

"The 1913 Disaster:" Michigan Local Legend

William Ivey
Folklore Institute
Indiana University

The local event legend has been little dealt with by folklore scholars. Students of the folk legend have concentrated on the supernatural belief legend, often treating its migratory nature in comparative studies.

The local event legend may well be a New World phenomenon. It contains few supernatural elements (although these frequently become attached to it), and is distinctly non-migratory in its nature -- being firmly attached to a historical event of purely local significance. Even though the local event legend does not lend itself to comparative studies of international scope, it is nevertheless a fruitful area for folklore research. The local event legend is closely intertwined with the beliefs and attitudes of the community which supports it, and is thus a window through which the researcher may view the heart of a community's life.

Such a legend is particularly useful in the collecting and interpretation of local history. Communities, like ethnic groups and nations, interpret their pasts and make collective decisions about their futures. The local event legend, because it deals with a specific historical occurrence, will reveal a folk theory of history, which can, in turn, make plain to the scholar the forces which the community feels have shaped its past and present.

This paper examines a single local event legend, known both as "the 1913 disaster" and "the Italian Hall disaster," in an attempt to answer two broad questions: First, what is the precise nature of such a narrative, and, if it is a legend, what determines its legendary status? Second, how is the legend integrated into the local culture, what is the meaning of the narrative, and what forces preserve the legend in tradition? It will further be suggested that this genre of folklore demands special field techniques, and that it may force American folklore scholars to a broader definition of the term legend.

"The 1913 disaster" is a fragmentary narrative relating the tragic death of seventy-four townspeople of the Northern Michigan mining community of Calumet at a Christmas party on December 24, 1913. During a party given by the Womens' Auxillary of the Western Federation of Miners, an unknown man yelled "fire!" in the crowded second-story hall, and in the resulting rush for the exits, seventy-four died -- most of them women and children. There was, in fact, no fire. The deaths resulted from trampling and from suffocation as the children rushed from the second-story ballroom, stumbled down a long flight of stairs, and finally came to rest against doors which opened inward. Because the doors opened in, women and children piled up in the stairwell, and most died there.

The disaster occurred during a serious labor dispute which had pitted 15,000 mine workers against the power of the local mining companies. The party had been sponsored by the militant Western Federation of Miners who had struck the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company, its subsidiaries, and other mining firms of the district. Although both parties to the dispute blamed the disaster on each other, the man who caused the disaster

with his false alarm was never found.¹

In the early spring of 1967, I visited Calumet and collected approximately fifty texts relating the incident referred to as "the 1913 disaster" or "the Italian Hall disaster." Half of the texts were collected orally and retained as tape recordings, the others were collected in written form from high school students attending the local public school. These texts vary in length from one or two sentences to sustained narratives of several thousand words. Each describes, at the minimum, the outline of events as they took place in 1913. Several texts contain significant information about the community of the past and of the present.

Every individual approached for an interview possessed the narrative in at least a fragmentary form. The following text, collected in writing from a high school student, is typical:

I heard that many people had gathered at the Italian building. Suddenly someone yelled fire and people all started running out. I guess the door didn't open right away and many people got trampled.²

The following text is also typical of the form in which this narrative most often appears.

In 1913, there was a Christmas party at the Italian Hall, now the Eagles' Hall. Some of the miners outside yelled, "Fire!" The children rushed down the stairs too quickly to open the doors, which opened inward. Each child, trying to save himself, crawled over the others, until there was, literally, a pile of children up against the door. A large number of children died from suffocation.³

The second text is interesting in that it states that "some of the miners" yelled "Fire!" Another text lays the blame on the shoulders of the company:

There was a strike on at C and H* and it was around Christmas. I'm not too sure how they got around to it, but the people of Calumet were going to have a Christmas party for the children.

At the party everybody was having a good time, when some drunken person called fire. It was believed to be a C and H official. Everybody scrambled for the door, trampling the children and older folks.

The doors happen to open inward and people trying to get them opened were also trampled. When it was over there was nothing but a mass of bloody bodies, mostly of children.

