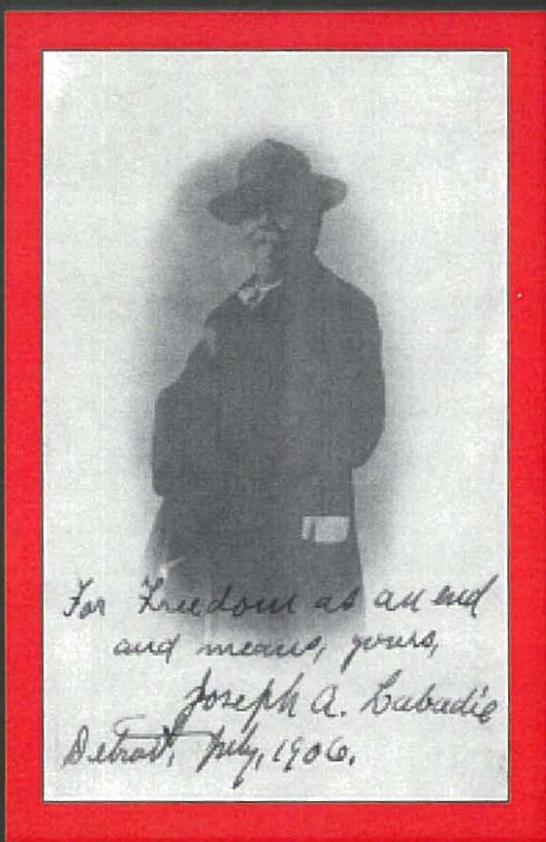


Jo Labadie and His Gift to Michigan



A Legacy for the Masses

Jo Labadie and His Gift to Michigan: A Legacy for the Masses

Curated by
Julie Herrada and Edward Weber

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INTRODUCTION

When Jo (Charles Joseph Antoine) Labadie was born in 1850, most of Michigan was wilderness and the U.S. was largely pre-industrial. By the time he died, in 1933, the state of Michigan was one of the most highly industrialized in the country, due to the automobile industry. In between, Jo Labadie had played an important role in determining how workers and employers were to relate to each other in the modern industrial world.

As a believer in the power (and the right) of individuals to determine their own fate, Jo Labadie was responsible for organizing the first significant labor union in Michigan, the Knights of Labor. As a champion of freedom and the common man, he had his own printing press and used it effectively to share his views. As an active author and organizer, he met and corresponded with many people who were also actively working for human rights and workers' rights.

Through his activist interests, his labor organizing, his printing, writing, and publishing, and his far-flung correspondence, Jo Labadie accumulated a sizable collection of books, pamphlets, newspapers, magazines, manuscripts, and memorabilia. He credited his wife, Sophie, for preserving much of this material. By the time he was 60, Jo was determined to find an institution that would accept his collection and make it available for future generations. Even though friends at the University of Wisconsin tried to convince him his collection should go there, Jo wanted it to stay in Michigan and was very pleased when the University of Michigan Board of Regents accepted the Labadie Collection for the University Library in 1911.

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In the nearly 90 years that the Labadie Collection has been at

the University of Michigan, it has grown to many times its original size through both gifts and purchases. It now contains some 40,000 books, 800 current and 8000 non-current periodicals, 20,000 pamphlets, and many collections of manuscripts from both people and organizations, as well as photographs, posters, and memorabilia. Topics covered have expanded to include earlier 19th century radical movements and later 20th century materials, as well as the right side of the political spectrum. Our aim is always to gather materials that capture the ideas of radical social and political movements directly from the participants, just as Jo Labadie's collection captures his ideas and those of his comrades.

If Jo Labadie could see the collection that bears his name today, and could see the many students, faculty, and scholars who use its materials, would he be pleased? I think so. During the regular school term, over half the users of the Special Collections Library are undergraduate students here at the University of Michigan. Jo would surely be pleased by that. Each year, several new books, articles, and television documentaries appear that have used materials from the Labadie Collection. He would probably be astonished, but pleased, by that. Thanks to the strength of current Labadie holdings, we are able to continue to build by adding collections of archives and personal papers each year. I think Jo would wish he could be here to delve into those new collections himself.

After 90 years, the University of Michigan remains grateful to Jo Labadie for the donation of his collection, and proud of the fact that we have built his original gift into one of the leading libraries documenting radicalism in the world. Please join us in celebrating the 150th anniversary of Jo Labadie's birth by enjoying this exhibit celebrating his life and work.

Peggy Daub, Head, Special Collections Library

Birth and Early Life

Jo Labadie was both the great grandson and the great-great grandson of Antoine Louis Descompte dit Labadie, who was born in Montréal in 1730 and moved to the French fortress town of Detroit at the age of 10. He apparently sired 33 children among three wives, and with additional large families in the second generation, it became common for Labadie cousins in the Michigan-Ontario area to intermarry. Antoine Louis's second wife, Marie, said to be the daughter of an Ojibway chief, was Jo's great-great grandmother, and his third wife, Charlotte, was Jo's great grandmother.

