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History of Labor in Maine

Maine Department of Labor

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By
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June 25, 2001
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History of Labor in Maine: 1820-1900

Early Manufacturers- “As early as 1810, the District of Maine had turned out half a million dollars’ worth of boots and shoes; better than 2,000,000 yards of woolen and cotton cloth, 60,000 hats, $250,000 worth of cordage. By 1820, Brunswick alone had 1,248 cotton spindles in operation, and 240 woolen spindles.” Portland Press Herald’s Story of Maine, pg. 74.


Profile of Maine in 1820: “When Maine became a state in 1820, it counted 298,335 inhabitants." “...the primary work activities in Maine were farming, lumbering, fishing, shipbuilding, and commerce.” Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg.1.

Imprisonment for Debt- “was one of the many issues that captured the attention of local mechanics. The honest debtors who were unemployed, could not find work, or who were out of work because their employer failed to survive the competitive race, found themselves faced with imprisonment for debt.” Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg.17. This was a major issue for employees because it effectively placed them in a state of peonage to their employer.

Ups And Downs In Shipping in 1830s- “In 1839, when Maine had a third of the whole ship tonnage of the United States, a third of Maine’s tonnage was built in Waldoboro. In the 40’s and 50’s this percentage went down. Waldoboro’s output was as great as ever, but other coast towns were competing with her and the day would come when her suspender factory would stand her in good stead.” Portland Press Herald’s Story of Maine, pg. 84.

Maine’s First Labor Party- Purpose- “To set forth the grievances under which it was conceived the workingmen had long labored from want of concert in their feelings and conduct.” Later in the year, the workingmen of Portland organized the Working Men’s Institute, the first labor party in Maine.” Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg. 29. Had a political voice but failed to accomplish much.

Apprentice System- Two years later, the master mechanics...sought to promote the educational opportunities for apprentices by expressing their sentiment against night work. Sometimes it was the treatment by masters, rather than failure to perform their obligations, that caused apprentices to leave the workplace.” Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg. 55. As we see here, labor reform movements worked in all areas, including the age-old system of apprenticeship.

Temperance Movement- “A major motivation that prompted mechanics was a means by which they could contribute to their own self-advancement and counteract the social stigma attached to the ‘lower orders’ of society.” Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and
Foundations 1820-1880, pg. 58. The temperance movement, closely linked to social reform, was advocated for because of the tangible presence of alcohol in the workplace.

Flow of Irish into Maine in 1830's because of the Potato Famine- “The flow of Irish into Maine increased in the 40's as a consequence of the famed potato famine which forced many to leave the land and Ireland.” “...they provided the unskilled labor necessary for construction of railroad tracks, roads, bridges, canals, dams, houses, etc. They also labored in the woods.” “In Lewiston, and elsewhere, the Irish filled many of the less desirable jobs at the lower end of the economic order.” Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg. 118.

King Pine- “By 1835 the Kennebec had 1,500 men and 1,000 oxen in its lumber operations, the Penobscot perhaps twice as many. Three hundred loads of lumber were sledded into Belfast in a single day; ...” Portland Press Herald’s Story of Maine, pg. 83.

Story of A Trademark- “Augusta’s cotton factory, with 10,000 spindles began its operation in 1846.” Portland Press Herald’s Story of Maine, pg. 81.

Civil War Strikes- “The Civil War also indirectly touched the lives of workers in Maine as they became aware that governmental power might be exercised against those who sought to enforce their demands through strikes.” “While Maine did not attempt to pass anti-strike legislation, it did have a general conspiracy statute in place which dated from 1840 when the common law doctrine of conspiracy was given statutory form.” Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg. 169-170.

Civil War Labor Movement- “The labor movement during the Civil War also spawned twelve national unions and boasted a membership of 200,000 in 1864-1865.” Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg. 172.

Manufacturers In The 1870's- “Auburn, a pioneer in shoes, had a total capital of $1,000,000 in the business and one of its factories, the largest in New England, turned out 750,000 pairs of shoes a year, valued at $800,000 a little over $1.00 a pair, wholesale.”

- “According to the United States census of 1870, there were 20 cotton mills in Maine, employing 9,379 hands, and using almost wholly waterpower. Lewiston was the center of this industry. Her six mills had a total capital of $5,900,000 and the number of their spindles was 246,944. Three mills in Biddeford and Saco had 170,000 spindles, and a total capital of $3,200,000.”
- “The flour mills were prospering. There were 85 of these, turning out 60,000 barrels of flour a year. Paris, Lewiston, Bangor, Portland and Waterville accounted for most of this.”
- “Lumber continued to be one of the great industries in Maine, with 329 sawmills producing nearly 350,000,000 feet of long lumber.”
- “There were nine paper mills, with an invested capital of $1,500,000; and the mill at Minot, the largest in the State, turned out 1,800 tons of paper a year.”
- “Thirty-nine woolen mills turned out a variety of goods...”
• "The brick manufacture was in a good state. Maine's 93 brickyards producing in 1870 71,000,000 bricks..."
• "Packing was now big business. The State had 33 canning factories..."  

Co-op System in 1876-77- “The Grange experiment in co-operative stores dates from 1876-1877 when stores were opened in Carrol, Norway, Foxcroft, Belmont, and Portland" (pg. 212). "Only with the introduction of co-operative production in all branches of industry would the workers receive 'a just measure' of their 'rightful claims' to the wealth they create.” Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg. 213.

French Canadians- "In the immediate post-Civil War period, the ethnic composition of the state's textile industry rapidly changed as French-Canadians made their way to the textile centers from the Province of Quebec." "As early as 1866, however, French-Canadians were reported 'flocking' to the textile center of Lewiston." Approximately 1,000 French-Canadians arrived in Lewiston by the spring of 1870. By 1875, Lewiston counted 3,000 French-Canadians living in the city." Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg. 265.

Need for a Governmental Agency in 1873- "We need to know just what complete statistics of all the different kinds of business, and the more important facts connected with our social life, would furnish." History of Bureau of Labor & Industry, pg. 1. Governor Sidney Perham desired a bureau or one person to collect industrial statistics. "...he hoped the legislature then convened would 'provide for the performance of this work by one of the State departments, or by the appointment of an officer for this special duty.'” History of Bureau of Labor & Industry, pg.1-2. For 13 years, statistics were collected by the Secretary of State and published in an annual report. This eventually led to the formation of the Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics in 1887.

Established 1873- "The nucleus of the Bureau of Labor Standards was established in 1873 as an activity under the direction of the Secretary of State to collect and print statistics on manufacturing, mining, commercial and industrial interests, together with the valuation and appropriations of municipalities." Maine State Government Annual Report 1995-1996, pg. 252.

• "S.W. Matthews was the first commissioner” History of the Bureau of Labor and Industry, pg. 3.