Then the town had a funeral for all the dead.⁴

An examination of these texts might lead an observer to conclude that the dynamic element of this narrative is in the placing of blame on

*The initials "C and H" are used by local residents to refer to the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company.

one party or another in the strike. The first text quoted is most typical, however, and of all texts collected, only these two latter texts clearly blamed the tragedy on either the company or the union. The typical version blames neither party, is highly general, lacking in specific information (such as date, time, or the precise number killed), and is highly fragmentary in nature. When specific information is given, it is often at variance with the historical record and with other narratives. Reports of the number killed, for example, range from thirteen to "several hundred."

Even this limited variation indicates that the narrative has a primarily oral circulation. As far as can be determined, it seems certain that no printed standardizing version of the incident circulates in the community.

Variation alone, however, is not sufficient to give the narrative legend status. From an examination of the first three texts presented, the "1913 disaster" appears as a mere fragment of local history, and does not seem to possess the cohesive narrative form which has been associated with the legend.

Though the narrative is innocuous on the surface, it achieves legendary status through the manner in which it is integrated into the life of the community. It appears, from a close examination of the fifty texts collected, that this narrative relates an event which is viewed by members of the community as the turning point in the history of Calumet. This fact is not evident from an examination of the fragmentary narratives of the incident, but emerges in the conversational context which supports the narrative. Context, in this sense, refers to the set of ideas and associations which invariably accompany the narrative in conversation. It includes the themes of conversation which precede, bring forth, and follow the text itself. This use of the term context involves a set of ideas, and must be distinguished from the folklorist's standard use of the term in which it refers almost entirely to the physical setting accompanying a narrative or song. The term conversational context refers to those ideas or associations which, when they occur in everyday speech, will always produce a telling of a specific narrative or narrative fragment.

This sense of context is fleeting and extremely difficult to collect. It would be obtained only when the collecting situation is so unforced that the narrative sought appears in casual conversation without being elicited, in any direct way, by the collector. My own field work was geared to the concept of the local legend as a single, cohesive narrative, and I gathered texts by pointedly asking informants for versions of "the Italian Hall disaster," or "the 1913 disaster." For this reason most of my collected texts do not contain the slightest hint as to the nature of the conversational context of this narrative. However, I am now convinced that it is this conversational context which determines the legendary status of "the 1913 disaster," and which is the key to understanding the function of the legend in the life of the community.

Even though collecting was not directed toward obtaining the conversational context of this narrative, strong suggestions as to its nature emerged in the course of my field work. The following portion of an interview implies that the narrative appears in discussions of "old times:"

Q. Is it talked about much now?

A. Oh, recently I haven't heard much about it, until you mentioned it now. I think it's more or less a thing of the past now. Except, I imagine, when older people get together and discuss old times I imagine that comes up, but other than that I don't imagine you hear too much about it any more, unless somebody brings it up.⁵

The next informant is more specific about what subjects of conversation will bring forth a text:

Q. Who do you generally talk about it ("the 1913 disaster") to now, if it comes up in conversation?

A. I have to think about that a bit. Oh, it comes up whenever the strike...*of course, whenever there's... We'll start talking about C and H and the union today -- present-day union and C and H affairs: wages and so on, and then, they'll talk about the strike, and then, invariably, when the strike comes up, invariably "the Italian Hall disaster" get talked about in connection with the old strike.⁶

This second interview adds further dimensions to our notion of what set of ideas will bring forth a narrative of "the Italian Hall disaster." The informant suggests that the narrative of the disaster arises out of a discussion of present-day relations between the company and the union, which is then followed by talk of the great strike of 1913, which produces an account of the disaster. The narrative is thus linked to the present community through memories of the great strike and discussions of contemporary mining company affairs.

To complete our view of the conversational context of this local event legend, let us examine a text which includes a portion of the context within a simple narration of the events known as "the Italian Hall disaster." The informant is an older man who was present at the disastrous party in the Italian Hall. He relates the story with great vigor and enthusiasm. Like the other informants, he was asked only for a specific narrative about the events which took place on December 24, 1913. In his enthusiasm, however, he provided much more than the fragmentary narrative of events collected from most individuals. His vigorous narrative style carries him over, without a break, into the conversational context which accompanies the legend narrative. We join his narrative as he is asked the number killed; he continues with his interpretation of the cause of the disaster -- suggesting that someone said, "What if there's a fire in here," and that this statement caused the panic:

*Ellipses (...), in the context of these transcriptions, do not indicate a portion of the text omitted, but stand for a false start, an incomplete sentence, or a break in thought committed by the informant. No material has been deleted from any of the texts.

