## 1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: **SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY HALL**

Other Name/Site Number: Old Labor Hall, S.L.P. Hall, Socialist Block, Granite Street Hall, Socialist's Hall, Socialist Labor Building

## 2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 46 Granite Street Not for publication:___

City/Town: Barre Vicinity:___

State: VT County: Washington Code: 023 Zip Code:05641

## 3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private: ___
Public-Local: X
Public-State: ___
Public-Federal: ___

Category of Property
Building(s): X
District: ___
Site: ___
Structure: ___
Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

| Contributing | Noncontributing |
|---|---|
| 1 | ____ buildings |
| ____ | ____ sites |
| ____ | ____ structures |
| ____ | ____ objects |
| 1 | 0 Total |

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

Designated a
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK on

MAY 16, 2000

by the Secretary of the Interior

## 4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Certifying Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

## 5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

____ Entered in the National Register
____ Determined eligible for the National Register
____ Determined not eligible for the National Register
____ Removed from the National Register
____ Other (explain): _____

_____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

## 6. FUNCTION OR USE

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Historic: | Social | Sub: | Meeting hall<br>Civic |
| Current: | Social | Sub: | Meeting hall<br>Civic |
| | Recreation and Culture | | Museum |

## 7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: No Style

MATERIALS:

| | |
|---|---|
| Foundation: | Granite |
| Walls: | Brick |
| Roof: | Asphalt shingles |
| Other: | |

**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

Barre's Old Labor Hall sits on a half-acre parcel located at 46 Granite Street in the historic downtown of Barre, Vermont. The building consists of a long single-story gambrel-roofed hall and a two-story flat roofed section at the front that contains five rooms. Arranged on a northwest axis, the 50' x 108' rectangular brick structure is constructed in running bond and sits on an exposed half-story brick basement. The building has a granite foundation at ground level and a wide molded-wood cornice along the roof line. The building also contains a large attic directly above the meeting room.

The front section of the Hall measures 50' x 25'. The mass of this section above the basement level is arranged into seven bays, two piles deep and two stories high. All of the fenestration at the first and second story level of the building is 1/1 sash windows with segmental arch windows and segmental brick lintels. The windows at the basement level are three pane sash divided by vertical muntins with segmental arches.

**Northwest Elevation**. The **main facade** of the building faces northwest. The center entrance is reached by means of eight large granite steps and is composed of a double-leaf, five-panel wooden door with a four-pane segmental fanlight. Above the fanlight is a double-coursed brick arch springing from corbeled brick imposts. Directly above the fanlight is a granite medallion depicting the symbol of the Socialist Labor Party in bas relief: an arm and hammer above the letters "S.L.P."

At the basement level, near the outside walls are two bricked-in openings where plate-glass storefront windows originally were, one on each side of the building. Next to these bricked-in spaces, to either side of the entrance steps, are small granite steps that lead down to doorways at the basement level. Between the basement doorways and the entrance stairway is a small, rectangular opening that has been boarded over.

**Southwest Elevation**. The southwest facade can be divided into three portions: the area located on the two-story section of the building and the rear gambrel-roofed area that is divided evenly by a chimneystack. The southwest facade of the front portion of the building contains a pair of basement windows with two sets of sash windows above, one set at each floor level. Southeast of this area is a sheltered loading dock added some time after 1937, when the building was converted into a warehouse. The roof of the loading dock begins where the two-story part of the front building ends and terminates at the chimneystack. The concrete loading platform stands about four feet off the ground and extends out from the building about four feet. This platform is accessed by a set of steps located at the northwest end which partially covers a basement window opening. Opening onto the platform are two wide wooden doors. Each door has two rows of four lights at its upper section and a series of four vertically-oriented panels below this. There are two window openings in this area, one located above the loading dock stairs and the other next to the chimneystack.

To the far side of the chimneystack is a brick wall with two window openings that have been bricked in sometime after 1937. One of these openings is located approximately five feet from the chimneystack and the other is approximately five feet from the end of the building.

Between these two areas is a boarded-over doorway. At the basement level are two boarded-over openings, one directly below the filled-in end window and the other approximately two feet past the chimneystack.

**Southeast Elevation.** The southeast elevation is the rear gambrel end of the building. In the gambrel area of the facade are centered two sash windows. At the first-floor level are five evenly-spaced bricked-in windows. The middle window is slightly off-center to the northeast. The five basement bricked-in windows are centered with the windows above.

**Northeast Elevation**. The northeast facade is made up of a series of window openings, some of which have been bricked in. The front portion of the Hall is the mirror image of its composition on the southwest elevation. There are seven evenly-spaced windows on the gambrel portion of the building. The four southeast openings have been bricked in. The seven basement windows on this portion of the facade are located unevenly throughout the wall plane and fall just out of center with the windows above.

**Interior.** The interior of Barre's Old Labor Hall is divided into roughly three sections: the two-story front section of the building, the main meeting room area in the rear portion of the structure, and the basement. The measurements given here are estimated to the nearest foot. Recent restoration work throughout the main floor and second-story rooms of the Hall have enabled the removal of many non-historic materials, including plywood paneling, cooling equipment, insulation materials, partitions, and a drop ceiling.

In addition to the building's main meeting room--the principal feature of the Hall--the five smaller rooms in the front section served as offices, cloak rooms, classrooms, and a gathering place for small parties. In one of the upstairs rooms, a curved wooden stage exists which probably served as a podium for lecturers and as a platform for musical ensembles. Beside the glass ticket-window, which was located just inside the entry hall, there was a lead-lined storage space for cold beverages that was constructed at a later date in a corner of the main meeting room. The low ceilinged basement that housed the co-operative store and butcher shop was simply constructed with sturdy shelves and bins and handsome recessed windows to afford maximum natural light. Graduate students in the University of Vermont's Historic Preservation program have been engaged in analysis of the historic color schemes inside the Hall. The earliest combinations appear to have been boldly-colored and highly decorative, including stenciled patterns, marbleized surfaces, and bold stripes.

The **first floor** plan of the Labor Hall is made up of two areas: the front rooms and entrance comprise one area and the meeting hall to the rear the other. The stair hall measures 10' x 18' and is accessed from the outside through the double-leaf wooden main door. The hall contains a stairway leading upstairs along the southwest wall and a doorway that accesses the northeast room. The stair hall flows into the southwest room through a large opening in the wall which once contained a door. Immediately beside this doorway is an interior window opening which represents the original ticket window. The glass pane with its semicircular opening in the base for exchanging tickets and money has been preserved and will be reinstalled in its original location during ongoing restoration of the Hall. A southeast door opens into the meeting hall

and a door behind the stairs leads to the basement. The ceilings in the entrance and two front rooms are nine feet high.

The **northeast room** is 19' x 25' and retains much of its original fabric. The main architectural elements in this room include its maple flooring, pressed-tin ceiling, bead-board dado, windows, and plaster walls. There are three windows on the northwest wall and two on its northeast wall. All of the windows on the first and second floors of the building are 1/1 sash windows with flat stock trim. A modern door has been added to the southeast wall to provide access to the meeting room.