Greenback Party in 1874- "The Greenback political movement was the outgrowth of a conference held in Indianapolis on November 25, 1874." Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880

• “The conference declared that 'the solution of the money question more deeply affects the material interests of the people than any other question in issue before the people.' The reformers demanded payment of the national debt in greenbacks and the issue of interconvertible legal tender currency and bonds which would not bear more than 3.65 percent interest per year.” Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg. 311.
• "In Maine, the Greenback Party made its appearance in 1875..." "The platform (1878) of the National Party (more popularly called the Greenback Labor Party) included the familiar Greenback demands, but also contained some labor planks. The Party called for the abolition of National Bank notes, making the national government responsible for all monetary issues, the taxation of government bonds, a graduated income tax, reservation of public lands to active settlers, reduction of the hours of labor, state and national bureaus of labor, abolition of prison labor, and the exclusion of Chinese immigration. In 1878, however, the Greenback-Labor political movement swept across Maine and captured nearly a third of the total votes in the state." Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg. 314.

Convict Labor in 1870s- "In the early seventies mechanics began to protest convict labor in the state prison, which they viewed as competing with 'honest mechanics.'" "Since the state directly engaged in the manufacture of goods produced in buildings paid for by public monies, and utilized materials and labor also subsidized with public funds, it could sell below market price if necessary." Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg. 323.

• "Employment of convict labor apparently proved more successful in other jails, for during the convention of County Commissioners and Jailers held in Augusta in January 1878, other county jails reported success in the use of convict labor either on a contractual basis or in manufacturing products for sale." Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg.324.

• "In January 1879, petitions opposing convict labor, signed by carriage, sleigh, and harness makers, flooded the State House. No action was taken by the state legislature until protest intensified. In 1888 the Knights of Labor were able to win legislation limiting the use of convict labor in the making of goods that competed with free labor." Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg. 324.

Depression of 1877- "By 1877, one out of every five of the nation's workers was jobless, while two out of every five workers worked one half a year or less." "Most Maine unions disappeared from the economic landscape." "The reduction of hours and wages and unemployment persisted throughout the mid-seventies." Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg. 346, 349.

Pulp And Paper- "By 1880, there were seven pulp mills and 12 paper mills in Maine. By 1890, there were only six mills, but they were bigger, and the value of their output five times as great as it had been a decade earlier."

• "By 1899, Maine was second among the States in her output of paper and pulp, not counting the plants of the Great Northern which were just building at Madison and Millinocket. ... Pulp and paper making was beginning to be called 'the imperial industry in Maine.'"

Portland Press Herald's Story of Maine, pg. 95.

General View of the 1880s- "The decade of the 1880's marked the sudden emergence of a labor movement in the State. It was a decade of labor organization, agitation, turbulence and reform. By
its close the outlines of Maine’s modern labor movement were discernible.” Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1890, pg. 3.

**Formation of AFL**— “The chief characteristic of the labor movement from 1887 to the close of the decade was the rapid growth of the craft organizations and the formation of the State Branch of the American Federation of Labor in 1891.” Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1890, pg. 15.

**Significance of 1880s**— “If the eighties marked the beginning of the modern labor movement in Maine, the decade of the nineties marked its institutionalization.” Two Decades of Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1900, pg. 160.

**Perspective on Several Key Maine Industries in the 19th Century**

- **Aquaculture**— "The Industry’s pell-mell growth resulted in problems of oversupply and erratic quality and earnings. Occasional attempts were made by canners to fix prices through secret pacts, after which the conspirators typically raced to the nearest telegraph office to undercut the sworn agreements." A Day’s Work, Part 1, pg. 234.

- **Logging**— "These new ingredients to America’s proverbial melting pot were as yet unblended, resulting in wholesale stereotyping. ... Explanations regarding the alleged increase of lice in camps took ethnic slants. And so on. No doubt each such rule was fully proved by numerous exceptions! No group, as it should be noted, was called lazy, since lazy men did not remain at lumber camps. Probably the fact that the men were almost always occupied by working and sleeping accounted for the fact that most camps were surprisingly harmonious, multicultural societies." A Day’s Work, Part 2, pg 182.

- **Agriculture**— "In 1880 Maine had 64,309 farms, of which 22,025 were 50 to 100 acres, and 25,035 were 100 to 500 acres. The term included a variety of real estate, since soils ranged from excellent to practically worthless. While the range of aptitudes and ambition among farmers... was equally broad, presumably the majority were competent, and their families, reasonably comfortable." A Day’s Work, Part 2, pg. 156.

**Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics Established in 1887**— created as a direct result of the labor movement, purpose was to address labor issues. Selected Highlights of the Maine Labor Movements, pg. 1. "New Bureau empowered to take over the task of gathering statistical data and was required to present the information annually to the legislature...the new department was not a labor Bureau and could not become involved in questions of strife, wages, etc. It was only a long time, most extensive correspondence, and the fullest explanation, that this obstacle was largely overcome." History of the Bureau of Labor and Industry, pg. 3.

**Distinct Department**— "On the 12th of January in that year (1887) a bill was introduced into the House calling for a ‘distinct department’ of a Bureau of Labor Statistics for the purpose of assorting, systematizing and presenting in annual reports statistical details relating to various phases of laboring conditions in the state. ... The bill became law, creating Maine’s first Labor Bureau.” Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1890, pg. 76.
Industry In the Late Eighties- “We get some notion of the condition of industry and labor in Maine in 1888 from the remarks of workingmen and women appearing before the Commissioner of Industry and Labor. Said a woman web-drawer in a cotton-mill: ‘And what of the water we drink? Are the great tanks in the top of the tower as clean as they should be? I do not wish to be fault-finding, but I think water standing open to the dust and dirt of a factory and exposed to rats, mice and cockroaches, should be looked after pretty often?’”

- “And a saleswoman in a store testified: ‘The store is kept dark for fear of fading the dress-goods, which is the reason the girls look as if they had consumption. When a clerk is 25 years old, she feels like dying, and sometimes does. In towns, girls have to work every evening in the week but one.’”
- “A quarryman exploded: ‘How often am I paid? For a man who has not been paid for 15 years, that question is a stunner. I did have a little coming last Fall, but my employers said they thought they would likely need it in the Winter. Money is such a scarce article with us they were afraid I might get excited and spend it at some other store.’” Portland Press Herald’s Story of Maine, pg. 93-94.

Industrial Safety- 1887- “provision was made for appointment by the governor of a deputy commissioner of labor.” History of the Bureau of Labor and Industry, pg. 6. His duties included investigation of violations in relation to employment of women and children in manufacturing and mechanical establishments.

- 1893 “the official title of this officer was changed to Inspector of Factories, Workshops, Mines and Quarries.” He was required, “to examine into the sanitary condition of factories, workshops, mines and quarries...” (pg. 6-7).
- 1911- P.L. Ch. 65- “This Act provided for a Department of Labor and Industry and prescribed its duties and powers.” (pg. 7).
- 1911-P.L. Ch.65, Sec. 4- “This section provided the first mechanical safety act...” “It provided further that it was the duty of the commissioner or his agent to inspect for certain listed hazards.” (pg. 7).