Q. How many were killed?

A. There was ninety -- ninety-some. No reason at all. Just some bigmouth said, "Well..." Just like you go to some doings and they got a big crowd and he says, "Gee, look at the big crowd supposin' there's a fire here." "Fire, fire!" and boy, everybody starts to rush. That's one thing a guy should remember to keep his big mouth shut. Yeah, you betcha. No, that was a sad Christmas, I'll tell you. And you know, I'm gonna tell you a funny story.

My dad belonged to the union, so help me God. That was the union. He had a liquor license here before, when it was wet. I'm gonna tell you a funny story on this deal. He worked for C and H. He went out there, for crumps sake, and he went over there. He went to the brewery, he went everywhere, and everyplace he worked C and H blackballed him. 'Cause he would not turn in...I still got that union book right today. My dad never turned it in. He said, "That belongs to me. I paid for that. That belongs to me." Them guys that turned it in got back with C and H but my dad never turned his in. My dad worked for the brewery -- worked for Brocco's Brewery, so finally he decided. He bought this building and started a joint in here. Beck* used to come over here, he'd say, "Well, Pete, how's she goin'?" My dad'd say, "Go on, get the hell out of here!" C and H used to be...C and H had a C and H sheriff's department up there, and my dad went in there...I still got that book right today. That goes to show you, for crumps sake, and that's a long, long, long time ago -- It's a C and H outfit, I'm telling you. That was an outfit...that he belong to the union and the union lost out at that time. If the union would've won, that time in 1913, this Copper Country would've been the best God-darned place in the state of the union.

I come...I was not born here, I was born in Italy, and when I come here I was three years old, and I've sixty-five now, and I'm telling you, I went through this town and I seen it go up, and I seen...

I was living on Seventh Street, and my mother had fourteen boys. There was three shifts at that time, and if anything broke down underground...There was only one bed for them to sleep in there, and somebody had to sit down, because they had no room to sleep in there. And I'm telling you, I seen that.

If the union would've won at that time, the Copper Country today would've been the best town in the U.P.** I don't give a damn.⁷

This complex narrative is especially revealing because it flows, unsolicited, from a telling of the story of "the 1913 disaster." Much of the conversational context of the legend is revealed in this single

* Beck -- the sheriff of Houghton County in the years following the strike of 1913.

**U.P. -- Upper Peninsula (of Michigan).

version. The text includes the story of how the informant's father was blacklisted by the mining company because he refused to turn in his union membership book when the strike ended (lines 12-17). He was also harassed by the company-controlled sheriff's department (lines 21-22). Twice the informant interjects the comment that if the union had "won" in the 1913 strike, the subsequent history of the region would have been different (lines 28-30 and 40-43). The informant describes the crowded living conditions of the early days in the copper district, and suggests that he has witnessed both the rise and the decline of the community of Calumet (lines 33-34). Following the excerpt quoted here, the informant continued his narrative with a long story of unscrupulous mining captains* who cheated their men, and concluded with some general comments regarding the bleak nature of present-day relations between the company and the community.

Certain general outlines of the narrative's context emerge in this text. "The Italian Hall disaster" is linked with the strike of 1913, and the strike is linked, in a general way, to the decline of the community. The account of the disaster also leads readily to a discussion of relations between the community and the company -- past and present. This web of historical associations is bound to the text of "the 1913 disaster."

We may thus paraphrase the attitude inherent in these associations in the following manner: To the folk of Calumet, "the 1913 disaster" ended the strike of the same year, and the strike with its unfavorable conclusion ended the economic life of the community. The loss of economic vitality transformed the community from a first-class, progressive, populous city into an area of perpetual cultural and economic depression. The strike, and "the Italian Hall disaster" within the strike, divides the golden age of community progress from a period of steady decline. It is further implied that if the disaster had not occurred, the strike would have ended differently, and if the strike had produced a union, victory, the history of the community might have been different.