The **southwest room** is 17' x 25' and has undergone some change over time. Modern wall paneling (craftwall) and ceiling materials have recently been removed to reveal the original plaster surfaces. There are three windows on the northwest wall and three on the southwest wall. A doorway that opened onto the meeting room has been enlarged to approximately eight feet wide. A small 4' x 4' restroom is located in the northeast corner of the room. The massive McNeil and Urban safe purchased in 1904 for the cooperative store still occupies a corner of the room, having been rediscovered during the removal of a false wall.

The **meeting room** occupies the southeast portion of the structure and measures 48' x 83' with 13' ceilings. A 9' x 14' room which once served as a refreshment stand and later as an office, was constructed at some time in the north corner of this space. On the southwest elevation, two large freight doors open out onto a loading platform.

Much of the historic fabric of the main meeting room remains having been encapsulated by a drop ceiling, partitions and false walls in some locations. The main architectural elements of this space include the engaged decorative posts and beams, the maple flooring, windows and beadboard dado and plaster walls and ceilings. The engaged posts and beams are nonstructural and run at 12' intervals along the length of the meeting room. The dado wraps the lower portion of the post, with the remaining area of the post covered in plaster. At ceiling height it meets a boxed beam constructed of beaded board and flat stock. These beams span the width of the Hall. On some of the posts are the remains, completely intact, of the decorative scheme they were painted in. This pattern consists of a bluegray on the dado, brown on the chair rail, and a type of grained finish on the plaster part of the post. Just above the dado and below the beam on the post are stencils applied in gold finish. On a few areas of the wall surfaces are remnants of earlier finishes, including stenciled ornament and painted patterns. The original mirrored chandelier has been placed in storage and will be restored and repositioned in the Hall.

On the **second floor** of the front portion of the building are three rooms, one occupying the area northeast of the stairs, and two rooms to the southwest side. All have been remodeled with drop ceilings and craftwall, but visible behind these layers is evidence of earlier decorative schemes, including moldings and stenciled patterns. The northeast room is 28' x 25' with four windows on the northwest wall and two on the northeast wall. The southwest room is 18' x 13' and has three windows on its northwest wall and one on its southwest wall. Southeast of this room is a 15' x 12' room. The window on the southwest wall has been closed up.

The **attic** is unfinished, except for wooden flooring that has been installed in the front portion nearest to the entrance. Exposed ceiling joists infilled with fiberglass insulation bats extend to the rear wall where a pair of windows open out over the southeast elevation. Huge timber trusses support the roof of the Hall.

The **basement** at one time contained a cooperative food store and a butcher shop with a brick party-wall running the length of the structure and dividing it roughly into halves. At the northwest end a stairway between the stores allowed access to the upper floor. Each store had an outside entrance and large plate-glass window at its northwest end. The windows have been bricked over. The windows that run along the northeast and southwest walls are three-pane single sash set into recessed surrounds, a few of which have been bricked shut. The northeast room is 18' x 73' with two smaller rooms to its southeast, one 18' x 25' and the other 13' x 10'. The southwest area is 27' x 108' and is divided into five rooms by brick partitions along its length. Each space is approximately 27' x 20'. The remaining original fabric in these rooms includes the low tin ceiling, window sash, beaded-board dado., plaster walls, and the narrow tongue and groove maple flooring which appears to have been laid directly over the silt left behind by the Flood of 1927.

Writing about his visit to Barre in November, 1900, to dedicate the Labor Hall, Camillo Cianfarra, editor of Il Proletariol, the Socialist Labor Party Italian weekly, described the building:

> The construction is very beautiful. The facade, with a large flight of steps, is all of stone and red brick, with a large and majestic entrance, over which in the near future will be installed the big symbol of the S.L.P., the work of comrade [Egidio Dunghi].
>
> The Hall is enormous, all illuminated by electric light, with a vast stage, wide and completely adjustable for theatrical events, and with all the necessary amenities to make the place attractive and comfortable.
>
> To sum up, the place is a success, and we hope that it will fulfill the purpose for which it has been built.[1]

The interior and exterior of the SLP Hall in Barre, Vermont appear to have retained a high degree of integrity. Subsequent uses since the late 1930s have added materials, such as a drop ceiling, that once removed revealed the intact architectural features as well as other associated furnishings, such as the ca. 1904 safe. Current efforts to rehabilitate the SLP Hall are being conducted in close consultation with the Vermont State Historic Preservation Office and are designed to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for rehabilitation.

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[1]"From New York to Barre (Notes from a Journey)," *Il Proletario*, December 8, 1900.

## 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X Statewide:___ Locally:___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A_X_ B_X_ C_X_ D___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A___ B___ C___ D___ E___ F___ G___

NHL Criteria: 1

NHL Theme(s): II: Creating Social Institutions and Movements
1. Clubs and Organizations

V: Developing the American Economy
1. Extraction and production
4. Workers and work culture
5. Labor organization and protest

Areas of Significance: Ethnic heritage, European; Social History

Period(s) of Significance: 1900-1936

Significant Dates: 1900; 1936

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Historic Contexts: XXXI. Social and Humanitarian Movements
H. Labor Organizations

**State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**

Barre's Socialist Labor Party (SLP) Hall is nationally significant under NHL Criterion 1 for its association with socialist and anarchist politics, labor organizations, and Italian immigrant heritage in the early twentieth century. Barre, Vermont, was a leading place in which debates among anarchists, socialists, and union leaders took place over the future direction of the labor movement in America. The Socialist Labor Party Hall was the site for many of these debates and serves as an emblem of this radical heritage and the strength of the union movement during the early twentieth century. It is the only building known to have been erected by members of the SLP–the first national socialist political party in the United States--as a physical representation of the party's goals and aspirations. A multi-ethnic gathering place for socialists, anarchists, and unionists, the hall also provided a variety of community services.[2]

The SLP Hall was constructed by volunteers, mainly members of Barre's large Italian community, as a meeting hall for the Socialist Labor Party. At its dedication, the SLP Hall was described as "a superb synthesis and demonstration of the collective effort of the workers joined and guided by the light of an idea."[3] The entrance to the building features the Socialist Labor Party symbol above the door, a reminder of the era of ferment which characterized Barre at the time the Hall was constructed. Thus, the building was a prominent physical manifestation of the SLP's political ideology.

From 1900 to 1935, the SLP Hall served a variety of community social, political and cultural functions. The Hall served as a gathering place for Italian social and political groups, for local unions, and for various immigrant musical ensembles, as well as political rallies, masquerade balls, dances, parties, and sporting events. Many organizations used the SLP Hall as a meeting place, including the Mutuo Soccorso Society, the Italian Athletic Club, the Italian Pleasure Club, and the Granite Cutters' National Union. The Hall also housed a co-operative grocery store, then a bottling works and a bakery: coal and firewood were also available to Barre's residents. The Hall was a source of subsistence goods as well as ethnic food and other merchandise that had special importance to the immigrant population in Barre.

