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Jackpine Savages: Discourses of Conquest in the 1916 Mesabi Iron Range Strike*

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A wolf ran along the swamp
a bear rambled on the heath;
the swamp moved at the wolf's tread
and the heath at the bear's paws
  there iron rust rose
  and a steel rod grew
where the wolf's feet had been, where
  the bear's heel had dug.
(*The Kalevala*[1])

In the summer of 1916, independent action on the part of immigrant miners on Minnesota's Mesabi Iron Range, the source of the bulk of the nation's iron ore and the taproot of the powerful Steel Trust, drew the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies) into a conflict with some of the nation's most powerful capitalists and employers. The Mesabi's mine-owners—led by the omnipresent Oliver Mining Company—had grown accustomed to an almost colonial dominance over the region after successfully breaking up earlier strikes led by the Western Federation of Miners (WFM). Acute demand for iron ore from Europe, the curtailment of European immigration, and an increasingly radical Range workforce seemed to bode well for the Wobblies' chances, however, and the existence of a vibrant socialist movement among the immigrants who lived and worked on the Mesabi Range, especially among radical Finns, held out a ray of hope and a possibility for success that IWW organizers simply could not pass up.

The mine-owners and their allies possessed overwhelming economic might, a legion of armed mine guards, and the blessing of—and assistance from—the state in their battle against the miners, but they also counted on their ability to whip up nativist and anti-radical chauvinisms in order to de-legitimize the striking miners and justify their brutal suppression. On the cultural front Minnesota's employers emphasized, as did

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[1] Elias Lönnrot, translated by Keith Bosley, *The Kalevala* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 90.

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other employers across the country, the foreignness and un-American qualities of the miners.[2] In addition to their attempts to tap into the xenophobic sentiments of Anglo-American Minnesotans, however, employers also drew on a discourse generated during the 19th-century conquest of the state that derived much of its strength from the region's proximate history of conflict with Native Americans. Anti-radicals emphasized the brutish, savage natures of the strikers, their childlike propensity for falling under the sway of the malevolent IWW, and cast the industrial struggle as a battle between the forces of civilization and savagery. These characterizations relied upon cultural conceptions of Indians, the foundational savages for many Americans, as the yardstick by which civilization could be measured in the region.

The memory of Indian conflict remained potent across the state in the first decades of the 20th century. Toward the end of the 19th century Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) Indians intent on maintaining control over their timber reserves in northern Minnesota had defended their land in one of the last battles between the U.S. Army and Native Americans, the Battle of Sugar Point in 1898, killing seven soldiers and wounding 14 civilian irregulars.[3] The fact that the Anishinaabeg and Hochunks (Winnebagos) of the Upper Midwest had remained relatively peaceful since the turn of the 20th century did little to vitiate widely held, stereotypic notions of Native savagery, and the continued presence of Indians in the forests of northern Minnesota posed an occasional menace and a continuous obstruction to the desires of white settlers and corporate interests. Indian savagery, an atavism identified by whites in Indians' supposed frequent and violent drunkenness, indolence, sloth, clannishness, predilection for communism, and stubborn occupation of undeveloped land in the face of inexorable, market-driven change, provided an easily comprehended archetype transposable to the immigrant workers of the Range.[4] In compelling ways, the "varying shades of reddish earth" that tinted the immigrant miners served as a physical marker of a cultural truth promulgated by many employers who—almost instinctively—resorted to and relied upon superficial comparisons between the new immigrant workforce and the primordial red savages of the wilderness.[5] Neither Indians nor immigrant miners existed in the past or, on closer examination, readily conformed to the image of the stereotypic fierce Plains warrior. Nevertheless, capitalists and authorities characterized the 20th century's Indians as savages to gain access to valuable timber and cast the Finnish, Italian, Austrian, and

[2] In some sense I use "cultural front" in the same sense as Michael Denning in his *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1997). At risk of being accused of misappropriation, though, in most cases I use it with a somewhat different emphasis. I would like to consider a broader range of cultural productions, widening the concept to include more ethnographic material as well as a range of popular cultural productions.

[3] Louis H. Roddis, "The Last Indian Uprising in the United States," *Minnesota History Bulletin* 3 (1920), 278; William E. Matson, "The Battle of Sugar Point: A Re-examination," *Minnesota History* 5 (1987), 274. For more on the struggle for sovereignty waged by northern Minnesota's Anishinaabeg, see Melissa L. Meyer, *The White Earth Tragedy: Ethnicity and Dispossession at a Minnesota Anishinaabe Reservation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

[4] For more on the cultural images of Indians alive in white society at the turn of the century, see Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), Gretchen M. Bataille, *Native American Representations: First Encounters, Distorted Images, and Literary Appropriations* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), Luana Ross, *Inventing the Savage: The Social Construction of Native American Criminality* (Austin: University of Texas Pres, 1998), and Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian* (New York: Vintage, 1978).

[5] Anna A. Heikkenen, John E. Ketonen Papers, Immigration History Resource Center, University of Minnesota.

FIG. 1. A group of Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) Indians at White Earth, Minnesota, ca. 1890. Photograph by William R Sargent. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

South Slav miners as racial primitives acting from a savage compulsion to rebel against civilization and modernity to discredit their radicalism.

Finnish miners successfully employed their own defenses against charges of savagery, however. Rather than succumbing to the attacks, Finnish immigrants turned their supposed primitivism to advantage and carved a cultural space for themselves in northern Minnesota. Primitivism pervaded Finnish "homemaking myths"—foundation myths, blood-sacrifice myths, myths that highlighted a shared ideological relationship between immigrant Americans—and served the "function of claiming the United States as the rightful home of many immigrant groups."[6] In the context of northern Minnesota, a region that bore a unique past of indigenous conflict and supposed indigenous savagery, the homemaking myths of many Finns took an ironic twist that emphasized, rather than disavowed, Finnish connections with the region's Indian inhabitants.

Finnish homemaking myths drew on a construction of common indigenousness shared by Finns and Indians reliant upon a cultural overlap that placed Finns firmly at the center of an emerging American identity that, by the early 20th century, increasingly associated itself with the original inhabitants of the continent. In the face of denigration by outsiders, Finns drew on cultural, ethnic, and racial pride mingled with their radical labor ideologies to create conditions necessary for a kind of "ethnogenesis," the historical emergence of a people defined in relation to a separate and unique sociocultural and linguistic heritage.[7] Class conflict on the Iron Range

[6] Orm Øverland, *Immigrant Minds, American Identities: Making the United States Home, 1870–1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 19.

[7] Jonathon D. Hill, "Ethnogenesis in the Americas, 1492–1992," in *History, Power, and Identity: Ethnogenesis in the Americas, 1492–1992*, ed. Jonathon D. Hill (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996), 1. See also James H. Merrell, *The Indians' New World: Catawbas and Their Neighbors from European Contact through the Era of Removal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

reinforced the boundaries between Finn and employer while leaving the boundaries between Finn and other groups indeterminate in such a way that a new ethnic sensibility grew up within the culture of the Range's radical Finns, a synthesis of shared historical, cultural, economic, and political struggle.[8]

When prospectors discovered iron in the wilderness of northern Minnesota at the start of the 1890s community building proceeded quickly, lending to the region an *ad-hoc* frontier character. Towns sprang up on top of iron deposits almost overnight as prospectors and speculators rushed to exploit the newly-found mineral resources. Mining companies founded the communities of Tower, Hibbing, Biwabik, Chisolm, and Mountain Iron all within the first year of the discovery of significant ore deposits. Within the next two decades companies brought most of the other Range settlements into existence, almost 75 of them, among them Aurora, the birthplace of the 1916 miners' strike, in 1898.[9]

An abundance of cheap labor allowed iron production on the Mesabi Range to expand quickly, and in the short period of 15 years the Range supplied almost one-half of all the iron mined in the U.S.[10] The demand for labor, in turn, caused a rapid growth in population across the region. St. Louis County, encompassing most of the ore-bearing lands on the Range as well as providing a home to the region's largest city, Duluth, almost tripled in population in a mere 10 years, jumping from 19,000 to over 52,000 people in the decade after 1895.[11] Native-born American, Cornish, French Canadian, Irish, Swedish, Italian, Polish, Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian, Montenegrin, Bulgarian, and Greek settlers all moved into the region, though most residents were recent European arrivals; in 1905, for example, 55% of the residents living in the 12 principal Iron Range towns had emigrated from Europe and in the first decade of the 20th century two-thirds of all the miners employed in Minnesota were foreign-born.[12]

Though a small number of Finns had arrived in North America with Swedish settlers in mid-17th century, and a number joined in the California Gold Rush, *Amerikan Tauti* (American Disease) and *Amerikan Kuume* (American Fever) did not take hold in earnest until the latter half of the 19th century.[13] Large-scale immigration to the U.S. began in 1864 when, prompted by the labor shortage occasioned by the Civil War, a recruiter for the Quincy Mining Company of Michigan returned from Norway with approximately 200 workers and their families, among them Finnish miners who had been working in Norwegian mines. Upon their arrival these workers and their families added their numbers to resident Swedes and Norwegians in the local Swedetown.[14]

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[8] According to Hill, a synthesis "of a people's cultural and political struggles to exist as well as their historical consciousness of these struggles"; Hill, "Ethnogenesis," 1–2.

[9] Arnold R. Alanen, "The Locations: Company Communities on Minnesota's Iron Ranges," *Minnesota History* 48, 3 (1982), 96–97.

[10] Peter John Kivisto, "Immigrant Socialists in the United States: The Case of Finns and the Left," Ph.D. dissertation, New School for Social Research, New York, 1982, 162–163.

