

This Week in Saratoga County History – 1910 Corinth Paper Mill Strike

Submitted by Rachel Clothier, April 23, 2020

Rachel Clothier is the historian for the Town of Corinth. She has been active with the Corinth Museum, 609 Palmer Ave, for over 38 years. She is always on the lookout for stories about Corinth's past. More photos of the Corinth area can be found at Facebook/Corinth Museum. Rachel can be reached at clothierfarm@gmail.com



Militia on Main Street during Corinth IP Strike – March 1910

There had been riots in the streets of Corinth. A railroad trestle had been blown up with dynamite. Attempts were made to blow up two bridges on roads leading into the village. National Guard units from adjoining counties were brought in to restore order. All of this upheaval occurred exactly 110 years ago.

The final straw for workers at International Paper Company at the Hudson River Mill at Palmer Falls in Corinth had been the firing of Cornelius O'Leary without cause on March 6, 1910. The management of IP had been revoking several promises made in 1908 after a short-lived strike. Men were made to work every evening including Sundays, wages had been cut, and workers were discharged without cause. Discrimination against former employees was rampant. Word spread and within a few days IP mills throughout the area were on strike. Eventually more than 5,000 men walked out in the Northeast. Saratoga County Sheriff John Washburn could not control the riots in Corinth when IP brought in the strikebreakers to keep the mill in operation. Dynamite had been used to slow the transport of replacement workers. The sheriff telegraphed Governor Hughes. At this time a county sheriff had the authority to call upon National Guard troops from neighboring counties to help control the chaos. Each soldier carried 50 rounds of ammunition. The guard camped at the outskirts of town and accompanied the strikebreakers from the train station to the mill. A group of boys about the age of twelve formed their own junior militia as reported in the April 19 issue of the Troy Daily Times. They carried tin sabers and wooden guns and some of the young fellows procured revolvers. Leon Hickok was accidentally shot in the hand by a discharged revolver.

Meetings of the strikers were held in the Catholic Church Parish Hall and the Central House Opera House. Negotiations between the strikers and the management was at a standstill. Town leaders and clergy requested further help. The Bureau of Mediation and Arbitration was brought in and could not resolve the situation. Eventually New York Labor Law held a formal inquiry with meetings in Corinth, Glens Falls, and New York City. Seventy-six days after the strike began it was ended. The settlement accepted on May 21, 1910 included the following provisions: all men on strike will return to work as soon as possible, a three tour system with overtime and Sunday work will remain in effect, IP will recognize committees on all grievances within the various departments, an approximate 5% pay raise will take effect on August 1, 1910, grievances that cannot be settled locally will be handled by New York managers, paper machines will operate six days a week -24 hours a day, and pulp mills will operate 6 ½ days when necessary.

This strike cost International Paper Company a total of 140,498 works days in all of their New York mills combined. Unfortunately, this strike was just a precursor to the next big strike in Corinth in 1921 that lasted five years and had a lasting impact on the community in Corinth.

Sources: 1910 Saratogian as well as newspapers all over the state and nation, Special Bulletin of the State of N.Y. Department of Labor Issues 43-45