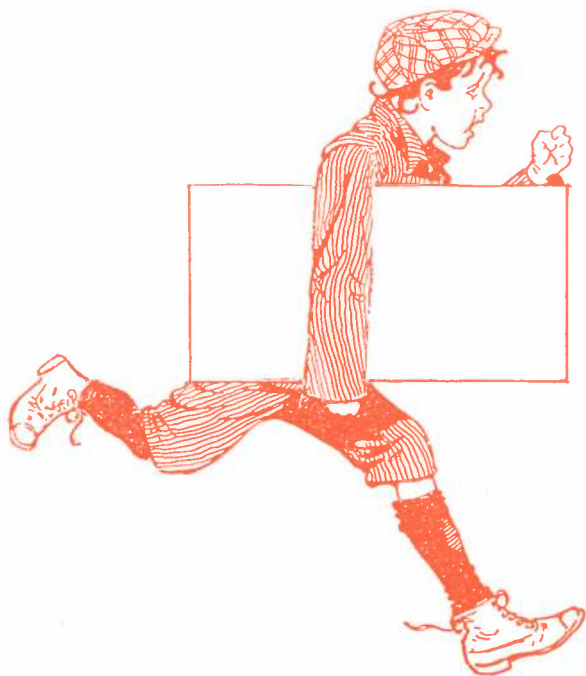


“THIRTY-FIVE CHILDREN

ARE COMING”



“Thirty-five Children Are Coming” read the headline on the front page of the *Barre Daily Times*, Saturday, February 17, 1912. At five o’clock that afternoon, several hundred people crowded around the Central Vermont Railroad station and cheered as the train pulled into Depot Square. A band played as the children stepped from the train and joined a parade to City Hall, around the park, and down Main Street.

Who were the children and why were people so excited about their arrival in Barre? They were the sons and daughters of factory workers in the woolen mills of Lawrence, Massachusetts. Wages in the mills were low, and then a cut in pay led to a **strike** in Lawrence. Thousands of families were out of work and few had enough to eat.

The strike in Lawrence became news everywhere. People in other cities who wanted to help the striking families offered to give the children food and shelter until the end of the strike. Some children went to New York, others to Philadelphia. Antonio Broggi and Tibaldo Rossi traveled from Barre to Lawrence to **escort** the group of thirty-five children to Vermont.

Margaret Sanger, who later became a world-famous champion of better medical care for women, was in Lawrence to examine the children before they left. She reported to Congress that the children were **malnourished** and dressed in rags. Most had no underwear, though it was wintertime, and their shoes were worn out. The huge woolen mills of Lawrence produced more cloth than any other mills in the world, yet the mill children had no woolen clothing to wear on the bitterest of winter days.

The children who arrived in Barre ranged in age from four to fifteen. Each had a badge to wear with the words, “Lawrence girl” or “Lawrence boy.” At the Socialist Hall they sat down to “a monstrous banquet.” The Italian drama company presented a play in the children’s honor at the Opera House.

While the children were in Barre local families welcomed them into their homes. Barre **merchants** donated bread, meat, milk, fruit, and candy. Dr. Joe Jackson, the city health officer, examined the children, and other people took photographs of them to send to their parents in Lawrence.



Mill children from Lawrence, Massachusetts, during their stay in Barre, Vermont. Antonio Broggi of Barre, at left wearing the dark hat, traveled from Lawrence with them. The children are standing on the steps of the Co-operative Store on Granite Street in Barre, February 18, 1912. Photo courtesy Aldrich Public Library, Barre.

The citizens of Barre were proud of the help they gave the mill families of Lawrence, proud that along with people in New York City and Philadelphia, they had opened their homes to the hungry children of the factory workers. When the strike was settled on March 14, the children went home, leaving many new friends behind them.

VOCABULARY

- strike** — action by employees who stop work in demand of job improvements
- escort** — accompany, go with someone
- malnourished** — underfed, not having enough to eat
- merchants** — business owners