Antoine Louis purchased a plot of land in Sandwich, Ontario in 1767 and moved there with his wife Marie, who died around 1784. This farm, with a windmill, stayed in the family until 1856, when a grandson representing the nine surviving children of Antoine Louis's first wife sold more than half the property to Hiram Walker, who built a distillery and mill there in 1857. The success of Walker's company town resulted in the naming of the area "Walkerville."

Louis Descompte dit Labadie, a son of Antoine Louis and Charlotte, had a daughter, Euphrosyne Angelique Labadie, who was Jo's mother. In 1849 Euphrosyne married her distant cousin Antoine (Anthony) Cleophas Labadie (great grandson of Antoine Louis and Marie), of Paw Paw, Michigan. Charles Joseph (Jo) Antoine Labadie, the eldest of their children, was born in Paw Paw on April 18, 1850. After his birth, the family moved to the Labadie estate on the Canadian side of the Detroit River where they lived in peace with the neighboring native people of Walpole Island. When Jo was six or seven, his family, being the dispossessed branch, was forced to move off the property when it was sold to Hiram Walker, and they settled near his father's hometown of Paw Paw.

Jo's father, Anthony Cleophis, was most at home living in the wilderness, and was probably pleased to be made to vacate the Labadie estate and move his family back to the woods of southwestern Michigan. Having lived among the Native Americans in the forests of Michigan since the age of 14, Anthony was uneasy with village life. He often took Jo on hunting expeditions or trips for which he served as interpreter between the Native Americans and Jesuit missionaries. This was the life that impressed young Jo, and that he remembered with fondness. Many of his poems and reminiscences reveal a passionate sentiment for this simple but fulfilling existence. Ultimately Jo's father could not subdue his wandering spirit and love of the wilderness, and in 1869 left his family and settled in Kalkaska in the northern lower peninsula of Michigan.

As the eldest child in a large and poor family, Jo became the mainstay of his mother and of his agreeable but feckless father. When adolescence neared, and with it the possibility of a more substantial livelihood, Jo was first sent to learn watchmaking with an uncle. After a year he left, being attracted to the hurly-burly of an apprenticeship in a printing shop with its lively discussion of the issues of the day. Printing was the profession he practiced for some twenty-five years, until ill health forced him to seek another livelihood. He remained a printer by avocation for the rest of his life.

Marriage and Family

Jo Labadie and Sophie Archambeau were married after an ardent courtship on October 14, 1877, at St. Alphonse's Catholic Church in Windsor. As first cousins, they were obliged to obtain a special dispensation. Despite Sophie's piety and Jo's agnosticism, their differences in religious faith did not di-

minish the regard they had for each other.

Their first child, Leo Donatus, was born in 1879 but lived only seventeen months. No information is known about his death. The birth of two daughters and one son followed: Laura Euphrosyne in 1886, Charlotte Antoinette in 1889, and Laurance Cleophis in 1898. The only child of the third generation was Carlotta, daughter of Charlotte Antoinette Labadie and her husband, Fred Hauser. Carlotta Hauser Anderson is the author of the biography of her grandfather, *All-American Anarchist: Joseph A. Labadie and the Labor Movement* (Wayne State University Press, 1998).

Sophie was a teacher who, unlike most women of her generation, continued in her profession after marriage. Jo gave her credit for bridging the gaps in his education.

Intellectual Development

Although it is thought Jo had no more than a very rudimentary formal education, he had not only absorbed the basics but wrote letters that could easily pass muster as he entered adulthood. He continued to educate himself throughout his life, and became a proficient writer and editor. In addition, his wife, Sophie, not only encouraged him to write but also served as a mentor in his choice of expression.

As Jo Labadie came of age, the Civil War had ended and the United States was experiencing a hugely expanding economy with transcontinental transportation and the excitement and corruption of the Gilded Age. The disparities between the immense wealth of the new tycoons and the poverty of the workers and immigrants prompted a large variety of suggested remedies, some as benign as the Homestead Act and a few

factory protection laws, others as debatable as Greenbackism and the “silver movement.” Some of the sweeping revolutionary ideas of socialism and anarchism provoked both hope and horror. Labadie’s mind expanded in unconventional and sometimes contradictory ways.

The later nineteenth century was an age of hot intellectual disputation in general. Perhaps the fulmination of preachers against Darwinism helped to make Labadie a lifelong agnostic. Certainly his avid reading of John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer stood behind his developing personal philosophy.

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)

Published in 1859, the same year as Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*, John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty* was the great philosophical argument for complete civil freedom and became the philosophical basis of most modern civil liberties organizations.

The precocious son of the utilitarian philosopher, James Mill, the younger Mill never attended a school or university, became entirely self-educated, and wrote learned articles from his early years. Various debates within the circle of philosophical radicals fostered Mill’s independence, and membership in the Speculative Society encouraged his tolerance for a very wide range of views. Mill’s renowned autobiography revealed that his intellectual concentration combined with emotional starvation resulted in a youthful nervous breakdown, from the despair of which he was rescued by his conclusion that happiness was not merely dependent on finding pleasure and that cultivation of the feelings is as important as gaining a grasp of concepts.

