

Paving-Block Cutters Lockout & Strike of May 1892 Against the Granite Manufacturers in New England

Compiled by Peggy B. Perazzo
Stone Quarries and Beyond

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Recently, I was asked for information on the paving block cutters strike in May 1892. I hadn't heard about it before, so I compiled the articles below, which tell the story of the granite paving block cutters lockout and strike and the Granite Manufacturers of New England. I found the story of their strike to be an interesting part of union history that many of us are not aware of today.

Peggy B. Perazzo

“May Day Strikes: Granite Cutters, Carpenters and Plumbers, Who Make Further Demands as to Pay and Hours of Work,” *Lewiston Evening Journal*, [May 3, 1892](#), Lewiston, Maine, pp. 4.

“The quarrymen in the employ of J. T. Tank, B. J. Blanchard, F. A. Ingerson and Ambrose Noles, of Uxbridge, Mass., and vicinity, struck this morning. They demand 43 cents an hour and nine hours work for five days in a week, and eight hours work with nine hours pay Saturday. The employers propose to fight it out.

“Nearly a thousand workmen employed in the quarries in and near Stony Creek, Conn., have joined the general quarrymen's strike. The men on strike are employed by the Red Granite Company and Norcross Brothers. The men employed by the Brooklyn Quarry Company, about 500 in number, are still at work, and will probably arrange matters in a manner satisfactory to all concerned.

“A large gang of men in the city highway department of Holyoke, Mass., struck Monday because several non-union teamsters were employed. The strike was ordered by the Central Labor Union. It is understood the teamsters will join the union and matters will be settled.

“All the paving cutters at Graniteville, Vt., struck Monday morning for an increase in wages.

“About 400 house carpenters of Baltimore, Md., struck on Monday for an eight-hour day.

“The Norwalk (Conn.) union carpenters truck on Monday for nine hours' work and ten hours' pay.

“Between 125 and 145 plumbers struck in Providence, R.I., Monday, for nine hours and \$3.50 per day.

Main Labor Troubles

“The granite cutters’ strike has stopped work on most of the islands in Penobscot Bay. At Hurricane Island and Vinalhaven, the principal seats of the industry, every quarry is silent, and Monday nights ‘strike’ was the sole theme of conversation of nearly 1,500 men who depend upon employment in the two towns. At Hurricane Island the paving and stonecutters went out in the morning and were followed at noon by the quarrymen. Fortunately for the Booth Brothers and Hurricane Granite Company, which control the quarries, the strike occurs at a comparatively dull season. At the time of their going out, there were only about 350 men employed. These were mainly getting out paving and cut stone.

“At Vinalhaven the same condition of affairs exists, only on a larger scale. The Bodwell Granite Company, the Booth Brothers, the Hurricane Granite Company, George Smith & Co., and J. P. Ambrose employ in the neighborhood of 1,000 men.

“Late advices from Deer Island, where nearly 800 men are employed, state that the men are still at work. The firm of Gausa & Small, belonging to the association, their men will probably follow the example of the brethren, and go out soon.

“The contractors will extend the existing bill of prices until January 1, 1893, which the men refuse to accept, asking, on the contrary, for an advance of wages and bills signed for a year. The quarrymen want an increase of 10 percent, and the granite cutters about 15 per cent. The paving cutters only ask for bills signed for a year.”

“**Paving Cutters’ Strike**,” *Los Angeles Herald*, Vol. 38, No. 29, [May 10, 1892](#).

“**New York, May 9.** – The fight of the New England Paving Cutters’ union has been taken up by the union of this city. Today 1200 members of this city and Brooklyn were ordered on a strike. It is also said 75 were ordered out in Troy, 100 in Albany, 200 in Baltimore and 150 in Philadelphia. This strike is in sympathy with the locked-out granite quarrymen in New England.

“**Quincy, Mass., May 9.** – The Manufacturers’ association has decided to positively refuse to grant the quarrymen any increase in wages. This is understood to be a prelude to a lockout, Saturday, by the manufacturers, affecting 2500 granite workers at Quincy, and 20,000 in New England.”

“**A Victory Scored by the Men Over the Quarry Owners,**” *San Francisco Call*, Vol. 7, No. 167, [May 16, 1892](#), pp. 1.

