

Vigilantism in Minnesota, 1850-1920

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Contents

List of Abbreviations	3
Introduction	4
Chapter One: Lynching	25
Chapter Two: Non-Lethal Vigilantism: Charivari, Tar and Feathers, and Whitecapping	38
Chapter Three: The Ku Klux Klan	56
Chapter Four: Wartime Vigilantism in Minnesota, 1917-1918	72
Conclusion	90
Appendix One: Images	97
Appendix Two: Essay on Primary Sources	104
Bibliography	106

Abbreviations Used in Notes:

BDP – *Bemidji Pioneer (Weekly) (1896-1917), Bemidji Daily Pioneer (1904-1971)*
 CT – *Chicago Tribune*
 DG – *Daily Globe (St. Paul) (1878-1884), St. Paul Daily Globe (1884-1896), St. Paul Globe (1896-1905)*
 DH – *Duluth Evening Herald (1883-1910), Duluth Herald (1910-1982)*
 DNT – *Duluth News-Tribune (1892-1982)*
 MCT – *Mower County Transcript (1868-1915), Mower County Transcript-Republican (1915-1920)*
 MH – *Minnesota History*
 MJ – *Minneapolis Journal (1888-1939)*
 MP – *Minnesota Pioneer (St. Paul) (1849-1855), Daily Minnesota Pioneer (1854-1855), Weekly Pioneer and Democrat (1855-1865), Pioneer and Democrat (1860-1862)*
 MS – *Minneapolis Daily Star (1920-1939)*
 MT – *Minneapolis Daily Tribune (1867-1876, 1884-1886), Minneapolis Tribune (1876-1877, 1886-1909, 1930-1982), Tribune (1877-1882), Daily Minnesota Tribune (1882-1884), Minneapolis Morning Tribune (1909-1930)*
 SDP – *Saint Paul Daily Press (1861-1864, 1866-1875), Saint Paul Press (1864-1865)*
 WM – *Minnesotian (St. Paul) (1851-1852), Weekly Minnesotian (1852-1858), St. Paul Weekly Minnesotian (1858-1859, 1860-1861), Weekly Minnesotian and Times (1859-1860)*

Abbreviations Used in Text:

AFL – American Federation of Labor
 APL – American Protective League
 ASWPL – Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching
 CCA – Civic & Commerce Association (of Minneapolis)
 IWW – International Workers of the World
 MCPS – Minnesota Commission for Public Safety
 NAACP – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
 NPL – Nonpartisan League
 TCRTC – Twin Cities Rapid Transit Company

Introduction

Minnesota has in recent years been in international news for several deaths at the hands of its police forces, including Philando Castile in 2016, George Floyd in 2020, and Duante Wright in 2021.¹ A study conducted by the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* found that among the 208 fatal police shootings from 2000 to 2020, 26% were of African Americans, a disproportionate percentage considering that African Americans only make up 5% of Minnesota's population.² Additionally, 7% of fatal police shootings were of Indigenous people, who make up just over 1% of the population.³ As protests were taking place in Summer 2020 in the wake of George Floyd's death, Governor Walz issued Minnesota's first posthumous pardon to Max Mason: a Black circus worker who was convicted for rape in 1921 under dubious circumstances after surviving a near-lynching the previous year in Duluth. The pardon application read, "there is a direct line between what happened (to Mason) to George Floyd in the streets of Minneapolis."⁴

On the night of June 14th, 1920, white teenager James Sullivan arrived at work at the ore docks for a night shift. Upon arrival, he told his father, also an employee of the same firm, that his friend Irene Tusken had been raped by a group of Black carnies earlier that night.⁵ Sullivan alleged that the men held the pair at gunpoint and robbed them before taking turns sexually assaulting Tusken. When Tusken regained consciousness, the men allegedly gave the pair back the items they stole and told them to leave immediately. Upon hearing the story, Sullivan's father phoned the police department, who then dispatched officers to

¹ Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs and Azi Paybarah, "Protestors Clash with Police After Minnesota Officer Shoots Black Man," *New York Times*, Apr. 11th, 2021., Reid Forgrave, "Remembering Philando Castile, Four Years Later: 'We got strength in numbers now,'" *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, July 6th, 2020.

² Jeff Hargarten et al., "Every Police-Involved Death in Minnesota Since 2000," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Updated Apr. 27th, 2021.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Dan Kraker, "Minn. Grants State's First Posthumous Pardon to Max Mason, in Case Related to Duluth Lynchings," *MPR News*, Jun. 12th, 2020.

⁵ This narrative of the lynchings is outlined in "A Travesty of Justice: The Duluth Lynchings," in John D. Bessler, *Legacy of Violence: Lynch Mobs and Executions in Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 183-224, and in Michael Fedo, *The Lynchings in Duluth*, Second Edition, (St Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2016), 23-35, 51-57, 80-100.

Tusken's house. Tusken's parents were surprised by the arrival of the police, as Tusken had not told them about any incident at the circus. The police then took Tusken down to the train yard and asked her to identify her assailants. She pointed at five of them. A sixth man, Isaac Mcghie, was also detained as a witness. The following morning local newspapers spread the story that some Black carnies had raped a local white teenager and reprinted incorrect rumors that Tusken might succumb to her injuries. These rumors were contrary to a doctor's report, which found Tusken to have no physical signs of having been assaulted. In the evening, a mob of white Duluthians started to form downtown, and while police stood by, the mob broke into the jail. The members of the mob dragged McGhie out first. He was given a sham trial by members of the mob, who then hanged him. The mob repeated this process on two of the five suspects: Elias Clayton and Elmer Jackson. A photographer on the scene took a picture of the dead men, two of them still hanging, and then sold copies of it as souvenirs. After surviving the lynching, Mason was put on trial for rape and was convicted. The conviction was based mainly on him having the same sexually transmitted infection as the alleged victim. Max Mason spent nearly four years in Stillwater State Prison before the governor commuted his sentence.

The lynchings in Duluth fit within a culture of vigilantism and white supremacy that had arrived with the first white settlers in the 1850s. Historian Linda Gordon argues that vigilantes are "perversely part of [American] democracy, of the very essence of the democratic spirit to which Americans owe so much. They represent a flaw in the democracy, but one so close to its center that we need to understand how it affected the whole if we are ever to remove it."⁶ The American Revolution was ostensibly based on the concept of "popular sovereignty:" the idea that the only legitimate source of governmental authority

⁶ Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 254.

stemmed from the people living in the territory of a state.⁷ However high-minded it may have been, the pursuit of this form of government justified the “meanest and most squalid sort of violence” against those who stood against the will of “the people” and these revolutionary acts of violence would become enshrined in national memory to the present day.⁸

The U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights were supposed to contain the will of the electorate within bounds of democratic, non-violent avenues for reform and enshrined the right to due process for American citizens.⁹ The 19th and early 20th centuries then saw the slow transformation of the American legal system from “the business of amateurs” of the colonial era to one run by professionals to ensure US citizens were afforded the rights given to them in the Constitution.¹⁰ American states slowly phased out corporal punishment in the first half of the 19th century in favor of imprisonment, which was also increasingly linked to reforming the prisoner to render them docile and disciplined rather than creating a spectacle out of their punishment.¹¹ States also began to hold hangings away from public view.¹² Executions were banned altogether in Michigan (1846) and Wisconsin (1853), while in Minnesota, there was a moratorium on the death penalty from 1868-1883 before the state abolished it in 1911.¹³ Following the example of London’s Metropolitan Police Service founded in 1829, American cities began establishing professional uniformed police services starting around mid-century, including the St. Paul Police Department, which was

⁷ Manfred Berg, *Popular Justice: A History of Lynching in America* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2011), 22.

⁸ R.M. Brown, *Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 7.

⁹ Michael J. Pfeiffer, *The Roots of Rough Justice: Origins of American Lynching* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 11, 72.

¹⁰ David A. Johnson, “Vigilance and the Law: The Moral Authority of Popular Justice in the Far West,” *American Quarterly* 33 no. 5 (1981), 558-559. Lawrence M. Friedman, *Crime and Punishment in American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 62-63, 74-75.

¹¹ Myra C. Glenn, “The Naval Campaign Against Flogging: A Case Study in Changing Attitudes Towards Corporal Punishment, 1830-1850,” *American Quarterly*, 35 no. 4 (1983), 409. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 2012) 252-261. Friedman, 27-28, 66-67, 76-82.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Pfeiffer, 60, 64.

established in 1854 and became fully uniformed in 1864.¹⁴ The US went from having 1.3 uniformed police officers per thousand persons in the 1860s to 2 per thousand by 1908, a ratio that remained roughly for the rest of the 20th century.¹⁵ However, the American state lagged behind its western European counterparts in establishing a highly centralized law enforcement system, nor was it able to establish a monopoly on violence.¹⁶ The federal government did not establish the Bureau of Investigation, the forerunner to the FBI, until 1908. In rural areas of Minnesota, the *posse comitatus* continued to be until at least the 1910s.¹⁷

Without a law enforcement monopoly on violence, vigilantism continued to be practiced into the early 20th century, often condemned by the reform-minded segment of society but rarely punished. Vigilantism allowed its practitioners to enact a punishment that was immediate, personal, corporal, and possibly humiliating to the victim when the legal system only provided punishments that were contingent on a conviction (which could take time), were administered by the state and were not “cruel and unusual.” It allowed for applying capital punishment even if the crime was not capital or if the state had abolished the death penalty altogether. It also allowed local populations to enforce communal mores that were not necessarily crimes such as extramarital sex or “slacking” during the First World War, which entailed not doing one's part to contribute to the war effort.

This study charts how different vigilante phenomena such as lynching, tarring and feathering, whitecapping, and others arrived in Minnesota, the motivations for such behaviour, and why vigilantism was largely tolerated by the state until the 1920s. While this study attempts to be as comprehensive as possible in its coverage of vigilantism, it relies

¹⁴ Eric H. Monkkonen, “History of Urban Police,” *Crime and Justice* 15 (1992), 549, 553-554. “The Police of St. Paul,” *DG*, Feb. 16th, 1904, pg. 19. Jane Lamm Carroll, “Criminal Justice on the Minnesota Frontier.” PhD diss., (University of Minnesota, 1991), 107-110.

¹⁵ Monkkonen, 554.

¹⁶ Pfeiffer, 5.

¹⁷ “Constable Proves a Hero,” *Caledonia Argus*, Aug. 27th, 1915, pg. 7. “Bandit Wounded by Posse,” *New Ulm Review*, Nov. 3rd, 1915, pg. 3. “Posse Closing in on Assault Suspect,” *BDP*, Sept. 23rd, 1916, pg. 1.

heavily on the newspaper record and there is the possibility that some incidents that went unreported in contemporary press, or was not uncovered during research due to full-text searching being unavailable on microfilm records.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of vigilante cases uncovered reveal that vigilantism was tolerated amid an otherwise working system of law enforcement as long as it reinforced the values of white settler society which during this time was anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, patriarchal, and, with the emergence of industrial capitalism in Minnesota by the turn of the century, anti-union and anti-radical.

This is due to fact that an important aspect of popular sovereignty, and subsequently vigilantism in America is who gets to be included within the concept of “the people.” To most white Americans in our period of study “the people” meant “free white men,” as iterated in the Naturalization Act of 1790. The phrase “all men are created equal” in the Declaration of Independence did not extend to the hundreds of thousands of enslaved people who continued to be enslaved after the revolution and continued to be subject to a separate judicial system.¹⁹ Although slavery ended, private citizens acting as vigilantes such as the Ku Klux Klan continued to operate in the place of pre-war slave patrols during Reconstruction, and the state continued to exact violence against Blacks through Jim Crow laws and the convict lease system.²⁰ This was underpinned by pervasive white racist fears of Black criminality, uncontrolled sexuality, and intellectual inferiority. This attitude is best summed up by Ben Tillman of South Carolina, who in a 1900 speech to the U.S. Senate, argued, “we of the South have never recognized the right of the Negro to govern white men, and we never will. We have never believed him to be the equal of the white man, and we will not submit to his gratifying his lust on our wives and daughters without lynching him.”²¹ By the 1890s, and

¹⁸ See Appendix 2.

¹⁹ Friedman, 53. Pfeiffer, 36-37.

²⁰ Sally E. Hadden, *Slave Patrols: Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 4, 67, 89-90, 169, 198., Friedman, 156-157.

²¹ "Speech of Senator Benjamin R. Tillman, March 23, 1900," Congressional Record, 56th Congress, 1st Session, 3223-3224.

continuing on until the demise of lynchings in the 1930's, lynching became intensely racialized with the vast majority of victims being African American.²² In Minnesota, however, the percentage of Black lynching victims is only 12.5%, a statistic due more to the comparatively small Black population in the state compared to others during our period of study rather than to a lack of racism. The majority of Minnesotan lynching victims were white (62.5%) or Indigenous (24%).

A prevalent belief among white settlers of the American west was that Indigenous people who did not adopt sedentary agricultural lifestyles were squandering land that would put to better use by white settlers.²³ If they resisted assimilation, white settlers saw them as part of the non-productive class of society similar to tramps.²⁴ Even if Indigenous people adopted a European way of life they were not guaranteed that they would be able to continue to live on their land, a president started with the Indian Removal Act of 1830, and they were not afforded U.S. citizenship until 1924.²⁵ This led to many Indigenous people being killed at the hands of both the state (such as the Wounded Knee Massacre) and vigilantes (such as the California Genocide) without consequence.²⁶ In Minnesota, most lynchings were of Indigenous people in the first few decades of statehood when land was made available to white settlers following the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux who began settling in the Minnesota Territory.

In some ways, the Duluth Lynchings of 1920 can serve as a bookend to the era of vigilantism in Minnesota. In response to the lynchings, the Minnesota government signed

²² An NAACP study published in 1919, titled *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918*, counted 3,224 people had been lynched during that time: 2,522 of whom were Black (78%), and 702 of whom were white (22%). The total number of American lynching victims is unknown. Michael J. Pfeiffer, introduction to *Lynching Beyond Dixie: American Mob Violence Outside the South* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2013), 13 (n. 6).

²³ Pfeiffer, *Roots of Rough Justice*, 48-51.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Louis Warren, *God's Red Son: The Ghost Dance Religion and the Making of Modern America* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 51.

²⁶ Eugene W. Hollon, *Frontier Violence: Another Look* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 56-62. Warren, 285-310.

anti-lynching legislation to hold sheriffs financially culpable for lynchings that occurred in their jurisdiction.²⁷ Following this law, there were no further acts of lynching, nor was there a repeat of any other forms of non-lethal vigilantism such as tarring and feathering, charivari, or whitecapping. This 70-year period, as described in the following section, saw the state go from a borderland region where the top industry was the fur trade, and the majority of its inhabitants were Indigenous people, to one inhabited almost entirely by white settlers engaged in farming, resource extraction, and manufacturing, one where law enforcement succeeded in monopolizing the legitimate use of violence and of punishing criminals. Unfortunately, this monopolization has not resulted in an end to racialized violence perpetrated by law enforcement. In addition, although vigilantes are much more likely to face prosecution than they did a hundred years ago, there recently has been a number of acts of attempted far-right vigilantism such the storming of the United States Capitol on Jan. 6th, 2021, or the plot to kidnap and hold Michigan Governor Whitmer on trial for alleged treason in 2020. With these issues facing Minnesotans today, it is worth taking a closer look at the roots of such phenomenon so that they might be understood better and hopefully prevented from happening again in the future.

Minnesota, 1850-1920

The Indigenous peoples in the south and west of Minnesota are the Dakota. The Ho-Chunk people, who had lived in present-day Wisconsin before the arrival of the white settlers, also inhabited Minnesotan lands for a time. The Ho-Chunk were forcibly relocated first to Iowa, then to Minnesota, where they lived first on a reservation at Long Prairie from 1847 to 1855, then on one near Mankato from 1855 to 1863.²⁸ However, the so-called U.S.-Dakota War, discussed in greater detail in Chapter I, prompted removing nearly all Dakotain the state by the U.S. government in 1863. Although the Ho-Chunk did not participate in the

²⁷“Anti-Lynching Bill Passed,” *Minneapolis Messenger*, May 28th, 1921, pg. 4.

²⁸ See Figure 1.

so-called U.S.-Dakota War, they were also forcibly removed from Minnesota in 1863. Around 200-300 Dakota remained in Minnesota immediately after the expulsion, despite a bounty placed on Dakota scalps in Minnesota after the war.²⁹ A few Dakota purchased plots of their land back while most squatted. They would remain unrecognized as a tribe in Minnesota by the federal government until 1884 when annuity payments were re-established, and land appropriations were authorized to provide reserves for them, leading to the establishment of the Prairie Island, Prior Lake, and Lower Sioux communities.³⁰ A 1929 census of these Minnesotan Dakota communities counted 554 Dakota living on just under 850 acres of land.³¹

In Minnesota's early years of settler colonialism following the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux in 1851, towns sprang up along rivers navigable by riverboats including Mankato, St. Paul, and Stillwater.³² Railways, most notably St. Paul and Pacific, replaced these waterways as the primary mode of transportation by the 1870s, and soon, the Twin Cities served as a railway hub for a vast agricultural hinterland that spanned from the Wisconsin border westward across the lower half of the state, up along the Red River and then westward into North Dakota.³³ Minneapolis soon became the larger of the two cities, spurred on by its milling industry centered on the Falls of St. Anthony. In 1871, the Washburn-Crosby company introduced the first "middlings purifier" at its B Mill in Minneapolis, which dramatically increased the efficiency of processing winter wheat and led Minneapolis to

²⁹ Mary Lethert Wingerd, *North Country: The Making of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 338, 350.

³⁰ Roy Willard Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux: United States Indian Policy on Trial* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 292.

³¹ Guy Gibbon, *The Sioux: The Dakota and Lakota Nations* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 139.

³² Carroll, 96.

³³ Don Hofsommer, "'Temples of Mammon and Hives of Industry': Railroads and the Minneapolis Milling District," *MH* 61 no. 6 (2009), 251-256. Thomas J. Baerwald, "Forces at Work on the Landscape," in *Minnesota in A Century of Change: The State and Its People Since 1900*, ed. Clifford Edward Clark (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989), 24-27.

become the leading American producer of flour by 1880.³⁴ St. Paul and Minneapolis became home to much of the state's industrial sector due to their position as railway hubs.³⁵ The steady stream of unskilled immigrant laborers into these urban centers due to this industry led to a robust Socialist Party following among the working class, and in 1915, Thomas van Lear became the first elected socialist mayor of Minneapolis.³⁶

Outside of the Twin Cities, white settlers tended to move to settlements where there were already large amounts of their ethnic group, and this is reflected in Minnesotan place names such as New Brighton, Scandia, Vasa, and New Prague.³⁷ Yankees also migrated to Minnesota, founding towns with names that reflected New England place names like Rochester, New Auburn, and Stillwater. St. Cloud, Chaska, and New Ulm became centers of German immigration, were home to German-language newspapers like *Der Nordstern* and the *New Ulm Post*.³⁸ Germans in these Minnesotan communities prior to World War I, according to historian Christine Wolkerstorfer, “lived not in a thoroughly American culture, but rather in German-America.”³⁹ Throughout our study period, one could still hear German on the streets of towns like New Ulm, and one could still hear Norwegian on the streets of towns like Benson.⁴⁰

³⁴ David B. Danbom, “Flour Power: The Significance of Flour Milling at the Falls,” *MH* 58 no. 5 (2003), 272-277.

³⁵ John R. Borchert, “The Network of Urban Centers,” in *Minnesota in A Century of Change: The State and Its People Since 1900*, ed. Clifford Edward Clark (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989), 68.

³⁶ David Paul Nord, “Minneapolis and the Pragmatic Socialism of Thomas van Lear,” *MH* 45 no. 1 (1976), 2-10.

³⁷ Odd Lovoll, *Norwegians on the Prairie* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2010), 31-33, 102-108, 191-201. Jon Gjerde and Carleton C. Qualey, *Norwegians in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002), 23, 42. Jon Wefald, *A Voice of Protest: Norwegians in American Politics, 1890-1917* (Northfield: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1971), 10-11. Jon Gjerde, *The Minds of the West: Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Middle West* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 89-98.

³⁸ Carleton C. Qualey, “Some National Groups in Minnesota,” *MH* 31 no. 1 (1950), 23-25, 29. La Vern J. Rippley, “Archbishop Ireland and the School Language Controversy,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 1 no. 1 (1980), 3-6. Borchert, *Minnesota in a Century of Change*, 59.

³⁹ Christine John Wolkerstorfer, “Nativism in Minnesota in World War I; A Comparative Study of Brown, Ramsey and Stearns Counties, 1914-1918,” PhD diss., (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1973), 18.

⁴⁰ Lovoll, 158. Thomas Harvey, “Small-Town Minnesota,” in *Minnesota in A Century of Change: The State and Its People Since 1900*, ed. Clifford Edward Clark (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989), 119.

The ethnic makeup of southern and western Minnesota influenced voting patterns. New Englander and Scandinavian-American farmers tended to vote Republican, as both groups were largely anti-slavery, pro-temperance, supportive of the Homestead Act, and Protestant.⁴¹ Soon after statehood, the Democrats became perpetual second-place finishers in state elections, but by the 1890s, economic concerns of farmers strained the Gilded Age Republican coalition, leading to an upsurge in support for the Populist Party. “All the [rural] newspapers are turning Populist...” the *Minneapolis Tribune* remarked in 1894, “[and] of the papers printed in any of the Scandinavian languages which retain the Republican spirit pure and without bias, only two are left.”⁴² It is not a coincidence that the two Populists elected to U.S. Congress from Minnesota were Kittel Halvorson and Haldor Boen, were both 1st generation Norwegian-Americans who represented rural districts. Like the Democratic-Populist fusion at the federal level, the two merged at the state level in Minnesota. In 1898, Minnesota elected John Lind as governor, the nominee of this Populist-Democratic fusion, a champion of progressive politics, and a 1st generation Swedish-American.⁴³ To many farmers in the upper Midwest, however, the policies of progressive-era politicians failed to improve their economic situation, which led to the rise of the Nonpartisan League in nearby North Dakota, founded by disillusioned former socialist A.C. Townley. The NPL promised rural credit banks, state-owned grain elevators, and fair insurance rates for farmers.⁴⁴ After taking control of the North Dakota Legislature in 1916, it expanded its operations into Minnesota to prepare for the 1917 state primaries. The result of the NPL’s advance into Minnesota will be discussed in Chapter IV when the state saw some of its worst political violence directed at this new political force.

⁴¹ Gjerde and Qualey, 66. Wefald, 18.

⁴² Quoted in John D. Hicks, “The People’s Party in Minnesota,” *Minnesota History Bulletin*, 5 no. 8 (1924), 549.

⁴³ Chrislock, 1971, 9-14.

⁴⁴ Wefald, 62.

In the upper north-eastern section of Minnesota, also known as the North Woods, a different situation emerged from the agricultural south, demographically, economically, and politically. The land in this area, both rocky and heavily forested, was unsuitable for commercial agriculture.⁴⁵ Europeans had been trading for furs with the Indigenous Ojibwe along Minnesota's Lake Superior shore since the 18th century, but it was not until 1870 when a railroad was built from the Twin Cities to Duluth that mass European-American migration to the area began.⁴⁶ The rail link allowed Minneapolis mills to send flour to Duluth, where it could be loaded onto ships, bypassing the railroads going east.⁴⁷ White settlers also established began extracting timber in the region, and by 1882, Duluth was home to eleven sawmills cutting eighty-three million feet of lumber per year.⁴⁸ In 1884, iron ore mining began approximately 100 kilometers northwest of Duluth in what is now known as the Vermillion Range and later at the nearby Mesabi (1892) and Cuyuna (1911) Ranges.⁴⁹ Railroads connected these mines to Minnesota's shore of Lake Superior, where dockers loaded the ore onto ships in Duluth and Two Harbors, bound for smelters in Illinois, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. In 1916, US Steel opened a smelter in Duluth so iron ore could also be smelted locally.

The Indigenous people of the North Woods are the Ojibwe. After the decline of the fur trade and expansion of the railroads north, whites increased political pressure to relocate and concentrate the Ojibwe bands of the North Woods onto one reserve at White Earth, Minnesota. Most Ojibwe resisted relocation to White Earth, with two-thirds of their population remaining instead at their old reservations, at Bois Forte, Fond du Lac, Grand

⁴⁵ Baerwald, *Minnesota in a Century of Change*, 25-26, 33-37.

⁴⁶ Richard Hudelson and Carl Ross, *By the Ore Docks: A Working People's History of Duluth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), loc. 202-221.

⁴⁷ Danbom, 278.

⁴⁸ Hudelson and Ross, 225-241.

⁴⁹ Baerwald, *Minnesota in a Century of Change*, 38.

Portage, Leech Lake, Mille Lacs, and Red Lake all of which are extant.⁵⁰ In 1889, the federal government passed the Nelson Act, which started subdividing Ojibwe tribal land into lots, with “surplus land” sold off to whites.⁵¹ At White Earth, white Minnesotan politicians hoped Ojibwe would be assimilated culturally and transformed into the yeoman farmers on a tract of land that could support such an enterprise. It resulted in 94% of White Earth’s acreage, along with most of its timber resources passing into the hands of white settlers by 1933, often through fraudulent means.⁵² Additionally, the Ojibwe at the Leech Lake Reservation ultimately lost 96% of the land they held in 1889 due to this process before the US government ended allotments in 1934.⁵³ Despite violence from white settlers and efforts on the part of the government to eradicate their culture and curtail their rights to hunt and fish, the Ojibwe of this region nevertheless found ways to adapt traditional ways of life to sustain themselves and produce products for trade in the new white settler economy throughout our period of study.⁵⁴

The non-Indigenous population of the North Woods shared some similarities with the rest of the state. The earliest wave of migrants to Minnesota’s northeast were mostly native-born Americans or from centers of “old stock” immigration: Canada, Britain, Sweden, and Norway.⁵⁵ This group of immigrants provided most of the mining captains, heavy machinery operators, and engineers.⁵⁶ By the late 1880s, there was a large influx of migrants mainly

⁵⁰ Ken Peterson, “Ransom Powell and the Tragedy of White Earth,” *MH* 63 no. 3 (2012), 89.

⁵¹ Richard E. Weil, “Destroying a Homeland: White Earth, Minnesota,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 13 no. 2 (1989), 74-76.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 76-82.

⁵³ Anton Treuer, *Ojibwe in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2010), 57. Melissa L. Meyer, *The White Earth Tragedy: Ethnicity and Dispossession at a Minnesota Anishinaabe Reservation, 1889-1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 56.

⁵⁴ Chantal Norrgard, *Seasons of Change: Labor, Treaty Rights, and Ojibwe Nationhood* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 4-16.

⁵⁵ David La Vigne, “The ‘Black Fellows’ of the Mesabi Iron Range: European Immigrants and Racial Differentiation During the Early 20th Century,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 36 no. 2 (Winter 2017), 13-15. Paul Lubotina, “Corporate Supported Ethnic Conflict on the Mesabi Range, 1890-1930,” *Upper Country: A Journal of the Lake Superior Region* 3 (2015), 32.

⁵⁶ Neil Betten, “The Origins of Ethnic Radicalism in Northern Minnesota: 1900-1920,” *International Migration Review* 4 no. 2 (Spring 1970), 46. Anne G. Lewis, *Swedes in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2004), 46-48.

from Finland, Italy, and Slovenia, many of whom had previously worked in mines in Michigan's Northern Peninsula and took mid-level positions primarily.⁵⁷ Finns were the most numerous of these groups, with Finnish-Americans remaining the largest group of foreign-born residents in Duluth's St. Louis County according to the census of 1910. Below the Finns on the ethnic hierarchy were immigrants from Bulgaria, Sicily, Montenegro, and Serbia whose migration to the region peaked later.⁵⁸ Mine owners often hired workers at the bottom of the hierarchy to do the worst, most menial jobs at the mines such as stripping in open-pit mines, laying track, and working as dumpmen.⁵⁹ Often, these new immigrants were the only people desperate enough to take these dangerous, unskilled jobs. As one manager for the Great Northern Railroad remarked, "white men coming to Duluth will not work. Dagoes [are the] only men who will work... send more dagoes and shut off the white men."⁶⁰

As early as the 1889 public works strike in Duluth, nativist Americans singled out these new immigrants as being responsible for labor unrest. The *Duluth Herald* remarked that the "cool-headed Scandinavians" lost control of the situation and that violence was the product of "Bohemians and Italians – races that are about as undesirable as could be had in a strike or a town."⁶¹ On the nearby Iron Ranges, immigrants were also seen as the most troublesome workers when it came to striking. Finns were the largest ethnic group on the Iron Ranges, and Finnish socialist halls became centers of strikes, such as the 1904 strike in Eveleth and the 1905 strike in Chisholm.⁶² Soon after, a Finnish-language socialist newspaper: *Tyomies* (The Laborer), relocated to nearby Hancock in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, soon becoming the largest Finnish socialist newspaper in America. Other socialist newspapers catering to an English-language readership also opened up in the region around

⁵⁷ Lubotina, 33-34.

⁵⁸ Lubotina, 40-41.

⁵⁹ La Vigne, 2017, 21-22.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Hudelson and Ross, loc. 1405.

⁶¹ Hudelson and Ross, loc. 451-459.