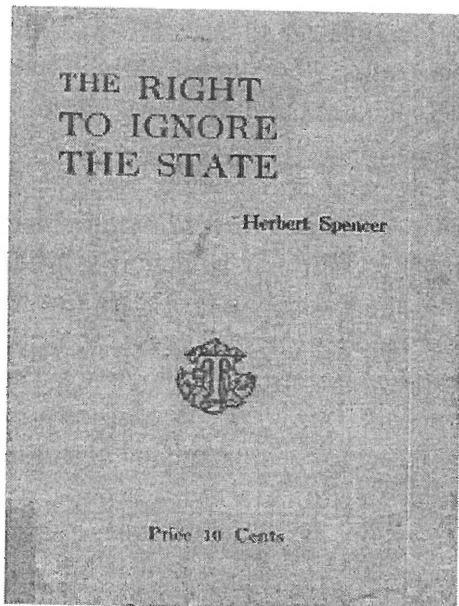
Mill held that every individual has the logical right to speak, write, and publish opinions since these cannot inflict physical harm on any other person, and that only bodily harm or property damage should be protected by law.

Jo Labadie enthusiastically welcomed Mill’s libertarianism, akin to anarchist principles of individual freedom. As the author of columns he called “Cranky Notions”, Labadie appreciated Mill’s statement in *On Liberty*, “Eccentricity has always abounded when and where strength of character has abounded, and the amount of eccentricity in a society has been proportional to the amount of genius, mental vigor, and moral courage it contained.”

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)

Both Jo Labadie and his mentor, Benjamin Tucker, avidly read the works of the greatest English philosopher of the late nineteenth century, Herbert Spencer.

In 1847 Spencer had abandoned railway engineering for his own ingenious if not very successful inventions and free-ranging essays published in the *Westminster Review*. His first book, *Principles of Psychology* (1855), suggested the mind developed from biological necessities. Commenced in 1860, Spencer’s system of synthetic philosophy endeavored to find a universal principle that underlies all phenomena and encompasses all areas of human knowledge. From the formless mass of undifferentiated primal energy emerged galaxies in which the vital force became ever more specific and individual. The Darwinian theory of evolution harmonized with Spencer’s cast of thought; he coined the phrases “struggle for existence” and “survival of the fittest” as keys to life on our planet. Spencer warned that the drift to central-



ers for emancipation from convention, and radicals intent on future utopias.

Darwin and Evolution

Darwin's theories of evolution and natural selection were prime areas of philosophical debate during Jo Labadie's formative years. Skepticism about the literal truth of the Bible had been voiced from the time of Copernicus, but the Age of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century emphasized scientific inquiry and scoffed at theology. Geology dealt the first powerful blow to Genesis with the study of rock formations. The brilliant English geologist, Sir Charles Lyell (1797-1875) maintained in his *Principles of Geology* (1832) that sedimentary layers were formed over eons of time. Undoubtedly this prepared western society for the ready acceptance of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) despite an intensely

ization in human society endangered the individual who was both the measure and the means of progress.

Through his many essays Spencer exerted a tremendous influence. His materialistic views and conviction of inexorable forces working through universal laws appealed alike to pathfinders in science, proponents of laissez-faire economics, fight-

hostile reception by religionists who insisted on separate creation of each species by God, and others who were dismayed by the principle of survival of the fittest as the dominating force in evolution.

In some ways, Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1871) was even more contentious than his earlier volume, as in it he met head-on the question of human evolution. Darwin not only stated that physical man had evolved from other forms of life but that human systems of law, customs, and morals arose, not from any divine source, but from our animal heritage. To a reader like Jo Labadie this implied that our laws and our habits could change in response to a higher mode of thought.

Socialism and Karl Marx

Despite his strong advocacy of the rights of labor, Jo Labadie's faith in the mainstream political parties certainly lasted at least until 1876, when he voted for the Democratic candidate for President, Samuel Tilden. It was soon after that he began to explore socialism.

Socialist doctrines flourished in the large working-class German community of Detroit, but its enthusiasts knew that to be an effective force they must attract English-speaking comrades. Led by curiosity to such a socialist meeting in 1877, Labadie soon became an ardent advocate of socialism, along with his close friend and long-time comrade, Judson Grenell. Together they produced the *Detroit Socialist* (1877-78) and helped formulate a mayoral ticket in 1878. As the Socialistic Tract Association, Labadie and Grenell, along with John Francis Bay, published a series of seven short essays about labor's rightful share in production and the kind of government they envisioned. Later, however, Labadie stated that

