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Maine Labor History Mural: Labor Day, 2008

Maine Department of Labor

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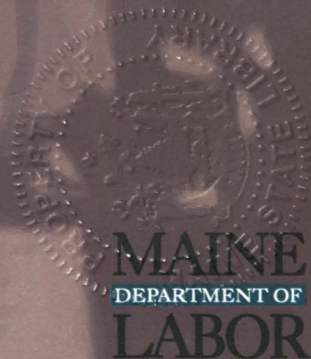
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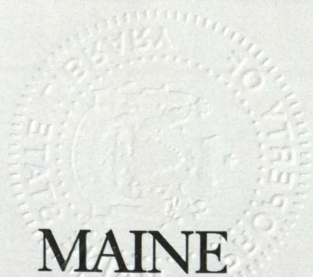
Maine Labor History Mural
LABOR DAY 2008



AUG 22 2013

BACKGROUND

Created by Tremont artist, Judy Taylor, the 11-panel oil on board mural depicts workers in Maine's traditional industries and trades. The piece shows working scenes from early artisan workshops, natural resource economies, and manufacturing and highlights pivotal events and people in the history of Maine labor. Maine labor historian, Charles Scontras of the University of Maine Bureau of Labor Education, aided in researching scenes for the work. The mural is on permanent display at the Maine Department of Labor administrative offices in Augusta, Maine.



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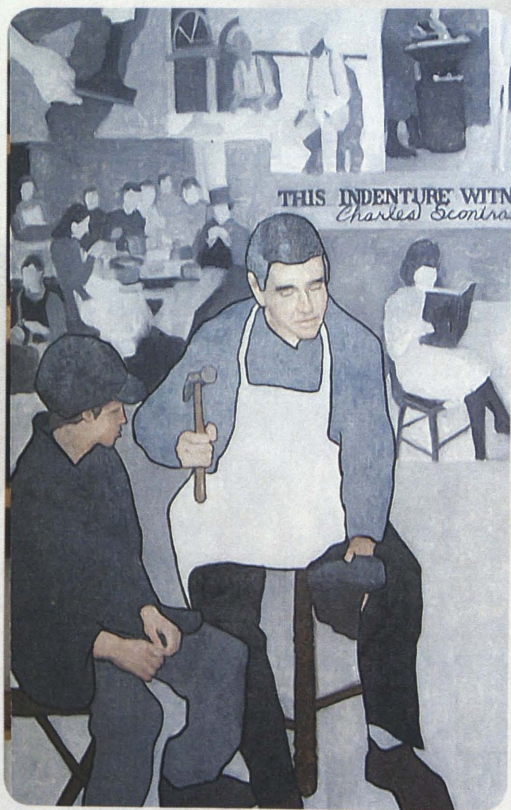
The Maine Department of Labor promotes the safety and economic well being for all workers and businesses in Maine.

PROTECTING WORKERS - CREATING OPPORTUNITY

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Judy Taylor has been painting in Maine for over 15 years and maintains her year round studio in Seal Cove, on the backside of Mount Desert Island. She trained in New York City at the National Academy of Design under the tutelage of Ron Sherr and Harvey Dinnerstein, among others, and was also a participant in the pilot masters program at the New York Academy of Figurative Art, a two year scholarship program with intensive study of anatomy and the human figure. Upon completion of her studies, she moved to Maine to paint, a lifelong desire, with a five year sojourn to Austin, Texas during the fall and winter to teach at the Austin Museum of Fine Art. She continues to teach at her studio in Seal Cove with occasional workshops in Austin, Chicago and New York. She is a past Artist-in-Residence at Acadia National Park. Her work consists of figurative and narrative pieces, landscapes, townscapes and portraiture. More of her work can be seen on her website, www.judytaylorstudio.com

