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## Gender on the Range: Feminine Strategies in the 1913 Michigan Copper Strike

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Kirkwood, Shannon Rebecca, "Gender on the Range: Feminine Strategies in the 1913 Michigan Copper Strike" (2014). *Retrospection & Respect: The 1913-1914 Mining/Labor Strike Symposium of 2014*. 1.  
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## Gender on the Range: Feminine Strategies in the 1913 Michigan Copper Strike

By Shannon R. Kirkwood

By November of 1913, the industrial conflict between the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) and the copper magnates of Michigan's Upper Peninsula had lasted for three months, and would continue to limp along for another six months. The issues were fairly typical of miners' strikes: owner paternalism, hours and wages, and the introduction of the one-man drill, which would eventually mean cutting the labor force in half. Complaints against the copper companies did not seem to pertain to anything above ground, and at first glance, the conflict appears to be one between men – union leaders, mine managers, and workers. Despite this, N.D. Cochran of the *Miners' Bulletin* took five columns out of the worker funded paper to describe a parade led by a woman in white, surrounded by little girls, carrying an American flag. The woman was Annie Clemenc, and Cochran dubbed her an American Joan of Arc. The pageantry seems out of place for a strike whose issues are so grounded in the masculine work of mining. Even more so when Cochran quotes a militia officer, whose duty it is to guard the mines and the strike breakers, as saying, "If [Calumet and Hecla Manager] McNaughton could only buy Big Annie, he could break this strike."<sup>1</sup>

The world of labor unions in the early twentieth century was largely understood to be the preserve of working men, even among contemporaries. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn of the Industrial Workers of the World, noted proponent of women's involvement in unions, was not optimistic about women's knowledge or willingness to participate in the labor movement, writing in a 1911 article:

No special efforts have been made seriously to interest wives in "man's affairs." Many a wife hasn't the remotest idea of what the union that John goes to every Friday night

consists of, or at least her knowledge is grumbling expressed about John having to pay fifty cents a week to “that union.”<sup>2</sup>

For Annie Clemenc and the women and girls around her to be so actively participating in “man’s affairs”, let alone the proverbial lynchpin that held the entire effort together, seems to fly in the face of convention of contemporary opinion and much of the established historiography of industrial disputes. Women’s roles in labor struggles, especially in those traditionally masculine industries such as mining and steel where women were not the primary workers, have been largely ignored, or only treated as an aside to the center action. Including women’s experiences into traditional strike narratives both deepens our understanding of the conflicts and complicates our understanding of the worker/employer relationship, as well as the communities in which such conflicts took place. Furthermore, women’s visibility during labor conflicts can highlight the otherwise invisible world of gender conventions and practices among the laboring classes. With all of this in mind the case of the Michigan copper strike of 1913-14 provides a particularly dramatic example of how this might be done.

Michigan’s Copper Country and its industrial disputes have not been a major focus of labor history, and even less attention has been paid the social structure of its company towns. Arthur Thurner’s *Rebels on the Range* is the seminal work on the subject. Thurner gives a comprehensive view of the conflict, including a brief history of the region, the reasons for the dispute, and a moment-by-moment, day-by-day account of the actions of either side. Other works on the strike have tended toward micro studies of specific events over the course of the strike (Steve Lehto’s *Death’s Door* and *Shortcut*, about the Italian Hall Disaster and the Seeberville incident, respectively), or have focused on a particular group of participants, such as Finnish miners (Gary Kaunonen’s *Challenge Accepted*). None of these go into great detail about female participation, nor do they tell us much about gender relations in the mining towns of Michigan’s

Upper Peninsula. Thurner is the most thorough, dedicating six pages to women's participation out of 250, but he does not apply much analysis to the meaning of women's involvement. Allison Hoagland adds more complexity to the discussion with her examination of company property and structures in *Mine Towns: Buildings for Workers in Michigan's Copper Country*. While she does not focus exclusively on the strike itself, Hoagland offers a complex understanding of domestic space and private property in a situation where everything was owned by the company. Her work opens the door for investigation into workers' understanding of private space, which was often understood to be the realm of wives.

With these considerations in mind, this article contends that women were central to the WFM strike efforts in the Michigan Copper Country. They used feminine strategies such as neighborliness and motherhood to illicit sympathy and keep men from crossing the picket line, and ceded their domestic space to union efforts. Finally, their very participation in strike efforts caused mine managers and workers alike to question their femininity, and resulted in a full-scale invasion of their feminine privileges and the domestic sphere as the mining companies sought to put down the strike.