The Gay Nineties- “The Gay Nineties do not seem to have been particularly gay for Maine’s working population. Cotton and woolen mills were on the increase, but the conditions of work were far from being what they are today. Dust from carding and beating thickened the air and tickled the throat. Some of the women got chronic catarrh, with pains in the chest, hoarseness in the voice, loss of appetite and sometimes fever. Sometimes they complained because the boarding houses lacked fire escapes or because the streets on which they fronted were unlighted.” Portland Press Herald’s Story of Maine, pg. 95.

Effect of Depression in 1890s- “The depression of the 1890’s all but destroyed the labor movement in Maine.” The Origins of Labor Day in Maine and Historical Glimpses of Labor in Parade in Early Nineteenth Century Maine, pg. 20.

Potential for Labor Organization- “In May, 1891, a dramatic shift in the labor movement in Maine began when a meeting of trade unionists was held to explore the prospects for creation of a state organization.” Two Decades of Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1900, pg. 140.

- "The city of Portland officially recognized Labor Day and closed its offices, suspended public business, and raised the national colors on the City Hall. Other cities and towns joined Portland in observance of Labor Day. While September 5, 1887, was not the first observance of Labor Day, it was generally regarded as so." The Origins of Labor Day in Maine and Historical Glimpses of Labor in Parade in Early Nineteenth Century Maine, pg. 9.
- "Maine is emphatically a state of workers," Gov. Edwin C. Burleigh said on the state’s first formal Labor Day in 1891, so holding a holiday for it was, ‘a just recognition of the position of labor in our social system.’” Clark T. Irwin Jr: Maine Sunday Telegram 9-6-87.

**Intangible Results of Labor Movement** - "As the end of the century approached (19th), organized labor could claim no significant labor legislation in the decade of the nineties other than the label law. Legislative reform was thus a phenomenon of the eighties, not the nineties. What the nineties contributed to the labor movement was the structure of union organizations that characterized the labor movement in the twentieth century and the inevitable benefit of agitation and education which was necessary for any future reforms.” Two Decades of Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1900, pg. 157.

**AFL in 1904** - "A new Maine State Branch of the American Federation of Labor was organized in 1904. This formed the basis for the third phase of the labor movement which had begun in the 1880’s.” Two Decades of Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1900, pg. 145.

**General Assessment of Working Conditions in the 19th Century** - "Maine workers, who in theory enjoyed freedom of contract, labored for employers who required them to earn their livelihoods in unsafe, multi-structured buildings without fire escapes, who fined them for accidental damage to materials or for leaving the premises without permission (assuming doors were not locked to prevent exit). Workers were required to deposit a week or two wages in advance, such wages to be forfeited if workers left their places without adequate notice. This requirement provided employers with working capital, prevented turnover and most importantly, served as a disincentive for spontaneous strikes.” Maine Sunday Telegram 9/6/92.

**Physical Environment** - "Men, women and children worked in multi-storied factories and mills in which there were no fire escapes. Sometimes the main doors to the factories were closed after the workers entered.” Maine Sunday Telegram 9/6/81.

**Threats** - "Employers threatened to invoke conspiracy laws should workers engage in collective action or threaten imprisonment for debt if workers failed to meet their obligations to them." Maine Sunday Telegram 9/6/81.
Sources


Labor in Maine 1900-2000

Evolving Title and Role- “In 1887, a separate department, the Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics was established by the Legislature. In 1911, this was changed to the Department of Labor and Industry with added responsibilities for enforcing laws regulating employment of children, minors and women, the protection of the physical well-being of factory workers and the payment of wages.” Maine State Government Annual Report 1995-1996, pg. 252.

Laborer Appointed Commissioner in 1907- Thomas Lyons, a granite cutter, is appointed Commissioner of Labor, first laborer to be appointed to this position. Selected Highlights of the Maine Labor Movements, pg. 5.

Maine Passes “Peonage” Law in 1907- The law provided a jail sentence for men employed in the woods who quit their employment after receiving advances in transportation, money, or clothing. By 1917, 342 men were jailed for this crime. The law was also repealed in 1917. Selected Highlights of the Maine Labor Movements, pg. 5.

54 Hour Work Week in 1915- “Fifty-four work hour established for men and women.” Selected Highlights of the Maine Labor Movements, pg. 6.

Workmen’s Compensation- “replaced common-law doctrines such as assumption of risk and contributory negligence, which practically insulated employers from liability in case of injury to their employers.” Selected Highlights of the Maine Labor Movements, pg. 6-7.

Legislative Developments in Labor 1910-1924-

- “The 1909 lawmakers set fifty-eight hours as the most that women and children should work in one week.” Maine and Her People, pg. 218.
- “In 1911 the Department of Labor and Industry was added to the executive branch of the government. The fifty-four-hour law was approved and a workmen’s compensation law
was passed under which a working man injured on the job should receive money from his employer while recovering. A law requiring boiler inspection and others designed to protect the safety of employees were passed, one by one. "Maine and Her People, pg. 218.

- "The average weekly pay of employees climbed from twenty-two cents an hour in 1914 to fifty-two cents in 1924." Maine and Her People, pg. 218.
- "Cooperation was established between the Federation of Labor and the Associated Industries of Maine; opposition of management to organized labor grew less and good will on the part of the public increased." Maine and Her People, pg. 218.

Mills- "Lewiston grew with the mills. Its population was 5,000 in 1850 and 23,700 in 1900. The nature of the work force had also changed. At first, young Yankee girls, off the farm, living in boarding houses, heavily chaperoned, tended the machines. Then came rough Irish immigrants and finally, the eventual mainstays of the mills, the French-Canadians, actively sought, good workers, and even more important to management, uncomplaining. During the hey-day of the mills' prosperity, 70% of the local work force had jobs there." Maine: A Narrative History, pg. 258.

- "By 1970, textile manufacturing in Lewiston employed only 1,800 out of 17,600 workers." Maine: A Narrative History, pg. 258.
- "Textiles have not totally disappeared from Maine, nor have shoes—and, indeed, in 1987, Maine was still the third largest shoe producer in the U.S., although the number of shoe workers had dropped by half since 1980." Maine: A Narrative History, pg. 258.
- "Thanks in large degree to the mills, a Maine of considerable ethnic diversity now exists." Maine: A Narrative History, pg. 258.

Hathaway Strike in 1937- "Elsewhere in Maine, a major strike, also called because of CIO organizing, was brewing at the Hathaway Shirt Company in Waterville." Maine: A Narrative History, pg. 316.

