

**Documented During Their Detention:  
Initial Findings and Research Opportunities Using the  
Lawrence History Center's Essex County Jail Records**

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I'd like to thank everyone at the Lawrence History Center, in particular Amita Kiley, Kathleen Flynn, and Susan Grabski for their support and invaluable assistance. They opened every archive to me and proved invaluable sources of direction and information.

There is no such thing as “too much information” when studying history. Every document or artifact tells a story or fleshes out a previously studied period, person, or event. Sometimes, however, a set of documents offers up so much information as to overwhelm a researcher. This is the case of the Essex County Jail Record collection, a massive store of documents saved at the jail’s closing. In attempting to learn more about the 1912 Bread and Roses Strike using the records, I answered some questions while coming away from the efforts with even more questions about the strikers and role of the legal system during the strike. Here, I describe the collection, the sorting process I used, and discuss some of the information that can be gleaned from the documents.

Located at what is now the corner of Auburn and Hampshire Streets in Lawrence, the Essex County Jail was built in 1853. The second-oldest jail in the country, with a distinct octagonal design and three three-story wings facing North, East, and West, housed 237 inmates at its peak.<sup>1</sup> Demolished in the late 1980s, the site is now the soccer field for Central Catholic High School. Importantly, from 1853 until its closing, every single file, form, and receipt relating to the functioning of the jail and its prisoners was saved. Despite rumors of incineration, the massive trove of documents was unceremoniously dumped into black garbage bags and given to the Lawrence History Center. The documents were never completely studied. They were boxed up and put into storage, and while over the years a few attempts at sorting the documents by date were made, very little information was drawn from them.

When I began my directed study, I was stunned by the sheer number of documents; there are well over 100,000 prisoner files alone, not counting the repair bills,

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<sup>1</sup> Mass.Gov: Official Website of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. “History.” Accessed March 19, 2014. <http://www.mass.gov/essexsheriff/facilities/history.html>.

commissary receipts, pay slips, guard time-clock disks, and hundreds of other forms and files. In addition, there are over 200 record ledgers and books. To even consider studying a specific time period (in this case the 1912 strike), an effort had to be made to sort these documents. The primary type of document is a “Mittimus”, a Latin term for an arrest warrant. Every single prisoner who entered the jail had a mittimus filled out, a tri-fold document roughly 8 x 3 ¼ inches in dimensions when closed. While the attached documents and specific details of the form varied over the decades, they all contained basic information regarding the inmate, crime, and any legal proceedings. By 1912, a standard mittimus included an additional form glued inside, which contained the officer’s writ and a typed form documenting the prisoner’s information. This is called the “Receiving Officer’s Memorandum”.

These mittimi run in numbered order from the day the jail opened. I handled forms dating as early as 1853 with the prisoner number as low as 23. By 1912, the numbers ran in what Kathleen Flynn of the Lawrence History Center and I called “the 50,000 series,” as the numbers all ran in the 50,000s. However, a second set exists in parallel that are identified as the “14,000 series.” At this point, it is unclear as to why this second, much smaller run of documents exists. Flynn has developed a system of binding the documents in “runs” of one hundred. Thus, a single “run” might go from 50,100 – 50,199. Runs are boxed by decade.

Despite this, at the start of my directed study only about a third of the documents had been sorted, leaving some forty-eight or so boxes of bent, dirty, and scrambled files to sort. To speed the process for finding 1912 documents, I “rough-sorted” mixed boxes into three categories: pre-1900, 1900-1919, and post-1920. The 1900-1919 set was then

further sorted by year. Sorting occupied far more time than originally planned. With over twenty unsorted boxes remaining but less than a half a semester to go, I determined to see if further sorting was necessary. Using the runs of one hundred to pull all of 1912, I determined that I had located 444 out of 600 14,000 series mittimi and 1,438 out of 1600 50,000 series mittimi. There was not enough time left to locate the 156 and 132 missing files, respectively. Therefore, my findings at this point are limited. The next step in making conclusions was to sort the files not by jail date, but by arrest date. When first arrested, prisoners were brought to a police station and then the police court; this meant they might spend some time in jail. Then, they could bail out, pay a fine, or be released. Only if they lost an appeal or could not pay the fine or bail would they be transported to jail. Therefore, the jail records include only those individuals locked up *in the county jail*, not those who were arrested or jailed at the police station. Inside each form is a statement detailing the charge; it includes the date of the initial charge, and this is the date by which I then sorted the files. This was important because, as I found, someone might have been arrested on one day and not jailed until a week or more at the Essex County Jail. Thus, it was necessary to search the entire year to pull out arrests relating to the strike period of Thursday, January 11<sup>th</sup> to Thursday, March 14<sup>th</sup>.

