

Upper Country: A Journal of the Lake Superior Region

Volume 4

Article 4

2016

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Recommended Citation

Penn, Allie (2016) "No News Is Good News: Newspaper Reports of Calumet's Italian Hall Disaster," *Upper Country: A Journal of the Lake Superior Region*: Vol. 4 , Article 4.

Available at: https://commons.nmu.edu/upper_country/vol4/iss1/4

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No News Is Good News: Newspaper Reports of Calumet's Italian Hall Disaster

Allie Penn

*"Take a trip with me in 1913, To Calumet, Michigan, in the copper country. I will take you to a place called Italian Hall, Where the miners are having their big Christmas ball."*¹

Singer Woody Guthrie wrote "1913 Massacre" almost forty years after the disaster occurred. When he crooned the above lyrics about the 1913-14 Copper Country Strike in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, he wanted to memorialize the worker's unionization movement and the tragedy of the Italian Hall Disaster. Workers began striking in July of 1913; the workers demanded higher wage and less hours, and protested the implementation of the one-man drill, known as the "widow maker." The mine bosses rejected these demands in order to keep the mines profitable. The strike became a tragedy on Christmas Eve 1913, when striking families gathered in Calumet's Italian Hall. An unknown individual yelled "fire," which caused a rushed evacuation resulting in many deaths. By using folk music, Guthrie provided a voice to the working class' interpretation of these events while keeping the history alive. It also added an interpretation of the events that began in the newspapers shortly after the tragedy. This paper will sample and analyze regional, state, and national newspaper accounts of the Italian Hall Disaster to demonstrate how selected information shows the economic biases the papers used to recount the tragedy.

Due to the longevity of the strike, many miners and their families were unable to provide Christmas presents for their children. Annie Clemenc, union leader and wife of one of the protesting miners, organized a Christmas party for the striking families. She solicited donations of hats, mittens, toys, fruit, and candy for the strikers' children, in the hopes they would receive at least one Christmas present. With the promise of free gifts, entertainment, and fun, over seven

hundred people attended the Italian Hall party. Later in the afternoon, a man entered the Italian Hall, and shouted his infamous “fire” and ran away. Whether a joke, intending to cause panic, or a real belief of a fire, the results of the cry were devastating. Seventy-three people suffocated in the crowded stairwell while trying to escape.²

Early newspaper reports focused on the Citizens’ Alliance, an anti-strike group who supported the mine owners and bosses. While newspapers like the *Calumet News* and the *Daily Mining Gazette* of Houghton published reports of the heroics exhibited by the group, Hancock’s Finnish newspaper *Tyomies* questioned the part the group may have taken in the incident, citing witness testimony that mine bosses had been present that night, even that they may have held the doors at the bottom of the stairs closed, preventing party goers from vacating the Hall. These accusations most likely stemmed from the earlier reports of Alliance violence against striking miners.³

Other newspaper reports focused on the fatalities indicating a death toll of seventy-three, seventy-four, or even eighty. Reliability suffered as some papers printed names twice or so badly misspelled them that friend and relatives could not identify their loved ones. Naturally there are favorable and condemning interpretations about the strike, unions, and mine companies. It is less understandable that there could be two sides to the factual reporting.⁴

In the early twentieth century newspapers often provided a voice to the community. An examination of news sources from local, regional and notational papers demonstrates how questions of labor, capital and the Italian Hall resonated in much of the nation. Three sources from the Calumet region explore the Italian Hall tragedy from pro and anti-business perspectives. Other Upper Peninsula newspapers from Marquette, Escanaba, Ishpeming, and Negaunee

likewise articulate these economic biases and perhaps serve as a warning to miners in those communities.

Given the often contentious labor unrest in the Midwest and major industrial cities, other newspapers picked up the Italian Hall story and used it as an opportunity to weigh in on work issues. Regional newspapers in Duluth, Minnesota, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Michigan's Lower Peninsula all covered the disaster. Likewise, the industrial behemoths Detroit, Chicago and New York City, recognized the significance of the Calumet Strike. Several papers from these locals will provide national insight on the role of workers and their employers.