The SLP Hall also connected Barre's citizens with nationwide labor and political issues. The Hall was a locus for the continuous exchange of ideas in an era when such leaders of labor and political movements as Samuel Gompers, Emma Goldman, Eugene Debs, Luigi Galleani,

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[2] Green, Archie, January 11, 2000. "This site may be the only one still standing that brought together skilled craft workers (granite cutters), mainstream trade unionists (Samuel Gompers persuasion), and dissidents (Daniel De Leon followers)." Consultation with labor historians familiar with the history of the SLP, archivists for the SLP collections at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and with Nathan Karp, an archivist with the current SLP national office in California indicates that this hall is the only surviving property that was actually established by the party. During the early twentieth century, the national office operated at several locations in the New York City area, but never created their own establishment.

[3] Camillo Cianfarra, editor of *Il Proletario,* the SLP Italian-language weekly from New York, November 28, 1900.

Edmondo Rossoni, Joseph Ettor & Arturo Giovannitti, "Big Bill" Haywood, "Mother" Mary Harris Jones, and Ann Burlak ("The Red Flame") came to Barre to speak.

The Hall continued to be operated by Social Club #2 until 1936, when it became the home of the Washington Fruit Company. In recent years, it has housed the Vermont Pak Tomato Company. In 1994 bankruptcy closed the company's doors. On March 31, 1995, a campaign was launched to purchase and preserve the Labor Hall with a "Restoration Celebration Dinner" attended by over 200 people. On July 28, 1995, the Barre Historical Society, in partnership with the City of Barre, purchased Barre's Old Labor Hall.

The direct association of this property with the Socialist Labor Party, the labor movement, Italian immigrants, and their social and political ideals, makes Barre's Old Labor Hall a unique symbol of an era in American labor and political history that is little remembered today. That it is located in a small community in Vermont not far from the Canadian border is significant, for it demonstrates that Barre, with its large Italian colony, served as a rural refuge for noted labor leaders including Luigi Galleani and Emma Goldman, who faced persecution because of their political views. Barre played host to some of the key figures in the international labor and political movements of the early 20th century, and became an outpost for radical politics at a time its proponents were coming under increased attack.

Labor historians are united in their assessment of the national importance of Barre's "Old Labor Hall" to the history of immigration, radical politics, and labor history. As labor historian Archie Green has written, "By good fortune, the Hall holds a symbol of the diverse elements that joined hands in the American labor movement–a work force of native New Englanders uprooted from agriculture to industry, foreign-born immigrants, exponents of both radicalism and pragmatism, [and the] tragic events of industrial death and disease."[4]

From Brown University, Socialist Labor Party authority Paul Buhle states that "The Hall brings back to mind labor at the turn of another century, miserably poor but so idealistic that a poem usually appeared on the front page of the radical, socialist, or anarchist papers, calling the reader to something beyond bread and butter. Barre's traditions embodied in the hall recall the struggles of the immigrant, not only for self-improvement (or even collective ethnic advance) but for universal values hardly realized in Social Security and health programs generations later."[5] Buhle believes that the Barre building is the best (perhaps only) surviving property associated with the Socialist Labor Party.

The SLP Hall has important associations in the history of Italian immigration. "For the immigrants workers and their families around Barre, it was the center of a thriving community life that bridged the old world and the new, a symbolic and practical focus of how workers could create for themselves a civil environment that was both useful to their daily lives and

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[4]Green, Archie, January 11, 2000.

[5] Buhle, Paul, n.d.

uplifting of their spirit."[6] Immigration historian Rudolph Vecoli noted that: "The SLP Hall embodies the conjuncture of a number of major historical developments of the twentieth century: immigration; industrialization and technological change; class conflict; radical ideologies and movements; and ethnic and cultural diversity." In addition, Vecoli states that the SLP Hall and its Italian immigrant constituents have been the subject of important studies by several Italian historians interested in the transformation of Italian culture in America.[7]

Columbia University historian Eric Foner concludes with: "Barre plays a central role in the history of Italian anarchism and militant unionism in this country. And the SLP Hall offers an excellent opportunity to bring to bear the insights of the new social and labor history on the interpretation of an existing building and community, and to highlight one part of the still neglected history of radical movements in American society."[8]

Representation of American labor history is at present limited within the National Historic Landmarks Survey primarily to the homes of important labor leaders (Samuel Gompers, Eugene Debs, Kate Mullany, Terrence Powderly); the sites of significant labor actions (Botto House and the Matewan District); or commemorative sites (Union Square and the Haymarket Martyrs' Monument). Only one union headquarters–the American Federation of Labor (AFL) building in Washington, DC–has been designated thus far.[9] The SLP Hall illustrates an aspect of American labor history that is not currently represented in the NHL Survey and this property appears to be a rare example of a site with national historical associations and high integrity.

Karen Lane summarized the site's significance in a recent *Labor's Heritage* article :

> Barre's Labor Hall serves as an example of other twentieth-century union halls, labor temples, and working class meeting places of all shapes and sizes out of which came the leaders, ideas, and energy that helped shape the century. It is a labor icon that has been saved from destruction and preserved for future generations as an interpretive site and community center. The direct association of this property with the labor movement, with Italian immigrants, and with their social and political ideals, makes Barre's Old Labor Hall a unique symbol of an era in American labor history that is but little remembered today.[10]

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[6] Cannistraro, Philip V., January 12, 2000.

[7] Vecoli, Rudolph J., January 5, 2000.

[8] Foner, Eric, January 15, 2000.

[9] *List of National Historic Landmarks by State*. National Park Service, 1999.

[10] Lane, Karen, "Old Labor Hall, Barre, Vermont," *Labor's Heritage*, Vol. 10, 1993.

## NARRATIVE HISTORY

### Origins of the Granite Industry in Barre, Vermont

The town of Barre sits at the headwaters of the Winooski River in the rugged hills of central Vermont, about 7 miles east of Montpelier, the state capitol. Mountains encircle the village, forests stretch for miles in all directions, and farms hug the steep hillsides or crowd strips of fertile ground near rivers and streams. Over 100 million years ago, molten rock pressed upward from beneath the earth, forming the Green Mountains of Vermont. In the hills surrounding Barre, the lava was trapped below the surface, forged into granite by the intense pressure.