[11] Hyman Berman, "Education for Work and Labor Solidarity: The Immigrant Miners and Radicalism on the Mesabi Range," TMs, Immigration History Resource Center, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1–2.

[12] Carl Ross, *The Finn Factor in American Labor, Culture and Society* (New York Mills: Parta Printers, 1977), 100, 107.

[13] Kivisto, 99; Michael Gary Karni, "Yhteishyvä—or, For the Common Good: Finnish Radicalism in the Western Great Lakes Region," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1975, 41.

[14] Kivisto, 100; Carl Ross, *Finn Factor*, 10. It is often assumed that the Finns chose the Upper Midwest as a destination because of its Finland-like environment, heavily forested, cold, and bleak. In general, this is not the case—an established Finnish community in Florida, for one, argues against such an assumption.

The lure of employment and available land alone may have encouraged some Finnish travel to the U.S., but economic and social change in rural Finland accounted for most Finnish immigration. Approximately two-thirds of Finnish immigrants claimed the two rural northwestern provinces of Finland, Vaasa and Oulu—the part of the country known as Ostrobothnia—as their homelands. Very few Finnish emigrants departed from urban areas, and it was only after 1905, prompted by revolutionary events in Russia and Finland, that a significant number departed for the U.S. from southern urban cities such as Helsinki, Turku, and Viipuri.[15] A decline in agricultural productivity, the depletion of forest resources, a growing rural population, and scarce opportunities for landownership all served to motivate Finns to search for alternate means of making their livings away from their Ostrobothnian homes. Compounding the demographic shift, industrial change swept over the rural areas of Finland, undermining traditional methods of agriculture and severing many people's connection to the land. The inability of the nation's nascent urban industries to absorb the rural population, coupled with the increasingly oppressive Russian control of Finland—mandatory conscription in the Russian army constituted the chief complaint of many Finns—prompted mass emigration.[16]

In the half-century after their initial exodus to the New World, some 350,000 Finns, one-ninth of the total population of Finland in 1900, left for America, 215,000 of those arriving between the years 1900 and 1914.[17] Finns primarily settled in four regions in the United States—the Northeast, the Upper Midwest, the Mountain West, and the Pacific Northwest—drawn by the intelligence passed on through transatlantic networks of kin, *omanpaikkasia* (community), and friendship.[18] Driven by choices of a decidedly practical nature, Finnish settlement patterns reinforced a widely held myth that the "nature of the Finns was best suited to the nature of their land," a biological imperative that many assumed drove Finns to settle in colder, heavily forested regions that closely resembled their homeland.[19] Finns initially concentrated themselves in *pesäpaikka*

Footnote 14 Continued

Omanpaikkasia, a relationship shared by persons from the same parish in Finland, often determined settlement patterns. Mavis Hiltunen Biesanz, *Helmi Mavis: A Finnish-American Girlhood* (St. Cloud: North Star Press, 1989), 18.

[15] Finland industrialized relatively late compared to many European nations, with only 75,000 industrial workers in 1900. Only 7.5% of the population depended upon industry in 1880, and only 15% 30 years later in 1910. Ross, *Finn Factor*, 41; Kivisto, 89, 92–93, 102; John Syrjamaki, "Mesabi Communities: A Study of Their Development," Ph.D. dissertation, Sociology, Yale University, New Haven, 1940, 106.

[16] Kivisto, 56–64, 92–102; Karni, 41, 45; Ernest Koski, interview by Velma Dobi, February, 1981, interview K-8, tape 1, side A, Finnish American Family History Project, Immigration History Resource Center, University of Minnesota, Testimony of Leo Laukki, "U.S. vs. Haywood et al., July 29, 1917," box 114, folder 3, Industrial Workers of the World Collection, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, 9130. Leo Wiljamaa's father escaped induction into the Russian army in 1903, coming to Tower, Minnesota to work as a lumberjack and miner, and received a commemorative medal from the Finnish government after World War I for resisting the draft. Leo Edwin Wiljamaa, History, file W-2, Finnish American Family History Project, Immigration History Resource Center, University of Minnesota, 1–2.

[17] Ross, *Finn Factor*, 59; Kivisto, 89.

[18] Kivisto, 106–107.

[19] John Ilmari Kolehmainen, "The Finnish Pioneers of Minnesota," *Minnesota History* 25 (1944), 319; Kivisto, 106; Ross, *Finn Factor*, 4–5. Of course similar notions had revolved around Indians for centuries—see Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999).

(nesting places) of the copper mining country of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, but with the development of Minnesota's Iron Range large numbers of Finns moved to northern Minnesota directly from Finland.[20] Within a short time most Iron Range communities hosted "Finntowns," also known pejoratively as "Pig Towns" or "Finn Hells."[21]

Finns dominated the Iron Range, comprising the single largest group of immigrants to the area and, according to one observer, setting "a pattern of life on the [R]ange" that subsequent groups of migrants followed.[22] Over one-half of all the Finns in the U.S. lived in Minnesota, Michigan, and Wisconsin by 1905, and over one-third of the population of the Iron Range had emigrated directly from Finland. In some towns Finns made up over 80% of the population.[23] Range towns like Embarrass, Minnesota owed their existence exclusively to Finns. Embarrass, the "Minnesota Arrowhead's Finland," consisted of only a couple of settlers in 1895, but by 1905 more Finns had moved to the township, drained swamps, and established farms in the dense forests of pine. Embarrass, according to one Works Projects Administration writer in the 1930s, "naturally took on many characteristics of Finland," and the unique "gumdrop" haystacks that the Finns constructed on their farms "gave the [Embarrass] valley a foreign appearance."[24] In addition to setting the style of life in Embarrass, Finns gave names to expanses of cutover forest on the Range like the Palo-Makinen region and the Brimson-Toimi district, as well as scores of towns with names like Nurmijärvi, Lehtijärvi, and Susijärvi.[25] Finns, of course, did not miss an opportunity to emphasize the Finnishness of the Range; one favorite song called the state's "wooded country" "our beloved homeland," whose "nature suits us best."[26] Eddie Koski, who moved to Virginia, Minnesota with his family in 1914, remembered a popular joke told at Finn Halls that started with the question: "Where was Virginia 10 years ago?" The punch line, of course: "In Finland."[27]

By the summer of 1916 conditions had become unbearable and the miners of Minnesota's Mesabi Iron Range, the Finns and all the others, walked off the job and, as they had almost 10 years earlier, began feverishly organizing their ranks. The exact origins of the strike have remained obscured, though most accounts suggest that the Mesabi strike represented what many labor historians have been fond of calling a "spontaneous" action.[28] The most detailed accounts seem to agree that on June 2 an

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[20] Karni, 55; Ross, *Finn Factor*, 10.

[21] Kivisto, 162–163; Walter O'Meara, *We Made It through the Winter: A Memoir of Northern Minnesota Boyhood* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1974), 14; Syrjamaki, 242.

[22] Stewart H. Holbrook, *Iron Brew: A Century of American Ore and Steel* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), 109.

[23] Ross, *Finn Factor*, 98–99; Kivisto, 162–163.

[24] Work Projects Administration, *The Minnesota Arrowhead Country* (Chicago: Albert Whitman, 1941), 121–122.

[25] Kolehmainen, 319–320.

[26] *Ibid.*, 328.

[27] Eddie Koski, interview by H. E. Lager, October 10, 1978, interview K-7, tape 1, side A, Finnish American Family History Project, Immigration History Resource Center, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

[28] George West, writing for the *International Socialist Review*, commented that the strike "started without any organization of any sort, and spread almost instantaneously through the iron range before any outside labor organization had participated," in George P. West, "The Mesaba Strike," *International Socialist Review*, September, 1916, 159. Melvyn Dubofsky also calls the strike spontaneous, though, curiously he also specifies a flurry of organizational activity on the Range prior to the strike on the same page. Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (New York: Quadrangle, 1969), 321–322.

Italian miner, Joe Greeni, angered over a short pay envelope—a result of variations consequent to the hated and capricious contract system—threw down his pick and walked off the job. As the story goes, Joe Greeni's act of frustration quickly escalated from one shift's "wildcat" walkout to a strike encompassing the whole Iron Range that involved anywhere from 10,000 to 20,000 miners.[29]

Whether spontaneous or not, the Range's miners had ample experience to draw on. Finns had gone on strike on two separate occasions prior to 1916, in 1907 on the Iron Range and in 1913 in Michigan's copper country.[30] Both of these strikes involved organizers from the Western Federation of Miners, and in both instances employers defeated the striking miners. Many of the strikebreakers imported by the iron mining companies in 1907—Italians, Serbians, Montenegrins, Greeks, Russian, Croat, Bulgarian, and Rumanians—in fact, comprised the strikers of the 1916 action, and in large part the grievances remained the same. Housing on the Range continued to be expensive and prices for food and household necessities remained high, at times 50% or even 100% higher than prices for the same goods in Duluth or the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Typical hours in 1916 for a miner still stood at 10 hours a day, pay remained low, and the contract system, subject to the vagaries of favoritism and changing rates of pay, prevailed across the Range.[31]

Though the Finns did not dominate the strike numerically—as they had in the 1907 Range strike—they nevertheless provided much of the organizational leadership, opening their Finn Halls for strikers to use as meeting places and infusing their radical sentiment into the rhetoric and ideology of the 1916 strike. After the failure of the WFM in 1907 and 1913, the Finns of northern Minnesota, rather than rejecting unionism, embraced the far more radical IWW in increasing numbers. Though the initial focus of the Finnish IWWs in the years after the 1907 strike had been political education, Finnish enthusiasm for industrial unionism prompted the IWW to step quickly into the 1916 struggle against the Steel Trust atop an already formed organizational structure built by radical Finns.[32]

Once the 1916 strike had begun, predictably, employers and authorities responded to the demands of the miners quickly and unequivocally. Minnesota's governor James Burnquist granted the Oliver Mining Company the authority to deputize its private mine guards to help insure order; by the end of June this force had been augmented by some 1000 additional guards recruited from outside of the Range and equipped them with riot sticks, guns, and deputies' badges.[33] These guards fanned out across the Range, an ominously ubiquitous presence "[s]tationed at frequent intervals along

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[29] Berman, 47; "The Mesaba Range Strike," *The New Republic*, September 2, 1916, 108; also Douglas J. Ollila, "A Time of Glory: Finnish-American Radical Industrial Unionism, 1914–1917," *University of Turku [Finland] Institute of General History Publications* 42 (1977); Eleff, 67.