“**Barre, Vt. May 15.** – H. Webster, a wealthy quarry owner and a large paving contractor, has signed the Paving Cutters’ bill of prices to May 1st 1893. The cutters say that Webster’s action is a victory for them, and that others will follow his example. Two thousand men are idle in Vermont, and the dealers say the lockout will last forever, unless the cutters give in.”

“**They Decided in Favor of Boycott,**” *The Chicago Tribune*, Chicago, Illinois, Monday, [May 16, 1892](#), pp. 7.

“**Decatur, Ill., May 15.** – (Special.) – Owing to the recent action of the local labor unions connected with the American Federation of Labor in ordering a general strike, building enterprises in Decatur have received a serious setback, for the reason that those who had contemplated building are as yet undecided what to do. By order of the committee all union men are at work on union jobs and contractors who will not or cannot employ union men are going ahead with buildings started before the labor complications arose. They say they will finish all contracts if they have to send out of the city for non-union men.

“There are many new workmen now in the city who are not union men. Further trouble is expected, but it is not likely that Decatur will experience another general strike. Tonight Rev. W. B. Cake, the Christian minister, delivered a sermon on ‘Are Strikes a Remedy for Labor Troubles,’ in which he took a negative position.

“**Bloomington, Ill., May 15.** – (Special.) – A conflict has occurred between the master house-painters and the journeymen during the last week. A painters’ union was formed by the journeymen and they resolved to demand Monday ten hours’ pay for nine hours’ work. The master painters last evening, acting in unison, discharged all of their employes and propose when they hire their journeymen again to require ten hours’ work for ten hours’ pay. Spring work on buildings is now under full headway and the master painters can hardly stand an extended strike without great loss. The journeymen are about all members of the union and they are firm in their resolve for a reduction of time and the old wages.

“**Barre, Vt., May 15.** – H. Webster, a wealthy quarry-owner and large paving contractor, has signed his paving cutters’ bill of prices to May 1, 1893. Two years ago Webster was a member of the Dealers’ Association, but is not now. He says he will furnish stock to all who want it. The cutters say that Webster’s action is a victory for them and that others will follow his example. At a meeting of the association last night nearly fifty new firms joined. The owners of all large quarries are members, excepting Webster and the Langdon Granite company. Two thousand men are idle in Vermont. The dealers say that the lockout will last forever unless the cutters give in.”

“Stopped Work Here: Stone-cutters leaving the Newberry Building,” *The Chicago Tribune*, Wednesday, [May 18, 1892](#), pp. 5.

“Twenty-six men refuse to go on, in obedience to Eastern Instructions – Norcross furnishes the stone, but they do not work for him – They ask permission to resume – Many buildings throughout the country deserted – The great strike is extending

“As a result of the lockout in the New England granite quarries twenty-six granite cutters employed on the Newberry Library Building quit work at 9: o’clock yesterday morning. James Martin, President of the Chicago Granite-Cutters’ Association, said yesterday:

“The real cause of the ‘trouble is the demand of the Eastern granite quarry owners to change the preparing of the wage scale to January in the future. The scale is usually made out May 1, when work is brisk. At that time granite-cutters stand a fair show, whereas if the time was changed to January, when work is slack, the quarrymen would have things their way. Besides this, wages in the East are only \$3 a day; whereas they should be \$4 or \$4.50.

“About 100 men have been called out in this city. Work has ceased on the May building on Burton avenue and Astor street, and on the Thomas building at State street and Burton avenue. The headquarters of our National Union is at Concord, Mass. Norcross Bros. are the leading granite quarrymen in the East, but we do not work directly for them, although the stone used on the Newberry building comes from them. All the granite used on Chicago buildings of late years comes from the East, with a few exceptions. I cannot tell how long we will be out. We are waiting for advice from Concord.’

“Contractor Purdy, who has charge of the Newberry Library work, said:

“The strike does not bother us much because the granite work is nearly finished and can be done at any time, as the remaining work consists principally of carving. My men have telegraphed East explaining that Norcross does not employ them and requesting that they be allowed to return to work.’

“New York, May 17. – (Special.) – There was an increase in the number of strikes throughout the country today as a result of the lockout of the employes of the Granite Manufacturing Association of New England. Wherever non-union stone was reported as being used in this and other cities, strikes were ordered, and it is said many men quit work. Many buildings in this city were abandoned, as well as in Philadelphia, Boston, Providence, Washington, Albany, Troy, Baltimore, Buffalo, Montpelier, Augusta, and elsewhere.