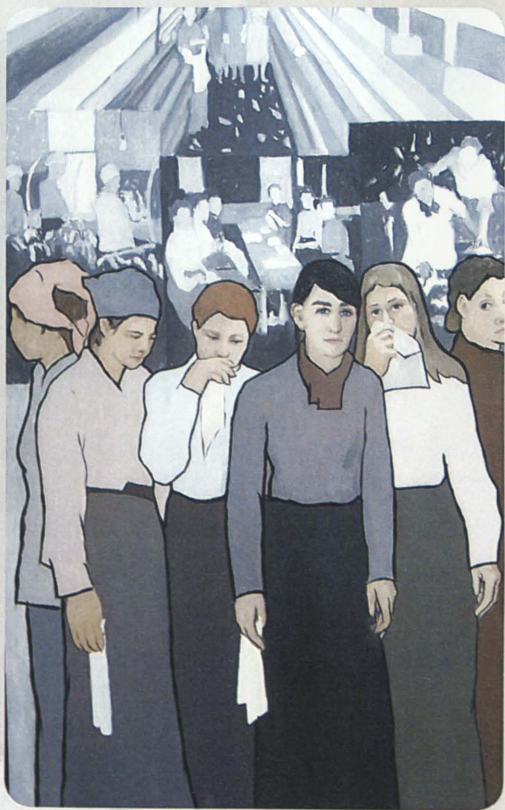




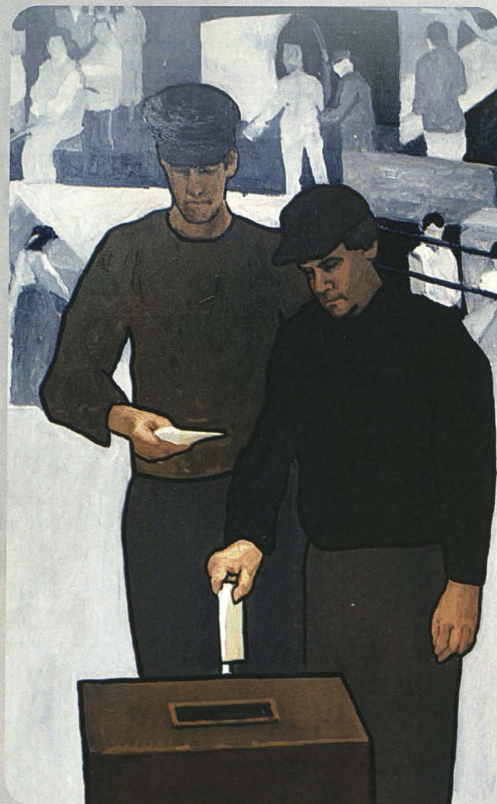
APPRENTICESHIP Apprenticeship has always provided opportunities for workers to learn a skilled trade on the job. At the center of this panel is a shoemaker teaching his craft to a young apprentice. Labor historian Charles Scontras (who was a shoe repairer in his youth) was selected as the model for the mentor shown in the picture to honor his years of service in education and history. Other scenes in this panel show apprenticeship in a variety of other trades, including hatmaking. The young woman reading represents the children that were often brought into apprentice workshops to read or play music to keep workers entertained as they performed their work.



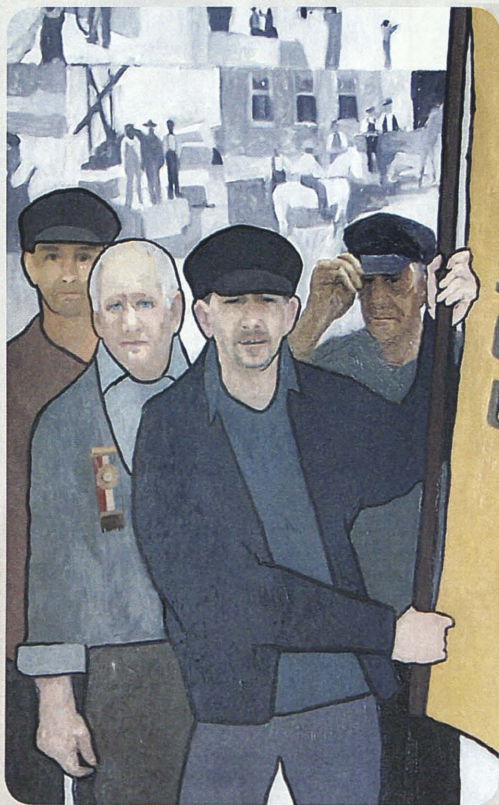
CHILD LABOR As recently as a century ago, children as young as eight worked long hours in dangerous work environments. This panel depicts young workers and the trades in which they labored. The centerpiece is a cluster of children workers. Two are carrying dinner pails to their jobs and one has bandages on her hands, which reflects the sacrifices they made in their work. Scenes in the background include images from blueberry harvests, food and fish processing, and textile mills.



