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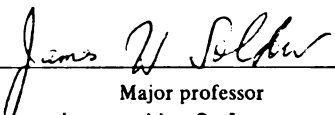
1890 - 1915

presented by

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has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

M.A. degree in History


Major professor
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IMMIGRANTS TO MICHIGAN'S WESTERN UPPER PENNINSULA
1890 - 1915

By

Debra Lynn Duckworth

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

IMMIGRANTS TO MICHIGAN'S WESTERN UPPER PENNINSULA 1890 - 1915

By

Debra Lynn Duckworth

Studies of immigrants to the United States often focus on those immigrants who settled in cities and problems unique to that environment. But not all immigrants chose the city life; many settled in smaller communities.

Through the use of demographic sources of annual reports, reports of the Commission on Immigration, contemporary articles, and especially, oral history, this study examines the lives of immigrants to Michigan's Upper Peninsula mining locations between 1890 and 1915. For these immigrants, adjusting to a new life meant struggles with the English language and with the languages of other ethnic groups settled there. It meant exhausting workdays spent underground, constant fear of death or accident in the mine, company paternalism, and few job opportunities for women. Despite the drawbacks, however, many immigrants still felt America was the promised land, a land to which Europe could not compare.

To my grandparents

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INTRODUCTION

Studies of immigrants to the United States often focus on those immigrants who settled in the cities and the problems unique to such an environment. But not all immigrants chose the city life; many settled in rural areas or in small towns or even began new communities across the United States.

This study focuses on Italians, Slovaks, Finns, Poles and other ethnic groups who settled and worked in the mining fields of Michigan's Upper Penninsula, exploring their experiences in becoming a part of America's industrial society between 1890 and 1915.

For immigrants who both shaped and were shaped by American society in the Upper Penninsula, adjusting to a new life meant struggling with the English language as well as learning to get along with languages spoken by people of other nations also settled here. It meant dealing with company paternalism, poor housing conditions, and exhausting work during a twelve hour day spent under the ground. Mine accidents were common and labor organization poor but many immigrants nevertheless found life in the Upper Penninsula far better than life in Europe. Despite the drawbacks, America was still, as John DeRosso would emphasize to his children, a "land of promise " and

opportunity, to which his native Italy could not compare. Because of such sentiments among immigrants, Michigan's Upper Penninsula population grew and its economy flourished, providing the immigrants with the jobs they came to America to find.

I. Beginnings: Arriving in Michigan

In 1905 John DeRosso left Vela D'Astico, a small village in northern Italy to join his brother Bertallo at a logging camp in Michigan's Upper Penninsula. Bertallo had sent John good reports of employment along with passage money for the trip to America. He added only one stipulation: John was to work in the woods with him until he paid back his passage money. For fifteen-year-old John, who wasn't enthusiastic about either lumbering or paying back Bertallo, this took about two years. After that he "was a roamer" but eventually settled down to work in the major industry of the Upper Penninsula: mining.¹

For John and other immigrants arriving in the Upper Penninsula between 1890 and 1915, the need for their labor had been determined years earlier with the discovery of the rich natural resources of the Upper Penninsula. Under the forests of white pine were lodes of copper and iron. John DeRosso worked first as a logger but he was cutting maple and hemlock; pine had been stripped away by about 1894.

The copper regions of Keweenaw, Houghton, and Ontonogan counties were surveyed by Douglas Houghton in 1830 and the first miners, skilled coal miners recruited from Cornwall, arrived about 1844, followed by German and Irish immigrants seeking work. Although copper was highly valued in the marketplace, large profits from copper mines were not realized until better techniques and equipment were developed after the Civil War.

Iron being neither as accessible nor as valuable as

copper, its mining even more than copper mining needed better technologies to be profitable. Its veins were mined only in small amounts until about 1874 when the Menominee Range opened. The Marquette Range opened in 1876 and the Gogebic Range in 1884.

The iron mines first drew on the supply of skilled Cornish, German, Irish, and Swedish mine workers already settled in the Upper Penninsula. Around 1890, however, some changes within the mining industry made such skilled workers, already in short supply on the copper and iron ranges, no longer necessary. Along with technical improvements of machinery, mines began using the method of shaft mining and added smelting to their surface operations. Many of the older mines were also being consolidated into fewer hands at this time. These changes made mining operations more profitable, especially because unskilled workers could now be used to extract the ore. The 1911 Report of the Commission on Immigration found that the English, Irish, Germans, and Swedes began leaving the mines (usually heading for the western mines) "due to the change in the methods of mining requiring less skill and to a consequent lowering of the prices paid for mining."²

It also became clear to both the iron and copper mine operators that the supply of available workers in the Upper Penninsula could not meet their demands. Even as late as 1898, Michigan Miner reported a shortage of iron mine workers which was causing higher wages to be paid on those ranges. This shortage, however, was apparently because

experienced miners were heading for better pay in the copper mines, whose operators were advertising desperately for workers.³

With this shortage of labor and a lessened need for skilled workers, mine owners realized they ought to do some recruiting. They began their campaigns for unskilled labor from Finland, northern Italy and other southeastern European countries much earlier than 1898 though.⁴ Finns could be found in mines by 1883 and North Italians, by 1887. But the bulk of these immigrants arrived in the later 1890s. The census of the State of Michigan for 1904 shows that between 1894 and 1904, while the number of Canadians, Irish, English, Germans, and Swedes either remained steady or decreased slightly, the number of immigrants from Austria, Poland, Italy, and in particular, Finland, increased greatly.⁵

Copper and iron companies also encouraged immigrants settled elsewhere in the United States to come to their mines. The Report of the Commission on Immigration stated in 1911 that, for the Michigan copper mines, "the greater number of foreign-born employees had worked elsewhere in this country before coming to the Lake Superior region." Nevertheless, of 4,519 men interviewed by the Commission, 44.9% of them had been in the United States less than five years and only 20.9% of them had been here for more than five but less than nine years. If these men are grouped according to nationality, one finds that the overwhelming number of Croatian, Finnish, North Italian, Magyar, Polish, and Slovenian immigrants had, by 1911, been in the United States for nine

or fewer years. In contrast, Canadian, English, and German copper miners show larger numbers of workers having been in the United States ten or more years. The figures become even more contrasting for twenty or more years spent in the United States.⁶ Most of the immigrants who arrived after 1890 were either Finnish or south European and no matter where his first job was -- Chicago, Detroit, Pennsylvania -- the immigrant probably had not been in the United States too long before taking up iron or copper mining.

Besides recruitment, mine owners found that once an immigrant arrived, they could depend on his letters home to insure a steady and growing supply of labor. Although he didn't mince words when describing his homesickness and the sometimes painful work and life in America, an immigrant's first letters were hopeful. A Finn wrote home in 1902 that "' . . . one does work like a machine at first such a work fever seems a little strange . . . but now it goes naturally'" and another Finn breathed a sigh of relief in his letter when he wrote that "'Things are certainly better here than in Finland things were difficult for me in Finland.'"⁷

The immigrants arriving in Michigan's Upper Peninsula usually had relatives waiting for them, as did John DeRosso. This meant that members of the same village in Europe often settled in communities together once in Michigan. A Jewish community in Iron Mountain, for example, had lived in the same village in Europe and most of them were related to the Cohades clan. There seems to be no evidence, however, that whole European villages picked up and sailed to the Upper

Penninsula as a rule. They often shared the same communities once here, but they usually arrived as individuals or small family groups.

The Izzo family in Italy heard from a cousin already in America and two of its sons crossed the ocean to join him in 1890; they in turn, eventually sent for their mother and brothers and sisters, though not all at once.⁸ Bertallo DeRosso sent passage money not just for John, but for each of his brothers to join him in the United States and also settled his mother, father, and sisters here. Ludmilla Darovich's father, from Austria-Hungary, surely would have written a convincing letter to his relatives as he "'would praise this country, where you could come with only a bundle of clothes, and, if you worked hard, you could own your house in a few years.'"⁹ Darovich was, no doubt, a great optimist!

Industry could also count on political and religious unrest in Finland to keep Finns coming. Many Finns objected to the requirements of the State Church of Finland, feelings which were brought to the United States when supporters of the State Church re-established the church here. A much greater reason to leave Finland, however, was presented by Russia which ruled Finland since 1809 (indeed, Finns were counted as Russians in the 1890 census). Russian rule was made less tolerable by Czar Nicholas II's 1899 manifesto curtailing Finnish freedoms and, in 1901, requiring Finns to serve in the Russian army. Even before the 1901 requirement, however, Finns chose to leave the homeland rather than join the Russians. Herman Kallungi's father traveled to the

Upper Penninsula in 1897 to escape the draft, leaving his wife and young son in Finland until 1903.¹⁰

Once in the United States, Finns did not forget what they had left in Finland, besides home and family. The Sault News of Sault St. Marie, in 1901 reported that "the Finnish National Society of the City ordered fancy cuspidors with a picture of Nicholas Brobrikof, governor-general of Finland, in the bottom. His name will be printed in gold around the picture, so that there will be no mistake as to who will be spit upon."¹¹

A lack of interest in the attractions of army life also led Nick Poprovich to arrive in the Upper Penninsula from Yugoslavia and many Italians also shared his sentiments. Some North Italians also objected to the Roman Catholic Church in the late nineteenth century and were glad to leave that religion behind.¹²

But the strongest force pulling immigrants toward the United States was poverty and the promise of a better life in America. When asked why her father came to America, possibly arriving in "corduroy trousers of ample dimensions [and] a bright colored sash,"¹³ Delia Johnson acted surprised that one should even need to ask. Her father, John DeRosso, was one of seven children and his parents "had a little land and lived off of the soil, they were very poor, didn't have very much food to feed his family." Her mother's parents sent the children begging "for cornmeal to make polenta their meal. And they'd go to different homes, and they'd get a little handful of cornmeal and when they got enough to make

polenta, then they'd go home."¹⁴

Poverty was probably true of most south European immigrants to the Upper Penninsula. The main reason they came to the United States was more basic than political or religious reasons. In Europe they had very little chance of ever owning a farm or working a job that paid wages enough to live. America was "the land of opportunity" as Delia Johnson said, and promised an abundant life. Families often scraped and saved to send at least one member to the land of opportunity. Anna Dulan's Yugoslavian parents took out a loan for a \$40 ticket allowing her to cross the ocean to America in the ship's steerage and Alida Henning's grandparents borrowed money to send their sixteen-year-old daughter to Michigan, putting their "little old shack as a bond for if she didn't pay within a certain time, well, then they would lose their home." It was obviously crucial that their daughters go to the United States.¹⁵

Consequently, geography had little to do with the immigrants choice to settle in northern Michigan. Both southern Europe and Finland bear a few similarities to the climate and terrain but dissimilarities are more common. Obviously, groups from such contrasting geographies in Europe could hardly have both found a home-like geography in the Upper Penninsula. Aileen Jacobson, daughter of Finnish immigrants, rejected the notion that her parents settled in Michigan because of comparable terrain and climate. "Actually the reason why is because there were jobs at that time. It just happened that the geography was about the same."¹⁶ Immigrants settled

the Upper Penninsula primarily because it offered them jobs and good wages.

Paltry as those wages may have appeared to social workers of the time who knew better of America and recorded and protested such things, the Annual Report in 1892 of the Michigan Department of Labor and Industrial Statistics reported great differences between wages paid in Europe and those earned in the Michigan mines. The average per month wage paid to Englishmen was \$16.61 in England and \$48.76 in Michigan; to Finns, \$10.24 in Finland and \$45.99 in Michigan; Germans earned \$13.81 at home and \$44.79 in Michigan. Polish immigrants averaged \$12.70 in Poland and \$46.33 in Michigan mines and the Italian received \$6.43 in Italy but \$50.11 in Michigan. The report concluded this section with the comment, "Have these figures been sent over to Europe? If so, it is no wonder the Italians and Poles and Prussians, are flocking to The United States by the hundreds of thousands."¹⁷ Those specific earnings may not have been sent to Europe but those immigrants already here no doubt conveyed the message in their letters home!

The English miners from Cornwall, however, worked in familiar circumstances in the mines to earn their good American wages where most of the immigrants after 1890 drawn to the copper and iron mines were new to the work. In Table 1, the 1911 figures of the Immigration Commission for copper and iron ore mining indicate that, with the exception of the English, the occupation most commonly held by all races before arrival in the United States was farming

TABLE 1. OCCUPATION OF FOREIGN-BORN MALE EMPLOYEES* BEFORE COMING TO THE UNITED STATES.¹⁸

Race	Number Reporting	Number who were engaged in --					
		Mining	Manuf.	Farming	Laborers	Trades	Domestics Other
Croatian	565	36	12	334	43	59	-- 81
Canadian	286	--	17	166	32	44	1 26
English	803	481	28	59	76	74	9 76
Finnish	1929	40	61	1412	193	94	3 126
German	98	13	13	38	6	20	-- 8
Italian, N.	949	90	38	541	133	102	3 42
Italian, S.	96	10	1	54	9	7	-- 3
Magyar	87	6	5	64	5	5	-- 2
Polish	360	34	15	206	69	22	1 13
Slovak	115	7	7	78	16	5	-- 2
Slovenian	171	9	4	111	9	27	2 9
Austrian	59	6	6	36	6	1	-- 4
Total	5,518	732	207	3,099	597	460	16 392

* Combined copper and iron mining figures for employees.

(48.1%). Further, three-quarters of the foreign-born in the Upper Penninsula mines had come unskilled in mining methods. Even the North Italians from Italy's primary industrial locations of the North (which received the bulk of government contracts) were unskilled and came to the Upper Penninsula as farmers. Skilled workers would probably have settled elsewhere in the United States where their skills would be useful. Those who emigrated to Michigan did so because farming in Europe did not pay well, but mining in the Upper Penninsula did pay well. Clearly, new technology meant experienced miners and the wages they expected could be replaced by newcomers unfamiliar with mining rigors at a lesser pay.

Women arriving in the copper and iron regions of the United States had been mostly "without occupation" in Europe according to the 1911 Report of the Immigration Commission (see Tables 2 and 3). Those who did work, were, like the men, primarily employed as farm laborers. The other major occupation had been domestic service.