Barre granite is valued for its uniform color, its hardness, its durability and its mirror-like shine when polished. Feldspar gives the stone its light gray color, mica its sparkle, quartz its strength, and silica its polished shine. But silica also represents a danger to those who labor to cut and shape the stone, for it lacerates the lungs of the workers.[11]

Granite was first quarried in central Vermont in the early 1800s, but moving the heavy stone made necessary teams of up to 20 or 30 oxen or mules, and took many days. So Barre remained a quiet marketplace for farmers and a way station for travelers until the arrival of the railroad in 1875. Direct access from the quarries to rail transport in 1888 opened Barre's granite works to new markets across America and transformed the little farm village into a small industrial city. The population rose from 2,060 in 1880 to 6,812 a decade later. Barre expanded its operations from quarrying to include finishing and carving stone during the 1890s, thus increasing the need for skilled artisans. By 1902, there were 68 granite quarries in operation with an annual output of 1.5 million tons and employing over 1,500 cutters.[12]

### Barre's Immigrant Workforce

Scottish quarriers from Aberdeenshire arrived in Barre beginning about 1880, bringing with them a strong commitment to organized labor. Although some of the Scots were skilled granite finishers, their greatest strength was as quarrymen, and many of the quarry terms still used today are Scottish in origin, particularly "grout," which denotes the huge piles of granite waste seen all about the quarries.

Skilled artisans from the north of Italy were the next to come to Barre, bringing with them social and political ideals that had their roots in the Italian experience. Many were highly-educated stonecarvers who had studied sculpture and design in the fine arts academies at Milan, Brera, or Carrara. Italians from the prosperous northern provinces of Lombardy, Piedmont, and Tuscany and from Italian-speaking southern Switzerland and Austria first arrived in Barre about 1890. The political reality of life in the region from which they came was that of turbulence and a rich mixture of competing ideas, parties and movements, including anarchists, socialists, and syndicalists of many varieties. Most of the emigrants

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[11] Rogers, Betty, *Blood of Barre: Portrait of the Granite Industry*, 1979

[12] Slayton, F.C., "Vermont Quarrying", n.d.

chose to leave their homeland for economic reasons, but for many it was also to avoid the draft.[13]

The confluence of these two principal ethnic groups with their specialized training and background in organized labor or politics led to early unionization in Barre, so that by the year 1900, 90 percent of all jobs in the city were organized. Barre began the 20th century as a union town and as a boomtown, for the population had increased five-fold in a single generation, from 2,060 in 1880 to 10,734 in 1910. Immigrants flooded the town from all over Europe. Skilled granite workers left the granite districts of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland as well as those of Scotland, Switzerland, Austria, and Italy to enrich the workforce of Vermont's granite industry.

Once in Barre, the immigrant laborers found multiple avenues toward success. Due to the skill involved and the health and safety hazards, Barre granite workers were some of the most highly paid in the country. Owners of finishing plants as well as their workers were almost exclusively immigrant Scots or Italians; men who had started as laborers owned or had established all of the finishing plants in Barre.

**Socialists and Anarchists in Barre**

The Socialist Labor Party was founded in April 1876 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and was the first socialist political party with a national scope in the United States.[14] From the beginning, the SLP was a "multiethnic, immigrant working-class coalition. Perennially weak at the national center, it set down hardy roots locally."[15] The party was at its height in the 1890s after some political success in national elections–in 1892 it ran the first Socialist presidential campaign. However, adoption of Daniel DeLeon's philosophy that the primary function of unionism was to overthrow capitalism, resulted in many members–after 1900--joining the less militant Socialist party founded by Eugene V. Debs.[16]

The Socialist Labor Party brought the anarchists and socialists of Barre together, and provided an additional forum for Scots and Italians to join one another in the promotion of union

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[13] Pironi, Peter, Letters to Ben Collins, January 22, 1975 and February 10, 1975

[14] Girard, Frank and Ben Perry, *Socialist Labor Party 1876-1991, A Short History*, p. 3

[15] Paul Buhle, "The Socialist Labor Party," in *Encyclopedia of the American Left,* pp.711-716. Ironically, the SLP was criticized in the 1890s by Frederik Engels for its immigrant makeup. Engels thought that to be successful, the party would have to become "out and out American." Socialist Labor Party, "Who Was Daniel De Leon?"

[16] *Dictionary of American History, V*, p. 110-111. Though the party's greatest strength was among German-Americans and Eastern Europeans, it attracted a group of Italian immigrants in Pittsburgh, who founded the newspaper *Il Proletario* in 1896. The paper's editors included many notable Italian socialists, among them Camilo Cianfarra (1900), Giacinto Menotti Serrati, Carlo Tresca (1904-1906), Arturo Giovanitti (1912), and Edmondo Rossoni (1915). Many of the accomplishments of the Socialist Labor Party in Barre were chronicled in *Il Proletario.*

activities and political activism. The SLP was the most important radical political organization in Barre, as both Italians and Scots found its appeal to immigrants especially compelling.

More mainstream Socialists–of the Eugene V. Debs variety--also played a leading role in Barre politics. Notices announcing socialist gatherings in Barre appear as early as 1895 in the newspapers of the day.[17] Unlike the SLP, Barre's Socialist Party was made up primarily of Yankees and Scots. In fact, Barre citizens elected Vermont's first socialist mayor, Robert Gordon, in 1916.

Historian Paul Avrich, an expert in the SLP, has noted that one of the earliest anarchist groups in New England was established in Barre in 1894. "Its members," he writes, "were stone and marble cutters from Carrara and other northern Italian towns, who had virtually transplanted their way of life to the United States, following the same occupations, customs and beliefs as they had in the old country."[18] The political radicalism of the Italians played an important role in shaping both union activity and politics in Barre.

The most famous anarchist in Barre was the singular polemicist Luigi Galleani (1861-1931), who "was the leading Italian anarchist in America" during the first two decades of the twentieth century. On June 6, 1903, Galleani launched *Cronaca Sovversiva*, "the mouthpiece for his incendiary doctrines and one of the most important and ably edited periodicals in the history of the anarchist movement."[19] An advocate for violent overthrow of authority, Galleani's followers attempted several acts of terrorism across the country, which resulted in the Red Scare. Barre's radicals welcomed other leading anarchists as lecturers and guests, including Emma Goldman, who gave a series of four lectures on social problems in 1899.[20]

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[17] *Barre Enterprise*, 1895.

[18] Avrich, Paul, *Anarchist Portraits,* p.168.

[19] Avrich, Paul, Anarchist Portraits, p. 167-168. Because of his radical activities, Galleani had been exiled for more than five years to the island of Pantelleria off the coast of Sicily, escaping from there and making his way to Paterson, New Jersey, in 1901. During a strike in June 1902, Galleani was wounded in the face and escaped to Canada, and when he had recovered, "he secretly recrossed the border and took refuge in Barre, Vermont, living under an assumed name among his anarchist comrades, who regarded him with intense devotion." In 1907 Galleani was arrested in Barre, extradited to New Jersey, tried and acquitted. He returned to Barre, where he continued to edit and publish *Cronaca Sovversiva* until 1912, when he relocated to Lynn, Massachusetts.

[20] Goldman, Emma, *Living My Life, Vol. I*, p. 238. In her autobiography, Goldman pointed out that the municipal government prevented her from holding the fourth and final meeting, because she was considered dangerous. *Cronaca Sovversiva*, March 2, 1907, p. 4. While in Barre, Goldman met Galleani. On her return to Barre in February, 1907, she and Galleani appeared together before a crowd of 500 at the opera house. "Even after the Anarchist movement faded, for a long time a few of them [in Barre] still wore the black semi-bow tie that was their badge." Pironif, Peter, Letter to Ben Collins, January 22, 1975.