[30] For more on strikes, see: Ross, *Finn Factor*; Kivisto; Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States Volume IV: The Industrial Workers of the World, 1905–1917* (New York: International Publishers, 1965); Neil Betten, "Strike on the Mesabi—1907," *Minnesota History* 40, 7 (1967), 340–347; Syrjamaki.

[31] Neil Betten, "The Origins of Ethnic Radicalism in Northern Minnesota, 1900–1920," *International Migration Review* 2, 4 (1970), 51–52; Foner, 496.

[32] Carl H. Chrislock, *The Progressive Era in Minnesota 1899–1918* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1971), 30; Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 321–322; Foner, 494; David Carter List, " 'We Never Forget': I.W.W. support for Finnish draft resisters on the Minnesota Iron Range during World War I," Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1988, 75–76.

[33] Carl H. Chrislock, *Watchdog of Loyalty: The Minnesota Commission of Public Safety During World War I* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1991), 73; List, 77; Foner, 497.

the roads, silhouetted against the sky as they [stood], gun in hand, on the tops of the surrounding hills, stationed at the very doors of the miners' cottages," and patrolling the rural roads in armored cars.[34] Sheriff Meining of Duluth, the personification of state authority on the Range and widely regarded as an instrument of corporate and state anti-union sentiment, boasted that he deliberately did not look too deeply into the backgrounds of these recruits, men described by most local and national newspapers as representing the "worst elements of society" from the gutters of Duluth, Minneapolis, and St. Paul, "any place where men could be found willing to go to the [R]ange, strap on guns, grasp riot sticks, pin deputy sheriff's badges on their shirts, and go forth to attack picket lines, menace strikers' parades, and brow-beat strikers wherever they should be met, singly or alone."[35] These "Burly Booze Tanks" who "Paraded the Streets Wearing Stars and Guns" were, according to one local paper, irritable, prone to violence, and almost instinctively hostile to the foreign striking miners.[36] Their presence practically insured an outbreak of violence.

In conjunction with the company's demonstration of brute force, anti-radical newspapers sympathetic to the mine-owners' plight played on the nativism of Range residents by invoking the specter of alien subversion to incite fear of and hatred for the striking miners. Stories accused the IWW of an "invasion" in order to "commit rape upon the progress and tranquility of the village" and warned that "[r]ioting and violation of law and order must cease if it is necessary to place under arrest every deluded foreigner who has pledged allegiance to the I.W.W." "Americanism," cautioned the Chisolm, Minnesota *Tribune Herald*, "is the first consideration of the range country."[37]

Critics reserved their most venomous denunciations for the Finnish miners, a "temperamentally morose, suspicious, sullen, self-centered and obstinate" group, according to one U.S. Army Military Intelligence operative, a people who "made ideal recruits for any ultra-radical labor agitation." The Finns, the agent continued, seemed to be "dissatisfied with any and all conditions and against the established order of things in general."[38] That Finns naturally tended toward radicalism was a fact that many Iron Range residents seemed to agree upon, no matter the side in the conflict. Though estimates of Finnish participation in radical activities on the Range varied wildly, from a low of 15% to as high as 50% of the adult population of Finns on the Range, they formed a distinct and visible ethnic presence at the forefront of most organized radical agitations on the Range from the 1907 strike forward.[39] At the same time that agents for employers working for the Department of Justice or Military intelligence claimed that the Finns "were always ready to stir up trouble among the

[34] Marion B. Cothren, "When Strike Breakers Strike," *Survey*, August 26, 1916, 536; Neil Betten, "Riot, Revolution, Repression in the Iron Range Strike of 1916," 86 [Y271].

[35] "The Mesaba Range Strike," *The New Republic*, September 2, 1916, 109; Cothren, 536; "Dollars and Steel Against Humanity," *Solidarity*, September 2, 1916, 4.

[36] "Drunken Deputies," *Strikers News* (Hibbing), August 18, 1916, 2.

[37] *Tribune-Herald* (Chisolm), June 23, 1916, 1, and *Tribune-Herald* (Chisolm), July 7, 1916, 1. The Chisolm *Tribune-Herald* was bought in January, 1916, by Walter Brown, a retired Oliver Mining Company employee, and maintained a virulent anti-IWW stance throughout the strike. Even though loyal to the company, Brown insisted that "this does not mean that the mining company will control the paper that will continue as in the past to be free and independent." *Herald-Tribune* (Chisolm), January 14, 1916, 5.

[38] Letter from James Daly to the War Office, May 21, 1917, Randolph Boehm (ed.), *US Military Intelligence Reports, Surveillance of Radicals in the United States, 1917–1941* (Frederick: University Publications of America, 1984), reel 1, frames 0182–0183.

[39] Karni, 91–92.

workmen" and that the Finns constituted "trouble breeders and a class not to be trusted," IWW reporters and organizers noted that the Finns seemed "easier to reach with industrial unionism than other … races," some claiming that if "the American Wobblies was (sic) as catty as the Finns, we would have some fighting union."[40]

Empowered and encouraged to arrest strikers on the slightest pretext and transport them to Duluth to face justice in company-dominated courts, the gunmen carried out their instructions immediately upon their arrival on the Range, selectively enforcing the law and harassing strikers' parades to provoke and intimidate the miners. On June 21 gunmen, equipped with armored cars and rifles, harassed parading strikers in Hibbing, causing a riot. The next day in the town of Virginia, gunmen followed the same strategy, and when the parading miners resisted, the gunmen opened fire, killing a striking miner.[41] The most dramatic single act of violence in the strike occurred as a result of selective law enforcement in Virginia, Minnesota. When armed deputies searching for a blind pig, an illegal saloon, raided the home of Nick Masonovich and his family in early July, the residents resisted the arbitrary invasion of their home. In the pitched battle that followed deputies killed Masonovich and a deputy, Nick Dillon, an ex-bouncer at a "house of ill-fame," was shot twice through the thigh.[42]

Mining companies and the state justified their tactics in part by characterizing the strikers as savages deserving such treatment. Range Finns, especially, embodied the threat of radical savagery in the summer of 1916. The Finns had already earned reputations as radicals, but they had also been characterized for some time as primitives. Finns, therefore, were particularly vulnerable to charges of savagery, of being the enemies of and obstacles to the civilizing mission of corporate interests in the North Woods. Allied with the IWW, a union, according to one local paper, whose "trail … is one of blood" that would "persist as long as a single follower of [its] red emblem remain[ed]," the Finns appeared to their detractors as temperamentally and racially as well as ideologically at odds with progress and civilization.[43] Accused of being "bloodthirsty savages" and "de-horned devils" similar to the "countless savages bent on slaughter, rapine, and plunder" of an earlier era, the IWW and their Finnish supporters signified the threat of "rever[sion] to [the] barbarism and savagery" of the Sioux that reigned in the state in the 19th century when Indians stalked the settlers of the region, preying at the ragged edges of civilization and breaking into outright rebellion during the Civil War.[44]

A collective memory of frontier conflict with Native Americans remained an active presence among many Minnesotans, even as late as 1916, and provided a backdrop for

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[40] "Re: I.W.W. Activities Virginia, Minn., and Vicinity. European Neutrality Matter," July 16, 1917, Boehm, reel 2, frames 0851–0852; Alanen, 105; "Stark Tells of Mesaba Strike," *Solidarity*, September 2, 1916, 4; Roy A. Brown, St. Maries, to Don Sheridan, May 30, 1917, read into evidence July 9, 1918, "U.S. vs. Haywood et al., July 9, 1918," Industrial Workers of the World Collection, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, box 111, folder 5.

[41] Helen C. Camp, *Iron in Her Soul: Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and the American Left* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1995), 69; Foner, 499–500.

[42] Mary Heaton Vorse, "I—From the Miners' Point of View," *Outlook*, August 30, 1916, 1045–1046; "Dollars and Steel Against Humanity," 4; Camp, 69–70; List, 77–78.

[43] *Tribune-Herald* (Chisolm), June 30, 1916, 3.