Having sorted the mittimi, a wealth of information can be laid out day-by-day, detailing who the strikers were and their actions. A standard 1912 mittimus contains entries and forms detailing the following:

- Name of prisoner, prison number, and crime
- Sentence (fine and/or jail time), date of sentence, and date of commitment to the jail
- Did the prisoner appeal or withdraw/lose their appeal
- Skin color, sex, height, and weight
- Age, date of birth, and marital status

- Residence, birthplace, and number of years residing in the U.S.
- Name of mother, father, and their birthplaces
- “Temperate or intemperate”: while the modern definition relates to alcoholism, the older (and more understandable) definition is relates to having or showing a lack of self-control; i.e.; being immoderate. I understand this to describe their temperament at the time of arrest, and general behavior while under arrest
- Education: “Common School” or none
- Can the prisoner read, write, or speak English
- Occupation
- Have they spent time in the Concord or Sherborn Reformatories
- Any previous convictions in this prison (Essex County Jail) or in other prisons; if yes to the former, what file ID number
- If married, wife/husbands name and residence
- Name and address of nearest friend or relative
- Maiden name of prisoner and maiden name of prisoner’s mother
- Any distinguishing/unusual marks
- Did they serve in the army/navy; if so, in the Civil or Spanish-American war
- Date of release<sup>2</sup>

A final set of details chronicles the prisoner’s personal belongings at the time of arrest. A form contains an exhaustive listing for “hat, cap, coat, vest, trousers, suspenders, overalls, jumper, sweater, Cardigan sweater, reefer, overcoat, outside shirt, collar, cuffs, undershirt, drawers, socks, shoes, boots, over boots, rubber shoes, rubber boots,” and has space for “other articles to wit” and any cash. The prisoner had to sign or make a mark verifying that this list was correct and that jailers were authorized to open and inspect their mail. The majority of officers filled out only the last few items on the list, during the strike and in other years.<sup>3</sup> We know who these officers are because many forms contain the signatures of the receiving officer, the officer committing the prisoner to the jail, the justice at the sentencing, and the clerk.

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<sup>2</sup> Essex County Jail Records, January – March 1912, Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, Mass

<sup>3</sup> Essex County Jail Records, January – March 1912, Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, Mass

An example of how this information can be put to use is by comparing this “new” information with what little has surfaced in accounts from the strike, such as those in the newspapers. The newspapers often ran stories that featured the names of specific strikers, but not where they were from or any other information about their lives. I took one such account, from the February 25<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Boston Globe* the day after the infamous trains station beatings. On that day, police, determined to stop any further attempts to send the children of strikers to safer and supportive care away from the city, clashed violently with men, women, and children. Forty-six children and their parents and chaperones gathered at the main Boston & Maine depot on Broadway and Essex streets, awaiting the 7:11 am train to Boston when police began to form a cordon. Marshal Sullivan stepped inside and warned the strikers not to attempt the exodus, before returning to the police lines; nearby a military transport truck was parked in plain view. When the train arrived, police attempted to prevent strikers from boarding their children. What happened next polarized the city and the nation, and arguably turned the tide of national opinion in favor of the strikers: policemen pulled parents and children apart, grappling and struggling with them and violently throwing them into the truck. As horrified bystanders and train passengers watched, policemen clubbed many of the defenseless women, who fought and scratched to reach their young ones. In many cases it took several officers to “restrain” a single woman, while desperate fathers were held back behind the police cordon line.