⁶² Arnold R. Alanen, "Early Labor Strife on Minnesota's Mining Frontier, 1882-1906," *MH* 52 vol. 7 (1991), 257-260.

this time, such as the *Labor World* in Duluth and the *Two Harbors Socialist* in nearby Lake County, Minnesota. After the largest strike amongst miners up to that point, organized by the Western Federation of Miners in 1907, failed, many working-class immigrants joined the even further left International Workers of the World. The IWW, founded in 1905, were the principal organizers of several high-profile strikes in the region among dockers in Duluth (1913), among employees of US Steel (1916), and among loggers (1916-1917).⁶³

African Americans had been a part of the Minnesotan populace since the era of the fur trade. George Bonga, the son of an Ojibwe mother and Black father, born in 1802 near Duluth, was the first child born in Minnesota of a non-Indigenous parent.⁶⁴ When white settlers began to move to Minnesota in the 1850s, a slow but steady stream of free Blacks arrived as well, and although the Northwest Ordinance banned slavery in territorial Minnesota, slaveowners nevertheless brought their enslaved people there. Hotels at the scenic falls of St. Anthony advertised rooms for vacationing slaveowners to visit with their enslaved people, and steamships, the lifeblood of Minnesotan settler society before the arrival of railroads, were often staffed by enslaved people.⁶⁵ White Minnesotans had varying opinions about slavery at the time. Abolitionist Jane Swisshelm's *St. Cloud Visiter* (sic) often clashed with the pro-slavery *St. Cloud Democrat*, edited by Tennessee plantation-owner Sylvanus Lowry, eventually leading to a pro-slavery mob attacking Swisshelm's office and destroying her printing equipment in 1858.⁶⁶ Two years later, Eliza Winston, an enslaved person, escaped from the Winslow House hotel in St. Anthony.⁶⁷ She was captured soon after by a sheriff's posse who brought her before a judge. Winston's lawyer argued that she was free

⁶³ Chrislock, 1971, 116-118. Robert M. Eleff, "The 1916 Minnesota Miner's Strike Against U.S. Steel," *MH* 51 no. 2 (Summer 1988), 63-74. John E. Hayes, "The Revolt of the 'Timber Beasts': The IWW Lumber Strike in Minnesota," *MH* 42 no. 5 (Spring 1971), 164-165. Hudelson and Ross, loc. 885-908.

⁶⁴ June D. Holmquist, *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981), 73.

⁶⁵ Christopher P. Lehman, *Slavery in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1787-1865: A History of Human Bondage in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2011), 114, 122-123.

⁶⁶ Frank Klement, "The Abolition Movement in Minnesota," *MH* 32 no. 1 (1951), 17.

⁶⁷ William D. Green, "Eliza Winston and the Politics of Freedom in Minnesota, 1854-1860," *MH* 57 no. 3 (2000), 107-108. Klement, 18-19.

under Minnesota's constitution drafted in 1858, and the judge agreed. Although Winston's former owner did not attempt to regain ownership of her, several mobs of white Minnesotans formed, angry at the verdict. One mob attacked the home where Winston was staying, intent on tarring and feathering its owner and riding him on a rail.

Eventually, Eliza Winston would leave Minnesota for Canada, but other African Americans did stay in the state. From 1860 to 1920, the Black community in Minnesota would grow from several hundred, 0.15% of the state's population to nearly nine thousand, 0.37% of the population. African American Minnesotans in this period, though living far away from the Deep South, nevertheless had to contend with pervasive racism. White Minnesotan audiences could see "coon songs" performed by blackface minstrels and then purchase sheet music so they could play the music at home.⁶⁸ Books such as *In Ole Virginia, or Marse Chan and Others* or Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle Remus stories opined for a past where simple Blacks were content as enslaved people on the plantation.⁶⁹ Mass-market products with distinct branding became more and more ubiquitous in the decades following the Civil War and began to use these racist caricatures in advertisements.⁷⁰ The Aunt Jemima Pancake Company ran advertising campaigns from 1906 until after our period of study, offering free dolls of the "funny and cunning" Jemima herself as well as "funny old Uncle Mose," the "pickanninny Diana," and the "young rascal Wade."⁷¹ Consumers could buy Gold Dust powder, a cleaning agent with two caricatured Black children at work cleaning as its mascots with the slogan "Let the Gold Dust Twins do your work!"⁷² This white nostalgia

⁶⁸ "Golden Rule – Advertisement," *DG*, Mar. 31st, 1901, pg. 14., "Elks Minstrels to Make Big Hit," *BDP*, Nov. 27th, 1914, pg. 1. "Pamphlets Relating to Minstrel Shows Performed in Minnesota, 1887-," MNHS Archives, includes programs for minstrel shows performed in Minnesota as late as 1939.

⁶⁹ Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped From the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Bold Type Books, 2017), 266. Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Capitalism in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 51-54, 71-73.

⁷⁰ Hale, 89-91, 151-166.

⁷¹ "Aunt Jemima's Pancake Flour – Advertisement," *MJ*, Oct. 12th, 1906, pg. 9., "Send for these Aunt Jemima Dolls – Advertisement," *DH*, 1916, pg. 29., "Aunt Jemima Week – Advertisement," *DH*, Apr. 25th, 1921, pg. 9. See Figure 2.

⁷² "How Gold Dust Works for You – Advertisement," *DH*, Apr. 22nd, 1915, pg. 11. See Figure 3.

emerged concurrently with a view that enslaved people, emancipated from the direct oversight and control of their masters, degenerated into a life of sloth, vice, and criminality.⁷³

In Minnesota, throughout our period of study, the prevalence of anti-black racism manifested itself in an ambivalent attitude towards Black Minnesotans. Whites in the state voted for Black enfranchisement in 1868, the state legislature passed a bill banning funds to segregated schools in 1869, and the state legislature passed a bill preventing discrimination on the basis of race in civil and legal matters in 1885.⁷⁴ Yet, upward economic mobility was difficult for Blacks due to limited job opportunities, and the majority of Black Minnesotans worked in the service sector as railroad porters, barbers, and hotel staff during our period of study.⁷⁵ During the nadir of American race relations in Minnesota, there were a number of cases of Black Minnesotans being refused service in hotels and eating establishments in Wabasha, St. Paul, and on the Iron Ranges and a few near lynchings discussed in greater detail in Chapter I.⁷⁶ Into at least the 1930s, certain neighborhoods were considered off-limits to black homeowners in the Twin Cities.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, Black newspaper editors at the Twin Cities newspapers *The Appeal* and *The Twin City Star*, Black politicians, and activists continued to eke out a space for themselves within Minnesota. For example, John Francis Wheaton became Minnesota's first Black member of the State House of Representatives in 1898 and successfully introduced a bill to add saloons to Minnesota's anti-discrimination laws.⁷⁸ Activist Nellie G. Francis was involved in the attempts to suppress the pro-

⁷³ Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 32, 35-54.

⁷⁴ William D. Green, *Degrees of Freedom: The Origins of Civil Rights in Minnesota: 1865-1912* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 71-80.

⁷⁵ David V. Taylor, *African Americans in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002), 14-15, 58.

⁷⁶ Green, 2015, 134, 154, 224.

⁷⁷ Douglas R. Heidenreich, "A Citizen of Fine Spirit," *William Mitchell Magazine* 18 no. 2 (2000), 5. Jennifer A. Delton, *Making Minnesota Liberal: Civil Rights and the Transformation of the Democratic Party* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 62.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 247-248.

Confederate film *Birth of a Nation* in Minneapolis and later successfully lobbied the Minnesota Legislature to adopt anti-lynching legislation in 1921.⁷⁹

Forms of Vigilantism in Minnesota

This survey of vigilantism starts with lynching: an Americanism for a group of people killing someone for a perceived violation of a law or for violating social mores. The term came into use nationwide following a notorious lynching in Vicksburg in 1835.⁸⁰ Lynching initially could include any form of extralegal punishment, whether it ended in the death of the victim or not. An example of this was when in 1857, a man from Todd County, Minnesota, was “lynched” for allegedly stealing some money. Vigilantes beat him “until [his] life was nearly extinct” in order to extract a confession from him, and when that did not result in a confession, he was left to make his way to the nearest town forty miles away.⁸¹ By the end of the 1860s, only incidents ending in the victim's death were labeled lynchings by the Minnesotan press. The first case of someone losing their lives in a lynching in Minnesota dates to 1857, with the last lynchings being perpetrated in 1920 in Duluth, all of which will be discussed in Chapter I.

Another quintessentially American form of vigilante violence, tarring and feathering, outlasted its first widespread use as a means to terrorize loyalists during the American Revolution, continued to be practiced across America into the early 20th century. Tarring and feathering continued to be used as a means of political violence, such as in the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794 and during the Anti-Rent War in upstate New York from 1839 to the 1850s.⁸² Tarring and feathering were also used during this time to punish criminals,

⁷⁹ “Mrs. W.T. Francis...,” *Appeal*, Nov. 6th, 1915, pg. 3., “Anti-Lynching Bill Passed,” *Minneapolis Messenger*, May 28th, 1921, pg. 4.

⁸⁰ Pfeiffer, 2011, 17-19. Manfred Berg, 3, 29.

⁸¹ “Outrage in Todd County,” *St. Cloud Democrat*, Mar. 3rd, 1859, pg. 1. Other examples of non-fatal lynchings in this period include “Lynching,” *MP*, 26th Sept., 1850, pg. 2, “Private Lynching,” *Minnesota Weekly Times*, Apr. 10th, 1855, pg. 1, “Recovery of the Stolen Goods,” *WM*, May 15th, 1858, pg. 2.

⁸² Benjamin H. Irvin, “Tar, Feathers, and the Enemies of American Liberties, 1768-1776,” *New England Quarterly* 76 no. 2 (2003), 227, “At Macon, Georgia...,” (*Tarborough*) *North Carolina Free Press*, Jan 10th, 1832, pg. 4, “Scenes at Charleston,” *Daily National Intelligencer (Washington, D.C.)*, Sept. 21st, 1832, “There

particularly when their offenses were related to sexual impropriety. One example occurred when a man was stabbed to death by a prostitute outside a brothel in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1832.⁸³ A mob tarred and feathered the proprietor before demolishing “several houses of a similar character.”⁸⁴ In 1845, a man in Hanover, New Hampshire, was tarred and feathered by men from Dartmouth College after being accused of prostituting his wife and daughter.⁸⁵ Many other men were tarred and feathered for assaulting or being otherwise “cruel” towards their wives.⁸⁶ When white settlers came *en masse* to Minnesota for the first time in the 1850s, some brought this practice. The first case of tarring and feathering in Minnesota occurred in 1866, and the last act was committed in Minnesota less than two years before the lynchings in Duluth in 1918.⁸⁷ Tarring and feathering cases, along with other forms of non-lethal vigilantism, will be discussed in Chapter II.

The charivari was another form of non-lethal vigilantism which made an appearance in Minnesota. The charivari had its roots in Europe during the Middle Ages, and it arrived in North America by the early 19th century, brought over by white settlers. The charivari’s original purpose was to punish those who defied sexual mores, such as breaking the taboo on older widows marrying younger men or marrying interracially.⁸⁸ Neighbors perpetrated the

was a collection...,” *Middlebury (Vt.) Free Press*, Nov. 18th, pg. 2, 1832, “More Lynching,” *New York Spectator*, June 27th, 1836, “A Dreadful Outrage,” (*Philadelphia*) *Pennsylvania Inquirer and Daily Courier*, Aug. 29th, 1839, “Tar and Feathering,” *Baltimore Sun*, Mar. 7th, 1840, “Domestic,” (*Bellow’s Falls*) *Vermont Chronicle*, Jan 6th, 1841, “More Difficulties in the Van Rensselaer Manor,” *New York Tribune*, 27 Jul., pg. 2, 1844, “More Tar and Feathers,” *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, Sept. 21st, 1844, pg. 2, “Revival of the Land-Lord War,” *Council Grove (Kansas) Republican*, Mar. 15th, 1845, “Hudson, March 31,” *Liberator (Boston)*, Apr. 9th, 1847, “Anti-Rent Outrages,” *Daily National Intelligencer (Washington, D.C.)*, Aug. 22nd, 1851, “Printing Office Destroyed by Mob,” *Minnesota Weekly Times (St. Paul)*, May 1st, 1855, pg. 2.

⁸³ “St. Louis, May 19,” *Boston Courier*, June 7th, 1832.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ “Judge Lynch in New England,” *New York Herald*, Apr 28th, 1845.

⁸⁶ “A Rail Road!” *Vermont Republican and American Journal*, Apr 10th, 1830, pg. 4, “By the Mails,” (*Vergennes*) *Vermont Aurora*, Jan 14th, 1830, pg. 2, “Lynching in New Jersey,” *Liberator (Boston)*, Feb. 19th, 1841, “Lynch Law,” *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, Apr. 11th, 1850, pg. 2.

⁸⁷ “Disgraceful Proceeding,” *SDP*, Apr. 22nd, 1866, pg. 4., “More Mob Violence,” *Lincoln (Nebraska) Herald*, Aug. 30th, 1918, pg. 2.

⁸⁸ Bryan D. Palmer, “Discordant Music: Charivaris and Whitecapping in Nineteenth-Century North America,” *Labour* 3 (1978), 9, 20, 29-30. Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 447. William F. Holmes, “Charivari: Race, Honor, and Post Office Politics in Sharon, Georgia, 1890,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 80 no. 4 (1996), 759-760.

charivariby visiting the house of a newly married couple after dark and proceeding to make “rough music:” a loud continuous cacophony comprising yelling, shooting guns, and banging together pots and pans and metal tools.⁸⁹ In Minnesota’s early years of statehood, the charivari was used for punishment purposes a few times, but there were far more cases of charivaris being perpetrated by young men and boys for the sole purpose of making mischief at the expense of the married couple and extracting payment in the form of money, cigars, or beer. To further complicate matters, a more refined sort of charivari also began to be practiced towards the end of the 19th century, one that retained the rough music but was more of a friendly party: a way of welcoming a young couple into the rural community.⁹⁰

One more form of non-lethal vigilantism in Minnesota was “whitecapping.” The phenomenon had its origins in southwestern Indiana in the 1850s and attracted nationwide newspaper coverage by the mid-1880s. By the end of the 1880s, it had spread to other states, including Minnesota.⁹¹ An 1889 dictionary of Americanisms mentions white-caps as men “who take it upon themselves to administer justice to offenders independent of the law. They go out at night disguised, and seizing their victim, gag him and bind him to a tree while they administer a terrible whipping.”⁹² Descriptions of white-cap regalia are varied, but generally, they wore white pointed hats, similar to dunce caps or white pointed hoods which obscured their identity, similar to the hoods worn by the 1915 revival of the Ku Klux Klan.⁹³ The first incident of whitecapping in Minnesota recorded in the press took place in 1889, and the last took place in 1902.

Chapter III will discuss another American form of vigilantism: the Ku Klux Klan. While the form of violence used by the Klan tapped into older traditions of regulating

⁸⁹ Palmer, 9.

⁹⁰ Loretta T. Johnson, “Charivari/Shivaree: A European Folk Ritual on the American Plains,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 20, no. 3 (Winter 1990), 372.

⁹¹ Palmer, 39-44. “The Hickory Switches,” *CT*, Jan 29th, 1887, pg. 1. “White Caps,” *MT*, Apr. 29th, 1888, pg. 9.

⁹² Quoted in Palmer, 39.

⁹³ See Figure 5.

and slave patrols, its costume was something new, something historian Elaine Parsons says was “influenced by “sensationalist fiction, the minstrel stage... Sir Walter Scott, Mardi Gras, and bureaucratise:” things that would get attention in the media.⁹⁴ One would have to believe the Klan’s propaganda in believing that free people were indeed simple-minded enough to be scared by the costumes of the Klan rather than merely at the real danger of being assaulted, tarred and feathered, whipped or lynched with impunity.⁹⁵ At first, many white Minnesotans saw the Klan as being the remnants of the traitorous Confederacy, but by the early 20th century, many began to see them as upstanding citizens upholding the rule of law and the American Constitution. The works of novelist Thomas Dixon, Jr., and their eventual cinematic portrayal in *The Birth of a Nation* were critical in this process. *The Birth of a Nation* was the film event of the decade: its distributor rented screens across all of rural Minnesota for it, charged higher than average admission and accompanied every show with a live orchestra. *The Birth of a Nation* directly inspired a revival of the organization founded by William J. Simmons of Georgia in 1915, which established chapters in Minnesota in 1921.⁹⁶

As discussed in Chapter IV, a final wave of vigilantism overtook Minnesota during the American involvement in World War I, from April 1917 to the armistice in November 1918. Although a new form of vigilantism emerged during this time (vandalizing property with yellow paint), most of the methods used by vigilantes were similar to those practiced before the war, such as tarring and feathering. What sets this period of vigilantism apart from earlier vigilantism in the state is what the vigilantism was purportedly punishing: not supporting the war. Those targeted were people deemed to be “pro-German,” whether because they belonged to a political group that was seen as being not supportive of the war (the Nonpartisan League, the IWW, or the Socialist Party), because they did not participate in

⁹⁴ Elaine Frantz Parsons, *Ku-Klux: The Birth of the Klan During Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 76.

⁹⁵ Parsons, 103-104.

⁹⁶ Elizabeth Dorsey Hatle, and Nancy M. Vaillancourt, "One Flag, One School, One Language: Minnesota's Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s," *MH* 61, no. 8 (2009), 362.

the war effort (by signing up for the draft, buying war bonds, and donating to the Red Cross) or both. This vigilantism during World War I was the last appearance of vigilantism in Minnesota before the lynchings of 1920.

Chapter I: Lynching

The first lynching in Minnesota occurred in 1857 after three Ojibwe men: Charles Gigabish, James Shambo, and Jo Shambo, were arrested near Gull Lake, Cass County, for allegedly murdering a white merchant.¹ Sheriff Jonathan Pugh from Little Falls, along with deputy James Selkrig shackled the accused men, loaded them in a wagon, and set off for the jail at Fort Snelling so they would be safe from being lynched. That evening, however, when the party of five was in Morrison County, a lynch mob stopped the prisoner wagon and took them to the nearby town of Swan River. Pugh and Selkrig were held prisoner in a tavern while the three Ojibwe men were hanged and buried in unmarked graves. No perpetrators of the lynching faced any prosecution. That same year, a Dakota man was lynched in Wabasha County.² Allegedly, the Dakota man (whose name remains unknown) requested passage on a boat owned by a group of white lumberjacks across the Mississippi River from Wisconsin to Reed's Landing, Minnesota; loggers refused to let him on the boat. In retaliation, he allegedly shot dead one of the white men in the boat as it rowed away. The Dakota man was soon captured by a mob and taken to Minnesota, where he was pronounced guilty by a "lynch court and jury" and then hanged.

This lynching near Wabasha occurred only a few days after the so-called "Spirit Lake Massacre" of over forty white settlers at Spirit Lake, Iowa, and the surrounding Iowan and Minnesotan countryside by the Wahpekute Dakota. The massacre's origins can be traced back to 1854, when white trader Henry Lott convinced Chief Sintomniduta of the Wahpekutes to go elk hunting with him to murder and steal from him.³ During the outing, Lott shot Sintomniduta in the back and then murdered his wife, mother, and children before

¹This narrative of the lynchings is outlined in Robert D. Pomeroy, "Morrison County's Only Lynching," Unpublished Manuscript, Minnesota Historical Society Archives, 1962.

² "Another Murder – Lynch Law and Hanging in the Vicinity of Wabashaw," *WM*, Mar. 14th, pg. 3., "Still Another!", *Minnesota Weekly Times (St. Paul)*, Mar. 21st, 1857., pg. 1.

³ Wingerd, 260-265. Jerry Keenan, *The Terrible Indian Wars of the West: A History from the Whitman Massacre to Wounded Knee, 1846-1890* (Jefferson: Macfarland & Company, 2015), 249-251.

stealing their furs.⁴ Inkpaduta, Sintomniduta's brother, went to Fort Ridgely to seek justice to no avail. Three years later, during a particularly harsh winter, Inkpaduta and his family were starving and received no help or sympathy from nearby white settlers. After some Wahpekutes killed and ate a white settler's dog, a posse formed and forced the Wahpekutes to hand over their guns. Deprived of their only means of hunting, the Wahpekutes turned on the white settlers of the area, stealing back their guns and then committing a series of raids on settler homesteads. After killing forty settlers in Spirit Lake, Iowa, they moved north, attacking a trading post near Springfield, Minnesota, killing two men. Troops were dispatched from Fort Ridgely to apprehend Inkpaduta and his followers, but they had already fled the state.

Meanwhile, life on the Dakota Reservation on the Minnesota River was increasingly difficult for the Dakota that relocated there. Dishonest white traders siphoned much of the Dakotas' annuity money, claiming that the Dakota owed them money.⁵ The exceptionally harsh winter of 1861-1862 created food shortages on the reservation, and by the end of July 1862, annuity money had not been distributed. Authorities refused to give out any food at the Upper Agency warehouse to alleviate their suffering. In what would later become an infamous exchange, a white trader living nearby refused to sell food to the Dakota on credit, arguing that they should eat grass or feces instead.⁶ That summer, a group of Dakota, perhaps numbering less than 1,000 out of a total population of around 7,000, decided to take violent action. Led by Little Crow, they began raiding nearby white settlements such as New Ulm and Mankato, taking supplies and hostages, and killing between 400 and 1,000 white settlers.⁷ The war, however, would be over by the end of September, when Little Crow's soldiers were overwhelmed by Gen. Henry Sibley's army, which outnumbered the Dakota warriors by a

⁴ This narrative of the Spirit Lake Massacre is outlined in Keenan, 249-251.

⁵ Scott W. Berg, *38 Nooses: Lincoln, Little Crow and the Beginning of the Frontier's End* (New York: Vintage Books, 2013), 24.

⁶ Wingerd, 302.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 307.

margin of more than two to one in the Battle of Wood Lake.⁸ Most of the remaining Dakota decided to surrender and hand over what hostages they still possessed.

Upon their surrender, hundreds of Dakota men were tried on the spot, without translators present. Some of these trials took no more than five minutes. Ultimately, 303 Dakota warriors were sentenced to death and marched as a group to Mankato, where they were to be executed. All others were marched to an internment camp at Fort Snelling, where they would remain until the following year. Acts of vigilante violence were common along the marching route of the Dakota to Fort Snelling. A woman in Henderson grabbed a baby from the arms of a Dakota woman and threw the child on the ground.⁹ When the condemned men were being transported to Mankato, they passed through New Ulm, where a mob of angry white settlers armed with various improvised weapons confronted them. The soldiers managed to keep the mob back, though the settlers injured at least ten of the condemned, two of them mortally.¹⁰ In St. Cloud, Jane Grey Swisshelm, editor of the *St. Cloud Visiter*, was calling for a ten dollar bounty to be placed on the head of every Dakota scalp and for bands of whites to go out hunting them, remarking that “it will cost five times that much to exterminate them by the regular modes of warfare and they should be got rid of in the cheapest and quickest way possible.”¹¹

Chapters of a secret society known as the “Knights of the Forest” soon established themselves across southern Minnesota.¹² The Knights’ goal was to use every means at their disposal to get the government to remove all Indigenous people from the state, and in the meantime, a group of them patrolled outside the Ho-Chunk Reservation to make sure its inhabitants did not leave.¹³ After the condemned Dakota men were brought to Mankato, word

⁸ Keenan, 266.

⁹ Scott W. Berg, 196-199.

¹⁰ Wingerd, 321.

¹¹ Hoffert, 344, 356-359.

¹² Wingerd, 77.

¹³ Wingerd, 77.

arrived that there were perhaps a thousand armed whites, possibly some having been organized into a militia under the self-appointed “Colonel” Brandt, was converging on the town, perhaps to break into the jail to murder the prisoners.¹⁴ Officers ordered that soldiers who did not guard the condemned with their lives would be shot. After having the cases reviewed by some clerks in Washington, President Lincoln authorized the execution of thirty-nine prisoners whom he believed participated in “massacres” of white settlers and pardoned those he thought only participated in battles.¹⁵ On December 26th 1862, thirty-eight of the Dakota sentenced to death were hanged, surrounded by a crowd of white settlers and a sizable detachment of soldiers keeping them away from the gallows.¹⁶ That following year, the remaining Dakota at Fort Snelling were forcibly moved to South Dakota and would soon be joined by the non-executed men being held at Mankato. Fears still were high among the settler population was still high, and after a family was presumed to have been murdered by a band of Dakota in the summer of 1863, the Minnesota government began offering money for any white person in Minnesota who killed a Dakota and brought in the scalp. However, by then, most had been either fled Minnesota or forced to relocate, resulting in only three scalps ever being turned in.¹⁷

Like the three Dakota scalped in Minnesota, the 1865 lynching of a Metis man named John Campbell in Mankato was posited as retribution for an “Indian Massacre” by many of that town’s white citizenry.¹⁸ Campbell stood accused of being a part of a group of Dakota men from the Traverse Lake Reservation in South Dakota who had come to Minnesota to steal horses. This group was blamed for robbing and murdering four Jewett families and their farmhand near Garden City, Blue Earth County. After Campbell was caught, allegedly with

¹⁴ Scott W. Berg, 213-214.

¹⁵ Ibid., 220.

¹⁶ Keenan, 268.

¹⁷ Wingerd, 229-230.

¹⁸ “Another Indian Raid!,” *Mankato Union*, May 5th, 1865, pg. 2., “Another Indian Outbreak,” *SDP*, May 5th, 1865. pg. 1., Walter N. Trenerry, *Murder in Minnesota: A Collection of True Cases* (St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1962), 70-74.

some of the Jewetts' possessions, he was taken to the county jail in Mankato. Soon, a lynch mob formed, which seized Campbell and decided to put him on trial on the spot. This "people's court" decided that he should hang, and he was hanged. A letter to the *Saint Paul Press* from Mankato explained the lack of due process by stating, "our citizens were fearful that if the matter was delayed, Gen. Sibley would get hold of the red-skin, and he would then get clear, and escape the punishment he so richly deserved. The hitherto lenient policy Gen. Sibley, in disposing of Indian prisoners, and in protecting the frontier, has led our people to distrust his anxiety and desire to protect us and punish Indians."¹⁹

In 1866, two white trappers were lynched in nearby New Ulm: Charles Campbell and George Liscom. They were allegedly drunkenly imitating Dakota warriors scalping white settlers in a New Ulm tavern.²⁰ John Spenner, another patron of the bar, got into a physical altercation with the pair. During the fight, Campbell fatally stabbed Spenner, resulting in the local sheriff quickly arresting both Campbell and Liscom. There was a belief among some New Ulmites that the two men tanned and dressed in what looked like Dakota garb must be of Dakota heritage. Some thought that Charles Campbell was related to John Campbell, the Metis man lynched in Mankato the year before. A mob formed, broke the two out of prison, assaulted them brutally, and then hanged them. A dozen New Ulmites were later charged with murder for the double lynching, but all but one posted bail and fled the state before they could be tried. The remaining defendant, John Gut, argued that since he believed the pair to be "half-breeds" of the Dakota nation, he was entitled to lynch them, scalp them, and claim a bounty.²¹ The judge overruled this defense after the Attorney General argued that Campbell and Liscomb had been illegally seized from government custody, making the bounty

¹⁹ "Another Indian Outbreak," *SDP*, May 5th, 1865. pg. 1.

²⁰ Bessler, 10-11. Trenerry, 74-85. "The New Ulm Tragedy," *Mankato Union*, Jan. 4th, 1867, pg. 2., "The New Ulm Murders," *Winona Daily Republican*, Feb. 7th, 1867, pg. 2.

²¹ "The New Ulm Murder Cases," *MT*, Feb 4th, 1868, pg. 2.

invalid.²² Thus, Gut became the only person to be convicted for participating in a lynching in Minnesota until 1921. Initially sentenced to death, his sentence was later reduced to life imprisonment in 1870, which was reduced again to ten years in 1873.²³

The last lynching of an Indigenous man in Minnesota occurred in 1872 in Brainerd. Two Ojibwe men, Gegoonce and Tebekokechickwabe, who lived on the nearby Milles Lac Reservation, stood accused of raping, murdering, and dismembering the remains of a white settler.²⁴ In mid-July, both men were arrested and brought to the county jail in Brainerd. While in jail, a white mob formed and seized them, and in broad daylight, hanged them, then shot them repeatedly.²⁵ For those unable to see the spectacle first-hand, a photographer took a picture of Gegoonce and Tebekokechickwabe as they hanged.²⁶ Copies of the photograph were circulated for sale in St. Cloud and Minneapolis.²⁷ In the aftermath of the lynching, the editor of the *St. Cloud Journal* remarked, “if lynching is every justifiable, it doubtless was in this case” and argued that such a lynching was inevitable due to an 1868 law that made the mandatory sentence for first-degree murder to be life imprisonment if the accused confessed.²⁸

The remaining lynching victims in Minnesota up to the Duluth lynchings in 1920 were white men. The first of these lynchings occurred in 1858, when the murder of white farmer Henry Wallace near Monticello, Minnesota, sparked what came to be known as the “Wright County War.”²⁹ Oscar Jackson stood accused of the murder after being found in possession of banknotes owned by Wallace. A jury acquitted Jackson of the murder, but when he returned to Wright County in April 1859, a mob formed outside his house and

²² “The New Ulm Murder Cases,” *MT*, Feb 4th, 1868, pg. 2.

²³ “Commuted,” *MT*, Mar 1st, 1870, pg. 4. Wayne E. Webb and J.I. Swedberg, *Redwood: The Story of a County* (North Central Publishing Company: St. Paul, 1964), 473.