The importance of women's involvement as strike sympathizers and participants was acknowledged on all sides of the conflict. In August, barely two weeks into the conflict, a striking miner admitted, "If we win [the strike] much of the credit will belong to our wives. . . [They] are the heart and soul in the cause. They urged us to strike and they're urging us not to give in."<sup>3</sup> The writers at the *Miners' Bulletin* went a step farther in enthusiastically acknowledging the wives, sisters, and daughters of striking miners, crediting them with proving that the strike was not the work of outside agitators:

The women have been one of the great factors in this strike. They furnish the answer to all the statements that this was a strike brought on by imported agitators. No agitator

could induce women to get out on the picket line at five o'clock in the morning . . . to stand shoulder to shoulder with husbands . . . to endure the insults of scabs and deputies and meet the bayonets of soldiers without wavering.<sup>4</sup>

Even those opposed to the strike acknowledged the centrality of women's efforts in the strike. Captain Robert Hill of Company H of the Michigan Militia described the women of the copper range as "the real active ones in the district" and that their presence on the picket lines and their behavior towards non-strikers was more difficult to handle than any action taken by the men.<sup>5</sup> The *Calumet News*, which was decidedly on the side of the mine managers, described the prominence of women on the picket lines and their other strike activity, and noted that their activity was steadily escalating — much to the dismay and disgust of reporters at the *News*.<sup>6</sup> In a time line of the strike, the *Boston Globe* omitted the Seeberville incident, but listed the activities of women on both sides. August 30 — troops rescue deputies attacked by mob of women; September 1 — fifteen year old girl shot in riot; September 6 — women begin escorting non-union men to work; September 9 — soldiers prevent clash between women partisans in strike; and so on.<sup>7</sup>

Aside from media coverage and public perception of women's activity as strike sympathizers, official reports also confirmed the prominence of women on the copper range. In his report for the Department of Labor, Walter Palmer reported that picketing parades were usually led by women, and that women were frequently arrested for intimidation and assault of strike breakers.<sup>8</sup> He also reported that of the 215 people arrested for strike related activities, women made up almost a quarter of the arrests, and a third of the 145 people arrested for relatively petty offenses such as intimidation and inciting riot (as opposed to more violent crimes such as armed robbery or murder).<sup>9</sup> These are staggering numbers considering that these women did not work for the mining companies, and therefore could not officially even be on strike.

Their participation is therefore without question. However, what makes the actions of the women of the Copper Country notable within the setting of the strike, and what ultimately adds to our understanding of the roles of women in labor conflicts in general, are the strategies they used. The women of Copper Country did not merely replicate the behavior of male strikers on the picket lines, but rather found their own methods of giving support to the men out on strike, keeping others from crossing the picket line, and resisting the deputies and national guardsmen brought in to put the strike down.

In *Radicals of the Worst Kind: Laboring Women in Lawrence Massachusetts*, Ardis Cameron argues that women effectively used their traditional female spaces and resources to organize and protest, and that stores, street corners, and kitchens became forums for information sharing and decision-making.<sup>10</sup> A similar process seems to have been taking place in the very different context of the mining towns of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. In the context of the mining town, the hotbed of union activity and female collusion was the boarding house.

Ironically, the mining companies had moved away from building boarding houses in favor of accommodating the single family. It was hoped that this would help stabilize the work force, who would be encouraged to put down roots and to bind themselves to the company and its wellbeing. This plan was complicated by the fact that women often saw a way to contribute to the family's income by taking in boarders.<sup>11</sup> One such woman, Antonia Putrich, was able to bring in approximately sixty-seven dollars a month, more than her husband's income, all while caring for four children.<sup>12</sup> This situation had two effects that greatly impacted the course of the strike: companies could not eliminate boardinghouses as sites of labor unrest, and the women who ran them were empowered by the act of bringing in as much if not more income than their

husbands. This income was directly tied to the mines, and gave these women a stake in the miners' strike that they would not have had otherwise.