Political Issues in 1937- "Politically, labor was in a weak position. They had a good friend in Democrat State Senator Lawrence Walsh of Lewiston who introduced an order for arbitration, but it only received two votes; one potential voter, another Democrat, Lewiston Senator Charles Fortin, somehow got himself excused from voting. Later in the year, Fortin was to become very controversial when he was appointed as labor's representative on the State Unemployment Compensation Commission. Despite his waffling on the shoe strike, he was considered to be close to the CIO and thus fiercely opposed by the AFL." Maine: A Narrative History, pg. 317.

Effect of Wagner Act- "An unexpected event on the national scene helped finally bring labor peace to Lewiston-Auburn (and also to Waterville). This was the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling that the National Labor Relations Act (the Wagner Act) was constitutional. The legislation set the stage for union elections and established a National Labor Relations board to oversee them. Therefore, the biggest sticking point of these 1937 strikes in Maine—union recognition—had a mechanism by which it could be democratically determined." Maine: A Narrative History, pg. 317.

New AFL President in 1937- "The year 1937 was also important to labor in Maine in that it witnessed the election of Benjamin J. Dorsky to the presidency of the AFL. A movie picture
projectionist in Bangor, Dorksy had already become one of the most effective organizers in the labor movement and, as head of the AFL (and later the AFL-CIO), he presided for many years over labor's growth in Maine, lending it the stability it needed. "Maine: A Narrative History, pg. 317.

Legislation in 1937- "While an effort to pass a 'baby Wagner Act' in Maine in 1937 was not successful, labor did become more effective on the legislative front during the following years. By 1941, as Charles O'Leary writes, 'It was evident...that labor could wield influence and obtain enactment of legislation." Maine: A Narrative History, pg. 317-318.

The CCC in 1930s- "However, one of the New Deal Programs—the Civilian Conservation Corps, the CCC—has left lasting memories." Maine: A Narrative History, pg. 318.

- "By the time it was phased out in 1942, the CCC had given employment to 3,190,393 persons in 4,500 camps at an expenditure of $3 billion, plus allotments to dependents of enrollees of $660 million." Maine: A Narrative History, pg. 318.
- "The camps ranged from Alfred in York County to Patten and Princeton in the north county. The emphasis was on forestry work, whether for insect control, averting forest fire danger, trail construction, or building roads and bridges in the wilderness." Maine: A Narrative History, pg. 318.

Maine Human Rights Act in 1971- "Protects individual workers against a variety of abuses and circumstances relating to the workplace, but do not enhance the power of collective action which arise through unions." Selected Highlights of the Maine Labor Movements, pg. 12.

Department of Labor- "The Department of Labor was created by State Government reorganization legislation, effective September 24, 1971, that consolidated various employment and training related agencies of the State, including the Bureau of Employment Security and the Employment Security Commission, originally established in 1936; the Bureau of Labor Standards, functioning since 1873; the Maine Labor Relations Board, established in 1972; the Maine Occupational Information Coordinating Committee, originally established in 1979; the Bureau of Employment and Training programs, functioning since 1974; the Office of Administrative Services established in 1982; the Office of the Commissioner established in 1983; and the Maine Human Resources Development Council, established in 1987." Maine State Government Annual Report 1995-1996, pg. 234.

Present Day Role of the Employment Security Commission- "Maine's Employment Security Commission consists of three members appointed by the governor. ... Under the Maine law it aids workers during times when they are unemployed. ... The commission also keeps a constant check on employment conditions. ... When a person loses his job and cannot find work for which he is suited, he may be in a position to draw unemployment insurance." Maine and Her People, pg. 218.

Present Day Role of the Industrial Accident Commission- "Maine has an Industrial Accident Commission of five, consisting of three members appointed by the governor, and the Commissioners of Labor and of Insurance. It carries out the Workmen's Compensation Law which covers state, county, and city employment and may be used by towns and by private employers.
The law entitles an injured employee to receive up to sixty dollars per week and medical aid for a period of time following the accident. Employers sent to the commission reports of 35,123 cases of injury in 1974. It is the commission's duty to study cases and make a decision where there is a dispute between the injured workman and his employer." Maine and Her People, pg. 218.

Role of DOL- “The Department of Labor was established to achieve the most effective utilization of the labor resources in the State by developing and maintaining an effective State employment and training policy, by insuring safe working conditions and protection against loss of income and by enhancing the opportunities of individuals to improve their economic status.” Maine State Government Annual Report 1995-1996, pg. 234.

Sources


Booklet- “Selected Highlights of the Maine Labor Movements”, Charles Scontras.

Child Labor

Presence of Child Laborers in the Market- “In the 1820s and 1830s, children under the age of sixteen reportedly comprised between one-third and one-half of the industrial work force of New England. They earned about thirty-three cents a week.” In The Name of Humanity: Maine’s Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 5.

Laws of 1847 - “With the support of Governor John Dana and ‘friends of education,’ legislation was passed in 1847 which provided for the better education of youth in the cotton and woollen manufacturing establishments of the state. It forbade the employment of any child under fifteen
who had not attended school for three months preceding the year of employment, and children under twelve unless they had attended school for four months preceding the year of their employment. The necessary evidence for such schooling was to be a teacher certificate made under oath and filed with the employer. The law of 1847 failed, however, to make any reference to the limitation of hours." In The Name of Humanity: Maine’s Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 8.

Maine’s First Child Labor Law in 1847- "The first child labor law in Maine was passed during the industrial revolution, when child labor and sweatshops were commonplace. The 1847 law addressed the amount of formal schooling a child must have in order to work. The intent of the legislators was two-fold: to prevent the exploitation of children and to emphasize the importance of education. Truancy laws passed in 1887 required children under 15 to attend at least 16 weeks of school in a school year in order to work in manufacturing and mechanical workplaces." Booklet on Maine Child Labor Law, 1991

Knights of Labor- "In 1885, a surging labor movement in the form of the Knights of Labor (which a year later would claim nearly 28,000 members and 127 locals), led the crusade for effective restrictions against child labor." In The Name of Humanity: Maine’s Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 15.

Successes of Child Labor Advocates in 1887- “In 1887, the advocates of liberating ‘the tiny hostages to rapacious capitalism’ from ‘the steel jaws of the modern industrial machine’ won a qualified success in securing legislation that prohibited the employment of any child under twelve years of age (some manufacturers preferred ten) in any manufacturing or mechanical establishment, and prohibited any child under fifteen from employment in such establishments unless such child had attended some public or private school (excepting vacations) for eighteen weeks prior to employment. The law also required the mill owners to maintain on file a certificate which revealed the child’s age, place of birth, and school attendance record, and which was to be signed by a member of the school committee or whomever he authorized to sign the certificate. Workers were to learn, however, as they were to learn many times over, that laws were not self-executing, and in the absence of an ideological commitment of financial and human resources for their full realization, they gave only the illusion of reform and progress." In The Name of Humanity: Maine’s Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 16.

Problems With Falsification in 1888- “The basic difficulty in enforcing the child labor feature of the new law arose from the practice of many parents in falsifying the age certificates of their children. The Deputy Commissioner, in 1888, agreed that many under-age children worked with falsified certificates.” Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1890, pg. 68.