Within the Croatian race there are striking differences between those settling in the iron ore regions and those in the copper regions. Where 81% of the Croatian women in the copper region had been without occupation in Europe, in the iron region only 12.2% of the women had been in such a state. The iron region also contained 46.9% of the former farm laborers and 38.8% of the former domestics where the copper region held only 16.7% of the farm laborers and 2.4% of the domestics. The Slovenian figures for those settling in the two different regions are also quite different, though not as extreme

TABLE 2. OCCUPATION OF FOREIGN-BORN FEMALES* BEFORE COMING TO THE UNITED STATES.¹⁹

Race	Number Reporting	Percent Without Occupation	Percent Working With or Without Wages In --			
			Farming	Domestics	Mining	Sewing Other
Croatian	42	81.0	16.7	2.4	--	--
English	20	65.0	--	15.0	--	10.0
Finnish	76	77.6	6.6	15.8	--	--
N. Italian	75	52.0	10.7	4.0	--	13.3
Magyar	30	30.0	66.7	3.3	--	--
Norwegian	21	52.4	14.3	19.0	--	14.3
Polish	28	10.7	60.7	21.4	--	7.1
Slovenian	24	54.2	41.7	--	--	4.2
Total	316	59.1	22.2	9.4	--	3.7
						7.3

* Figures are for the copper region only.

TABLE 3. OCCUPATION OF FOREIGN-BORN FEMALES* BEFORE COMING TO THE UNITED STATES.²⁰

Race	Number Reporting	Percent Without Occupation	Percent Working With or Without Wages In --			
			Farming	Domestics	Mining	Sewing Other
Croatian	49	12.2	46.9	38.8	--	2.0
Finnish	40	72.5	7.5	17.5	--	2.5
Slovenian	27	70.4	29.6	--	--	--
Swedish	31	54.8	9.6	35.5	--	--
Total	147	48.2	25.2	25.2	--	1.3
						--

* Figures are for the iron region only, including Minnesota.

as those of the Croatian women. The Finnish women show only small differences for the copper and iron ranges.

For the households studied by the Immigration Commission, women's work in Europe appears to have been perceived quite differently according to one's native country. Only 10.7% of the Polish women arrived without an occupation, 60.7% of them categorizing themselves as farm laborers; the Magyar women had similar tendencies with 30% without occupation and 66.7% employed as farm laborers. Finnish women, on the other hand, show 77.6% and 72.5% of those studied in the copper and iron regions as without occupation and 6.6% and 7.5% employed as farm laborers. Immigrant women arrived in Michigan with very different perceptions of their duties as women.

Women were convinced to make the trip to the United States for many of the same reasons men were convinced. With some variations, being part of a poor family and the promise of a job in the United States were two reasons for coming that women shared with men. At twenty, Agda Pedersen, accompanied by her brother, was sent by her poor farmer-parents in Sweden to join her sister's family in Ironwood, Michigan in 1901. Her sister was expecting another baby and Agda would be much help to her. It was also no secret that having Agda and her brother out of the house would be a big help to her parents in Sweden. Domenica Debernardi, arriving in 1898, also was to join her sister's family but would earn her living as a seamstress.²¹ Like male immigrants, the women and their families had received word from relatives about jobs and money in the United States; having relatives

already settled also meant that daughters would have a safe place to stay and someone to watch out for them.

Parents could also look for their single daughters to be married soon after arrival in Michigan though such arrangements were not always made in advance. Agda was married within two years after arrival but usually the women were in the United States only about a year before marrying, as was the case of Domenica Debernardi, Anna Dulan, and another Italian who met her husband at the boardinghouse where she worked.²² The promise of a husband was clearly on Teresa DeRosso's mind, however, when, given the choice between joining a brother in South America or a fiance in Michigan, she chose Michigan. The two Izzo brothers mentioned earlier married wives in Italy but returned to Michigan to earn the money to send for them.²³

Joining a fiance or husband was the most common reason a woman over sixteen arrived in Michigan but the decision to do so probably was not a difficult one to have made. The new country held the promise of a well-paid job, but that job would be for her husband, not her. As nervous as she may have been about leaving her home, she was certain her standard of living would improve because of her husband's earnings. Meeting a husband or fiance with a job in the Upper Peninsula would be preferable to a jobless husband eeking out a living in Europe as his father had done before him.

An immigrant woman who arrived in Michigan's Upper Peninsula between 1890 and 1915 then, was more likely to be married than single. This is borne out by the State of Michigan census statistics for 1894. For the eleven counties

comprising the western Upper Penninsula (Alger, Delta, Baraga, Dickinson, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, Marquette, Menominee, and Ontonogan), there were 6,332 married women compared to 1,955 single women between twenty and thirty years old. Between thirty and forty-five years old, the figures widen even more with 9,084 married women and 393 single women. On the other hand, the statistics are somewhat reversed for women between fifteen and twenty with only 346 married women but 2,426 single women. Since women usually arrived to join a husband or were married soon after arrival, one can probably assume that most immigrant women were over twenty when they set sail for Michigan. Including the fifteen to twenty age group (who more than likely were immigrant children who arrived with their parents), 76.7% of the total population of immigrant women between fifteen and forty-five were married.²⁴

Immigrant men settling in the western Upper Penninsula, however, were more likely to be single but only between the ages of fifteen and thirty. After that, most immigrants were married. In 1894, there were nine married men among 2,808 single men between fifteen and twenty and 4,361 married men to 9,807 single men between twenty and thirty. Married men numbered 12,918, however, to only 4,578 single men in the thirty to forty-five age group. Combining these figures shows that in the fifteen to forty-five age grouping, 50% of the men in the western Upper Penninsula were married.²⁵

Most immigrants in the western Upper Penninsula, both

male and female, were over twenty. Their numbers were fairly evenly distributed in all age groups over twenty, though a slight majority were counted in the twenty-five to thirty groups for both 1894 and 1904. Immigrants comprised about 46% of the total population of 174,556 in 1894. This percentage figure was down from 51% of a total population of 99,197 in 1884 and by 1904, the percentage would fall even lower, to 39% of 232,643, despite increases in the foreign-born population.²⁶ The native-born population was increasing more quickly than immigrants were arriving, hence the overall decline in percentage. Part of this native-born increase was no doubt due to immigrants bearing children in Michigan who would be considered native-born, though children of foreign-born parents.

As might be guessed, within the immigrant population numbers, the majority were men. Women only constituted 39.6% of the total in 1894 and 40.3% in 1904. And in every age group above twenty, the figures for women consistently fell between 35% and 39%. With three immigrant men for every two immigrant women it's easy to understand why women arriving single were often married after being in Michigan's Upper Penninsula only a year.

Married or single, old or young, the immigrant of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries usually came seeking to fulfill one major goal: Finding work. And he knew that in America, that work would pay a much better price than work he could find in Europe.

II. Work: The Reason They Came

Laboring in the Mines

"'. . . one does work like a machine at first such a fever seems a little strange . . . but now it goes naturally.'"²⁷

Immigrant writing home, 1902

The number of men employed in mining in the Upper Peninsula rose from 7,000 in 1893 to 14,000 in 1903;²⁸ most of these men were unskilled immigrants. A mine owner was probably quite cheerful about the continued arrival of these immigrants since they assured a steady source of undemanding cheap labor to mine his land's valuable iron and copper deposits.

The foreign-born comprised 46% of the total population of the western Upper Peninsula in 1894 and 39% in 1904 but in the mines themselves the percent of foreign-born was much higher, especially in the copper district. The Immigrant Commission reported information for 5,632 workers in 1911 and, believing the "distribution of races . . . to be representative of the total number of mine workers in the district" found that 81% were foreign-born and only 19% were native-born. In a similar representative sampling, of 2,921 workers in iron mines, 89.1% were reported as foreign-born.²⁹ Even though immigrants were not a majority of the total population of the Upper Peninsula, they clearly made up the bulk of the labor in the mines, the major employment opportunity in the Upper Peninsula.

Newcomers to both iron and copper mining were introduced to the work at its lowest level in the position of trammer.

Trammers loaded a one-ton car with about two and one-third tons of ore extracted by the miners. The car was then pushed to the shaft. Some mines used mules to pull the cars to the shaft but most used Italians, Croatians, other south Europeans, and Finns for this job. Alexander Agassiz, of the Calumet and Hecla conglomerate, wrote to the manager of the mine at Red Jacket, "We must be prepared to do our tramming in some other way than man power very soon, for the men, judging from scraps in the paper, are beginning to talk about the use of men as beasts of burden."³⁰ Trammers were also the lowest paid workers in the mines. They were usually paid on the basis of the number of cars filled per day; mining companies sometimes set twenty cars as the minimum number they wanted filled by a trammer each day.

The next position on the occupational ladder was that of miner. A miner usually spent his entire shift drilling holes to receive the dynamite with which he would fill them at the end of his shift. Trammers picked up the blasted ore. Experienced English miners could enter at this level but trammers who did their jobs well could and usually did, move into this position. Groups of miners were usually quite a mix of ethnic groups.

Above-ground employment, that of teamsters, mechanics, and captains, was almost entirely occupied by English, Canadian, and sometimes Swedish workers. A Finn or Italian rarely, if ever, attained this level. This is not to say that there were no Finns or Italians employed on the surface. Their jobs were not those of teamsters, mechanics, or captains

however. They occupied dirtier and more dangerous positions. Mike Jutila was employed in the stamp mills in Point Mills for about eight years before becoming a furnace runner at the smelting works in Hubbell.³¹ Just because a man was employed above-ground did not mean he had a comfortable or advanced position. A step above the surface workers were superintendents whose positions were filled by native-born Americans or those of English ancestry.

An immigrant seeking a job as a trammer or miner would need to see the all-important shift boss and captain. Wilmer Johnson remembers taking his newly arrived cousin to see the shift boss who in turn would take him to the captain. The captain usually did the actual hiring but the boss was the man to please. Some immigrants could have mistaken him as God, he seemed to hold so much power over them and their jobs! It was the shift boss who negotiated with the captain and superintendents for the wages an immigrant would receive; he alone judged whether or not a trammer's cars were loaded high enough. He could hire or fire a worker simply because he liked or disliked him. Any grievance a worker had went to the captain who promptly informed the shift boss; this undoubtedly helped keep complaints to a minimum, especially those involving the boss himself. A shift boss might even assign an immigrant a new name if it would speed up his bookkeeping to write "Bill Johnson" rather than "Mattias Jusilla." Getting along with the boss was extremely important if a worker intended to keep his job, though certainly some were bold enough to test a boss

occasionally.

For the most part, a shift boss and captain were willing to "hire anybody as long as you were a foreigner; they could do what they wanted with you."³² All one had to do was ask, although it was not an uncommon practice for a boss to require a fee for hiring an immigrant. A very unscrupulous boss might sometimes even lay a worker off only to rehire him immediately upon payment of a fee.³³ The Immigrant Commission also reported that after 1895 in the iron mines, there was a tendency "to employ as few Finns as possible . . . so to avoid labor difficulties" since employers felt Finns were "inclined" to start strikes.³⁴ As Finns continued to arrive in the Upper Penninsula in great number, however, mine employers must have been willing to hire them. Such cheap labor was probably worth the price of an occasional, abortive strike. Besides, any man known to have organized or been a leader of a strike was blacklisted to other mines of the range and was consequently forced to move out of the district. So captains usually had few fears in hiring anyone who applied.

A miner labored Monday through Friday, and, depending on the mine, also worked a half day on Saturday. Trammers usually worked six full days, but that again depended on the mine. Both had Sundays off. Delia Johnson remembers her father, an iron miner, having most Saturdays completely off.³⁵ A man worked the day shift one week then switched to night shift for a week, then back again, constantly rotating. A day shift ran from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and a

night shift from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. A miner actually spent about nine to ten hours working at his station and the rest of the time eating his lunch (while still underground), and getting to and from his station via the shaft. These hours practically meant that a miner could easily spend all his day in darkness, either working or sleeping, especially during the long winter months. The beds of a packed boardinghouse never cooled; there were always men who occupied them.

Several mines experimented with eight-hour days, one of the first being at the Lake Angeline iron mine in 1892, and considered a success after two months. Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company at Ishpeming, however, claimed it was first with the eight-hour day in 1896.³⁶ No matter who was really first, the eight-hour day did not catch on with many other mines in the Upper Penninsula, notably the copper mines, which were still working long hours in 1913. Hours worked were always a bone of contention in any strike, especially because western miners only worked an actual eight-hour day (total underground time) and were paid higher wages.

Wages paid to immigrants (the trammers and miners) between 1890 and 1915 are confusing to follow and decipher. The reason for this confusion is primarily due to the individual nature of the pay system so nearly every source claims a different daily average for the men. There was no minimum wage in Michigan mines as there was in western mines and this was another usual strike demand.

Employees at occupational levels above the miners and

trammers were paid a consistent monthly salary but trammers and miners worked according to an incentive system. This system provided that one's earnings would be based on fathoms of rock broken or number of cars filled, not hours worked. A man was supposedly encouraged to work quickly and constantly; if he loafed, he really only hurt himself. Miners in the copper country were nevertheless offered "rewards for exceptional ability or energy"³⁷ though what these rewards were is unmentioned.

The actual amount a group of miners or trammers would receive was negotiated between the group's foreman and shift boss, then the mining captain. These negotiations often occurred once a month. This meant that every man in the mine earned a different, though similar, price for his labor. A company would also benefit from competition among the workers who would sometimes agree to work an area containing much copper (and therefore more valuable) for lower wages than another group who wanted the same area.

Workers never saw the company sign the contract or received a copy of the contract they had to sign. To Arthur Oinas, this made the contract open on the company's part; it allowed the company freedom to do as it pleased, but bound the men. Arthur experienced this when the men of his group worked very diligently and each made \$130 that month. The mining captain informed them that they could not possibly pay them that much since the other workers would be angry. He was "afraid they'd have a rebellion." Probably afraid themselves of ending up on the streets with no pay and

no job, the miners quietly acquiesced and accepted \$105 pay, the company having successfully cheated them of twenty-five dollars each.³⁸

Contracts were a benefit mostly to the company obviously. They were deliberately kept short to enable a company to renegotiate according to current monthly payrates in the district. More importantly, short contracts allowed a company to adjust its wage scales according to the market prices it was currently receiving for copper or iron. These rates were in large part determined by the grade of rock being mined. A low grade of rock meant the rock contained a low proportion of copper or iron and was worth less in final marketing dollars. A company therefore justified its low wages by arguing that it couldn't possibly pay equal rates to miners of good and poor grades of rock even though those workers broke the same amount of rock. By keeping wages low and fluctuating, mine operators were able to keep their profits fairly even, with the workers absorbing the market swings.

This policy clearly irked The Survey magazine when it reported the 1913 copper strike. They wrote " . . . to the man who thinks of wages in terms of standard of living, this argument has little appeal. No mine manager would think of trying to get his drilling machines cheaper by using it; and there is no more reason why it should be applied to labor cost."³⁹ Labor costs, like drilling machine costs, should be a steady, fixed cost; if an owner could not pay the price then he could not own it.