This event was only one of several violent altercations that day, as demonstrated by the descriptions of arrests for the day found in newspaper accounts. There was at least

one other major “riot” at the same time that day, and the mood of the strikers grew uglier when word of the train station beatings spread. According to the *Boston Globe* article:

Fines of \$5 each were imposed in the cases of Oishula Fiak for assaulting an unknown man, Regina Yocum for disturbance by hooting, Aggie Choplar for assault on Special Policeman Ryan, and Annie Kautrotovich for intimidating Mary Rowland. The last named said she was employed in the Duck Mill and the defendant had threatened to kill her if she continued at work.<sup>4</sup>

Who were these women? The newspaper gives little in the way of details, but their arrest records do. Oishula, Regina, Aggie, and Annie all were charged \$5 initially; they appealed, but then all withdrew their appeals and were sentenced to pay a \$50 fine. They spent their full sentence in jail. Aggie, Oishula, and Regina were from Austria; Annie was from Russia. None had an education, could read, write, or speak English. All but Oishula were mill operatives; Oishula performed housework. Regina had lived in the U.S. among the longest of anyone I encountered as a striker, ten years. Aggie, Annie, and Oishula had lived in the U.S. four, seven, and two years, respectively. They represent a wide age range; Aggie was 22, Annie 50, Oishula 48, and Regina 38. Aggie and Oishula lived at 32 Allen Street with their husbands, while Annie, a widow, lived at 23 Lowell Street and the widowed Regina resided at 126 Springfield Street. All were considered “intemperate.”<sup>5</sup>

Maggie Jesocavitz and Martha Jackovitch, both fined \$1 for loitering, were likely friends, for according to the *Boston Globe*, “The Jesocavitz woman had asked to be

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<sup>4</sup> “Women Fined in Court,” *Boston Globe*, February 25, 1912 (clipping, Lawrence History Center Archives, Lawrence Mass)

<sup>5</sup> Essex County Jail Records, January – March 1912, Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, Mass

arrested when her companion was taken into custody.”<sup>6</sup> I did not find Maggie, but Martha did end up in jail. Twenty-six years old and a U.S. resident for an unknown period, she and her parents were Russian. She was one of the few strikers I found who could speak English, even if she couldn’t read or write in it. She “violated a city ordinance”.<sup>7</sup> Thanks to the newspaper, we know this most likely resulted from Col. Sweetser’s infamous edict that no group larger than three individuals could gather in one place. Martha is one of several women fined \$1 who refused to pay, as part of a “conspiracy” to wreak havoc on the systems of law and order. The *Boston Globe* noted, “They seemed to invite arrest. The policemen say they defied them and jeered them; and when the officers attempted arrest some of the women calmly sat on the curbstones until the patrol wagon arrived. They appeared only too eager to make the trip to the station house.” Upon arriving, “Everyone pleaded not guilty and when they were fined, in many cases no more than \$1, they said they had done nothing and would not pay the fine. When told through an interpreter that unless they did so they would have to appeal and furnish bonds, or go to jail, they said they would go to jail, and the majority of them did so...”<sup>8</sup>

The jail records back up a commonly held tenet of the strike: women were the key to the strike’s success. While comments in the newspapers express these opinions (“Women, for the most part, played the prominent parts, although there have been a few men mixed up in the affair”<sup>9</sup>), the sheer number of women sent to the prison when compared to men irrefutably back this up.<sup>10</sup> These women flooded the justice system, and

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<sup>6</sup> “Women Fined in Court,” *Boston Globe*, February 25, 1912 (clipping, Lawrence History Center Archives, Lawrence Mass)

<sup>7</sup> Essex County Jail Records, January – March 1912, Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, Mass

<sup>8</sup> J C O’Leary, “Angry Women Attack Police,” *Boston Globe*, February 25, 1912 (1-6)

<sup>9</sup> J C O’Leary, “Angry Women Attack Police,” *Boston Globe*, February 25, 1912 (1-6)

<sup>10</sup> Essex County Jail Records, January – March 1912, Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, Mass