WOMEN TEXTILE WORKERS During the 19th and 20th centuries, Maine textile mills employed thousands of workers, mostly women. The women shown in the front of the picture are holding handkerchiefs, reflecting the poor air quality in the mills because of all the lint in the air. Women in the background scenes are shown picking rags, sewing, and operating the massive looms found in many Maine factories.



THE SECRET BALLOT This panel represents the significance of the secret ballot and depicts the act of workers placing their votes in a ballot box. The secret ballot protected workers' livelihoods from being threatened if their vote displeased their employers. In the background are illustrations of other Maine industries such as corn canning and pipe fitting. The top scene is that of an Irish tenement neighborhood in Portland.



THE FIRST LABOR DAY This panel honors the significance of Labor Day when workers historically paraded under the banner of their union. The stonecutters and granite workers of Maine are depicted here with an historical Maine Granite Workers' badge pinned to one of the worker's shirt. In the background are representative scenes from Hall Quarry, Stonington, and Hallowell, a few of the sites where granite was quarried in Maine.



WOODS WORKERS Maine's plentiful forests have historically provided economic activity and jobs in the wood products industry. Shown at the forefront is a group of workers engaged in organizing activities of the International Workers of the World in the 1920's. Scenes depict tree felling, log driving, sawing, and life in the woods camps. Workers in the pictures are carrying the traditional tools and implements of a Maine logger, including a uniquely Maine invention, the peavey.



THE '37 SHOE STRIKE With the support of organizers at the Congress of Industrial Organizers (CIO), thousands of Lewiston and Auburn workers walked out of shoe mills in 1937 seeking fair wages, shorter hours, and union recognition. Despite Federal laws protecting their right to organize, workers were beaten and jailed for marching or speaking at public meetings. The image at the front of the panel shows a confrontation between marchers and police and a French language newspaper that reported on the brutality. Images in the back show scenes from the strike, including the arrest of organizers. Pictured also is Auburn Police Chief Harry Rowe, who sided with the manufacturers and brought in state police to stop the picketing workers. The choir image is shown as a reminder of the Catholic Church opposition to the strike. A local priest warned that the strikers would go to hell and threatened excommunication for anyone who participated in the labor dispute.



LABOR REFORMERS This panel honors the work of the political reformers of the first half of the 20th century. Pictured prominently at the front of the panel is Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Under Perkins' leadership the FDR administration enacted wide-sweeping labor and social reforms that comprised the foundation of the labor law and social safety net that exists today. Background images show FDR and his cabinet, the signing of legislation establishing the employment security law, worker advocate Rose Schneiderman, and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. On the far left section of the panel are images of women at work and of the fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, which is regarded as one of the worst workplace accidents in U.S. history. This had a great impact on Francis Perkins, who as a young woman witnessed the tragedy in New York City.



ROSIE THE RIVETER This panel honors the contributions of the thousands of Maine women who entered the workforce during WWII to help support the war effort. Pictured at the front are women workers who built Liberty Ships in South Portland Shipyards in the 1940's. Scenes in the background depict women in their working clothes, employed in tooling shops, and the variety of occupations held by Maine's own "Rosie the Riveters" during the war.