The companies were obviously taking advantage of their

workers, immigrants with few skills to find other employment and usually little desire and even less money to forge to the western mines with their families. The mine owners knew that even the low wages immigrants received in the Upper Peninsula mines were better than those offered in Europe. Tradition said that when James MacNaughton took charge of the Calumet and Hecla Copper Mining Company at a reported salary of \$85,000 per year, he vowed "that he would teach people to eat potato parings."⁴⁰ Whether true or just a story by an angry worker, in repeating the story a miner reflected his feelings about his own earnings and the disparity between them and his master's salary.

A trammer, who worked the hardest and longest, was considered an unskilled laborer and earned the least. According to various government publications, his approximate daily wage for either copper or iron mining was \$1.43 in 1894, \$2.10 in 1902, and \$2.33 in 1911. Copper mines as a general rule paid more than iron mines but by 1902, wages were very close with iron mines paying a few cents more. Miners wages were about \$2.44 each day in 1894, \$2.38 in 1902, and by 1913, about \$3.00 a day.⁴¹

Studies reporting wages often vary widely because of the individual nature of the incentive system as well as because of variations in the copper and iron industries themselves. The Survey magazine in 1913, for example, found average daily wages at Calumet and Hecla were approximately \$2.80 for trammers and \$3.48 for miners. The authors quickly added, however, that the earnings of workers in other mines

ran about fifty or sixty cents per day lower than at Calumet and Hecla.⁴² Then studies often mix trammer and miner wages, for an average wage; others report wages before deductions while still others report wages after deductions. And most don't say how their daily wage was calculated. All of this makes it difficult to be certain of wage scales, especially when even a twenty-five cent difference would have made changes in the life of a trammer or miner.

Deductions were made from a man's negotiated pay for supplies necessary to the trade. The company supplied and charged miners for dynamite, fuses, caps, oil, drill bits, and shovels. By 1913 they could choose between an acetylene lamp for .75¢ or an "old-fashioned" lamp for .25¢. Trammers were charged for pick handles.

Although Delia Johnson remembers selling miners oil, lamps, and caps at her father's store during the 1920s,⁴³ at this time miners apparently were not allowed to buy supplies except through the company. Naturally, a company typically charged its miners and trammers twice the amount the supplies were actually worth. In most instances the men must have learned to live with this injustice because it does not appear specifically as an issue in any strike on the copper or iron ranges during this time. But there must have been controversy surrounding it since the Michigan Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics inquired about it when writing its 1904 Annual Report. A company justified its double charges, they wrote, on the grounds that 1) it would be difficult for miners to secure their own supplies;

2) with high prices, miners would be more careful using their supplies as a miner tended to be wasteful if supplies were cheap and 3) wasteful miners meant higher contract prices paid by the company because miners would want to earn the same living they earned when they were not wasteful.⁴⁴

The company argument is a brain teaser, meant only to confuse immigrants and reporters asking questions since it doesn't make much sense. With supplies at cheap prices an immigrant could afford to waste supplies and still earn wages equal to those he earned when paying high supply prices; the option of wasting or conserving was up to him. Knowing that any extra expense would be deducted from his paycheck, a miner would tend to be conservative in his use of supplies no matter what their cost or what he was earning. The Survey declared, "Furthermore, one frequently hears mine managers declare that their highest paid miners involve their lowest labor costs, because of greater efficiency."⁴⁵ With as small a wage as these men were earning, one would expect most to be frugal, preferring to save their earnings or spend them on family and pleasure, not on supplies for the job.

A variety of other deductions were made at Calumet and Hecla and other mining companies in the Upper Peninsula. Not all companies made the same deductions but, in addition to health care deductions, some subtracted fifty cents for the use of the dryhouse, where the men changed their clothes, and twenty-five cents for each unfilled tramcar under twenty that a trammer failed to fill. Immigrants were also

sometimes required to pay the company back his transportation costs if the company's recruiter had hired him elsewhere in the United States. In 1913, the travel cost from Hew York to Calumet via the train was \$24.50 -- more than a week's wages for a miner.⁴⁶

A miner's wage was also affected by the frequent closing and reopening of mines, although workers in the bigger mines were not quite as subject to such events as those in smaller mines. As a result, immigrants were a very transient group, continually seeking jobs.

An immigrant often chose to move of his own accord, however, usually responding to the notice that a certain mine was paying better wages than those he was currently receiving. Mattias Jusilla arrived in Ironwood and worked in various mines on the Gogebic Range before settling down to just one. Martin E. Luokinen's father worked first for the Quincy Mining Company, then moved around the copper ranges.⁴⁷ By no means was the mobility of immigrants restricted to Michigan's Upper Penninsula either. Herman Kallungi's father came first to Minnesota, traveled to the Butte, Montana mines, then, when a strike encompassed Butte, he went back to Finland for a time, and finally arrived in Calumet.⁴⁸ John DeRosso worked in the iron mines for a time then decided he wanted to see America. Even after he was married he left his family in the Upper Penninsula and went to California and Pennsylvania and other states working odd jobs in a salt mine and a coal mine. Of course, he never sent his family any money but when he decided to come home, "he

didn't have money to come home so he had to write [his wife] and ask her for money She didn't have any money but she sold a cow to send money for him to come home."⁴⁹

Immigrants felt no particular loyalty to any given employer. Charles Cobb, in an article for Michigan History wrote rather unsympathetically, "That we may get some idea of the class of labor, let me say the Iron Chief [mine] employed only 65 men at any time and yet 150 names appeared on the payroll during the month" ⁵⁰ They moved themselves and their families, whenever a move was dictated for any reason.

These moves were, naturally, usually made by younger men, younger families, and newly arrived immigrants. When Teresa DeRosso sold the cow to bring her husband home, he settled down to a steady job as an iron miner. The same can be said for most of the other immigrants too. The older and more acclimated they became to the United States, the more they were inclined to keep a job for a long period of time, provided they could keep the shift boss happy.

Moving to a new location did not necessarily mean that an immigrant improved his occupational status. His financial status may have risen but the job was often the same. Almost without exception a trammer became a miner but it was difficult, if not impossible for some nationalities, to rise above that level. A miner, particularly if he was a Finn, could sometimes obtain an above-ground position but such a move would be considered more lateral than vertical; the job was often still hard, dirty, or low-paying even though

considered less dangerous than actual mining.

It was true that the longer an immigrant had been in the United States, the more likely he was to make more money, but only up to a point. Nearly all Finns, Italians, and Poles in the iron fields made between \$12.50 and \$15.00 per week. Of the Finns who had been in America under five years, 20% of them studied by the Immigrant Commission earned between \$15.00 and \$17.50 per week. This percentage increased to 44% for Finns in America between five and nine years and further increased to 52% by ten years of longer. For Italians, their figures began with 26% of those residing in the United States under five years earning between \$15.00 and \$17.50 per week; between five and nine years, 50%; over ten years, 42%. The Poles posted numbers of 18%; 30%; and 43%. It is important to realize that not all Finns, Italians, and Poles could look forward to a substantial increase the longer they lived in the United States. A Finn only stood a fifty-fifty chance of making over \$15.00 a week after he had been here more than ten years. And there was little chance an immigrant might earn over \$17.50 even after he had been here ten years: only 3.6% of the Finns, 8% of the Italians, and 6% of the Poles managed to achieve such a wage.⁵¹

One of the reasons an immigrant had so little to look forward to can be explained by Joan Hannon's study of Michigan's labor statistics for 1888 - 1891. Although her years studied are a bit early, her findings nevertheless hold true for the Upper Peninsula's newly arriving immigrants in the late nineteenth century. She writes that, "On the

job, the foreign born were either denied opportunities for acquiring new skills or were denied access to the upper rungs of the occupational ladder."⁵² Italians, Finns, and other southeastern European immigrants could not advance without the skills required of the position of teamster or captain. To acquire those skills was close to impossible for the immigrant who worked at mining twelve hours each day. After all, mine owners had recruited these immigrants precisely to fill and keep filled those unskilled positions, not create a pool of bosses and captains.

More than skills, however, an immigrant needed to be born in the right foreign country or he simply was denied the better positions. Indeed, the Italians, and Magyars were best suited for low-skilled jobs, in the opinion of employers.⁵³ Such an opinion would immediately preclude any rise on the occupational ladder.

Not only were the upper positions almost exclusively filled by those of English, Canadian, and Swedish birth or native-born Americans, but those nationalities had much higher proportions of workers earning over \$17.50 per week than those of Finnish, Italian, or Polish birth (see Table 4). English, Canadian, and Swedish immigrants had been the first to settle Michigan's mining frontier and obviously would have had a bigger opportunity to climb the ladder of success. But by 1911, when the Immigrant Commission report was published, the newer immigrants would have had quite a bit of time to acquire the skills necessary to a better and more highly paid position if such a feat was possible. Not even most

of the Canadians, English, Swedes, or native-born earned over \$17.50 per week, let alone the Finns and southeastern Europeans. But, as Table 4 indicates, to even consider an upper-level occupation and higher wages an immigrant had to acquire skills and be of the proper stock.

It is interesting that though they were non-English speaking, Swedes were permitted to rise on the occupational ladder. The exact reasons for this are unclear. Finns, however, saw the advantages of being Swedish and commonly changed their names to pass as Swedes, since many of them might resemble the Swedish people. This not only might get a Finn a better position, but in some cases would also keep an employer from branding him a Socialist, as so many employers did with Finns. Many Finns were known as Swede-Finns anyway, having come from a section of Finland where Swedish was spoken.

Although not a Swede-Finn, Mattias Jusilla changed his last name to a more Swedish-sounding Johnson and went by the first name of Bill. He married a Swede, Swedish was spoken at home, and his children considered themselves Swedish and not Finnish at all.⁵⁴ Mattias also eventually held the position of timberman in the mines, a post typically better paid and occupied by Swedes even though it was nearly as dangerous as the actual mining.

Immigrants were also subject to the whim and opinion of shift bosses, captains, and superintendents, as mentioned earlier. These men were not to be trifled with if one valued one's job; they fired workers for the smallest

TABLE 4. PERCENT* OF MALE EMPLOYEES EARNING EACH SPECIFIED AMOUNT BY WEEK. 55

	<u>Copper</u>			<u>Iron</u>		
	\$12.50-	\$15.00-	Over	\$12.50-	\$15.00-	Over
	<u>\$15.00</u>	<u>\$17.50</u>	<u>\$17.50</u>	<u>\$15.00</u>	<u>\$17.50</u>	<u>\$17.50</u>
Canadian	21%	38%	22%	46%	30%	7.7%
Croatian	74	16	.62	60	35	.62
English	19	56	11	31	45	17
Finnish	35	34	.8	56	34	2
Italian, N.	68	20	2	62	30	1
Polish	28	54	2	68	23	1
Slovenian	64	16	3	--	--	--
Slovak	--	--	--	58	24	.8
Swedish	28	47	10	31	47	13
Native-born	24	14	15	54	21	6

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* Figures do not add up to 100% because those earning less than \$12.50 per week are not included.

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infrac-tion. Joseph Tambourini⁵⁴ dared to tell others his political views in 1899 at the Chapin Mine. His views apparently were not in line with management's and he was fired, being forced to move off the company's property and sell his livestock in the middle of winter. The superintendent of the mine was sending a clear signal to the miners that they could be easily fired for any reason. Tambourini nevertheless quickly found work as a logger for the rest of the winter and when Spring came, he built a house high on a hill above the superintendent's home. In this way, if the superintendent looked north, he would be forced to look up, not down, to Tambourini. Tambourini literally "moved up" within the mining community.⁵⁶ Other immigrants were not as lucky as Tambourini, who managed to remain in the community as a garbage collector for the rest of his life. For most, being fired meant moving to a new community and often to a new range. Those with a particularly outstanding reputation were fortunate enough to make the company's blacklist and were usually forced to move from Michigan if they desired to continue mining.

Though most would probably have claimed otherwise, employers were indifferent toward their workers. The life or death of an immigrant meant little to them. What was important to the company was the amount of work accomplished. ". . . sometimes they'd have an accident and you had to wait until the end of the shift to get the men out. They couldn't stop working A life just didn't mean anything. You had to keep on working," recalled Delia Johnson.⁵⁷ Wilmer Johnson explained further, " . . . they didn't

even stop the skip. They said, 'Wait until quitting time.' See? Because what they done was, the skip was going, they were hauling the ore up, they never had no cages to put on the side. So they figured that would be delaying, taking the bodies up."⁵⁸

Nothing was allowed to interfere with the rhythm of drilling, blasting, and hauling. Bodies could be taken care of soon enough at quitting time. The small respect mine policy paid its workers weighed heavily on the minds of many immigrants and still bothers many of them living yet today. Martin Loukinen remembered, "if a man carelessly injured a mule or caused it to die, [he] was fired . . . the company would say it had to buy a mule but a man could be replaced."⁵⁹ The death of a mule cost the company money to replace but the cost of replacing a man was cheap. There was usually a good supply of replacement immigrants available.

Here one might use the same reasoning used by the company when charging its miners two times the cost for supplies necessary to the trade. Men were necessary to the mining trade and by using immigrants, an employer was wasteful with his supply of them because they were plentiful and came quite cheap. Had the available manpower been fewer in number, the cost to the company would have been greater and employers would have been more careful in their use of them. Unfortunately, immigrant workers were in no position to charge double for their labor, and remained a cheap supply for companies.

Accidents and Death and Medical Benefits

"'Although this is a small city there are 16 mines . . . rare is the day that someone isn't hurt in my time here several men have died in the mines I have worked in the mines for 3 months and I know the work well what it is like.'"

Finn writing home from Negaunee, 1910⁶¹

To this immigrant and many others like him, the dangers of mining were well-known; deaths occurred frequently enough to remind them of the hazards of their occupation and price they might pay to earn a fortune in America. County-wide, there was at least one death per month in any year though quite often the number was two deaths per month for men killed while engaged in mining. At the risk of appearing as callous as a company, however, one must point out that compared to the number of men employed in mining, the number of those actually killed is surprisingly low. One would expect a much larger number.

In Table 5, one can see that for the years selected, the highest number of fatalities was 8.4 per 1,000 employees but the average number falls closer to 5 deaths per 1,000 employees. Iron mining seems to have been slightly more dangerous than copper mining as is pointed up by a Finnish writer in 1904, possibly advising a friend he had made a wrong decision to work in iron country.