It is thus clear that the conversational or ideational context of this narrative is a web of historical associations which may or may not conform to standard historical interpretation, and which causally link "the 1913 disaster" to the decline of the community. These associations do not appear in the narrative itself, but in the conversational context which surrounds a particular telling of an "Italian Hall disaster" text. Here is the nature of the "group awareness"⁸ of this narrative, and it is this set of associations which links "the Italian Hall disaster" to the heart of the community, and which distinguishes the narrative as a local event legend.

In order to unravel the meaning of the legend narrative, it is worthwhile to examine the contents of this legend context in the light of the record amassed with the use of standard historiographic techniques. Was there a golden age, did the strike end it, and did "the Italian Hall disaster" bring about the union's defeat in that strike? Is the folk attitude toward the disaster and the strike found in the legend context confirmed or denied by the historical record? The answers to these

*Mining captain -- Mine foreman.

questions may provide the researcher with insights into those community attitudes which are responsible for converting "the 1913 disaster" from a historical anecdote into a local event legend.

It would take little imagination to characterize the period before the 1913 strike as a golden age in the history of the Calumet community. The Calumet and Hecla Mining Company enriched the economic and cultural life of the community in the manner of "benevolent paternalism" so common in industrial cities of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The company operated a fine hospital, and a fee of \$1.00 each month covered house calls, medicine, and surgery for an entire family. A public library was provided, which possessed 35,000 volumes at the time of the strike. The company collected garbage, provided electricity to employees at a reduced rate, supported local churches with grants of land and the donation of funds, rented nine-room houses for an average rent of seven dollars per month, furnished life insurance for fifty-cents each month, and allowed each miner free pasturage for one cow. In addition the mining company supported a "silver cornet" band, and gave picnics and balls in public parks donated to the community by the company.⁹ At the time of this research, however, in 1967, none of these services remained.

Other data support the conclusion that the period before 1913 was a golden age. The price of copper (which provides a valuable index to economic life in this one-industry community) averaged 28.4 cents per pound from 1899 to 1919. From 1920 to 1950, the average adjusted price* was only 12.6 cents per pound.¹⁰ In a similar fashion, the population, number of working mines, and number of production workers show a marked decline from before 1913 to the period following the strike. The 1910 Houghton County population of 88,098 had declined to 52,851 by 1930.¹¹ At the time of the strike, 25 mines were operated in the region by 14,500 production workers. In 1929, 18 mines utilized only 7,834 employees.¹²

At first glance these figures, and the description of company benevolence in the years before the strike, appear to confirm totally the folk attitude toward the strike of 1913 as the watershed in the history of the community. This conclusion, however, must be modified. A closer examination of these statistics will reveal that the connection between scientific and folk history, in this case, is a subtle and tenuous one.

It is true that the Calumet and Hecla Mining Company provided a wealth of benevolent services to the community in the period prior to the strike of 1913. The strike, however, did not signal the sudden withdrawal of this benevolence. The public bathhouse was closed as late as 1937. Company-owned homes were sold to miners in 1936, and the company hospital was not closed until 1947.¹³ Thus much of the benevolence of the pre-strike years carried over into the nineteen-thirties and forties. In this sense, the golden age of Calumet extended several decades beyond 1913.

*Price of copper at New York, deflated by Index of Prices of Final Products (1926=100).

The same modifications can be placed on other indicators of economic decline. The average price of copper before and after the strike year indicates a marked decrease in the latter period. A closer look at the data, however, reveals that the high price of copper was reached in 1916 -- 39.8 cents per pound. The low of 7.3 cents came some years later, in 1932, at the height of the Great Depression.¹⁴ It is thus incorrect to associate this aspect of the community's decline with the strike of 1913.

The following table indicates county population, the number of working mines, and the number of production workers employed in them from 1910 to 1950.