[44] "Tolerance Will Win," *Tribune-Herald* (Chisolm), June 23, 1916, 1; "Elizabeth Gurley Flynn Makes Good Impression," *Strikers News* (Hibbing), August 4, 1916, 2; Julius Schmahl, *Address by Julius Schmahl (Secretary of State of Minnesota) at New Ulm, Minnesota August 20, 1919 and Kimball Minnesota Sept. 27, 1919* (Minneapolis: Syndicate Printing, 1919), 3, 11.

residents to draw upon when any claims of violence were made against miners.[45] A foundational moment for the image of the "savage Indian" in Minnesota, the Sioux Uprising of 1862, crystallized an image that remained an archetype across the state. Called "crocodiles," "wild beasts," "red jawed tigers whose fangs are dripping with the blood of innocents" by even some of the most liberal Minnesotans after the uprising, Indians from that point were transformed into an enemy race.[46] Swift and fierce retribution fell upon the rebellious Dakotas; "Caucasian valor," according to one turn-of-the-century memoirist, "had its innings" with the savages and over 2000 were immediately imprisoned.[47] Of the 306 Dakotans sentenced to hang for the uprising 38 lost their lives at the end of a rope, but vengeance did not purge the collective memory of the violence of the event.[48] For decades after, and as far north as the Mesabi Iron Range, grandmothers vividly described the uprising to their grandchildren, a cautionary tale to youngsters who lived in almost daily contact with the Indians on the Range, many of whom, according to some whites, even in defeat, as late as the dawn of the 20th century, still harbored "bad, cruel, fiendish and devilish" thoughts "augmented by the history and memory of their suffering ancestors."[49]

Of all the comparisons Minnesota's employers and anti-radicals attempted to make between the savagery of Indians and the savagery of immigrants, perhaps the easiest, and most visibly compelling, was the use and abuse of alcohol by both Indians and working class immigrants. The Finns had gained a reputation as ferocious, irresponsible, and violent drinkers, a stereotype that reinforced notions that Finns were cultural primitives. The "loaded" Finn, according to one critic, was "a terrible fellow" and liquor seemed to "let loose in him fell and destructive impulses which had been held in the leash by moral ideas."[50] Even sympathetic observers of Finnish drinking habits could not help but notice that Finns, though hard workers, had also been unable "to live down their reputation as saloon heroes"—hard drinkers and hard fighters.[51] Though companies had forbidden saloons on their "locations"—oftentimes makeshift and ramshackle, but always easily moved settlements—and in the towns that they controlled, many Finns bootlegged, and some of the earliest legitimate businesses Finns established on the Range in independent towns were *kapakkas* (saloons).[52] Saloons dotted the Iron Range, 350 of them in the principal villages and towns of the region in

[45] Patty Loew, "Newspapers and the Lake Superior Chippewa in the 'Unprogressive' Era," Ph.D. dissertation, Mass Communication, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1998, 209–210.

[46] Sylvia D. Hoffert, "Gender and Vigilantism on the Minnesota Frontier: Jane Grey Swisshelm and the U.S.–Dakota Conflict of 1862," *Western Historical Quarterly* 29, 3 (1998), 357.

[47] Daniel Buck, *Indian Outbreaks* (1904; reprinted Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, 1965), 282 (page citations from reprint edition)

[48] Angie Debo, *A History of the Indians of the United States* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1970), 187–188.

[49] Walter O'Meara, a boy in Cloquet in 1906, recalled his grandmother warning him away from members of the Font du Lac band of Anishinaabeg with tales of the 1862 Uprising (O'Meara, 8, 22); Buck, 58.

[50] Edward Alsworth Ross, *The Old World in the New: The Significance of the Past and Present Immigration to the American People* (New York: The Century Company, 1914), 169–170.

[51] "Notes for History of Finns in America," Edith Koivosto Papers, Immigration History Resource Center, University of Minnesota, folder 103.

[52] Lilyan Holmes (Maki), interview by Vienna Maki, April 14, 1979, Finnish American Family History Project, Immigration History Resource Center, University of Minnesota, tape 1, side A; Martin Kotiranta, interview by Velma Doby, January 20, 1981, Finnish American Family History Project, Immigration History Resource Center, University of Minnesota, tape 2, side A; Mae Koski, interview by Vienna Maki, April 9, 1979, Finnish American Family History Project, Immigration History Resource Center, University of Minnesota, tape 1, side A; Kivisto, 120–121; Alanen, 104.

1912, run by native-born Americans, Poles, Scandinavians, Italians, Croatians, Slovenians, and Finns.[53] Though Finnish socialists had been responsible for several campaigns against liquor and vice in an attempt to eliminate the "open evils of a frontier community" and Finns also had been leaders in the founding of temperance societies, numbering some 150 with 10,000 members in 1900, their reputation as inebriates persisted.[54]

Ideas linking liquor with work, immigrants, and radical labor drew on a long history of drunken Indian stereotypes that resonated deeply among many white residents of the Iron Range. Especially during the 1916 miners' strike, alcohol, and the supposed inability of Finns to hold their liquor, formed a web of ideological associations conservatives drew upon in their response to the potential for radicalism on the range. Indeed, alcohol usage tied the image of the Finns even more closely with that of Minnesota's Indian population, and brought the wrath of Indian agents' down on the non-Indian community, a community that, until the 1916 strike, had received the mildest of punishment if any at all.[55] Indian agents patrolled Range towns, ostensibly to insure that no alcohol would make its way onto any Indian reservations, but also to break up blind pigs frequented by miners and used as meeting-houses and impromptu union halls, hauling suspects to Duluth to face federal charges for introducing liquor onto Indian territory. Agents' activities could at times be quite entertaining, and local papers ran continuous stories describing arrests under headlines that anticipated the crusade of Elliot Ness and his Untouchables in the 1920s: "Hard to Evade Indian Agents"; "Four Grabbed by Indian Agents"; "Severe Loss to the Bootleggers"; and "Indian Agents Arrest Another Bootlegger."[56] Indian agents employed force as well as subterfuge to track down and arrest violators both on and off of Indian land, searching suspicious-looking residents on the slightest pretext and employing Indian decoys to shut down saloons in towns not yet covered by county option laws. Indeed, a frequent complaint saloon operators leveled against the Indian bulls was the difficulty in telling the difference between the decoys and legal, non-Indian, drinking customers.[57]

At the same time that newspaper headlines seemed to indicate a hotbed of illegal activity on the Range, however, Iron Range reservation superintendents' reports indicated little or no liquor traffic with the Indians, the justification for the actions of the agents in the first place. The superintendent for the Red Lake Reservation, for instance, continually reiterated in his correspondence to the Indian Bureau his belief that the liquor problem among the Indians was on the wane.[58] In the several years approaching the 1916 miners strike, in fact, government officials stationed at the White Earth, Leech Lake, and Red Lake agencies, all in close proximity to Range mines and miners, agreed that the "liquor situation" had never been so well in hand, the Red Lake agent going

[53] Syrjamaki, 271–273.

[54] Berman, 35–36; Ross, *Finn Factor*, 26; Kivisto, 127–128; Edith Koivosto, notes for history of Finns in America, folder 103, Edith Koivosto Papers, Immigration History Resource Center, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

[55] Loew, 22–23.

[56] *Herald-Tribune* (Chisolm), January 28, 1916, February 11, 1916, March 3, 1916, 28.

[57] "Valuable Property Falls into Government's Hands as Result of Treaty Violation," *Tribune-Herald* (Chisolm), March 3, 1916, 1; "Justin Jula Sentenced in Federal Court," *Tribune-Herald* (Chisolm), January 21, 1916, 1; "Four Gallons of Whiskey Gets Man in Trouble," *Tribune-Herald* (Chisolm), February 18, 1916, 1; Abbott, "History of Alcohol," 195–196.

[58] "Annual Report, 1914, Red Lake Indian School, 1914," in *Superintendents' Annual Narrative and Statistical Reports from Field Jurisdictions of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1907–1938* (Washington: National Archives, 1975), 7.

FIG. 2. An underground miner on the Mesabi range, perhaps one of the thousands of strikebreakers imported by the mine-owners in 1907. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

so far as to recommend that the "Agency police force be diminished."[59] Of course self-serving Indian agents may have been minimizing the liquor problem, just as white observers off the reservation tended to inflate the level of Indians' alcohol use and abuse. At the very least, though, the startling inconsistencies in the approaches that federal agents took to the problem of alcohol on the Iron Range indicated that Indian agents in 1916 were determined to harass immigrant savages on the Range.

Gus Beaulieu, the mixed-heritage editor of the Anishinaabeg newspaper the *Tomahawk*, claimed that the application of a law designed to protect Indians from liquor in "counties and communities in which the sight of an Indian would be a curiosity" was purely a "political move" intended to erroneously cast the Range as a wild "Indian country."[60] Little wonder, though, that such associations were encouraged. The Oliver Mining Company could use the conflation of Native and newcomer to employ uniformed federal agents vested by the so-called "Indian Lid"—the 1855 Chippewa Treaty—and extradite suspected bootleggers to Duluth to face federal charges to

[59] "Annual Report, White Earth Agency, 1915," in *Superintendent's Annual*, reel 169, frame 0360; "Annual Report, Leech Lake Indian School, 1915," in *Superintendent's Annual*, reel 78, frames 0652–0653; "Annual Report, Red Lake Indian School, 1916," in *Superintendent's Annual*, reel 114, frame 0639; "Annual Report, Red Lake Indian School, 1917," in *Superintendent's Annual*, reel 114, frame 0650; "Annual Report, Red Lake Indian School, 1916," in *Superintendent's Annual*, reel 114, frame 0632.

[60] "Indian Lid Mistake Businessmen Say," *The Tomahawk*, December 30, 1915, 1; "Indian Country Objects to Name," *The Tomahawk*, February 17, 1916, 1.

control Range towns.[61] When the U.S. attorney in St. Paul could use federal Indian legislation to suppress radical activities among "Bulgarians, Croatians, Finns, Montenegrins, Austrians, etc." and add special agents of the Department of Justice to the already active Indian agents on the Range, the ethnic confusion that merged radicalism, foreignness, and Indianness proved a positive boon that officials readily reinforced.[62]

Drinking habits alone might not have convinced observers of an ethnocultural link between foreigner and Native that would have justified subjecting nominally European citizens to the treatment and regulation reserved for "Indian" savages. Minnesotans, however, could draw upon a wealth of additional superficial resemblances between Indians and Finns, resemblances that linked immigrant and indigenous behavior.