“The lockout and its attendant strikes will probably reach its limit before the end of the week. The men claim there will be 100,000 men out by Friday. It takes some time to learn where the stone comes from that is used on many buildings, as the contractors try to conceal the quarry.

“The manufacturers showed a determined attitude today. Some of them claimed to attach no importance to the strikes ordered by walking delegates to compel them to sign the yearly agreement with their men in May instead of January. They declare, strikes or no strikes, they will not yield. The paving cutters said the managers were blacklisting men and had caused men to be thrown out in Green’s Landing, Maine.”

“**The Granite Stonecutters in the East to Quit Work.** Over 100,000 men to join the army of the unemployed on Monday – Result of a lockout,” *San Francisco Call*, Vol. 71, No. 166, [May 15, 1892](#), pp. 1. “Special to the Morning Call.”

“**New York, May 14.** – The executive committees of the Granite-cutters and Paving-cutters’ national unions announce this morning that they have decided to order a general strike of granite-cutters, quarrymen and paving-cutters, even if the threatened ‘lockout’ in New England did not take place. Before the important decision was reached every trade in the stone industry was consulted, and not one union dissented from the proposition to go on a strike Monday morning. The lowest estimate places the number of men who will strike on Monday at 100,000. The seriousness of the strike is made plain by the fact that the police in at least a dozen large Eastern cities are making preparations to quell all possible demonstrations by the strikers. The eccentric engineers and derrick men decided to support the granite-cutters.

“The strike will not be directed against employers in various cities, but against the granite manufacturers in New England. Both employers and employees have entered the fight in earnest and it may last several months, causing much suffering in all parts of the country. The police expect trouble, especially along the water front, where strenuous attempts will be made to prevent the unloading of granite and blue stone from the objectionable quarries. The union longshoremen are in sympathy with the Granite-cutters’ Union and have agreed to refuse to handle any stone from the New England quarries.

“Work has already been stopped on the water tower and memorial arch in Brooklyn and in the yards of Booth Bros. and the Hurricane Isle Granite Company, and on the extension of the Mutual Life building in this city. On Monday work will be stopped on the foundations of the Grant monument, on the new State Capitol at Albany, where 500 men will stop work; on the new Congressional Library building at Washington, where 800 men will stop work; and on the Reading terminal building and the Betz building in Philadelphia.

“The trouble of the pavers are assuming a more serious aspect every hour. The Granite Manufacturers’ Association asserts that the places of the strikers will be filled with German pavers. Where the non-union men are coming from cannot be learned. A mass-meeting of strikers will be held on Monday. The union will establish headquarters in this city where the national officers will remain until the strike is settled.

“Reports from Providence, R.I., New Hampshire and other points in New England indicate the commencement of a great granite-cutter’s lockout and strike combined at Providence.

“The granite-cutters were notified to-night that work would not open Monday, though the men are working on Government contracts were requested to continue. They declined by a unanimous vote of the unions, however, as was the case at Concord, when the men who were not paid off to-night decided to strike Monday.”

“Granite Cutters Locked Out All Along the Line. Fifty thousand quarrymen idle in New England – New York Building Operations Menaced,” *Los Angeles Herald*, Vol. 38, No. 36, May 17, 1892, pp. 2

“**New York, May 16.** – A lockout of granite cutters throughout the New England states was declared this morning, throwing out of employment from 20,000 to 30,000 men, and at the same time a number of strikes were ordered in sympathy with the stone cutters. It is estimated that fully 50,000 men, employed in quarrying stone, etc., are now out as the immediate effect of the lockout.

“Efforts are being made in this city to stop all building operations, with a menace of still more far-reaching effects. Many other trades will undoubtedly be implicated if the struggle is protracted. The men say they have means to continue the struggle indefinitely, and believe the urgency of the contracts will compel the employers to surrender.

“Commissioner of Public Works Gilroy, upon whom the men rely to bring the employers to terms by insisting that the paving contracts now under way shall be filled, said this morning that he saw no way in which to bring about an understanding between the men and their employers. He declared that he could make no calculation as to when work would be resumed.