Population, Houghton County¹⁵

<u>1910</u>	<u>1920</u>	<u>1930</u>	<u>1940</u>	<u>1950</u>
88,098	71,930	52,851	47,631	39,771

Number of Mines¹⁶

<u>1913</u>	<u>1919</u>	<u>1929</u>	<u>1939</u>	<u>1954</u>
25 17	28	18	6	5

Production Workers¹⁸

<u>1913</u>	<u>1919</u>	<u>1929</u>	<u>1939</u>	<u>1954</u>
14,500 ¹⁹	12,235	7,834	3,166	2,094

Notice that the greatest decline in population comes in the ten-year period between 1920 and 1930. The most significant decrease in the number of working mines appears between 1929 and 1939. In like fashion the number of production workers drops most precipitously between 1929 and 1939. On the basis of these indicators it seems clear that the depression years had the deepest effect on the economy of the copper district, and that the effect of the 1913 strike is slight when compared to the decline of the 1930's.

The depression caused the collapse of an already-weakened industry. In 1902 the Michigan mines produced 53 per cent of the rock tonnage mined nationally, supported 53 per cent of the wage earners employed in the production of copper, used 69.4 per cent of the horsepower expended in the copper industry, but produced only 25.6 per cent of the domestic output of refined copper.²⁰ The high cost of deep-shaft mining, the gradual exhaustion of the Michigan copper lode, and the large number of men required for hard-rock mining had weakened the Michigan mines' competitive position in relation to western, open-pit operations. The mines of the Calumet region, in 1902, were employing more than half of the copper industry's workers, mining more than half the total copper-bearing rock extracted nationally, expending almost three-quarters of the national industry power output, to realize profits on only one-quarter of the total national output of refined copper. This unfavorable situation chipped away at the earning power of the Michigan mines from the turn of the century on, and even if the depression and the great strike are ignored, it is still clear that the copper district was "dying inward from the edge."²¹

While these facts do not support the folk attitude that the strike of 1913 was the turning point in the history of the community of Calumet, neither do they entirely deny this attitude. Even though the greatest economic decline apparently took place during the Great Depression, the two main concepts -- the golden age and the decline -- exist in fact. The folk have simply adopted the cataclysm of the strike as a convenient point at which to divide the history of the community into the "good" and the "bad" days. In addition, because the local economy had been threatened since the turn of the century, the eight-month strike of 1913-1914 must have had a noticeable impact on the income of the great companies and of the community of Calumet.

A second aspect of the folk attitude toward "the Italian Hall disaster" involves the extent to which that tragedy brought about the union's defeat in the strike. Once again, the historical record is ambiguous. Most scholars suggest that the strike was lost by the time "the Italian Hall disaster" took place. There was a general feeling that the union was unprepared for a strike in the summer of 1913, and that a later effort could have been more successful:

In June 1913 unrest among the Michigan mines was assuming such proportions that the leaders of the Western Federation of Miners who were eager to avoid a strike until the spring of 1914 were no longer able to resist the pressure.²²

The copper district companies, many of which were owned or controlled by the Calumet and Hecla company, were well prepared for the strike. They were united against recognition of the union, and had armed 1700 "local and imported" special deputy sheriffs. Thus the Western Federation of Miners, calling a strike before they were financially prepared, were forced to end in the spring of 1914:

The deplorable state of the strike fund faced the leaders with the alternatives of ending the strike or decreasing the relief payments which ranged from \$3.00 weekly for single men to \$10.00 for men with families. All in all the union disbursed \$271,000 in relief. Moyer* explained the situation in an open letter to the public in the early part of April. The district organization placed the matter before the strikers. As all the important demands had been conceded, except union recognition, the strikers decided to end the strike, which had lasted more than eight months.²³

Thus the end of the strike was brought on by company concessions (which were fewer than suggested in the preceding quotation)²⁴ and by the depleted state of the union treasury. Again, it appears that the folk interpretation has overestimated the role of "the 1913 disaster" in the history of the community.

The disaster of December 24 did have an impact on the course of the strike, however. The tragic deaths of 74 townspeople, all of whom were associated with the union, produced bitter recriminations and accusa-

*Moyer -- Charles H. Moyer, President of the Western Federation of Miners.

tions by the groups involved in the strike. President Charles H. Moyer of the Western Federation of Miners made the following statement on the evening of December 24:

My information is that no striker or any one in sympathy with the strike brought about this catastrophe. There are many who testify that a man from the outside came up the stairs and yelled "Fire!"