In many cases, boardinghouses also encouraged tightly knit communities. As Allison Hoagland notes, rather than a house full of strangers, boardinghouses were often filled with extended family or people of the same ethnic background.<sup>13</sup> Because of the way that company housing was organized and prime locations assigned, Finns, Italians, "Austrians" (largely South Slavs from the Austro-Hungarian Empire) and other immigrants from Eastern Europe found themselves living in the same neighborhoods. These groups in turn, united to form the core of the union during the copper strike.<sup>14</sup> As a result, deputies and militiamen in search of criminals and contraband weapons targeted the boardinghouses. The most notable example of this was the attack on the Putrich boardinghouse near Painesdale on August 15, 1913. Deputies tried to arrest a striker for trespassing on company property. They followed him to the yard of his boardinghouse, and then surrounded it when everyone went inside. Reportedly, one of the boarders threw a nine pin at one of the deputies, hitting him in the head. This led the deputies to begin firing into the house. Fifteen people were in the house, including two women and four children.<sup>15</sup>

Witnesses claimed that none of the people in the house had guns or any other type of weapons, and the deaths of boarders Steve Putrich (a brother of the owner) and Alois Tijan were later dubbed the "Seeberville murders."<sup>16</sup> Initially, deputies would not enter the house without a warrant, and Allison Hoagland argues that houses/homes had a special protective quality which the outside did not. However, once the shooting began, Hoagland notes that protection was disregarded. When the smoke had cleared, the deputies entered the house without a warrant, and

demanded the keys to every trunk in the house, searching them thoroughly.<sup>17</sup> This intrusion set a precedent for the deputies for the rest of the strike.

Minnie Hietala had her home invaded by deputies twice in November of 1913. She had four boarders, and the deputies took down all of their names. According to her, they never had any warrants.<sup>18</sup> Deputies raided Mrs. Monticelly's house twice in December. The first time, they claimed that a man that they were chasing had entered the house, and that the Monticellys were hiding him. Mrs. Monticelly was sick in bed, and a deputy threatened her with a revolver because she and her children were frightened and crying. The Monticellys also had boarders, one of whom was her nephew. The deputies came back three days later and performed another unauthorized search of the house.<sup>19</sup> Mrs. Tuomela had twenty boarders when deputies forced their way in. She testified that they ransacked her entire house, damaging furniture and breaking into the trunks of all her tenants. She said they had neither stars nor warrants. Sixteen of her boarders were arrested.<sup>20</sup>

This action on the part of deputies — many of whom did not seem to be wearing any insignia designating them as officers of the law — and the reaction of the women involved is suggestive of several social and cultural assumptions held by each. The fact that deputies asked for the names of Mrs. Hietala's boarders confirms Allison Hoagland's argument that the company did not keep track of who boarded with whom.<sup>21</sup> Beyond that, the deputies did not feel they had to obey the written law (which required warrants and identification) or the unwritten law of the house as a feminine space. The doctrine of separate spheres would have made the house the domain of women, and therefore deserving of respect and delicacy from the men who entered it. An article reporting the home invasions in the *Miners' Bulletin* identifies the homes as belonging to the men, which they legally were.<sup>22</sup> But all of the testimony given by women



surrounding the incidents clearly indicates that the women thought of the homes – or at least the space inside them – as their own. This general consensus on the interior space belonging to wives is confirmed by the way Congress conducted their hearing on the strike. With the exception of Mr. Monticelly, Congress did not bother to ask husbands about home invasions.

A possible complication to this understanding of private space and the domestic sphere was the assumption of company ownership of the houses in question. In theory, deputies in the service of the mine companies did not have to obtain warrants to search property that the company owned. But of all the women that were asked, only one lived in a company house, and her complaint was of wrongful arrest, not home invasion.<sup>23</sup> The interpretation of company property was fairly fluid. Both Thurner and Hoagland point out that almost all property around the mines fell into one of two categories. Either the house was a company house, built and owned by the company, or the house was built and owned by the miner and his family, on land leased from the company. At the time of the strike, companies owned slightly over three thousand houses, and leased another seventeen hundred. Hoagland goes further in pointing out that, while there was some private ownership of land, and only about a third of workers officially lived in company-owned or leased houses, another third boarded with them, meaning that an overwhelming majority of mine workers lived in company property in one sense or another.<sup>24</sup> But the interpretation given by those before Congress, and accepted by Congress, was that these homes were private, and therefore subject to the laws and social rules regarding private space. The legal questions of warrants aside, it seems that the issue for the women before the Congressional hearing, and even for Congress itself, was deputy violation of the domestic sphere.