I would have gone to look at better places than the iron mines no human being can last long in them it's difficult in them and the work full of disease only those who don't dare to get better jobs work there they don't know anything but bad of America.⁶²

No matter what statistics report about number of

TABLE 5. NUMBER OF FATAL ACCIDENTS FOR SELECTED YEARS.⁶¹

<u>County</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Fatalities</u>	<u>Employees</u>	<u>Fatalities per 1,000 Employees</u>
Houghton (Copper)	1889	21	6480	3.0
	1895	46	7249	6.3
	1900	36	13,971	2.5
	1902	44	14,130	3.1
Gogebic (Iron)	1891	13	3851	3.0
	1893	30	3562	8.4
	1900	14	3654	3.8
	1902	29	4088	7.0
	1911	24	4489	5.3
Marquette (Iron)	1895	11	2310	4.8
	1900	24	6627	3.6
	1913	16	5709	2.8
	1916	11	unknown	

fatalities per 1,000 employees, it is nevertheless clear that the immigrants thought a good many men were killed in the mines. The Finn above writing from Negaunee implies that deaths were common occurrence; when asked whether "a lot of people [were] killed or just hurt" in the mines, Wilmer Johnson replied, " . . . lots of them got killed."⁶³ The sense of danger and fear for their own lives as well as the uncaring attitude of the company toward its workers made the number of men killed seem, to an immigrant, much greater than it actually was.

An immigrant may also have tended to exaggerate the number of deaths because of the manner in which the greatest number of them occurred. A worker was typically killed by falling rock, ground, or ore. He had no real control over such an occurrence; he was a victim. A worker was therefore very vulnerable. The second biggest killer in mines was a fall by a miner from a skip or timber or down the shaft. A miner could supposedly have more control over this type of accident by taking careful steps, although more than one careful foot slipped. Every time he set foot in a mine, death was a very real possibility, looming large to a worker.

Then too, even if an immigrant managed to escape death in a mine, he might be disabled instead. Most injuries occurred through falling ore, rock, or ground, the same way most deaths occurred. As in Michigan's 1904 Annual Report of Labor and Industrial Statistics, the death figures were usually trotted out to show that mining was

indeed quite safe and its workers had little about which to worry or complain. What these authors usually omit, even in most of the county mine inspectors' reports, are the figures for those workers who have not been killed but seriously or slightly injured. An injury was considered serious if a miner lost more than twenty days of work and slight if the loss of work was more than one but less than twenty days. When the injury statistics can be obtained, it becomes clear that workers could complain about safety, and have reason to fear in the mines. If an injury was serious enough, an immigrant might as well have been dead for all the support he would be able to give to his family.

In Negaunee, an iron mining location, J. Russell Whitaker found the "number of slightly and seriously injured men is more alarming" than the number of fatal accidents.⁶⁴ In the whole of Marquette County, the number of seriously injured per 1,000 men was 40.8 or the ratio of two serious accidents for every forty-nine men. Only a few were slightly injured. By 1916, however, the number of those slightly injured had risen from 37 per 1,000 in 1913 to 444 per 1,000 for some unexplained reason; the number of serious injuries remained about the same.⁶⁵ Injury was no stranger to immigrants in the mines. If one worked in the mines long enough, chances were good he would encounter a serious accident.

Delia Johnson's father was blasted on at least one occasion; Edith Wicklund's father had a number of accidents, one occurring when he caught his foot under a tramcar's

wheel and crushed his toe. He nevertheless worked the rest of the day rather than lose any pay. Another injury was serious enough for him to leave work but he still had walked nearly all the way home before a friend came along and picked him up.⁶⁶ "Bluish-green powder marks on the miners' faces and hands and bodies were hallmarks of lucky escapes from serious or fatal injuries."⁶⁷ Injuries like these were common enough and also served to remind an immigrant of mining's imminent hazards.

Mining was dangerous even if one was not actually killed or disabled by mining accidents. Sanitation was not always the best in a mine and an immigrant might easily pick up a disease while drilling. Ida Erickson remembered many dying from Sylicosis and Herman Kallungi's father built a house in Chassell in his later years only to live there one or two years before succumbing to Black Lung Disease.⁶⁸ Wilmer Johnson's father specifically died of pneumonia but the illness was complicated by bronchitis and asthma, two problems undoubtedly aggravated by mining.⁶⁹ Then there was the twenty-three-year-old man found by his partner in the mine, but believed to have died of heart failure.⁷⁰ Twenty-three is quite young to have heart failure; the young man probably died from other factors which caused his heart to fail. A miner might also have died some time after receiving a serious injury so he would not have been included in the year-end report of fatalities, particularly if he lived more than a year after his injury.

One suspects that more immigrants died from mining

related problems than were reported, especially when reviewing the 1904 census statistics for foreign-born widows. By far the greater number of immigrant women over twenty in the western Upper Penninsula were married, and of a total of 28,887 married and widowed women, 3,360 or 11.6%, were widows in 1904. For every seventeen married, there were two widows. In Houghton County, center of Michigan's copper mining industry, the rate was one widow for every seven married women.⁷¹

This is a high number of widows in an area overpopulated by men with few occupations available to the mostly younger women; widows would be easily remarried. If approximately only twenty-three men were actually killed in the mines each year in a given county (about two per month), even if one allows for deaths by natural causes, there remains a high number of widows. Immigrant husbands died often whether death actually occurred in the mine or at home from a mining related illness.

Company officials could usually expect any death that occurred to be ruled accidental if not by the county mine inspector, then by a jury if a man's family pressed the case into court. In his annual report for 1890, the Inspector of Mines for Gogebic County ruled all sixteen deaths for that year accidental, "exonerating the Company." He often did a bit of moralizing in explaining the reason for a fatality as he did in the case of a miner killed by falling rock. A jury having "exonerated the Company from all blame," the Inspector explained the reason the accident

occurred, "It is frequently a habit of miners to stand too nearly under their work when picking down ground, and depending on their alertness to dodge when the material falls." In other words, if a miner was killed, it was almost surely the fault of his own carelessness. After all, the good Inspector found in most mines "no reason for not considering the [place of death] perfectly safe."⁷² It was the miner himself who made the mine such a dangerous place to work. Without workers the mine was inherently a safe place; of course, without workers, it was also non-producing!

This same Inspector further chastises workers the next year while easing the consciences of company officials when he reports that ten of the thirteen fatal accidents happened to "miners and timbermen, men who are supposed to be well aware of the dangers incident to mining."⁷³ Accidents wouldn't occur if the men thoroughly understood the dangers of their job; they would be more careful. What the Inspector failed to see was that with such dangers "incident to mining," no matter how much care might be taken, accidents were bound to happen.

But officials still claimed that the reason for a death in the mines was due to a worker's own carelessness. They said that the men grew accustomed to the dangers of mining and consequently took unnecessary risks at times. A second excuse frequently stated in the Department of Labor and Industrial Statistics Annual Report was that accidents occurred because the immigrant miners were

illiterate and could not understand English. Authors of annual reports usually went a step further and suggested that these men either be given jobs on the surface or those jobs involving the least danger. The authors apparently failed to realize that officials sought and hired non-English-speaking immigrants precisely for the more dangerous, lesser-paid jobs.

It really made no difference whether an immigrant read or understood English. There were no signs to read, warning of danger, no instruction manuals to follow. Once hired, an immigrant usually worked with an immigrant of another nationality, so speaking English would have had no advantage. Finally, most immigrants were probably quite well aware of the dangers of mining before they even applied for a job, being informed by the letters and stories of friends and relatives. In a 1911 survey, the Pickands-Mather Company (iron mining) found that of those injured only one-third had no understanding of English.⁷⁴ This survey was conducted by a company, and one is not told exactly what was considered "understanding English" but many immigrants, according to the Immigration Commission reports, did comprehend some English (see page 71). But understanding English probably would not have kept falling ore from killing or injuring an immigrant.

Benefits given in case of death or injury varied widely from company to company. Calumet and Hecla had one of the better programs, but it's important to realize that many mining companies didn't have as good a benefit

program and some had no death or disability benefits (worker's compensation) at all. The fund for death and disability benefits was separate from the Hospital or Medical fund, which provided for outpatient services from local doctors. Both programs were supported by payments from the men, but a company sometimes contributed matching funds to the death and disability fund. In general, the bigger the company, the better the program, so Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company and Calumet and Hecla Copper Company are the two most often described.

At Calumet and Hecla, membership in the Aid Fund for death and disability benefits was mandatory for underground men and optional for surface men, though it was possible to be disqualified because of a bad medical report when hired (such a person was apparently still hired, however). Each man contributed about fifty cents each month to the fund; that amount was matched by the company. The Aid Fund was controlled by trustees who were both miners and company officials, not just agents of the company. Benefits paid were usually \$300 for a crippled limb; \$500 for death or total blindness; and \$25 per month (with a maximum payment period of eight months) for sickness or injury. These payments were made only if the sickness, injury, or death occurred while an employee was actually at his job. A widow or injured man had the right to sue for better compensation but a company (not just Calumet and Hecla) often tried to force a widow to sign papers absolving the company of any further responsibility once the benefit was paid.

Calumet and Hecla's contribution to the Aid Fund was described as "a good-will offering on its part to the employees . . . ; to show the men that the Company really takes an interest in their welfare, to the extent of aiding them as much as they will aid themselves."⁷⁵ The writer wished to make clear that Calumet and Hecla owed their employees nothing for occupational hazards since the men chose to work in the mines. Benefits came only if the men contributed part of the funds.

Calumet and Hecla not only managed to escape full responsibility for occupational hazards, but also managed to receive some benefits from the Fund. The Aid Fund eventually gained a surplus of funds and officials invested that surplus in shares of Calumet and Hecla. This supposedly made it possible during prosperous years for the Fund to pay benefits with no contributions from the workers or the Company. How often this actually happened is unknown.

Cleveland Cliffs program was similar to Calumet and Hecla's but its benefits were not nearly as good. Where Calumet and Hecla paid a lump sum in case of death, Cleveland Cliffs preferred to pay a widow twelve dollars each month for a maximum of five years. Because payments stopped if she remarried, a Cliffs widow would have to remain a widow for three and one-half years to collect the \$500 death payment given by Calumet and Hecla. In general, companies having aid funds paid \$200 to \$500 in case of death and seventy-five cents to one dollar per day for injuries.

Once a disabled man was able, Calumet and Hecla put

him to work again, at his old job if possible or at a new job if he was incapable of handling his old work. This make-work program of Calumet and Hecla was unique almost only to Calumet and Hecla; most smaller companies could not afford such a plan. It was highly touted in its day, however, as an indication of how well Calumet and Hecla took care of its own.

Injured miners were employed as dryhouse attendants, they sawed wood, and they made brooms (beginning in 1903) for Calumet and Hecla. Before being given a job, however, the Company made it clear that all members of a disabled man's family had to be willing to work. In the case of one dryhouse tender, he was so crippled that he could merely watch the house while his family did the sweeping. Needless to say, this could easily place an undue burden on a family, but Calumet and Hecla saw the "integrity of the family . . . preserved" and the disabled man "[did] not look upon himself as a drain on others."⁷⁶

The one drawback to these programs was the number of men they employed. Calumet and Hecla required all dryhouse tenders to be crippled miners, but there were only fifteen or twenty dryhouses. It only took two blind miners working for one dollar a day each (considerably less than they made as miners) to supply all the brooms Calumet and Hecla needed. A limited number of sawyers could also be employed. Calumet and Hecla also provided some odd jobs for injured men, but not enough for all those miners too seriously hurt to return to a miner's job. So although these

programs were much praised, the reality of the numbers they could employ makes Calumet and Hecla seem less than it claimed to be.

The Hospital or Medical Assistance Funds operated by most mining companies provided for outpatient services and medicines for an immigrant and his family. Contribution to the fund of one dollar each month for married men and fifty cents each month for single men was compulsory. The employer contributed nothing toward an employee's medical expenses. Extra charges were usually made for hospital stays and, in some cases, for obstetrics care. The men grumbled about this fund for several reasons.

Although the company contributed nothing, it collected the money but made no reports as to the sums amassed, though the money was supposedly turned over exactly as collected to the doctors. There were no printed rules, meaning the rules could change any time the company so desired. The men had no voice in the committees administering the funds as to distribution of funds. But the biggest demand of workers, one that was always brought up at a strike, was the choice of doctor. Miners wanted to choose their own doctor rather than be assigned one and they felt that the company's doctors minimized on-the-job injuries. A company would obviously wish to reserve the right to choose its doctors for its employees, probably for the exact reasons the men disliked the company doctors. The men argued, however, that they were paying for the doctor's service and ought to be able to choose whom they wished to pay.

The medical service was a mixed blessing for workers: the services were good to have but nevertheless represented one more control of them by the company.

But as long as they were required to give up their monthly sum regularly, immigrants were sure to get something for that money whether they were sick or not. If nothing else, they managed to get to the doctor at the end of the month and receive a bottle of castor oil. That oil was then used to grease their boots!⁷⁷

Cleveland Cliffs and Calumet and Hecla were also leaders in establishing pension funds for their employees. Again, most smaller mines did not offer any such program. Calumet and Hecla offered the best retirement plan, established in 1904. A man had to be over sixty and have worked for the company for twenty years but that did not automatically make him eligible for benefits. Only certain employees who could meet other conditions, and each case was decided individually, could receive benefits. Those conditions were never specified in print; writings simply acclaimed the wonderful program. Retirement benefits of a monthly income based on one's average salary for the previous ten years of employment still were not open to all by 1911. A man accepted into the program could look forward to his monthly income for five years, plus free rent and medical benefits.

In the iron mining field, the Cleveland Cliffs Company required mandatory retirement at seventy years; retirement was optional at sixty-five. Benefits consisted of a monthly

income based on one percent of a worker's average monthly wage for the previous ten years of employment multiplied by the years of service he had given. This program was apparently open to all. Pensioners were allowed to take other jobs provided they were not in conflict of interest with the iron company.

Labor Organization

Whereas, the history of the Iron Ore Mine Workers throughout the country has been but the record of constant struggle against oppression and Whereas, these troubles have arisen almost entirely from lack of unity and confidence in each other as workers, and misunderstanding the true causes of oppression and Whereas, unity guided by intelligence is a source of strength that can stand all attacks . . . and Whereas, we could cultivate an acquaintance with our fellows in order that we may be better enabled to form an undivided opposition to acts of injustice . . . [for] united we stand, divided we fall.

Bylaws of the Iron Ore Mine Workers,
1896⁷⁸

Between 1890 and 1913, Michigan's iron and copper mining fields saw few strikes and few problems with its immigrant labor. Before the big strike in Copper Country in 1913, observers could report that there had "never been marked 'unrest' among laboring classes of the Lake Superior country that is so common elsewhere as to be almost chronic" and "before 1913, no union had been able effectively to penetrate the Copper Country of Michigan."⁷⁹ The Immigrant Commission found only three immigrant miners who reported affiliation with a trade union. Many of the skilled

surface workers were organized through affiliation with the AFL, but all those working underground were considered unskilled and therefore remained unorganized.