Contemporary observers could not resist commenting upon the Finnish propensity to settle in wilderness areas. As one observer noted, "[l]overs of wood and water, they keep to the North and the Northwest and are willing to tackle the roughest land in order to become independent."[63] Adolf Ylen, for example, emigrated from Finland to Superior, Wisconsin, in 1896 and quickly established his own farm. After working in the Great Northern Railway shop for two years, he and his immigrant wife, Liisa, settled into Pine Lake Township, near two existing Anishinaabe Indian settlements, and built a log cabin and the town's first sawmill.[64] Sanni Santala and her husband, John Niemin, who emigrated from Kokemäki, Finland in 1906, combined their earnings from working in a boardinghouse and blacksmith shop to purchase land and establish a farm in the forests that surrounded Owen, Wisconsin.[65] John Harma and his wife, Wilhelmiina Suupi, built a low two-room log house on the Range from his earnings in the mines. "On many mornings," according to John and Wilhelmiina's daughter, Sadie, "snow had piled on the quilts. A hurried job of filling the cracks [between the logs in the walls] began at dawn. At times when Dad opened the shed door a so[l]id wall of snow faced him."[66] William Jakob Hyrkas, who emigrated from Finland in 1875 to work in the mines, "had an urge to go farming" when his wife, Anna, gave birth to their first child, Olga, in 1890. William and his family moved to New York Mills, Minnesota, where he cleared 40 acres and built a small log cabin. William and Anna soon moved their growing family onto a larger farm on which William built a larger log house. Mamie Josephine Hyrkas, born 1895, and two of her sisters started to sleep in the new cabin as soon "as the walls were up" so that "no wild animals, like wolfs (sic) could come in."[67]

Not all of the Finns who homesteaded in the far reaches of northern Minnesota did so willingly, however. Many Finns forced out of work, either blacklisted or barred from the mines because of work-induced health problems or injuries, made lives for themselves in Minnesota's forests. In the aftermath of the failed strikes in 1907 and 1913, Finns dispersed far and wide over the Range, and many communities experienced

[61] C. Whit Pfeiffer, "From Bohunks to Finns," *The Survey*, April 1, 1916, 13; Tyler Dennett, "The Other Side," *The Survey*, August 30, 1916, 1048.

[62] Attorney General, Washington, DC, from Alfred Jacques, US Attorney, St. Paul, Minnesota, April 13, 1917, Melvyn Dubofsky (ed.), *Department of Justice Investigative Files: Part I. The Industrial Workers of the World* (Bethesda: University Publications of America, 1989), reel 1, frames 0263–0265.

[63] Ross, *Old World*, 169.

[64] Ketonen Papers; Buck, *Indian Outbreaks*, 9.

[65] Ketonen Papers.

[66] *Ibid*.

[67] Mamie Josephine (Hyrkas) Mackie, "History of Pioneers William Jakob Hyrkas Family," TMs, file m-1, Finnish American Family History Project, Immigration History Resource Center, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1–3.

spikes in their populations as Finns left the mines and made their ways to the forests.[68] Sulo Esala's immigrant parents were forced to homestead in Sandy Township, Minnesota, after his father was blacklisted from work in the mines as a result of the 1913 strike in Michigan. The township was located in a very remote section of the Range, and, lacking roads, the family walked on twisting Indian paths to get from Virginia, Minnesota, to the location of their new homestead. According to Esala, Indians were a common sight along the trails, the only paths through the newly settled area, and settlers always kept bread and coffee handy for those who might pass by their houses, Indian or Finn.[69] Where companies had attempted to deprive radical miners of their livings, the nearby forests seemed to offer them a safe haven. The uncanny ability of Finns to make a living on the harsh range after being blacklisted, their *sisu* (guts), their ability to, according to Finnish immigrant Mavis Hiltunen Beisanz, "keep going through thick and thin," tended to frustrate mine-owners and gave many of those fearful of Finnish radicalism the impression that radicals and the IWW lurked everywhere on the Range.[70]

Finns possessed the remarkable ability to not only survive in the woods, but to flourish, racially and ethnically equipped, as Anglo Minnesotans presumed, with the requisite skills for wilderness survival. According to one Depression-era novelist, the *Suomi* (Finns) "learned to travel on their short skis—'barrel staves'—almost as soon as they could walk," and they put those skills to good use adopting their own version of the Aninshinaabe seasonal rounds—hunting, fishing, and gathering—to glean a comfortable living from the forests.[71] Opportunities for hunting, fishing, and gathering berries and wild foods abounded and Finns, as their neighbors the Indians, blithely ignored local game laws and the protests of Anglo "sportsmen" in the pursuit of "illegal venison" to supplement their livelihoods.[72] Ernest Koski and his family frequently supplemented their diets with wild game in times of need, and many Finnish families would engage in trapping, fishing, and gathering berries and other wild forest foods.[73] While children generally did not go after big game, they contributed to the family by making snowshoes, skis, and sleds and capturing, skinning, and cleaning rabbits and other small game.[74] Mae Koski, of Hibbing, Minnesota, recalled her brother saving skins to sell to peddlers every year just before Christmas to earn money for gifts and holiday treats.[75] Lilyan Holmes' family dined on bear that her father killed, though

[68] Chrislock, *Progressive Era*, 117; Robert M. Eleff, "The 1916 Minnesota Miners' Strike Against U.S. Steel," *Minnesota History* 51, 2 (1988), 67; Foner, 492; Karni, 150; Kivisto, 169–170, 212; Ross, *Finn Factor*, 137; Syrjamaki, 218–219.

[69] Sulo Esala, interview by Velma Doby, interview E-1, November 19, 1980, tape E-1, Finnish American Family History Project, Immigration History Resource Center, University of Minnesota, tape 1, side 1.

[70] Biesanz, 20; Chrislock, *Progressive Era*, 117.

[71] Phil Stong, *The Iron Mountain* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1942), 202; Walter O'Meara also referred to the Finn's ability to ski as a "natural" endowment (O'Meara, 65).

[72] Berman, 14; Syrjamaki, 23–24; "Leech Lake Indian School Annual Report, 1915," in *Superintendent's Reports*, reel 78, frame 0648; Mavis Hiltunen Biesanz, "Hilja Hiltunen History," Finnish American Family History Project, Immigration History Resource Center, University of Minnesota, file H-7, 50, Melissa L. Meyer, " 'We Can Not Get a Living as We Used To'," 376 [Y282].

[73] Koski interview by Doby, tape 1, side A.

[74] Edward Aho, interviewed by Velma Doby, March 21, 1981, Finnish American Family History Project, Immigration History Resource Center, University of Minnesota, tape 1. side B.

[75] Mae Koski, interview by Vienna Maki, April 9, 1979, Finnish American Family History Project, Immigration History Resource Center, University of Minnesota, tape 1, side A.

some of her neighbors refused the meat because "they figured they'd get just as wild as the bear if they ate it," as well as a variety of other game animals and fish.[76]

In each of these cases, Finnish immigrants demonstrated proficiency in the woods, a region, according to environmental historian Freida Knobloch, that stood as symbol against which "all the animosity of 'civilization' turned in simultaneous nostalgia and contempt for its imagined sylvan origin," an inscrutable "obstacle to decisive or virtuous action" standing athwart the "lateral lines of conquest and civilization and vertical lines of enlightenment and grace."[77] While life on the Range presented many challenges, to outsiders it seemed as if the Finns possessed an almost natural ability to thrive in harsh, exacting conditions, abilities akin to those attributed to Indians. Finns, the denizens of Minnesota's woods, therefore, stood in as symbols of the wilderness as Indians had in the 19th century. After all, "the savage," as one ethnographer noted toward the end of the 1800s, "is best known, understood, and described by his surroundings," "the child and companion of Nature, its product and its willing subject."[78] Turn-of-the-century Americans, according to cultural historian Kerwin Lee Klein, associated wild nature with "*wild* people." The forest, the geography of wilderness, represented "the geography of savagery, the setting of an anachronistic survival of the primitive age of man," a setting that linked forest, Indian, and European, an environment possessing the ability to mingle natural wilderness, savage Indian, and civilized European consuming and transforming them all into creatures of untamed nature.[79]

Finns also stood condemned as savages because of their culture, their beliefs, and their traditions. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855), the blueprint for many Americans' version of the Native savage, and the source even for many of Edward S. Curtis's ideas concerning American Indians, was itself inspired by Finland's national epic poem, the *Kalevala*. Longfellow freely admitted that the Finnish epic, written by Elias Lönnrot in 1835 and based on the oral traditions and stories of rural Finns, had provided the inspiration for his poem and that he emulated it in both form and style.[80] The popularity of the *Song of Hiawatha* established it as one of the foundational books for many Americans' conception of Indians, providing substance for their construction of the nation's primitive inhabitants. The connection between Longfellow's song and the *Kalevala*, then, as one of the foundational documents that provided a means for Americans to construct their version of Finnishness, according to Minnesota historian Carl Ross, "revealed a similarity to the culture and tradition of [N]ative Americans … closely identified with the objects and forces of nature" endowing Finns "with spiritual attributes" and stressing "the need for harmony in the relationship of men and nature." "The ancient Finnish tribal leader," according to Ross, "the shaman or minstrel-singer, who was believed to possess magic power to mediate between the real and the spiritual worlds, strongly resembled the Indian medicine man."[81] Lönnrot, in an effort to inspire a sense of Finnish nationalism,

[76] Lilyan Holmes, interview by Vienna Maki, April 14, 1979, Finnish American Family History Project, Immigration History Resource Center, University of Minnesota, tape 1, side A.