## Building the Socialist Labor Party Hall

The Socialist Labor Party Hall is located in the heart of downtown Barre, in a quiet neighborhood made up of granite manufacturers, machine shops and small residences. Located just a few steps away from North Main Street, Granite Street forms the boundary of Barre's immigrant community, the "North End." With its blend of residential and commercial buildings, Granite Street clearly represents the kind of growth and change that has transformed Barre from a rural agricultural village to a bustling industrial city.

In her book *Santander to Barre–Life in a Spanish Family in Vermont*, Elisabeth Ramon Bacon describes her childhood on Granite Street. She calls up images of a lively, culturally diverse community where the day's routine was governed by the noise of granite shed whistles, and where ethnic foods from bread to meat were delivered door to door. Even today, the tiny yards of the modest homes still situated on Granite Street contain huge fruit trees--evidence of the celebrated self-sufficiency of the Italian and other immigrant residents who called the street their home.

Volunteer Italian granite workers built the SLP Hall in Barre to provide a setting for implementing many of the ideals of the Party, and for maintaining the cooperative traditions of Italian immigrants. According to municipal records, one reason given for establishing the SLP Hall was to house a cooperative store that would offer its members "produce, merchandise, goods, articles, and commodities."[21]

Work began on the Hall in the summer of 1900. Through the efforts of the volunteers, the Hall was constructed in a comparatively short time. "The labor was done by members in off-work hours, and the brick and carpentry work were hired out."[22] Local materials were used for the construction of the Hall: Barre's own gray granite supplied the foundation stones, window sills, steps, and especially the superb medallion above the entrance. Soft red bricks from the Drury brickworks in nearby Burlington make up the exterior walls. Local lumberyards were the likeliest source for the wooden lath, flooring, dado and trim.

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[21] Records of the City Clerk, Barre, Vermont, *Articles of Association of the Co-operative Association of Consumption*, November 6, 1901. The Italian immigrants established the SLP Hall for the public good. The owners specified that the property could only be used for: Italian consumers, producers' or workers' cooperatives, erection of low-income housing, an Italian hospital, or other useful purpose.

[22] Pironi, Peter, Letter to Ben Collins, January 22, 1975. Ironically, the contractor J.E. McGue, was accused of hiring non-union laborers for some of this work. According to one report, the GCNU threatened to back out of its agreement to rent the Hall when word spread that non-union workers may have been involved in the building's construction. *Barre Evening Telegram*, November 19, 1900. "It seems that the Granite Cutters National Union agreed to rent the hall and offices from the proprietors of the building, but yesterday a committee of two from the GCNU waited on the SLP and informed them that they could not be held to their agreement, as they had been informed that the building had been put up by scab laborers. J. E. McGue . . . was most emphatic in his denial of the report, stating, 'Having heard that non-union men have been employed by me in erecting the Socialist Labor building on Granite street, I wish to contradict the report most emphatically and state that none but union laborers have been employed.'"

Barre's Old Labor Hall was dedicated on November 28, 1900. "There were nearly 700 Italians [who] attended the opening of the Socialist Labor hall on Granite Street. As early as 7 o'clock the hall was crowded and at 8 o'clock there was standing room only. This was to hear the lecture by Camillo Cianfarra, editor of *Il Proletario*, on 'What is Socialism."[23] During his talk, he remarked on the character of the people of Barre, calling them: "Those good stonecarvers, with their faces so open and sincere, with honest smiles, and with good and generous hearts."[24] According to the local newspaper, "After the lecture a pleasant time was spent and then dancing was indulged until a late hour in the morning."[25]

On his return to New York City, Cianfarra wrote of his visit to Barre in an editorial entitled *From New York to Barre (Notes from a journey)*, which he filled with humor and admiration:

> As the comrades from other countries know, the Italian Socialist Section of Barre has built a Hall for the grand sum of 7,000 dollars, most of which has already been paid. That which at first would have seemed impossible has been accomplished, and the Hall stands now on Granite Street, a superb synthesis and demonstration of the collective effort of the workers joined and guided by the light of an idea like ours. To many, perhaps, this Hall will mean nothing, for many others, it will be the subject of jokes; but to me, when I saw it for the first time, it spoke in a language full of wisdom. Who, but a few years ago, would have imagined a thing like this: What would the great patriots of New York think of it if they should have the opportunity to see it?
>
> A year ago I believed this project of the comrades of Barre was just a utopian dream, and the patriots would say perhaps that the Hall is destined to fail. But when I saw the devotion with which our comrades were working there, I became convinced that for many years the Hall would have significance as the fruit of the judicious activity of our comrades, and that in the Hall many would awaken from the long hybernation in which they have lain, and many consciences will be revolutionized."[26]

## Labor Unions and the SLP Hall

From the quarries on the hills above, Barre granite was extracted and hauled to manufacturing plants in the village below to be shaped and polished. Conditions in the Barre granite industry were far from ideal, for the work place was inherently dangerous, the back-breaking work was done in bitter winter weather, the pay was low and the opportunities limited for the quarry workers. Hand quarrying gave way to pneumatic tools at the turn of the century, but the new machines produced clouds of deadly silica dust that infected the lungs of the granite workers.

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[23] *Barre Evening Telegram*, November 30, 1900.

[24] *Il Proletario*, December 8, 1900.

[25] *Barre Evening Telegram*, November 30, 1900. *Boston Sunday Herald*, March 12, 1905. Some of the events at the SLP Hall ended in violent confrontations: just a few weeks after the Hall was formally dedicated, trouble developed during a dance held in the building and City Police Chief Patrick Brown was shot by several men who emerged from a darkened doorway. An anarchist by the name of Arturo Barnacci was arrested and sentenced to 21 years for the incident.

[26] *Il Proletario*, December 8, 1900.

