

**Title:** Berger, Victor Collection

**Reference Code:** Mss-2027

**Inclusive Dates:** ca. 1890s – 1929

**Quantity:** 3.0 cu. ft. total

**Location:** Microfilm cabinets, MF12 (55 reels of microfilm; 1.0 cu. ft.)  
WHS, Sh. C093 (2.0 cu. ft.)

**Abstract:** Victor Berger was born in Austria-Hungary in 1860. He emigrated to the United States in 1878 and worked at odd jobs across the country before settling in Milwaukee in 1881 to teach in the city's public schools. He was thoroughly immersed in the socialist thought transplanted from Germany. He resigned his teaching position in 1892 and purchased a German-language labor newspaper to advance his political views. He co-founded the Social Democratic Party with Eugene Debs in 1898 and retained a leadership position within party ranks at the national and local levels for the rest of his life. He successfully married the labor movement with the Socialist Party, and his conservative view of the development of a socialist state held sway with party leaders for years. In 1910, Berger was the first Socialist elected to the U.S. Congress, and he was re-elected five times. His English-language newspaper, *The Milwaukee Leader*, further enhanced his status as a leading voice of the movement, though his influence declined in the wake of the anti-German, anti-Socialist sentiment that gripped the country during World War I. Berger was seriously injured by a streetcar on July 27, 1929, and he died eleven days later.

**Scope and Content:** This collection contains the microfilmed papers of Victor and Meta Berger housed at the Wisconsin Historical Society. The last series of film (reels #36-55) include Berger's papers from the Milwaukee County Historical Society's Socialist Party Papers. These records were incorporated within the larger body of material to provide a more inclusive view of the Berger's lives. Also included are the transcripts related to Berger's trial for violating the Espionage Act during World War I.

**Access and Use:** No restrictions

**Language:** English, German

**Notes:** See also microfilm reel #526 which contains William D. Browne's thesis "Victor L. Berger" and microfilm reels #69, 77-79 for Berger's Socialist clippings.