[77] Frieda Knobloch, *The Culture of Wilderness: Agriculture as Colonization in the American West* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 18–17, 61.

[78] Ellis, 142–143.

[79] Kerwin Lee Klein, *Frontiers of Historical Imagination: Narrating the European Conquest of Native America, 1890–1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 15, 133–135.

[80] Mick Gidley, *Edward S. Curtis and the North American Indian, Incorporated (*New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 232; Lönnrot, viii, xiii; Ross, *Finn Factor*, 4–5.

[81] Ross, *Finn Factor*, 4–5.

collected ancient songs and poetry composed by Finnish people in the first millennium ACE, songs and poems "laid in a society with animistic beliefs, whose shamans negotiated with an otherworld through magic."[82] By the end of the 19th century the *Kalevala* appeared in eight languages, including English, revealing a similarity between Finnish and Indian culture that, according to one historian, rendered Indian and Finn "interchangeable" in that Longfellow "imputed to both a primitive, nature-based sacro-magical world view."[83]

According to popular wisdom, Finns also possessed magical powers, a belief reinforced by the rawness of their surroundings at the far edge if the industrial frontier in northern Minnesota. Finns, according to many of their critics, remained people of the forest long after they had arrived in the United States, drawing on the woods for their sustenance and their cures, maintaining their folk-wisdom and lifeways long after other groups of immigrants had given them up.[84] According to Meridel Le Sueur, whose father taught at the radical Finnish Work People's College near the Range, many people believed that Finns' homes were "houses of witchcraft," a hallmark of "the savage and semi-civilized world," according to one Progressive-Era writer.[85] Le Sueur furthermore believed that Finns were the only people able to work in the vast forests of northern Minnesota alone without going crazy because of their special relationship to the woods and nature.[86] In the 1930s ethnologists remarked on the persistence of witchcraft, charms, folk cures, and incantations among Iron Range Finns, claiming that a "touch of Finnish mysticism, of ancient magic, suits the north country, where, in spite of vast public highways, the ragged surrounding forest is never forgotten, and people still travel by ski in the winter and canoe in the summer." Hopefully, almost wistfully, and certainly nostalgically, one ethnologist concluded that for "a few more years, perhaps, one may still meet black bears in the woods and red foxes on the roads, fond magic on the homesteads, and hear strange music beside the lakes."[87] As late as World War II novelists could still plausibly identify Finns as "people who were still not quite sure about gnomes, earth-spirits, kobolds, and monsters."[88]

In general Anglo-Americans tended to characterize Finns as "laconic," "temperamentally morose, suspicious, sullen, self-centered and obstinate." Finns could also become "rabid," "ferocious," a brawling gang of "Jackpine Savages." Finns, at all times, seemed ready to draw their ever-present *puuko*, a traditional knife carried by Finnish men, to settle an argument, an instrument, as one contemporary writer described it, imbued with "echoes of immemorial ululations [of] northern forests, when … tribesmen gathered to defend their fastnesses."[89] Finnish songs that celebrated

[82] Lönnrot, xviii.

[83] Lönnrot, xvi; Ross, *Finn Factor*, 4–5; Kivisto, 192. As late as 1915 the *Kalevala* influenced American writers, significantly Edward S. Curtis in his *In the Land of the Headhunters* (Yonkers-on-Hudson: World Book Company, 1915), a sympathetic portrait of Northwest Indians, according to Gidley, 232. Finns themselves may have promoted the connections between Finns and Indians found in the *Kalevala*, though out of national pride more than anything else. Walter O'Meara picked up a copy of the *Kalevala* in the Cloquet Public library on the Range, at least indicating that the book was known on the Range (O'Meara, 15). Meridel Le Sueur, *North Star Country* (New York: Book Find Club, 1945), 135, 71.

[84] Syrjamaki, 338.

[85] "Witchcraft Strong among Savage Tribes," *Fresno Herald*, February 12, 1910, 4.

[86] Le Sueur, 135, 71.

[87] Marjorie Edgar, "Finnish Charms and Folk Songs in Minnesota," *Minnesota History* 17 (1936), 406–408, 410.

[88] Stong, 145.

[89] James H. Daly, "Mesaba Iron Range—General Neutrality Matters," May 21, 1917, Boehm, reel 1, frames 0182–0183; Ross, *Old World*, 33–34; O'Meara, 14; Stong, 219; Leonard Cline, *God Head* (New York: The Viking Press, 1925), 47.

bad-men and outlaws, boasting titles like "The Brother Murderer," or "Big House Andy," at least as understood by non-Finnish observers, celebrated violence and gore.[90] Finns were a people comparable to the Bedouins, Sioux, Blackfeet, Cheyennes, or Arapahos, one newspaper insisted, "barbarians" "at the lowest stage of development."[91] Of course, as radicals quickly pointed out, characterizations of northern workers as "not quite human and worthy only of exploitation," and "the greatest menace to civilization" on the Range, tended to reinforce an industrial regime that paid wages that could barely support "a stinking kennel … not fit to keep your neighbor's dog in."[92]

In early 20th century racial categories Finns often occupied a gray area between white and non-white, an uncertain location along the Great Chain of Being.[93] According to one Progressive-Era tract Finns emerged from Mongolian stock, specifically, the "Finno-Tartar branch of the Mongolian race," though the author added that, to their credit, "the western Finns have intermingled with the Swedes until their blondness and cast of countenance bespeak the North European." Nevertheless, and in spite of such beneficial blending, the Finns "here and there" betrayed an "inward and downward slant of the eyes [that] proclaims the Asiatic."[94] Adding to the racial confusion surrounding the Finns, some 19th century philologists traced the Finnish language itself to an indeterminate racial category they called, "Turanian," a linguistic group that also gave rise to Turkish, Mongolian, Basque, Tamil, and the languages of the American Indians.[95] On the Iron Range Finns inhabited an unstable middle ground between "whites," generally understood to mean native-born Americans, English, Cornish, Welsh, Swedish, or Norwegian descent and "blacks," a descriptor usually reserved for residents of eastern European descent, among them Serbians, Montenegrins, and Slavs.[96]

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[90] Edgar, 409.

[91] Walter C. Roe, "The Mohonk Lodge: An Experiment in Indian Work," *The Outlook*, May 18, 1901, 176; Kivisto, 18; Ross, 19.

[92] Testimony of Archie Sinclair, "U.S. vs. Haywood et al., July 3, 1918," Industrial Workers of the World Collection, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, box 111, folder 1, 6052; Harrison George, "Minnesota Again Strike Bound," *Solidarity*, January 6, 1917, 1, 4.

[93] In spite of Eric Arnesen's acute interrogation of the practice of cultural history within working class and labor studies ["Scholarly Controversy: Whiteness and the Historical Imagination," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 60 (2001), 1–92], I remain convinced by the evidence—anecdotal, archival, published, and secondary—that cultural considerations of race and the admittedly broad category of whiteness can be useful when investigating the significance of culture in class conflict. Finns in Minnesota persisted in utilizing the categories of "white" or "black" in their day-to-day lives as a substantive relational category. Matthew Frye Jacobson may well be correct in his assertion that "immigrants from places like Greece, Russia, Italy, or Finland posed a special problem: they were 'white' enough to enter the polity as 'free white persons,' and yet they seemed not to possess the very properties of whiteness—its virtue, its wisdom, its capacity for self-sacrifice—that had suggested the racial qualification for citizenship in the first place." Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876–1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 217.

[94] Ross, *Old World*, 168–169.

[95] Adam Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society: Transformations of an Illusion* (Routledge: New York, 1988), 51; according to Benjamin Keen in his cultural history of the image of the Aztec, some 19th century Mexican historians credited the achievements of the Aztecs to influence from the so-called "Turanians," arguing that Finns had somehow made it across the Atlantic sometime in Mesoamerica's ancient past. Benjamin Keen, *The Aztec Image in Western Thought* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 420, 438.

[96] Chester Jay Proshan, "Eastern European Jewish Immigrants and Their Children on the Minnesota Iron Range, 1890s–1980s," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1998, 34; Syrjamaki, 169.

During the 1907 strike, St. Paul's District Attorney held up the immigration papers of 16 striking miners claiming that their Mongol origins excluded them from citizenship.[97] Debates over the racial origins of Finns continued to rage past the strike of 1916, a debate that, at least legally, was settled only when Minnesota's General Registration Board directed Iron Range draft officials to accept Finns as "Caucasians."[98] Radical Finns, especially, seemed vulnerable to racial attack, and as their radicalism deepened with their allegiance to the IWW in the years leading up to the 1916 strike, socialist Finns increasingly tended to be associated with the region's so-called "blacks," or, to the horror of conservative Range Finns, "Reds," in every sense of the word.[99] Red, the color of the miners as they emerged from the pits "rising like red ghosts out of Mesaba coated with iron," the color of the "radical socialist agitator," also conjured up a racial conflation with Mongolians, or, a kinship startlingly close to hand, Indians.[100]

The charge of savagery clearly stuck to the 1916 strikers for several compelling reasons. Against savages mining companies could import armed thugs to intimidate, brutalize, and in several cases, kill strikers in the process suppressing civil rights, as well as call in Indian agents to harass and imprison strikers and their sympathizers. In the face of such corporate hostility and intransigence the 1916 strike, by mid-summer, had settled into something of a stalemate with strikers' wives and children, less likely to be shot at though still subject to harassment and arrest, holding parades, and employers, mine guards, and Indian agents conducting periodic raids and making arrests among the restive immigrant residents of the Iron Range.[101]

By the end of the summer of 1916, miners on the Range began to drift back to work, pressured by a lack of funds, the imprisonment of key organizers, and threats and assaults from mining company gunmen.[102] With winter fast approaching, their leaders imprisoned under threat of life sentences, and hunger stalking the miners and their families the miners officially called off the strike on September 17, 1916.[103] In spite of these setbacks, however, the strike could hardly have been called a complete failure. Shortly after the strike the Oliver Mining Company instituted a 10% pay raise and addressed some of the more egregious violations of foremen and the abuses of the contract system.[104] Fearing renewed struggle the next spring, and betraying the ineffectiveness of its campaign against the IWW as well as its inability to manipulate public opinion on the Range, the Oliver Mining Company began to set up an elaborate, and costly, spy network to head off future conflicts.[105]

After the 1916 strike, Finnish miners did not quit the IWW. On the contrary, Finns provided the union with even more members. Minnesota's newspapers quickly picked up on the Steel Trust's inability to discourage Range radicalism, especially among the Finns. One writer commented in February 1917 that the "wonder of it all is that there

[97] Karni, 147; Kivisto, 194; List, 71.