In 1886, the skilled carvers, cutters and polishers formed the Barre branch of the Granite Cutters' National Union (GCNU – later the Granite Cutters' International Association or GCIA), which by 1900 had became one of the largest chapters in the American Federation of Labor (AFL) with over 1,000 members. The less skilled quarrymen, led by the Scots, established the Quarry Workers International Union (QWIU) in 1903, and Barre served as the union's national headquarters.[27]

As early as March of 1901, the GCNU had established their offices in the Socialist Labor Hall and held their meetings there. Cornelius Granai, who later in life was a professional baseball player, then a lawyer, Mayor of Barre and state representative, joined the industry in 1907 at the age of ten as a tool grinder. He spoke of the pay he received to help support his struggling parents: as little as one or two cents per hour. It wasn't hard for such boys and men to see the need to organize, said Granai: "if you weren't a union man, you were a helpless idiot!"[28]

The union movement was so strong in Barre that while most of the American labor movement struggled for recognition, Barre unions had the nine-hour-day and closed shops. The prevailing wage was superior to most other industrial communities. The unions also were partially successful, at least early on, at controlling the introduction of technological innovations that threatened jobs and health. One contemporary source noted that "as a consequence" of this high level of unionization, "Barre sets the national pace in union standards."[29]

While the Italians dominated the membership of the Granite Cutters' Union, the Scots held the positions of power within the union. Disputes during negotiations over the adoption of the "American Plan" caused a rift within the GCNU that lasted many years and weakened the union, just when it needed solidarity in the face of challenges to its legitimacy and patriotism during World War I. A post-war depression in the granite industry added to the appeal of the open shop for manufacturers, as it meant they could reduce wages for workers and not be

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[27] *Barre, Vermont: An Ethnic Bouillabasse*, 1978

[28] Rogers, *Blood of Barre*, 1979

[29] Sartwell, David, *Aspects of Berre History to 1940: A Preliminary Investigation*, 1967. p. 51. In 1909 workers launched a successful strike over the introduction of the "bumper," a jackhammer device very injurious to the user both because of the amount of granite dust it created and the violence with which it shook. The strike settlement was reached after about 3 months time and imposed several restrictions on the use of the bumper. The machine was soon abandoned in the industry. Slayton, "Vermont Quarrying."

bound by union contracts. [30] Due to these setbacks, by the late 1920s Barre was no longer a leader in the American labor movement.

Illustrating a national union trend towards workers' health and safety issues, the GCNU established a silicosis clinic at the SLP Hall during the 1920s to provide medical services in addition to the limited company-sponsored programs.[31] In good times and bad, remembered C.O. Granai, "what brought them together was the cemetery," referring to the untimely deaths of many quarry cutters and carvers, who after years of working in the quarries and inhaling silica dust died of silicosis. The late Pace Nicolino, whose father Natale Cardini was a prominent local anarchist, recalled why there is no monument in the local cemetery to commemorate his father's life: "He said he didn't want anyone eating out their lungs for him."[32] Not until 1936 were the first suction devices installed in the sheds by the manufacturers to rid the air of the deadly silica dust. Soon wet-drilling was introduced at the quarries. The impacts of silica dust were felt for many decades to come.[33]

Conditions during the Great Depression united union and non union workers in Barre. During a 1933 strike, which lasted 6 months, a commissary for needy strikers was set up at the Labor Hall. The union members held their ground and the manufacturers, faced with financial disaster, reconciled their differences with the union and restored wages along with the right to collective bargaining. By the beginning of World War II the unions had again asserted themselves as the dominant power in the local economy.[34] Recalling this era of strife fifty years

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[30] Painter, Nell Irvin, *Standing at Armageddon: the United States, 1877-1919*, pp. 381-390. In 1915, workers waged a strike over working conditions and pay. As settlement loomed, the Italians opposed the Scots' plan for a secret ratification vote, desiring instead an open election. Balloting was to take place at the Barre Opera House, and as the vote was about to be taken, a group of Italian militants formed a phalanx and seized the ballot box, which they carried in triumph down Main Street. The American Plan was an attempt by management, following World War I, to undermine union strength by ending collective bargaining and other union gains. American manufacturers set out to bust the unions and proposed the "American Plan" of an open shop, in which non-union workers were hired. Companies argued that the American Plan represented a patriotic effort to make America strong following the war, for they argued that the closed shop was a tool of radical foreigners. The Espionage and Sedition Acts passed during the war, along with the Palmer Raids of 1919 and the Immigration Restriction Acts of 1921 and 1924 highlighted the nativist sentiments of much of the nation. These acts further undermined the strength both of national unions and those in Barre, which were comprised heavily of foreign-born workers.

[31] Derickson, Alan, "Criteria for Historic Landmarks of Extractive Labor in the United States," Draft NHL Theme Study, National Park Service, Washington, DC., p. 16.

[32] Rogers, *Blood of Barre.*

[33] In 1951,the Vermont legislature finally enacted a bill granting workers protection against silicosis. The tuberculosis sanitarium on Barre's Beckley Hill finally closed in the 1960s after more than forty years in operation and hundreds of deaths. Allen, Donald G., *Barre Granite Heritage with Guide to the Cemeteries*, 1997, p. 33. One notable family monument at Hope Cemetery in Barre vividly depicts the death by silicosis of a graniteworker. The poignant Brusa monument (1939) was carved by Donato Coletti from the model by Flavio Furloni. This modern pieta was inspired by the Volonte monument by Quadrelli at the Cimitero Monumentale in Milan, Italy.

[34] Sartwell, David, "Aspects of Berre History to 1940," p. 61.

later, Eddie Melvin, a native of Scotland and a lifelong union member, quoted the slogans that guided the striking men: "Join the union and be a man!" "In solidarity there is strength!"[35]

**Early Operation of the SLP Hall**

Throughout the first winter the Hall was open (1900-1901), there were efforts to form a variety of groups, including a choral society, a band, Italian language classes, and so on. The late Cornelius Granai recalled the music he heard at the Hall: "They used to sing "L'Internazionale" –that's the old socialist song. I used to hear it played by the band and sung by the people in the Socialist Block down on Granite Street...so I joined them." Granai described the radical politics of the SLP as anti-monarchy, anti-clerical, and anti-padrone or anti-boss. Of the era of labor strife, when the Hall was most heavily-used, he said, "They were good times, but they were bitter times."[36]

So popular was the new building that over 1000 members of the Italian community attended the ball and dramatic entertainment held there on Saturday, June 8, 1901. The play presented to the large audience was *Sensa Patria* by the renowned Italian anarchist playwright Pietro Gori.[37]

The active use the Hall experienced since the time of its dedication necessitated repairs by the 1920s. The Hall was re-decorated in September 1924. According to the Barre Daily Times, "The dance hall in the Socialist block on Granite street is undergoing some much needed repairs and within a few days will be transformed into a much pleasanter assembly hall. A new sound board to improve the acoustic properties has been installed while the stage will be partly enclosed with lattice work and the sides and back covered with draperies. A gentlemen's rest and smoking room has also been provided."[38] In 1930, it was reported that "[t]he old floor at the Granite street hall is being replaced, a gang of workmen having started on the job yesterday taking up the well-worn floor which is being rapidly replaced with new hardwood flooring. The managers of the hall expect to open it to the public again about New Year's day with a celebration dance on the new surface."[39]

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[35] Rogers, *Blood of Barre.*

[36] Rogers, *Blood of Barre.* Numerous dances were held to benefit local widows as well as to celebrate weddings. In August of 1900 a collection of $122 was raised for the families of strikers at Berra, Italy. In October, the Circulo di Studii Sociali held a public meeting at the hall for a discussion by Pietro Calcagni on the principles of Socialism.

[37] *Barre Evening Telegram*, June 12, 1901. Among the members of the cast that night was an Italian by the name of Eugenio Rispoli, who had arrived three weeks earlier from Italy and had been immediately suspected by the anarchists of being a spy. When threatened, Rispoli hid himself in the basement of Socialist Hall. His friends placed him in the hands of the police for safety until he could escape from Barre at the earliest opportunity.