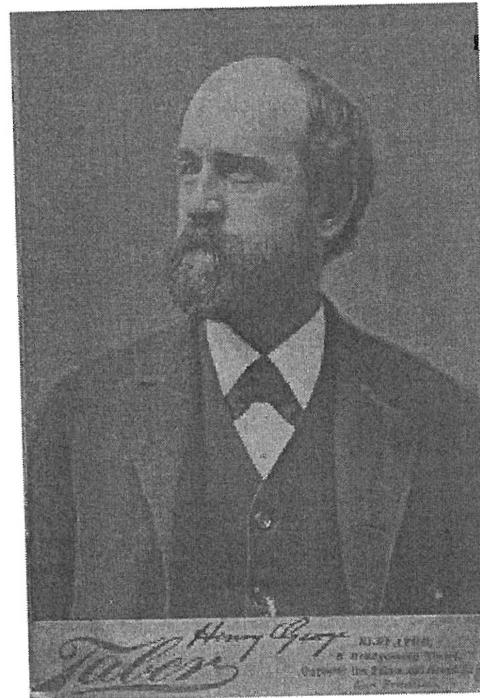
his “Marxmanship” was never very keen. He belonged to other groups like the Greenbackers, and as an individualist anarchist he feared the concentrated power that would result from state control of production.

Greenbackism

The Greenback Party, founded by farmers in the 1870s to promote currency expansion, called for the issuance of the greenback (paper currency not backed by gold), with the belief that printing more money was the solution to the country’s economic crisis. In 1878 the Greenback Party joined ranks with labor organizations, whose demands included a reduction in working hours, establishment of a federal labor bureau, and restriction of Chinese immigration (perceived as a cause of low wages). The two groups formed the Greenback-Labor Party, and in the 1878 elections polled over one million votes and elected 14 members to Congress.

Michigan was a strong Greenback state, led by labor lobbyist Richard Trevellick. Many socialists were avidly against the Greenbackers, including Labadie’s friend Judson Grenell, who criticized their ideas as incorrect and unsound. Nonetheless in 1879, at the age of 29 and still a socialist, Joseph Labadie accepted the nomination to run for mayor of Detroit on the Greenback-Labor ticket, despite his colleagues’ criticisms. He received only 110 votes. That was the first and last time Labadie ran for public office.

In the 1880s the party’s popularity steadily declined, and many Greenbackers joined the Populist Party of the 1890s.



**Henry George
(1839-1897) and the
Single Tax Move-
ment**

Born in 1839 in Philadelphia, Henry George led a life very similar to Jo Labadie’s. Though the two didn’t become acquainted until Labadie sent George a fan letter in 1881, their lives paralleled each other. Both were born poor and left home at early ages to learn the

printing trade, and both were self taught and opinionated, with analogous ideas about government. Labadie was highly influenced by George’s best-selling *Progress and Poverty* (1879), which asserted that private ownership of land caused an unequal distribution of wealth. His solution was to place a single tax on the value of land, making it possible to eliminate all other taxes. There are many “Single Tax Movements” and schools around the world, including one founded in New York City in 1932 and still in existence, with affiliated schools around the country.

Labadie and George corresponded until George’s untimely death in 1897. An estimated 100,000 people marched at his funeral, and the *New York Times* venerated George in an obituary, stating, “his life closed in the noblest services to his ideals.”

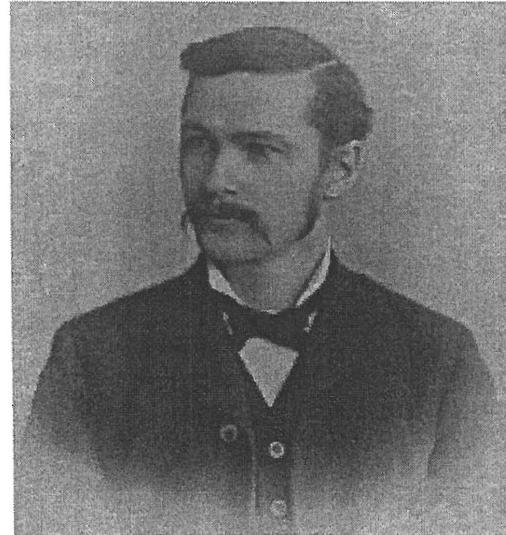
Knights of Labor

In October 1878 Charles Litchman, Grand Scribe of the newly organized Knights of Labor, traveled to the thriving labor center of Detroit and selected Jo Labadie to form the first cell of the Knights of Labor in Michigan. The Noble and Holy Order of the Knights preferred to keep its identity obscured, for its mission to organize all laboring men (including the unskilled and blacks) into a secret federation was certain to arouse intense hostility from business leaders. Attractive, bluff, gregarious, and a ready speaker, Labadie was a splendid choice for the incipient organization whose ideals of brotherhood and justice inflamed the tenor of his life.

It was due to Labadie's zeal that the Knights of Labor grew to a significant force in Michigan. Although he strongly opposed the policy of secrecy, as well as the mystical ceremonies, he may have enjoyed disguising his first group by naming it "The Washington Literary Society." Traveling through the state, Labadie oversaw the formation of Knights of Labor groups elsewhere. By 1887, his Detroit District Assembly 50 [DA 50] numbered some 10,000 workers of both sexes and many nationalities, more than a third of the local work force.