Beyond the community within the boardinghouse, women were also active participants in their neighborhoods. Female neighborliness was a survival strategy used in everyday life, and it continued during the strike. However, when circulating in these female networks, women often were the targets of the officers in charge of controlling strike activity. They were arrested while paying visits to neighbors or otherwise coming to their aid. Deputies arrested a Mrs. Sabolaszli when she came to the aid of her neighbor Mrs. Pihar. Mrs. Pihar herself was seemingly arrested for merely being outside her house.<sup>25</sup> Mrs. Kovacs was arrested the same day in the same neighborhood for checking on her neighbor Mr. Polyak. She and Mrs. Pihar were handcuffed together while Mrs. Sabolaszli was taken to a different location.<sup>26</sup>

Over the course of the strike, women also used neighborliness to encourage participation in strike efforts. On September 2, 1913, deputies and militiamen fired into the air to break up a picket parade near North Kearsage. When the crowd cleared, the authorities discovered that a fourteen year old girl named Margaret Frazekas had been shot in the head.<sup>27</sup> She miraculously recovered, and was well enough to give her testimony before the House Subcommittee on Mines and Mining. During the hearing, Margaret revealed that she had gone out on picket duty that day because a group of neighboring women had come to collect her. Her brother and other relatives were strikers, but her decision to be on the picket line had been largely influenced by the participation of other women.<sup>28</sup> An article in the *Miners' Bulletin* seems to indicate that it was common for women to gather together in the morning before joining the picket line or the parade. The author claims that she and eight or nine other women met together at the beginning of the day, and would have convinced the wives of strike-breakers to join them had it not been for the interference from deputies.<sup>29</sup>

The deputies and soldiers stationed in the copper district used this exercise of neighborliness to their advantage. Margaret Cibacca was brought down to the mining office by a report that she was needed to help a sick woman. Once there, she discovered that there was no woman. Instead, deputies held her in the office for five hours, and then transported her to Houghton, where she was threatened with a six-month jail sentence. According to her testimony, no one would tell her what she had done wrong, and when she asked to go home to feed her children, the deputies merely laughed at her. A second woman brought Margaret two of her children, and was then arrested as well. Margaret claimed that she was released several hours later, all without knowing why she was being held, and that her youngest child of only three months, subsequently died from exposure due to the cold weather.<sup>30</sup>

Margaret's testimony is illuminating in many ways. First, she was willing to go to the aid of another woman that she did not know, despite the fact that the people who came to her door were recognizably men from the company. Second, she was taken in the presence of her children, who were later brought to her by another woman – presumably due to their young ages. This sheds some light on the willingness of miners' wives to participate in rituals of neighborliness, both in responding to emergencies and in watching over children. Finally, deputies did not respond to her claims of motherhood. Margaret claimed a total of five children between the ages of six years and three months. In her testimony, the people holding her showed no regard for her responsibility of feeding them, and gave no assistance to her when they turned her out into the cold with a three month old.

Motherhood was a powerful tool used by women strike sympathizers to both bring sympathy to the cause and to justify their presence in the streets as demonstrators. As Margaret Cibacca's example shows, the women in the Copper Country were mothers and wives above

anything else. The biggest complaint on Margaret's part was not even the fact that she was arrested, but that she had to leave her children in the street, was not allowed to go home to feed them, and suffered the loss of her baby. From her testimony, it is clear that she took at least the baby with her to begin with, and then had another two small children brought to her. Similarly, taking children to demonstrations and to court in the instance of arrest was common both for its necessity in the case of infants, and its sympathetic image before a judge. Mrs. Widas of Trimountain was arrested for assaulting a male neighbor who crossed the picket line. In the description of the assault, the writer for the *Calumet News* was clearly disgusted by her actions; never the less, the article mentions that Mrs. Widas stood before the court with a baby in her arms.<sup>31</sup> Children were also very visible during large demonstrations. Reporters observed that children walked relatively long distances to take part in rallies and parades – though there was little speculation about whether they did so voluntarily. An early rally in Painesdale was reportedly attended by forty children who had marched for three miles from South Range. Countless others that were too small to walk were carried by their mothers. Other demonstrators had apparently walked even farther.<sup>32</sup>