[38] *Barre Daily Times*, September 1924.

[39] *Barre Daily Times*, December 23, 1930.

**Union Co-Operative Store**

The creation of cooperative organizations was one of the most important elements of Italian culture in America. The SLP became the central site in Barre for the organization of Italian cooperatives. "Importante: I soci delia cooperativa sono invitati ad intervenire alla riunione che avra luogo goiveci 29 agoste alle ore 8 precise nella Sala Socialista" read the announcement in the *Barre Evening Telegram* on August 26, 1901. On November 5, the *Telegram* announced that, "For some time past a number of the householders of this city have been organizing themselves into a co-operative society for the purpose of securing their groceries at wholesale prices. They have decided to open a store this week in socialists hall, Granite street."[40]

At first only groceries and dry goods were sold in the store, with a bottling works and bakery added later. Fuel (coal and wood) supplies were stockpiled for local residents. By 1902, representatives from the store were making regular trips to Boston and New York to secure goods for sale in the Italian cooperative store. The store even minted its own currency: coins bearing the arm and hammer of the SLP with the words "Cooperative Stores, Barre, VT" were produced in 5c, 10c and 25c denominations. According to a notice in the *Barre Daily Times* of August 16, 1904, the cooperative store was enjoying such an increase in business that they purchased an enormous McNeil and Urban safe, which still occupies a corner of one of the rooms in the front of the Hall.[41]

The Co-op was important to workers during times of economic downturn throughout the region. The organization held fund raisers and helped distribute food throughout the Depression.[42] During the granite industry strike of 1933, free food donated by local farmers and tradesmen was distributed at the Cooperative Store to striking workers. The Cooperative continued to serve this social function throughout its existence.

**Primo Maggio (May Day)**

The SLP Hall also became the site of local May Day celebrations. Italians from Barre, together with Italians of nearby Montpelier and Northfield, where the granite industry was also prominent, instituted annual May Day festivities at the Hall, where the event was known as "Italian Labor Day." In 1901, the local newspaper announced that "The first of May is to be

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[40] *Barre Evening Telegram*, November 5, 1901.

[41] During recent renovations at the Hall, Angelo Ambrosini, whose father was a member of the co-operative and of the SLP, found a well-preserved bottle-cap in the attic of the Hall with the words "Union Co-Operative Store" printed on it.

[42] *Barre Evening Telegraph*, December 13, 1930. "An estimated crowd in the vicinity of 600 persons gathered last evening at the Granite Street Hall for a Dance and Bazaar conducted by the Granite Cutters International Organization for the benefit of needy unemployed members of the organization....With the heavy advance of tickets, orders for shoes, clothing and food were put in by the G.C.I.S. committee and distribution to members families where there is a lack of employment will be started at once. It is expected that the distribution will do much to help make the holiday a happier one for a great many families."

celebrated all over the United States by the Socialists as labor day and the Italian section of Barre is laying plans for an extensive celebration."[43]

Immigration historian Rudolph Vecoli explains that in the United States, May Day represented an "invented tradition" that originated during the campaigns for the 8-hour day. For the Italian working classes, Primo Maggio became the focus of their aspirations for freedom and justice, a day they celebrated with religious intensity.[44] In Barre, notices in both English and Italian signed by "I Socialisti" or "The Socialists" appeared in the local newspaper inviting all to attend the celebration at the Labor Hall. Ads announced that the celebration would include a dance, a fair and a philodramatic presentation entitled "Il Primo Maggio" written by the renowned Italian anarchist Pietro Gori.[45]

The SLP Hall was not only the setting for celebrations, parties, and plays, the site also witnessed its share of the often violent clashes between political associations, unions, and lawmakers.[46] The 1912 Bread and Roses Strike illustrates the connection between Barre's political, labor, and immigrant communities with national affairs.

**Bread & Roses Strike, February 1912**

An example of the association of the SLP Hall with radical politics and union actions at the national level is the role of Barre citizens with the1912 Bread and Roses Strike in Lawrence,

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[43] *Barre Evening Telegraph*, March 12, 1901.

[44] Vecoli, Rudolph, p. 30.

[45] *Barre Evening Telegraph*, April 8, 1901. On May 1, 1901, the newspaper featured the following description: "The members of the Italian colony are observing today, May 1st, as Labor Day, it being the date selected at Chicago in 1886, and at the International Labor Congress at Paris in 1889 for such observance. At 10 o'clock this forenoon a well attended mass meeting at Socialists hall was addressed by G. Miani, Messrs. Cassi, Calcagni, and Esteve. Philip Halvosa was the last speaker, and delivered an interesting address [on "Class Conscience: United International Action by the Workers of the World]. This evening the celebration will be continued with dancing and a dramatic presentation at Socialists hall."

[46] One of the most dramatic and tragic events in the history of the SLP Hall occurred as a result of recurrent disagreements between anarchists and socialists in Barre. In October 1903, Barre sculptor Elia Corti was fatally shot on the steps of the Labor Hall after a lecture by a prominent socialist from New York. Local Anarchists "made no secret of the fact that they intended to heckle and otherwise disrupt the talk." Corti was killed by a stray bullet during an altercation between the Socialists and the Anarchists. Pironi, Peter, Letter to Ben Collins, February 10, 1975. Corti, a native of Viggiu in northern Italy, had come to Barre in 1892. One of Barre's finest carvers, he is best remembered for having carved the panels on the base of Barre's Robert Burns Monument. Because of his prominence as a gifted granite carver, and as a man well-liked and respected in the community, public grief at Corti's death was widespread. Corti's monument, which stands at Barre's Hope Cemetery, depicts him in a traditional melancholy pose, his arm resting on a broken column which symbolizes his life cut short. Grieving stonecarvers from throughout Vermont helped to carve the base where lie his carving tools: calipers, square, hammer, chisel, pneumatic carving tool, and a palm branch, the symbol of peace. Corti's death symbolized the interlinking relationships between radical politics, ethnic heritage, and the tragedy associated with the lives of stonecutters in the granite industry.

Massachusetts.[47] At a meeting at the SLP Hall, where "enthusiasm existed in unbounded measure," a group of union supporters took up the cause of the striking textile workers by rasing funds and providing foster homes for the worker's children during the strike. Several meetings were held in preparation for receiving the children in Barre.[48]

"Thirty-five Children Are Coming" read the headline on the front page of the *Barre Daily Times*, Saturday, February 17, 1912. At five o'clock that afternoon several hundred people carrying signs that read "Help the Strikers" in both English and Italian crowded around the Central Vermont Railroad station and cheered as the train pulled into Depot Square. A band played as the children stepped from the train and joined a parade to City Hall, around a park, and down Main Street to the Socialist hall on Granite Street.