Calumet, Houghton, and Hancock

The *Calumet News* published a special edition the day of the tragedy. Multiple reports stated that a man entered the Hall and yelled fire. The December 24, 1913 edition of the newspaper reported that the person was a drunk, originating from the saloon below the room where the Christmas party took place, though there is no evidence that this was the case. When the December 26, 1913 newspaper was released, one of the main articles, entitled "Heartrending Scenes Witnessed by Those Who Did Rescue Work," conveyed the important efforts of the Waddell-Mahon men. These men were, according to the union and strikers, hired to break the strike; the mine company reported the Waddell-Mahon men were on payroll to maintain the peace, and to protect those workers who chose to go to work. The article further recounted the beneficial work of the Citizens' Alliance. "Deputies, mounted police and members of the Citizens' Alliance worked hand in hand and by their untiring efforts, possibly hundreds were saved." However, many witnesses within the Italian Hall claimed that someone wearing a Citizens' Alliance pin was the one who falsely claimed fire in the first place.⁵

Steve Lehto's book *Death's Door* argues, "The *Calumet News* also used the disaster to sing the praises of the Citizens' Alliance and the Waddell-Mahon security guards. Although some Waddell men and Alliance members were present in the street after the tragedy and helped with rescue efforts, the paper made them out to be the saviors of the day." The Waddell men and the Citizens' Alliance had been the very same people against the striking miners and their union.⁶

While the *Calumet News* proclaimed the Citizens' Alliance as heroes, it failed to report other witnesses who were present helping rescue party-goers from the pile of bodies at the bottom of the stairs. Al Harvey, a Calumet resident, was present the night of the Italian Hall Disaster. He vividly remembered the night and proclaimed there was no fire. He heard the loud cries coming from the Hall, as he was a few blocks away from the location. He, along with his friend Joe Caddell, who was Chief of Police in Calumet, ran to the Hall to help out. He described the scene: "The hallway was jammed clean from the top to the bottom. There they were—jammed in there, one on top of the other. I have never seen anything like it." This first-hand account is important because it does not mention who was or was not there; it focuses on saving the people who were still alive. Caddell and Harvey stayed to help dig party-goers out of the mess that had accumulated at the bottom of the stairs, the pair of them being only two of the multitude who had come to help victims at the Hall.⁷

The *Daily Mining Gazette* of Houghton related similar stories. While announcing the tragedy on the front page of the newspaper, the article continued to accuse the union leader, Charles H. Moyer, of using the incident to benefit his strike. While Moyer did say that the union would take care of its people, there is no evidence that Moyer attempted to use the disaster to benefit him. Arguably Moyer refused the funds and assistance because these were the same people who had been rejecting the union and the striking miners for the previous months. He

would have simply been maintaining consistency in the relationship of the striking miners and the companies. The *Gazette* also took the opportunity to create doubt as to whether or not a Citizens' Alliance pin was worn by the person crying fire. This was in response to claims of many witnesses that someone had been wearing a Citizens' Alliance pin. The testimony of these witnesses was the reason that Moyer continued to demand an inquest take place.⁸

Within the Coroners' Inquest that followed the Italian Hall Disaster, more than ten interviewees were asked if they saw someone wearing a Citizens' Alliance pin. While Anna E. Lustig, a woman who attended the party, confirmed that the person who cried fire was wearing a Citizen's Alliance pin, John Auno, a striking miner present at the party, did not see a button on the man's coat. The *Daily Mining Gazette* continued to fight the accusations against the Citizens' Alliance even after the Coroner's Inquest was concluded.⁹

The Coroner's Inquest itself could be another example of the weight pulled by the mine owners. The Inquest was called to determine whether or not the deaths had been suicidal, accidental, or homicide; it had to be determined whether or not this tragedy had in fact been an accident. Union leader Charles Moyer demanded the Inquest stating that he was not blaming the Citizens' Alliance, but there were too many similar stories claiming their presence. The truth needed to be found. However, as the Inquest commenced it was clear they were not actually seeking the truth, but trying to clear the guilt of the Citizens' Alliance and pro-mine people. Many witnesses were not allowed translators even though their English was broken at best, and it seems the only thing the jury was interested in finding out is whether or not the man who called fire was wearing a Citizens' Alliance pin.¹⁰

In general, the local newspapers lacked a focus on the victims of the Italian Hall Disaster. The newspapers of Calumet and Houghton spent more time discussing what the citizens of