Besides the visual presence of children, the women participating in the strike and their supporters often referenced their commitment to motherhood in conjunction with their commitment to the strike. In an article in the *Calumet News*, women discussing the strike ultimately pointed toward the children as the main cause, saying “They [the children] are the ones our men are striking for. You don't want to see them bent and crippled before their time.”<sup>33</sup> The *Miners' Bulletin* concluded that the women who were committed to the strike would “stand as monuments of untiring labor and devotion,” presumably both as mothers and as strikers. They would be able to tell their children of their sacrifices in order to provide them with more comfort

and security, and that the children would then go on to be upstanding and religious citizens who would improve the world.<sup>34</sup> Sympathetic observers were quick to point out the virtues of good motherhood displayed by the striking miners' wives. Annie Clemenc's perennial admirer N.D. Cochran made sure to mention the handmade dresses and the cleanliness of the children participating in the parade he witnessed. He also went on to proclaim that the country would be infinitely better if more mothers were like Annie and the other women involved in the strike.

Any disruption of motherhood, especially as a result of deputies or militiamen bent on breaking the strike, was viewed as a serious affront, not only to the strike effort, but to the sanctity of motherhood. When the Putrich boarding house was fired upon by deputies in the Seeberville incident, one of the major points of outrage was the powder burns sustained by Antonia Putrich's baby. This was despite the deaths of two men, and the wounding of another two; neither Antonia nor her child suffered any long term injuries, but if the story was reported at all, they received top billing.<sup>35</sup> The women themselves were extremely angry at the effect that the presence and activities of the deputies and militiamen had on their children. Maria Hirvela expressed her outrage in front of Congress when she testified that her home was fired upon twice by soldiers and police. In both instances, her children seemed to be the targets. Maria stated that her daughters had been simply looking out the window of the house when it was fired upon. She herself had only heard the shot, but her children came to her frightened, and she found that the bullet had hit the windowsill. Her initial anger was aimed at the soldiers who had fired at children; but a second wave was aimed at the Congressmen who asked whether or not she thought her children would lie about such a thing.<sup>36</sup> Anna Dyyr was similarly upset when deputies arrested her; the issue was not so much that she considered the arrest wrongful, but that they did so while she was taking her children to use the outhouse.<sup>37</sup>

Beyond the language of motherhood, the women of the Copper Country had to use all of their domestic tools to resist the actions of the deputies and the militia. Upon spotting soldiers coming toward her house in Wolverine, Mrs. Fodor hid her husband in a pantry. When a deputy knocked on the door and demanded entrance, she allegedly doused him with a kettle of boiling water and threw red pepper in his face. She then supposedly attacked him with a rolling pin; the deputy dragged her out of the house so that his men could make a search. The affair made so much noise that two neighbors came over to help her. When the three of them re-entered the house, deputies locked them in the kitchen.<sup>38</sup> In this case, we have a woman who unsuccessfully concealed her husband in a part of the house that was undeniably part of the feminine domain, resisted deputies who enter her house without a warrant with kitchen utensils, and then had to break out of her own kitchen. In the end, the deputies and soldiers arrested three men — her husband and two of her boarders. The entire episode made it into the *Boston Globe*. The *Globe's* rendition of the incident included guns and bayonets, but majority of public attention went to the kettle of water, the red pepper, and the chair and table legs brandished by the women. The paper also highlighted the Fodor boarding house as being a center of union activity.<sup>39</sup>

Using domestic weapons often meant sabotaging the domestic efforts of other women. Women made all of the preparations necessary to send a man off to work. This included making his lunch and making sure he had clean clothes to wear. When coaxing, picket parades, and other methods failed to keep men from crossing the picket line, women began to target the domestic accomplishments of other women that made men's work possible. Among other things, this meant stealing lunch pails — the logic being, if you can't eat, you can't work. This behavior on the part of women strike sympathizers was noted by all sides. It even made Walter Palmer's report to the Department of Labor.<sup>40</sup> The *Survey* noted that women snatched lunch pails and gave

their carriers a severe tongue-lashing.<sup>41</sup> A militiaman even claimed that the women would attack children carrying lunch pails to their fathers.<sup>42</sup>

When not stealing lunch pails failed, the women went after men's clothes. This tactic above any other attracted the attention of the media and drew the disgust of most observers. Calumet and Hecla manager James McNaughton even saw fit to mention it in a letter to owner Quincy A. Shaw:

I cannot tell you to what length the Finnish and Croatian women are going in this matter. . . [They] dipped up a pail of human excrement from an outside water closet, they put a long stick through the handle and carried the pail down the street followed by five other women with brooms, the intention being to smear any non-union man they could find.