“Pickets of the granite cutters watch every boat load of stone brought to the city, and in every case where it comes from a quarry the owner of which is a member of the Granite Manufacturers’ association, the workmen will be warned not to handle the stone.

“Secretary Grant, of the Paving-Cutters’ National union, today received a dispatch from Secretary Dyer, of the Granite-Cutters’ National union, saying: ‘Lockout all along the line.’ This means that 5000 men are locked out, and the only quarries now in operation in the New England states are those at Swan’s island, Maine, and one at Waterville, Conn.

“**Quincy, Mass., May 16.** – Every stone yard in the city opened for business this morning, giving a chance to the workmen not recognizing organized labor to resume work, but none responded. It is said an effort will be made by the men to have the apprentices, who were the only people working today, to join the unions, thus bringing work to an absolute standstill. The men feel confident that the present state of affairs will not exist more than a week.”

“The Stone-cutters’ Strike. A victory scored by the men over the quarry owners,” *San Francisco Call*, Vol. 71, No. 167, [May 16, 1892](#), pp. 1

“Barre, Vt. May 15. – H. W. Webster, a wealthy quarry owner and a large paving contractor, has signed the Paving Cutters’ bill of prices to May 1st, 1893. The cutters say that Webster’s actions is a victory for them, and that others will follow his example. Two thousand men are idle in Vermont, and the dealers say the lockout will last forever, unless the cutters give in.”

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Documents of the Assembly of the State of New York

Vol. 7, New York (State). Legislature. Assembly, [1893](#), Bureau of Labor Statistics, pp. 294-301.

Pavers and Rammermen and Paving Cutters, New York.

“A general strike to assist granite paving-block cutters was inaugurated on the ninth of May.

“New York city and vicinity being the principal market for the output of paving blocks prepared in the New England granite quarries, the Paving Cutter’s Union made its headquarters here, and in the summer of 1891, in conjunction with the pavers and rammermen and stonehandlers’ unions, instituted the general council of the stone industry. The object of this alliance was to promote the interests of the several trades and to render another material aid in the event of difficulties arising with the employers.

“At a meeting of the Paving Contractors’ Association of New England, an adjunct of the New England Granite Manufacturers’ Association, held at Boston, Mass., on April fifth, it was

“Resolved, that the executive committee be instructed to notify the secretary of the Paving Cutters’ National Union that the members of this association will extend the bills of 1891 until December 31, 1892, and that any demand by either party for the year 1893 be made on or before October 1, 1892; and that an answer to the above be made on or before April 11, 1892; and in case of the answer in the negative all work will cease on that date.’

“An extension of time in which to transmit a reply to the foregoing was requested by the paving cutters, and granted. In the interim the question was submitted for a final vote to all the branches of the Paving Cutters’ Union of the United States and Canada, which decided that the demands of the employers could not be conceded, and as a result of this refusal the cutters were, on May second, locked out of twenty-two quarries in the New England States. The union reports that it asked for an increase in wages in only three of these places, the old bills of prices being satisfactory in the other nineteen.

“In previous years – in fact ever since the formation of the Paving Cutters’ Union, in 1887 – the annual agreement went into effect on May first, an article in the constitution of the international organization directing that ‘every branch of the union shall have a bill of prices, to be signed by both parties thereto.’

“On the side of the manufacturers it was urged that the agreement should date from January first, for the following reasons.

“All contracts for stone are made before the first of May, and many of them as early as January. Nearly all of such contracts must be closed by the first of March. If we do not know until May first what wages we are to pay our men from that date, how can we make a contract in February for the delivery of stone in July or August, or any time after May first? If we know what wages we are to pay between May first and January first we can tell what the stone is going to cost us and what we ought to get for it, and can then make our contracts; but we could not make a contract before May first for the delivery of stone during the rest of the year if we were to be liable to pay the increased wages from that date.’

“The union persisted that the yearly agreement should go into force in May, alleging that in January there is a small amount of work and many idle men, and the employers could take undue advantage of their employes and fix wages at a low rate; whereas, in May the quarries are operated to the full capacity, there being employment for all granite workers, and the men would have a better opportunity to obtain more satisfactory terms. The union refuted the statement that the employers make contracts before the first of May, and averred that none is made even as early as the first of January. It was further asserted by the officials of the paving cutters’ organization that the demand to change the time for signing the contract was simply a pretext by the quarry owners to force the men into idleness for the purpose of wrecking their trade union.