A Perpetual Problem in the 19th Century- “Child-labor reform always appeared on organized labor’s agenda for change. And although organized labor was successful in 1887 in getting laws defining a 10-hour work day and prohibiting employment of children under 12 years old, it became apparent that some employers forced workers to labor beyond the legal limit.” Maine Sunday Telegram 9/6/81.

Schools- “Superintendents of schools possessed the authority to grant permission to children to leave school and seek employment if, in their judgment, it would help alleviate economic hardship for the child’s family.” In The Name of Humanity: Maine’s Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 21-22.
Socialists- “Maine’s young Socialist Party (1900) viewed the problem of child labor as a necessary and inevitable feature of the capitalistic system itself.” In The Name of Humanity: Maine’s Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 27.

National Consumers’ League in 1903- “In 1903, a branch of the National Consumers’ League was organized in Gardiner. The League, founded in 1891, dedicated itself to waging opposition to the ‘sweatshop system’ and child labor. By the end of the decade the local branch of the League was transformed into the Consumers’ League of Maine.” In The Name of Humanity: Maine’s Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 27.

National Child Labor Committee in 1904- “The formation of the National Child Labor Committee in 1904 best symbolized the efforts of ‘progressives’ to awaken the nation’s conscience and obligation to its own children who had been engulfed in the economic transformation of the nation.” In The Name of Humanity: Maine’s Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 25.

MSFL in 1904- “The formation of the Maine State Federation of Labor in 1904 ensured that the crusade to eliminate child labor would gather momentum in Maine.” In The Name of Humanity: Maine’s Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 26.

Dangers- “If a child suffered an injury, as did a nine year old who lost a hand while ‘playing about a drier,’ the prevailing view was that the child was expected to know that the machine was dangerous.” In The Name of Humanity: Maine’s Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 46.

Problems in 1908- “Federal government agency investigating New England cotton mills reported that Maine was chief violator of state statutes pertaining to child labor.” Selected Highlights of the Maine Labor Movements, pg. 5.

Maine Child Labor Committee- “Immediately following the new law which raised the age limit of employment to fourteen, the Maine Child Labor Committee was organized. Led by clergy, academics, representatives of the Maine Federation of Women’s Clubs, and Maine’s Commissioner of Labor, the new organization sought to improve the education and well-being of children and to rescue them ‘from the greed of thoughtless parents.’” In The Name of Humanity: Maine’s Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 54.

- “In 1909, The Maine Child Labor Committee introduced a measure which required an educational test for all those between the ages of fourteen and fifteen who desired to work during school hours. The measure also called for the elimination of night work for minors under sixteen from 7:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. in manufacturing, mechanical, and mercantile establishments, and in messenger service and street trades. It won the support of the labor movement. Following ‘an all winter battle’ in 1909, reformers, after being ‘bitterly opposed by the corporations,’ were successful in achieving passage of legislation which extended the coverage of the law to all mercantile establishments and telephone and telegraph companies. It also provided for an educational test for all those between fourteen and fifteen who desired to work during school hours, the effect of which, according to the factory inspector, was credited with a ‘marked decrease’ in the number of children employed in the mills.” In The Name of Humanity: Maine’s Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 56.
Educational Test in 1911- "The required educational test, however, was not standardized, allowing considerable discretionary power to local superintendents. Nor was it generally enforced." In The Name of Humanity: Maine's Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 58.

- "A measure of the degree to which the educational test was enforced was provided by Commissioner John F. Connelly, who, in his first biennial report of the new Department of Labor and Industry for 1911-1912, reported 'practically no effort' had been made to enforce the required educational test required by the legislation passed in 1909." In The Name of Humanity: Maine's Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 59.

Employment of Women and Children in 1911- "In 1911, the basic law regarding the employment of women and children was amended to provide that no female minor under eighteen, no male minor under sixteen, and no women should be employed in any manufacturing or mechanical establishment for more than ten hours in any one day. The consent of parents, however, enabled minors to contract for longer work periods. The prohibition against the employment of any child under fourteen in any manufacturing or mechanical establishment rounded out the statute relative to young workers." In The Name of Humanity: Maine's Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 61-62.

Legislature Gets Tougher in 1915- "In 1915, the Maine legislature stipulated that children under 14 could not work during the hours that public schools were in session. The law also required working papers for children 14 to 16 years old." Maine Sunday Telegram 9/6/81.

Reforms in the System in 1915 & 1917- "Further, since much child labor was traced to economic need, the state's passage of such legislation as the workmen's compensation act, which became effective in 1915, and legislation which provided aid to mothers with dependent children in 1917, helped to lessen the dependence upon children for economic assistance." In The Name of Humanity: Maine's Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 70.

Effects of Governor- "In 1917, Governor Carl E. Milliken stoked the fires of child labor reform in his legislative address relative to the 'welfare of children' when he remarked that 'A child who must leave school to enter the ranks of the toilers is especially entitled to the fostering care of the State.' He called for the further extension of occupations prohibited for children, and for 'Some more definite provision ... made for medical inspection of children working in mills and factories.'" In The Name of Humanity: Maine's Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 66.

Reforms in 1919- "In 1919, organized labor and child labor reformers, drawing upon the energy and support generated by the child welfare movement, continued their forward thrust. They secured additional legislation which raised the age limit from fourteen to fifteen by which a minor could be employed during school hours, a legislative change that finally brought the long effort to harmonize the labor law and the school attendance law to a conclusion. Legislation was also enacted which required that a minor between the ages of fifteen and sixteen complete the first six grades of elementary public school or the equivalent." In The Name of Humanity: Maine's Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 67.

Marked Improvements in Child Labor Battle in 1920s- "Additional positive signals were received when, according to the 1920 Census, only 8.5 percent of all children ten to fifteen years of age, inclusive, were reported to be at work—a decrease of 46.7 percent of children under sixteen and a
decrease of 57.8 percent for children under fourteen. While critics pointed to some imperfections in the count, it nevertheless sparked a wave of excitement among the child labor reformers in the state. So, too, did a report of the Children’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, which revealed that a smaller percentage of children were employed in Maine in 1920 than in any other New England state. Of Maine’s 82,829 children between the above ages, only 2,585 or 3.1% were engaged in gainful occupation, while the rate for all the New England states was placed at 7.7%.”

In The Name of Humanity: Maine’s Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 67-68.

Federal Action in 1924- “In 1924, Congress approved and submitted to the various states a proposed amendment to the Constitution that would give Congress the power to limit, regulate, and prohibit child labor under eighteen years of age. Organized labor in Maine strongly supported the measure, but both houses of the Maine legislature voted against the amendment. ... In 1933, a new and vigorous effort to secure passage of the amendment was launched, and Maine finally ratified the amendment in 1934.” In The Name of Humanity: Maine’s Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 71-72.