Judson Grenell (1847-1930)

For many years Jo Labadie's closest friend, the quiet, thoughtful Judson Grenell, served not only as a foil for his colorful co-worker in early Michigan socialist and labor organizations, but also as a fervent expositor for the exchange of ideas. Together Labadie and Grenell edited several labor newspapers including *The Detroit Socialist*, *The Detroit Times*, and *The Labor Review*, also known as *** (Three Stars). An ar-



dent socialist, Grenell never embraced anarchism but finally espoused the "single tax" as the key to economic and social justice. Throughout his long career as a printer, journalist, editor, legislator, and civic activist, Grenell fought for many reform movements prominent during his life: wage and labor laws, electoral democracy, codification of economic statistics, creation of needed government agencies, cooperatives, settlement houses, and women's rights. Grenell's cast of mind foreshadows the Progressive Era. Despite the essential difference in their basic philosophies, Grenell and Labadie were companionable warriors in the battles for individual rights and social justice.

Benjamin Ricketson Tucker (1854-1939)

The most significant figure for more than a generation in the anarchist movement was Benjamin Ricketson Tucker, whose journal *Liberty* (1881-1908) was one of the longest running American anarchist journals. Of Massachusetts parentage, Tucker met the anarchists Josiah Warren and William B. Greene in 1872 at a meeting of the New England Labor Reform League, and in the same year became intimately involved with the radical feminist Victoria Woodhull, notorious for her

free love doctrines. With Woodhull and her sister, Tennessee Claflin, Tucker traveled to France in 1873, studied and translated the works of anarchists Pierre Joseph Proudhon and Mikhail Bakunin, and became the foremost exponent of individualist anarchism in the United States.

Tucker contributed to and edited Ezra Heywood's *The Word*, and after his own short-lived *Radical Review* (1870-1878), found his bearings in *Liberty*, where his learning, trenchant style, and fondness for polemics made him an intellectual force. Tucker was an eloquent preacher against state control and for the freedom of the individual to conduct his own personal life without outside interference.

It was Tucker who enlightened Labadie's dilemma with the concentration of power in state socialism. Their extant correspondence covers more than forty years. After a disastrous fire in the printing office ruined *Liberty*, Tucker moved to congenial France, outside the mainstream of American developments, and wrote very little more.

Anarchism

In the early 1880s Labadie's constant quest for truth and social justice brought him to ask Benjamin Tucker, editor of the anarchist journal *Liberty*, about some practical elements of conducting an anarchist society. Labadie was at this time a member of the Socialist Labor Party, a longtime member of the Detroit Typographical Union, and still involved with the Knights of Labor. In seemingly direct contradiction to his earlier "communistic" philosophy of socialism, Labadie's anarchism, like Tucker's, was individualist in nature, typically American, in the tradition of Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Thomas Paine. Individualist an-

archists asserted that people should be sovereign and free to live their lives as they choose, as long as they do not infringe on the rights of any other individual. They see all government, including majority rule and state socialism, as tyranny over the individual. This theory extended to the right of the individual to own the fruits of his own labor, which meant individualist anarchists were proponents of private property and free trade. Anarchists such as Labadie were opposed to all laws that created an unfair economic disadvantage to people through tariffs, patents, copyrights, land monopolies, and ownership of natural resources.

Individualist anarchists differed sharply from the communist anarchism of Peter Kropotkin, Johann Most, and Emma Goldman, who promoted a society without government, but based on collective good and abolition of private property. They also varied from the anarcho-syndicalism of August Spies and Albert Parsons, who advocated revolutionary trade unionism. Notwithstanding ideological and theoretical distinctions, Labadie admired these other radicals, even publicly defending them.

Due to Labadie's famous affable nature, the ease with which he made friends, his optimistic outlook, his dapper appearance, and his nonviolent convictions, he became known as "the Gentle Anarchist." Few newspaper articles about him failed to mention these qualities, which perhaps caused the authorities to take him less seriously or to view him as less of a threat to the public welfare. Although his belief was that anarchism would eventually be accepted without a violent revolution, which added to his popularity among non-anarchists, Labadie was not beyond displaying antagonism and spewing fierce rhetoric when his sense of justice was violated, as during the Haymarket trial. Labadie, always in favor of working people (he was one of them, after all), saw

merit in trade unions and remained active in them for most of his life. Although he disagreed with many people, including his closest friends, he was a constant advocate of free speech and never wavered in his fight to protect it.