²⁴ Bessler, 12-14. Trenerry, 117-146.

²⁵ “The Indians in Northern Minnesota and Red River,” *Wisconsin State Journal (Madison)*, July 29th, 1872, pg. 1.

²⁶ “Brief Mention,” *MT*, Aug. 4th, 1872, pg. 1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ “The Brainerd Lynching,” *St. Cloud Journal*, Aug 1st, 1872, pg. 2., Bessler, 95-97.

²⁹ Bessler, 6-7. Trenerry, 30-44.

remained there for days, keeping fires burning at night to make sure he would not escape. Wright County Sheriff Bertram soon arrived, took Jackson into custody, and set off to the county jail in Monticello with his prisoner.³⁰ Up the road, a mob seized Jackson from Bertram and hanged him. Gov. Sibley quickly condemned the lynching and offered a 500-dollar reward for those responsible. One of these men, Aymer Moore, was ultimately arrested by local law enforcement for participating in the lynching, but an armed and disguised mob freed him. In response, Gov. Sibley sent three companies of militia to Monticello to re-establish the rule of law, and there, they arrested eleven men.³¹ Ultimately, however, a grand jury refused to indict any of the men involved in the lynching, and they were released.

In Le Sueur County the following year, Charles Rhinehart, known for being a “gambler by profession” and a saloonkeeper, was arrested for allegedly murdering a man with whom he was conducting a real estate transaction.³² Instead of sending the accused to the Ramsay County Jail or Stillwater State Penitentiary, as was customary, the citizens of Le Sueur County decided to build a jail so that legal proceedings could be carried out locally.³³ Rhinehart, however, was able to escape from this new wooden jail twice. After a posse captured Rhinehart a second time, he was seized from jail by a mob of around 60 men and hanged.³⁴ Another lynching soon followed Rhinehart’s lynching in January 1859 in Hastings, Dakota County. A man there was caught in the act of stealing beef from a store owned by Vandyke and Thurber.³⁵ According to the *Hastings Ledger*, a mob formed, and as the alleged thief had “been an old offender,” the mob hanged him “to punish him for his depredations and prevent in future the loss of property to the citizens.”³⁶ The same paper also called the

³⁰ Bessler, 6-7. Trenergy, 30-44.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Trenergy, 17-29.

³³ Carroll, 118-119. Trenergy, 22-24.

³⁴ Trenergy, 25-27.

³⁵ Reprinted in “Lynching in Minnesota,” *St. Cloud Democrat*, Mar. 3rd, 1859, pg. 1., “Another Horrible Lynching Affair,” *CT*, Feb. 8th, 1859, pg. 2.

³⁶ Ibid.

lynchers “wretches who were instrumental in... disgracing the name of our state” and demanded they be brought to justice.³⁷ There is no record, however, of anyone being charged over the murder.

In 1876, in Plainview, 25-year-old Frank Hathaway murdered Nellie Slayton, aged 18, with a revolver after she “refused to marry him.”³⁸ He then turned the gun on himself, but he failed to take his own life. A few days later, as Hathaway lay recuperating, a group of around fifty masked men arrived at his boarding house, dragged him from his bed, and hanged him from a tree outside.³⁹ The lynching allegedly took only five minutes, and the mob vanished as quickly as it formed. The *Lake City Leader* condemned the lynching as an inexcusable “act of barbarism” and compared the lynchers to the contemptible Ku Klux Klan of the former Confederacy.⁴⁰ The editor of the *Grange Advance* of Red Wing, however, applauded their actions, arguing that it was “almost impossible to convict a murderer...” as the accused could feign insanity and that even if there was a conviction, it was “most frequently followed by wholly inadequate punishment,” perhaps referencing the 1868 law restricting the use of capital punishment.⁴¹ Ultimately, the editor concluded that “even lynching has its excuse when it is the only means left for securing just and adequate punishment for crime.”⁴²

Another lynching occurred in November 1879 in Long Prairie, Todd County. The victim was John Meide, a recent immigrant from Germany.⁴³ His brother, Michael Meide, narrowly escaped lynching himself.⁴⁴ Both brothers stood accused of murdering two men

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ “Shocking Tragedy at Plainview,” *Record and Union (Rochester)*, Jan. 28th, 1876, pg. 3.

³⁹ “Home Tragedy,” *MT*, Jan 27th, 1876, pg. 2.

⁴⁰ Reprinted in “The Southern Ku Klux Outdone by Minnesotians,” *Record and Union (Rochester)*, Feb. 4th, 1876, pg. 7.

⁴¹ “The Plainview Tragedy,” *Grange Advance (Red Wing)*, Feb. 2nd, 1876, pg. 1.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ “Mob Law in Minnesota,” *MT*, Nov. 10th, 1879, pg. 1., “The Double Lynching,” *MT*, Nov. 11th, 1879, pg. 2.

⁴⁴ Michael Meide was into custody by the local sheriff and brought to the Stearns County Jail. He was convicted in 1880 for the homicides of Kalway and Steinhuber largely due to John Meide’s confession prior to his death. Sentenced to life imprisonment without parole, Michael Meide died in February, 1925, in Stillwater State

named Kalway and Steinheuber. Allegedly Kalway's 17-year-old wife, who had come to Todd County in February of that year, had split with her husband and went to live with the Meide brothers as a housekeeper.⁴⁵ While she was living with the Meide family, someone burned down the Meides' house and stables. Rumors spread that the fire was started by "local women of the neighborhood, hoping to terminate the scandalous performances in their midst," alluding to Mrs. Kalway having an extramarital affair with one of the Meides, but John Meide blamed Kalway for starting the fire.⁴⁶ After Kalway went missing, John was quickly arrested as he had a motive for the crime. Soon a lynch mob formed outside the jail, and John confessed to the sheriff that he helped his brother murder the two men and buried them nearby.⁴⁷ Soon, the bodies of Kalway and Steinhuber were dug up where John said they would be. The mob broke into the jail, seized John, and hanged him. In response to the lynching, the *Brainerd Tribune* remarked that if Meide was indeed guilty, "he should suffer the penalty of death – a penalty the law was powerless to inflict."⁴⁸ He met this penalty "not at the hands of the law, it is true, but at the hands of the people whose duty it is to make the law and enforce it... Correct the law and there will be no excuse for lynching, and less of it will be done."⁴⁹

Two separate lynchings followed in 1882, with the first occurring in Perham, Otter Tail County when a mob lynched 16-year-old John Trivett.⁵⁰ Trivett allegedly murdered two land surveyors and then tried to sell some of their items before quickly leaving town. When a search party for the two missing men found Trivett's old boots near their bodies, a warrant

Prison. "Minnesota Scatterings," *MT*, Nov. 12th, 1879, pg. 3., "A Murder Trial," *Janesville (Wisconsin) Daily Gazette*, Mar 24th, 1880, pg. 1., "Life Sentence," *CT*, Mar 27th, 1880, pg. 6., "Todd Pioneers Unmoved as Convict-Slayer is Buried," *MS*, Feb. 12th, 1925, pg. 15.

⁴⁵ "Todd County Tragedy," *DG*, Nov. 21st, 1879, pg. 2.

⁴⁶ "Double Murder and Lynch Law in Todd County," *New Ulm Review*, Nov. 19th, 1879, pg. 2., "The Double Lynching," *MT*, Nov. 11th, 1879, pg. 2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Reprinted in "Lynch Law," *MT*, Nov. 19th, 1879, pg. 2.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Victim of Vile Literature," *Stillwater Messenger*, June 10th, 1882, pg. 2. "Perham," *Northern Pacific Farmer (Wadena)*, June 8th, 1882, pg. 1., and "The Record of 1882," *MCT*, Jan. 3rd, 1883, pg. 5.

was put out for his arrest.⁵¹ Trivett was soon arrested in Bismark and brought back to Perham to face a trial.⁵² The *Stillwater Messenger* called the boy “a victim of vile literature,” and the *Minneapolis Tribune* identified Trivett as “an inveterate reader of dime novels and vile weekly prints emanating from the vice propagating presses of New York.”⁵³ The moral panic that lowbrow “dime novel” literature featuring smut, violence, and the glorification of criminality had been corrupting the nation’s youth had been in the public consciousness since the 1870’s thanks in large part to Anthony Comstock’s New York Society for the Suppression of Vice.⁵⁴ To shocked Minnesotans, Trivett had been inspired by stories of famous outlaws, most notably Jesse James (who had committed his famous robbery of Northfield, Minnesota’s First National Bank, only six years earlier) to commit cold-blooded murder and then flee to Montana “to join the cowboys.”⁵⁵ Soon after Trivett was brought back to Perham, a mob of 20-25 masked men broke into the county jail and lynched Trivett nearby in full view of a crowd whom they kept back at gunpoint.⁵⁶

Also, in 1882, a Minneapolis mob lynched Frank McManus, an Irish-American from Boston who was among an “army of tramps” who moved to the city that spring to work in the Mill District.⁵⁷ McManus was accused that fall of raping a four-year-old girl.⁵⁸ When a police officer came to question him, he fled, but he was later arrested and found with blood on his clothes.⁵⁹ Later that night, a mob formed outside the jail, broke in and seized McManus. They brought him to the victim's home, and the victim’s mother identified him as the assailant.

⁵¹ “Perham,” *Nothern Pacific Farmer (Wadena)*, June 8th, 1882, pg. 1.

⁵² “A Hoodlum’s Crime,” *MT*, June 6th, pg. 2., “Deeds of the Diabolical,” *Marshall Messenger*, June 8th, 1882, pg. 2., “Perham,” *Northern Pacific Farmer (Wadena)*, June 8th, 1882, pg. 1.

⁵³ “Lynched!,” *MT*, June 10th, 1882, pg. 2. “Victim of Vile Literature,” *Stillwater Messenger*, June 10th, 1882, pg. 2.

⁵⁴ James A. Morone, *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 228-232.

⁵⁵ “Victim of Vile Literature,” *Stillwater Messenger*, June 10th, 1882, pg. 2.

⁵⁶ “Tribbetts Lynched,” *Winona Daily Republican*, June 9th, 1882, pg. 2. “Lynched!,” *MT*, June 10th, 1882, pg. 2.

⁵⁷ *The Minneapolis Tragedy: Full Account of the Crime of the Fiend Frank McManus, and the Swift Retribution of an Outraged Community*, Minneapolis: Haywood and Kruckeberg, 1882, 12-13.

⁵⁸ “A Shocking Outrage” *MT*, Apr. 28th, 1882, pg. 7.

⁵⁹ *The Minneapolis Tragedy*, 3-5.

This evidence satisfied the mob, who hanged him in front of a crowd of around a thousand. Bystanders quickly made souvenirs of the hanging by cutting up “surplus rope,” stripping bark off the tree where McManus was hanged and tearing his hat into pieces.⁶⁰ A pamphlet containing facts about the lynching gleaned from newspapers was printed by a Minneapolis publisher put on sale less than two weeks later to capitalize on public interest.⁶¹ Although the pamphlet contained no illustrations, it remarked that “an enterprising photographer was on hand, taking front and rear views of the dead man.” According to the *St. Paul Daily Globe*, the photographersold “a large number” of his lynching photographs.⁶²

Two more lynchings occurred in June 1886, one in Becker County and the other in Polk County. In Detroit, Becker County, town marshal John Convey attempted to stop a fight between two rival pimps and saloonkeepers who were both brandishing revolvers.⁶³ One of the saloonkeepers, William “Big Red” Kelleher, shot Convey, killing him instantly. Kelleher fled but was soon apprehended and put in the county jail. Later that evening, a mob overpowered the sheriff and seized Kelleher from his cell. They dragged him by the neck to a nearby tree, where they hanged him and shot him a dozen times with revolvers.⁶⁴ In Polk County that same month, farmhand Ole Becknolt had been accused of having an affair with the wife of the farmer for whom he had worked. The farmer had attempted to get Becknolt to leave the area, but he refused.⁶⁵ The farmer gathered some accomplices and decided to lynch Becknolt and hanged him from the limb of a tree. Allegedly, the group had not intended to kill the Becknolt but rather torture him into leaving the township. Nevertheless, when they

⁶⁰ *The Minneapolis Tragedy*, 8-9. Farr, H. R., photographer. The lynching of Frank McManus in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Minneapolis Minnesota, 1882. [Minneapolis: Published by H.R. Farr, 428 and 430 Nicollet Ave] Photograph. See Figure 1.

⁶¹ “Minneapolis Globelets,” *DG*, May 9th, 1882.

⁶² “Minneapolis Globelets,” *DG*, May 2nd, 1882., “Minneapolis Globelets,” *DG*, May 7th, pg. 3.

⁶³ “Quick Work,” *MT*, June 24th, 1886, pg. 1, “A Minnesota Lynching,” *New Ulm Review*, June 30th, pg. 2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*.

⁶⁵ “Minnesota State News,” *Little Falls Transcript*, June 25th, 1886, pg. 2., “Didn’t Want to Kill Him,” *Morris Tribune*, June 16th, 1886 pg. 4.

took Becknolt down, he was already dead. There is no record of any of the men involved being charged for the murder.

In 1893, John Domeau, a French-Canadian immigrant who “had no friends” and about whom “little was known,” was accused of raping two young girls in Mountain Iron in St. Louis County.⁶⁶ A posse soon formed to hunt down the suspect, and he was found nearby on the Mesabi Range.⁶⁷ He allegedly confessed to the crime and was identified by one of the victims as her assailant and was promptly hanged by the mob. The *Minneapolis Tribune* commented on the orderliness of the affair, noting “it was probably the quietest affair of the kind that ever took place.”⁶⁸ The *St. Paul Daily Globe* added that “there was no attempt at concealment on the part of those taking part in the lynching, and there will be no attempt made to arrest them.”⁶⁹

The last lynchings before World War I occurred in 1896 near Glencoe, McLeod County.⁷⁰ The victims of the lynching, H.A. Cinqman and Dorman Musgrove, had been convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to prison time after killing a sheriff when he tried to arrest the pair. After the jury came to the verdict, a mob of around 25-30 masked men broke into the jail where the two convicts were being held, seized them, and hanged them nearby.⁷¹ The *Daily Globe* noted that the lynching was an “outrage against law and order” and “universally condemned at the [state] capitol.” An inquest was soon underway but met investigators encountered a conspiracy of silence from Glencoe citizens and police. No one was ever charged for perpetrating the lynching.

Although prior to Duluth lynchings of 1920, there were no lynchings of African Americans in Minnesota, there were several near lynchings. In 1895, Houston Osborne, a

⁶⁶ “Lynched,” *MT*, May 7th, pg. 3. Other sources list his name as Frank Belange or Pete Bolanger: “He Was Lynched,” *DH*, May 6th, pg. 1., “Crime of Belange,” *DNT*, May 8th, 1893.

⁶⁷ “A Brute’s Quietus,” *DG*, May 7th, 1893, pg. 1, “Lynched,” *MT*, May 7th, 1893, pg. 3.

⁶⁸ “Lynched,” *MT*, May 7th, 1893, pg. 3.

⁶⁹ “A Brute’s Quietus,” *DG*, May 7th, 1893, pg. 1.

⁷⁰ “Dangling From a Bridge,” *DG*, Sept. 7th, 1896, pg. 1,3.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

“tramp” as the *Pioneer Press* called him, broke into a house in St. Paul but was immediately discovered by one of the house’s women residents who began screaming. Osborne took off immediately, and a few nearby men, seeing him leap out an open window and run away, pursued him. When bystanders caught him, they strung him up immediately from a nearby tree.⁷² Osborne only escaped death when a group of women nearby persuaded the mob to cut him down before he strangled to death, and he was taken to jail.⁷³ In July 1903, an African American man named Joseph Scott was arrested for violently stabbing and assaulting a White woman by the name of Helen Olson during a robbery at her home in Montevideo, Chippewa County.⁷⁴ Soon there was talk of lynching among whites in the city. Law enforcement decided to move Scott out of the county, and a mob formed when they were escorting their prisoner to the train station, a white man in the crowd rushed up to Scott and pointed a revolver at the prisoner’s head, but violence was averted when the police managed to talk the would-be assassin down from pulling the trigger. Afterward, the remaining six African American residents fled from the county under threat of lynching. In the autumn of 1917, James Boozer, an African American projectionist living in St. Cloud, was observed walking alone with a 25-year old German woman by the name Katherine Tierk.⁷⁵ Soon rumors spread that Boozer had sexually assaulted Tierk. Boozer was fired from his job, and some whites threatened to lynch him. In order to prevent a lynching, the chief of the St. Cloud Police ordered Boozer to leave the city. Like the victims of the other two attempted lynchings of Blacks in Minnesota, Boozer's escape was a matter of luck and shows how sentiments among the white population, such as a fear of miscegenation, were in Minnesota long before the lynchings of 1920.

⁷² Green, 2015, 253-254. Paul D. Nelson, “‘Hang Him! That’s the Best Way:’ A Lynching in St. Paul,” *Ramsay County History*, 27, no. 2 (Summer 2002), 11-12.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Christopher P. Lehman, “‘The Contemplation of Our Righteousness:’ Vigilante Acts Against African Americans in Southwest Minnesota, 1903,” *MH*, 64, no. 7 (2015), 268-76.

⁷⁵ Christopher P. Lehman, “Black Cloud: The Struggles of St. Cloud’s African American Community, 1880-1920,” *MH* 66, no. 6 (2019), 234-243.

Chapter II: Non-Lethal Vigilantism

The Charivari

The charivari arrived in North America by the first decade of the 19th century.¹ The charivari was meant to condemn couples that defied sexual mores in its earliest form, such as a marriage between a younger man and a much older woman.² Those who participated were most frequently young men, and boys often also pulled pranks at the victim's expense or committed acts of petty vandalism. The mob would continue “serenading” their victim with loud noises until the groom bribed them with money, liquor, or cigars.³ Although most targets of Canadian and American charivaris were people who had married, though on occasion, it could be used against any person who was deemed obnoxious by other community members.

By the mid-19th century and continuing into the 20th century, however, the charivari began to be used as a celebration rather than punishment. This is the case at one of the earliest charivaris recorded in a Minnesotan newspaper which took place in January 1863 in Saint Cloud. Citizens there rattled “cow bells, tin horns, kettles, [and] drums” in honor of the recently married alderman, Mr. Robbers.⁴ The charivari was so loud that the town council, then in session, decided to adjourn in order to join the party “to congratulate the fortunate alderman, and wish him success in sundry glasses of beer washed down by pretzels (sic).”⁵ This charivari falls within scholar Loretta T. Johnson’s assessment of charivaris in the rural Midwest as a celebration that was “almost an inevitable adjunct to marriage, [which] integrated [the married couple] – with a somewhat rowdy set of approval – into the

¹ Pauline Greenhill, *Make the Night Hideous: Four English-Canadian Charivaris, 1881-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 3-4. Palmer, 9-10, 26-30.

² Ibid.

³ “Charles Rice...,” *St. Charles Union*, Oct. 29th, 1879, pg. 5 is a Minnesotan example of this.

⁴ “Town Council,” *St. Cloud Democrat*, Jan. 15th, 1863, pg. 2. Other examples of this type of celebratory charivari in Minnesota include “Olson-Schaefer,” *New Ulm Review*, Nov. 29th, 1893, pg. 1. “Mr. and Mrs. John McManus,” *BDP*, Sept. 5th, 1900, pg. 2. “Pratt News Items,” *Peoples’ Press (Owatonna)*, Feb. 14th, 1902, pg. 9. “Golden Wedding,” *Spring Valley Mercury*, Mar. 3rd, 1904, pg. 4. “News Budget From Pratt,” *Peoples’ Press (Owatonna)*, Mar. 12th, 1915, pg. 4. “Cambria,” *New Ulm Review*, June 21st, 1916, pg. 6.

⁵ “Town Council,” *St. Cloud Democrat*, Jan. 15th, 1863, pg. 2.

community of married folks.”⁶ Indeed, the vast majority of both Midwestern American and Canadian charivaris were positive, but several charivari cases in Minnesota were punitive in nature.

The first of these cases took place in Rochester in November 1859. The victim was A. R. Deblain, an AfricanAmerican barber who had recently opened a business in that town.⁷ According to the *Rochester City Post*, a married white woman was allegedly tricked into having sexual relations with Deblain by her husband through “persistent entreaties and threats” and by “quot[ing] scripture” in order to have grounds for divorce.⁸ When she agreed, the husband gathered a group of her friends and caught her with Deblain to show them evidence of her alleged infidelity. She pleaded her case to the interlopers, explaining the actions of her husband. The following night, a mob who believed her story arrived at her house to tar and feather her husband only to find that he had fled the city. The mob then went after Deblain, whom they found at his home, and proceeded to charivari him. After the mob began to throw rocks at the house, Deblain opened fire with his shotgun at the crowd, injuring two young men. Eventually, Deblain was persuaded to leave his house and go into police custody under the promise that he would be protected from mob violence. When he was released the next day, he left town. Soon after, reports came into Rochester from Wabasha that a black man had been lynched in that village, to which the editor of the *Rochester City News* commented, “wonder if that was our nigger!”⁹ It turned out to be a false report, with the *Wabashaw Journal* publishing a rebuttal to the claims, stating “a negro has been behaving very badly at Rochester, and although he was not hanged, perhaps he ought to have been.”¹⁰ Deblain fled to La Crosse on the Wisconsin side of the Mississippi River, but he found trouble there too. The *Wisconsin State Journal* reported in February 1860 that he

⁶ Johnson, 372. See also Greenhill, 145-166.

⁷ “Hair Dressing and Shaving,” *Rochester City Post*, Nov. 2nd, 1859, pg. 3

⁸ “Beastly,” *Rochester City Post*, Dec. 3rd, 1859, pg. 3. “Sad Affair,” *Rochester City News*, Nov. 30th, pg. 3.

⁹ “Mob Violence,” *Rochester City News*, Dec. 7th, 1859, pg. 3.

¹⁰ “A rumor prevails...,” *Rochester City News*, Dec. 14th, 1859, pg. 2.

had been arrested for “having insulted passing women in the evening [who were] unaccompanied by gentlemen.”¹¹ After his arrest, a mob formed at the police station, but they were talked down from tarring and feathering Deblain. The next day he was released and quickly left town.¹²

Another victim of a Minnesota charivari was William P. Duvall, an itinerant quack doctor who promised to cure everything from paralysis to cancer “without the use of medicine or instruments.”¹³ Duvall arrived in Owatonna on November 3rd, 1868, for a month-long stay at the home of William A. Sterling, where Duvall was to set up his practice. The following day, Duvall met Elizabeth Moore, and on the 23rd of November, Duvall married Moore, who became his fourth wife. On the night following the wedding, Sterling’s house was surrounded by a mob. As they approached the house were fired upon by Duvall and Sterling. A bullet hit John Roesch, a member of the mob, and soon Sterling and Duvall were arrested. At first, the press blamed the charivari on a “group of Germans” who were not satisfied with the liquor they received at another charivari, who went on to charivari the recently married Dr. Duvall. Duvall and Sterling were charged with assault, but by mid-December Duvall had been released and continued his travels across Minnesota and later to Wisconsin along with Elizabeth. Several weeks later, an anonymous letter to the editor was sent to the *Minneapolis Morning Post*, claiming that the perpetrators were a group of 60-80 men whom the author of the letter dubbed the “Ku-Klux klan society of Owatonna.”¹⁴ This group of Owatonna residents threatened Duvall previously, and on the evening of the 23rd, they were following through with those threats. Further details about the charivari emerged after Dr. Duvall’s arrest in Janesville, Wisconsin, on April 30th, 1869, for the murder of

¹¹ “Wisconsin Items,” *Wisconsin State Journal (Madison)*, Feb. 20th, 1860, pg. 2.

¹² “‘Our Nigger’ in a Tight Place,” *Rochester City News*, Feb. 22nd, 1860, pg. 3.

¹³ Supplement, *Dodge County Republican*, Nov. 7th, 1868.

¹⁴ “The Owatonna Rioters,” *MT*, Dec. 18th, 1868, pg. 2.

Elizabeth Moore, who was discovered dead the previous day.¹⁵ During Duvall's trial, William Sterling testified that Duvall had acted cruelly to Moore during their courtship and brief married life in Owatonna and his general conduct prompted seventy-two citizens to write a letter telling him to leave town.¹⁶ Duvall did not heed their warnings, and the citizens came to his house with the intent of tarring and feathering him the day after he married Moore. They had brought a rail with them and were in the process of battering down the door when Sterling opened fire. Sterling kept the crowd at bay until the sheriff arrived, who arrested both Sterling and Duvall. Ultimately, Duvall was convicted of murdering Moore with strychnine and was sentenced to life imprisonment.¹⁷

Beyond these early incidents, only a few isolated charivaris were used to punish people in Minnesotan newspaper records. A case in 1874 in Stillwater saw four men being fined five dollars each for holding a charivari in "honor of the return of a female acquaintance who had some months ago left her husband."¹⁸ In 1881, a woman in Perham, whose recently separated husband kept custody of their two children, organized a charivari to serenade her estranged husband.¹⁹ When her estranged husband was distracted by the charivari, she snuck inside his house and grabbed one of their children, and then quickly sought refuge at the house of a local senator. The father, realizing what happened, quickly formed a mob of his own which soon arrived at the senator's house, only to be met with a threat of shooting them, to which the mob decided to disperse. A final case occurred in 1889 near St. Charles. When a local 65-year old man from that town, Merle Sours, married "a girl of seventeen summers... the boys determined to give them something out of the ordinary in

¹⁵ "Duvall, the Wife Murderer," *MT*, Aug. 6th, 1869, pg. 1.

¹⁶ "The Trial of Dr. Duvall for the Murder of his Fourth Wife," *Freeborn County Standard*, Mar. 17th, 1870, pg. 2.

¹⁷ "Dr. Duvall Convicted," *Lake City Leader*, Mar. 18th, 1870, pg. 1., "The Duvall Murder," *Rochester Post*, Mar. 19th, 1870, pg. 2.

¹⁸ "Record of the Reckless," *Stillwater Messenger*, Apr. 24th, 1874, pg. 5.

¹⁹ "A man named Hank Sprague," *Northern Pacific Farmer (Wadena)*, May 26th, 1881, pg. 4.

the way of a charivari.”²⁰ They poured two pailfuls of animal blood around Sour’s house and then drove in a dozen cattle to his yard, which started making a commotion.

Although the 1889 St. Charles charivari would be the last case of a Minnesota charivari being used to punish someone for sexual impropriety, charivaris continued to be perpetrated at the expense of the newly wed. A description of a charivari of this type can be found in Sinclair Lewis’ *Main Street*. After Carol Kennicott, *Main Street*’s protagonist moves to live with her husband Will in the small fictional town of Gopher Prairie, Minnesota, she and her husband are subjected to a charivari on several occasions perpetrated by a group of young men led by Cyrus Bogart, a local teenage delinquent. Cyrus, whom Carol had also seen torturing a cat, stealing melons, and throwing rotten fruit at her house, led a group of like-minded youths to make noises loud enough to frighten Carol “into screaming” to get Mr. Kennicott to pay them to stop.²¹ Such art imitated life in Minnesota, with John L. Banks, who confessed that the “only thing he ever did that he was ashamed of” as a teenager living in Northfield between 1923 and 1926 was participating in a charivari.²² They held the charivari at the expense of the “wealthiest person in town” whose daughter recently got married. A gang of teenagers, including Banks, went to the man’s house to get a “handout” but were threatened with a shotgun. In retaliation, they stole a case of ice cream that was intended for the reception. The local newspaper reported that the town “was beginning to get overrun with hoodlums.”²³ Their local newspaper was not the only one, as a *Wabasha County Herald* article from 1908 made a clear distinction between a charivari held by “the friends of the contracting parties... indulging in some frivolities,” and “reprehensible” charivaris

²⁰ “It Drew the Cattle,” *St. Charles Union*, Aug. 30th, 1889, pg. 4.

²¹ Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street* (New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2003), 106-107.

²² John L. Banks, interview by David V. Taylor, June 19th, 1974, transcript, Minnesota Black History Project, Minnesota Historical Society Archives.

²³ Ibid.

perpetrated by “rabble who have no interest save to get money... and to have fun at the expense of the newly wed.”²⁴

Reports of this type of charivari in that state date back to the 1860s. The *Chatfield Democrat* in 1865 reported that “four young men” whose names were withheld by the paper to prevent them from getting any notoriety for their crimes were fined five dollars each and court costs for participating in a charivari.²⁵ Newspapers almost always described the perpetrators of these charivaris as being boys, young men, or simply as “roughs” or “hoodlums.” The charivariers would make “rough music” or committed acts of vandalism until the groom came out and paid them in money or in kind to stop. This act on the groom's part to bribe the charivariers came to be known as “setting ‘em up” with the desired goods or money. Thus, in many cases, charivaris dispersed after the groom gave them a bribe. Cigars were a popular bribe.²⁶ In an 1878 case, a man near Princeton who “invested in a box of cigars” managed to avoid a charivari altogether, and in another case in 1879, a man was able to stop a charivari by giving out some silver dollars for the crowd to buy cigars.²⁷ Beer was also a widespread bribe given to charivariers, with the *Mantorville and Kasson Express* in 1881 arguing that “coming out with a keg of beer” for the charivariers “is said to be the custom.”²⁸ This was the case at an 1879 charivari near St. Charles, where the groom came out with an “eighth of beer” for the crowd.²⁹ The editor remarked, “beer has very often raised rows here, but it has never been known to stop one quicker than on last Saturday night.”