Eighth Grade in 1927- “Child labor law amended to provide that minors had to complete the eighth grade of an elementary school or its equivalent before they were entitled to a work permit allowed them to be employed during school years. Previously, work permits were allowed when minors had completed the sixth grade.” Selected Highlights of the Maine Labor Movements, pg. 9.

Federal action in 1938- “In 1938, the reach of the federal government was made comprehensive through the passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act. This Act restored the minimum age protections of the National Industrial Recovery Act which prohibited all child labor under the age of sixteen in the fields of manufacturing and mining, and of children sixteen and seventeen in occupations considered to be particularly hazardous or detrimental to their health.” In The Name of Humanity: Maine’s Crusade Against Child Labor, pg. 72.

Continued Progress in 1940s-5Os- “The 1940’s and 1950’s saw great technological advances and business expansion. To protect children, the Maine legislature enacted more and stricter child labor laws. Recognizing the value of education to the growing economy, educational requirements for working were strengthened in Maine.” Maine Sunday Telegram 9/6/81.


Sources


Scontras, Charles A. “A Look Back at Labor in “Good Old Days,” Maine Sunday Telegram, pD1, September 6, 1981.

Books

General Legislation Pertaining to Dept. of Labor

Labor Legislation- There was a Joint Standing Committee on Labor created in/around 1887. Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1890, pg. 57.

Voluntary Apprenticeship System- 1943 P.L. Ch. 258- Provided for a system of apprenticeship whereby voluntarily made agreements of apprenticeship would be encouraged, created Apprenticeship Council appointed by the governor. History of the Bureau of Labor and Industry, pg. 92.

- Duties- Establish standards and assist in development of apprenticeship agreements; Issue rules and regulations; Make an annual report to Governor of activities and results.


Maine State Safety Conference- Conference is a self-supporting annual event conducted by MDOL in which employers are taught about workplace safety, first convened in 1928. History of the Bureau of Labor and Industry, pg. 18.

Labor Relations- State Board of Arbitration and Conciliation created in 1909, appears in Chapter 229- provided for three members, one to be an employer of labor or selected from some
association representing employers of labor. Original board given the duties that have continued unchanged; namely, to endeavor to settle disputes, strikes, and lockouts between employers and employees. History of the Bureau of Labor and Industry, pg. 79.

- 1941- P.L. Ch. 292- “Workers shall have full freedom of association...for the purpose of negotiating the terms and conditions of their employment or other internal aid or protection, free from interference, restraint, or coercion by their employers or other persons” (pg. 80).
- 1955 - P.L. Ch. 462- Divided work of board into three distinct functions- 1) Board of Inquiry, 2) Board of Conciliation, 3) Board of Arbitration, this act eliminates all authority on part of Board to assess blame for a controversy before it. (pg. 82).
- 1951- P.L. Ch. 353- Original act established Panel of Mediators- consisted of five impartial members appointed by governor including chairman appointed by governor. (pg. 83).

Sources


Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Me, c1910
Work Hours


Eight-Hour Day Issues in 1866- “Central to the movement for the eight-hour day was a Boston machinist, Ira Steward” (pg. 193). “In Steward’s view of things, the enactment of a universal eight-hour law would stimulate the economy, generate profits, and provide the workers with greater security and higher living standards” (pg. 194). “The eight-hour enthusiasts of Portland led the way and claimed two Eight-hour Leagues by the winter of 1866, with a membership of ‘about four hundred good and true men.’” But, “The Republican legislature, however, refused to create an eight-hour law, believing that the existing ten-hour law was sufficient.” Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg. 195.

Creation of 8-Hour Day in 1868- In 1868, Congress created the 8-hour day. “In June, 1868, an eight-hour bill introduced by Senator B. Gratz Brown of Missouri became law. The law provided the eight-hour day for mechanics and laborers employed by the Federal government.” Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg. 200.

10-Hour Movement Launched in 1880- “By the late 60’s, workers in Maine’s textile mills generally labored for sixty-six hours a week, or an average of eleven hours a day” (pg. 275). “The agitation for the ten-hour day continued, however, and in the next legislature (1885), Governor Frederick Robie took note of the rising tide of protest when he informed the legislature that ‘the employment of women and minors by our manufacturing corporations [had] created considerable criticism...’” “The labor reformers, reinforced with the increasing visibility given to the issue, and by the power of the Knights of Labor, prompted the legislature to respond with a ten-hour law in 1887.” Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg. 280.

Labor Legislation in 1887- One of the biggest issues for the 1887 legislature was labor legislation. “Early in the session, several ten-hour bills were introduced.” Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1890, pg. 57, 58.

10-Hour Bills in 1887- In 1887, both William Looney, a Representative from Portland and Harry A. Weymouth, a Democratic Senator from Saco, introduced bills about ten-hour laws. “The first clause of Looney’s bill stated that ‘no minor under eighteen years of age and no woman’ shall be employed in mechanical and manufacturing establishments over ten hours a day. Senator Weymouth’s bill commenced as follows: ‘No persons, except foremen, watchmen, and engineers shall be employed...’ The essential difference here was that Weymouth’s measure would have brought men as well as women and children under the measure, and hence was decidedly more radical.” There were two other ten-hour bills introduced at that time, one being the Heath bill. Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1890, pg. 58,59.

- Some people saw the ten-hour law pertaining to women as taking away their rights. Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1890, pg. 62.
Knights' Position on 10-Hour Day- According to Portland Representative, Horace H. Shaw, "...the Knights of Labor in the State really did not want an inflexible ten-hour law." His reasoning was that it would only help those people who could not find steady employment due to laziness and being "good for nothing." Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1890, pg. 62-63.

Probably the major explanation for the lack of enforcement of legislation during this period is linked with the fact that the Knights of Labor had declined in numbers and strength." Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1890, pg. 68.

Looney Bill Passed in 1887- The Looney bill finally passed but in an amended state in 1887. "Most important was the amendment permitting women to contract for a period beyond ten hours." Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1890, pg. 65-66.

- "Passage of the ten-hour law was a major achievement." Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1890, pg. 66.

Sources


Morning in camp on Lobster Lake, Maine - Sept. 3rd 1885.
Labor Unions and Organized Labor

Beginnings of Unions in 1830- “Labor newspapers had sprung up in Maine by the 1830s, including the Kennebec Labor Advocate and others in Belfast and Ellsworth.” Maine Sunday Telegram 9-6-87.

Mutual Benefit Association of 1842 - “In a precursor to a union, employees at the Portland, Saco & Portsmouth Railroad organized a ‘mutual benefit association’ to relieve accidents and sickness in 1842.” Maine Sunday Telegram 9-6-87.