“The companies that supplied the street paving contractors in the metropolis with paving blocks were members of the Paving Contractors’ Association of New England and were foremost in opposing the renewal of the May compact. It was believed by the unions that, if they could prevent the handling of the product of the latter concerns, a settlement could be speedily effected. So the pavers and rammermen were called on to take part in the conflict.

“This general sympathetic movement on the part of the pavers and rammermen was evidently not unexpected by the contractors, for at a general conference of the stone industry, on February twenty-fifth, it was ordered that a copy of the following circular be forwarded to each employer:

“Dear Sir. – Desiring to promote harmonious relations between ourselves and our employers, to obviate trouble and prevent future strikes, we, the representatives of the New York, Brooklyn and vicinity Pavers, Rammermen, Stone Handlers’ Unions, and Paving Cutters’ International Union, in conference assembled, desire to duly notify you, believe it to be fair and just to you and to ourselves to do so, that we do not intend to handle non-union product of our industries in the future. The organizations herein represented are now thoroughly organized, with few exceptions. Those few exceptions are elements of discord likely to create disturbances in the future, as they have in the past, and in order to remove this we have resolved not to work with non-union men or handle nonunion products of the industries above named. As we have stated, it is our desire that this be understood between ourselves and our employers so that this shall be the guide and basis of future actions.’

“It was at the opening of the paving season that the controversy began, and only four contractors, employing forty-nine pavers and rammermen, had commenced to lay new pavements. These workmen promptly responded to the strike order. Several streets had been torn up and large piles of paving blocks lined the sidewalks. Protest against this state of things began to pour into the public works department from a number of citizens engaged in business on the streets that were undergoing repairs. Probably the most inconvenience was experienced on West street, which runs parallel with and proximate to the North river, along which the wharves of the large steamship companies and the passenger and freight stations of the railroads that enter New Jersey. Traffic here was in continual state of blockade on account of the disarrangement of the thoroughfare, and shippers and truck drivers strongly objected to the delay in starting the work.

“The State Board of Mediation and Arbitration made futile efforts to bring about a settlement; one of the quarry owners informing the board that it was a New England fight, the strikes in this city being only sympathetic, and did not come within the province of the New York State arbitrators. The only place, he said, where the difficulty could be arranged was at the headquarters of the Granite Manufacturers’ Association in Boston. On the other hand, the secretary of the Paving Cutters’ International Union desired to refer the whole subject to the Arbitration Board of this State. He said that, inasmuch as the lockout extended to the States of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island, and directly affected the people of New York, the questions in dispute could be adjudicated here as well as in Boston, if the manufacturers were disposed to submit the matter to arbitration.

“About the middle of May the Paving Cutters’ Union suggested a compromise, offering to give ninety days’ notice prior to May first of any intended change in prices. The granite companies were obdurate, however, and would not recede from their position.

“In the latter part of May the commissioner of public works, wishing to have the torn-up streets put in proper condition, and having been notified that the union men would not decline to handle the old granite blocks, informed the contractors that they must repave the streets with the old material. Some non-union men were placed on these jobs, the contractors refusing to treat with the union workmen unless they consented to set the new stones. Subsequently, non-union pavers began to lay the black-listed paving blocks; and, on July eleventh, the Pavers and Rammermen’s Union gave up the contest, agreeing to allow its members to resume operations if the contractors would re-employ the old hands and adhere to the union rules regarding wages and hours of work. All but one employer assented, and the strike was declared off.

“The paving cutters continued their opposition to the January plan, and eventually succeeded in settling their differences in ten quarries, subscribing to a three years’ agreement, which dated from March 1, 1892. There was no prospect of an adjustment of the trouble with the twelve remaining establishments, including the two companies whose products were in use in New York; and, in order to provide employment for a number of mechanics who were still idle on account of the lockout, the officers of the international union organized co-operative companies, composed exclusively of members of the Cutters’ Union. Quarries were leased, and in a short time the business was placed on a paying basis. A portion of the preamble to the rules that were enacted for the government of these companies is as follows:

“By the strength of union, intelligently directed, workingmen in times past have been enabled to protect their interests, elevate their conditions, improve their knowledge, and gain an insight and understanding of business methods necessary for conducting the affairs of trade and sharing the profits derived from union, and believing from our experience that we have ability to do our business, and that we are especially favored in our trade of paving-block cutting, in that the chief capital required for investment is our labor, we have resolved to form a co-operative company, or partnership, whereby we shall be enabled to receive a full share of the profits of our toil.’