A public meeting of citizens has been called for tomorrow to take relief measures, but the Western Federation of Miners will bury its own dead and the American Labor movement will take care of the relatives of the deceased. No aid will be accepted from any of those citizens who a short time ago pronounced these people undesirable citizens.²⁵

The New York Times, in an editorial on January 2, 1914 concluded:

The evidence shows that nobody was admitted to Italian Hall who did not have a union card or was not vouched for, so there is every probability that those who are blaming others caused their own suffering. The idea is too firmly fixed in their minds to be removed by proof, and its 26 existence is fostered by those who thrive on agitation.

It was within this climate of accusation and innuendo (which reached as far as New York City), that the conservative Citizens' Alliance, furious that Moyer, in his statement, had refused their offer of financial assistance, took strong action:

A committee of Alliance men came to Moyer's hotel room and demanded that he publicly absolve the Citizens' Alliance from responsibility by accepting the \$25,000 offered for the relief of the stricken families. Moyer absolutely refused. A few minutes after the committee's departure armed men burst into his room, beat him into insensibility, and shot him in the back. They then seized him, together with a union organizer, and dragged them both through the streets of Hancock for a mile and a half to the railroad station. At the station, Moyer was dragged before James McNaughton, the president of the Calumet and Hecla Company, who hit him in the face and threatened to have him hanged if he ever returned to the Michigan copper country. There-upon Moyer and his fellow in misery were placed on a Chicago-bound train.²⁷

There can be little doubt that the violent outbursts which the disaster elicited from both sides hastened the union's capitulation. The vote which ended the strike on April 13, could be interpreted as the miner's expression of disgust for a strike which had brought violence to the copper district, had destroyed his livelihood, poisoned his relations with his employer, and brought about the deaths of friends and relatives. The full extent of the impact of the disaster on the course of the strike is difficult to assess. It seems true, however, that "the 1913 disaster" provoked a new burst of violence in the expulsion of Moyer, and that it hardened and intensified antagonisms already present in the contending

factions of the community. Thus, although financial problems brought an end to the strike, "the Italian Hall disaster" increased factional bitterness and speeded the union's capitulation.

The folk attitude toward the effect of the disaster is again in the grey area between unsupported belief and historical fact. Though it is doubtful that the union could have succeeded in gaining recognition from the company under any circumstances, "the Italian Hall disaster" hastened the end of the strike by demoralizing the union miners, inflaming community passions, and by raising the possibility that the union itself was somehow responsible for the deaths of women and children. Although the event was not decisive, the disaster did heighten the community's distaste for the strike. There is, then, at least a grain of truth in the folk interpretation of the role of the disaster in the strike of 1913.

The causal progression suggested by the conversational context of the legend of "the Italian Hall disaster" implies that if the disaster had not occurred, the strike of 1913 would have ended in a settlement favorable to the union. Although the disaster may have precipitated the conclusion of the strike, the eventual outcome would have been the same even had the disaster not taken place.

The legend context further suggests that, had the union been recognized, the copper district would not have suffered economic decline. It has been shown, however, that the most serious decline came decades after the strike and the disaster, and that it was the result of the Great Depression, the rise of western open-pit copper mines, and the exhaustion of the copper lode of the Calumet district. Evidence can be found that indicates the disaster had an impact on the strike, and that the strike affect the history of the community, but it can be shown with greater force that these were not decisive factors.

Thus the narrative on "the Italian Hall disaster" is a local event legend. It gains its legendary status from its exclusively local, oral circulation, and from its context, which links the narrative to a folk interpretation of the community's past. The context of the legend is a web of historical associations in which the disaster is presented as a crucial turning point in the history of Calumet, and which always accompanies a telling of the legend text in relaxed, undirected conversation. It is this context, and an analysis of it, which reveals the meaning of the legend text, and not the narrative itself.

The contemporary context of the legend is variable, and a number of idea sets will bring forth a telling of "the 1913 disaster." The conversation may be about the general present-day economy of the community, or the 1913 strike itself, but each conversation is likely to produce the legend narrative. For example, a general discussion of the community's economic life will lead to a comment about contemporary community-company relations. This comment may produce a general discussion of the "good old days," or of labor conditions past and present. The most recent strike would then be discussed, followed by talk of "the great strike" of 1913. "The Italian Hall disaster" is at this point a most logical topic of conversation, and a legend text would be likely to appear. Although it is most difficult to collect, this network of informal associations -- present and past -- is the key to the meaning of any local event legend.