²⁴ “It Was Not Right,” *Wabasha County Herald*, Sept. 3rd, 1908, pg. 5.

²⁵ “Fined,” *Chatfield Democrat*, 1865, Apr. 22nd, pg. 4.

²⁶ “Douglass Items,” *Record and Union (Rochester)*, Aug 3rd, 1888, pg. 2., “Mound Prairie,” *Hokah Chief*, May 17th, 1888, pg. 4., “Pleasant Grove,” *Record and Union (Rochester)*, Oct. 2nd, 1891, pg. 5., “A Fitting Sequence,” *MT*, Sept. 15, 1897, pg. 3., “Sargeant,” *MCT*, Mar. 30th, 1898, pg. 7., “Maple Ridge Mites,” *BDP*, May 3rd, 1900, pg. 5. “Blue Hill,” *Princeton Union*, May 18th, 1916, pg. 8.

²⁷ “Mr. George Foltz,” *Princeton Union*, Oct. 16th, 1878, pg. 8., “Mr. Henry Howard...,” *Princeton Union*, May 7th, 1879, pg. 8.

²⁸ “At the marriage...,” *Mantorville and Kasson Express*, Apr. 1st, 1881, pg. 2.

²⁹ “Charles Rice...,” *St. Charles Union*, Oct. 29th, 1879, pg. 5., Several other grooms handed out beer as well: “Fun in Meriden,” *People’s Press (Owatonna)*, Dec. 21st, 1883, pg. 1., “Married,” *Princeton Union*, Mar. 30th, 1893, pg. 5., “Cracked his Skull,” *Zumbrota News*, Oct. 18th, 1905, pg. 2. “Genoa,” *Pine Island Record*, Dec. 6th, 1895, pg. 2., “Nerstrand,” *Kenyon Leader*, Oct. 3rd, 1895, pg. 2. “Sheldon,” *Houston Valley Signal*, Oct. 1st,

If the groom did not hand over the desired goods, charivariers would, in some cases, give up and return home, but often, they would escalate their harassment of the couple. Charivariers sometimes began throwing rocks at the couple's house or committing other acts of vandalism such as cutting up harnesses and shaving horse manes.³⁰ In an 1889 case, the charivariers climbed onto the couple's roof, blocked the chimney with a piece of wood, and "literally smoked the family out."³¹ At a charivari in Sacred Heart in 1870, Norwegian-American a groom refused the crowd's demand for money to buy alcohol.³² In retaliation, the charivariers committed a "diabolical outrage" by breaking into the house, stripping the groom naked, and riding him on a rail.³³ In 1894, in Lester, a charivari gang of "30 hoodlums" were denied ten dollars for beer. In retaliation, the charivari mob battered down the front door and started a brawl, leading one of the occupants to draw a pistol and shoot three intruders.³⁴ At an 1895 charivari in Frontenac, a charivari party was not satisfied with the quarter keg of beer they received, so they forced their way into the cellar and stole more of it.³⁵ Eventually, the bride's father and a guest named J. Schmitt asked the men to leave and were "immediately met by an assault from the drunken men, who were armed with clubs and other weapons," with one of them lunging at Schmitt with an iron bar.³⁶ Schmitt grabbed the bar and beat the intruder with it, fracturing their skull.

Although authorities were able to convict people for participating in charivaris under other laws before 1876, the Minnesota legislature passed a bill explicitly outlawing

1896, pg. 9., "Maple Ridge Mites," *BDP*, May 3rd, 1900, pg. 5., "Meets Death in Mississippi," *Little Falls Herald*, July 2nd, 1915, pg. 1.

³⁰ "Eight nice young men...", *Record and Union (Rochester)*, Nov. 28th, 1874, pg. 2. "Minnesota News Items," *Weekly Valley Herald*, Mar. 18th, 1875, pg. 2., "A disgraceful affair...", *Mantorville Express*, Aug. 4th, 1876, pg. 2., "Minneapolis Globelets," *DG*, June 25th, 1883, pg. 5., "At a recent wedding...", *New Ulm Weekly Review*, Jan 1st, 1890 pg. 4., "Charivari," *St. Charles Union*, June 15th, 1894, pg. 5., "Boy is Arrested at Charivari," *MT*, Jan 17th, 1902, pg. 6., "Shots Rout a Charivari Party," *MT* Aug. 28th, 1914, pg. 15.

³¹ "Personal," *Chatfield Democrat*, Jan 12th, 1889, pg. 3.

³² "In Our own State," *MT*, Nov. 24th, 1870, pg. 4.

³³ *Ibid*.

³⁴ "At Lester, Rice County...", *Mabel Enterprise* May 10th, 1894, pg. 1.

³⁵ "Minnesota in Brief," *Zumbrota Independent*, Oct. 17th, pg. 2., "Cracked his Skull," *Zumbrota News*, Oct. 18th, 1895, pg. 2.

³⁶ "Cracked his Skull," *Zumbrota News*, Oct. 18th, 1895, pg. 2.

charivaris.³⁷ Fines for participating in a charivari ranged from \$5 to \$20, with court fees usually added as extra punishment.³⁸ In some cases, participants spent time in county jail, but none were ever sent to the state penitentiary in Stillwater. In many cases, however, especially in rural areas, the victims of a charivari would take the law into their own hands. Many times all that was required was a threat or a few shots fired above the heads of the mob to scare them off, but on more than a few occasions, charivari victims would fire at the crowd gathered outside, which was the case at over a dozen Minnesota charivaris from 1872 to 1909. In most cases, the charivariers suffered minor injuries, as shotguns loaded with bird shot were often used to shoot the interlopers.³⁹ In two cases, men were tried for firing pistols at charivariers: one for the murder of a six-year-old boy and the other case for injuring a fifteen-year-old girl. In both cases, the defendants pled not guilty, blaming someone in the crowd for the shooting, a plausible explanation, as charivariers often used guns as noisemakers, and in some cases, this led to accidental injuries or deaths. Both defendants were acquitted.⁴⁰ In 1889, in nearby Iowa, a case of a charivari victim who shot a charivari dead made it to the Iowa Supreme Court, which declared the homicide justifiable.⁴¹ In 1890, a similar decision was reached by the Wisconsin Supreme Court after it overturned a case where a wounded charivari was awarded \$350 in damages after he was

³⁷ "Severe Penalties for Charivari Offenders," *Worthington Advance*, Aug 5th, 1904, pg. 4.

³⁸ Fined \$5 per person: "Record of the Reckless," *Stillwater Messenger*, Apr. 24th, 1874, pg. 5., Fined \$5 per person: "Minnesota News Items," *Weekly Valley Herald (Chaska)*, 1875, Mar. 18th, pg. 2. A \$100 fine split between 15-20 people: "Expensive Fun," *Freeborn County Standard*, Mar. 8th, 1877, pg. 3., Fined \$5.60 per person: "A Good Example," *Wabasha County Herald*, May 4th, 1881, pg. 3., Fined \$5 per person: "Cost of a Charivari," *New Ulm Review*, Dec. 19th, 1894, pg. 6., Fined \$15 per person instead of 10 days in jail: "The members..." *MCT*, June 29th, 1898, pg. 3.

³⁹ "From the St. Cloud Journal Press," *Little Falls Transcript*, Mar. 5th, 1880, pg. 1, Mentions shooting first with "salt" then a second time with "small shot," "Northwestern News," *Stillwater Messenger*, Nov. 6th, 1886, pg. 2, mentions the use of buckshot to disperse charivariers., "Since it has become a custom..." *Rushford Star*, Jan 2nd, 1890, pg. 2, mentions how "it has become a custom to fire ample loads of buckshot into charivari parties."

⁴⁰ "Griswold Trial Set for Trial Monday," *MT*, Apr. 26th, 1908, pg. 8., "Trial of William Griswold Begins," *MT*, Apr. 28th, pg. 1., "Acquit Griswold of Manslaughter," *MT*, May 2nd, 1908, pg. 1., "Paul Thompson is Held to Grand Jury; Assault," *BDP*, Nov. 5th, 1909, pg. 1., "Shot During Charivari Young Girl Loses Arm," *DH*, Dec. 7th, 1909, pg. 15., "District Court Today," *BDP*, Feb. 24th, 1910, pg. 1., "Not Guilty of Assault," *DH*, Mar. 2nd, 1910, pg. 6.

⁴¹ "An Iowa jury..." *DG*, Dec. 23rd, 1889, pg. 4.

shot in the leg.⁴² The decision concluded that the charivari was “a riot, participated in by a large crowd of desperate and evil-minded persons, armed with guns...” Arguing that charivari victim was acting in self-defense, the court decision also added that “citizens may of their own authority, lawfully endeavor to suppress a riot, and for that purpose even arm themselves, and whatever is honestly done by them, in the execution of that object, will be supported and justified by the common law.”⁴³

When charivariers injured their attackers, newspapers almost always took the side of the victims. The editor of the *Pioneer Press* commented in 1879 that “occasionally a loafer gets shot” at a charivari, “but this remedy for the evil is not frequent enough to effectually break up this beastly performance.”⁴⁴ A *Stillwater Messenger* article of 1882 commented that the local charivari should have “‘set em up’ in the shape of fine shot” instead of giving in to their demands for money.⁴⁵ A *Faribault Journal* article of 1905 argued, “it is possible to approve of that husband who, after enduring a charivari for two days, shot and wounded some of his tormentors.”⁴⁶ Thus, while charivaris never caught on as a means of vigilantism, they remained part of Minnesota culture into the 20th century, either as the good-natured celebratory party version or as the bad-natured version, which was mostly getting liquor, cigars, or money from the couple rather than punishing them for a perceived transgression. Ironically, many Minnesotans ended up taking the law into their own hands to prevent being victimized by the latter of the two types.

Tarring and Feathering

Minnesotans more widely adopted the practice of tarring and feathering as a means of vigilante violence than the charivari. Surviving from the Revolutionary War era, the practice continued to be used against those deemed obnoxious by their communities in Minnesota

⁴² “Charivaris are Riots,” *Appleton (Wisconsin) Post*, Apr. 10th, 1890, pg. 7.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ “From the Pioneer Press...,” *Little Falls Transcript*, May 15th, 1879, pg. 4.

⁴⁵ “Samuel Bloomer...,” *Stillwater Messenger* Oct. 14th, 1882, pg. 4.

⁴⁶ “The wedding jokers...,” *Faribault Journal*, Sept. 20th, 1905, pg. 4.

from statehood into the 1910s. In pre-Civil War Minnesota, the practice was linked by many Minnesotan newspapers to the maintenance of slavery in the South through the intimidation of abolitionists and through the violence necessary to keep enslaved people suppressed and working on plantations. For instance, an 1860 article in the Rochester City Post, titled “Southern Outrages Against Northern Men,” claimed that Southerners were tarring and feathering Northern men at random if they ventured into that part of the country regardless of their views on abolition.⁴⁷ Another editor argued that these random attacks on Northern men were one reason why the South could not establish itself as a center for industry, as skilled Northern mechanics were afraid of venturing south lest they be labeled abolitionists and tarred and feathered.⁴⁸ During the Civil War, some Minnesotan newspapers linked tarring and feathering directly to the Union cause in the war, with the *Wabasha County Herald* arguing that the South “must be made to abjure their scourges, their tar and feathers, their hangings and burnings, and respect our national laws.”⁴⁹

Soon after the Civil War, however, a mob committed the first Minnesotan tarring and feathering in April 1866 in St. Anthony. The *St. Paul Daily Press* described the victim, James H. Murray, as being a “lewd sinner” who had allegedly abandoned his wife in order to take up a “vile connection” with “the wife of a colored citizen” in California.⁵⁰ Allegedly Murray had run out of money and returned to his St. Anthony home three months later. Soon after, a crowd of around 30-75 men surrounded his house.⁵¹ Murray’s clothes were “violently stripped from his person,” and he was tarred and feathered in the street.⁵² After the mob ran out of feathers, they let Murray go, and he retreated to his home. The next day, Murray described his ordeal to the police, and soon a couple of men were arrested in connection with

⁴⁷ “The Treatment of Northern Men,” *St. Cloud Democrat*, Nov. 29th, 1860. pg. 4.

⁴⁸ “Why Democratic States Cannot Build Up Manufactures,” *Wabasha County Herald*, Feb. 2nd, 1860, pg. 4.

⁴⁹ “Sins of the South,” *Wabasha County Herald*, Aug 2nd, 1862, pg. 2.

⁵⁰ “Heard From,” *SDP*, Apr. 18th, 1866, pg. 4, “Disgraceful Proceeding,” *SDP*, Apr. 22nd, 1866, pg. 4,

⁵¹ “Disturbance at St. Paul,” *CT*, Apr 28th, 1866, pg. 2. “The Murray Outrage,” *SDP*, Apr. 24th, 1866, pg. 4.,

“James H. Murray, of St. Paul,” *Waterloo (Iowa) Courier*, May 3rd, 1866, pg. 1.

⁵² *Ibid.*

the tarring and feathering. Mrs. Murray also gave the word to the press that the mob was “entirely misconceived” about the circumstances of Mr. Murray’s departure, stating she consented to his journey to California and a mistress did not accompany him.⁵³ By June 16th, twenty-eight people were identified as part of the mob and indicted by a grand jury.⁵⁴ The prosecution’s case fell apart, though when the Murrays did not show up to testify in the trial, having fled the area fearing reprisals from those indicted.⁵⁵ After one mob member was acquitted, charges were dropped against the remaining twenty-seven.

As in the James H. Murray tar and feathering case, the majority of Minnesotan tar and feathering cases, the victims typically stood accused of breaking sexual mores or committing sexual assault. For example, in 1871, a mob of around 100 converged on the house of 60-year-old George Spencer of Shakopee, a married fruit and candy merchant, after he was accused of fathering a child with a female employee named Mary Brown of unknown age.⁵⁶ The *Minneapolis Tribune* claimed that it had not been the first time “the old seducer” had seduced an employee, noting that his “candy and peanuts decoyed several girls of tender years.”⁵⁷ Whether the relationship between Brown and Spencer was consensual or not is unclear as the crime of seduction in that era was the action of a man “destroying a woman’s chastity” by engaging in extra-marital sex.⁵⁸ Whether or not the sex was consensual was not relevant to the prosecution of seduction law. In Minnesota, seduction was only criminally prosecutable only if the victim had been of “previously chaste character” and only if the man had made a promise to marry the victim, which he did not keep.⁵⁹ The age of consent was ten in Minnesota until 1891 when it was raised to sixteen, yet prosecution under this law could

⁵³ “The Murray Outrage,” *SDP*, Apr. 24th, 1866, Pg. 4.

⁵⁴ “Eastern Matters,” *Valley Herald (Chaska)*, June 16th, 1866, pg. 2.

⁵⁵ “Tarring and Feathering,” *SDP*, June 27th, 1866, pg. 4.

⁵⁶ “The Farmington Press...” *MT*, July 15th, 1871, pg. 1, “An old citizen of Shakopee...” *Mantorville Express*, July 21st, pg. 2. Murray fled Shakopee before the mob was successful in tarring and feathering him.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Estelle B. Freedman, *Redefining Rape: Sexual Violence in the Era of Suffrage and Segregation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 38-44.

⁵⁹ H.W. Humble, “Seduction as a Crime,” *Columbia Law Review* 21 no. 2 (Feb. 1921), 146.

be avoided by the perpetrator if he married the victim.⁶⁰ Thus in several cases which we would consider statutory rape today were instead described as cases of “seduction” in Minnesotan newspapers and were prosecuted as such until the 1890s.⁶¹

Many seduction cases ended like the Murray case, with angry neighbors and family members of the victim taking punishment into their own hands. An example of this occurred in 1877 when W.D. Phillips of Austin, Mower County, allegedly fathered a child with a former student and employee of his and was later arrested for “illicit intercourse.”⁶² However, he was released after he was able to convince the judge that his relationship antedated conception of the child. Soon after he was released, three or four “enraged relatives” seized him, stripped him to his waist and tarred and feathered him.⁶³ In 1889, a Rush City merchant named T.B. Richardson had “became too intimate” with his wife’s “hired girl” who became “a mother in his own house.”⁶⁴ He was told to leave town by vigilantes. He did so, abandoning his wife but taking his mistress with him to a new residence at Rice Lake. Approximately 60 people showed up to his new home, seized him, and dragged him for about a mile before whipping and tarring and feathering him.

Unmarried cohabitation and bigamy were also acts that inspired tar and feather parties, as was the case where a man in Getchell was assaulted and then tarred and feathered by “fifteen or twenty young men of the neighborhood” in 1883 for living as a couple with a woman against the wishes of her family.⁶⁵ After he could not produce evidence he had divorced his first wife or had married his new wife, the mob formed to punish him and run him out of town. In Cottonwood County, in 1880, a Mr. F. Moon was visited at night by eight to ten

⁶⁰ “The Age of Consent,” *MT*, Mar. 10th, 1891, pg. 4, “Now the Bill Goes,” *MT*, Apr. 18th, 1891, pg. 1, “Age of Consent Statute,” *DG*, June 15th, 1900, pg. 10.

⁶¹ “District Court,” *MT*, Nov. 27th, 1869, pg. 4, “Minneapolis Globelets,” *DG*, Oct. 20th, 1883, pg. 6, “Stillwater News,” *DG*, June 2nd, 1887, pg. 5, “The City,” *MT*, Oct. 22nd, 1887, pg. 5, “Sent Up for Five Years,” *DG*, Jan. 28th, 1888, pg. 7.

⁶² “The Tar and Feathers,” *Chatfield Democrat*, Mar 24th, 1877, pg. 2., “Tar and Feathers for a Seducer,” *Weekly Valley Herald (Chaska)*, March 29th, 1877, pg. 2.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ “Richardson ‘Regulated,’” *DG*, Sept. 5th, 1889, pg. 4.

⁶⁵ “Too Many Wives, Tar and Feathers,” *Worthington Advance*, Apr. 12, 1883, pg. 2.

masked men because he abandoned his wife and children.⁶⁶ After a gun battle, during which a piece of F. Moon's scalp was blown off, the vigilantes tarred and feathered him and threatened to "put him under the ice" if he did not leave town.⁶⁷

Domestic violence was also a common cause for tarring and feathering in Minnesota. A man named Comstock was tarred and feathered in 1875 in Antrim for "violently driving his wife from his home."⁶⁸ Her brother got together a crowd which went to Comstock's house, tarred and feathered him, and rode him on a rail. Another case in 1889 saw Dr. S.B. Newell of Slayton being tarred and feathered for allegedly "beating his wife."⁶⁹ In 1897 in Rosemont a man was tarred and feathered for allegedly forcing his wife and children from their home due to his violent drunkenness.⁷⁰ A group of citizens drove the man, A. Olson, to the county fair grounds and there "gave him a taste of law and order" by tarring and feathering him.⁷¹ In 1911, in Glenville, pharmacist E.B. Freeman was tarred and feathered by a mob for the abuse of his wife and child.⁷² On the day of the tar and feathering, Mrs. Freeman, with whom he had separated from several months prior, had visited him at his pharmacy. There they got into an argument, and Freeman allegedly kicked her. A mob of at least thirty people seized Dr. E.B. Freeman, and tarred and feathered him with "roofing paint," and threw rotten eggs at him. Eleven men were later arrested for assaulting Dr. Freeman but were acquitted due to Mrs. Freeman's testimony for the defense.

Committing sexual assault against minors was another reason for the tarring and feathering, such as a case in 1902 where a man from Lismore had openly boasted while drunk

⁶⁶ "An Outrage," *Worthington Advance*, Jan 29th, 1880, pg. 3., "The Tarring Affair," *Worthington Advance*, Feb. 5th, 1880, pg. 3.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ "A case of tar and feathers...", *Wabasha Herald*, June 3rd, 1875, pg. 1

⁶⁹ "Minnesota Culling," *New Ulm Weekly Review*, July 17th, 1889, pg. 6.

⁷⁰ "Tar and Feathers as a Cure," *DG*, Aug. 11th, 1897, pg. 3.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² "Tar and Feathers," *Freeborn Country Standard*, Apr. 12th, 1911, pg. 5, "Around the County," *Redwood Gazette*, Apr. 25th, 1911 pg. 5, "Alleged Hazers Give Bonds," *Tower Weekly News*, June 2nd, 1911, pg. 6, "Glenville," *Tower Weekly News*, Sept. 1st, 1911, pg. 4, "Attorney-General to Aid in Tarring Prosecutions," *MT*, Feb. 6th, 1912, pg. 1.

that he had committed “criminal intimacy” with his sixteen-year-old daughter.⁷³ His house was egged, and some neighbors allegedly discussed tarring and feathering him. In 1906, photographer Byron Andrews of Cass Lake was accused of taking indecent photographs of young girls.⁷⁴ One of the victims’ mothers put signs up around town alleging his abuse, and that evening, a mob of around 200 citizens took him from his home and tarred and feathered him with a mixture of tar and molasses.⁷⁵ Although the nearby *Itasca News* called for him to be lynched, he left for North Dakota by way of Bemidji the following day.⁷⁶ In 1907, James Wilcox of Solway was taken from his home by a mob and tarred and feathered after allegedly attempting to rape a 13-year-old girl.⁷⁷ After the tarring and feathering, he promised to leave town. Again, in 1916, a man who stood accused of having attacked a seven-year-old girl was brought to the New Prague jail.⁷⁸ A mob of around 200 stormed the jail and seized him. They tarred and feathered him on the spot but were eventually persuaded to hand him over to the police before he was lynched. He was taken to a neighboring county jail for his own protection.

Although most cases of tarring and feathering were against men, there were a number of cases where women were tarred and feathered. In 1881, a Mrs. Welch was abducted from her home around midnight in Adrian, Nobles County, by half a dozen neighbors disguised as Indigenous people.⁷⁹ Her husband, whom she alleged orchestrated the incident, “shed crocodile tears” when she was abducted, while he was left unharmed.⁸⁰ Mr. Welch denied the allegations. The *Worthington Advance* remarked, “men who could take a woman out of her

⁷³ “Egged at Lismore,” *Worthington Advance*, July 4th, 1902, pg. 3.

⁷⁴ “Citizens Mob a Cass Lake Artist,” *MJ*, Aug. 10th, 1906, pg. 1., “Tar and Feathers for a Cass Lake Photographer,” *BDP*, Aug. 10th, 1906, pg. 4. “Andrews is on Way to Dakota,” *BDP*, Aug. 11th, 1906, pg. 4.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, “Cass Lake’s Sensation,” *International Falls Press*, Aug. 15th, 1906, pg. 4.

⁷⁷ “Tar and Feathers for Solway Man,” *BDP*, Jan 14th, 1907, pg. 1.

⁷⁸ “Assailant of Child Tarred and Feathered,” *MT*, June 18th, 1916, pg. 6., “Captured by a posse...,” *Eveleth News*, June 22nd, 1916, pg. 5.

⁷⁹ “Hellish Outrage in Lismore,” *Worthington Advance*, Sept. 22nd, pg. 3, “Westside,” *Worthington Advance*, March 30th, 1882, pg. 2, “Mr. Welch of Adrian...,” *Worthington Advance*, Apr. 13th, 1882, pg. 3.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

house at midnight and tar and feather her, ought to be brought to justice. We do not want that relic of a barbarous state of society revived and introduced in this country.”⁸¹ In 1891, a farmer from St. Peter, Michael Murphy, and his housekeeper, Kate Boyd, were visited by a group of men after dark who enticed them to come out to help with a sick horse.⁸² When they went outside, Boyd, who seems to have been the primary target, was stripped, tied up, tarred, and feathered, and then thrown into their cellar, and Murphy was also subjected to similar treatment. Boyd later sued their neighbor, Cornelius Hessian, and his three sons for \$25,000 and won a settlement of \$6,000. The motive for the tarring and feathering was unclear, with the *St. Paul Daily Globe* saying it was due to a “perceived wrong at an earlier date.”⁸³

In cases where the motives for tarring and feathering a woman were more clear, it seems that they were targeted for not abiding with sexual mores. In 1903, Will Beede and Ruby Samples were tarred and feathered in Hokah. Some residents of Hokah allegedly been “disgusted with the work carried on at her home,” perhaps suggesting the pair were running a brothel.⁸⁴ After the tarring and feathering, Beede was escorted to the edge of town and told not to return. “The good work,” according to the *Hokah Chief*, “was done by an orderly crowd of about twenty.”⁸⁵ That same year, a mob of 10-15 citizens tarred and feathered Charles Colburn and Mrs. George Farwell in Spencer Brook. Mr. and Mrs. Farwell had recently moved to the community, and it was reported in the *Princeton Union* that “when the woman moved there, her reputation was under a cloud” and that both she and her husband had left their old town “with anything but the highest testimonials of good character.”⁸⁶ They found themselves sharing a house with a Charles Colburn and his family, a house that to their

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² “St. Peter, June 3rd,” *St. Charles Union*, June 26th, 1891, pg. 2., “A Morning Bath of Tar,” *Worthington Advance*, July 2nd, 1891, pg. 2. “A Special from St. Peter...” *New Ulm Weekly Review*, Sept. 9th, 1891.

⁸³ “Tar and Feathers,” *DG*, May 1st, 1892, pg. 5.

⁸⁴ “Tar and Feathers,” *DG*, May 1st, 1892, pg. 5.

⁸⁵ “Tar and Feathers,” *Caledonia Argus*, July 11th, 1903, pg. 5., “Tar and Feathers,” *Princeton Union*, July 30th, 1903, pg. 1.

⁸⁶ “Tar and Feathers,” *Princeton Union*, July 30th, 1903, pg. 1.

neighbors, soon “became an eyesore and one of very questionable character.”⁸⁷ A mob formed to meet out a punishment “that usually means disgrace and expulsion from the community.”⁸⁸ They found Charles Colburn and Mrs. Farwell alone in the house, tarred and feathered them both, and then ordered Mrs. Farwell to leave and never return to the community, a demand to which she complied.

The idea that women could be tarred and feathered for not abiding by sexual mores was reinforced in the film “The Sin Woman,” first screened in Minnesota in December 1917.⁸⁹ The film follows Grace Penrose, a “vamp:” that era’s slang for a femme fatale. The prologue to the film was a series of vignettes, showing Penrose’s ancestors going back to Eve also being “vampires,” and suggests that an inclination for this life of “sin” is perhaps hereditary for all women. After the prologue, Penrose arrives at her home in the country and soon meets a “big, generous,” and “happily married” man named John Winthrop, with whom she has an affair. When Winthrop leaves his wife to go live with Penrose, his wife confides in the town’s woman mayor as to her husband’s recent departure. The mayor reveals that Penrose had also once seduced her son and wanted revenge. “All the inhabitants” turn out to tar and feather Penrose, but Winthrop convinces them to show mercy at the last minute.

Whitecapping

In the late 1880s, a new mode of vigilantism known as “whitecapping” appeared in Indiana, and by 1889, it had spread to Minnesota.⁹⁰ As was the case with tarring and feathering, the majority of cases of Whitecapping in Minnesota had to do with allegations of adultery or domestic violence.⁹¹ For instance, an 1893 Whitecapping at White Bear involved

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ “New Aster,” *MT*, Dec. 3rd, 1917, pg. 3., The following description of the film is paraphrased from “Irene Fenwick in ‘The Sin Woman,’” *Exhibitors Herald (Chicago)*, Sept. 15, 1917, pg. 26.

⁹⁰ “Caledonia,” *Hokah Chief*, Mar. 28th, 1889, pg. 4.

⁹¹ “There is a man (?)...,” *Houston Valley Signal*, July 6th, 1893, pg. 1., “Sad Case,” *DH*, June 3rd, 1895, pg. 6., “White Caps,” *Willmar Tribune*, Feb. 5th, 1902, pg. 3., “Man Dragged Nearly A Mile,” *MT*, Apr. 23rd, 1902, pg. 1.

a man who had been arrested for assaulting his wife. A group of whitecaps broke into the county jail and “gave him a sound thrashing” and then told him to leave town or suffer a “harsher penalty.”⁹² In Wadena in 1895, a man named C.S. Fechan was abducted by a hundred-strong mob who tied a noose around his neck. The victim pleaded with the men not to kill him, and they let him go, with the promise that he would “treat his family better hereafter.”⁹³ Two years later, in Brainerd, a local preacher was whitecapped for alleged adultery. The preacher, J.E. Chase, was “handl[ed] roughly” and told to “leave the country.”⁹⁴

Although at least one Minnesota news article argued that Whitecapping was an acceptable punishment for men who abused their families, the Minnesota press seems to have had a negative response to the phenomenon.⁹⁵ An example of this is the *Hokah Chief* coverage of two incidents of attempted whitecapping in nearby Caledonia in 1889. In one case, a group of whitecaps showed up at night at the home of a “peaceable citizen” who dispersed them with two shotgun blasts.⁹⁶ Later a whitecap mob surrounded the house of a woman and created a “great disturbance to neighbors” but failed in whitecapping her. The editor of the paper asked the question, “why not shoot the mob down?”⁹⁷ Even in cases of punishment for “fiendish outrages” such as spousal abuse, however, there could still be condemnation in the press, such as the 1895 case in Wadena mentioned above. The *Minneapolis Tribune* remarked that “Wadena is all torn up over the disgraceful affair and is endeavoring to hush the thing up. Wife beating is bad enough... but ‘white capping’ is worse.”⁹⁸ Likewise, the 1894 whitecapping of S.H. Mitchell of St. Paul Park was described in that same paper as “an outrage which has scandalized that charming little suburb.”⁹⁹ Mitchell, who had been accused

⁹² “The whitecaps...,” *Stillwater Messenger*, Nov. 4th, 1893, pg. 6.