There were strikes, particularly during times of depression and the iron industry seemed more prone to them than the copper industry. But such strikes were usually short in duration and unsuccessful because the immigrants were poorly organized. This poor organization is something of a puzzle but several reasons may at least partially explain the problems.

The first step a company took toward a "contented labor" situation was to hire non-English-speaking immigrants, hoping that language barriers would prevent unionism. This trick was not lost on the immigrants. "They figured miners which jabber like monkeys and can't speak a word of English can't get together and make trouble," stated an old miner.⁸⁰ Delia Johnson confided, "That's what the company would do -- they would get one from another country and put him in with . . . two foreigners from two foreign countries so none of them could speak to each other" A company deliberately mixed several nationalities together for a team of miners. But, as Delia Johnson continued, when her father, an Italian, was made a partner with an English miner, " . . . they learned [to speak to each other]. This other fella, he learned Italian!"⁸¹ Her father also learned English, but it was quite a switch for an Englishman to learn Italian!

The immigrant workers recognized that it was partly

language problems that kept them unorganized and divided when dealing with company injustices. Hoping to remedy that, the newly formed Iron Ore Mine Workers Union published its bylaws in 1896 in English, Swedish, German, and Italian. It was apparently not published in Finnish, however, which seems a little odd considering the number of Finns settling in the Upper Peninsula at this time. The bylaws further provided that a member who did not speak English could "address [the] union in [his] own language or have an interpreter."⁸² The men tried very hard to thwart the company's intentions but the language problem often was too much for them, even when they sought ways to speak a common tongue. This union dissolved barely a year after its initial organization after an unsuccessful strike.

A visitor to the Calumet and Hecla mines in 1907 wrote, "'There are no labor unions among the mines of the Calumet region. The miners say they do not need them. They are satisfied with their wages, and their living conditions and they prefer to work the entire year to being on strike for higher wages.'"⁸³ Most of the statement is untrue. If there were no unions in 1907 it surely was not because the men were satisfied or felt unions unnecessary. The absence of unions more likely pointed out the problems of diverse languages with a readily available supply of immigrants; the company's well-conducted paternalism (particularly in the case of the bigger companies); the contractual incentive wage system which kept

competing with each other; and seasonal or transient labor.

Next to the language barrier, the seasonal and transient workers were probably the second biggest reason the immigrants were unorganized. Men moved from company to company and between copper and iron fields in order to obtain better wages or living conditions. They worked together but lived apart in communities of their own nationality often. Many also worked farms in addition to mining and thus only worked in the mines when the farming was completed or it was a bad year for crops. The mines themselves often shut down for a month or two, or at least laid off workers if market prices were low or the winter season prevented ore from being shipped out. The Iron Ore Mine Workers Union tried to deal with this problem of changing occupations or jobs by giving a member who was moving on an honorary membership card. This card could be presented to the union if his occupation changed again and made him eligible once more for union membership. He would be completely reinstated with this card.⁸⁴

Immigrants constantly moving in and out of the mining work force were hard to keep organized, especially if a strike was to occur. One union for all copper or iron miners and trammers would have been ideal to keep together the men moving from one mine to another. But if the men could not stay organized at one small mine, how could they stay together when separated by miles? A suggestion was made within Calumet and Hecla to connect all its properties by a railway system in 1900 but officials squelched

the plan because "'the men could get together easier in time of strike.'"⁸⁵ If connected by rail, the men could also get together easier in non-striking times, too, to organize and plan a strike. Calumet and Hecla wanted to be sure it was difficult for the men to socialize or organize.

Besides the Iron Ore Mine Workers Union, there were only a few other unions to last any length of time; small strikes usually occurred with no prior organization. The Northern Mineral Mine Workers Union was created in 1904 but fell apart by 1906 or 1907. The biggest unionizing attempt came by the Western Federation of Miners who first entered the copper district in 1904, could not gain a foothold then, and returned in 1909.

This time the workers proved more receptive but by the time a strike was called in 1913 (admittedly called too early), reputedly only one-third to one-half of the underground workers were WFM members.⁸⁶ If the WFM was actively campaigning and there was indeed only half the work force organized, the WFM had little to show for four years work except how difficult Michigan miners were to unionize.

Small strikes peppered the iron and copper regions between 1890 and 1915. They were occasionally marred by violence and were usually only partially successful in some of their minor demands. They nevertheless indicated an underlying dissatisfaction of conditions by workers. They were not as contented as some observers of the day believed. The two most important and best organized strikes occurred in 1895 and 1913, the first on the Marquette iron

range and the second in the copper fields.

During a strike, it was especially important that all workers stop work, especially the trimmers, who loaded ore onto the ships. If a company could continue to ship its stockpiled ore, it would be little hurt immediately by a strike, and workers would be forced to survive a longer strike. Also working in a company's favor was the strike clause written into their contracts for ore prices. According to this clause, the agreed upon prices for ore remained firm unless interrupted by a strike. When their workers walked out, a company was able to cash in on any rises in ore prices that might occur either during the strike (if the company was able to ship its piles of ore) or after the strike. So a company quickly gloated in the local papers that the workers only made things better for the company and worse for themselves when they would have to come back to work at a new contractual price.

During a strike, a company also served eviction notices to those workers renting its houses or lands and miners were denied credit at stores, even though such stores were not usually owned specifically by the company. A strike for a minimum wage, shorter hours, union recognition, or the disuse of dangerous equipment (four of the demands made in the two strikes), was nearly impossible to commandeer when the company controlled the town. That was discouraging enough without even thinking of language problems or seasonal workers.

One immigrant recalled that, "Strikes were the scene

of trouble" and he would leave before one began.⁸⁷ No doubt there were others who agreed with him, especially those immigrants brought in by the company as strikebreakers. Such men were unaware there was a strike in progress until their arrival in town. The contract they signed was typically written in their tongue, but the word "strike" was spelled in English. Once they discovered the strike, they usually also refused to work and joined the union ranks, even when threatened by the boss or hampered by locked railroad cars. They wanted nothing to do with a strike and wanted even less to oppose their fellow immigrants.

Opportunities For Self-Employment in a Mining Community

I came here to stay. First when I come
I worked in a mine. Then I started my
business career and I am satisfied. No
old country for me!

Immigrant businessman⁸⁸

Most men arrived in the Upper Peninsula with the intention of becoming miners. An important group, however, located in the area seeking other kinds of opportunities, particularly those involving self-employment. Like the businessman above, they usually worked in the mines at first, but moved into other occupations as soon as possible. Often such ambitions meant juggling both mining and a tavern or farm. The family would work the farm or run the store while its owner mined. "Finnish trammers worked for the Company only in between their meagre potato crops . . . " and Germans saved to go into independent business.⁸⁹ The miner might also leave mining for his business and when

it failed, return to mining only to quit again when a new business opportunity was presented.

Frank Izzo, an Italian, worked in the mines long enough to earn money to marry and send for his relatives, then opened a clothing store. Peter Fiera was a miner at Chapin Mine from his arrival in 1866 until 1899 when he opened a saloon. In this case, Peter was probably getting old and wanted more security for old-age than the mines offered. He would call to the miners on their way to work in the mornings to stop in for an "eye-opener" and after work he filled their empty lunch pails with beer for ten cents.⁹⁰

Not quite as successful was Secundo Angeli who, with a partner, built a tavern with an upstairs boardinghouse while he was still mining. His wife ran the boardinghouse. When the partnership dissolved, Secundo went back to the mines. Michael Golas was a miner in 1910 but hoped his sons would not be forced to work in a mine and consequently opened a grocery store, while continuing to mine. The store proved to be a good investment a few years later, when he was disabled in a mine accident.⁹¹ John DeRosso, the young man who had started out in lumbering, mined, roamed the United States doing odd jobs, and came back to Michigan mining again, " . . . didn't like that mine. He said that's why he bought the tavern. He didn't want the mine."⁹² That tavern actually started out as an ice cream parlor and candy store; it became a tavern much later. Mike Jutila's business was his hands. After five years of working for Calumet and Hecla, he became what he had

dreamed of becoming: a masseur. He built a very good practice and was even hired by Calumet and Hecla to work for them one day a week, massaging disabled miners.⁹³

The desire for land and to be a farmer was on many young men's minds when they arrived in the United States. Like businessmen, they too started in the mines saving their money for forty or eighty acres of cut-over stumpland. Before being able to farm his land, an immigrant had to remove the stumps left by the lumberjacks. He would also have to contend with a short growing season in the Upper Peninsula; much of the farm land was also quite low and water was sometimes a problem. But farmers in the Upper Peninsula were determined, perhaps inspired by a publication of Michigan's Immigration Commission which sung the praises of the rich land, excellent for farming. It promised many opportunities open to immigrant farmers with only twenty percent of available land in cultivation in 1914.⁹⁴ One Finn purchased a homestead three miles from the main road and dragged or carried all his supplies (and his family) there. All these belongings remained under a fir tree until he had built a little shack in which to live and begin farming.⁹⁵

There were settlements of farmers who bore no relationship whatever to mining, such as the Finnish immigrants who homesteaded a portion of Otter Lake in 1890 or the Hungarian settlement of Banat, near Menominee. More typical, however, were those farmers who both owned a farm and mined at the same time. Wilmer Johnson explained, "Although there was a lot of Finns, they worked in the mines for a while, see,

and pretty soon they [would] go and start farming. They get a little land, land was cheap, see? But then you had to work. They would work in the mine and then [they] would work on the land too, see. They'd get dynamite from the mine, they'd steal it, you know, blast stumps and that." Farmers also did not necessarily live on their land, but lived in town, walking to the mines, and walking to their farms outside the town.⁹⁶

A typical miner-farmer was described as owning forty acres of oats, potatoes, and hay. His wife and children did most of the farm work, but the miner himself quit the mine for about three weeks each year to help during the haying season. The family also owned seven milch cows and they sold butter and their oats and potatoes.⁹⁷

Herman Kallungi was also a miner-farmer, also raising sheep. His wife sheared the sheep while he mined as well as running a boardinghouse. When some of those boarders could not pay their rent, they cleared the land of stumps in payment.⁹⁸ Finns were usually the farmers of the Upper Peninsula but not exclusively. Giuseppe Gasperini, an Italian, sold vegetable plants, potatoes and tomatoes while mining and a Polish miner bought eighty acres of land as a miner. His wife and children cleared the land of stumps, sold for firewood in town, as well as growing vegetables to be marketed.⁹⁹

If an immigrant did not desire to mine and farm at the same time, he could still find employment as a miner during farming's off-season in late fall and sometimes winter.

This helped the family to have cash, instead of just crops, particularly if the previous season wasn't good.

Mine operators liked the seasonal or double-occupation worker too. With a farmer or tavern owner in his mine, he was guaranteed a dependable labor supply. An immigrant who owned a business or land was not likely to be a floater and would also be on hand when needed by the mine. Additionally, those ambitious enough to own farms and businesses were the most careful and thrifty miners, thought mine operators. They were dependent on their income to pay off the farm or business. A temporary shut-down simply returned the men to their farms, ready at a moment's notice to return to the job.

It's hard to know how many immigrants actually left mining to open a business or operate a farm. To be sure, the majority remained in the mines, unable to move up the ladder of mining but not quite possessing enough cash or enough desire to venture out on their own.

Women At Work

"I can accomodate 6 boarders, price
\$18 per month. House over Sam Maurence's
store "

Ad in Calumet newspaper, 1896¹⁰⁰

By far the majority of immigrant women over twenty in copper and iron fields were married. Those who were single, even if only for a short time after arrival, performed jobs quite different from those of married women or helped their mothers at home.

In 1911 the Immigration Commission classified the occupation of nearly 98% of its total immigrants studied as "At Home."¹⁰¹ This broad classification does not really mean the women were without work, but that their work was performed at home in most cases. In the mining fields of Michigan there was little employment for women outside their homes, but within the domestic sphere, there were plenty of jobs to be found.

The biggest responsibility of married women was keeping boarders. The Immigration Commission reported that of 493 households studied, in the copper field, only 18% kept boarders but certain immigrant groups tended to keep boarders more than other groups. Boarders could be found in 60% of the English homes and 83% of the Magyar households. In Croatian homes, 35% kept boarders and in Slovenian homes, 46%. For the iron mining fields, the total homes accepting boarders was higher.¹⁰² These total figures, however, can be questioned because they only counted homes with boarders at the time of the survey. Though some boarders stayed for long periods, many boarders moved from mine to mine and the number of boarders a woman had at any time varied from none to full capacity. Oral history interviews also indicate a high number of households with boarders. Whenever asked about boarders in the house, the answer was nearly always affirmative. So it would appear that more women kept boarders than reflected by the Immigration Commission figures.

Lydia O'Meara recalled that the company allowed her

parents to live in a copper company house rent-free, as long as her mother boarded company men. Her mother originally boarded fourteen workers but pestered the company to build a second story addition to the house (which they eventually did) so she could increase her number of boarders.

Accommodations probably were not exactly spacious, but for men who spent half the day working and the other half sleeping, they were no doubt sufficient. Even space over a store could manage a family and some boarders for the extra income. An ad in the Copper Country Evening News stated, "I can accomodate 6 boarders, price \$18 per month. House over Sam Maurence's store, in the Jermain block, Front Street."¹⁰³ Some women could only house two or three men but others had space for as many as thirty-five.

For an average payment of fifteen to eighteen dollars a woman's duties to her boarders usually meant her day began about four in the morning, preparing pasty or other hearty fare for the dinner pails of those miners on the job by 7 a.m. The rest of her hours would be spent washing, changing beds, and always, preparing more food and meals for family and boarders. She might not tumble back into bed until midnight.

In addition to satisfying the needs of her boarders, or even if she had no boarders, the wife of an immigrant was usually in charge of the garden, including planting and harvesting. If she did not have indoor water, water had to be carried from the nearest well or stream. Animals -- cows, chickens, and pigs -- were also the wife's

responsibility, though her children often helped milk the cows and feed the animals. Extra vegetables or milk at a nickel a pail, were sold by the children in town or to neighbors, along with butter and cheese. Incidentally, milking the cow was not as simple as walking out to the barn. Cows were allowed to roam freely and before one could be milked, she had to be found. Wilmer Johnson clearly remembered being awakened by his mother's "holler," that "'The cow ain't home! Got to go get her!'" And I [Wilmer] used to be so mad. And I had to get up and I didn't know where to look for her either, you know. Sometimes they'd be down at Gile and sometimes they'd go down this way And I'd go off one way and the cows would be the other way."¹⁰⁴

A woman might also serve as a midwife though there seems to have been only one or just a few midwives in any given community who served all immigrant families regardless of nativity. Though not a midwife, Sofia Passamani helped an Iron Mountain doctor deliver babies, acting as an interpretor (and no doubt a comforter), for Italian women.¹⁰⁶ Midwives and doctors also both commonly attended a birth, particularly as the century wore on.