their very sentencing proved that the city had already been forced to bow to the effects of the strike. It may not seem like much, but that \$1 fine was actually a capitulation; on January 16, during the first few days of the strike, police court judge John J. Mahoney had announced that anyone arrested in connection with the strike for any offense would go straight to jail; no fines would be set.<sup>11</sup> A month later, miniscule fines are being handed out;<sup>12</sup> this appears to be an attempt to punish strikers while avoiding overloading the jail. In court, according to newspaper accounts, the women certainly seemed aware of their situation and the ramifications; on February 24<sup>th</sup> the *Boston Globe* featured the story of one such woman, Josephine Liss. Pictured on the front page, she is noted as a “Lawrence Girl Striker Fined \$10 on Charge of Assaulting a Soldier, Who Long Refused to Pay, Courting a Jail Sentence Instead.” The court certainly tried to avoid her imprisonment; “Judge Rowell pleaded with her in vain. She insisted on serving her eight days sentence. Her counsel, C. J. Mahoney, finally prevailed on her to appeal the case and to go out on \$100 bail...”<sup>13</sup> If any readers still doubted there was a “conspiracy”, the *Globe* noted that “The picketing by women will go on and the women themselves declared that after this, no fines would be paid by them and no bail asked. If they are arrested they will serve.”<sup>14</sup>

Such statements give the impression that the women were indeed actively acting to “gum up” the legal system. While there is no *direct* proof that this was the case, the argument can be backed up by another odd fact, born out solely through the jail records: for a full week in the middle of the strike, there was a large clerical error in the filing of

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<sup>11</sup> John W Carberry, “Lowell and Haverhill Militia Reinforce Lawrence Companies to Suppress Any Outbreak Today,” *Boston Globe*, January 16, 1912, page 1

<sup>12</sup> J C O’Leary, “Angry Women Attack Police,” *Boston Globe*, February 25, 1912 (1-6)

<sup>13</sup> Frank P. Sibley, “Crisis is Near in Lawrence Strike”, *Boston Globe*, February 24, 1912 (1-2)

<sup>14</sup> Frank P. Sibley, “Crisis is Near in Lawrence Strike”, *Boston Globe*, February 24, 1912 (1-2)

the police records. As noted before, each prisoner's file was assigned a number and this number was affixed to the receiving officer's memorandum, which was glued inside. In short, the number appears three times on a standard mittimus. For a full week and at least twenty prisoners, the inside and outside numbers ran out of sync by two digits.<sup>15</sup> During the sorting phase, I never saw this sort of mistake during any other time period. It only seems to have occurred during the height of the strike, when strikers and public opinion overwhelmed the police. How it occurred is not clear; perhaps they were filling out forms in anticipation and some were lost. But, it is a sign that the effects of the strike overwhelmed the justice system.

From one *Boston Globe* article I discerned and connected fifteen names that matched jail documents: Oishula Fiak, Regina Yocum, Aggie Choplar, Martha Jackovitch, Annie Kautrotovich, Mary Kiblitiz, Pauline Novak, Helena Glovitzka, Aggie/Mary Stincone (both names are used interchangeably in the documents), Annie Balcinte, Simon Knebel, Annie Tomalatovich, Eva Shinconis, Mary Mabuta, and Donato Fabriza.<sup>16 17</sup> Of this group, four were Austrian, ten were from Russia, and one was from Italy. Martha Jackovitch and Annie Balcinte spoke English, while Knebel went to Common School and could read, write, and speak English. Two lived on Allen Street, two on Short Street, two on Chestnut Street, three on Elm Street, and the rest on Oak, Lowell, Springfield, and Union streets. Eleven were mill operatives or weavers, while Knebel, Fabriza, Fiak, and Balcinte were house workers while Knebel was a letter carrier and union organizer and Fabriza was a stonecutter. Excepting Knebel, none but Yocum

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<sup>15</sup> Essex County Jail Records, January – March 1912, Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, Mass

<sup>16</sup> "Women Fined in Court," *Boston Globe*, February 25, 1912 (clipping, Lawrence History Center Archives, Lawrence Mass)

<sup>17</sup> Essex County Jail Records, January – March 1912, Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, Mass

had been in the U.S. for at least ten years (Simon had spent 26 of 40 years in the U.S.).<sup>18</sup> These few facts help us understand where the Lawrence strikers came from and where they lived in the city. This is a prime example of just how information-rich the jail records are.