Houghton, Hancock and Calumet were doing to help. They also spent a great deal of time attempting to paint both the Waddell-Mahon strike-breakers, and the Citizens' Alliance in a favorable light. Instead of reporting on the families and what they needed, the front page was full with descriptions of relief funds started by the citizens of Houghton and Calumet, and the efforts completed by Citizens' Alliance members.¹¹

One newspaper that did embrace the worker was *Tyomies*, a Finnish-American newspaper originating out of Hancock. *Tyomies* (or Workman) was known in the Keweenaw and the Finnish-American community for being on the side of labor interests. Further, the newspaper had a high circulation rate, selling nearly 10,000 copies for the year of 1911. Two days after the disaster occurred their headline read "83 MURDERED!" Their paper was full of attacks on the Citizens' Alliance, placing the deaths directly at their feet. Historian Arthur Thurner challenged the reports within *Tyomies* questioning the Finnish paper's reports which cited interviews acknowledging a Citizens' Alliance man as the cause of the panic, as well as claims that Citizens' Alliance men held the doors closed and laughed as people tried to escape and were unsuccessful.¹²

Steve Lehto *Death's Door* states the *Tyomies* article actually argued that the deputies had simply "prevented the egress of the people" as they were trying to leave the Hall, which would cause an additional problem. In Houghton, the *Daily Mining Gazette* reported, on Sunday December 28, 1913, that the offices of *Tyomies* had been searched the day before and that these newspaper employees were arrested for causing a riot by publishing their Friday, December 26, 1913, newspaper. The warrant called for twenty arrests, the remainder were to be made on Monday. The *Gazette* bolstered its cause by linking Finnish miners to socialism: "Tyomies is a Finnish newspaper. Its politics are socialist and it has been looked upon as the worst influence

for the strike before the strike began and the worst influence in favor of its continuance since it began.” It is suggested that the article described by Steve Lehto above is the same article that is said to have caused a riot.¹³

Gary Kaunonen and Aaron Goings examine *Tyomies* in their book, *Community in Conflict*. Within the book they focus on the impact that the paper had within the Finnish and miner community, and also include excerpts from the paper. “In less than three minutes afterward fifty of their frail little bodies were jammed and crushed in the hallway being used as a roadway over which their companions were vainly endeavoring to escape. The scene was a horrible one, and will never be effaced from the minds of those who witnessed the terrible tragedy.” While this quote describes the first discussion of the event, reports only grew darker.¹⁴

Kaunonen and Goings continue with the next day’s article titled “83 MURDERED!” This article, as previously described, shows the miners perspective of the event and questions the involvement of the Citizens’ Alliance. It was not surprising that *Tyomies* would have talked to witnesses present at the time of the tragedy. Included in these witness statements was the idea that the disruption had been planned “...and executed by human brutes, gunmen, and that they executed it purposely and knowing its terrible consequences.” The article quoted here attacks the event as an evil plot to kill many. While it does not directly name the Citizens’ Alliance, the implication of who formed this “dastardly plot” is obvious.¹⁵

It is possible that these articles could have added more anger and frustration to the situation, but it was already dire. The strike was in full swing and many of the victim’s families did not want the help of the mine anyway. The *Calumet News* and Houghton’s *Daily Mining Gazette* were allowed to publish articles claiming witnesses to the event were liars, incorrectly print names of the victims, and most prominently proclaim the pro-mine forces, especially the

Citizens' Alliance and the Waddell-Mahon strike breaking forces, heroes of the day. *Tyomies* was stopped from printing their perspective of the event. An important question is why some newspapers would be allowed to be printed, while others are shut down. The men of *Tyomies* may have been arrested for starting a riot. Maybe they were arrested for printing a story that was a perspective offensive to the pro-mine forces. They may have even been arrested for printing something close to the truth. Whatever the case, some of the *Tyomies* workers were arrested and the newspaper was shut down. It was clear what was to be reported about the event in the Copper Country. Whether or not the rest of the Upper Peninsula, the rest of the state, or even the rest of the country thought that that was the truth, remained another story.