[98] *The Duluth News Tribune*, June 3, 1917, 1.

[99] Karni, 148–149; Kivisto, 194; Syrjamaki, 257.

[100] Irene Paull, untitled poem, quoted in Karni, 32; Kivisto, 193–194.

[101] Frank H. Little, "Strikers Firm Despite Violence," *Solidarity*, August 5, 1916, 4; "Stark Tells of Mesaba Strike," *Solidarity*, September 2, 1916, 4; "Blames Private Police for Violence in Miners' Strike," *Labor World* (Duluth), September 26, 1916, 6.

[102] List, 78–79.

[103] "Facts in the Iron Range Case," *Solidarity*, September 23, 1916, 1; Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 330; Foner, 511–512; Neil Betten, "Riot, Revolution, Repression in the Iron Range Strike of 1916," *Minnesota History* 41, 2 (1968), 93.

[104] John S. Gambs, *The Decline of the I.W.W.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), 132; Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 330–331; Ross, *Finn Factor*, 148–149; List, 78–79; Foner, 524.

[105] Kivisto, 223; List, 78–79; Ross, 148–149.

FIG. 3. A pair of hunters bringing in a wolf, Aitkin County Minnesota, 1890s. Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.

has been no bloody revolution in Minnesota long before this."[106] "Notwithstanding all the noise made by the Steel corporation and its subsidized newspaper," a Hibbing reporter noted that same month that the IWW "is gaining a following, in membership and sympathizers, that is fairly carrying the Big Fellows off their feet."[107] Throughout the spring and summer of 1917 a continuous flurry of reports from corporate and government agents indicated the continued presence of radical activity. In May one government operative reported that "Finnish persons" in Biwabik, Minnesota claimed that the IWW would soon "run this part of the country."[108] In June an agent for the Vice President of Operations of James J. Hill's Great Northern Railway indicated that the IWW had been giving the company trouble all summer, advising that "militia be retained at [the] head of [Lake Superior], especially on the Wisconsin side where the laws are more favorable to the IWW element, who have rented a building in … Superior [Wisconsin]."[109] Another Great Northern agent reiterated a preference for military action one month later when he opined that "the soldier is the best antidote [for the IWW]" and, given the belligerent status of the United States in the Great War, that the company "ought to be able to procure necessary assistance from the military arm

[106] "Industrial Workers of the World Showing Up the Rottenness of Law Perversion in Minnesota," *The Mesabi Ore and Hibbing News*, February 17, 1917, 8.

[107] "We're Not Bullying Brutes," *The Mesabi Ore and the Hibbing News*, February 24, 1917, 1.

[108] Report made by James H. Daly, Duluth, May 21, 1917 (Boehm, reel 1, frame 0182).

[109] Telegram from G. S. Stewart, Superior, Wisconsin, to J. M. Gruber, St. Paul, June 27, 1917, Great Northern Papers, Vice President, Operating Department, Minnesota Historical Society, box 5, file folder 3191.

of the Government."[110] In July, as well, government agents sniffed out a possible alliance between the Non-Partisan League and the IWW Agricultural Workers' Organization (AWO) in the fields of North Dakota and Minnesota.[111] In several reports made by one agent of the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety, the state's newly formed wartime watchdog agency, radical Finns, "people who will start trouble if measures are not adopted to stop them," clearly emerged as an ongoing threat to industrial peace and stability.[112] While the radical passions of Slavs, Austrians, Italian, Serbian, and Montenegrin had markedly cooled over the winter, Finnish enthusiasm for the IWW had apparently not yet begun to wane.[113] According to this agent, Finnish Wobblies had taken over the Range town of Crosby, and, as the most aggressive ethnic group in northern Minnesota, would bear close scrutiny.[114] Another agent reporting to the Commission of Public Safety seconded these reports and added that the "I.W.W. is very strong [on the Range] among the Finns."[115] Fears of Wobbly influence transformed into fears of Wobbly invasion at the end of July when, according to the Minneapolis *Journal*, a "New Joan of Arc" was reported to be leading an IWW army against the town of Bemidji, resulting in the summary deportation of 40 Wobblies by 50 specially deputized police officers.[116] Rather than receding after their supposedly disastrous defeat at the hands of the steel corporations, the Wobblies came roaring back borne on the shoulders of Finnish immigrants who refused to be intimidated by charges of savagery and joined the IWW in record numbers, adding 5000 new members in summer of 1917 despite the network of corporate spies created to suppress their radicalism.[117]

The Finns, maligned as they were for being radicals, seemed impervious to their critics' barbs. On the Iron Range, where in places as much as three-quarters of the population was either foreign-born or the sons and daughters of foreign-born parents, attacks based on an assumed Americanism could carry unintended consequences.[118] With such a large portion of the population hyphenated, the definition of the "American way of life" itself proved elusive, and would take shape as immigrants themselves took the opportunity to define it.[119] Mining companies were not able to

[110] E. C. Lundley to J. M. Gruber, St. Paul, Minnesota, July 5, 1917, Great Northern Papers, Vice President, Operating Department, Minnesota Historical Society, box 5, folder 3191.

[111] Report from Agent H. G. Clabaugh, Chicago, Illinois, July 7, 1917, "In re I.W.W. Activities in Duluth and Vicinity," Boehm, reel 2, frames 0845–0849.

[112] Anthony Pleva, Crosby, Minnesota, July 16, 1917, to John Lind, St. Paul, Minnesota, Burnquist Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, box 10, folder 6.

[113] Anthony Pleva, Crosby, Minnesota, July 16, 1917, to John Lind, St. Paul, Minnesota, Burnquist Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, box 10, folder 6; "Report of Anthony Pleva Made August 9th, 1917," Burnquist Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, box 10, folder 8; Telegram from G. S. Stewart, Buhl, Minnesota, to J. M. Gruber, St. Paul, Minnesota, Great Northern Papers, Vice President, Operating Department, Minnesota Historical Society, box 5, folder 3191.

[114] Anthony Pleva, Crosby, Minnesota, to John Lind, St. Paul, Minnesota, July 16, 1917, Burnquist Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, box 10, folder 6.

[115] Joseph A. Salo, Crosby, Minnesota, to John Lind, St. Paul, Minnesota, July 18, 1917, Burnquist Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, box 10 file, folder 6.

[116] "I.W.W. Say New Joan of Arc Leads 'Army' Organizing," Minneapolis *Journal*, July 27, 1917, 9; "I.W.W. Threatens to Attack Bemidji," *Pioneer Press* (St. Paul), July 27, 1917, 10; "Bemidji Deports I.W.W.; Fear 'Vengeance,' " *News Tribune* (Duluth), July 26, 1917, 1, 10; "Mine Owners Wait Action of I.W.W.," *News Tribune* (Duluth), July 27, 1917, 12; "I.W.W. Army to Bemidji is Report," *News Tribune* (Duluth), July 27, 1917, 1.

[117] List, 7–8.

[118] Chrislock, *Watchdog*, 20; Chrislock, *Progressive Era*, 98.

[119] Chrislock, *Progressive Era*, 99.

successfully transmit their definition to Americanism to the Range. Finns, it would seem, were far more successful in imprinting their own cultural traits onto the land and region. U.S. Senator John Lind, an avid red-baiter and member of the Commission of Public Safety during the war, inadvertently indicated the implicit legitimacy of Finns and other immigrants on the Range when he remarked, at a hearing concerning the ongoing revolution in Mexico, that the oil situation in Tampico, Mexico resembled northern Minnesota. "We have the same situation in our State of Minnesota," he said. The "Steel Corporation owns nearly all the iron mines in our State … Our people say, 'Why, the Steel Corporation is taking away the iron ore, of which we only have one crop; when it is gone, that is the last of it; and they are leaving us an unsightly, ugly hole in the ground, and why should they not contribute liberally toward the support of our schools and to create a permanent fund?'"[120] In northern Minnesota, the foreigners were the mining companies, not the immigrant miners. Company attempts to displace the cultural and territorial legitimacy of the miners failed. The cultural associations employers attempted to use against the immigrant miners unwittingly strengthened the position of the Finns as almost natural fixtures of the northern landscape, in fact.

