LOCAL DAYTON SOCIALIST PARTY
BRIEF PARTY HISTORY

Between the years 1901 and 1912, the Socialist Party of America enjoyed continuous growth and exerted a wide impact upon the political life of the nation. Starting with 10,000 members in 1901, the party had grown to 118,000 by 1912, had elected some 12,000 public officials throughout the United States, and was publishing over 300 periodicals of all kinds. In the labor movement, and in many of the reform movements of the period, Socialists held positions of prominence and had won substantial followings. Many Socialists looked forward to the continuing expansion of their party, fully expecting it to become a dominant force in American politics. During the next decade, however, the Party not only ceased to grow, but by the mid-1920's, had almost ceased to exist.

The evolution of the Socialist Party in Dayton followed a similar pattern of growth and demise. The roots of the Party can be traced to the formation of a Social Democratic Party in 1899. The charter members of this organization were six Dayton workingmen, members of a substantial working-class community of German descent from which the Party would draw a large share of its early supporters. Voicing their disillusionment with the present two-party system, these men felt that their newly emerging class had interests which were not being represented in traditional Dayton politics.

By 1902, the new political party had changed its name to the Local Dayton Socialist Party and begun to run candidates for local offices. During its tenure in Dayton, the Socialist Party was well-organized, held regular meetings, ran candidates in local elections, and, from 1912 until 1924, published a Party newspaper, the Miami Valley Socialist.

The years 1911-12 marked the peak of the Socialists' power and influence in Dayton politics. Actual membership in the Party was nearly 600 at this time, and in the municipal election of 1911, Socialist candidates were elected to two City Council seats and three Assessor positions. Eugene V. Debs, the Socialist candidate for president, received over 6,000 votes in Dayton in the 1912 Presidential election, but the municipal victories of 1911 were to be the first and last the Socialists would enjoy here. In 1913, the change-over to a non-partisan, manager-type city government, in which commissioners were to be elected on a city-wide basis, deprived the Dayton Socialists of much of their political power which had been based on the old system of electing a Councilman from each ward. Other factors contributing to the Socialists' decline, locally as well as nationally, were right-left ideological conflicts and the incorporation of some of Socialism's basic issues into the platforms of the progressive wings of the major political parties.

Throughout the decade, the official stance of the Party in Dayton remained moderate, and the local Socialists took only a mild anti-war stand in 1917. Consequently, they escaped much of the repression suffered by radicals during the war years and in the following "Red Scare" that swept Ohio and the country.

The election of 1921 was the last in which the Socialists made any showing in Dayton, and membership at this time had dwindled to 200 members, with about 50 consistently active. In 1924, the Local Dayton Socialist Party backed Robert LaFollette's Progressive-Farmer-Labor candidacy for the Presidency and ran its last slate of candidates for city-wide office. In the same year, the Miami Valley Socialist stopped publication.
The Local Dayton Socialist Party experienced a small resurgence during the early depression years. Membership swelled to 400, but then fell to less than 100 members, with only about 14 people very active by 1936.

During the late 30's, many Socialists took an active part in helping the C.I.O. form the first industrial unions in Dayton. At this time, conflicts between Communists and Socialists became open and hostile as the large electrical unions at Delco, Frigidaire and other plants were being organized.
INTRODUCTION

The records of the Local Dayton Socialist Party were accessioned into the Wright State University Archives & Special Collections Department in February of 1930. They were purchased from Mrs. Lucille Stapleton of Dayton, whose father-in-law had been a member of the Party in the 1930's. The papers in this collection date from 1893 to 1956 and fill five Hollinger boxes and sixty-three individual file folders.

There are no restrictions on their use and literary copyright has been deeded to the public.
SCOPE AND CONTENT


Administrative Records (Series I) is composed of the Minutes of the Campaign Executive Committee, April - November 1901.; Minutes of the City Campaign Committee, 1905-1906; Minutes of the General Membership Meetings, 1910-1912 and 1914-1919; Minutes of the County Central Committee, 1912-1916; Minutes of the Executive Committee, 1920-1924; General Membership Minutes, 1933-1937; and a record of new members, which includes the name, age, address, and occupation of those who joined the Local Dayton Socialist Party from 1906-1908 and 1912-1917.

Series II, Financial Records, has the dues and cash books for the Local Dayton Socialist Party for the years 1907-1909, 1910-1911, and 1916-1929. The series also contains a record of Local Dayton's real estate sales for the years 1921-1924.

Series III, State & National Socialist Party Materials, includes a constitution for the Socialist Party of Ohio, 1932; a ballot for the election of the State Committee, 1912; a secretary's report to the State Convention, 1932-1933; portions of the minutes of the 1933-34 State Convention of the Socialist Party of Ohio; Handbook of the State Convention of 1935; a National Platform of the Socialist Party, USA for 1936; and a State Platform of the Socialist Party Of Ohio, 1932.

Series IV contains Socialist Party Literature covering such topics as strikes, industrial and trade unionism, anarchy, militarism, pacifism, socialist philosophy and communism. Also included in this series are several issues of Socialist Party newspapers and copies of the Debs Memorial Edition of the American Appeal. Span dates for this series are 1898-1956.