The meaning of the legend for the community is always found in the contemporary context. Had the community of Calumet prospered after the 1913 strike, it is unlikely that the disaster or the strike itself would be viewed as a crucial turning point in the community's past. As present-day company-community relations improve or worsen, the earlier strike and the disaster within it are continually reviewed and discussed. This is a continuing process -- not unlike the sociological concept of re-interpretation -- by which the community continually changes its past in order to integrate it with its present situation.

It is perhaps natural for Calumet, which has suffered forty years of continual economic decline, to attempt to rationalize this decline by discovering its causes in an impersonal, accidental occurrence. To unconsciously view "the Italian Hall disaster" as the cause of Calumet's decline makes that decline accidental, and thereby, somehow, reversible. The community, because of this interpretation of its past, continues to look to the mining industry for its salvation. Rumors abound regarding new copper discoveries, or a new corporation which is about to base its operation in Calumet and thus magically restore the golden age. This backward looking view has obscured the genuine economic alternatives which lie before the community. The tourism, local art, and handicrafts which could re-invigorate the economy of the area are ignored in favor of wishful hopes for the return of a bygone age. The folk interpretation of community history expressed in the legend of "the Italian Hall disaster" and its ideational context, explains how Calumet reached its present state of decline and embodies the blind hope that a renewed mining industry will somehow restore the lost golden age.

Richard M. Dorson has suggested that the legend is the property of a group, and that it transcends the knowledge of any one individual. Certainly this is true in the case of the local event legend, which when studied with its full context and interpreted in the light of local history, will do much to aid our understanding of the dynamics of thought and change in American communities.

NOTES

- 1 "Coroner's Jury Reaches Verdict," New York Times, January 1, 1914 Sec. 1, p. 17.
- 2 Eleventh-grade high school student, written text.
- 3 Tenth-grade high school student, written text.
- 4 Eleventh-grade high school student, written text.
- 5 Female informant, age 45, orally collected text.
- 6 Male informant, age 50, orally collected text.
- 7 Male informant, age 65, orally collected text.
- 8 Richard M. Dorson, "Defining the American Folk Legend (abstract)," in Forms Upon the Frontier, edited by Austin and Alta Fife and Henry Glassie, Utah State University Press, Logan, 1969, p. 164.
- 9 United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, Michigan Copper District Strike, Bulletin No. 139, 1914, pp. 123-126.

- 10 Figures based on Orris C. Herfindahl, Copper Costs and Prices: 1870-1957, John Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1959, Table 22, pp. 208-209.
- 11 Michigan. Secretary of State, Michigan Manual, 1967-1968, p. 402.
- 12 United States Government, United States Census of Mineral Industries, 1954, Vol. 1, Summary and Industry Statistics, 1954, p. 10D-5, Table 2.
- 13 Interview with William Ivey, Sr., January 21, 1970.
- 14 Herfindahl, Copper Prices, Table 22, pp. 208-209.
- 15 Michigan. Manual, p. 402.
- 16 United States, Census of Mineral Industries, p. 10D-5, Table 2. The census lists "mining establishments" as defined by the United States Budget Bureau Standard Industrial Classification Manual, Major Group 10, Metal Mining, p. 14, 1967: "Establishments primarily engaged in mining, milling, or otherwise preparing copper ores." Number of Mines thus refers to the number of mining companies or major extractive divisions of companies operating in a given year. The precise number of mine shafts in operation would be represented by a much larger figure.
- 17 Mineral Census data is unavailable for 1913 and the years immediately preceding that date. Twenty-five separate mining establishments would seem a fair, and perhaps high, estimate of the number of operations in the Copper District in 1913. The New York Times, July 27, 1913, Sec. 8, p. 7, lists 14 mining operations with a 1912 output of at least 1,742,000 pounds of copper. Michigan Copper District Strike, Appendix III, p. 165, lists 18 mining establishments extant in the district. These are the Mohawk Mining Co., Ahmeek Mining Co., Allouez Mining Co., Osceola Consolidated Mining Co., Wolverine Mining Co., Centennial Copper Mining Co., Calumet and Hecla Mining Co., Tamarack Mining Co., LaSalle Copper Co., Laurium Mining Co., Franklin Mining Co., Oneco Copper Mining Co., Hancock Consolidated Mining Co., Qunicy Mining Co., Isle Royal Copper Co., Superior Copper Co., Copper Range Consolidated Co., and Winona Copper Co. Of the 18, 9 were owned by Calumet and Hecla, and 6 by Copper Range Consolidated. C. H. Benedict, in Red Metal, Table VII, p. 131, indicates that the Calumet and Hecla Mining Co. owned some shares in 15 different mining companies, as of April, 1909. Thus the figure of twenty-five would be a likely upper limit for the number of mining operations (see note 16 for definition) employing workers in 1913.
- Michigan Copper District Strike, Appendix III, pp. 165-166, adds to our perception of mining operations in the Keweenaw peninsula by indicating that of 70 copper-mining establishments incorporated from the beginning of work on the copper range, only 21 companies had paid any dividend by 1913, and a mere 14 had completely repaid their original stockholders' investment. The same publication, Appendix II, pp. 139-164, lists 52 separate mine shafts in some form of operation during 1912, and this figure includes only those shafts operated by the subsidiaries of Calumet and Hecla and Copper Range Consolidated, excluding the diggings operated by the parent corporation exclusively.