⁹³ “Wadena White Cappers,” *MT*, July 23rd, 1895, pg. 2.

⁹⁴ “White Caps at Work,” *Little Falls Weekly Transcript*, Dec. 17th, 1897, pg. 9.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ “Caledonia,” *Hokah Chief*, Mar. 28th, 1889, pg. 4.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ “Wadena White Cappers,” *MT*, July 23rd, 1895, pg. 2.

⁹⁹ “Mobbed at St. Paul Park,” *DG*, May 27th, 1894, pg. 1., “Paint and Feathers,” *Stillwater Messenger*, June 2nd, 1894, pg. 8.

of “creating discord in the family of John Newburg,” had been dragged from his hotel, beaten, and given a coat of paint and feathers.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Part III: The Ku Klux Klan

In our period of study, 1850-1920, the Ku Klux Klan was not active in Minnesota, neither in its loosely organized Reconstruction form nor in its 1915 revival under William J. Simmons.¹ However, during this time, there was a culture war over what the Klan represented in American history to white Minnesotans. It would end with the Klan being no longer seen as insurrectionary Confederate criminals but rather within a tradition stemming back to the Revolutionary War of men who took the law into their own hands in times of tyranny.

In January 1868, the Klan first appeared in a Minnesotan newspaper: *The Lake City Leader*. Its editor described the Klan as a “secret rebel organization” with an “outlandish name” that was formed to “drive Union men out of the country, or at least keep them in constant alarm, and to overawe the negroes, and prevent them from exercising their right at the ballot box.”² The Republican-aligned *Minneapolis Tribune* remarked, “The Klu-Kluck (sic) Klan is a reality... they prove this by murders and robberies – the victims being blacks or loyal whites. There is impunity for this second rebellion, for it is nothing less.”³ Another article about the Klan in the *Tribune* reminded Minnesotans that “it was a motto among the ancient Germans that a coward did not deserve to live... Never in history was there more a cowardly, ruffianly, wicked, and contemptible organization than this same ‘Ku-Klux Klan’... Let the Union men of Tennessee put a stop to this miserable, sneaking kind of war by exterminating, if necessary, those who carry it on.”⁴

Through the end of the 19th century, some Republican politicians would attack their Democratic opponents with claims of voter suppression in the “Solid South.”⁵ The *Daily Globe* of St. Paul for instance, reprinted a speech by Republican John Sherman in 1880, who

¹ Hatle and Vaillancourt, 362.

² “The Kuklux Klan,” *Lake City Leader*, Jan. 31st, 1868, pg. 4.

³ “The Ku-Klux Klan,” *MT*, Apr. 9th, 1868, pg. 1.

⁴ “Brownlow on the ‘Ku-Klux Klan,’” *MT*, Apr. 2nd, 1868, pg. 2.

⁵ “Significance of Southern Assassinations,” *MT*, Feb. 27th, 1884, pg. 4., “Speaker Reed,” *MT*, Apr. 27th, 1890, pg. 1., “A Roar from the South,” *MT*, Dec. 6th, 1890, pg. 4., “A Republican,” *MT*, Oct. 18th, 1891, pg. 12., “Unconsenting Governed,” *Post and Record (Rochester)*, Aug. 10th, 1900, pg. 8.

stated the Democrats “power in the Southern States rests upon actual crimes of every grade... from murder to the meanest form of ballot box stuffing, committed by the Ku Klux Klan and its kindred associates, and, as you know, some of the worst of them were committed since 1879.”⁶ The editor of the *Rushford Star*, a Republican-aligned paper, similarly declared in 1880 that “we of the North assert that the colored man has certain rights under the constitution... we can inform the White Leaguers, Bulldozers, and Ku Klux Klan that as they could not defeat the North in the field of battle, they cannot defeat it in the field of political strife.”⁷ As late as 1892, an article in The Minneapolis Tribune ran titled “A Moral Hero: A Story of the Ku Klux Klan in the Palmetto State.” The article, written specifically for the Tribune by J.D. Andrews, paints a picture of a South paralyzed by the violence of southern whites who could not accept Black participation in government or the Republican Party:

“Outrage followed outrage, murder after murder was committed until the Republican party was almost demoralized... [Benjamin F.] Randolph, an intelligent, well educated young man, the first colored man to be elected to any office in the state, was shot down only a few days after his election... as he lay with upturned face, cold in death, his murderers coolly recharging their pistols mounted their horses and galloped away without an effort being made to restrain them.”⁸

A bestseller in the north, the novel *A Fool's Errand* was published in 1879 by Albion Tourgée, a white Union Army veteran who lived through Reconstruction in the south. The novel tells the story of Comfort Servosse, who is also a Union Army veteran who purchases a plantation in the south shortly after the end of the war. In his new home, he soon encounters the Klan, who leave a death threat at his house calling him a “nigger-worshipping Yankee

⁶ “Campaign Facts,” *DG*, Oct. 19th, 1880, pg. 1. An excerpt of Sherman’s letter to former Confederate officer Wade Hampton, then a Senator from South Carolina, accusing him of “enjoy[ing] the benefits of political power derived from the atrocities of the Ku Klux Klan,” was also published in “Matters Political,” *Owatonna Journal*, Oct. 29th, 1880, pg. 1.

⁷ “The South and Hancock,” *Rushford Star*, Aug. 5th, 1880, pg. 1.

⁸ “A Moral Hero: A Story of the Ku Klux Klan in the Palmetto State,” *MT*, Feb. 29th, 1892, pg. 6.

spy” who came south as a carpetbagger to “put niggers over white folks [by telling them] how they should vote and sit on juries and swear away white folks rights as much as they damn please.”⁹ Servosse always manages to evade the Klan’s assaults, but he witnesses and hears of how they tortured and lynched several of his neighbors and how they assassinated elected black officials in a campaign to “establish a serfdom (for Blacks) more barbarous and horrible than any on earth...”¹⁰ Congressmen at first abrogate responsibility for intervening to ensure civil rights for southern Blacks citing States’ Rights, and when they finally acquiesce to public outrage about the Klan, setting up a committee to investigate Klan activities and to prosecute them under the Enforcement Act of 1871, they succumb to public pressure to pardon those who were convicted.¹¹ “So the Ku-Klux was buried,” Tourgée declared, “such is the influence of peace and goodwill, when united with amnesty and pardon, that in a twelvemonth forgotten, and he who chanced to refer to [the Klan] was greeted with the laughter-provoking cry of the ‘bloody shirt.’”¹²

In the summer of 1885, J.C. Fremont, a free person, embarked on a lecture tour of southern Minnesota. He spoke in front of over a dozen audiences in small towns and cities: in temperance halls, churches, and courthouses. His lectures were on “matters pertaining to the South,” particularly the struggles of Black churches and schools and the outrages of the Ku Klux Klan.¹³ Many Minnesotan newspapers wrote positive reviews, claiming that his lecture was “highly appreciated,” “very good,” and overall, his efforts to educate Minnesotans on the Klan were “well spoken of.”¹⁴ The editor of the *Dodge County Republican* mused, “we wonder that the diabolical proceedings of the Ku Klux fiends has not been made public. Many a man unfortunate enough to be born with a black skin has suffered indignities from

⁹ Albion Tourgée, *A Fool’s Errand, By One of the Fools* (New York: Fords, Howard & Hulbert, 1879), 83-84.

¹⁰ Ibid., 171-172.

¹¹ Ibid., 210-212, 225-226, 284-285.

¹² Ibid., 284-285.

¹³ “J.C. Fremont,” *Mantorville and Kasson Express*, June 5th, 1885, pg. 2.

¹⁴ “Posters have been received...,” *Mantorville and Kasson Express*, May 15th, 1885, p. 3., “Farm Hill,” *Rochester Post*, June 19th, 1885, p. 2.

the above named demons.”¹⁵

Despite the praise he received in the press, few showed up for Fremont’s lectures. The *Dodge County Republican* reported that only three citizens of Kasson bought tickets for the lecture, none of whom attended.¹⁶ The *Pine Island Journal* and the *St. Charles Union* also reported low attendance.¹⁷ In addition to many Minnesotans being apathetic to J.C. Fremont’s lectures, a segment of the population was openly hostile to his message. The *Preston Democrat* celebrated the cancellation of Fremont’s lecture in a neighboring town due to poor weather and mocked the low attendance of the lecture in Preston.¹⁸ The *Democrat* argued the topic of the Klan was “too ancient and narrow to interest our [Preston’s] people.”¹⁹ To the editor, Fremont was merely a “coon,” and a “shalloped darkey (sic), who had learned to make his living without work,” trying to reinvigorate “old sectional feelings... doing a GREAT INJURY.”²⁰

The *Democrat’s* perspective reflected how, from the very beginning of Minnesotan newspaper coverage of the Klan, some editors expressed doubt that the Klan was real, or if it was real, it was not a problem. The *Federal Union* of Rochester, for instance, published an interview with a B.S. Cook, a resident of nearby Mantorville who had spent several months in the spring of 1869, where he remarked “lying newspaper correspondents as a public scourge... the lies which they publish to fire the northern mind – representing the lives and property of ‘loyal men’ as being subjected to constant peril by the mythical ‘Ku Klux.’”²¹ To Cook, these tall tales had “the tendency to keep out northern immigration and capital, and

¹⁵ “Claremont,” *Dodge County Republican*, June 4th, 1885, pg. 3.

¹⁶ “John C. Fremont,” *Dodge County Republican*, May 28th, 1885, pg. 3.

¹⁷ “But few were out to hear...,” *Pine Island Journal*, June 19th, 1885, p. 1., “The lecture given by J.C. Fremont...,” *St. Charles Union*, May 15th, 1885, pg. 3.

¹⁸ “The Lecture on the ‘Ku Klux Klan’,” *Preston Democrat*, Apr. 30th, 1885, p. 2.

¹⁹ “There is a new coon in town...,” *Preston Democrat*, Mar. 19th, 1885, p.3.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ “Things in Tennessee,” *Federal Union (Rochester)*, June 12th, 1869, pg. 2.

arrest[ed] the development of the country.”²² Others, such as one letter published in the *Minnesota Tribune*, defended the Klan as having legitimate grievances, fighting “radical” aspects of legislation, which were designed to “keep in subjection the Democratic Party of the North and to Africanize the South” and that the Klan was “neither section nor partisan, but eminently conservative and national in its organization and purposes.”²³ Or that they were “uphold[ing] law and order,” as a regulatory body protecting the south from “the bad men who had come among them after the war.”²⁴ Another form of denialism took the form of dismissing particularly egregious acts of terror as being the work of copycats of the Klan’s name and methods to rob people or settle personal debts.²⁵

Another phenomenon that muddled the waters as to the severity of the Klan was that just as the Klan borrowed its theatrics from popular culture, creators of popular culture began to borrow from the Klan as a source for entertainment. In *A Fool’s Errand*, Tourgée remarked, “the newspapers of the North unwittingly accustomed their readers to regard [the Klan] as a piece of the broadest and most ridiculous fun... a ghostly police to play upon the superstitious fears of the colored people... so the Northern patriot sat back in his safe and quiet home, and laughed himself into tears and spasms at the grotesque delineations of the ghostly K.K.K.’s and terrified darkies.”²⁶ One traveling circus which toured Minnesota in the fall of 1870, “Dan Castello’s Great Circus and Egyptian Caravan,” attempted to capitalize on this and featured in addition to gymnasts, acrobats, and clowns, a “side-splitting afterpiece, entitled the Ku Klux Klan, or the Initiation of Two Members into the Mystic Order.”²⁷ The following year, in 1871, Austin, the seat of Mower County, held its first “Ku-Klux” parade in

²² “Things in Tennessee,” *Federal Union (Rochester)*, June 12th, 1869, pg. 2., “Washington Correspondence,” *Chatfield Democrat*, Mar. 18th, 1871, pg. 2., “Washington Correspondence,” *Chatfield Democrat*, Apr. 1st, 1871, pg. 2. “The Presidency in 1880,” *DG*, July 18th, 1878, pg. 2.

²³ “Extent of the Ku Klux Klan,” *MT*, Apr. 22nd, 1868, pg. 2.

²⁴ “The Story of the Ku Klux,” *Rushford Star*, July 3rd, 1884, pg. 3., “Political Meetings,” *DG*, Nov. 1st, 1887, pg. 6.

²⁵ “General News,” *MT*, Sept. 16th, 1873, pg. 1.

²⁶ Tourgée, 162.

²⁷ “Advert: Dan Castello’s Great Circus and Egyptian Caravan,” *Lake City Leader*, Oct. 7th, pg. 7., “Dan Castello’s Great Circus and Egyptian Caravan - Advertisement,” *MT*, Oct. 8th, pg. 3.

conjunction with its annual Independence Day celebrations.²⁸ It was reported to be “an extended cavalcade of grotesque images representing every conceivable monstrosity upon the face of the earth besides, a thousand others that never existed, except in the wild imaginations of those who originated the performance.”²⁹ This tradition continued on the Fourth of July in Mower County into the first decade of the 20th century.³⁰

Meanwhile, in Washington D.C., in 1890, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge introduced the Federal Elections Bill, which provided for supervision of elections by federal officials and for the education of citizens on how the electoral process worked.³¹ In 1892, incumbent Republican President Benjamin Harrison who had an electoral plank promising all U.S. citizens the right “to cast one free and unrestricted ballot,” lost to Democrat Grover Cleveland, who had attacked the Lodge Bill in a public letter saying it was “a direct attack upon the spirit and theory of our government... it must be condemned by all those everywhere who love their country and... believe in True Democracy.”³² The bill failed, and there would be no further civil rights legislation introduced at the federal level until the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill in 1918. Republican William McKinley won the presidency in 1896 with the first Republican platform since the Civil War to omit the promise of federal force to enforce the Reconstruction Amendments.³³ Speaking in 1898 in Atlanta, McKinley said, “sectional lines no longer mar the map of the United States... every soldier’s grave made during our unfortunate Civil War is a tribute to American valor.”³⁴ Tourg  e believed that the

²⁸ “Independence Day,” *MCT*, July 6th, 1871, pg. 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ “Ku Klux,” *MCT*, June 13th, 1872, pg. 3., “The Fourth of July,” *MCT*, July 9th, 1874, pg. 3. “The Fourth in Austin,” *MCT*, July 6th, 1876, pg. 3., “Celebration of the Fourth At Austin,” *MCT*, July 8th, 1880, pg. 3., “The Glorious Fourth,” *MCT*, July 2nd, 1884, pg. 3. “Independence Day,” *MCT*, June 20th, 1888, pg. 1., “Le Roy,” *MCT*, July 6th, 1898, pg. 7. “Official Program,” *MCT*, July 1st, 1908, pg. 2.

³¹ Stanley P. Hirschson, *Farewell to the Bloody Shirt: Northern Republicans and the Southern Negro, 1877-1893* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), 202-204.

³² Hirschson, 239-244.

³³ Patrick J. Kelly, “The Election of 1896 and the Reconstruction of Civil War History,” *Civil War History* 49 no. 3 (2003), 255, 263-264.

³⁴ Clarence A. Bacote, “Negro Office Holders in Georgia Under President McKinley,” *Journal of Negro History* 44 no. 3 (1959), 235.

north and south were “simply convenient names for two distinct, hostile, and irreconcilable ideas” and argued that “if there is to remain one nation (the United States) on this territory we now occupy, it must be either a nation unified in sentiment and civilization, or one must dominate the other.”³⁵ What was intended as a warning in 1879 became fact by the end of the century, with the white southern interpretation of the war becoming accepted in the north.

American academics of this era, especially the well-respected Archibald Dunning of Columbia University and his followers, began publishing works espousing the “Lost Cause” of the Confederacy. Slavery in the south, to Dunning, had been the “*modus vivendi* through which social life was possible,” and, since Blacks were inferior to whites in his opinion, slavery had to be replaced “by some set of conditions which... must, in essence, express the same fact of racial inequality.”³⁶ As Dunning’s mentor, John Burgess wrote, enslaved people had been “in general, entirely contented” under the “superior intelligence of whites” and “it was the white man’s mission, his duty, and his right to hold the reigns of political power” even after the end of slavery.³⁷ Radical Republicans in Congress, to Dunningites, supposedly either acted out of spite against the people of the former Confederacy in retribution for the Civil War, out of some ideology divorced from the needs or capabilities of Blacks in the south, or out of personal greed *à la* corrupt political bosses like William Tweed who “exploit[ed] the poverty, ignorance, credulity and general ignorance of blacks” in securing their votes, as Dunning wrote in a 1901 article in the *Atlantic*.³⁸ Blacks that got elected to political office were said to have engaged in “corruption, shame, and vulgarity... plundering the treasury, increasing taxes, selling franchises, issuing bonds, and celebrating

³⁵ Tourgée, 340-341.

³⁶ Quoted in James S. Humphreys, “William Archibald Dunning: Flawed Colossus of American Letters,” in *The Dunning School: Historians, Race and the Meaning of Reconstruction* ed. John D. Smith and J. Vincent Lowry (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 84.

³⁷ Shepherd W. McKinley, “John W. Burgess: Godfather of the Dunning School,” in *The Dunning School: Historians, Race and the Meaning of Reconstruction* ed. John D. Smith and J. Vincent Lowry (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 60, 62.

³⁸ Quoted in Humphreys, 83, 86.

high carnival everywhere.”³⁹

However, most important for this study was Dunning’s interpretation of the Klan, which was said to have been comprised of “southern whites, subjugated by adversaries of their own race, thwarted the scheme which threatened permanent subjection to another race.”⁴⁰ It was “natural,” though “not praiseworthy,” historian John Burgess argued, that the Ku Klux Klan formed to take “the law into their own hands.”⁴¹ In Northfield, Minnesota, two literary societies of St. Olaf College hosted what they dubbed “A Southern Evening” in the Spring of 1899. Lecture topics included “The Future of Negro Suffrage,” which argued that blacks were presently unfit for voting rights, and “An Unsuccessful Raid of the Ku Klux Klan,” which the paper describes as “a vivid depiction of the way justice (?) was provided for in the south not so very long ago, and the way that the sentence of the court (?) was for once not carried out.”⁴²

The Klan presented in Northfield’s “Southern Evening” was reinforced in Minnesota through popular fiction in the works of Thomas Dixon, in particular his trilogy of novels set in the south during Reconstruction: *The Leopard’s Spots* (1902), *The Clansman* (1905), and *The Traitor* (1907). Dixon, like the Dunningites, describes Black lawmakers of the Reconstruction era as corrupt, intent on taxing white farmers to the point of bankruptcy and spending the revenues on gambling.⁴³ The main character of *The Clansman*, Ben Cameron, the son of a former plantation owner, is arrested without a warrant by Black Union troops who want to arrest a random white man so they could collect reward money for an unsolved murder.⁴⁴ Ben’s father, Dr. Richard Cameron, writes an editorial in a local paper denouncing the arrest, but he is arrested, and the local newspaper is demolished with sledgehammers and

³⁹ McKinley, 62-63.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Humphreys, 86-87.

⁴¹ Quoted in McKinley, 64.

⁴² “Clionian-Chrestomathian,” *Northfield News*, Mar. 4th, 1899, pg. 4.

⁴³ Thomas Dixon, *The Clansman* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 266-267, 277.

⁴⁴ Dixon, 217-219.

set on fire by Union soldiers.⁴⁵ These crimes against white southerners, of dubious historical veracity, justify Dixon's white southern characters creating the Ku Klux Klan, an organization designed to restore law and order.

The law and order meted out to the supposedly unruly Blacks is expressed in the climactic scene of *The Clansman*, when the Klan apprehends Gus, a black man accused of raping a white woman. Dixon's Klan does not immediately lynch Gus when they seize him but instead take him to a cave on the edge of town where they try him. After a chaplain reads a prayer, the "Grand Cyclops" [Leader of the local Klan] opens the proceedings by stating, "we are met tonight at the request of the Grand Dragon [State Commander-in-Chief of the Klan]... to constitute a High Court for the trial of a case involving life... Let the Grand Scribe read the objects of the Order on which your authority rests."⁴⁶ The Grand Scribe reads from *The Prescript of the Order of the Invisible Empire*, which in addition to declaring that the Klan is a benevolent organization created to protect white southerners, goes to great lengths to claim to be operating within the laws and customs of the United States. The Klan's stated aims according to Dixon are "to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States, and all the laws passed in conformity thereto... [and] to aid and assist in the execution of all Constitutional laws, and to protect the people from unlawful seizure, and from trial except by their peers in conformity to the laws of the land." Ultimately, they find Gus 'guilty,' through a combination of circumstantial evidence and a 'confession' by Gus induced by hypnosis, and they lynch him. The Klan subsequently rides through town to the cheers of the white populace, who rejoice at the restoration of white supremacy and law and order.

A 1906 review of *The Clansman* in the *Minneapolis Tribune* stated, "[the Klan's] truths were unknown North of the Mason and Dixon line, save in isolate instances, until Thomas Dixon, Jr. wrote his two powerful novels, 'The Leopard's Spots,' and 'The Clansman.' These

⁴⁵ Dixon, 227-230.

⁴⁶ Dixon, 320.

books have proven a revelation to the North, where they have been read as widely as in the South.”⁴⁷ The *Minneapolis Journal*’s “Book News and Gossip” section claimed the Dixon’s books would “awaken a new sympathy in the North for the South” as Reconstruction was “a period of horrors worse than the war itself” for whites living in the former Confederacy.⁴⁸ To attest to the historical veracity of his works, Dixon claimed in an interview with the *Minneapolis Tribune* that he had spent thousands of dollars of his own money on buying books on researching the Klan and Reconstruction. In order to research Thaddeus Stevens, the basis of Dixon’s Austin Stoneman in *The Clansman*, he claimed to have spent \$2,000 (approximately \$57,000 in 2021 dollars when adjusted for inflation) on books.⁴⁹ In another paragraph describing the Klan, he claimed to have spent \$300 on books and embarked on a special trip to Nashville to undertake “exhaustive research.”⁵⁰ Just as Tourg  e followed up the success of *A Fool’s Errand* with non-fiction works on the Klan, Dixon capitalized on the popularity of *The Clansman* by writing a non-fiction article titled “The Truth About the Ku Klux Klan” for the *Metropolitan* magazine in September 1905.⁵¹ A *Duluth Herald* review of the article claimed: “when it is stated that the author of this paper is Thomas Dixon, Jr.... the authenticity of the information cannot be questioned.”⁵²

In addition to reading Dixon’s books and articles, Minnesotans could also see adaptations of his works in live theatrical performances in the Twin Cities and Duluth.⁵³ A photograph published in the *Duluth Herald* of the Duluth production of the play shows the Klan assembling for the trial of Gus in their cave headquarters.⁵⁴ The clansmen are dressed in identical white robes, all with a patch of the Christian cross attached to their chests, rather

⁴⁷ “Story of the Ku Klux Klan,” *MT*, Apr. 15th, 1906, pg. 28.

⁴⁸ “Book News and Gossip,” *MJ*, Mar. 11th, 1905, pg. 4.

⁴⁹ “Thomas Dixon – The Man and His Work,” *MT*, Feb. 5th, 1905, pg. 12.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ “The Magazines,” *MJ*, Aug. 22nd, 1905, pg. 4.

⁵² “The Magazines for September,” *DH*, Sept. 4th, 1905, pg. 10.

⁵³ “Theatrical Offering of Unusual Merit,” *Aitkin Age*, July 30th, 1907, pg. 1., “Metropolitan – The Clansman,” *MT*, Apr. 27th, 1906, pg. 4. “The Clansman,” *DH*, Sept. 3, 1906, pg. 6.

⁵⁴ See Figure 6.

than the hideous monsters that might have been seen at a Mower County Fourth of July celebration. The *Minneapolis Tribune* gave the play a positive review, stating the “negro problem [is] brought forcefully and vividly home to the spectator... one sees and feels the eternal difference between the white skin and the black, excuses the organization of the Ku Klux Klan and rejoices in its timely interference with the consummation of that ‘equality’ between the white and black races.”⁵⁵

In addition to pro-southern plays about the Klan, Minnesotans could also read memoirs of former Klan members in local newspapers. In 1907, the *Minneapolis Tribune* published an interview with a former Klan member, Confederate Captain Josiah Percy, who insisted that Klan members took an oath of loyalty to the United States.⁵⁶ He repeated a defense common among Klan sympathizers that the “depredations” of the Klan were conducted by imitators, whom he and the other members of the Klan condemned then and at present. Another interview with a former Klan member, in a 1905 edition of the *Duluth Evening Herald*, had a former Confederate about sealing a Northern detective in a barrel and throwing him into the Mississippi River, only to be fished out dead several days later. The former Klansman stated that he had “never been ashamed of [his] connection with that organization,” as “radical hands, scalawags, carpetbaggers... had reduced the land to sorrow.”⁵⁷

Above all else, however, it was a film that did the most to change attitudes in Minnesota about the Klan. In February 1915, the most financially successful film in American history thus far was released: *The Birth of a Nation*. It was an adaptation of Dixon’s *The Leopard’s Spots* and *The Clansman*, and the film’s publicists advertised in Minnesotan newspapers that it cost unprecedented \$500,000 to produce and required the use of 18,000 actors and 3,000

⁵⁵ “Metropolitan – The Clansman,” *MT*, Apr. 27th, 1906, pg. 4.

⁵⁶ “Haskin’s Personal Stories,” *MT*, Mar. 19th, 1907, pg. 3.

⁵⁷ “Terrible Vengeance,” *DH*, Oct. 11th, 1905, pg. 13.

horses.⁵⁸ Although publicists exaggerated these numbers, the film still impressed moviegoers in terms of technical innovation and scale.⁵⁹ A review of the film in the *Duluth Herald* declared, “nothing approaching it has yet been seen in motion pictures... it is thrillingly realistic. It amazes and awes.”⁶⁰ The rights to the film in seventeen states west of the Mississippi, including Minnesota, were purchased by the Elliot and Sherman Film Company, based in Minneapolis, for a record 200,000 dollars.⁶¹ By October 1915, the pair had received five sets of reels for the film and planned to open the film simultaneously in Duluth, Minneapolis, and St. Paul.⁶²

However, the arrival of *The Birth of a Nation* in the Twin Cities was not without controversy. A journalist from the *Appeal*, a Black-owned newspaper from Minneapolis, wrote the following review after attending an advance press screening of the film:

We unhesitatingly and unqualifiedly declare that we failed to discover one redeeming feature in it or, a plausible reason for its existence... How any human being who possesses the slightest belief in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, can derive one iota of pleasure from viewing such scenes as are depicted, we are unable to realize.⁶³

Another weekly Minneapolis-based African-American-owned newspaper: *The Twin City Star*, started a petition signed by hundreds of Minnesotans to block the screening of the film in Minneapolis.⁶⁴

In response to the protests against the film coming to the Twin Cities, the mayor of Minneapolis, Republican Wallace G. Nye, stated that he would not allow the film to be

⁵⁸ Melvyn Stokes, *D.W. Griffith's The Birth of a Nation: A History of the Most Controversial Motion Picture of All Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 106.

⁵⁹ Stokes, 84, 283 (n. 25). “Birth of a Nation,” *Warren Sheaf*, June 21st, 1916, pg. 1.

⁶⁰ “The Birth of a Nation,” *DH*, Nov. 15th, 1915, pg. 5.

⁶¹ “Local Men Get Rights for ‘Birth of a Nation’,” *MT*, Oct. 11th, 1915, pg. 7.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ “The Birth of a Nation,” *Appeal*, Oct. 23rd, 1915, pg. 2.

⁶⁴ “New Life Lease for ‘Birth of a Nation,’ Seen,” *MT*, Nov. 22nd, 1915, pg. 1.

shown in the city.⁶⁵ When the movie opened for the public in the Twin Cities on October 31st, 1915, Mayor Nye immediately revoked the license of the Shubert Theatre where the film was being shown.⁶⁶ In response, a District Court judge intervened on behalf of the owner of the Shubert to prevent its closure, yet this “stay of execution” for the film (as the *Minneapolis Morning Tribune* worded it) expired less than two weeks later with the last screening taking place on November 10th. A ban was also successfully passed in nearby St. Paul, where Acting Mayor Henry McColl and the city council voted unanimously to prevent the film from being shown in the city auditorium.⁶⁷ In Duluth, a delegation of Black activists led by pastor George Holt filed a complaint with the city council concerning the racist themes of the film.⁶⁸ As a result, they received an audience with the city’s Public Safety Commissioner, and it was agreed that any parts of the film deemed unacceptable by the delegation would be cut from Duluth’s showings of the film.⁶⁹ In the end, the municipal government allowed the film to be screened in Duluth, albeit with a few scenes removed.⁷⁰

Immediately after Mayor Nye announced the film’s ban in Minneapolis, A.G. Bainbridge, the manager of the Shubert Theatre, appealed his case to the Minnesota Supreme Court, and shortly afterward, on November 19th, 1915, the court announced its verdict.⁷¹ The court found Mayor Nye to have the power to revoke the Shubert’s license, as Nye had “investigated [the film] properly, and then had used his discretion, a thing which he had the power to do.”⁷² With Nye’s legal victory secured, the *Tribune* deemed it to be “the end of [the] fight,” yet public demand was still high. It was reported in *The Tribune* that on the final days of the film’s first run, over 1000 people in line for the film had to be turned away from The Shubert

⁶⁵ “A Damnable Photo-Play,” *Twin City Star*, Oct. 16th, 1915, pg. 9.

