

NEW ENGLAND FINNISH SOCIALIST SUMMER FESTIVAL IN MAYNARD -

1924

FOREWORD by Roy Helander

The Finnish Socialist Chapter of Maynard, which operated at what we know as Parker Street Hall, hosted the New England Finnish Socialist Summer Festival in July, 1924. A festival edition of the "Raivaaja", (The Pioneer), a socialist oriented Finnish language newspaper published in Fitchburg, Mass. appeared a week before the festival and contained several articles describing the story of the Finns in our town.

The conductor of the "Imatra" Band at that time was Louis Koski and he writes this story about the band at that time. Band directors were paid \$15 per month in the 20's. He was also the director of the mixed chorus which he had recently rejuvenated and the man in charge of the festival play, Lehar's ever popular operetta "Merry Widow" which was presented three times during the weekend festival, selling over 900 tickets. Then Koski was the man who arranged the selection of the music for the massed bands and conducted the performances as well.

Friday was given over to the activities of the Ypsel's, the young people's socialist league, who had a cultural program, athletics of all varieties and a dance at Vose's, the park owned by the Maynard socialist chapter. The operetta debuted also. Saturday began with a parade from Parker St. Hall to Vose's. At the park Koski led all bands and choruses in a singing of "The Internationale", which had been the anthem of the socialist movement for years. Later it was taken over by Lenin in Russian. The massed bands played first, then program with speakers, poetry, choral pieces and individual band performances. Athletics filled the day and a dance at the park followed while the operetta was performed at the hall. Sunday morning the bands held a short parade around the downtown streets of Maynard from 9 to 10, so as not to disturb the church services. Sunday was a repeat of Saturday and then at 4 pm all the musicians presented a concert at the park. A dance and the operetta concluded the weekend.

The crowd was estimated at 5000 by the local press. The guests were fed soup and sandwiches over the weekend and were housed in private families who had volunteered their homes in the months before. People came in special train cars from around Massachusetts and New York City. The attendees went to the events that interested them, not everyone saw everything. There were those who only came to socialize and meet other Finns. It was an annual event and Maynard was the host six times in the years from 1912 to the 1949's.

I hope you enjoy the articles which include the ad informing the attendees of how the parade would be organized, a story by Verner Niskanen on the history of the Maynard Finns, another on the history of the socialist chapter and a story by Louis Koski on the history of the "Imatra" Band