Series V is a miscellaneous collection containing Socialist Party notices, petitions, handbills, announcements, resolutions, miscellaneous correspondence and three photographs of a Socialist Party outdoor meeting. Span dates for this series range from 1906-1936.
CONTAINER LISTING

SERIES I: ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS

Box 1
File 1 Minutes, Campaign Executive Committee, Local Dayton Social Democratic Party, Apr 1901 - Nov 1901
  2 Minutes, City Committee, Local Dayton Socialist Party, Dec 1905 - Sep 1906
  3 Minutes, Local Dayton Socialist Party, May 1910 - Jul 1911
  4 Minutes, Local Dayton Socialist Party, Sep 1911 - Mar 1912
  5 Minutes, Local Dayton Socialist Party, Dec 1914 - Jan 1917

Box 2
File 1 Minutes, Local Dayton Socialist Party, Jan 1917 - Oct 1919
  2 Minutes, County Central Committee, Jun 1912 - Jun 1916
  3 Minutes, Executive Committee, Local Dayton Socialist Party, Jan 1920 - Dec 1924
  4 Minutes, Local Dayton Socialist Party, Feb 1933 - Jul 1937
  5 Record of New Members, Jul 1906 - Sep 1908
  6 Record of New Members, Jan 1912 - Mar 1917

SERIES II: FINANCIAL RECORDS

Box 3
File 1 Cash Book, Local Dayton Socialist Party, Apr 1907 - Mar 1909
  2 Dues Book, Local Dayton Socialist Party, Jan 1910 - Sep 1911
  3 Dues Book, Local Dayton Socialist Party, Jan 1916 - Oct 1919
  4 Dues and Cash Book, Local Dayton Socialist Party, Oct 1919- May 1923
  5 Cash Book, Local Dayton Socialist Party, May 1923 - Jun 1929
      Loose Record of Local Dayton Lot Sales, 1921-1924

SERIES III: STATE & NATIONAL SOCIALIST PARTY MATERIALS

Box 4
File 1 Ballot for election of State Committee, 1912
  2 Constitution, Socialist Party of Ohio, ca. 1932
  3 Secretary's report to the State Convention, Socialist Party of Ohio, 1932-33
  4 Minutes, Convention of the Socialist Party of Ohio, 1933-34
  5 Proceedings & Handbook of the State Convention of the Socialist Party of Ohio, 1935
  6 Proposed Declaration of Principles, Socialist Party, USA, ca. 1935
  7 National Platform, Socialist Party, USA, 1936
  8 State Platform, Socialist Party of Ohio, 1932
SERIES IV: SOCIALIST PARTY LITERATURE

Box 4
File 9  "What Means This Strike" - 1898
       "Marx on Mallock" - 1904
       "Burning Questions of Trade - 1917
       "Unionism" by Daniel Deleon
       "Ethics of Evolution" by John Scott - 1914
       Waylands Monthly - 1905
11  "Shall a Labor Party Be Formed"
       "Letters to Judd" 1923
12  "A Plan for America" - 1932
       "Socialist Handbook" - 1937
13  Price List of Socialist Party of America Literature, 1933
14  "Essentials of Socialism" - 1933
15  "Where your dollar goes, 1934 United Socialist Drive" - 1934
16  "Labor, Democracy & Fascism," "Fascism", "The Land of the Free
       Socialist America," "Social Attitudes Towards War ~ Peace" - 1934
17  "The Commonwealth Plan" - 1934
18  "Traffic in Death" - 1934
19  "Mother Bloor" - 1935
20  "Industrial Unionism" - 1936
21  "Communism, Its Evils ~ Causes" - 1937
22  3 issues of the Socialist Call - 10/37, 5/38, 10/53
23  The American Guardian - 9/40
24  Misc. Newspaper- clippings - 1930's
26  "Labor Spies in the NMU" - ca. 1940
27  "Socialism Answers Anti-Semitism" - 1943
       "The Labor Draft" - 1944

Box 5

File 1  "Anarchy, Communism, Socialism" 1932
       "The Boytown Railroad"
       " Parable of the Water Tank"
2  Issues of American Socialist Quarterly, Autumn 34 - 4/36
3  Issues of American Socialist Quarterly, 6/36 - 10/36
4  "Government Competition with Private Enterprise, a Report" - 1933
5  Series of Lectures on Social Justice - 1935
6  "Death for Insurrection in Georgia:
       "Introduction to Scientific Socialism" - 1932
7  "Hammer & Tongs" - 1956
SERIES V: MISCELLANEOUS MATERIALS

Box 5

File 8  Handbill re: Debs Organization Fund
  9   Misc. Handbills & Notices
10  Agreement, Local Dayton Socialist Party & Fern Dobbins, 1918
11  Acknowledgement of sympathy card from Mrs. Eugene V. Debs, 1926
12  Position paper, re: disruptionist tactics of Communist Party in the US Congress Against War, ca. 1933
13  Precinct Directory, City of Dayton, 1933
14  Notices, re: Party sponsored activities, 1918, 1335
15  Petition to US Congress, re: Cuba, 1936
16  Rules taken from WPA Foremans Handbook, 1936
17  Photographs
18  Copies of Agreements, Correspondence & Legal Proceedings, re: Local Dayton's Lot Sales, 1927-1932
19  Misc. Correspondence, Local Dayton Socialist Party, 1906-1936
20  Misc. Announcements & Resolutions, 1911-1932