⁶⁶ “Supreme Court Last Hope of Film Show Unless Nye Relents,” *MT*, Nov. 9th, 1915, pg. 11.

⁶⁷ “It Pays to Agitate,” *Appeal*, Nov. 13th, 1915, pg. 2.

⁶⁸ “Opposition is Aroused,” *DH*, Oct. 18th, 1915, pg. 2, “Film May be Operated On,” *DH*, Oct. 19th, 1915, pg. 9.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ “Will Denature Film,” *DH*, Oct. 20th, 1915, pg. 3.

⁷¹ “‘Birth of a Nation’ Decision Given Nye by Supreme Court,” *MT*, Nov. 20th, 1915, pg. 22.

⁷² *Ibid.*

as the theatre was at capacity.⁷³ Students at the Minneapolis Central High School were also reportedly scheming to bring the film to their auditorium in the wake of the Shubert's closure in order to raise funds for a new athletic grounds.⁷⁴

On November 22nd, Mayor Nye announced a compromise on the film after being petitioned by several leading citizens of Minneapolis to allow the film to be screened. Nye's solution would be a panel of one hundred citizens from some of the city's leading citizens' groups would convene and pass judgment on the film.⁷⁵ Nye stated that he felt that the case was "too big a problem for one man to decide... I wish to be fair to both sides of the controversy." The committee's members would be drawn from the following organizations:

"the Catholic Women's League, the Council of Jewish Women, Civic and Commerce Association, Drama League, Fifth District Woman's Club, Parents and Teachers' Association, Social Service Club, Woman's Club, Teachers' Club, United Union Card and Label council, Trades and Labor Assembly, Building Trades Council, Joint Improvement Association, Women's Welfare League, Y. M. C. A., Y. W. C. A. and the Minneapolis Press Club."

It took only three days for the censorship committee, comprised of 97 members, to return their verdict on the film.⁷⁶ Members were asked whether they agreed that the film should be shown from the following standpoints: "Artistic" – 87 said yes, 3 said no. From a "Historic Standpoint," 87 said yes, 3 said no. From a "Moral Standpoint," 80 said yes, 10 said no. From a "Racial Standpoint," 73 said yes, 17 said no. That evening, *The Birth of a Nation*, having been given the *imprimatur* from the censorship committee, reopened at the Shubert Theatre.

The Birth of a Nation would go on to have 239 showings in Minneapolis, a record for a

⁷³ "Supreme Court Last Hope of Film Show Unless Nye Relents," *MT*, Nov. 9th, 1915, pg. 11.

⁷⁴ "'Birth of a Nation' May Continue Here," *MT*, Nov. 21st, 1915, pg. 19.

⁷⁵ "New Life Lease for 'Birth of a Nation', Seen," *MT*, Nov. 22nd, 1915, pg. 1.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

motion picture in the city with its run ending in February 1916.⁷⁷ Following its showings in Minneapolis and Duluth, the film was shown in smaller towns and cities across rural Minnesota, including Aitkin, Albert Lea, Austin, Faribault, Hector, New Ulm, Northfield, Princeton, Rochester, Warren, and Willmar, playing for several days at local movie theatres, or an armory or opera hall if no theatre was available.⁷⁸ The film was shown each time accompanied by a full orchestra, providing the soundtrack to the film just as they had in Minnesota's metropolises. In towns such as Bemidji and Owatonna, locals were expecting thousands to come to see the show by train and local merchants offered special deals to coincide with the film and special chartered trains were hired to bring in the spectators.⁷⁹

Many audience members not only appreciated the spectacle of the film, but were convinced of its supposed historical accuracy. Minneapolis School Superintendent Dr. F. E. Spaulding, went on the record endorsing the film as the "most wonderful and instructive pictorial lesson in the history of this nation that [he has] ever seen."⁸⁰ The educational value of the film was also recognized by the International Falls school board which made arrangements for its students to see the film so as to teach them "history of that important era in our national life" and the "necessity for unusual courage during unusual periods of lawlessness."⁸¹ The *Brainerd Daily Dispatch* remarked that the film's depiction of newly freed blacks "rioting in the deliciousness of liberty so new and untried" was "exactly true to history." A reporter for the *Duluth Herald* present at a showing in the city wrote "the Lyceum audience cheered the gathering of the clansmen and the shooting down of the negroes. The

⁷⁷ "Birth of a Nation," *MT*, Feb. 13th, 1916, pg. 14.

⁷⁸ "The Birth of a Nation," *Zumbrota News*, Jan. 7th, 1916, pg. 2, "The Birth of the Nation," *Ellendale Eagle*, Jan. 20th, 1916, pg. 3, "'Birth of a Nation' Booked at Armory," *New Ulm Review*, Mar 8th, 1916, pg. 10, "The Birth of a Nation," *Lyle Tribune*, Mar. 31st, 1916, pg. 1, "Horrors of Reconstruction," *Princeton Union*, June 1st, 1916, pg. 2, "Ku Klux Klan's Warning to It's Victims," *Aitkin Age*, June 3rd, 1916, pg. 4, "Vivid Pictures from the Sixties," *Willmar Tribune*, June 14th, 1916, pg. 1, "The Birth of a Nation" *Warren Sheaf*, June 28th, 1916, pg. 1, "Birth of a Nation – Advert," *Northfield News*, Dec. 5th, 1916, pg. 4.

⁷⁹ "Feature Play to Draw Crowds," *Daily People's Press (Owatonna)*, Jan. 7th, 1916, pg. 1. "Bemidji to be Host to Thousands Next Week," *BDP*, May 20th, 1916, pg. 1. "Trains Bringing Many to City to See Big Picture," *BDP*, May 22nd, 1916, pg. 1.

⁸⁰ "Dr. Spaulding O.K.'s 'Birth of a Nation'", *MT*, Oct. 17th, 1915, pg. 9.

⁸¹ "Many favorable comments...", *International Falls Press and Border Report*, Nov. 9th, 1916, pg. 4.

audience applauded the refusal of the “‘Little Colonel’ to shake hands with the mulatto Lynch.”⁸²

To capitalize on the popularity of the film, in December 1915, the Red Cross of Minneapolis organized a parade to raise funds for their organization and to raise awareness of preventable diseases.⁸³ The parade also featured a band, nurses, and leaders of local charitable organizations. They were led by a contingent of “Society Girls” dressed as members of the Ku Klux Klan atop horses. The parade was such a success that it was filmed and shown in local theatres, and in the following December 1916, the Red Cross rode again as the Ku Klux Klan.⁸⁴ There was also the creation of a new Boy Scout-like group for rural Minnesotans called the “Ku Klux Cavaliers” and parade in January 1917 at the St. Paul Outdoor Sports Carnival given by the Minneapolis Automobile Trade Association, which featured over 500 automobiles and 1000 “night riders” in full Klan regalia.⁸⁵ The embrace of the Klan by white Minnesotan businessmen, charitable organizations, and youth groups goes to show how much the Klan had become part of white Minnesotans’ heritage just as much as it was a part of the heritage of white southerners and it was a part that many white Minnesotans were proud.

⁸² “The Birth of a Nation,” *DH*, Nov. 15th, 1915, pg. 5.

⁸³ “Society Girls as Ku Klux Klan Feature in Mid-Week Motion Picture Film,” *MT*, Dec. 17th, 1915, pg. 11., “Red Cross Parade Draws Hundreds of Holiday Shoppers,” *MT*, Dec. 12th, 1915, pg. 11.

⁸⁴ “Big Parade to Open Health and Happiness Week in Minneapolis,” *MT*, Dec. 1st, 1916, pg. 4.

⁸⁵ “Ku Klux Cavaliers is ‘Boy Scout’ Move for Farm Boys,” *MT*, May 14th, 1916, pg. 27, “Ku Klux Klan Is Coming! Girl Night Riders in This Raid, Too,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, Jan. 25th, 1917, pg. 7, “Ku Klux Klan Who Will Invade St. Paul,” *MT*, Jan. 28th, 1917, pg. 26.

Chapter IV: Wartime Vigilantism, 1917-1918

Shortly after the First World War began, the Entente powers cut the underwater telegraph lines leading out of Germany and implemented a naval blockade cutting Germany off from goods and mail going to and coming from the United States.¹ American exports to the Central powers were reduced to nil by 1916, while the value of American exports to the Entente powers increased nearly fourfold.² There was lobbying on the part of groups like the National Security League for both the government and the American populace to prepare for intervention, and an act of congress expanded the military.³ Still, there was considerable anti-war sentiment amongst the American people, and President Wilson was re-elected in 1916 after running on an anti-intervention platform.⁴

Meanwhile, nativism, which had been growing in strength among the white American public since the 1890s, was growing stronger. The *Minnesota Tribune* ran an editorial declaring the “Hyphen Must Go!” to argue against immigrants identifying as German-American or Swedish-American.⁵ The Norwegian *Minneapolis Tidende*, one of the most widely circulated foreign language papers in Minnesota, responded to this, arguing it was not “unpatriotic or un-American to use the shorter term “Norwegian American” or “English American” to identify as an American of Norwegian or English Ancestry.”⁶ The *New Ulm Review* also defended the ethnic heritage of its much of its readership from the heavily German-American Brown County, editorializing “by German-Americans we mean American citizens of German blood, who are first for their country, but have a great sympathy (and it is

¹ Frederick Leubke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 85-86. Walter D. Kamphoefner, “Language and Loyalty among German-Americans in World War I,” *Journal of Austrian-American History* 3 no. 1 (2019), 12-13.

² Benjamin Fordham, “Revisionism Reconsidered: Exports and American Intervention in World War I,” *International Organization* 61 no. 2 (2007), 286.

³ Manuel Franz, “Preparedness Revisited: Civilian Societies and the Campaign for American Defense, 1914-1920,” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 17 no. 4 (2018), 670.

⁴ Carl S. Chrislock, *Ethnicity Challenged: The Upper Midwest Norwegian-American Experience in World War I* (Northfield: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1981), 128.

⁵ Carl S. Chrislock, *Watchdog of Loyalty: The Minnesota Commission of Public Safety During World War I* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1991), 21.

⁶ Quoted in Chrislock, 1981, 44.

right that they should have it) for the Fatherland.”⁷ In the months and years leading up to American entry into the war, it was acceptable in Minnesota to be pro- or anti-intervention without the risk of violence.

Following the declaration of war, however, Minnesotans who were skeptical of or against American intervention would find there was to be no free expression regarding the war. “The debate is closed,” editorialized the *Duluth Herald*, “the issue is no longer ‘shall we enter the war or keep out of it?’ The issue is whether the nation being at war, will you support the government or oppose it.”⁸ The *Duluth Herald* also reassured its readers that America had “no quarrel with the German people. Our quarrel is with the Hohenzollern and all it stands for.”⁹ The *Willmar Journal* argued that Americans of German birth should “realize that this war is not against the people of Germany, but against the system of government which drove them and many of their ancestors away from the old country...”¹⁰ This system of government was called “Prussianism” by many pro-war Americans as a way of reducing the German peoples’ blame for the war, which had up until the First World War been a key part of freedom-loving Anglo-Saxon racial myth in the Progressive era, from the actions of their autocratic government and its seemingly brainwashed supporters.¹¹ It is also important to note that “Hun” was not a common anti-German slur before the war, it having stemmed from a speech by Wilhelm II to German soldiers departing to quell the Boxer Uprising, instructing the troops to take no prisoners as Attila the Hun once did, and “make the name German

⁷ Carl S. Chrislock, *The Progressive Era in Minnesota: 1899-1918* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1971), 98.

⁸ “The Debate is Closed,” *DH*, Apr. 4th, 1917, pg. 8.

⁹ “The War Flame Reaches America,” *DH*, Apr. 6th, 1917, pg. 12.

¹⁰ “When all the American citizens...” *Willmar Journal*, Apr. 14th, 1917, pg. 1. See also: “A Naturalized Patriot,” *DH*, Apr. 12th, 1917, pg. 8., “U.S. Fights for Free Germany,” *People’s Press (Owatonna)*, Apr. 17th, 1917, pg. 1., “Kaiser and President,” *BDP*, Apr. 17th, 1917, pg. 2., “There is thoughtless talk...,” *Warren Sheaf*, Apr. 18th, 1917, pg. 4.

¹¹ Joseph M. Sicarusa, “American Policy Makers, World War I, and the Menace of Prussianism, 1914-1920,” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 17 no. 2 (1998), 22-24. The idea of “Prussianism” being the cause of the war was disseminated in Minnesota in pamphlets such as Douglas Wilson Johnson, *The Peril of Prussianism* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1917), particularly 7-18, which according to Stephen J. Gross, in “‘Perils of Prussianism,’ Main Street German America, Local Autonomy, and the Great War,” *Agricultural History* 78 no. 1 (2004), 79-80, was ordered by the German-American editor of the *Richmond Standard* for distribution in the heavily German-American Stearns County.

remembered in China for a thousand years so that no Chinaman will ever again dare to even squint at a German!”¹² During the war this speech was brought up by the Entente powers to cast the German government as the aggressors in the conflict. Thus, was not simply ethnic Germans who were targeted for vigilantism and instead, it was “pro-Germans” and “slackers” who were targeted by vigilantes for their actions which hindered the war effort.

Soon Minnesota became part of the “Home Front,” a term so new that it was coined during the First World War itself, a product of the industrialization of war. In the era of trench warfare, as historian Ronald Schaffer remarked, “victory depended not just on the courage, weapons, and skills of those who fought, but also on the productivity and endurance of people at home.”¹³ Productivity was ensured through two means: first, a spirit of voluntarism in vogue during the Progressive era. Minnesotans were expected to grow “victory gardens,” conserve resources, donate to the Red Cross, and buy war bonds.¹⁴ Secondly, for those who could not be inspired to participate in the war effort voluntarily, the federal government enacted a series of laws that restricted civil rights in order to prevent interference with the war effort such as the Espionage Act. As the federal government did not have the personnel to enforce these laws, they got the Bureau of Investigation to partner with a nationwide vigilante group known as the American Protective League, which included over 250,000 people at its height.¹⁵ APL operatives conducted wiretappings, searches of property, the opening of mail suspected to be containing seditious materials, and carried out “slacker raids” where they rounded up men of draft age and forced them to prove they had signed up for the draft.¹⁶

¹² Quoted in Jan Kocvar, “Germany and the Boxer Uprising in China,” *West Bohemian Historical Review* 5 no. 2 (2015), 148.

¹³ Ronald Schaffer, *America in the Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), xi.

¹⁴ Celai Malone Kingsbury, *For Home and Country: World War I Propaganda on the Home Front* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 7, 27-35, 170-174, 194.

¹⁵ Schaffer, 17-18.

¹⁶ Ibid.

In Minnesota, further measures were taken to supplement federal laws mandating participation in the war effort during World War I. These included laws to ban “criminal syndicalism,” which attempted to ban the IWW, registration for all foreign-born persons in the state, and the formation of a committee: the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety which wielded nearly dictatorial powers to implement orders to manage the home front.¹⁷ Based in St. Paul, the MCPS started meeting regularly in the spring of 1917 to coordinate law enforcement in the state. The MCPS quickly set up the volunteer Home Guard, which soon grew to over 7000 members, complete with a “Motor Corps,” which was ready to drive to every corner of Minnesota in the event of pro-Germans causing trouble.¹⁸ Soon, all county-level public safety organizations were made to report directly to the MCPS and the MCPS shortly after summoned all county sheriffs to a meeting to ensure they were following MCPS directives.¹⁹ The MCPS also hired private detectives to spy on suspected slackers, but by the end of 1917, it had switched to using APL volunteers.²⁰

Within a week of the American declaration of war against Germany, Minneapolis's Civic & Commerce Association also decided to organize the “Citizens Auxiliary:” a volunteer constabulary that had been proposed earlier in 1916 to deal with ordinary crime.²¹ In order to avoid being considered a paramilitary organization which Minnesota law prohibited, the organizers of the Auxiliary suggested it was merely a means to give local businessmen “the fundamentals of military training” in case their services were “needed by the War Department.”²² Letters soon flooded into CCA’s head offices, with one local businessman offering his services to the organization with the following assurance:

¹⁷ Chrislock, 1991, 51-59, 88-91.

¹⁸ Ibid., 99-102.

¹⁹ Ibid., 99.

²⁰ Ibid., 271.

²¹ “City’s Problems Outlined Before Six O’Clock Club,” *MT*, Mar. 21st, 1916, pg. 1,3. “Letter to the Editor from G.W.T.,” *MT*, Mar. 28th, 1916, pg. 6. “Mayor to Accept Staley’s Findings in Police Inquiry,” *MT*, Mar. 22nd, 1916, pg. 12.

²² “Letter to Newton D. Baker,” War Records Commission, “Civilian Auxiliary and Home Guards,” Minnesota Historical Society Archives.

“I am one who favors some patriotic organization that will stand ready to use force whenever necessary to put down disloyalty in Minnesota. A good punch in the jaw should be ready for any foreigner or Socialist who dares opens his mouth in opposition to the United States. That is what this mayor (Van Lear) needs, in my opinion. I wouldn’t be surprised if we have to lynch him inside of a month unless the government takes care of him.”²³

The letter, now in the Minnesota Historical Society archives, bears a note in pencil stating that its author had been inducted into the organization. The CCA ordered surplus rifles, infantry drill manuals, and uniforms to equip its private army, and Archbishop Ireland of St. Paul offered up grounds at the University of St. Thomas for them to drill on.²⁴ It was, however, unclear for what purpose this paramilitary organization would be used.

In August 1917, workers for the Twin Cities Rapid Transit Company decided to unionize with the International Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees, and their first order of business was to ask for a raise. After conferring with his CCA colleagues, the president of the TCRTC, Horace Lowry, decided to fire all employees who had joined the union, and soon the TCRTC had a strike on their hands. In September 1917, the 600-man Citizens Auxiliary was deputized by Minneapolis Sheriff Langum (who himself had been endorsed by the CCA for mayor in the 1916 election but lost) in order to suppress the strike, which started on Oct. 6th.²⁵ In Minneapolis, the Citizen’s Auxiliary, armed with service rifles, dispersed the crowd while in St. Paul, the National Guard, not yet sent overseas, also broke up the strike. Soon after, the MCPS stepped in to negotiate, and

²³ “Letter from H.K. Young,” War Records Commission, “Civilian Auxiliary and Home Guards,” Minnesota Historical Society Archives.

²⁴ “Telegram to Military Publishing Company,” April 10th, 1917, “Letter to Mr. Cady,” April, 18th, 1917, “Letter to Bannerman Company, New York City,” April 26th, 1917, “Letter to J.W. Jackson,” May 3rd, 1917, War Records Commission, “Civilian Auxiliary and Home Guards,” Minnesota Historical Society Archives. “College of St. Thomas,” *Irish Standard* (St. Paul), Sept. 1st, 1917, pg. 2.

²⁵ This narrative of the strike is outlined in William Millikan, *Union Against Unions: The Minneapolis Citizens Alliance and its Fight Against Organized Labor, 1903-1947* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2003), 125-140.

both sides agreed to a compromise by which management would rehire most dismissed employees, wages would increase by 10%, and the question of unionization would be settled after the war's end. Not all streetcar workers were pleased with this, and some continued to wear pro-union buttons on their uniforms, leading to them being fired again, leading to another strike, this time receiving the sympathy of some of the city's other unions. The Citizens Auxiliary was once again called into service in Minneapolis, while in St. Paul, TCRTC management appealed to Gov. Burnquist to send in the Home Guard to suppress the strike gatherings. Before the general strike was to take place on Dec. 13th, however, the unions agreed to arbitration with the President's Mediation Commission. Arbitration in this fashion became standard practice for the remainder of the war for moderate unions who subscribed to AFL leader Samuel Gompers' policy of cooperation with the government during the war.²⁶

In addition to creating the Citizens Auxiliary, the CCA was also responsible for creating the Minneapolis branch of the APL.²⁷ H.M. Gardner, the Vice President of the CCA, appointed Charles G. Davis to be the branch chief, then appointed captains for each of the eleven districts of Minneapolis, who were in charge of a total of 491 operatives and officers.²⁸ On March 25th, 1918, the APL organized their first "slacker raid," sending 120 agents to the Gateway district, home to many of the city's boarding houses. The agents went room to room at night asking for draft papers, ultimately arresting around 100 people, 21 of whom were deserters or draft dodgers.²⁹ A second raid on Apr. 6th led to 1,150 men being taken into custody, of whom 27 were charged for non-compliance with the draft. Raids in the Central

²⁶ William M. Dick, *Labor and Socialism in America: The Gompers Era* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1972), 137.

²⁷ Millikan, 2003, 108-109.

²⁸ Operative No. 71 [Pseud.], *Summary and Report of War Service* (Minneapolis: American Protective League, Minneapolis Division, 1919), 1-2.

²⁹ Emerson Hough, *The Web: A Revelation of Patriotism* (Chicago: Riley and Lee, 1919), 314.

District and at the grounds of the Ringling Bros. Circus later that year but netted only 12 draft dodgers.³⁰

In September 1917, the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* reported the “first blood shed” of an anti-war activist.³¹ Allegedly a man named Arthur Bryan interrupted “two religious streetcorner orators” in Red Wing, then launched into his own speech about how the US should not be in the war.³² When a mob formed around him, he jumped into a nearby car to escape, but the car was soon stopped and Bryan was dragged out, beaten, and kicked. Bryan was later arrested for disorderly conduct, while no one in the mob was charged. In April 1918, in Minneapolis, a French-Canadian machinist named Philip Barrill at the Emerson-Brantingham Company was grabbed by a “dozen willing decorators” and was brushed down with yellow paint. Barrill was then forced to wear signs reading “I’m Pro-Kaiser” and was forced onto a nearby streetcar so that he could be shown off to the public. The motive for the attack was that Barrill had allegedly not bought any Liberty Loans and had been previously fired for espousing anti-war views.³³ The following month, a five-hundred strong mob of employees from the machine shops of the Chicago, Milwaukee, & St. Paul Railroad doused the tools and workspace of one of their fellow employees with yellow paint and threatened to tar and feather the man if he did not contribute to the Red Cross. The *Minneapolis Tribune* noted that the mob was led by Anton Geisbauer, a German immigrant who [had] been in America only a few years.”³⁴ These three cases reflect how most incidents of wartime vigilantism in Minnesota went unpunished. A letter from MCPS mailed to Minnesotan newspaper editors in January 1918 suggested they publish an article titled “One Cure for Disloyalty,” which advised Minnesotans on how to deal with disloyalty after “reasonable

³⁰ Ibid., 315.

³¹ “Anti-War Talk Ends as Crowd Beats Speaker in Near Riot,” *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, Sept. 23rd, 1917, “Curb Orator Jailed,” *St. Paul Daily News*, Sept. 23rd, 1917, both clippings in Charles W. and Mary Lesley Ames Papers, “National Nonpartisan League, 1917-1920,” Minnesota Historical Society Archives.

³² Ibid.

³³ “Coat of Yellow Paint Works Conversion of Liberty Bond Slacker,” *MT*, Apr. 24th, 1918, pg. 11.

³⁴ “Red Cross Slacker Gets Yellow Paint Reception,” *MT*, May 23rd, 1918, pg. 15.

argument fails and information given is not accepted in the effort to bring about a change of heart.”³⁵ It gives the example of a man who pulled a Red Cross pin off of another man and threw it into a spittoon. In retaliation, a “crowd of loyalists” beat him “to a pulp,” before the alleged disloyalist was arrested and fined, while the loyalists are assumed to have met no punishment themselves.³⁶ Thusly, victims of wartime vigilantism in Minnesota were targeted for their perceived anti-war beliefs or their lack of participation in the war effort.

Membership in the newly formed Nonpartisan League was seen by many Minnesotans as being indicative of one holding anti-war views, even though the organization did not actively oppose the war after it was declared in 1917.

Prior to US intervention in World War I, the NPL was focused exclusively on state-level politics and allowed to decide for themselves whom to vote for in terms of the presidency. When the war was declared on the Central Powers, the NPL quickly backed the federal government’s decision to enter the war. A widely circulated NPL pamphlet published in June 1917, asserted “whatever ideas we as individuals may have had, as to the wisdom of our nation engaging in this war, we realize that a crisis now confronts us... we stand unreservedly pledged to safeguard, defend and preserve our country,” and at the September 1917 NPL convention in St. Paul delegates reiterated that they pledged “our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor to our country and our flag in this, OUR WAR.”³⁷ While the NPL did not cease criticism of government policy, their remarks were invariably tempered by the need for an efficient home front and to support their troops overseas. Townley argued “it is absolute insanity for us... to believe that this nation can succeed in war when hundreds of

³⁵ Letter to “The Editor,” Minnesota Commission of Public Safety Main Files, “County Organization Material,” Minnesota Historical Society Archives.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Robert L. Morlan, *Prairie Political Fire: The Nonpartisan League, 1915-1922* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1985), 136-137. Michael J. Lansing, *Insurgent Democracy: The Nonpartisan League in North American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 181. The NPL’s official newspaper: the *Nonpartisan Leader*, frequently featured cartoons depicting its members as being loyal to the American war effort and doing their part to buy war bonds and support the Red Cross (see Figure 11), while also printing cartoons depicting their political rivals as businessmen opportunists using “loyalty” as an excuse to violently suppress farmers who supported the NPL (see Figure 10).

thousands of parasites, the gamblers in the necessities of life, use the war only for the purpose of exacting exorbitant profits.”³⁸ He promised, “we shall produce an immense crop, you will be sure that it will arrive at the camp where your boy is fighting for his country without your having to pay for it at that end four times what you received for it at this end.”³⁹

At the NPL’s 1917 convention in St. Paul, Wisconsin Senator Robert La Follette was invited to give the closing speech. He spoke mainly in praise of the NPL’s platform but devoted a portion of his speech defending his voting record against US intervention. On the subject of the Gore-Mclemore Resolution, he argued “the comparatively small privilege of the right of an American citizen to ride on a munitions-loaded ship flying a foreign flag, is too small to involve this government in the loss of millions of millions of lives.”⁴⁰ A man in the audience yelled out “yellow,” to which the senator replied “I don’t mean to say that we hadn’t suffered grievances; we had at the hands of the Germans serious grievances!”⁴¹ The Associated Press reporter covering the rally misquoted him as saying, “I wasn’t in favour of the war, we had no grievances.” The AP did not retract their reporting until May 1918. In the meantime, the *Minneapolis Journal* called his speech “more disloyal, more treasonable, than the utterances that have landed lesser pro-Germans in prison.”⁴²

The link established between the NPL and being pro-German in the media was so strong that in Minnesota, mobs often greeted NPL organizers when they came to town. In January 1918, citizens of Glencoe, Mcleod County, forced an NPL representative onto a train bound for the Twin Cities under threat of tarring and feathering. The *Minneapolis Tribune* remarked, “although the citizens of Glencoe... are largely Germans or of German extraction they are loyal to the cause espoused by the government.”⁴³ That same month in Alexandria,

³⁸ Quoted in Morlan, 138-139.

³⁹ Morlan, 138-139.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Morlan, 143-144.

⁴¹ Quoted in Lansing, 182.

⁴² Quoted in Morlan, 145.

⁴³ “Nonpartisan Organizer Run Out of Glencoe,” *MT*, Jan. 20th, 1918.

Douglas County, the editor of the pro-NPL *Park Region Echo*, who had previously had his newspaper office ransacked the previous Fall after an NPL meeting was held in town, was again attacked by an angry mob who beat him severely.⁴⁴ At Olivia, Renville County, an NPL representative was prevented from holding an NPL meeting by a mob of 18 people who forced him onto a train and told him if he ever returned, he would be tarred and feathered.⁴⁵

Rural vigilantes did not just target NPL members but also anyone who was not supporting the war effort to their standards. A popular form of vigilantism against such persons was vandalism of the person's property with yellow paint. The first of these incidents in Minnesota took place in Olivia, Renville County, in early February 1918.⁴⁶ The *Warren Sheaf* reported that the target was Krause Mercantile Company, but local authorities discerned no motive. Later that month, a citizen of Bird Island, Renville County also had his business vandalized with yellow paint for his alleged "pro-German proclivities."⁴⁷ By March, the phenomenon had spread out of Renville County. In Hutchinson, McLeod County, Rev. Mueller of the German Evangelical Church had his house "profusely striped with yellow paint by indignant citizens, and the word "pro-kaiser" inscribed on the sides with "flaming characters."⁴⁸ His alleged crime was refusing to donate to the Red Cross when two representatives showed up at his door.⁴⁹ In Paynesville, Stearns County, E.E. Finger, a merchant who supported the NPL, had his store "decorated with yellow paint" the night after he decided not to close his shop during a loyalty rally.⁵⁰ In Fairfax, Renville County, five businesses were targeted with yellow paint in one evening. The motive was that each business belonged to a school board member who was not in favor of implementing a policy

⁴⁴ "Anti-Gang Editor Attacked," *Nonpartisan Leader (St. Paul)*, Jan 21st, 1918, pg. 21.

⁴⁵ "Olivia Citizens Eject Nonpartisan Speaker," *MT*, Jan. 25th, 1918, pg. 7.

⁴⁶ "News of the State," *Warren Sheaf*, Feb. 6th, 1918.

⁴⁷ "Local News," *Hector Mirror*, Feb. 21st, 1918.