- 18 United States, Census of Mineral Industries, p. 10D-5, Table 2.
- 19 Michigan Copper District Strike, p. 8.
- 20 William Bryam Gates, Michigan Copper and Boston Dollars, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1951, p. 89.
- 21 Angus Murdock, Boom Copper, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1943, p. 230.
- 22 Selig Perlman and Philip Taft, Labor Movements. History of Labor in the United States, 1896-1932, Vol. 4, edited by John R. Commons, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1935, p. 249.
- 23 Perlman and Taft, pp. 252-253.
- 24 "Michigan Miners Vote to Call Off Strike," New York Times, April 14, 1914, Sec. 1, p. 3. The miners voted, on April 13, to call off the strike on the promise of better working conditions, an eight-hour day, and \$3.00 minimum daily wage. The two central issues of the strike -- the removal of the one-man drill and the recognition of the union -- were not conceded by the companies.
- 25 Unsigned article in the New York Times, December 25, 1913, Sec. 1, p. 2, paragraph headed "Veiled Charges by Moyer."
- 26 "Laws to Help Anarchists," (editorial), New York Times, January 2, 1914, Sec. 1, p. 8.
- 27 Perlman and Taft, p. 252.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Benedict, C. Harry, Red Metal: The Calumet and Hecla Story, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1952.
- Dorson, Richard M., "Defining the American Folk Legend (abstract)" in Forms Upon the Frontier, edited by Austin and Alta Fife and Henry Glassie, Utah State University Press, Logan, 1969.
- Gates, William Bryam, Michigan Copper and Boston Dollars, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1951.
- Herfindahl, Orris C., Copper Costs and Prices: 1870-1957, Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1959.
- "Laws to Help Anarchists," (editorial), New York Times, January 2, 1914, Sec. 1, p. 8.
- Michigan. Secretary of State, Michigan Manual, 1967-1968.
- "Michigan Miners Vote to Call Off Strike," New York Times, April 14, 1914, Sec. 1, p. 3.
- Murdock, Angus, Boom Copper, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1943.

Perlman, Selig and Philip Taft, Labor Movements. History of Labor in the United States, 1896-1932, Vol. 4, edited by John R. Commons, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1935.

Sullivan, William A., "The 1913 Revolt of the Michigan Copper Miners," Michigan History, Vol. 43, no. 3, Sept., 1959, pp. 294-318.

United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, Michigan Copper District Strike, Bulletin No. 139, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1914.

United States Congress. House of Representatives. Committee on Mines and Mining, Hearings before a Subcommittee pursuant to House Resolution 387, Conditions in the Copper Mines of Michigan, Four parts, Feb.-March, 1914.

United States Government, United States Census of Mineral Industries, 1954, Vol. 1, Summary and Industry Statistics, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1954.