Individual “character studies” also illustrate how much information is contained in the jail documents. A careful look at three individuals reveals how lives can be fleshed out. Knebel was an organizer who helped with the so-called ‘children’s exodus’. However, he all but disappears when compared to how more famous strike figures like Bill Haywood, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Joseph Ettor, or Arturo Giovannitti are considered. The *Boston Globe* has one brief note on him, referencing his arrest at the infamous railroad station beatings: “Then came the railroad station cases. Simon Knebel, who was one of the committee who came here from Philadelphia to take charge of the party of children, was fined \$10 for violation of the ordinances. He appealed and was held in \$100.”<sup>19</sup> But using the jail records, we learn much more about him. In the U.S. for 26 years, the 40-year-old Knebel was born in Austria to Samuel and Marion in February 1872. He was 5’ 3 ½” tall and weighed 140 lbs. He lived with his wife Annie in Philadelphia at 1842 East Clematine Street, and was employed as a “letter worker.” He could read, write, and speak English, and was “temperate” at the time of his arrest.<sup>20</sup>

Donato Fabriza is an almost stereotypical radical Italian. Left with just the description in the *Boston Globe*, we have a name and an offense: “Donato Fabriza was complained of for assaulting an officer, but the latter had left the courtroom and the case

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<sup>18</sup> Essex County Jail Records, January – March 1912, Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, Mass

<sup>19</sup> “Women Fined in Court,” *Boston Globe*, February 25, 1912 (clipping, Lawrence History Center Archives, Lawrence Mass)

<sup>20</sup> Essex County Jail Records, January – March 1912, Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, Mass

was held over until Monday.”<sup>21</sup> In fact, he was held on *two* counts: assaulting an officer and molesting a soldier. Twenty-five, 5’ 4” and 140 lbs., and a stone cutter, he lived alone at 140 Oak Street in Lawrence. Born in Italy to Glatano and Madia (possibly another name, due to poor handwriting by the officer), he’d been in the U.S. for nine years, and could read, write, and speak English. Arrested with a pair of gloves, a notebook, and pencil in his pockets, he was held in jail for thirty days.<sup>22</sup>

Helena Glovitzka presents a very interesting case. Arrested in a group with Pauline Novak, Annie Balcinte, Mary Kiblitz, and Aggie/Mary Stincone,<sup>23</sup> the young Russian woman was, like her companions, a mill worker who could not read, write, or speak English. Like her companions she was arrested for violating a city ordinance, fined \$1, appealed and then withdrew her appeal. She spent time in jail, having been found in judgment to the cost of \$25. She was only 19, 5’ 3” and 110 lbs. She lived with Mary Glovitzka, possibly an aunt or sister (not her mother, Annie, or her father, Alexander). Her arrest documents indicate that she was in the U.S. for just two weeks, before she found herself in the middle of the 1912 strike.<sup>24</sup> These “character studies” can help solve myriad strike mysteries. For example, one of the strike’s least-understood events occurred during the “reign of terror” that flooded the city on the Monday after the infamous train station beatings. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of February, shots rang out and city police chased down several suspects after one policeman barely escaped being shot at point blank range. Pieced together from the newspapers, all that is known is that in some 25-30

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<sup>21</sup> “Women Fined in Court,” Boston Globe, February 25, 1912 (clipping, Lawrence History Center Archives, Lawrence Mass)

<sup>22</sup> Essex County Jail Records, January – March 1912, Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, Mass

<sup>23</sup> “Women Fined in Court,” Boston Globe, February 25, 1912 (clipping, Lawrence History Center Archives, Lawrence Mass)

<sup>24</sup> Essex County Jail Records, January – March 1912, Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, Mass

shots were exchanged between police and gunmen in a three-story tenement on Common Street. During a subsequent chase and running gun battle, a gunman turned on Officer Bartlett, firing directly at his face. Either the gun jammed or the shooter accidentally tried firing an expended shell. The gun failed to go off and Bartlett narrowly escaped becoming one of the few fatalities associated with the strike. According to the *Boston Globe*, “It was a thrilling incident while it lasted, but was over inside ten minutes when a swarm of police appeared on the scene.”<sup>25</sup> Even a definitive book such as Bruce Watson’s “Bread & Roses” makes little mention of the event. But, from the newspaper accounts, the event was a major one for the authorities. The jail records allow us to piece together the day’s events more fully.