For all the jobs and duties for which women were responsible, they earned wages of some sort. These wages were usually in the form of monthly payments from boarders, both in cash and in kind. But though the wife provided for the care of boarders, their payments were made to the household or to the husband, not to the woman herself.

Her earnings from boarders were considered supplemental to the main source of family income, the wages of the husband. In its tables detailing sources of family income, the Immigration Commission attributes no part of total income earned to the wife. The Commission does, however, list income earned from boarders and even that earned by children. Wives, according to the tables, contribute no specific earnings to the family income.¹⁰⁵

This contrasts with the treatment of the earnings of a man, who, as a miner and the primary source of all income, was never paid in kind and ultimately had the right to decide where his earnings (and those of other family members) were spent. He no doubt usually decided they should be spent on rent, groceries, clothing, or other necessities but a woman was not allowed to make even such obvious decisions with the pay she earned by running the household.

Nonetheless, when a husband was hurt or killed, it was the woman's earnings, however supplemental they might have been considered earlier, that sustained her and her children. Boarders became more important and so did every nickel earned in selling a pail of milk or pound of cheese to the neighbors. Occasionally a woman was forced to take on more work -- Alida Henning remembers some friends' fathers being killed "and their mother had to start working and raising the family" at the same time.¹⁰⁷ This work was separated from that of caring for boarders. A woman perhaps took in extra washing and sewing or managed to find a job outside the home. Few of them remained widows for

long, however, usually remarrying within a couple years of their husband's deaths.

In the mining country, jobs for a woman working outside her home were not particularly abundant, especially in the counties where mining precluded any other sort of factory. In Gogebic County factories, the annual inspection of 1909 indicated only nine women were employed.¹⁰⁸ Although a few women were also at work in clothing factories, bakeries, laundries, and factories dealing in printed matter most commonly, more were employed as chambermaids and waitress in hotels and as saleswomen and clerks in stores. Seamstressing was very common, but the position nearly every woman was to try was that of domestic, either in a boardinghouse or a superintendent's home. Most women in these positions in factories and hotels and working as seamstresses or domestics were single, though a married woman might also have worked at such a job in a pinch. Single working women may have arrived in the Upper Penninsula with their parents or come alone. It is unknown how many single immigrant women arrived alone in this country intending to make it on their own, employed as such.

For many of the positions available, the ability to speak English was necessary; immigrants in those positions would have to have been in the United States long enough to learn the language. A glance at the want ads in Houghton's Daily Mining Gazette indicates that those doing the hiring wanted English-speaking cooks, housemaids, baby-sitters, and servants. Those rich enough to hire domestics were

usually bosses and superintendents of the mines and those families were by far and wide English speaking themselves. Those women hired to work in boardinghouses were no doubt hired by less formal means than a newspaper ad. They were usually friends or relatives or simply a fellow countryperson who spoke the same language.

The daughter of Peter and Caroline Christenson was hired out at twelve years as a domestic earning twelve dollars a month. She later became a dressmaker and then a cook before she married.¹⁰⁹ Alida Henning's mother arrived alone in the Upper Penninsula at age sixteen and went to work as a "discullerie": a maid in a boardinghouse.¹¹⁰ Both Domenica Debernardi and Agda Pedersen arrived to stay with a sister's family, but one worked for the family, and the other as a seamstress for a local boardinghouse.¹¹¹ How many women were employed as domestics in the Upper Penninsula is hard to ascertain; none of the labor reports and inspections count domestics but many oral histories indicate that most women were domestics at one time or another.

Kreeta, the "Angel of the Roundheads" was particularly successful, though a bit unusual, in her strivings for a career when they went to work. Kreeta had to work extremely hard to be a success. She had arrived with her Finnish family as a teenager and quickly discovered there was little for girls to do in a mining camp. She persuaded a woman to take her as a domestic in the mornings and she sold pianos, organs, and sewing machines in the afternoons. Kreeta also spent evenings in night school and working as

an extra clerk. During this time she mastered the English language and American mannerisms and after five years in the Houghton-Hancock area, managed to use persuasion again to get William Condon, a Hancock merchant, to give her a job as a saleswomen. Having such a position gave her "marvelous . . . influence over her countrymen" and she soon became involved in politics, studying the United States laws and constitution to "advise her countrymen wisely." Kreeta also began advising Finns in financial matters, acting as a broker and investing the funds they placed in her hands. She eventually organized a Finnish equal suffrage society, and became editor and proprietor of the Ladies Journal, a paper based on the principle of equal suffrage.¹¹²

The brief magazine account of Kreeta's successful rise on the occupational ladder raises many tantalizing but unanswered questions. One wonders how she managed to accomplish all the work she took on as a teen plus going to night school. Her earnings are never mentioned and neither is her family or their reactions to her jobs and success. Further, how did she finance her political activities and her equal suffrage society and journal? The answers to these and many other details would be very helpful in better understanding women in the Upper Peninsula.

Kreeta nevertheless showed it was possible for a woman to advance to a good position, but these positions were few in number in a mining community and usually required better skills than an immigrant might ever possess. Most

women, when employed, were in the position of domestic, a job that paid little, offered few rewards, and needed only the lowest of skills to be applied to dusting, changing beds or doing dishes. Though many households preferred that their domestics speak English, this was not always a requirement and did not always mean a woman needed to have full command of the English language, particularly if she was a domestic in a boardinghouse. For Kreeta to become a saleswoman, she obviously needed to possess the skill of persuasion, both in getting the job and in order to sell the merchant's goods to others. She had also mastered English over a period of time, a skill that would be required of any applicant to a sales job.

Kreeta's position as a saleswoman probably paid her about \$1.25 per day, the average wages for a saleswoman in 1903. These wages were considerably better than a domestic who normally earned about .55¢ a day (or twelve dollars a month). A hotel cook made about \$1.01 per day but a waitress only boasted .53¢ per day. For any occupation, ten hours formed the average workday. Kreeta's occupation as a saleswoman did not pay her the highest wages a woman might possibly earn, but she had clearly advanced beyond the positions most women filled.

Men employed under the same job title as women earned considerably more than women, even though their workdays were approximately the same length. A female book-keeper earned \$1.60 each day but a male book-keeper earned \$3.31 each day; to a saleswoman's \$1.25 daily wage, earned in a

position for which some women strived, a salesman's daily wage was \$2.16.¹¹³ No matter where men were employed, they were worth more than women. Single men and single women spent their money in similar ways however; for room and board, savings, and sending money back home in order to bring more family members and relatives to Michigan.

Like most women in the United States at this time, the length of time a single woman spent in any particular occupation varied. She changed jobs whenever possible to earn more money but it was marriage more than anything that determined the number of years a woman worked at jobs outside of home duties. As the census data for 1893-1894 shows, over seventy percent of single women were married by age twenty-five and one-quarter of those were married under the age of twenty.¹¹⁴ Marriage affected a woman's career in the Upper Penninsula as it did elsewhere in the United States, putting at least a temporary, if not permanent, end to a woman's participation in the labor force.

III. Adjustment to American Life

The Community and The Language

I came to stay with my daughter, but found everything disagreeable. The language, customs, food, in fact all seemed to be so strange that I thought to myself I would never remain here I felt lonesome and would often burst into tears Finally when nobody seemed to pay any attention to my crying I had to stop it myself. I have stayed with my daughter and now I feel perfectly at home. I am so glad after all that I came here.

Interview with Finnish immigrant¹¹⁵

For many immigrants to Michigan's Upper Peninsula between 1890 and 1915, easing into American life was difficult. Not only were American customs and food different, but a new immigrant in the mining communities also had to deal with more languages than just English in order to get along. And his job was far different from any work he had known before. His expectations of finding a better life in America were not always confirmed on arrival. "Houses were covered with a thin, reddish coating and one never hung the wash out on a dry, windy day."¹¹⁶ A miner's wife lamented, "'. . .I was bitterly disappointed when I reached this mining town . . . [and saw] miserable looking miners' huts scattered all along the muddy alleys and roads. As I contrasted conditions here with those in my native country, I began to cry'"¹¹⁷

Most immigrants had friends and relatives already in Michigan to help them adjust to a new life. One of the goals of an immigrant was to earn enough money to send for the rest of his family, not just his wife and children

but mother, father, brothers, sisters -- everyone related to him. Alida Henning's mother saved enough money from every monthly paycheck to bring her family, one or two at a time, to America. This saving continued even after she was married, two years after her Michigan arrival.¹¹⁸

Boardinghouses, too, were welcome to an immigrant lost in a sea of languages. It was comforting to be able to come home after work to a house in which everyone spoke the same language and were often from the same area in Europe.

In the Copper Country at least there was a directory published for Italian immigrants. Titled Guide to the Italians of the Copper Country, the handbook was published completely in Italian by the Italian newspaper of Houghton. It was written especially for Italians new to the area, but also for use by other Italians as a reference to keep on hand during one's stay in Michigan. It contained ads for stores and businesses in the area, though these were not just Italian businesses; the ads were nevertheless written in Italian.

Other information in the directory that an Italian might find useful included the United States constitution and Declaration of Independence along with the Presidents of the United States. It informed Italians as to the legal holidays observed in the United States, told them how American currency was counted, and gave brief biographies of the "Pionieri della Colonia" -- the first successful Italians in the Copper Country so fellow Italians would have inspiration. Probably the most important parts of the book

for new immigrants, however, was the brief outline of each mining location and the names and addresses of the Italians living in each location.¹¹⁹ An Italian fresh off the boat would find fellow countrymen ready to help him in this new land.

Although an immigrant usually lived in a house with people who spoke his language, that house was not necessarily in a district comprised only of people of his nationality. Some areas were exclusive, others were not, and an Italian immigrant could easily find himself living a few houses down from a Finnish immigrant. He learned a smattering of his neighbor's language and his wife even exchanged recipes with the neighbor.

Despite living among so many different nationalities, few immigrants recall many ethnic conflicts. Some remember feuds between the Italians and the Finns; some report the Finns as very docile while some remember the Finns as always being involved in fights. There seems to have been no real animosity between nationalities except occasionally. Angus Murdoch writes that in Red Jacket, a copper community, "for all their thirst [a reference to the large number of saloons], the citizens seldom robbed, burgled, or killed one another."¹²⁰ When pressed, most children of immigrants said the type of conflict they encountered usually involved only name-calling among the children. They are quick to point out that this is common even today among children, and the names meant little.

Annie Aldrich's mother also experienced some

discrimination of the less harmful type though it affected her emotionally. When she arrived from England with her husband, who had already been working in Atlantic Mine before marrying her, she was ill received by the other women of the location. They apparently felt "she was putting on airs because she had a pair of lace curtains at her living room window" when no one else had curtains at all. Unfortunately, she found life in Atlantic Mine quite disagreeable and doctors, fearing she might die of homesickness, sent her back to England for a two year stay.¹²¹

An illustration of how well the various nationalities could accomodate each other is seen in a Polish wedding in Iron River. When a group of Croatians barged in on the celebration, the Poles tolerated them for the dancing, even allowing them to dance with their daughters. Before the feasting began, however, the Croatians were asked to leave. It was only when they refused to comply that fighting broke out in an effort to remove them.¹²² The nationalities were as flexible as they felt they could be in living with each other but sometimes conflicts did occur. The conflicts, however, seem to have been no more in number than those which might occur in a more homogeneous community.

In his book about Finnish radicals, Arthur Puotinen writes that women brought "a semblance of civilization to the community"¹²³ and aided their husbands in adjusting to their mining jobs. While most men eventually brought their wives to Michigan, some waited many years before doing so.

In studying the copper mining field, the Immigration Commission found that of those immigrants in the United States for less than five years, 88.6% of the Croatians, 50.2% of the Finnish, and 70.5% of the Italians reported their wives as abroad. These numbers dropped considerably after an immigrant had been here more than five years, though after ten years spent in the United States, 19.4% of the Italians and 14.6% of the Croatians still had not sent for their wives.¹²⁴ The figures are quite similar for the iron mining fields in Michigan.¹²⁵

Some men were too busy having a good time away from their wives to send for them. Angelo was married but remained a boarder at John DeRosso's "for a long time before he finally sent for [his wife]." Then there was Frenchie, married with "a bunch of kids" in Europe. Once here, he "forgot all about his family" or even taking care of them until he got old and had to give up drinking. Then he managed to save up enough money to send for his wife and one son. Partly because of the circumstances in her late arrival, Frenchie's wife never learned to speak English and was very unhappy and lonely in Michigan until her death.¹²⁶ For the most part, however, immigrants usually sent for their wives earlier than Frenchie did, and usually sent for them as soon as they were able to save the funds for their passage.

Learning English was one of the most important steps an immigrant could take to make his transition into American life easier. As a Finnish immigrant later recalled,

"'I, as so many immigrants, had somewhat lonesome days on my arrival here. It was my inability to talk the English language that caused all the trouble.'"¹²⁷ A Polish immigrant involved in a ruckus found himself in jail for a time because he could speak no English and no interpreter could be found for his side of the story immediately. As it turned out, the Pole was innocent.¹²⁸ English was difficult to learn, and many tried to get along without it. There are also stories of those immigrants who set out determinedly to learn English, only to discover they had learned Finnish, so great was the number of Finnish settlers! A Norwegian living in Calumet cried, "'When I come here I don't learn to speak English! I have to learn Finnish or I don't speak to nobody.'"¹²⁹

Many immigrants picked English up on their own, but most communities offered free classes in English. Some of these classes were supported by the mining companies, others were actually paid for by the city or county. The classes were well attended, particularly by those intending to become citizens. In the Copper Country, the Immigrant Commission found that of 3,413 immigrant employees, 25.7% could speak English after being in America for less than five years. This figure increased to 60.6% between five and nine years and to 87.1% for those immigrants here more than ten years.¹³⁰ The Commission does not indicate what actually constituted ability to speak English. These figures are not tremendously high and perhaps reflect an immigrant's difficulty experienced in learning English.

Immigrants learned English of necessity but their native tongue was spoken at home. This sometimes presented a problem when children started school and began speaking English. Though the children could understand the native tongue, often they could not speak in it, and would answer their parents in English. Many children were also confused for a few weeks after beginning school unless they already knew English. A Finnish youngster named Toivo was told by his teacher, "that thereafter he would be known as Clyde."¹³¹ Not only did Toivo have a new language to learn, he also had a new name to learn! Schools were often strict in enforcing the language requirement, forbidding any other language to be spoken at all.