The Haymarket Affair

On May 4, 1886 in Haymarket Square, Chicago, a rally was called to protest the recent attacks on strikers at the McCormick Harvester Works, where just a day before, four workers were killed and several more wounded. Some 3,000 people showed up at the protest rally, among them August Spies, editor of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, the German-language publication of the International Working People's Association (IWPA), and Albert Parsons, member of the Knights of Labor and editor of the *Alarm*, the English-language IWPA paper. Both men were known to Labadie and were considered leaders in the turbulent labor struggles. Toward the end of the rally, after most of the people had gone home, including Parsons, about 180 policemen appeared. They were led by Captain John Bonfield (nicknamed by workers "clubber"), who ignored the recommendation of the mayor to dismiss his men and ordered the peaceful crowd to disperse. Just then a bomb went off, killing one police officer. Mayhem broke out, and in the commotion seven more police and many civilians died from gunshot wounds. It was later established that, apart from the first victim, the rest of the police were shot by their fellow officers.

Although it has never been discovered who made or threw the bomb, Spies and Parsons, along with Louis Lingg (Spies' assistant on the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*), Michael Schwab, Samuel Fielden, Adolph Fischer, Oscar Neebe, and George Engel, were arrested for conspiracy to commit murder. All the men

were labor union activists and anarchists; however, only two of the eight were at Haymarket Square at the time of the bombing. After a highly sensationalized and grossly unfair trial in front of a prejudiced jury, seven of the men were sentenced to death and Oscar Neebe received a long prison sentence. Schwab and Fielden later appealed to Illinois Governor Oglesby for executive clemency and had their sentences commuted to life in prison. Rather than surrender to the state's assassin, Lingg committed suicide in jail, leaving Spies, Parsons, Fischer, and Engel to face the hangman, which they did on November 11, 1887. Since there was no substantial evidence against them, it was commonly believed that it was not the actions of the defendants that put them on trial, but their ideals and philosophies.

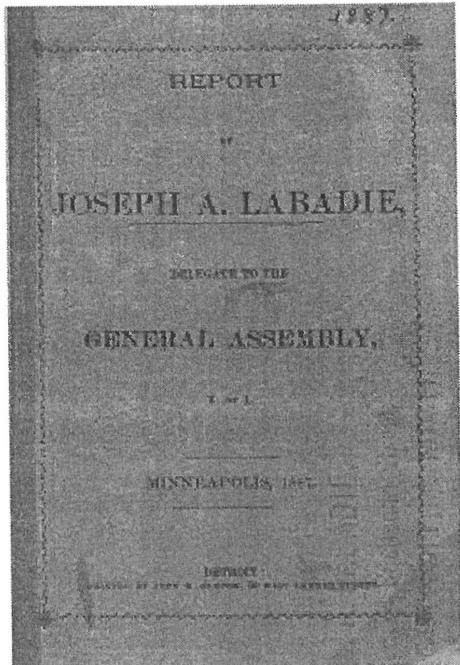
Jo Labadie was already an anarchist by this time, having been influenced by Benjamin Tucker. He was also very active with the Knights of Labor and had been in the forefront of labor agitation in Detroit for several years. The week before the Haymarket bombing he received a visit from August Spies, whom he admired and respected. Albert Parsons had been a fellow delegate with Labadie at the 1880 Greenback-Labor convention, and the two had together broken with the Socialistic Labor Party to initiate the IWPA. Despite ideological differences, Labadie considered both men brave and honorable, and the Haymarket case to be a fundamental struggle for freedom of speech. He spent much time and effort defending the men in his writings and speeches. His friends were not nearly as agitated by the ordeal, including Benjamin Tucker, who accused the martyrs of being "falsely called Anarchists," and Henry George, who did nothing in defense of the Haymarket martyrs, and in fact believed they were guilty. Terence Powderly, attempting to distance the Knights of Labor from the Haymarket anarchists, openly admonished them, even resorting to denying his own radical

past, and found himself the target of Labadie's hostile denunciations.

By the time the second execution date was set (the first being delayed by a stay), public perception had swung in the opposite direction; it was now generally believed that the Haymarket anarchists had been railroaded. Labadie visited them in jail twice just a few weeks before their execution, on his way to and from the Minneapolis Knights of Labor convention, shaking hands with each of them through the bars of their cells.

Labadie returned home from that visit with renewed zeal and resumed organizing for their defense by printing and distributing pamphlets, organizing mass meetings, and raising money. Never did he waver in his defense of them or his loyalty to their cause, and he was understandably distraught upon their deaths. Over 20,000 people attended their funeral in Chicago on November 13, 1887.

In 1893, Governor of Illinois John P. Altgeld pardoned the three living Haymarket defendants, Michael Schwab, Samuel Fielden, and Oscar Neebe in a scathing indictment of the trial process. That same year, a bronze monument was erected in honor of the dead men at Waldheim Cemetery (now named



Forest Home), Chicago, the gravesites of all but one of the Haymarket Martyrs. This Haymarket Monument still attracts many visitors from all over the world.

Later Relations to Labor Organizations

Although he was active in many different groups during his lifetime, Jo Labadie was first and foremost a leader in organized labor. In 1882 he addressed a convention of the struggling Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions (FOTLU), urging this new organization to merge with the Knights of Labor. Four years later, in the wake of his differences of opinion on the Haymarket Affair with Knights of Labor leader Terence Powderly, he was heartily glad they had rejected his proposal.