He goes on to describe how in one instance, the women cornered a man coming out of an outhouse, smearing him from head to toe.<sup>43</sup> In such a condition, a man could not go to work, and his wife, sister, or boardinghouse keeper would have to wash his clothes. Women's focus on these items showed that they understood that a man who crossed the picket line did so with the encouragement and support of the women in his life. In essence, men's work was made possible by women providing food and clothing. Stopping a man from working thus required the destruction of another woman's work. In an effort to prevent or counteract these attacks, the wives of non-union men began to escort their husbands to work.<sup>44</sup> This in turn led to women attacking and fighting other women. One woman striker reported that, while trying to convince a man not to go to work, his wife came and took him away. She responded to this by calling out, "Don't allow that bad woman to drive you to work!"<sup>45</sup>

Clashes between women were frequent over the course of the strike, and several made it into popular strike mythology. One such story about Annie Clemenc involved a fight with another woman described as "Big Kate" (probably the Kate Swetish identified by Thurner).<sup>46</sup> Both women ended up in a ditch, bloody, and missing chunks of hair and most of their clothing.

Another story describes non-union women turning “the water engine” on Annie and her followers.<sup>47</sup>

Women’s participation in the strike effort called into question their claims to femininity and female privilege in a way that no other activity would have. The degree to which the deputies and soldiers sent to deal with strikers ignored the feminine privileges of separate spheres and motherhood has already been demonstrated. In this case, it could be reasonably argued that the deputies were merely trying to do their jobs in a stressful situation and that gender expectations had nothing to do with their decisions. However, the femininity of these women and the respect they could claim due to their sex was called into question not only by the deputies and soldiers, but also by mine managers, and even the strikers themselves.

To a certain extent, the women were aware of the attitude toward them, especially on the part of the soldiers and deputies. When a militiaman tried to push a group of women off a sidewalk one striker said, “If we were nice young girls, you would not do that.”<sup>48</sup> James McNaughton taunted the women for their behavior, saying “[T]he language they have used is beyond description, and a ‘S.O.B. of a scab’ is a common expression among the politest women of the strikers.”<sup>49</sup> The *Calumet News* also reported on the unladylike behavior of the women, describing in detail a fight between several women and a workman. Calling it a “free-for-all melee”, the *News* was quick to point out that the women were bested.<sup>50</sup> Clearly, observers were shocked and appalled at the indelicate actions of the women on the picket line. When commentators could not attack the women’s lack of femininity, they commented on the deficient masculinity of the men involved, sometimes regardless of the side they were on. One militiaman commented that men were content to let the women do the fighting for them.<sup>51</sup> The *Calumet News* expressed confusion at the timidity of the men going to work to resist the attacks of



women.<sup>52</sup> The manliness of mining men was probably the source of further confusion and speculation when they began to rely on their wives to escort them to work like children to school. Deputies also derided workers, sometimes calling them cowards for letting mere women persuade them to stop going to work.<sup>53</sup>

But it wasn't merely outside observers who had difficulty processing and justifying the actions of Copper Country women. Strike participants also had difficulty in accepting women on the picket lines. Even though the men were glad to have them there, they began to question the role of such active women in working class society. Even N.D. Cochran, who had gone to such lengths to emphasize Annie Clemenc's femininity and motherliness, raised questions in writing "As manhood goes, she's more of a man in fighting quality, in sand, in courage, in heroism than Governor Ferris."<sup>54</sup> This is clearly meant as a compliment, and is supposed to call into question Governor Ferris' manliness rather than Annie's femininity. Yet, he clearly calls her a man, and even says she has "sand", which is a reference to male genitalia.