Schools played a further role in Americanizing children and their immigrant parents by developing pageants to be presented to the parents. These pageants used native costumes, and songs, gradually blending them together in American costumes, songs, and stories. A cauldron was usually used, too, as a symbol of the melting pot. In praise of such pageants, the superintendent of the Escanaba schools wrote that the pageant acted as ". . . a moral agent. It exalts labor and industry, perserverance, self-sacrifice Local pride is stirred." The pageant also served to educate parents, "blending together many warring and hostile elements into one mass . . . [fusing] radical elements."¹³² Learning English was only the beginning of becoming a true American; falling into the melting pot to lose a little more of one's native

heritage came next.

The Company

. . . when completed the new Tamarack Hospital will stand as a permanent monument of the Company, and a refutation of the adage that corporations have no souls.

From The Copper Handbook (1900)¹³³

Whether one judged a corporation as having a soul or not based on the number of "monuments" it constructed to itself was debatable in Michigan's Upper Penninsula at this time. The answer depended on whether the respondent mined for his wages or supervised for his living. One saw the company's infiltration into every facet of life as a control over the way he lived or the way he desired to live. The other viewed the company's involvement as a generosity, given out of concern for the immigrants' welfare and a desire that they be eased into American life in the best way possible. Paternalism was both good and bad at the same time as Angus Murdoch points out by using two conflicting terms when describing Calumet and Hecla as a "Benevolent Octopus."¹³⁴

Calumet and Hecla, as one of the largest mining companies in the Upper Penninsula, is focused on most frequently. According to its company report of 1893, its

real estate consist[ed] of 2599 acres of mineral land in Houghton County, 20,352 acres of timberland in the three counties of Houghton, Keweenaw, and Ontonogan, and 988 acres at mill and smelter. On this property are a total of 698 houses belonging to the

Company, and on leased land 941 homes owned by the employees. Some twenty churches are on Company property and six schools One Company¹³⁵ owned hotel completes this roster.

Although the numbers would change, the same description could be written of many company towns in the Upper Peninsula. Calumet and Hecla and other companies would soon build hospitals, libraries, bathhouses, more schools, and allow more land for churches. Even the smaller iron mines of Baltic and Caspian had clubhouses equipped with baths, barberships, bowling alleys, billiards, and a music room in 1908. Cleveland Cliffs also established rest cottages for weary women and a visiting nurse occasionally called on immigrant families in both copper and iron mining areas to make suggestions for better health. Company men of the period declared that the laboring men in this district were far better off than those who might be more highly paid elsewhere.¹³⁶

At the bottom of all this paternalism was the apparent desire to give foreigners "a fair chance to live decently and make their communities clean and prosperous." According to one author, by doing so, companies solved the Americanization problem.¹³⁷ Paternalism would also provide the conditions of "good health, intelligence, contentment, and industry" so necessary to "give a sufficiency of efficient and competent men," making them more capable and willing to stay with the company.¹³⁸ These sound like very caring notions but also highly idealistic in the face of actual working conditions provided for employees.

Company planners obviously thought more of the wonders of being a miner than did the miner himself.

In order to have efficient and competent workers, the Lake Superior Mining Institute recommended Americanizing the workers through education. Immigrants and their children would be trained at schools paid for by the mining companies to insure a good supply of miners, foremen, and bosses in the future. Lectures and classes would focus on the "practical art of mining."¹³⁹ Michigan Technological University was established with such an education in mind. Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company for a few years operated a school training young men for the position of shift boss. Education was not recommended solely for men either. The Institute also advised instruction for women in the arts of housekeeping, gardening, cooking, washing, sewing, and nursing.¹⁴⁰ Mine officials preferred married men as employees since they tended to be more stable workers; by training women in the proper behavior, they increased their chances of hiring married men.

Spending money on schools and libraries for the education of the immigrants was money well spent in the eyes of a mining official. As long as they were trained in the areas of mining and housekeeping, the company felt it could be assured of loyal and willing miners and foremen, content both at work and at home. An article in The Engineering and Mining Journal claimed that Calumet and Hecla was so successful in its program of education through schools and libraries that "many of the foreigners send their children

away to finish their education."¹⁴¹

Exactly where these foreigners were sending their children is not stated. More than likely they weren't sending them anywhere. Oral history interviews indicate that while some children continued their education into high school, a good many of them left school without a high school diploma. Delia Johnson was necessary in her parents' store by the age of twelve; Wilmer Johnson quit in the ninth grade; Alida Henning, as a straight-A student, desperately wanted to go to high school after finishing eighth grade but her mother had other ideas. She had "the old country notion that girls didn't need any further education [S]he handed me her last baby . . . and she said, "Now, he is your baby.'" When Alida objected, her mother was firm: "'You know how to change baby diapers, that's all that's necessary. You don't have to sit on a high school bench.'"¹⁴²

Despite the company's desire to educate the immigrants to be better miners and wives, many children never reached the level of specialization. A mining company successfully integrated immigrant children into American life through their schools and libraries but they could not Americanize the "old country notion" that only a certain amount of education was necessary. After that age, a child or the earning he might make were more important to the family and its economy than further education.

Besides the schools and libraries, clubhouses and bathhouses were highly touted in articles concerning the mining

regions of the Upper Penninsula. Just because authors take pains to point out the recreational facilities available, however, doesn't mean virtually everyone in the community used them. Baths cost money and a large family didn't have two and a half or five cents per family member to spend on a bath downtown. Immigrants took their baths at home or visited a Finnish neighbor's sauna. Wilmer Johnson remembers that the older boys would sneak in the dry-house on Saturdays and take a shower at the company's expense.¹⁴³ Oral history interviews also rarely indicate immigrants spending time with the billiards or bowling alleys of a company-built clubhouse. Perhaps the recreational activities cost money too. So despite the commendations authors give to the mining companies for all these comforts, it is questionable that many immigrants used them.

The one area in which the mining companies appear to have had little influence was that of stores. Most stores were privately owned and many towns had cooperatives established nearby. Mine employees were not forced to shop at any particular store. The Ironwood Store Company was known as "the company's store," but again, no one was forced to buy there.

Nevertheless, any store was ultimately built on company-owned property since the mining companies controlled all the land, and a company could exert its influence through such means if necessary. There are also reports of men being denied credit by unsympathetic stores during times of strike. The Federal government investigated the Copper

Strike of 1913 and found deductions from miners' checks for various purchases. Paul Musso had \$14.15 deducted from over several paychecks for "supplies of building material for home owned by employee;" Israel Harris had \$49.60 "assigned to grocery store."¹⁴⁴ If the company was totally uninvolved in the area stores, why were these charges directly deducted from a miner's paycheck?

Oral history shines little light on this issue. Few respondents themselves remember company stores or cooperatives although this is probably due to the manner in which they did their buying. Most women did not go to town on a regular basis. Instead, they waited for "teamsters" sent out by the local stores in a horse and wagon to take their order for groceries. The teamsters would bring that order within two days and take an immigrant's new order. In this way, an immigrant had little contact with the actual store and its owner and was more likely to be unaware of any company influence.

Clothing was also purchased in a similar manner. Delia Johnson recalls Jewish men, whom they called "sheenys" stopping by on Sundays with suitcases full of clothes for customers to admire.

And of course, they [the immigrants] hardly never got to the store, they were always so busy They'd tell them, "What else you got?" So they'd go out in their wagon, and come in again with suitcases. So they'd display all these clothes, and that, that's how they done most of their clothing. That's how they shopped.¹⁴⁶

Company stores or no company stores, with many good

things of life provided for them by the company, not to mention the many jobs, the immigrants were no doubt well taken care of, with little to complain about. "No one could deny that, for the most part, company infiltration into your life was good and most economical."¹⁴⁶ The wife of a former trammer put it succinctly, "The Company was wonderful -- a man always came and fixed the toilet."¹⁴⁷ An immigrant could ask for little more.

But an immigrant might have wished for a little less, given the opportunity. He might have asked for fewer clubhouses or libraries or even schools that were controlled by the people, not by a mining company. He might have preferred the company pay him a higher wage and allow him and his fellow immigrants to build the types of buildings they desired on land they owned. Because when the company provided so thoroughly for its employees, it naturally also controlled them in many ways, whether they were aware of such a control or not.

Company officials felt they had the right to make "a business of keeping your expenses down" if a miner was not managing his expenses in what they considered a proper manner. "If your family birthrate got out of hand," a nurse might call to "make suggestions." True, companies generously provided rent-free land for churches but those churches had to be of a "reasonable faith."¹⁴⁸ Few, if any, churches were denied land, but nonetheless, management reserved the right to reject any faith it deemed unreasonable. There was also some concern that churches built

on company land would become company mouthpieces and further control workers.

Company supervisors and officers were encouraged to run in local elections and "in consequence were heavily represented on the county boards of supervisors."¹⁴⁹ The immigrant could not then effect even a small amount of control of the company through taxation. Why did they elect such officials? According to Angus Murdoch, election judges in the Calumet-Houghton area were typically straw bosses at Calumet and Hecla and knew who paid their wages. A blue ballot indicated a Republican vote and a red ballot, Democrat. If a miner asked for a red ballot, the boss worked him extra hard at his job until he quit.¹⁵⁰ Murdoch is the only author who makes reference to such a practice so it's difficult to judge the story's accuracy. Immigrants, however, had little time or money to run for local office themselves and probably had little actual choice at the ballot box.

During the 1913 Copper Strike, a reporter for The Survey found that mining officials on the Houghton County Board of Supervisors were not in the majority but constituted the strongest group, "and what that group says 'goes.'" He further reported that rarely was anything done that mine managers did not want done; the strikers complained that the companies controlled "the machinery of government in Houghton County, from the sheriff down."¹⁵¹ The reporter, too, was impressed by the degree of control the companies wielded over their employees in all facets of

life, both public and private.

Housing

At once on my arrival I was bitterly disappointed when I reached this mining town. The companies had heaped recklessly mountain-like rock piles in the neighborhood residence sections. In addition, one could see miserable looking miners' huts scattered all along the muddy alleys and roads

Miner's wife¹⁵² arriving in the city
of Hancock

The streets in upper Michigan's mining communities certainly were not paved of gold nor were workers' houses made of jewels. Many immigrants probably were as shocked as the wife speaking above. America was the Land of Promise but miners' homes did not reflect that promise. They were usually more humble, built of wood-frame construction with few windows and surrounded by a yard, 50 by 100 feet in the case of company houses, for gardening and keeping chickens, pigs, or a cow (when she stayed home!).

The mining companies originally built houses for their workers and their families. The very nicest houses, with porches, awnings, and sometimes made of rock, were reserved for superintendents and managers. For the others, the Lake Superior Mining Institute recommended housing based on European examples for "healthy workers." These consisted of "well-arranged tenement houses and separate houses at low rent," built near the mine so the worker would not be tired on arrival for his shift.¹⁵³ Within this category of housing for workers, in large communities, there were

houses of good quality and spaciousness as well as those of a poorer grade and almost a ramshackle appearance. A worker was assigned to a house based on his value to the company, and his responsibility, not on his position. Those whom bosses or superintendents felt were most loyal or did the best job were granted the better quality houses. The rent for either type of house was one dollar per room per month, universal throughout both iron and copper mining areas. A miner renting a better home, however, probably paid a higher rent since the better homes usually contained more rooms. More rooms, though, meant more space available for boarders so any extra expense would be covered by rent from boarders, provided the company approved a worker boarding other men.

Houses were built all alike in monotonous rows, and painted a reddish color in both iron and copper country to hide the dirt and pollution that settled on the houses from the mines and smelting works. Although the written word implies every house was painted and companies kept them in fair repair, pictures taken of the area claim otherwise. While the better houses were painted, those of a poorer grade looked in very bad shape and appeared to never have been painted, but had probably been painted at first. Edith Wicklund remembers living in Chapin Mine in a company house that challenged a company's definition of "fair repair." There was no indoor plumbing (the better houses often had this) and water was obtained from a hydrant across the street. " . . . the windows of our house needed

putty so badly that when we washed them mother would wash the inside and I would wash the outside at the same time" because they were afraid the glass would fall out.¹⁵⁴

A picture taken of a kitchen in a company house in Painesdale (Houghton County) showed a tiny room with a sink, with obvious indoor plumbing, a shelf lined with tin dinner pails, a stove, and a chair. Intruding into this tiny space was an outside entry door. The kitchen served the miner, his wife, and four children along with eight boarders.¹⁵⁵

Families in rented housing were also subject to contracts which could be terminated by the company with a fifteen-day notice. These eviction notices were served by the Quincy Mine during a strike, in hopes of breaking the strike and luring the men back to work. On the other hand, Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company gave workers an incentive to keep their homes (whether rented or owned) neat: they gave annual prizes for the best kept premises.¹⁵⁶

But immigrants preferred to own their homes, built on land leased from the mining companies. Even in 1893, Calumet and Hecla owned and rented 698 houses but leased land for 941 homes owned by employees.¹⁵⁷ Though several sources specifically state that Finns wished to own their home as soon as possible, this tendency crosses all nationalities recruited and arriving after 1890. In the copper areas, the Immigrant Commission found that of those immigrants studied, 49% of the Finns owned a home, 48% of the Italians owned their homes, 53% of the Magyars, and 65% of the Polish owned homes. This is in direct contrast

to the number of native-born, English, or Swedish immigrants. None of the English or native-born owned homes, and only 20% of the Swedes owned. Statistics for iron mining areas appear very similar but the Immigrant Commission included statistics for Minnesota iron fields so the results are not strictly for Michigan.¹⁵⁸

An immigrant's desire to own his home was not unique to Michigan's Upper Penninsula immigrants. Margaret Byington studied Homestead, Pennsylvania in 1908 and found 25.7% of its ethnic population owned homes, a high number in her eyes. More than forty-seven percent of these homes were clear of any debt. Byington's personal interviews "corroborated this evidence that mill-town workingmen wish to own their dwellings."¹⁵⁹ Olivier Zunz in his study of Detroit also found a high percentage of immigrants who owned their own home at about this same time. In Detroit it was also true that more immigrants owned homes for more often than did native-born Americans. Many in Detroit were free of encumbrance too.¹⁶⁰ Writing in Michigan's 1909 Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor, a reporter claimed that the "average miner of today takes pains to build and maintain a pleasant home where he can enjoy life after a hard day's toil."¹⁶¹ That's a bit romanticized, but true.