⁴⁸ "Hutchinson," *Levang's Weekly*, Mar. 14th, 1918, pg. 3.

⁴⁹ Also in March 1918, Theodore Nelson of Albert Lea was also forced to kiss the U.S. flag by a patriotic mob for making "disloyal comments" about the Red Cross: "Man Obligated to Kiss Flag," *Blooming Prairie Times*, Mar. 28th, pg. 1.

⁵⁰ "Store Painted Yellow," *DH*, Mar. 22nd, 1918, pg. 9.

of teachers “talking and teaching loyalty” at the local school. “This was more than patriotic citizens could stand for,” explained the *Hector Mirror*, and “the painting followed.”⁵¹ A letter to the editor of the *Minneapolis Tribune* from an “American” from Fairfax threatened further acts of vandalism, stating, “this town is 99 percent loyal and will not tolerate any German propaganda whatever. Beware boys; yellow paint is being made every day.”⁵²

In April 1918, yellow paint incidents occurred frequently across rural Minnesota. In Jackson, Stillwater, Spicer, Adrian and Luverne vigilantes targeted citizens who did not buy enough war bonds, did not donate enough money to the Red Cross or were otherwise pro-German.⁵³ In May 1918, another attack occurred in Randall, Morrison County, where the “one and only man” who refused to buy a third Liberty Loan decided to leave town after his buggy was smeared with paint. The local *Pierz Journal* applauded the vigilantes, remarking “hats off to Uncle Sam’s unknown helpers who aided in removing this unnatural person from our midst.”⁵⁴ That same month, in Holden, a mob of around “twenty-five young men” decided to vandalize a farmer by the name of O.F. Henkel with yellow paint but dispersed after Henkel fired two rounds in their direction.⁵⁵ In late May, “one of [the] prominent businessmen” of Spring Grove, Houston County, refused to contribute to the Red Cross, and as a result, that evening, “true-blue gentlemen applied the brush to his place of business and literally smeared it with yellow epitaphs.” The *Spring Grove Herald* promised that if the victim did not pay up, it would “print his name in bold-faced type.”⁵⁶

June, 1918 was the month when the Minnesota primaries were held for the fall elections. The *Nonpartisan Leader*, the official newspaper of the NPL, called it “the most

⁵¹ “Five business places...” *Hector Mirror*, Mar. 28th, 1918, pg. 4.

⁵² “Yellow Paint Made Daily,” *MT*, Apr. 3rd, 1918, pg. 6.

⁵³ “Recent Happenings in Minnesota,” *Twin City Star*, Apr. 13th, 1918, pg. 8. “The citizens of Spicer...” *Willmar Journal*, Apr. 20th, 1918, pg. 4. “Minnesota State News,” *Warren Sheaf*, Apr. 24th, 1918, pg. 4. “Stillwater Store is Given Coat of Yellow,” *MT*, Apr. 30th, 1918, pg. 20. “Minnesota State News,” *Warren Sheaf*, Apr. 3rd, 1918, pg. 4.

⁵⁴ “Local News Items,” *Pierz Journal*, May 2nd, 1918, pg. 4.

⁵⁵ “Doings in Kenyon and the Vicinity,” *Kenyon News*, May 23rd, 1918, pg. 6.

⁵⁶ “Red Cross Slacker,” *Spring Grove Herald*, May 23rd, 1918, pg. 1.

important election that any state ever had. It will be the first test of the ability of farmers and city working people to co-operate and take over the functions of government for PRODUCERS, who constitute two-thirds of the mass of the people, and who are consequently entitled to rule.”⁵⁷ Yet, many still associated the league with being pro-German. The *Rock County Herald* declared that the contest was instead a “fight against disloyalty,” where voters had to defend incumbent governor Burnquist against in “defeating the forces of disloyalty and socialismthat are seeking to control our government and besmirch the good name of our state.”⁵⁸ Early that month, when NPL members in Lonsdale were busy putting up signs announcing an upcoming meeting there when residents began tearing down their signs and managed to smear yellow paint on a few of the league’s cars.⁵⁹ In Goodhue County, some angry residents broke up a League parade by throwing rotten eggs and splashing yellow paint at the participants.⁶⁰ Soon after, a co-operative store in Willow River was vandalized with yellow paint after displaying a pro-league poster.⁶¹ Later that month, a group of seven masked men showed up at the home of NPL member Rupert Kinney, beat him, tarred and featheredhim, destroyed furniture in his home, andassaulted his wife.⁶² The unknown assailants telephoned an NPL office and told them that the assault was a warning to other NPL supporters. That same month the front windows of the pro-League *Willmar Tribune* office were smeared with yellow paint.⁶³ A typewritten note was slipped under the front door. “I have two sons in the army which you have already stabbed in the back more than once thru (sic) your dirty sheet... I did not see you in the loyalty parade when your own Governor wanted to talk to you, but he is a loyal swede (sic)... The room for such men as

⁵⁷ “The Eyes of the Nation on Minnesota,” *Nonpartisan Leader*, June 10th, 1918.

⁵⁸ “Primary Election Next Monday is Fight Against Disloyalty,” *Rock County Herald*, June 14th, 1918, pg. 1.

⁵⁹ “Renounce League or Be Deported,” *Evening State Journal (Lincoln, Nebraska)*, June 24th, 1918.

⁶⁰ “Minnesotans Give Non Partisans Bad Jolts,” *Winona Daily News*, June 13th, 1918, pg. 7.

⁶¹ “Willow River Store Daubed,” *DH*, June 10th, 1918, pg. 10.

⁶² “Nonpartisan Given Tarring,” *DH*, June 17th, pg. 14.

⁶³ See Figure 13.

you is getting smaller every day in our loyal county.”⁶⁴ It was signed “A Loyal Farmer.” In Luverne, Rock County, local loyalists forced an NPL organizer, W.C. Coates, to leave the county under threat of tarring and feathering.⁶⁵ The mayor of Luverne, C.O. Wright ordered pro-League *Rock County Journal* to cease publication.⁶⁶ A mob of loyalists later hunted down its editor, W.W. Latta, kidnapped him, and dumped him across the Iowa-Minnesota border.⁶⁷ Mayor Wright, with support from the “Luverne Loyalty Club,” then ordered all NPL members to register with “county authorities and renounce their league connections” under threat of deportation and forfeiture of their property.⁶⁸ One farmer, John Meints, refused to sign the loyalty pledge and was kidnapped from his house by men in a fleet of 20 vehicles and was dumped across the border in Iowa.⁶⁹

Vigilantism did not abate with the end of the Minnesota primary. In July, several buildings were vandalized in New Ulm: the Fairmont Cream station, as well as the shops of H.H. Meuller, John Berg, and Joe Schumacher.⁷⁰ The vigilantes also painted Schumacher’s car and emptied his gas tank. In August, three male conscientious objectors of Butterfield, Watonwan County, all of the Rempel family, were arrested for the alleged assault of two travelers: Klein and Towbridge. The travelers overheard two of the men talking “pro-German” and warned that the government might confiscate their property if they did not “cut out the pro-Hun stuff.”⁷¹ The trio returned to the hotel later that day and got in a physical altercation with Klein and Towbridge. The *Mower County Transcript* noted that the Rempel family-owned store was recently targeted by a yellow paint mob and several other buildings in the town

⁶⁴ “Outrage Committed at Willmar Tribune Office,” *Willmar Tribune*, June 19th, 1918, pg. 4.

⁶⁵ “Luverne Man Fears Mob; Appeals to Governor,” *MT*, June 19th, 1918, pg. 3. “Nonparty Organizer Eludes Searchers,” *Rock County Herald*, June 21st, pg. 1, 12. That month, loyalists in Rock County also painted the buildings of a M.J. Boomgaarden yellow for being an NPL organizer: “Buildings Painted Yellow,” *Rock County Herald*, June 14th, 1918, pg. 2.

⁶⁶ “Newspaper Office Closed by Mayor,” *Rock County Herald*, June 21st, 1918, pg. 1-2.

⁶⁷ “Rock Co. Loyalists are Scared Stiff,” *Rock County Herald*, July 19th, 1918, pg. 1-2.

⁶⁸ “Renounce League or Be Deported,” *Evening State Journal (Lincoln, Nebraska)*, June 24th, 1918.

⁶⁹ “Lindbergh’s Backers Desert Nonpartisans,” *MT*, June 25th, 1918, pg. 7.

⁷⁰ “The Yellow Menace,” *New Ulm Review*, July 3rd, 1918, pg. 4.

⁷¹ “Bags Bunch of Disloyalists,” *MCT*, Aug. 7th, 1918, pg. 3.

were painted as well.⁷² During that same month, the *Winona Republican-Herald* reported that Rev. Rabe of the German Methodist Church had left town to live with family in Lake City, Goodhue County, after being tarred and feathered and his home was smeared with yellow paint.⁷³ Another incident that month saw paint being on the properties of several residents of the towns of Stewart and Brownton, both in McLeod County.⁷⁴

In August, it was reported that John Meints, who had previously been deported to Iowa, was back in Rock County and was living with his son's family. A mob soon arrived at his home to deport him once again. Meints' sons grabbed their guns while John called some of his neighbors for aid, having organized some "into a force for self-protection," but armed members of the mob forced their way into their kitchen and forced them to end the standoff.⁷⁵ Meints was then forced into a car and driven into town, where he was locked in the basement of a hotel and given an unofficial trial for disloyalty. He pleaded that he was not a member of the NPL, but his abductors did not believe him. They once again put him into a car and dumped him on the other side of the South Dakota border, where six masked men armed with revolvers took him from the mob. One of the men pointed at a nearby oak tree and said, "there's where you'll hang if you ever come back to Minnesota," while others whipped and tarred and feathered him.⁷⁶

The final yellow paint mobs in Minnesota were reported on Nov. 14th, during victory celebrations in Winona and in Lewiston, Winona County.⁷⁷ Lewiston's Mayor, Fred Zander "headed the delegation of patriots who administered yellow paint to the homes of those who failed to rise when the victory bells rang at 3 A.M. They also forced the suspicious ones to

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ "German Pastor Leaves Charge," *Winona Republican-Herald*, Aug. 23rd, 1918, pg. 8.

⁷⁴ "The Yellow Streak," *Northfield News*, Aug. 9th, 1918, pg. 3.

⁷⁵ "Meints Returns; Is Again Deported," *Rock County Herald*, Aug. 23rd, 1918, pg. 1-2.

⁷⁶ "More Mob Violence," *Lincoln (Nebraska) Herald*, Aug. 30th, 1918, pg. 2.

⁷⁷ "Fischer Store Gets Coat of Yellow Paint," *Winona Republican-Herald*, Nov. 14th, 1918, pg. 2.

kiss the American flag.”⁷⁸ The mob ultimately vandalized eight homes with the paint, writing “I.W.W.” on some. This reference to the IWW was unique among rural vigilantism of this period, as they were seen as more of a threat in resource-extraction economies in the north of the state. When asked decades later about the wartime atmosphere of Bemidji, a town in the heart of Minnesota’s North Woods, resident Herbert C. Warfield remarked, “I’ll tell you this much: it didn’t pay to open your mouth in those days... People were just stirred up. They were acting crazy.”⁷⁹ Perhaps the first instance of this “hysteria,” as Warfield put it, occurred when the mayor of Bemidji ordered the flag to be flown wherever possible shortly after war was declared. The employees of a local box factory decided to pool money for a flag for their workplace. One employee refused to pitch in and was seized by a few of his colleagues, and his head was held underwater until he changed his mind.⁸⁰ In March, a store owned by W.B. MacLaughlin was vandalized with paint during the night, and a threatening letter was tacked on the door. The *Bemidji Pioneer* quoted the letter as stating, “there is no place in this town for your type. Thirty days for you to get out or a rail, tar and feathers. Take warning you Pro-German skunk.” The letter was signed “Ku Klux Klan.”⁸¹

Later, in July 1917, the Crookston Lumber Company’s Mill in Bemidji burned down, and the IWW was blamed. A mob led by Bemidji’s mayor soon formed and went on a rampage through town, vandalizing several businesses owned by suspected disloyalists.⁸² They threw yellow paint on several properties and proceeded to threaten and sometimes beat up their owners. Eventually, the mob rounded up 24 card-carrying members of the IWW and forced them on a train heading out of town. After the Wobbly threat was dealt with, the owner of the Crookston Lumber Company sent a telegram to the mayor congratulating him on his efficient “clean-up” of the town and assuring him that he had “talked with the governor and the

⁷⁸ “Yellow Paint at Lewiston,” *Rochester Daily Post and Record*, Nov. 14th, 1918, pg. 4.

⁷⁹ Art Lee, “Hometown Hysteria: Bemidji at the Start of World War I,” *Minnesota History* 49 no. 2 (1984), 65.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁸¹ “Captain ‘Mac’s’ Store Front Painted Yellow; Warning is Issued,” *BDP*, Mar. 30th, 1918, pg. 1.

⁸² Lee, 47.

attorney general and they are with you.”⁸³

When word of IWW organizer Frank Little’s lynching while organizing employees of the Anaconda Mining Company in Butte, Montana reached Northern Minnesota in August 1917, the *Duluth Herald* editorialized, “to solve the problem of the IWW, we shall probably have to forget rights and liberties and constitutional guarantees... A nation at war cannot let itself be hampered and perhaps defeated by internal revolution.”⁸⁴ That same month, after an IWW member allegedly stabbed an American soldier stationed in Duluth, a mob led by a soldier from his regiment ransacked the IWW hall.⁸⁵ Soldiers who participated dragged out all I.W.W. literature inside the hall out onto the street and set it on fire before marching into a predominantly Finnish neighborhood nearby and brawling with some of the residents. This pre-dated the Sept. 25th, 1917, nationwide raids on IWW halls where prominent leaders of the movement like Kate Richards O’Hare and William Haywood were arrested.⁸⁶ In May 1918, the *Chisholm Herald* ran an editorial titled “Deport the Alien Scum,” stating “a gang of alien miners... quit work last week rather than listen to arguments as to why they should purchase Liberty bonds. It was found that these men were earning \$8.40 per day in the contract they were working. Is there any wonder that vigilance committees are painting the shanks of such characters with tar and feathers?”⁸⁷

On March 23rd, 1918, the *Duluth Herald* received and published a letter from a local group calling itself the “Knights of Liberty” stating that they were going to act to stamp out “pro-Germans” in Duluth “using the quickest and most effective methods” and insinuated they might use tarring and feathering as a tactic.⁸⁸ On March 24th, 1918, the Knights of Liberty delivered on their promise. They abducted Gustaf Landin, a German-American

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Hudelson and Ross, loc. 1128.

⁸⁵ Ibid., loc. 1136.

⁸⁶ Sidney Lens, *Radicalism in America* (New York: Crowell, 1969), 253.

⁸⁷ Reprinted in “Deport the Alien Scum,” *Princeton Union*, May 16th, 1918, pg. 6.

⁸⁸ “Pro-Germans Warned by Knights of Liberty,” *DH*, Mar. 23rd, 1918.

photographer, and tarred and feathered him, mailing details of their actions to the *Duluth Herald*.⁸⁹ Five days later, a gang reported to be comprised of members of the Knights of Liberty painted a German-American-owned candy store in Bemidji yellow, and its proprietor was given thirty days to leave town.⁹⁰ These actions received praise from papers in the northern Minnesota regions, with an editorial in the *International Falls Press and Border Report* calling on the Knights of Liberty to visit the town and deal with some “slackers” there.⁹¹ In July, a Hibbing store was also doused with yellow paint after its proprietor failed to close during a Fourth of July parade.⁹²

On Sept. 12th, 1918, Duluth held a draft registration day for any man, alien or citizen, aged 18 to 46, who had not yet registered. As a result, several men in Duluth decided to rescind their intentions to become US citizens to avoid being drafted. One was Olli Kinkkonen, who wanted an exemption for the draft as he was not an American citizen, and said he would be heading back to Finland.⁹³ The draft board refused his request, citing that he was born in a non-neutral country, Finland, which had become hostile to America’s ally Russia and was considered a co-combatant of Germany. On Sept. 17th, the *Duluth Herald* published Kinkkonen’s name and address, along with another man’s personal information accusing them both of being slackers for wanting draft exemptions.⁹⁴

Later that night, a group of men pulled up to Kinkkonen’s boarding house and forced him into a waiting automobile, claiming they were from the draft board and they needed to ask him some questions.⁹⁵ They then drove him to the edge of town, where they proceeded to

⁸⁹ “Gustaf Landin Tarred and Feathered for Disloyalty,” *DH*, Mar. 25th, 1918. “Tar and Feathers for Disloyalist,” *International Falls Press and Border Report*, Mar. 28th, 1918.

⁹⁰ “Bemidji Store Painted Yellow,” *DH*, Mar. 30th, 1918. “News of the State – Bemidji,” *Aitkin Independent*, April 6th, 1918.

⁹¹ “Concerning County Affairs,” *International Falls Press and Border Report*, April 11th, 1918. “An ancient judge said...” *Eveleth News*, Mar. 28th, 1918. “The Knights of Liberty,” *DH*, Apr. 4th, 1918.

⁹² “Yellow Paint,” *Northfield News*, July 19th, 1918, pg. 4.

⁹³ Department of Commerce and Labor, Naturalization Service, “Olli Kinkkonen,” (Declaration of Intent, St. Louis County, Minnesota, 1912).

⁹⁴ “Two More Slackers Relinquish Citizenship,” *DH*, Sept. 17th, 1918.

⁹⁵ “Knights of Liberty Tar and Feather Slacker,” *DH*, Sept. 19th, 1918.

give him a sham trial where they found him guilty of being a slacker and being pro-German. As punishment, they tarred and feathered him.⁹⁶ The citizens of Duluth found out about the crime the next day when the Knights of Liberty claimed responsibility for the incident by contacting local newspapers, including the *Duluth Herald*. In a letter to the *Duluth Herald*, the Knights listed six other men with their respective addresses and warned them to stay loyal unless they also wanted to be tarred and feathered. Kinkkonen, meanwhile, was nowhere to be found. He had not returned to his boarding house. His body was later discovered hanging from a tree near Duluth's Lester Park on Sept. 31st. The St. Louis Co. Coroner estimated that he must have died within a few days of being abducted and did not order an autopsy to be conducted.⁹⁷ Kinkkonen was buried in an unmarked grave in the indigent section of the local cemetery. Officials and the establishment press labeled his death a suicide, but many suspected murder, including the editor of *Truth*, a local paper affiliated with the IWW.⁹⁸ A survey of letters to the editor of the *Duluth Herald* written in response to the lynching reveals universal condemnation by those that decided to write in to the *Herald*.⁹⁹ On Oct. 6th, Gov. Burnquist offered a \$500 reward for any information regarding the incident. Some tips came to the Duluth police, but no arrests were made.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ "Tarred Alien Disappears; One Recants By Default," *DNT*, Sept. 20th, 1918, 8.

⁹⁷ State of Minnesota, Division of Vital Statistics, "Olli Kinkkonen," (Death Certificate, St. Louis County, Minnesota, 1918).

⁹⁸ "Victim of Tar Party in Duluth Suicide, Belief," *DNT*, Oct. 1st, 1918. "Olli Kuikkonen Did Not Commit Suicide," *Truth (Duluth)*, Oct. 4th, 1918., "Not the First Lynching," *Labor World (Duluth)*, June 26th, 1920, pg. 5.

⁹⁹ "Knights of Loyalty," *DH*, Sept. 23rd, 1918. "Knights of Loyalty," *DH*, Sept. 24th, 1918. "Knights of Loyalty," *DH*, Sept. 30th, 1918. "Wrongheaded Patriotism," *DH*, Sept. 26th, 1918. "Knights of Liberty," *DH*, Oct. 3rd, 1918.

¹⁰⁰ "Governor Offers Award," *MT*, Oct. 6th, 1918. "\$500 For Arrest of Tar and Feather Party" *International Falls Press and Border Report*, Oct. 10th, 1918. "Arrest Expected in Murder Case," *DH*, Oct. 7th, 1918. "Clews to Knights of Loyalty Crew," *DH*, Oct. 8th, 1918.

Conclusion: The End of Vigilantism in Minnesota

In August 1918, Nels Hokstad, an NPL organizer who had been tarred and feathered in Pine County in May 1918, had brought suit against the 35 men identified as his assailants.¹ In September, NPL member Rupert Kinney sued 18 residents of Pine County for \$80,000 for being tarred and feathered, and in the same month, John Meints also filed a \$200,000 lawsuit against 37 people who were a part of the mob who deported him on Aug. 19th of that year.² The NPL bankrolled all three lawsuits. Although both Rupert Kenny and Nels Hokstad went on to lose their lawsuits, in 1922, John Meints settled out of court with 41 of the people who he accused of abducting and tarring and feathering him for the sum of \$8,000 (approximately \$125,000 in 2021 when adjusted for inflation).³

While these lawsuits were being filed, talks between the MFL and the NPL concerning forming a 3rd party to contest the November 1918 elections were reaching a conclusion, and on Aug. 25th, with the MFL agreeing to run candidates in urban areas under the name “Working People’s Nonpartisan League” while the NPL would field candidates in rural areas wherever their candidates failed to win the nomination in the spring primaries.⁴ Both groups agreed to nominate David H. Evans, who had his Tracy, Lyon County hardware business vandalized with “insulting language” written in yellow paint.⁵ At a campaign stop in Winona, Evans railed against the Burnquist administration as “mob rule” and complained that the NPL had “no protection in Minnesota.”⁶ J.B. Bosch, NPL candidate for State Senator in Kandiyohi and Swift Counties, took out an advertisement in the *Willmar Tribune* stating that

¹ “Townleyite Asks Balm for Tar and Feathers,” *MT*, Aug. 31st, 1918, pg. 9. See also Figure 12.

² “News of the State,” *Blooming Prairie Times*, Sept. 19th, 1918, pg. 3., “Meints Files Two Big Suits,” *Rock County Herald*, Sept. 21st, 1918, pg. 1-2. “Big Damage Suit Brought By An Alleged Pro-Enemy,” *Rochester Daily Post and Record*, Nov. 1st, 1919, pg. 4.

³ “Two Cases Dismissed,” *DH*, July 13th, pg. 2. “Tar-Feather Case is Lost,” *DH*, Oct. 19th, 1920, pg. 3. “Happenings in Gopher State,” *Hector Mirror*, Oct. 28th, 1920, pg. 11. “Tar Victim Granted New Damage Trial,” *MS*, Sept. 7th, 1921, pg. 1. “\$8,000 Paid to Meintz for Attack,” *MS*, Apr. 22nd, 1922, pg. 13.

⁴ Millard L. Gieske, *Minnesota Farmer-Laborism: The Third-Party Alternative* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 44-46.

⁵ “Law and Order Candidate in Minnesota,” *Nonpartisan Leader (St. Paul)*, Sept. 16th, 1918.

⁶ “Dry Speaker Talks Despite Damp Evening,” *Winona Daily News*, Sept. 17th, 1918, pg. 5. “D.H. Evans Gives Platform On Which He Stands,” *Daily People’s Press (Owatonna)*, Sept. 20th, pg. 6.

he stood for “loyal support of the President in his suppression of mob-rule and lawlessness” while Tom Davis, the NPL candidate for Minnesota Attorney General gave a speech in Willmar arguing the “paramount home issue... [was] mob-rule.”⁷ The NPL also charged that those responsible for the lynching of Olli Kinkkonen would be found if state law enforcement wanted to prosecute the case.⁸ Other newspapers sympathetic to the NPL ran article after article during the summer and fall of 1918, editorializing about the state of “mob rule” within the state.⁹

When A. Mitchell Palmer took over as Attorney General from Thomas Gregory in March 1919, one of his first actions was to terminate all connections between the Bureau of Investigation and the APL.¹⁰ Both he and Gregory allegedly agreed that “no organization even of this type should receive official recognition from this department in times of peace.”¹¹ It was a move praised in the *New Ulm Review* as “a blessing to the whole country that it is saved from further persecutions by these sycophants who had no regard for the most sacred rights of the individual as well as our families.”¹² J.A.A. Burnquist also received criticism from within his party following the war for his inaction in stopping the so-called “reign of terror” in Minnesota.¹³ The MCPS too was quickly disbanded following the war, and the Home Guard was either demobilized or incorporated into the Minnesota National Guard.¹⁴

⁷ “Tom Davis Speaks Twice at Willmar,” *Willmar Tribune*, Oct. 2nd, 1918, pg. 1., “Advertisement,” *Willmar Tribune*, Oct. 30th, 1918, pg. 3.

⁸ “League Candidates Are Now Busy on the Stump,” *DH*, Oct. 12th, 1918, pg. 2.

⁹ “Mob-Rule Patriotism,” *Willmar Tribune*, July 24th, 1918, pg. 9., “Let Not Your Angry Passions Rise,” *Levang’s Weekly (Lanesboro)*, July 25th, 1918, pg. 5. “Mob-Psychology,” *BDP*, Sept. 12th, pg. 2., “The Mob,” *Levang’s Weekly (Lanesboro)*, Oct. 3rd, pg. 4. “Some More About Mob Rule,” *Levang’s Weekly (Lanesboro)*, Oct. 17th, 1918, pg. 4., “Citizens Demand End of Mobbing,” *New Ulm Review*, Dec. 3rd, 1919, pg. 1.

¹⁰ “War Time Detectives Not Recognized Now,” *MT*, Apr. 1st, 1919, pg. 7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² “Efficient Management,” *New Ulm Review*, Apr. 16th, 1919, pg. 4.

¹³ “George Creel Lied, Charge of Governor,” *MT*, March 8th, 1919, pg. 2, “Hayes to Aid G.O.P,” *Tomahawk (White Earth)*, Apr. 10th, 1919, pg. 3.

¹⁴ Chrislock, 1991, 314-336.

The Minneapolis CCA, however, still tried to maintain the APL and the Civilian's Auxiliary following the war in order to spy on and suppress organized labor in the city. On November 25th, 1918, Sheriff Langum called on the motor corps to help break up a banned socialist meeting in the city. Around 180 cars were mobilized by the order quickly established martial law.¹⁵ When the APL was folded at the national level in January 1919, the Minneapolis Branch began working with the Minneapolis Sheriff's Office to root out radicalism and bootlegging in the post-war era. When the Civilian's Auxiliary was inducted into the Minnesota National Guard along with many other battalions of the Home Guard, it effectively severed the CCA's control over it. The CCA also lobbied the government to keep the Motor Corps on state salary, to essentially make a statewide constabulary, but pressure from organized labor prevented the proposed legislation from passing and the Motor Corps disbanded soon after.¹⁶ In 1923, Minneapolis Mayor Leach caved to pressure to allow the closed shop after the NPL won control of the city council.¹⁷ The Minneapolis APL, still led by the pro-CCA Charles Davis, turned on Leach and began to spy on him. When Leach discovered the espionage, he dismissed Davis and the remaining APL agents, dissolving the organization.¹⁸

After the war, life resumed much as it did before the war for German-Minnesotans. With Wilhelm II's abdication in November 1918, German autocracy had been overthrown, and the threat of "Prussianism" and the "Hun" was over and German could still be heard in rural Minnesota.¹⁹ The street in New Ulm, renamed "Liberty Street" during the war reverted to its pre-war name of "German Street."²⁰ Of the nineteen German-language newspapers in

¹⁵ William Millikan, "Defenders of Business: Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association Versus Labor During World War I," *MH* 50 no. 1 (1986), 223.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 224.

¹⁷ Nord, 10.

¹⁸ Millikan, 2003, 216.

¹⁹ Walter D. Kampfehofer, "Language and Loyalty among German-Americans in World War I," *Journal of Austrian-American History* 3 no. 1 (2019), 14.

²⁰ Wolkerstorfer, 68.

circulation in Minnesota prior to the war, fifteen remained in 1919.²¹ In 1921, the Deutsche Haus in St. Paul opened, sponsored by 51 different German-American cultural organizations, and it featured a pool hall, bowling alley, and a 1,000 seat theatre.²² Mass American culture and its motion pictures, department stores, professional sports teams, and non-ethnic associations like the YMCA one's German-American identity was made comparatively less important to one's white American identity.²³ Correspondence between German-Americans and the old country usually did not last past the first generation, and by the war's outbreak, the second-generation German-Americans outnumbered first-generation German-Americans by a two to one ratio.²⁴ In 1941, the last German language daily Minnesotan newspaper folded, in 1955 so did the last German language weekly paper, and in 1958, the Deutsches Haus was demolished to make room for a park in front of the State Capitol.²⁵

In the same year as the passing of anti-lynching legislation, the Klan began organizing in Minnesota. The Klan burned crosses at Claremont, Fergus Falls, Paynesville, St. Cloud, and Windom.²⁶ A popular part of Klan gatherings was public naturalization ceremonies such as one in Austin, where 400 new members were inducted in front of an audience of 20,000.²⁷ Like vigilantes who came before them in Minnesota, the Klan saw itself as a body that upheld "law and order."²⁸ In practice, however, while the Minnesota Klan attempted to spark terror in the eyes of their various enemies, they did not follow through with any of their own threats. By 1930, a Klan convention in St. Paul to choose a new Grand Dragon for Minnesota and the Dakotas drew only around 500 attendees.²⁹

²¹ Kathleen Neils Conzen, *Germans in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2003), 71-72.

²² Ibid.

²³ Russel A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 95-97.

²⁴ Kampfehofer, 2014, 7-8.

²⁵ Conzen, 78.

²⁶ Elizabeth Dorsey Hatle, *The Ku-Klux Klan in Minnesota* (Cheltenham: The History Press, 2013), 73, 97, 147-150, 157.