Even more telling are the folk tales that begin to circulate during and after the strike. In a collection of folk stories of the Upper Peninsula, Richard Dorson includes three stories about Annie. The first claims that she was two hundred pounds and could easily have "licked" Joe Louis. The second calls her a "big derelict of a woman". The last one said that no man would use the kind of language she did, and that she led a group of "bulbush" women like herself.<sup>55</sup> These sorts of descriptions are possibly what led Congressman Taylor of Arkansas to repeatedly ask women what they weighed when on the stand during the Congressional hearings.<sup>56</sup>

Clearly, women were a central force in the 1913-14 copper strike and their involvement was informed by distinctive feminine strategies of neighborliness, motherhood, and their role as the enraged guardians of the domestic sphere. That they were criticized for their strike activity is

beyond question. But their treatment by deputies and soldiers, and comments from strikers, mine managers and the press suggests that female involvement in strikes was seen as distasteful, and transgressed the public sphere. Though they proved vital to the strike effort, women found themselves under suspicion and even derision for not being ladylike in lending visible and enthusiastic support to “man’s affairs.”<sup>57</sup> While the working class men appreciated women’s support, they were not fully accepting of women wanting to be visibly active. That women felt the constant need to justify themselves with motherhood is an indication of this. Soldiers and deputies took the women’s behavior to mean that they too did not have to abide by conventional gender rules, allowing them to violate the feminine domestic sphere.

While this treatment of the Michigan copper strike is less than comprehensive, it does serve to illuminate significant, but overlooked, actors in the eight month stand-off between organized labor and the mine owners. It also raises, but does not fully explore, a number of new questions, which future works will hopefully address. For instance, this piece focuses primarily on women who were supportive of the strike, but what about the wives of miners who crossed the picket line? What could their experiences tell us about the lives of working class women in Michigan’s remote northwest? What can we learn about women’s relationship with the mining companies? How does that relationship change when we consider who lived in company housing and who did not?

Furthermore, there is much more work to be done on the strike, not only on the role of women, but also on the national significance of the outcome. The Western Federation of Miners was all but bankrupt after the loss, just as the global demand for copper and other metals was about to sky rocket due to the outbreak of World War I in Europe. The Michigan Copper Strike is arguably a turning point in the organization of mining areas, and can therefore be put in

context not only with the war, but with other industrial actions in Colorado, Montana, Idaho, and Arizona. This opens the door for comparative analysis of these communities, and potentially allows for a deeper understanding of the social and cultural conventions of these working class people. Do they change from mine town to mine town? Do the backgrounds of the miners and their families have a significant effect on the tactics used in strikes? How does the organization of mining companies impact the social developments of their surrounding communities, and did women play such a crucial role in other regions? All of these are tantalizing questions, and Michigan's experience offers a possible starting point for future investigation.

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<sup>1</sup> N.D. Cochran (November 1, 1913). "Annie Clemenc, an American Joan of Arc." *Miners' Bulletin*, Microfilm Collection, Michigan Tech Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections, Michigan Technological University, Michigan.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. "Women in Industry Should Organize," *Industrial Worker*, June 1, 1911 in Rosalyn Fraad Baxandall. *Words on Fire: The Life and Writing of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 93-94.

<sup>3</sup> (August 1, 1913). "Mother Jones Will Stir the Women to Activity." *Calumet News*, Microfilm Collection, Michigan Tech Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections, Michigan Technological University, Michigan.

<sup>4</sup> (September 11, 1913). "A Word for Women." *Miners' Bulletin*, Microfilm Collection, Michigan Tech Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections, Michigan Technological University, Michigan.

<sup>5</sup> (September 6, 1913). "Big Burden of Debt." *Calumet News*, Microfilm Collection, Michigan Tech Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections, Michigan Technological University, Michigan.

<sup>6</sup> (August 28, 1913). "Women Now Attack Non-Union Miners." *Calumet News*, Microfilm Collection, Michigan Tech Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections, Michigan Technological University, Michigan.

<sup>7</sup> "Chronology of Calumet Strike," *Boston Daily Globe*, December 29, 1913, 2.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Michigan Copper District Strike*. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1914), 67, 73.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>10</sup> Ardis Cameron. *Radicals of the Worst Sort: Laboring Women in Lawrence Massachusetts, 1860-1912*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 147, 151.

<sup>11</sup> Larry Lankton. *Cradle to Grave: Life, Work, and Death at the Lake Superior Copper Mines*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 150.

<sup>12</sup> Allison K. Hoagland, *Mine Towns: Buildings for Workers in Michigan's Copper Country* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), Kindle Edition, 51.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., xviii.

<sup>15</sup> *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 69.

<sup>16</sup> Hoagland, *Mine Towns*, 55.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 68-69.

<sup>18</sup> House Committee on Mines and Mining, *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Mines and Mining*, February 16-21, 1914. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1914), 776-779.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 750-756.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 834-836.