The mining companies owned the land on which most miners built their homes and charged them anywhere from one dollar to five dollars to lease a lot. The mining companies would not sell any of their land even if they could retain

mineral rights but sell the surface rights. The charge was quite nominal; Wilmer Johnson believed the only reason it was collected was to prevent a miner claiming squatter's rights. A representative of the company knocked on doors once a year to be sure an immigrant paid the rent.¹⁶²

The low cost of the rent, however, was about the only good part of a lease with a mining company. The company reserved the right to terminate any lease agreement on fifteen days notice and compel a family to sell its house and move out within ninety days. If the house was not sold or removed from the lot within that period, it became the property of the company. A company could force a renter out for any reason, as in the case of Joseph Tambourini, who was fired for his political views. A homeowner could neither sell nor rent his house without company permission and if a family became "undesirable on account of behavior," they could be thrown out.¹⁶³ The immigrant family was subject to any whim of the company; no matter how pleasant a home or how painstakingly they had built their home. Even if an immigrant managed to stay in the good graces of a company, the sulphur fumes constantly battered his house and disintegrated the paint. Damage suits that were brought against the company usually resulted in a company win, however, since the "courts ruled that this was the risk run by anyone who lived in a mining community."¹⁶⁴

Not only were the lease agreements unfair, but by owning a home, an immigrant limited his mobility. Mobility of labor, the freedom to seek a job elsewhere when

conditions were intolerable, was less of a safety latch when one owned a house. Mine managers liked part-time farmers precisely for that reason. They were always available, no matter what sort of conditions the mine wished to impose because they were committed, tied to the farms they owned.

Why did Polish, Italian, and Finnish immigrants strive so to own a home under such unfavorable circumstances? Owning a home meant a mixture of feelings to them. An immigrant worked in a position fraught with hazards and uncertainties; a home was a sure possession, something solid to hang onto in a world where he never knew what might become of him. Despite the lease terms, once an immigrant owned a house, he could at least sell it or move it piece by piece if necessary, if the company decided to throw his family out.

Immigrants were worth little on the job. By reason of nativity they were denied both skills and opportunities to rise on the occupational ladder. Those positions were reserved for those of English or American birth. No one, however, could deny them a home. They were free to build and create worthiness for themselves and their families. Owning a home was also an opportunity most would have been denied in Europe.

But simply building or owning a home did not mean a rise into middle class on the social ladder either. Although they often were better housed than non-owning immigrants, sometimes the house consisted of nothing more than a shack

or cabin, until a better place could be built. Delia Johnson was born in a log cabin, but her parents only lived there about a year before building a more permanent house.¹⁶⁵ The structure also had to be within the means of a miner or trammer. It took much scrimping and saving to buy or build a house. An immigrant would not be earning middle class wages so it would be difficult to manage a middle class home. Some homes were built by carpenters but many immigrants relied on themselves, relatives, and friends to put up a structure.¹⁶⁶

The house itself consequently was not worth much and a family often put up with the inconvenience of renting part of the house temporarily to help pay any debts. But it was owned, despite the lease agreement. The family could set the rules and be its own "boss" inside the house. The immigrant miner, worthy of no respect at work, commanded respect in a home he owned. Others were forced to acknowledge his presence, as Joseph Tambourini well knew when he built his house high on a hill overlooking his former employer's residence. The immigrant had the choice to build his house where he pleased, in communities of his own nationality or high on a hill.

Home ownership provided more worth to an immigrant than his job provided him. And that sense of worth was worth the cost of scrimping and saving and an unfavorable lease agreement.

Spare Time

"Well, I tell you, when anyone was baptized you have no idea the big celebration they had!"

Interview with Delia Johnson¹⁶⁷

Working twelve hours a day gave an immigrant and his family little time to spend in recreation during the week. Sundays were free, however, as was most of Saturday, and immigrants took this time to attend to personal business and socialize with friends and relatives, usually those of their own ethnic background. Immigrants sang together, danced with other ethnic groups at the community dance hall, gave parties for weddings and baptisms, and drove to the lake for a Sunday picnic. Even Calumet and Hecla sponsored a free family picnic once a year for several years. Opera houses were also popular, even in small communities. Ontonogan County, with a small population of 7,166 in 1904 boasted of three opera houses in 1908.

As one might suspect, the immigrants consumed a great deal of beer and wine, either in a tavern or at home or at a dance hall. This was consistently pointed out in any study published during this time. Within the ethnic community of Red Jacket, outside Calumet, there were seventy-four saloons in 1907. In Calumet itself the Michigan Bureau of Labor's annual reports list pages of citations against bar owners employing women as barmaids or allowing them to furnish music or dance. John Forster, commenting on life in the copper mines wrote about the festive character of Sundays when "a world of beer is drank" at saloons

while bands play. He was dismayed that no one so far had had the strength to close the bars on Sunday.¹⁶⁸ No one had the strength because no one really wanted to see them closed!

Although mining captains typically denounced Italians, Poles, and Magyars for their drinking habits, Finns, Swedes, and the English liked their beer too. Wilmer Johnson remembers being sent as a child to bring home one of his mother's Swedish boarders who "blew it all in" (spent all his money) at the bar. Wilmer would usually come home in tears without the boarder who preferred to sit at the bar.¹⁶⁹ Even children were allowed in saloons to buy white pop although whole families themselves did not frequent the drinking establishments.

In trying to explain or put Finnish drinking in a better light, one author suggests that Finns were not naturally so inclined to drink, but monotonous working and living conditions forced them into the saloons.¹⁷⁰ If this explains Finnish drinking, then it explains the other groups drinking also. Beer, and especially wine, were common in European households; immigrants were merely continuing their known way of life as much as possible. Italian children were offered wine with their meals, including breakfast.

Italians were especially committed to wine. Delia Johnson's father, John DeRosso, always made his own wine (even during Prohibition later) as did most of his Italian friends. Several men usually pooled their funds and ordered a train boxcar full of grapes from California. What

grapes they did not use they sold in town. "Everybody" bought grapes and trains would arrive bearing nothing but boxcars of grapes. Italians also sold the wine they made.

Once the wine was made, families were ready to celebrate any upcoming baptism. A baptism was a huge two-day celebration for an Italian, much bigger than that of a wedding. It was also fairly unrestricted, with other ethnic groups besides Italians being invited to celebrate.

Well, I tell you, when anyone was baptized, you have no idea the big celebration they had! It went on for a couple days. And you emptied out all your home [A]nd they would cook, oh gosh, had great big meals! And everybody was invited. Everybody! And they had this accordion player come in there and they just sing and drink wine And most of the time when they'd have a baptism there was going to be a fight someplace Sure, they drank too much and then there'd be a fight and that would break the party up.

The celebration lasted Saturday and Sunday with dancing for adults and Bocchi ball for children. Those homes with electric outdoor lights allowed the games to go on all night long.¹⁷¹

The Italian baptism seems to have been a well-known celebration among all ethnic groups although each group had its own particular time of celebration. Some just weren't as boisterous as the Italian. In a new world of America and hard work, the immigrants retained a bit of their native background that the mining companies could not take from them. Their leisure time was spent in traditional family activities and the hard realities of work could be forgotten for a time.

Returning to Europe or Staying in America?

It seemed impossible to live here among strange people, to starve from lack of congenial companionship. But as I had made nice savings and was about to depart I stopped to think awhile. I asked myself why I should leave so soon? I had learned a few words, had learned to eat American dishes, to dress like American. In the true sense of the word America and I were now more intimate friends. I decided to remain here one more year. I did so and after that period I paid a visit to Finland, but found conditions there so different that I could no longer tolerate [them]. I soon left back for America.

Finnish miner¹⁷²

Although this miner chose to make America his permanent home, not all immigrants who arrived in Michigan's Upper Penninsula made the same decision. It's impossible to know exactly how many returned to stay in Europe after having made financial gains in Michigan's mine because no records were kept of immigrants who returned to their native land.

Some idea of the number of immigrants settling permanently in the United States can be gained by studying the Immigration Commission's report on citizenship. Even this has a pitfall, however. Although including those who had taken out their first papers for citizenship, the tables show only those who had been in the United States for five or more years; an immigrant had to establish residency over a period of years before he was eligible for naturalization. He had to be in the United States five years just to take out his first papers. The tables do not indicate those immigrants in the United States for

less than five years who returned to Europe, uninterested in citizenship.

Of the immigrants studied by the Immigration Commission, 40.9% of those in the copper region had become citizens and 31.8% of them had taken out their first papers. The percentages were similar in the iron mining areas with 45.2% becoming citizens and 24.8% having taken out first papers.¹⁷³ In both groups, about two-thirds of the immigrants in America for more than five years had no desire to return to Europe permanently. The other thirty percent was not so sure of calling the United States their home.

The employees interviewed by the Immigration Commission and reporters commenting on citizenship tendencies of the various immigrant groups disagreed with each other and with the statistics. Employers described Poles and Italians as uninterested in citizenship and the Finns as making excellent citizens and seldom returning to Europe. A reporter writing for the Department of Labor's 1904 Annual Report stated just the opposite. And the figures themselves for each group are quite similar, ranging near 70% for citizenship and "first papers" combined. The one exception is the Polish figure for iron country (but not for copper country) which falls at 42% combined.¹⁷⁴

Those immigrants or children of immigrants interviewed had obviously become citizens or had parents who were citizens after deciding to remain in the United States. To encourage immigrants to become citizens, the county or state sponsored night schools to teach immigrants the

knowledge necessary for citizenship. Most interviewees weren't sure who sponsored the program except that it emphatically was not the mining companies.

The Guide to the Italians of the Copper Country also contained information on becoming a United States citizen, "Della Cittadinanza Americana." This section also listed the questions and proper answers to the questions that an Italian would be asked. To the query, "'Do you believe in organized government?'" an applicant was to respond, "'Yes, sir.'" to the question, "'Are you an anarchist?'" the respondent was to answer (as if he needed to be told!), "'No, sir.'" Each answer was to be followed by the perfunctory "sir."¹⁷⁵ Under United States law at that time, wives automatically became citizens when their husbands passed the test, so they did not have to go through the same questioning.

For those who chose to become citizens, the decision seems to have been one they made early in their stay in America. From that point on, they made few, if any, visits back to their native country. In the iron mining areas, the Immigrant Commission asked 2,447 men how many visits home they made. Those in the United States less than five years showed 6.3% of the men who had made an overseas trip. Those here between five and nine years had 19.3% return for a visit and those here for more than ten years also showed 19.3% returning for a visit.¹⁷⁶ These findings are in contrast to a statement made in Michigan's Bureau of Labor and Statistics 1904 Annual

Report. 1903 had been a difficult year for iron mines and many workers had been laid off. Consequently, writes the author, "many of the foreign workmen are taking advantage of slack work to return to Italy, Finland, or Austria for a winter's visit, expecting to return in Spring."¹⁷⁷ While more immigrants may have returned to Europe for visits during depression times rather than in good times, far fewer returned to Europe than this statement implies. They would more likely have looked for work elsewhere in the Upper Peninsula and the United States. Even if an immigrant planned to eventually return, he would not go without having made his fortune. It took time to save the money for passage and most immigrants might not have wished to spend forty dollars going to Europe and forty dollars to come back to America, especially since the ride was usually in the steerage compartment. It was also likely that an immigrant would have been spending his savings just trying to survive the depression at first, in the wake of shortened hours and less pay.

Still, not everyone wanted to stay. The visitation figures tell who visited, but again, not who chose to return permanently. Teresa DeRosso's sister arrived but found work at a lumberjack camp too hard and returned to Europe, but only for a couple years, deciding then that Michigan was the place she wanted to stay. Several other brothers and sisters of Teresa also lived in the United States for a long period of time before returning to Europe during the twenties.¹⁷⁸ Some immigrants originally found

Michigan quite disagreeable and would have returned quickly had they the money. "'I would have gone back to Finland had I enough money to buy my transportation ticket,'" stated one woman remembering her first days in Hancock.¹⁷⁹ Forced to stay, immigrants adjusted and many chose to stay in America, finding conditions better than originally thought and better than Europe.

The fathers of Alida Henning, Delia Johnson, and Wilmer Johnson never returned to Europe; two of their mothers returned for a visit only after their husbands died and they were old. These immigrants had no desire to return, having come to the United States to settle permanently in the Land of Promise, the Land of Opportunity. Alida Henning's grandparents mortgaged their "little old shack as a bond" to send their daughter to Houghton. Delia Johnson's father " . . . never wanted to go back. He said it was so poor over there. He said he never wanted to see Italy again. He said this was his home. America was his home. And he never wanted to go back."¹⁸⁰ Despite inequalities at the mine, despite company control of the towns, despite being separated from relatives by thousands of miles, despite the struggles to speak a new language, the opportunities offered by America were far better than those offered in Europe to many immigrants. And, like John DeRosso, they never wanted to go back.

IV. Conclusion

Having gotten over the initial shock of life in the mining communities of a new land, many unskilled immigrants to Michigan's Upper Peninsula found, to varying degrees, a better life and better opportunities here than in Europe. As low as they were, wages for a day's work were still higher in Michigan than in Europe; a family had the chance to own a farm or a business and a home. Immigrants who chose to stay struggled to save the money to send for their relatives, affirming their beliefs that America held more promise than Europe.

But such promises of opportunity were not without sacrifice. Men had to be willing to put their lives on the line when they stepped into the mine and few benefits awaited victims of accidents. The company controlled an immigrant as much as possible. Learning English was hard enough, but so many nationalities gathered together at a mining location that one almost had to know a smattering of every language. That handicap meant further struggles to be organized enough to demand rights on the job. The remnants of European traditions were often seen only on weekends or seasonally; a work day was more rigid here than in Europe.

The immigrants were willing to give up bits of their pasts and bits of their presents to grasp the promised opportunities and enjoy American life. At the same time, they carved out new communities and new experiences in a previously unsettled area, making that area unique in

Michigan and different from immigrant experiences elsewhere in the United States.

Much more detailed research needs to be done with immigrants in the Upper Penninsula. Women are especially problematic with few records kept of their outside jobs or involvement in other areas of life in the mining communities. Though much has been written about male immigrants and their jobs, there is little unbiased writing about the corporations themselves and their relation to their workers. Corporate records and company publications need to be examined, and officials still living need to be interviewed although the mining companies apparently still guard such records tightly. Much of this material also is not located in the Upper Penninsula, but at corporations' main offices scattered across the country.

Within the world of work much information is lacking about death and disability benefits paid out to workers and the questions of organizing labor among the immigrants in mining locations. Labor organization is particularly difficult to understand since most accounts of strikes or records of organizing were written about in newspapers sympathetic to the corporations and those few ethnic newspapers published, except for a few issues, have not been preserved.

A better knowledge of how immigrants spent their spare time would also be helpful. There seems to be little known so far about social clubs in the Upper Penninsula, and particularly, how much time actually was spent in a

saloon or drinking. There are many references to the large amounts of beer and wine consumed, but few hard details concerning its consumption.

All of these areas need to be researched along with oral interviews with immigrants or children of immigrants to compare their conclusions or perspectives with those of the corporation or written word. It was, after all, immigrants who made mining possible in the Upper Penninsula and it should be their story when the story is told.

NOTES

NOTES

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