Sustained Efforts to Link Workers in 1860s-70s - “While labor organization and protest, contrary to public perception, reach deep into Maine’s past, it was not until the 1860’s and 1870’s that a sustained effort to organize Maine workers took root. Labor unions were organized in major cities of the state during and immediately after the Civil War, and the number of strikes (union and non-union) so increased that the Portland Daily Eastern Argus was compelled to write, in 1867, that ‘strikes prevail in Maine’ as they did in other states. ‘Strike,’ it declared, ‘was the order of the day.’ The organization of labor unions, the increased strike activity, the formation of co-operatives, labor parties, and eight-hour leagues, and organizations such as the Knights of St. Crispin, the Sovereigns of Industry, and the founding of the Granite Cutters’ National Union, all symbolized the rise of worker consciousness in Maine during the immediate post-Civil War period.” The Origins of Labor Day in Maine and Historical Glimpses of Labor in Parade in Early Nineteenth Century Maine, pg. 6.

Union Numbers - “Maine unions reportedly rose from seven in 1864 to 150 in 1902.” Maine Sunday Telegram 9-6-87.

Rise of Organizations in 1890s - “While the Knights declined, the trade unions became stronger and developed an effective organization in the state. In the late eighties and early nineties, Central Labor Unions were formed for Portland, Lewiston and Auburn, the Kennebec Valley, and Bangor; while Central Labor Unions in Biddeford and Knox County came into existence by the middle nineties.” Two Decades of Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1900, pg. 140.

- There were many different unions organized in the 1880s. Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1890, pg. 14-15.
- “The nineties were also the years in which the philosophy and structure of the trade unions were firmly established. Whereas the movement of the eighties was broadly based, that of the nineties was more disciplined along purely trade interests.” Two Decades of Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1900, pg. 160.
- “Organization of the Union Labor Party in Maine was completed in 1888.” Two Decades of Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1900, pg. 68.
- “Apart from some success at the local level, some concentrated strength in Knox County, and the general educational value generated by third party movements, independent political action in Maine was not a significant factor in labor reform. Labor reformers had greater political success when they ran their candidates on the tickets of the major parties or supported candidates of the major parties. This, along with pressure group activity, was
responsible for the legislative gains made during the eighties." Two Decades of Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1900, pg. 159.
- "Because organized labor was a new dimension in Maine politics, it was uncertain what its political strength, strategy, and success would be." Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1890, pg. 22.
- "Indeed, the vision of a 'new industrial system' was what the decade of the eighties was all about, but Maine's rank and file were not seeking it through third party methods." Organized Labor and Labor Politics in Maine 1880-1890, pg. 47.

Gompers- The Chair of the AFL. Organized Labor in Maine: Twentieth Century Origins.

Unionism Grew Rapidly in Early 19th Century- 278,000 (1898) to 1,676,200 (1904). Organized Labor in Maine: Twentieth Century Origins.

State Branch of AFL in 1904- Its inception marked origin of Maine modern labor movement- "While not as spectacular, dramatic, or "menacing" as the Knights of Labor movement of the 80's, the rise of the State Branch of the AFL in 1904 marked the origin of the modern labor movement in Maine." Organized Labor in Maine: Twentieth Century Origins, pg. 54.

Maine Reform Efforts Echoed National Movements- "The opening years of the twentieth century were years of protest and reform in America." Organized Labor in Maine: Twentieth Century Origins, pg. 57.

Quality of Working Conditions Has Drastically Improved- "a relatively simple matter...would have been to make a provision for a place to sit...Ventilation was so poor in many factories and mills that the cry for fresh air could be heard with monotonous regularity." Organized Labor in Maine: Twentieth Century Origins, pg. 61.

Organized Labor- "Labor's influence in Maine seemed to rise and fall with the economy--but inversely. When times were hard, they were hard for labor unions, too; people were afraid of losing their jobs. With prosperity, labor organizing picked up considerably." Maine: A Narrative History, pg. 315.

New Branch of AFL in 1904- "In 1904, a new state branch of the AFL was organized." Maine: A Narrative History, pg. 315.

Woodsmen Fought Peonage Laws- "To insure greater control over the woodsmen and their financial resources, the lumber interests requested, and secured, legislation in 1907 which made it a crime to leave one's place of employment while in debt to the company store." Organized Labor in Maine: Twentieth Century Origins, pg. 94.

Charles Harriman- Pres. of Lime Workers Union of Rockland. "As a sympathizer of socialism, advocate of industrial unionism, critic of clergy of Rockland, self-proclaimed spokesman for the labor movement in Maine, and labor agitator who cast doubts and suspicions concerning the governor's character...(his) initial successes in causing defections from the AFL...(that gave) him special attention (from the AFL). Organized Labor in Maine: Twentieth Century Origins.
Creation of an Arbitration Board Between 1900 and 1914- "Between 1900 and 1914 a diverse contingent of Maine reformers generated...proposals...for change which ranged from ordinances prohibiting spitting on city sidewalks...abolition of state's conspiracy law, and creation of a State Board of Arbitration and Conciliation." Organized Labor in Maine: Twentieth Century Origins, pg. 131.

State of Organized Labor in 1930s- "Organized labor in Maine at the beginning of the 1930's was small in number, spread throughout the state, parochial in outlook and politically ineffective..." Maine: A Narrative History, pg. 314.

Treatment of Employees by Certain Firms- "The Hollingsworth and Whitney Company in Winslow built a club house for its employees which was furnished with a piano, magazines and papers, smoking room...bowling alleys..." Organized Labor in Maine: Twentieth Century Origins, pg. 156.

Tough Times for Organized Labor- "Yet despite such unlikely successes, it was usually rough sledding for organized labor in a state that voted overwhelmingly Republican. The hated 'peonage' law, which made it a crime for workers to leave a place of employment while in debt to the company store, took 10 years to repeal. Strike-breakers, often of Italian or Greek nationality, were frequently brought in to undermine strikes. And even the advent of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal did not improve matters greatly. The G.O.P. was briefly ousted from the Governor's chair by Democrat Louis Brann, but then the Republican tide swept back. The year 1937, a seminal one for organized labor in Maine, saw Republican Lewis Barrows in the executive office and a mere handful of Democrats in either body of the Legislature." Maine: A Narrative History, pg. 316.

Nationwide Unrest in 1937- "It was a time of extraordinary unrest in industrial America. The national labor movement had been rent by a damaging split the year before when a more aggressive wing, seeking to unionize in whole industries instead of along craft lines, broke from the AFL and became the CIO. In Maine, the break occurred early in 1937 at the State Federation's 33rd Convention. When a representative of the Textile Workers Union, which had been flirting with the CIO, tried to speak, he was refused and the TWU was expelled. It formally joined the CIO in March 1937." Maine: A Narrative History, pg. 316-317.

Unrest in 1937 in L-A- "At the end of that same month came the famous Lewiston-Auburn shoe strike. It began with a CIO organizing team attempting to gain representation in the 19 shoe factories in the twin cities. The owners were adamant they would not deal with them. 'As long as the walls of my factory stand, I shall never join the CIO,' defiantly declared Erwin W. David, head of Maine Shoes Inc., and every weapon of law and legislature and police was brought to bear against the organizers, led by William J. Mackesy of Boston. Approximately 6,400 workers were employed in the Lewiston-Auburn shoe shops and Mackesy claimed at least 4,500 were out on strike." Maine: A Narrative History, pg. 316.