The vacillation, undercutting of labor struggles and settlements, and personal animosity of Grand Master Powderly had already provoked bitter opposition within the organization, even though membership in the Knights had peaked with about 700,000 members. Powderly's conduct after the Haymarket Affair especially infuriated Labadie. Powderly denounced anarchists as traitors to the peaceful advancement of labor, tried to deny his own radical past, and appeared part of the mob bent on vigilante justice. Desperately trying to rally support for the Haymarket Martyrs and prevent their execution, Jo got support from the fledgling American Federation of Labor, the successor of FOTLU, whose founder, Samuel Gompers, he found dynamic and personally genial. At the 1887 Minneapolis convention of the Knights of Labor, Labadie, angry and bent on a showdown, attacked the leadership of the organization which he had founded in Michigan and to which he had devoted so many years, and led the "kickers" out to formulate their own manifesto.

After a period of dejection Labadie was inspired by Gompers in 1888 to urge the formation of a new organization of existing trade unions, the Michigan Federation of Labor. He became its first president in 1889. The Declaration of Principles for this organization, Labadie's handiwork, proclaimed lofty ideals of the brotherhood of all working people, but the trade unions were more interested in pursuing pragmatic goals. Labadie gradually dropped out of the work of this organization, and the Federation found its national support in the American Federation of Labor (AFL). The AFL then became dominant as the Knights declined into obscurity. Labadie and Gompers exchanged cordial letters for almost forty years about the issues of the day, but the original ideals of the Knights of Labor, all workers in one organization, remained with Jo for the rest of his life.

**Come and hear
this able speaker.**

ADDRESS BY

Joseph A. Labadie

OF DETROIT, MICH.

Poet, Writer and Thinker.

**Subject:—"Things as they are
and as they ought to be."**

Sunday, November 11th, 3 P. M.

AT

FLORENCE PARLORS,

527 Main Street.

Leon Czolgosz (1873-1901)

The assassination of President William McKinley by obscure, self-proclaimed anarchist Leon Czolgosz at the Pan-American Fair in Buffalo, September 6, 1901, electrified and shocked the nation. A tidal wave of vengeful anger was directed at all those who used the name anarchist. Many anar-

chists were arrested and detained without warrant, their clubs and homes were raided, and dozens were physically attacked.

Generally anarchists had reviled McKinley for his brutal imperialist policies in the Philippines and elsewhere and his violent antagonism toward labor, but few condoned the assassination. Emma Goldman became a particular object of hatred and fear after the press quoted Czolgosz as saying that a speech by Goldman, to whom he was unknown, had firmed his resolve to kill the President. However, Goldman, along with other anarchists such as Voltairine de Cleyre, Jay Fox, Abe Isaac, Max Baginski, and Kate Austin, saw Czolgosz as a victim of the violence of war and oppression committed by the state under McKinley's rule. They were extremely distressed at the vicious treatment of Czolgosz, which included several severe beatings, a flagrantly unfair trial, and death in the electric chair, after which his head was dissected and his body was burned in acid and lime.

In Detroit, which was Czolgosz's birthplace, Jo Labadie, in a newspaper column, condemned the killing of the President as the act of an insane man, and asserted the assassin was not even an anarchist. Emma Goldman and other anarchists saw Czolgosz's crime as the desperate act of a fighter for the cause of liberty. Despite their opposing views, all anarchists were classified together in the public eye. In 1903 Congress passed legislation which banned immigrants who advocated the overthrow of government.

The Water Board Incident

During the depression of the 1890s, Jo Labadie lost his job at the *Detroit News* due to ill health after years of breathing the fetid air of printing shops. Times were hard and Jo and Sophie

were having difficulty making ends meet. At the behest of his friends in city government, Jo was offered a civil service position in the Water Works Department, which allowed him to work outdoors and in a healthier environment. Although this government job compromised his ideals as an anarchist he felt he was not in a position to turn down the offer.

In 1908 Detroit Post Office Inspector J.J. Larmour declared letters from Joseph Labadie "unmailable" because of Labadie's use of stickers on his envelopes quoting venerable writers and philosophers such as Thomas Jefferson, John Stuart Mill, George Bernard Shaw, Herbert Spencer, and Lao-Tze. Labadie refused to stop using the stickers. Although



Labadie's popularity came in handy and public opinion forced Larmour to drop the issue, a month later Water Board Commissioner James Pound tried to have Jo fired from his job at the Water Works for "uttering and publishing anarchistic ideas denunciatory of all government." Labadie's numerous friends again came through for him, writing letters, making phone calls, and visiting

Water Board members to voice their disapproval. The outcry in favor of Labadie, and vehemently against Pound, was astounding. Labadie's friends in high places, including J. L. Hudson and Carl Schmidt, also came to his defense, and Labadie was back to work within two weeks. A *Detroit News* article after Jo's death in 1933 recalled that, "To hear the conversations on the streets, a stranger might have thought Detroit the world capital of anarchism."