“[While the printer was putting the tenth report in type, Mr. James Grant, secretary of the Paving Cutters’ Union of the United States and Canada, kindly furnished the Bureau with the following statement relative to formation and progress of the paving cutters’ co-operative companies:]

“In the month of August, 1892, after having been locked out for three months, the paving cutters of New England determined to form themselves into co-operative companies.

“The bitter lockout could have been ended to the advantage of employers and employed had the paving cutters, instead of wasting their finances to the extent of \$37,000 in foolish fighting, adopted the co-operative plan before, or at the beginning of the struggle, and thus could have saved all the sacrifices made among homes and families as a result of that lockout. The reason that this saving is not made was because we paving cutters were not then aware of the benefits that could be derived from co-operation.

“The paving cutters have special advantages over other tradesmen in forming co-operative companies, and carrying them out with a degree of success not possible in other occupations. These advantages could not have been so quickly found out, nor so readily tried, had it not been for the conditions brought about by the lockout of 1892. Prior to that time the union had spent thousands of dollars on strikes. These strikes were of a local kind – confined to one or two quarries at a time. The lockout covered New England and reached the large cities of the United States. The union’s tactics in the cities were to stop the street-paving work, which was done through association with the men who laid the paving blocks in the streets; to stop the unloading of paving blocks from schooners at the docks; to bring to the knowledge of those having power in the cities the justice of our cause, and seeking their aid.

“These methods proved useless; for, although the work was stopped for a time, this stoppage threw all the pavers and rammers in the cities idle. The paving blocks, therefore, were not used up in the streets, as they would have been had the pavers continued to work. Had this latter plan been adopted the supply of stone would have given out in the quarries, and consequently it could not have been sent to the cities. This method of warfare alone cost the Paving Cutters’ National Union \$13,000.

“It was believed at first that the fact of the pavers stopping work, the streets being torn up, pressure would be brought to bear and the lockout, by these means, brought to a more speedy conclusion. These were examples of the tactics used by the granite workers in the past troubles, to defeat the manufacturers.’

“The folly of these things became apparent, and, instead of continuing to waste energy and suffering hardships by idleness, the men turned to and began work for themselves. The wisdom of this course has been proven by the results of ten months’ trial of the co-operative plan and its growing and prosperous condition. Three necessary objects had to be attained before the co-operative movement could be established. Granite had to be found, labor was necessary, and, above all, markets had to be found or the paving blocks produced. The latter was the most difficult part of the undertaking.

“A few manufacturers had since the first use of granite paving blocks in this country, some twenty-five years ago, held possession of the markets. The officials in the cities had learned to believe that these men also held full possession of all the granite all over New England, and that no one else could supply stone but them. But conclusive proof demonstrated the falsity of these opinions. Granite is so very abundant throughout New England that it was easy to get quarries. The practical knowledge of the paving cutters enabled them to select quarries where the stone is of excellent quality; and, therefore, the co-operative granite is equal to any other granite, and much of it is superior. This, of course, was necessary; for if we had granite equal to or better than other granite used in the cities, with the best class of workmen, we could provide good paving blocks, and require nothing but fair play to place our products in the cities.

“We received our first contract direct from the city of Brooklyn. It was small, but it was the beginning we desired. To Mr. John P. Adams, the Commissioner of the Department of City Works in Brooklyn, we are indebted for his assistance to our endeavors. We supplied the city and contractors in Brooklyn with 1,250,000 paving blocks from September, 1892, to January, 1893. We have also placed our products in New York, Yonkers, Philadelphia, Pa., and Newark, N. J. In all, we have produced and delivered more than 2,500,000 granite paving blocks.

“In our business little capital is necessary. With the granite all that is required are tools to work with, the labor of the workmen forming the chief capital invested, and as each man receives the full market value of his labor (the average in New England being \$3 per day of 9 hours) less necessary expense on the returns being collected, the men are enabled to make twenty per cent more under the co-operative plan than under the other systems. Paving cutters in the New England States are steadily employed eight months of the year.