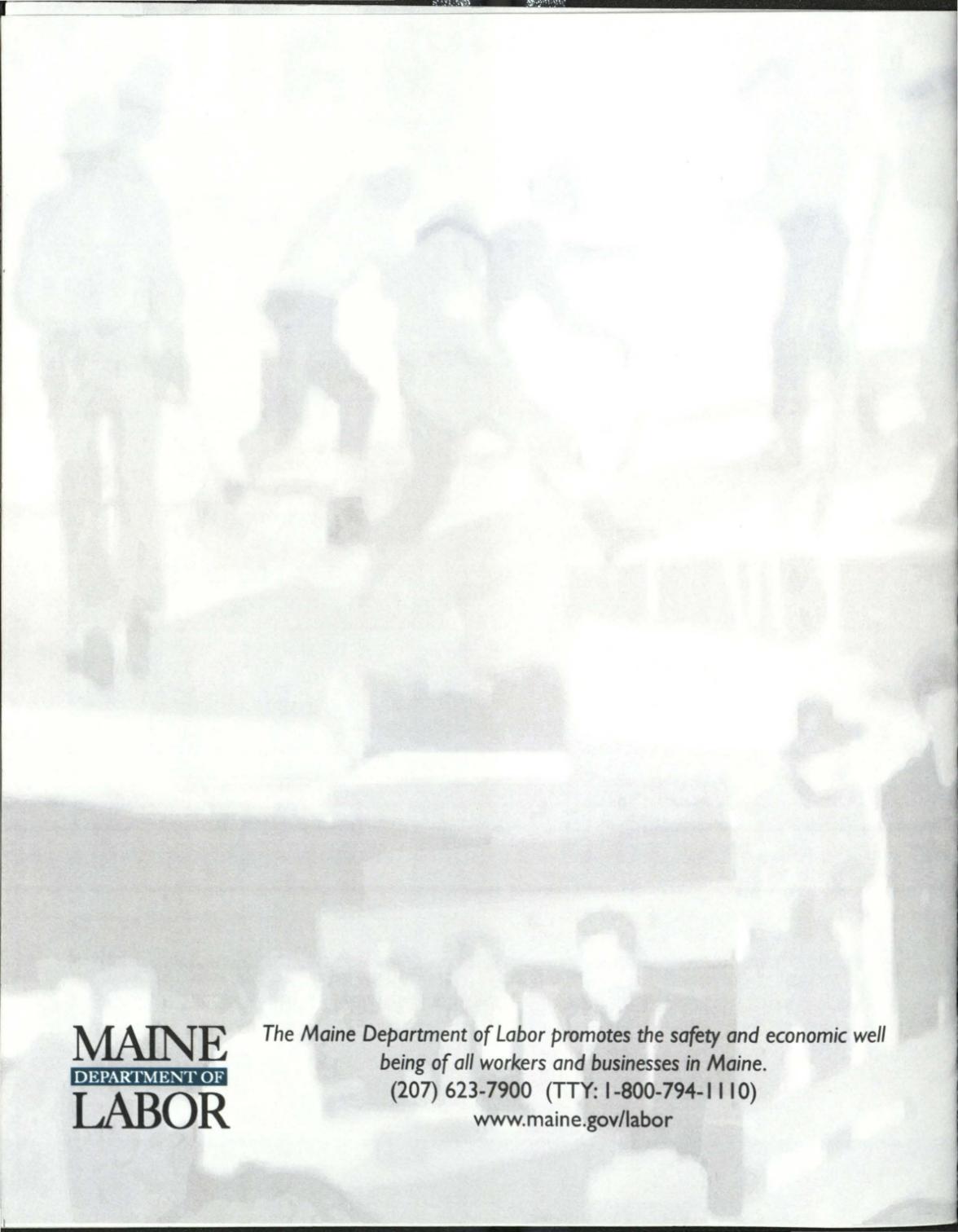
JAY STRIKE In June 1987, 1,200 workers at the International Paper Mill in Jay walked out on strike to protest wage cuts and layoffs. In what became the longest strike in New England history, union members and supporters held out for 17 months in a struggle that divided the town and ultimately cost many of the workers their jobs. The center image is of people in the community rallying behind the striking workers and represents the many generations that were affected by the strike. Background scenes show picket lines, worker rallies, and a food cupboard that was established to help workers and their families. Pictured also is civil rights activist, Jesse Jackson, and local worker advocates Roland Sampson and Peter Kellman.



FUTURE OF MAINE LABOR The Maine workforce is in a constant state of change. The figures at the center of this panel depict the handing off of work from one generation to another. Background images depict the faces and labors of the future workforce, including both young and old, new immigrant populations, and people with disabilities. Although nobody knows for certain what work will be like 50 or 100 years from today, the Maine Department of Labor will continue to work to ensure opportunities and protect workers so that our future may be better than the past.

The Maine Department of Labor provides equal opportunity in employment and services.

Auxiliary aids are available upon request to people with disabilities.



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*The Maine Department of Labor promotes the safety and economic well
being of all workers and businesses in Maine.*

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