The experience of another immigrant group in Minnesota, German Americans, provided an instructive contrast to the experience of the Finns, even when they drew upon similar frontier tropes to establish claims to Americanness. During World War I southern Minnesota's German Americans undertook strenuous efforts on the cultural front to prove their loyalty to the nation by emphasizing their steadfastness during the Sioux Uprising, demonstrated especially in their brave defense of frontier towns like New Ulm. Story after story appeared in the local press in 1917 that highlighted German American bravery during those "fateful days."[121] New Ulm residents attempted to regain their patriotic honor by planning a gala celebration of the anniversary of the Uprising, and local papers proudly boasted of the tremendous crowds on hand to celebrate German American valor on the 55th anniversary of the conflict. "As Gettysburg was the high tide of the Rebellion," one local partisan crowed, "so too was Fort Ridgely," the local garrison that bore the brunt of the attack.[122] At this event one New Ulm orator proudly pointed out, to a clearly ungrateful state, that no one should forget the fact that "many of those who formed the glorious American legion were of Teutonic origin."[123] The strategy backfired for Minnesota's Germans when Minneapolis and St. Paul papers denigrated the effort, claiming that treachery, a poisoned barrel of whiskey, not bravery, had won the day. One editor even went so far as to pine for the days when the Sioux possessed the ability sweep southern Minnesota clean of European influence and wipe out the disloyal German element.[124] The terms of Americanism had shifted under the feet of Minnesota's German residents: savagery was civilized, at least insofar as Germans were concerned, and their once-patriotic act had now become, for many Anglo-Americans, proof of German otherness.

In sharp contrast to southern Minnesota's Germans, the Finns celebrated their otherness, leaving an indelible mark on Range towns, while simultaneously claiming a

[120] *Investigation of Mexican Affairs*, Preliminary Report and Hearings of the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate, Senate Document #285, in two volumes (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920), 2338.

[121] "Indian Monument in New Location," *New Ulm Review*, June 20, 1917, 1.

[122] "Big Cewlebration at Fort Planned," *New Ulm Review*, August 15, 1917, 1; "Great Throng at Fort Ridgely," *New Ulm Review*, August 29, 1917, 2.

[123] Julius Schmahl, *Address by Julius Schmahl (Secretary of State of Minnesota) at New Ulm, Minnesota August 20, 1919 and Kimball Minnesota Sept. 27, 1919* (Minneapolis: Syndicate Printing, 1919), 5.

[124] "Heartless Story Denied," *New Ulm Review*, September 15, 1917, 4; Chrislock, *Progressive Era*, 142.

racial and ethnic indigenousness. With their peculiar ties to the land Range Finns developed a distinctive political identity.[125] Walter O'Meara, who spent his boyhood in Cloquet in the 1900s, remarked that even though the Finns of his town "were not as well integrated as the Swedes and Norwegians," they still influenced the character of the town. The Finnish enclave, known appropriately enough as "Finntown," stood out prominently, "distinguished by a huge frame boardinghouse, a community sauna, and houses painted in vivid shades of pink, green, blue, and mauve—people called them Finlander colors."[126] Finns, as young O'Meara noted, seemed to be "stubborn, nonconformist, often rebellious," as their riotous house colors may have indicated, and generally faithful to their own community.[127] Radical Finns decried the transformation of their children into "Finn-Yanks," resisted the adoption of English, instead employing a pidgin "Finnglish," refused in large numbers to volunteer for military service or comply with the military draft, and generally resisted and criticized Anglo efforts to de-hyphenate them.[128]

In his analysis of the West as a distinct region, and the varying abilities of distinct immigrant and ethnic groups to claim the region as their own, western historian Donald Worster observed that though "[m]any ethnic groups have come to live in the American West … the fact of their being in the West is not necessarily the same as their being *of* the West." Worster concluded that an "ethnic group becomes central to [a] region's history when and where and to the extent it becomes altered by that region, or, develops an active voice in defining the region's 'intractable diversity.' "[129] The experience of the Finns in Minnesota can be described in both senses, in some ways the region changed them, radicalizing them and driving them into the arms of the IWW, and in others the region became indissolubly linked with Finnishness, but on both counts the Finns, radical and foreign as they were, were able to effectively claim legitimacy as denizens of Minnesota's northern frontier.

Minnesota's Finns, unquestionably European newcomers, unquestionably socialist and radical, unquestionably racial and ethnic others in terms of early 20th-century understandings of the concepts, manned the ramparts of the wilderness, the border guarding the New World from the Old, and articulated a new sense of indigenousness while vocalizing a new type of homemaking myth that emphasized their common bonds with Native Americans. Jacob Anderson, who joined the IWW at the age of 15 in 1917, recalled that his brother was both a "heartland forest child … born in the wilderness" and "a hero of his class."[130] After having been sentenced to live on an Indian reservation by a corporate blacklist that denied their father a place in the mines, Ernest Koski and his sister embraced their new Indian neighbors while the Anglo residents of the reservation rejected the culture of their hosts. Attending school with Indians, going to Native dances and festivals and joining in the dancing, Ernest learned to appreciate

[125] Kivisto, 105; Gary London, "The Delaware Finns and John Morton: Seeking to Legitimize the Immigrant Experience in America," *Siirtolaisus* (Turku, Finland) 3 (1978), 13, 16–17; Øverland, 79, 126.

[126] O'Meara, 14.

[127] Ross, *Finn Factor*, 8. An impression of Finnish clannishness is also backed up by some Finns themselves. According to Mrs. Vieno Nieminen Keskamaki, born in Ishpeming, Michigan, in 1912, "Finns were clannish and had their own gatherings. For many, the Lutheran Church in Owen [MI] and its aids and Sunday School were the hub. For those who did not attend church, picnics, plays, and athletic events were arranged with other Finnish Settlements as far as 50 miles away" (Ketonen Papers).

[128] Kivisto, 187; Nute, 194.

[129] Donald Worster, "New West, True West: Interpreting the Region's History," *Western Historical Quarterly* 18 (1987), 148.

[130] Interview with Jacob Anderson, August, 1968, 14–15 [G16].

the opportunity to get to know "people of another race, to experience their culture, and especially how to learn to get along with them even while we felt our differences."[131] The white doctors and superintendents and their children, demonstrating their "white arrogance," refused to associate with the Indians, while he and his sister, the only Finns, remembered having joyously swam in the culture of their Native hosts.[132] Three-quarters of a century after her arrival on the Range, Lilyan Holmes remembered one her first images of America: Indians at the Duluth train depot. Her mother was made nervous by the Natives, but not Lilyan, who recalled that "I run [sic] into the middle of them … some smiled, some laughed," and she stamped her feet to get a response from the laconic observers.[133] Mavis Hiltunen Biesanz, born in 1919 near Tower, Minnesota, believed that Indians were an essential part of her homemaking experience, performing dances in full regalia every July Fourth.[134] Finnish farmers and Indians, both sojourners in Range towns, often rubbed elbows at the same saloons and traded forest products with the same merchants.[135] In perhaps the most revealing statement of the significance of indigenousness for the homemaking myths of many Minnesota Finns, Aare Suomela, echoing the sentiments of many of his neighbors, proudly recalled that the Finns were the first Europeans to really get along with Indians, asserting that "Finns went right in there and mixed them."[136] Some Finns became Indians, like Axel and Toivo Harmas, who posed as Indians and carved trinkets and plaques for tourists at their Vermillion Beach resort in the 1920s and played baseball with Indians every summer in between stunts as hunting and fishing guides.[137]

The European immigrants who responded to the mine-owners' calls to work on the Range actively competed with mining companies in the process of the reterritorialization of the Range. Immigrant workers, to a significant extent, were able to determine the culture of the Range, and, therefore, participate in the creation of their own alternative Americanism that legitimized their resistance to exploitation. Immigrants hired by mining companies to extract the mineral wealth of the Range, the region's first settlers, played a vital role in defining the Range as their own and, rather than defining themselves in terms that excluded the peoples that had come before them—though the paradoxical fact that they settled on land once possessed by those Natives cannot be overlooked—used the cultural presence of Indians as part of their mythic Americanness. Because miners were able to successfully claim the Range as their cultural space, the language employed by anti-radicals during the 1916 strike bore a remarkable resemblance to the language of conquest and Indian-hating used by pioneers in the West to justify the extermination of the Indians decades earlier. Striking miners menaced the health of Minnesota, menaced America, and menaced civilization itself. In 1916, however, employers' attacks against the miners, while dehumanizing, also tended

[131] Koski, 2–4.

[132] Koski interview by Doby, tape 1, side 1.

[133] Holmes interview by Maki, tape 1, side A.

[134] Biesanz, 60, 63.

[135] Abbott, "History of Alcohol," 130; Abbott, "Alcohol and Anishinaabeg," 32.

[136] Aare Suomela, interview by Velma Doby, April 27, 1981, Finnish Family History Project, Immigration History Resource Center, University of Minnesota, tape 1, side B.

[137] Wiljamaa, File W-2. What the Indians themselves thought about such role-playing can only be guessed at, but according to Melissa L. Meyer, among other historians of the Anishinaabeg, the "Anishinaabeg themselves used the terms 'Indian,' 'full blood,' and 'mixed blood' to distinguish between cultural patterns' rather genetic inheritance." It is quite likely that the Indians were unconcerned by the shifting identities of Finns. Melissa L Meyer, "Tradition and the Market: The Social Relations of the White Earth Anishinaabeg, 1889–1920," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1985, 283–286.

to reinforce the indigenousness of the iron miners, uniquely qualifying them for status as Americans, and, by extension, conferring legitimacy on their revolutionary ideology as an indigenous expression of Americanism. During the 1916 strike miners on the Range foiled employers' efforts to exercise cultural hegemony, necessitating the use of force and violence rather than the subtle power of culture. European immigrants, especially the Finns, acted in ways reminiscent of both pioneers and Indians in their efforts to make a living on the harsh landscape of northern Minnesota, thereby laying a dual claim to legitimate Americanism.