These children were the sons and daughters of factory workers in the woolen mills of Lawrence, Massachusetts. Wages in the mills were already low, and then a cut in pay led to a strike in Lawrence. Thousands of families were out of work and few had enough to eat. The strike in Lawrence quickly became national news. In addition to Barre, children were sent to live for the duration with union sympathizers in New York and Philadelphia–a fact that indicated Barre's commitment and standing among union supporters.[49] While the children were in Barre, local families welcomed them into their homes. Barre merchants donated bread, meat, milk, fruit, and candy. A city health officer examined the children and took photographs to be sent to their parents in Lawrence. The photos were printed as postcards and sold to raise funds to support the strikers.

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[47] *Barre Daily Telegraph*, February 8, 1912. "Three hundred and fifty workingmen attended a mass meeting in the Socialist Hall on Granite street last night and adopted steps toward aiding the striking weavers in Lawrence, Mass. Enthusiasm existed in unbounded measure. Ten committees were appointed to solicit funds and a call for subscriptions at the meeting met with a ready response. Many workingmen gave a dollar each and in some instances the individual subscriptions mounted to as high as five and ten dollars... As a climax to the enthusiasm manifested and the apparent desire to help the Lawrence strikers, many of the men arose and offered to care for children of the strikers until an agreement is reached in Lawrence. In the majority of cases where such offers were made, it was voluntarily agreed that the expense of transporting the children from Lawrence will be met by the local people. It is proposed that such children as are suffering privation through the strike shall be housed and fed by Barre families until the labor difficulties are adjusted." A total of $58 was collected on the spot and more was solicited.

[48] *Barre Daily Telegraph*, March 15, 1912. A crowd of more than 250 men and women gathered at the Barre Opera House to attend another mass meeting on behalf of the Lawrence strikers. They raised $50 to send to the strikers in Lawrence. Those gathered heard remarks by: Fred W. Suitor, Secretary of the Quarryworkers' Union; Lena Morrow Lewis of San Francisco; and, Ugo Lupi of New York, "a member of the Lawrence strike committee and the man who introduced the resolution at a meeting of New York sympathizers to house and feed the Lawrence strikers' children until the labor difficulties are adjusted....After the mass meeting, Italian members of the gathering...appointed Antonio Broggi and A. Rossi to represent the Barre sympathizers at Lawrence in an effort to allow some of the strikers' children to come to this city for a time."

[49] Antonio Broggi and Teobaldo Rossi traveled from Barre to Lawrence to escort the group of thirty-five children to Vermont. The children who arrived in Barre ranged in age from four to fifteen. Each had a badge to wear with the words, "Lawrence girl" or "Lawrence boy." At the Socialist Hall they sat down to "a monstrous banquet.." At the Opera House, the Italian dramatic company presented Pietro Gorils play, "Honest People," in honor of the children. At just 35c per ticket, the event, which was presented in Italian, raised over $100 to aid the strikers.

The help given to the mill families of Lawrence was a source of great pride to the Italian residents of Barre who had opened their homes to the hungry children of the factory workers. When the strike was settled on March 14, 1912 the children went home to their families. To celebrate the end of the strike, Socialist local No. 2 of the Italian Socialist Federation (SLP) invited a representative from the Lawrence strikers to its annual masquerade ball at the Barre Labor Hall. On behalf of the SLP members in Lawrence, Arturo Giovanitti conveyed the thanks of the workers of Lawrence for the support generated by the sympathizers of Barre.

**Old Labor Hall 1936-1994**

For reasons that are not clear, the Labor Hall was sold at auction by the sheriff in 1936 and passed into the hands of Sarkis Saliba, proprietor of the Washington Fruit Company. Saliba divided the large meeting hall into a cold storage facility by installing partitions. He lined the east quarter of the building with asphalt, cork and cement up to eight inches thick on walls, floor and ceiling. He installed compressors and an insulated door.

In the south quarter, Saliba lined the walls and ceiling with tongue-and-groove siding and installed hundreds of ceiling hooks for banana storage along with refrigeration units and gas lines for fumigants or ripening agents. The windows of the little refreshment stand were glassed-in and the room was made into an office. In later years, the original chandelier was taken down and a drop ceiling with florescent light fixtures was installed throughout the remainder of the meeting room. The new ceiling blocked access to a lead-lined compartment above the old refreshment stand. During recent renovation work, the compartment was reopened and found to contain party supplies and the historic glass raffle-bowl that had once been a feature of every social gathering at the hall.

**Old Labor Hall 1995-present**

Barre's Old Labor Hall was placed on the real estate market in early 1995 as a result of bankruptcy proceedings. A structural analysis by preservation architect Thomas Keefe on January 13, 1995, demonstrated that the Hall is quite sound, yet needs a total of about $348,800 in repairs to return it to its original condition and bring back the era of its past glory.

When the Barre Historical Society launched a campaign to buy the building, ownership had passed jointly to the Granite Bank and the U.S. Small Business Administration. These groups gave first option to the Society to help preserve the building and set the purchase price at $95,000.

With the support of the Barre Area Development Corporation, the Mayor, the City Council, the Washington County Legislative Delegation, the Granite Cutters' Association, the Mutuo Soccorso Society, the Northfield Savings Bank, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Fund, U.S. Senator Patrick J. Leahy and many other individuals and institutions, the Barre Historical Society secured title to the Hall in July 1995 through joint purchase with the City of Barre. Through the efforts of Eric Gradoia, a graduate student in the University of Vermont Historic Preservation Program, the Labor Hall was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, in September 1998.

## The Future of Barre's Old Labor Hall

In the near future, Barre's Old Labor Hall will reopen to the public as an interpretive site for heritage tourism and a partner with other cultural and historical organizations in Barre, throughout Vermont and across the nation. The effort to purchase and preserve this building has been inspired by the high ideals of the building's founders, who risked all in order to put into practice the philosophy of community in which they so fervently believed. When they visit Barre's Old Labor Hall, future generations of Americans and foreign visitors will become acquainted with these forgotten idealists and all that they wished to achieve in the green hills of rural Vermont.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ Previously Listed in the National Register.
___ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
___ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
___ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #_____
___ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #_____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

_X_ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
___ Local Government
___ University
_X_ Other (Specify Repository): Aldrich Public Library, Barre, Vermont

## 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Less than one acre

UTM References:

| | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | 18 | 699210 | 4896760 |

Verbal Boundary Description:

The SLP Hall sits at 46 Granite Street, and was formerly bordered by a small street, Zanleoni Place.

Boundary Justification:

The property comprises the Socialist Labor Party Hall and the half-acre parcel of land on which it has historically been seated.

## 11. FORM PREPARED BY


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Name/Title: | Karen Lane/Librarian | Robin Bachin<br>Charlton W. Tebeau Asst. Professor of History |
| Address: | Aldrich Public Library<br>6 Washington Street<br>Barre, Vermont 05641 | University of Miami<br>P.O. Box 248107<br>Coral Gables, FL 33124 |
| Telephone: | 802-476-7550 ext. 307 | 305-284-4261 |
| Date: | May 1999 | |


DESIGNATED A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK ON
May 16, 2000