²⁷ Ibid., 363-364.

²⁸ Ibid., 150.

²⁹ Ibid., 199-201.

As lynchings declined in frequency in the 1930s, there was also the rise in what historian Ashraf Rushdy calls “end of lynching discourse,” which attempted to label a lynching as being the last one to occur under narrow definitions of lynching set out by groups such as the NAACP, the ASWPL, or the Tuskegee Institute.³⁰ The motives for people to label one lynching as being the last are varied, from the admirable wanting to have an end goal for their anti-lynching activism to the less admirable goal of wanting save America’s reputation as a free, democratic nation from the embarrassment of lynching.³¹ The byproduct of this discourse is that lynching and perhaps vigilantism in general is in popular memory today identified with a bygone era, and erases the continuities between the racialized lynching violence of the past with the racialized “hate crimes” of the present. Although we may call the Duluth lynchings of 1920 the final acts of vigilantism in Minnesota due to the lynchings being the last time that suspects were abducted from a jail and murdered, or that it was the last time people took photographs of vigilantism for the purpose of souvineers, or that it was the last extra-judicial hanging, such a dividing line helps ignore how racialized violence continued in different forms after that final lynching to the present day. For instance, Nellie T. Francis, the activist largely responsible for the anti-lynching law passed in 1921, was herself the target of angry whites along with her husband when they moved into a previously all-white neighborhood in St. Paul in 1924. They received threatening phone calls and letters, had white protestors camp outside their home making a racket, and on two occasions crosses were burned on their lawn.³² Likewise, in 1931, another first Black resident of a neighborhood in Minneapolis had his house surrounded by a mob of around 3,000-4,000 white people who threw stones at it for several days. He eventually sold his house.³³

³⁰ Ashraf H.A. Rushdy, *The End of American Lynching* (Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 95-103.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Heidenreich, 5.

³³ Delton, 62.

Although tarring and featherings, charivaris, and spectacle lynchings have faded from use, America is still faced with the renewed threat of vigilantism. In February 2020 for instance, three white men murdered unarmed Black jogger Ahmaud Arbery with a shotgun in Brunswick, Georgia after they thought he burglarized a building in the neighborhood.³⁴ In October 2020, thirteen white men connected with the “Wolverine Watchmen Militia,” part of the broader “Boogaloo” movement were arrested by the FBI for conspiracy to commit kidnapping. They allegedly intended to kidnap Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer and hold her on trial for allegedly implementing unconstitutional lockdown measures to fight COVID-19.³⁵ In January 2021, while the US House of Representatives was conducting the counting of the electoral college vote, a mob of Trump supporters, many of whom belonged to the all-male “Proud Boys” group broke into the Capitol building.³⁶ Similar to the vigilantes of our period of study, these modern vigilantes are overwhelmingly male white supremacists whose primary concerns revolve around their belief that they have the right of popular sovereignty to take the law into their own hands. Much like how Klan ideology spread by co-opting and influencing American popular culture and media, the names “Wolverine Watchmen,” “Boogaloo Boys,” and “Proud Boys” are derived from modern popular media like *Red Dawn*, *Breakin’ 2: Electric Boogaloo*, and Disney’s *Aladdin*.

Today, the defendants in the above three incidents have yet to go on trial. What separates the era of vigilantism from the post-vigilante era is not a complete cessation of vigilantism, but a loss of vigilantism’s respectability among a large segment mainstream white American society. As the aforementioned cases of police shootings of African Americans in Minnesota suggest, merely handing over a monopoly on the legitimate use of

³⁴ Bill Rankin and Asia Simone Burns, “Suspects in Ahmaud Arbery Shooting Death Indicted on Federal Hate Crimes Charges,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Apr. 28th, 2021.

³⁵ Amanda Arnold and Claire Lampen, “What We Know About the Plot to Kidnap Gretchen Whitmer,” *The Cut*, Dec. 17th, 2020.

³⁶ Alan Feuer, “Did the Proud Boys Help Coordinate the Capitol Riot? Yes, U.S. Suggests,” *New York Times*, Feb. 5th, 2021.

violence over to law enforcement does not result in an end to racialized violence either. Currently the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act is being debated in the US Senate. If passed it would create a national database for police misconduct, would limit qualified immunity for police officers, and end use of “no-knock warrants, chokeholds, and carotid holds.”³⁷

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of combatting vigilante ideology is education about the ethnic cleansing of Indigenous people in Minnesota, the long history of racism towards racial minorities, and the violent repression of political dissidents. This means a reckoning with some of the states symbols, argues journalist John Biewen, like the “state seal, [which was] was chosen by Henry Sibley (the first Governor of Minnesota). It shows a white farmer behind a plow, tilling the soil. He’s looking up to watch an Indian ride away on a horse. In the original, he’s literally riding into the sunset... As far as you can tell, he’s leaving willingly.”³⁸ In the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder, protestors pulled down the statue of Christopher Columbus at the Minnesota State Capitol. Afterwards, Republican State Senator Bill Ingebrigsten introduced a bill to reinstall the statue of Columbus, a man known to have committed acts of genocide, at the cost of \$154,000 to the taxpayer, arguing “there seems to be a push to remove our history here in not only Minnesota, but in the country, and quite frankly, that’s the wrong direction.”³⁹ Here Ingebrigsten conflates memory with history. The removal of Columbus’s statue will not remove Columbus from the history books, but taking him off a pedestal will help bring an end to narratives about Minnesota’s past which excuse racialized violence.

³⁷ U.S. Congress, House, *George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2020*, HR 7120, 116th Congress, introduced in House June 6th, 2020.

³⁸ John Biewen, “Little War on the Prairie,” *This American Life* (Podcast), Nov. 23rd, 2012.

³⁹ Sarah Mearhoff, “Bill to Repair, Restore Toppled Columbus Statue at Capitol Advances to Minnesota Senate,” *Duluth News Tribune*, Mar. 17th, 2021.

Appendix One: Images

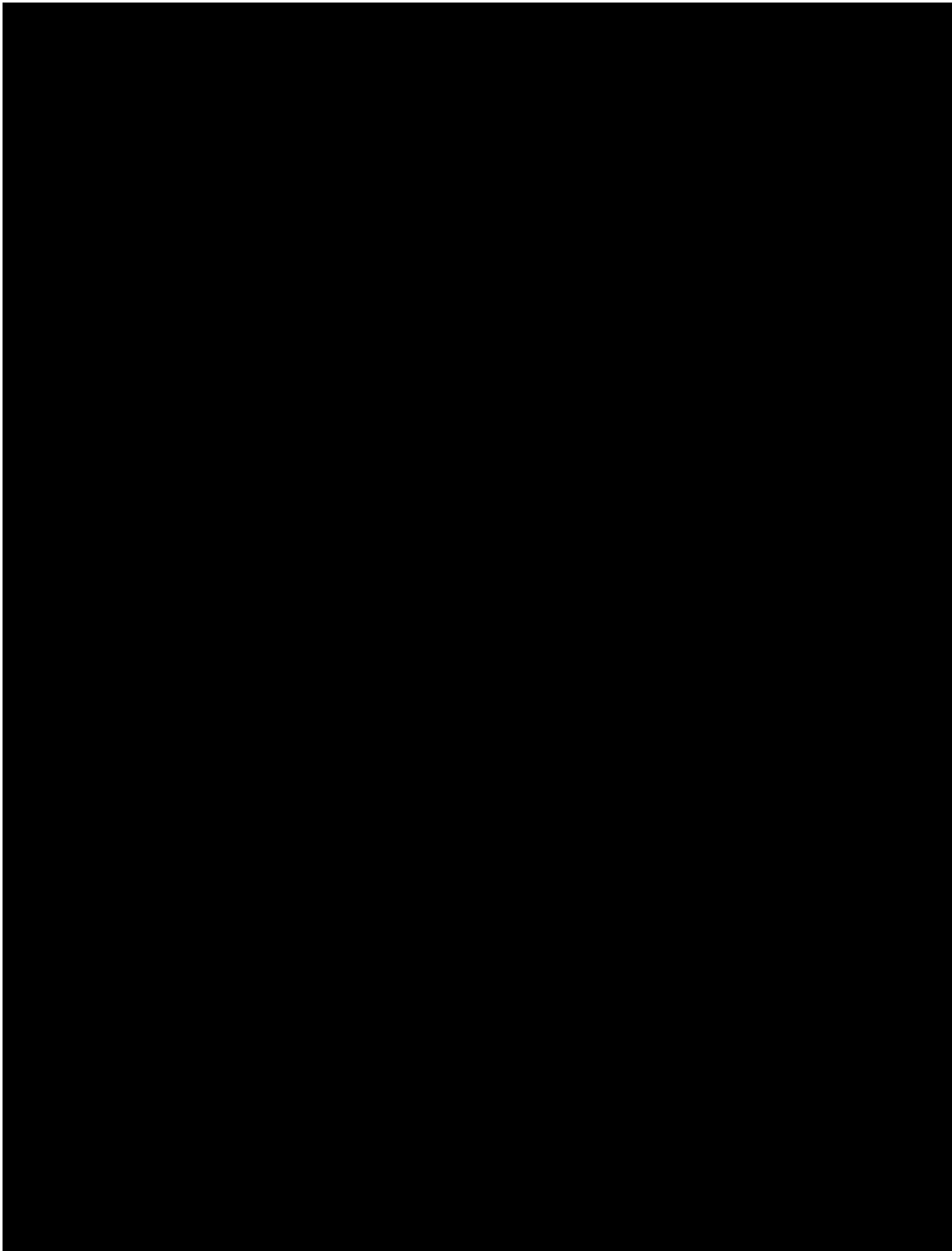


Figure 1: Lands ceded by treaties and reservations located in Minnesota prior to 1890.
Source: Wingerd, 221.

Aunt Jemima's — Pancake Flour

Fresh Fall Supply Now Ready at Every Good Grocery

THE Season for Pancakes is here again—and with it the famous **AUNT JEMIMA'S PANCAKE FLOUR**, fresh from the mills.

Yes—PANCAKES!
Hot from the griddle, baked to just the proper degree of crispness and the right shade of golden brown!
What a treat! What flavor! Was ever anything so delicious, so appetizing, so wholesome and satisfying as genuine Aunt Jemima Pancakes!

Whether buttered or baptized in syrup, surely there's nothing to compare with Aunt Jemima Pancakes served piping hot, for Breakfast or Luncheon, at this season of the year.

The reason for the superiority of **GRIDDLE CAKES, MUFFINS, WAFFLES AND GEMS** made from Aunt Jemima's Pancake Flour is not far to seek.

It is made out of Wheat, Corn and Rice, which, in this combination, forms a perfectly balanced food, possessing the virtues of all the three great cereals.

Always Ready

From Aunt Jemima's Pancake Flour a variety of palatable dishes can be prepared, such as Pancakes, Muffins, Gems, Waffles. It is ready for instant use. In five minutes any of these appetite tempters can be prepared. No yeast, no salt, no baking powder, is required. Simply mix the flour with milk or water, and follow the recipes on every package.

Here are Recipes

GRIDDLE CAKES.—Have the griddle hot; for each tea cup of Aunt Jemima's Pancake Flour, take one and one-fourth cups sweet milk or cold water; when water is used, a teaspoonful of sugar or molasses should be added to make the cakes brown, not necessary with milk.

MUFFINS AND GEMS.—Two eggs, one and one-fourth cups of sweet milk or cold water and two cups of Aunt Jemima's Pancake Flour. Bake in rings on griddle. For Gems drop with spoon into gem pan and bake in hot oven.

Aunt Jemima Dolls Free! Free!

"Pee Your Honey!"

We Want Every Child in this City to Have One or More of these Cunning Pickaninny Dolls

Read Every Word of this Wonderful Offer

To the Girls and Boys

AUNT JEMIMA'S come to town, and she wants to find homes for her enormous family of cute, kinky, laughing little pickaninnies! Each Aunt Jemima Pickaninny Doll is dressed in a yellow polka dot gown, a red and yellow cap, red bandana neckerchief and red striped apron, ready to stuff.

HOW TO GET A FREE DOLL

Of course you know about Aunt Jemima's Pancake Flour, which makes such delicious Griddle Cakes, Muffins and Gems. Well, children, on every package of Aunt Jemima's Pancake Flour there is a Doll Coupon. So in order to get a doll absolutely free, just have your mamma order a 10 cent package of Aunt Jemima's Pancake Flour from her grocer, and send the Doll Coupon, with two 2 cent stamps to pay postage, to **THE DAVIS MILLING CO., St. Joseph, Mo.**

Send the Doll Coupon and two 2 cent stamps at once, and **BACK** will come one of these cute Aunt Jemima Rag Dolls **BY RETURN MAIL.**

No matter how many dolls you now have, your doll family is not complete without at least one genuine Aunt Jemima Pickaninny Doll. Most children love their Aunt Jemima Dolls **BEST OF ALL**, because they are so cunning and funny.

Don't wait until all these dolls are gone! Get a package of Aunt Jemima's Pancake Flour quick, and send in the Doll Coupon with two 2 cent stamps by **FIRST MAIL.**

Many children are collecting **WHOLE FAMILIES OF Pickaninny Dolls.** The children have lots of fun by giving Aunt Jemima Doll Parties.

Top, Figure 2: Advertisement for Aunt Jemima's Pancake Flour

Source: *MJ*, Oct. 12th, 1906, pg. 9.

Bottom, Figure 3: Advertisement for Fairbank's Gold Dust Washing Powder

Source: *DH*, Apr. 22nd, 1915, pg. 11.

How Gold Dust actually works for you

THE active principle of Gold Dust is a valuable antiseptic cleansing agent. It actually *works*. It gets into the corners and crevices where fingers and washcloths can't reach. It permeates and dissolves dirt, grease and grime *everywhere* and it cleans and brightens *everything*.

Gold Dust does all this—does this actual work—because it is made for that purpose.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

MILLIONS of women all over the country use Gold Dust three times a day in washing dishes. They use it also for scrubbing floors, washing windows, etc.

But they do not realize all the uses of Gold Dust. Gold Dust is the only washing and cleaning powder needed in any home.

Gold Dust cleans metal work, nickel, enameled ware, etc., without scratching or marring the surface—leaving it sanitarially clean, bright and new-looking.


♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

THE use of Gold Dust is an economy. There can be no waste when you use the exact small quantity required for each specific purpose. It is at once taken up by hot or cold water, forming the perfect cleansing solution.

No soap or other cleansing help is needed. Gold Dust does it all, and Gold Dust does its work far better than anything else can.

Use Gold Dust not only for washing dishes, but for washing bathtubs and bathroom fixtures, cleaning oil mops, cleaning and freshening linoleum and oil-cloth, cleaning and brightening pots, pans and cooking utensils, giving luster to glassware—for every cleaning and brightening purpose.

"Let the GOLD DUST TWINS do your work!"



Gold Dust is as inexpensive as it is indispensable.

5c and larger packages sold everywhere

THE F. K. FAIRBANK COMPANY MAKERS



Figure 4: Stereo Photograph of the Lynching of Frank Mcmanus on Apr. 29th, 1882 in Minneapolis.

Source: Library of Congress. Farr, H.R., photographer.

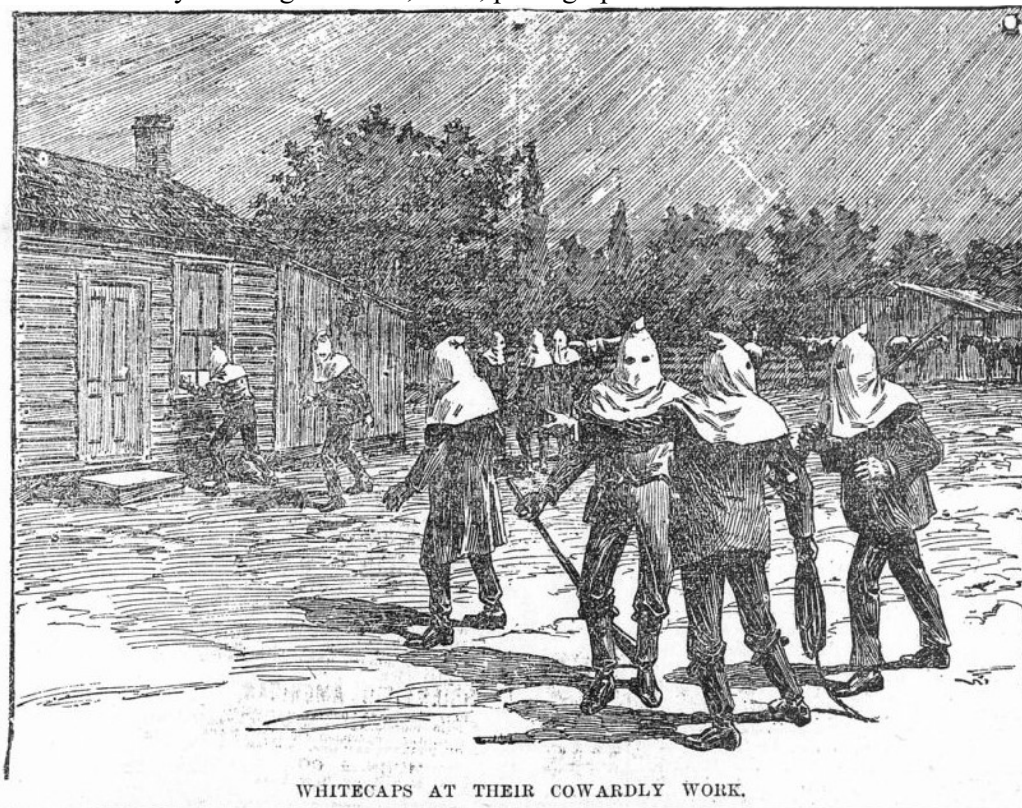


Figure 5: Depiction of “Whitecap” Garb in a Contemporary Minnesota Newspaper
Source: *Plainview (Minnesota) News*, Nov. 6th, 1897, pg. 1.

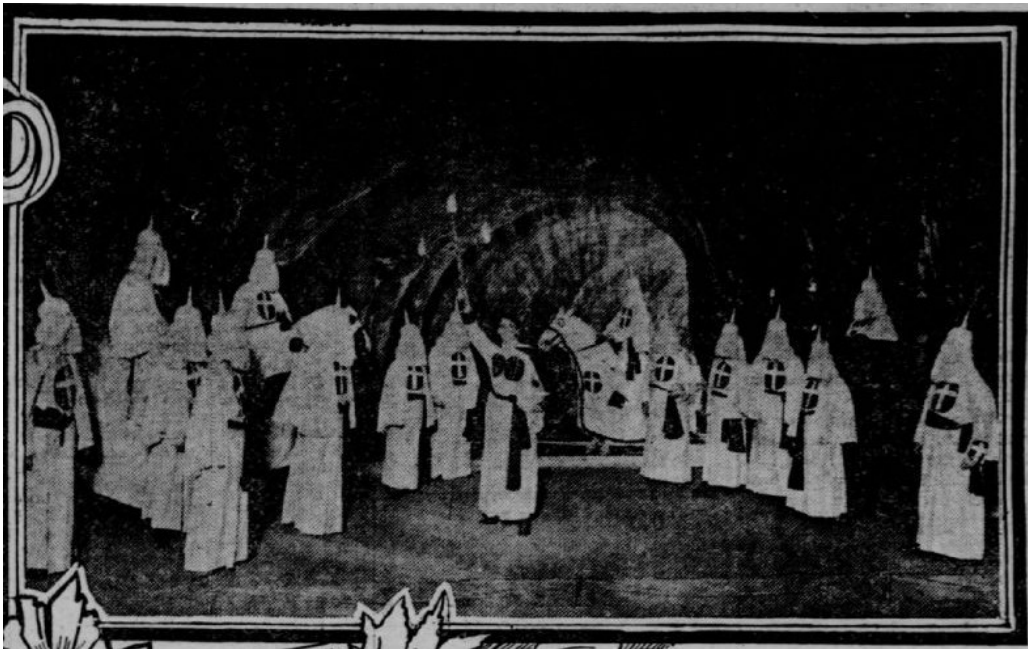


Figure 6: The climactic scene of the theatrical version of “The Clansman” where Klan members have gathered in a cave to put the freedman Gus on “trial.”

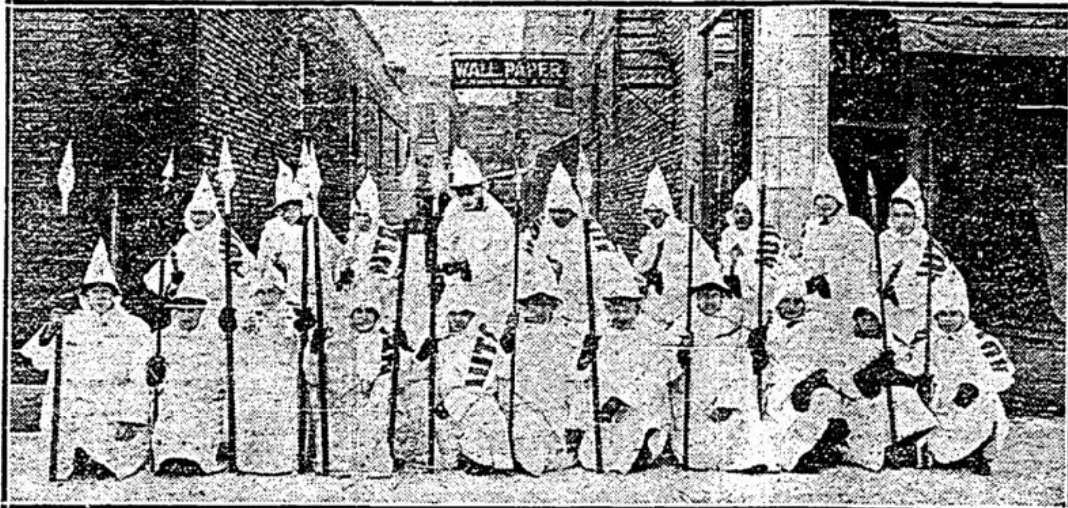
Source: “At the Lyceum,” *DH*, Sept. 6th, 1908, pg. 8.



Figure 7: Automobile Trade Association members dressed in Ku Klux Klan garb to promote the Minneapolis Auto Show.

Source: “Ku Klux Klan Who Will Invade St. Paul,” *MT*, Jan. 28th, 1917, pg. 26.

Auto "Clansmen" Ready for Raid

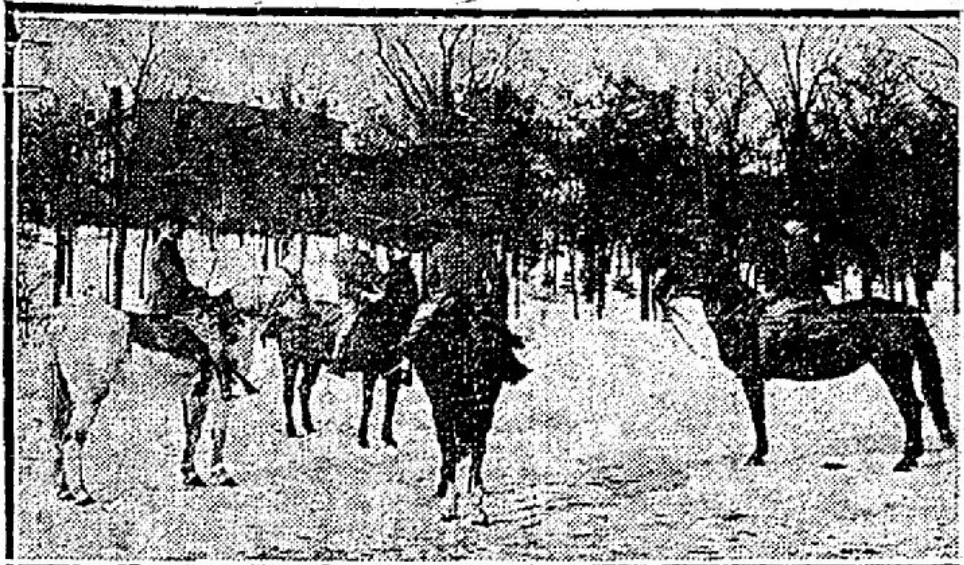


A group of the Minneapolis Auto Show Ku Klux Klan, the members of which will parade at St. Paul today. "Make it a Colder One" is their slogan.

Figure 8: More Automobile Trade Association members dressed in Ku Klux Klan garb to promote the Minneapolis Auto Show.

Source: *MT*, Feb. 2nd, 1917, pg. 8.

Ku Klux Kavaliers Is "Boy Scout" Move for Farm Boys



Some Farm Boy Cavaliers at the School of Agriculture, University Farm.

Figure 9: "Ku Klux Kavaliers is 'Boy Scout' Move for Farm Boys."

Source: *MT*, May 14th, 1916, pg. 27.



—Drawn expressly for the Leader by W. C. Morris



Figure 10 (Above): "Where they Differ with the President," Cartoon.

Source: Nonpartisan Leader, June 24th, 1918.

Figure 11 (Below): "I'm Pro-German, Am I?," Cartoon.

Source: Nonpartisan Leader, Apr. 15th, 1918.



Figure 12: Minnesota NPL organizer and tarring and feathering victim, Nels Hokstad.
Source: *Nonpartisan Leader*, May 20th, 1918, pg. 5.

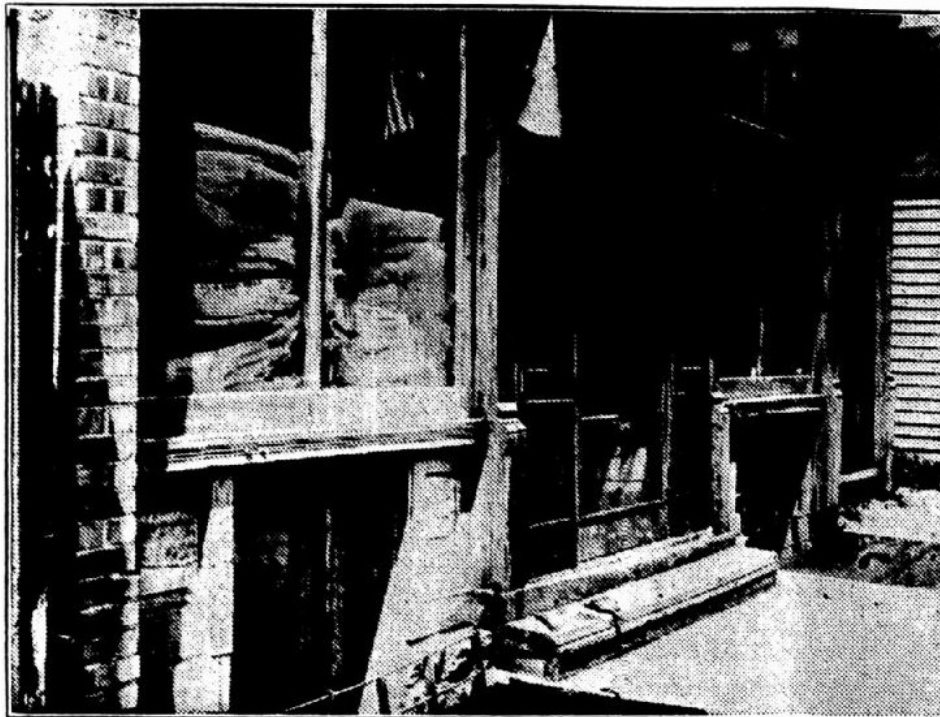


Figure 13: Yellow paint applied to the offices of the *Willmar Tribune*
Source: *Willmar Tribune*, June 19th, 1918., pg. 4.

Appendix Two: Essay on Primary Sources

All state and federal census data is derived from Integrated Public Use Microdata Series National Historical Geographic Information System (IPUMS NHGIS) from the University of Minnesota, unless otherwise stated. The IPUMS NHGIS database is available for free at <https://www.nhgis.org>.

All basic biographical data regarding current or former United States Senators and Members of Congress such as dates of birth and death, birthplace, districts represented, parties represented, and length of tenure are derived from the House of Representatives Archives “People Search” available at <https://history.house.gov/People/> (for Members of Congress), “Minnesota Legislators Past & Present” from the Minnesota Legislative Reference Library available at <https://www.leg.state.mn.us/legdb/> (for Minnesota Governors, State Senators, and State Representatives), and the Biographical Directory of the United States Congress available at <https://bioguideretro.congress.gov/> (for Members of Congress and United States Senators).

Most newspaper articles referenced in this paper were accessed as digitized copies from the following databases: the Minnesota Digital Newspaper Hub from the Minnesota Historical Society, available for free at <https://www.mnhs.org/newspapers/hub> (for most Minnesota newspapers published prior to 1923), the Newspapers.com database, available for a subscription at <https://www.newspapers.com/> (for Minnesota newspapers published after 1923 and for most post-Civil War non-Minnesotan newspapers), the Chronicling America: Historical American Newspapers database from the Library of Congress available for free at <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/> (for the *Nonpartisan Leader*), and the Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers Database from Gale, accessed through the University of Manitoba’s subscription (for pre-Civil War American newspapers). Basic bibliographic information regarding digitized newspapers such as years of publication, changes in title over the years,

and locations of publication are sourced from the appropriate databases. A few Minnesotan newspapers such as the *Rock County Herald*, *Duluth News-Tribune*, and the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* are currently only available in microfilm and were accessed in person at the Minnesota Historical Society Archives in St. Paul, Minnesota.

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