<sup>21</sup> Hoagland, *Mine Towns*, 50.

<sup>22</sup> (December 16, 1913 ). "Searching Strikers Homes." *Miners' Bulletin*, Microfilm Collection, Michigan Tech Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections, Michigan Technological University, Michigan.

<sup>23</sup> House Committee on Mines and Mining, February 16-21, 1914, 650.

<sup>24</sup> Arthur W. Thurner. *Rebels on the Range: The Michigan Copper Miners' Strike of 1913-1914*. (Hancock: Book Concern Printers, 1984), 24; Hoagland, *Mine Towns*, xiii.

<sup>25</sup> House Committee on Mines and Mining, *Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Mines and Mining*, February 23-25, 1914. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1914), 1061-62.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 1068.

<sup>27</sup> *Michigan Copper District Strike*, 70.

- <sup>28</sup>House Committee on Mines and Mining, February 23-25, 1914, 1163-1165.
- <sup>29</sup>(September 6, 1913 ).“A Strike Heroine,” *Miners’ Bulletin*, Microfilm Collection, Michigan Tech Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections, Michigan Technological University, Michigan.
- <sup>30</sup>House Committee on Mines and Mining, February 16-21, 1914, 649-655.
- <sup>31</sup>“Women Now Attack Non-Union Miners,” *Calumet News*, August 28, 1913.
- <sup>32</sup>“Work Pumps at One More Mine,” *Boston Daily Globe*, July 29, 1913, pg. 4.
- <sup>33</sup>“Mother Jones Will Stir the Women to Activity,” *Calumet News*, August 1, 1913.
- <sup>34</sup>“A Word for Women,” *Miners’ Bulletin*, September 11, 1913.
- <sup>35</sup>Inis Weed. “The Reasons Why the Copper Miners Struck,” *The Outlook*, 1914, 250; “The Michigan Copper Strike,” *The Literary Digest*, December 6, 1913.
- <sup>36</sup>House Committee on Mines and Mining, February 16-21, 1914, 809.
- <sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 846.
- <sup>38</sup>House Committee on Mines and Mining, February 23-25, 1914, 1070-1079.
- <sup>39</sup>“Use Red Pepper and Hot Water,” *Boston Daily Globe*, August 1, 1913, 16.
- <sup>40</sup>*Michigan Copper District Strike*, 67.
- <sup>41</sup>Graham Romeyn Taylor. “The Clash in the Copper Country,” *Survey*, November 1, 1913, 129.
- <sup>42</sup>“Big Burden of Debt,” *Calumet News*, September 6, 1913.
- <sup>43</sup>McNaughton, James. Letter to Quincy A. Shaw, September 2, 1913. Calumet and Hecla Mining Company Collection, Box 350, Folder 5. Michigan Tech Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections, Michigan Technological University, Michigan.
- <sup>44</sup>“Chronology of Calumet Strike,” *Boston Daily Globe*, December 29, 1913, 2.
- <sup>45</sup>(October 2, 1913 ).“A Woman’s Story.” *Miners’ Bulletin*, Microfilm Collection, Michigan Tech Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections, Michigan Technological University, Michigan.
- <sup>46</sup>Turner, *Rebels*, 90.
- <sup>47</sup>Richard M. Dorson. *Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers: Folk Traditions of the U.P.* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 215.
- <sup>48</sup>“A Strike Heroine,” *Miners’ Bulletin*, September 6, 1913.
- <sup>49</sup>McNaughton, James. Letter to Q. A. Shaw, September 2, 1913.

<sup>50</sup> “Women Now Attack Non-Union Miners,” *Calumet News*, August 28, 1913.

<sup>51</sup> “Big Burden of Debt,” *Calumet News*, September 6, 1913.

<sup>52</sup> “Women Now Attack Non-Union Miners,” *Calumet News*, August 28, 1913.

<sup>53</sup> “A Woman’s Story,” *Miners’ Bulletin*, October 2, 1913.

<sup>54</sup> N.D. Cochran, “Annie Clemenc, An American Joan of Arc,” *Miners’ Bulletin*, November 1, 1913.

<sup>55</sup> Dorson. *Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers*, 215.

<sup>56</sup> House Committee on Mines and Mining, February 23-25, 1914, 1070, 1241.

<sup>57</sup> Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. “Women in Industry Should Organize,” *Industrial Worker*, June 1, 1911 in Baxandall, 93-94.