Sources


Hannibal Hamlin, head-and-shoulders portrait, facing slightly to left, 1844-1860(unknown).

Governor Angus S. King, Jr. in his office in 2001.
Wage

Minimum Wage
- Maine’s first minimum wage law limited to women and minors packing fish and fish products- put forth in 1939 P.L. Ch. 289. (pg. 45)
- Minimum fair wage rate of not less than 33 cents per hour established in 1940. (pg. 47)
- State of Maine first enacted a general minimum wage law in legislative session of 1959, previously called for by Dept. of Labor and Industry in 54-56 and 56-58. Indicated that the worker was subject to exploitation and the employer who paid fair wages had to meet competition from employers who refused to meet the standards that he maintained. (pg. 49)
- 1959- P.L. Ch. 362- established a min. wage for the State at $1/hr. (pg. 49)
- 1965- P.L. Ch.410- Minimum wage rate increased from 1.00 to 1.25. (pg. 51)
- 1974- May 1, highest federal min. wage increased to $2/hr. (pg. 53)

Weekly Payment of Wages
- 1911-P.L. Ch. 39- provided for weekly payment of wages as supervised by MDOL- "Every...company, contractor, person, or manufacturing business...shall pay weekly each employee engaged in his or its business the wages earned by him to within eight days of the date of said payment..." (pg. 54)
- 1935- P.L. Ch. 111—amendment added restaurant to coverage of act. (pg. 57)
- 1937- P.L. Ch. 193- "There shall also be kept a daily record of the time worked by such person..." (pg. 57)

Sources
Women's Labor

Tailoresses in the 1800s- “They did not receive additional wages for laboring far into the night. Along with having deductions from their wages for absences, the tailoresses’ also had deductions if their work was defective.” Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg. 45.

Women Strike in Dover, NH- 1st strike by women, apparently, as Lowell strike of 1834 followed this one. “The strike in Dover was caused by the “obnoxious regulations”...fining the girls, threatening them with a dishonorable discharge, threat of a blacklist...” Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg. 83.

Women's Labor- “By the 1860’s, many Maine women were reported to be earning income from the manufacture of clothing for the Boston ‘ready made’ dealers” (pg. 303). “By 1881 it was reported that ‘There are probably few towns in which the female portion of the inhabitants are not more or less occupied in making some description of garments for the Boston wholesale trade’” (pg. 304). “The growth of the industry was noted officially for the first time in the state when in 1888 a special agent for the Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics reported that ‘the dressmakers are legion...’ and that ‘quite an army of women in shops and in their own homes, make men’s and boys’ woolen clothing’” (pg. 305). “It was not uncommon for several members of a family to be employed in the ‘manufacture’ of clothing.” Collective Efforts Among Maine Workers: Beginnings and Foundations 1820-1880, pg. 306.

Women’s Labor Legislation- Limitations were set on the number of hours a woman could work:
- 1887- P.L. Ch. 139, Sec.1- “no woman shall be employed...more than ten hours in any one day...” (pg. 19).
- 1915- no female shall be employed in any workshop...more than nine hours in any one day...in no case shall the hours of labor exceed fifty-four in a week. Proclaimed as law on September 28, 1916. (pg. 22)
- 1949- P.L. Ch. 262- equal pay for equal work- “No employer shall employ any female in any occupation within this state for salary or wage rates less than the salary or wage rates paid by that employer to male employees for equal work.” History of the Bureau of Labor and Industry, pg. 23.

Women’s Labor League in 1904- organized in 1904, endorsed in 1904 by State Fed.- “In May of 1904 the Portland Central Labor Union had already taken the lead in fostering the organization of women into a Women’s Label League.” History of the Bureau of Labor and Industry, pg. 52.

Sources

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>1975</td>
<td>James Longley</td>
<td>Emilien Levesque - 1978; Seth Thornton - 1978</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Department of Labor Timeline

1872- Governor Sidney Perham spoke to the Fifty-first Legislature and said that, "We need to know just what complete statistics of all the different kinds of business, and the more important facts connected with our social life, would furnish" (History of Bureau of Labor & Industry, pg.1).

1873- "Under the Resolves of the State of Maine for 1873 an activity was authorized relating to industrial statistics and placed under the direction of the Secretary of State" (History of Bureau of Labor & Industry, pg. 2).

1873- At the end of the year, a report called "The Wealth and Industry of Maine" was released. (History of Bureau of Labor & Industry, pg. 2)

1887- The Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics, a separate department, was established by the Sixty-third Legislature. (History of Bureau of Labor & Industry, pg. 2)

1887- The office of Commissioner was established. (History of Bureau of Labor & Industry, pg. 3)

1911- The Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics became the Department of Labor and Industry. (History of Bureau of Labor & Industry, pg. 3)

1972- The Department of Labor was created by State Government reorganization legislation that consolidated various employment and training related agencies of the state. (Maine State Government Annual Report, 1995-1996)
**Labor Movement Timeline**

1882- The Knights of Labor was established in Maine beginning the labor "movement" in Maine.

1888- The Maine Union Labor Party was organized.

1887- The Knights of Labor had a membership of close to 30,000.

1887- The Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics was established.

1891- The Maine State Federation of Labor was formed as an offshoot of the American Federation of Labor.

1891- The Secret Ballot Law was enacted.

1891- Labor Day was recognized as a legal holiday in Maine.

1893-1897- Due to a depression, both the American Federation of Labor and the Knights of Labor collapsed.

1904- A second Maine State Branch of the American Federation of Labor was formed.

1907- A granite cutter, Thomas Lyons, was appointed as Commissioner of Labor.

1907- The Maine Child Labor Committee was established to investigate child labor.

1909- The fifty-eight hour work law was passed for women and children and the minimum age for child labor was raised from fourteen to sixteen.

1915- The fifty-four hour work law was passed for women and children.

1915- Legislation for Workmen's Compensation was enacted.

1934- Maine’s textile centers participated in the nation’s largest strike in its history.

1937- A major shoe strike in Auburn occurred resulting in the calling in of the National Guard.

1956- The Maine AFL-CIO was created when the two independent entities merged resulting in a membership of approximately 60,000.

1969- Collective bargaining rights were established for public employees.

1971- The Maine Human Rights Act was enacted, therefore providing workers with protection against discrimination on many different grounds.

1982- The number of Mainers who belonged to unions reached 84,489.
1999- Of Maine's total workforce, fifteen percent are members of organized labor.

Taken from "Selected Highlights of the Maine Labor Movement" by Charles Scontras.
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Other Sources

Booklet- “Selected Highlights of the Maine Labor Movements”, Charles Scontras.