“The total amount of money invested in the co-operative business was \$5,000, and this sum was used to purchase tools for the workmen. The value of the sales for the first ten months was \$182,787.51.

“There are now thirteen quarries in operation, with over 500 men employed.

“We have had many difficulties to contend with, but we mean to proceed; and now that it is seen that we can perform whatever contracts we undertake, we are receiving more than we can supply.

“Beyond all immediate pecuniary profit, the co-operative movement will, in our trade, prevent strikes and lockouts in the future, and never again will we see such conditions as those which prevailed in 1892.

“‘This to our union, to the workmen, and to society is a great gain.’

“Nos. 1660-1661. Fifteen paving cutters employed by the two companies mentioned heretofore struck in May to assist their fellow craftsmen. They were engaged in trimming paving blocks, in

“New York city, to make them conform to the specifications of street-paving contracts. The strike is pending.”

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The American Federationist, Vol. 9, by Samuel Gompers, John McBride, William Green, American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, Vol. IX, No. 1, [January 1902](#), pp. 571.

Paving Cutters' Union
Secretary, J. H. Patterson.

“On June first, 1887, delegates representing the more important centers of the paving block industry, assembled at Baltimore to organize a National Union of the trade. The delegates were H. M. Beattie, James Kelly, R. C. Shearer, Owen Sheehy, James Walker and John A. Grant. They completed the work which called them together and decided upon Berlin, Wisconsin, as the headquarters of the union.

“On June sixth the union was formally organized at Berlin, Wis., and the following officers elected: President, Daniel Reid; Vice-President, John O. Jones; Secretary D. Junor; Committee, D. Ferguson, James Aiken and Peter Brodie.

“The movement was hailed with delight by the rank and file of our craft, who recognized it as a necessary step.

“Branches were formed rapidly, and in March 1888, there were twenty-four. In 1890, our headquarters were removed to Westerly, Rhode Island. The union made great progress during this year, numbering forty-six branches.

“In 1891 our headquarters were removed to New York City, where the organization continued to grow and prosper. At the beginning of the following year there were sixty-seven branches with a

total membership of 3,400. Practically speaking our trade was so well organized that there was hardly a man on the outside. While we were organizing we were laying up the sinews of war by increasing our treasury to five figures.

“In the latter part of 1891, an organization was formed in New York City, which was known as the New England Granite Manufacturers' Association, headed by John Pierce, of New York, who owned extensive quarries at Mount Waldo, Maine. This association decided to fight the union. In April, 1892, it locked out all the paving cutters in its employ, and refused to treat with

them or recognize them in any way. Then began the memorable struggle of 1892, in which our men proved their loyalty and devotion to union principles and to one another, by standing firm, shoulder to shoulder, even when they realized that all was lost. Our funds were spent in the struggle. The panic and general stagnation of business in the following year completed the work of disorganization and ruin.

“Our present union was organized in 1901 with headquarters at Lithonia, Georgia. We have now twenty branches with 400 members. With the experience of the past to guide us we are not likely to make the errors that cost us so dear in 1891 and '92. The beneficial results of the formation of the union have already been felt in nearly all of the localities where branches have been organized. A number of grievances have arisen, but they have been settled satisfactorily and quickly.

“The prospect for the future is very encouraging and there is no doubt that if the members of the different branches continue to act with the spirit of fairness which has so far characterized their actions, only asking what, after due deliberation, they believe to be their just rights, the union will prove a help and a blessing. The present officers are: President, Alexander Ross; Secretary and Treasurer, J. H. Patterson; Executive Committee, Hugh Hughes, R. S. Hammock, E. J. Chapman, W. I. Williams, Joseph Henderson and James Mitchell.”

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“Recalling Midcoast Maine’s Forgotten Labor Past: Unions, Radicals & the Granite Ring,” by Andy O’Brien, *The Free Press*, Rockland, Maine, [May 1, 2014](#)

(photo captions) (1) The Paving Cutters Union marching in a parade celebrating Vinalhaven’s 150th Anniversary in 1939, months before the island’s granite quarries were abandoned. – Photo courtesy of the Vinalhaven Historical Society. (2) Maine labor historian Charles Scontras next to a likeness of himself on the famous Maine Labor History Mural removed from the Department of Labor lobby by Gov. Paul LePage in 2011. – Photo by Kimberly Clark