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International Brotherhood of Paper Makers. Local 1 (Eagle Lodge : Holyoke, Mass.) Records

1901-1978

1 box (0.5 linear feet)

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First organized as Eagle Lodge in Holyoke, Massachusetts, the United Brotherhood of Paper Makers was granted a charter by the AFL in May 1883. Almost as soon as the union was established, however, it faced a serious struggle for power from within. Hoping to maintain their higher economic and social status, the machine tenders ultimately organized their own union, and the two remained separate for a number of years until they finally merged in 1902 as the International Brotherhood of Paper Makers.

The surviving records of the Eagle Lodge, Local 1 of the International Brotherhood of Paper Makers, include by-laws, minutes, correspondence, some contracts, a ledger, and three histories of the local and the early days of the union.

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Background on Eagle Lodge

With its abundant waterpower resources, Holyoke, Mass., became a center for the production of paper by the mid-nineteenth century, earning the nickname the "Paper City." In the unstable economy of the post-Civil War years, labor relations deteriorated, with the influx of immigrants seeking work raising tensions within the workforce. Facing the economic depression of 1884-1885, paper workers organized as the United Brotherhood of Paper Makers and was granted a charter by the American Federation of Labor in 1883. Its early years were not auspicious. Almost as soon as the union was established, it faced a serious struggle for power from within. Hoping to maintain their higher economic and social status, the machine tenders ultimately organized their own social club, later union, the Eagle Lodge, and the two remained separate for nearly twenty years, until they finally merged in 1902, becoming the International Brotherhood of Paper Makers, with Eagle Lodge designated as Local 1.

The Eagle Lodge focused initially on reducing the long hours associated with the two-tour system, in which workers were scheduled for eleven-hour days and thirteen-hour nights in alternate weeks. Although Whiting Paper conceded, agreeing to reduce machine tenders' hours from 72 to 60 hours per week, the backtenders voted to accept a pay increase over the shorter week. A small organization, the Lodge persisted in their advocacy for higher wages and reduced hours, leading a major strike in 1901 that effected every paper mill in the city with the exception of Whiting and Valley Paper Co., both of which agreed immediately with the strikers' demands. After two weeks of closure, the American Writing Paper Co. settled, granting a 20% increase in pay and a cap at 66 hour work week.

With its ranks swelling in response to their success, the Lodge became a leader in the tumultuous strike of 1903, in which women in the rag sorting rooms walked out after being denied a wage increase their male counterparts had been granted. This time the agitation lasted for months, not weeks, and failed, with the leaders of the strike being blacklisted by the mill owners. Eagle Lodge lost much of the momentum it had gained just two years before, but survived as a significant voice in Holyoke labor up until the deindustrialization that accelerated in the years after World War Two.

Scope of collection

The surviving records of the Eagle Lodge, Local 1 of the International Brotherhood of Paper Makers, include by-laws, minutes, correspondence, some contracts, a ledger, and three histories of the local and the early days of the union.

Inventory

By-laws and ritual

1901, 1907, 1943

Folder 1

Minutes

1938/1940

Folder 2

Ledger (1921-1925) with minutes (1928)

1921-1928

Folder 3

Withdrawal cards

1917-1923

Folder 4

Correspondence

1922, 1937

Folder 5

Contracts

1938-1967

Folder 6

Help stop pollution, don't help stop jobs [leaflet]

1978 1943

Folder 7

"A group of men, 1884-1900" [early history of the Eagle Lodge]

ca.1950

212 p.

Folder 8

Rush, Tom: Portrait of Eagle Lodge [paper written for Harvey L. Friedman]

ca.1980

Folder 9

Zwerling, Harris: "Eagle Lodge, 1914-22: A case study in AF of L craft unionism" [paper written for Bruce Laurie]

Folder 10

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Gift of Raymond Beaudry, 1985.

Processing Information

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Related Material

See also the records of the United Paperworkers International Union (MS 294)

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English

Copyright and Use (More information)

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Search terms

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Paper industry workers--Massachusetts--Holyoke

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Contributors

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Genres and formats

Minutes (Administrative records)

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