State Detective Thomas Thompson collared Santo Ricci, one of the men arrested during the chase, in an Essex Street doorway. According to Thompson, Ricci attacked him with a knife while resisting arrest. He was held on a \$500 charge.<sup>26</sup> An Italian immigrant, the thirty-four year old mill operative had lived in the U.S. for three years. He could not read, write, or speak English, and lived with his wife at 130 ½ Common Street.<sup>27</sup> Other Italian immigrants were arrested during the incident. Patrolman John J. Kelleher cornered Salvatore Bruno. According to the *Boston Globe* account, the arresting officer found “in his possession a revolver with three exploded shells in the cylinder, and with the barrel of the weapon still warm.”<sup>28</sup> Bruno, 5’ 4 1/2” and of unrecorded weight, lived in the U.S. for ten years worked as a farmer and was married. He lived at 189 Garden Street, near the Everett Mill, and could speak but not read or write English. He

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<sup>25</sup> James C O’Leary, “Fire 30 Shots At Lawrence,” *Boston Globe*, February 27, 1912 (1-3)

<sup>26</sup> James C O’Leary, “Fire 30 Shots At Lawrence,” *Boston Globe*, February 27, 1912 (1-3)

<sup>27</sup> Essex County Jail Records, January – March 1912, Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, Mass

<sup>28</sup> James C O’Leary, “Fire 30 Shots At Lawrence,” *Boston Globe*, February 27, 1912 (1-3)

had a previous charge for which he served five years in prison. Along with the gun, at the time of his arrest he had \$2.23, some keys, a watch and chain, and possibly a pipe (poor handwriting renders this part illegible) in his possession. He was charged with assaulting Richard H. Murphy with intent to murder and assaulting Daniel McLeod with intent to murder. For the two counts he was charged \$14,000, or nearly \$332,917.77 today given inflation. He stayed in jail for his full sentence.<sup>29</sup>

Mill worker Pratz Dubino, wounded in the shoulder, was brought to Dr. Henry F. Dearborn by his wife, and then sent to Lawrence General Hospital. Arrested, His charges and sentences were identical to Bruno's.<sup>30</sup> He lived with his wife Camullo at 131 Common Street, had been in the U.S. for two and a half years, and could not read, write, or speak English. According to the jail records, Pratz was missing four fingers on one hand, perhaps caused by a mill accident.<sup>31</sup> These are a handful of examples of the exciting history that can be written regarding the 1912 strike by delving into the Essex County Jail records. Much more can be done to make the records more researcher-friendly.

- Database:

A full database, using an Excel spreadsheet and possibly photographs or scans could be created, forming a searchable record of every jailing during the strike.

This would allow easy data mining.

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<sup>29</sup> Essex County Jail Records, January – March 1912, Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, Mass

<sup>30</sup> James C O'Leary, "Fire 30 Shots At Lawrence," Boston Globe, February 27, 1912 (1-3)

<sup>31</sup> Essex County Jail Records, January – March 1912, Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, Mass

Did strikers come from specific ethnic neighborhoods? The full nature of the role ethnicity played in the organization of the strike could be explored by documenting where arrested strikers lived. Strikers who did not speak, read, or write English conversed within their own groups, and by combining home addresses, immigration background, and other such information from the arrest records, a map could be drawn illustrating how these networks functioned. Did people get arrested together because they knew each other and were working in concert on a strike-related activity? How did strikers overcome language differences? Is there any evidence that groups of strikers from different nationalities got arrested while engaged in the same activity? Or, were group arrests more likely comprised of the same nationality?

- Important figures during the strike:

The jail records can allow us to learn a lot more about several major strike actors. Joseph Ettor and Arturo Giovannitti have arrest records that have been lightly examined. Other figures can be identified and searched more thoroughly once an arrest record database is prepared. The police could be more thoroughly studied as well. Do certain officers show up more than others? Officer Oscar Benoit, known for his involvement in the Anna LoPizzo shooting, filled out numerous jail records.

- The “average” striker:

While of course every striker was an individual, is there a striker composite that can be created based on the rich material contained in the arrest records. What has

to be kept in mind of course is the fact that only a fraction of the 25,000 – 30,000 strikers ever faced arrest. How old were arrested strikers? Where were they from? What were their jobs? Where did they live? Large-scale data mining would allow these questions to be answered.

The Essex County Jail records, which cover the period from 1853 to the early 1980s, are a treasure trove for researchers. Over the 14 weeks I worked with them, I was continually surprised by the wealth of information the records contained. These documents will be a research gold mine going forward and are an exciting part of the History Center's collections.