It was while at his job at the Water Works in 1897 that Labadie met the Russian anarchist and scientist Peter Kropotkin, whose kind and placid nature impressed Labadie greatly. Kropotkin was visiting Detroit and insisted on meeting the younger anarchist whose column, "Cranky Notions", he had read in *Liberty*.

Bubbling Waters

In 1912, Jo's wealthy friend Carl Schmidt purchased 40 acres of land for the Labadie family, some thirty miles north of Detroit, off Grand River Road in Livingston County. This became the Labadies' summer home, and Jo built several structures on it for the purpose of providing a summer retreat for working people who could not afford private resorts and cottages. This venture proved more effort than the Labadies were able to handle, but they hosted many guests and friends throughout their years at Bubbling Waters, as the retreat came to be known.

Among the buildings Jo built were a cabin, a barn, a henhouse and a press shop where he worked and stored his printing press. Jo and Sophie committed themselves to setting up Bubbling Waters as a refuge from an increasingly noisy and congested Detroit. They returned to their home and family in



Detroit during the winter months where Jo was able to resume his job at the Water Works.

In addition, Jo's brothers Oliver and Hubert, both entertainers, purchased 300 acres of adjacent land and opened a film studio, the Labadie-Detroit Motion Picture Company. Here several early silent films were made, including *Three Bad Men* (1915), *The Rich Slave* (1921), *The First Woman* (1922), and *Then Came the Woman* (1926). Famous Hollywood actors of the time could be seen there on location. The Labadie Collection owns a video print of the only extant Labadie film, a 62-minute segment of *Then Came the Woman*. This segment includes a forest fire scene which, according to one Labadie descendent, was started by pouring gasoline along the proposed path of the fire. Jo's brother, Francis, was also a professional entertainer at that time, and ran a company called the Labadie Lecture and Amusement Bureau.

The land at Bubbling Waters was passed down to Jo and Sophie's children, Laura, Charlotte, and Laurance, and in 1941 was deeded to the county to be preserved as parkland. To-

day, the Kensington Metropark Nature Center displays artifacts and information about the Labadie home, and although long since ravaged by time, remnants of the foundation of the cabin can still be seen along the Aspen Trail.

The Labadie Print Shop

Located in his home on Buchanan Street in Detroit, the Labadie Shop accommodated a 100-year old printing press, of the sort only skilled craftspeople knew how to operate. Although Labadie planned to use the booklets he made by hand, with Sophie's help, to supplement their income, it was chiefly a labor of love. When he began writing poetry at age 50, he printed it and gave it out to his friends. He also printed essays and an edition of *Jesus Was an Anarchist*, by Elbert Hubbard.

Later the Labadie Shop was moved to Bubbling Waters, and Jo printed more poetry there. When Sophie died in 1931, their son Laurance moved the printing press back to Buchanan Street, and Laurance continued the tradition of printing, reading and disseminating individualist anarchist literature, while becoming a prolific writer himself.

Later years

Labadie's later years were spent publishing new booklets on his old printing press, which was by that time considered antiquated but quaint. Forced by age to retire from his job at the Water Works Department in 1920, Labadie had no pension. Jo and Sophie again relied on the benevolence of their friend Carl Schmidt, whom they often visited at his vacation home, "Walhalla," on Lake Huron.

After Sophie died in 1931, their son, Laurance, spent the next two summers with Jo at Bubbling Waters, and in 1932 took him to visit the Labadie Collection at the University of Michigan one final time. Jo Labadie died on October 7, 1933, at Receiving Hospital in Detroit. He was 83 years old. He insisted on a simple funeral with no ceremony, although all his surviving friends attended. Jo and Sophie are buried side by side in Parkview Cemetery near Detroit, at Five Mile and Farmington Roads. In keeping with their tradition of simplicity and modesty in their lives, no stones mark their graves.

Agnes Inglis (1870-1952)

Without the work and dedication of Agnes Inglis the Labadie Collection would probably not exist today. Born into a wealthy Detroit family, but tied to domestic responsibilities for many years, Inglis found herself freed from these duties in her late twenties. She first visited the Labadie Collection in 1916, as an interested activist, and saw that the University had done very little with Labadie's initial collection received four years earlier. In 1924, she began to volunteer her time sorting and arranging the material in the collection.

Being an anarchist herself, Agnes Inglis had been involved in radical political activities, organizing lectures, rallying support for labor and civil liberties causes, and assisting and even putting up bail money for World War I draft law violators and political prisoners. Although not a trained librarian, she had a good sense of the subject matter, and knowledge of the people and events and movements that made up those times. Her work brought the Labadie Collection to the forefront of "labor" libraries, and during her tenure she increased its size dramatically.

The rich correspondence between Jo Labadie and Agnes Inglis demonstrates the passion she had for the materials in the Labadie Collection and all it contained, and the gratitude Labadie felt for her untiring efforts. Few materials collected by Inglis are without her annotations, notes, or other comments about the people or place or time period represented. Labadie expressed over and over again his appreciation for her caring and dedicated work. Inglis died in 1952, at the age of 81.

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