Upper Peninsula

Though Marquette and Calumet have one hundred fifteen miles between them, the pro-mine attitude easily transcended that distance. The weekly edition of the newspaper, published on December 27, 1913, from the first page reveals the bias that would echo throughout the paper. Two different perspectives were elaborated on: (1) the citizens of the Copper Country are doing everything in their power to help the families affected, and (2) the Western Federation of Miners, not witnesses in general, are accusing the Citizens' Alliance of being responsible. The *Mining Journal* comments: "any set of man that could have the temerity to bring such a charge against the leading citizens in one of the most enlightened communities in the country is one of the worst horrors of the disaster." The newspaper noted how Annie Clemenc and union leader Charles Moyer are blaming the Citizens' Alliance. The paper took the opportunity to paint both Clemenc and Moyer in a negative light, claiming the Annie Clemenc is known for her use of violence, and that Moyer fled town after the disaster. The *Mining Journal* contended that evidence of a fire

exists, however, none of the witnesses saw this evidence. Unlike Calumet and Houghton, support for the victims and those had lost families members was heavily felt in the Marquette area. In fact, a special train was organized by the miners' unions of Ishpeming and Negaunee to carry iron miners to Calumet for the funerals of the victims.¹⁶

The *Marquette Daily Chronicle* reported that the event would be the end of the strike. Many citizens saw the tragedy as the end to the dispute that had torn apart Copper Country since July. "United in grief, the warring factions, mine operators, guards, strike breakers, striking union miners and their friends, gave no thought to the big labor battle that is to blame for the most gruesome horror in the history of the country." The article expressed hope that the strike will end, mining will begin again, and that peace will be had in the area. Though the newspaper conveyed hope for peace, it also mentioned the relief efforts being taken up, and how it was ridiculous that the Citizens' Alliance could be responsible for the tragedy.¹⁷

The *Negaunee Iron Herald* reported that the cry of fire was the result, not of a single man, but of a group of people who had been within the Hall. The newspaper reports that while President Moyer claims it was the Citizens' Alliance, a witness within the Hall, "... a man from the striker's ranks, whose position in the hall makes him a most credible witness ..." points his finger at a group who cried fire in response to their belief that there was fire. However, candles were not used on the Christmas tree to avoid the very issue of there potentially being a fire. Mrs. Anna Wuolukka one of the women on the Women's Auxiliary committee stated: "I was certain there was no fire because we had no candles of any kind. We did not get candles because we were afraid the children would catch fire."¹⁸

The *Ishpeming Iron Ore* relays probably the most critical view of the union and Charles Moyer.

“One of the regrettable things following the calamity was the statement by Moyer, an agent of the Western Federation, that the alarm had been raised deliberately by a member of the Citizens’ Alliance, which is against the strike and its organizers, this to bring injury to the wives and children of the Federation members. Such a statement is without any foundation in fact and no one better understands than Moyer. It’s a dastardly charge that no decent citizen, irrespective of his position in this strike matter, will sustain or believe. It seems to the culmination of a long series of most unfortunate happenings in the Copper Country, and all very properly the outcome of the bad advice that Moyer and his crowd have given the poor people of that district. The Federation has certainly brought great sorrow to that religion.”¹⁹

This quote shows that while Ishpeming may have been a mining town, the paper felt the same dislike of the union as was seen in Calumet and Houghton. Many mine owners and company leaders disliked unions because they felt the union told them how to run their business. The paper pitted the union and its leader against the Citizens’ Alliance and proclaimed that the Citizens’ Alliance was innocent, though multiple witnesses testified to having seen a man wearing a Citizens’ Alliance pin at the Hall. The article was published before the Inquest had commenced to determine whether or not such claims would have led to the deaths that occurred.

The *Escanaba Daily Mirror* seems to be the first newspaper that reported in a manner least bias to either side. The article contained no mention of the Citizens’ Alliance nor is blame placed in any direction. The *Escanaba Daily Mirror* does relate: “Mr. MacNaughton and other officials of the Calumet & Hecla went to the Italian Hall as soon as they heard of the calamity, and walking in among the strikers and their bereaved families ...” There is no evidence that this actually happened. Arguably going to the Italian Hall site and meeting with the union members

would be an acceptance of the miners' union. While the report of the event is factual, the portrayal what happened afterwards is in line with pro-mine opinions. There is another account of the various relief efforts being organized and questions of whether or not witnesses lied about seeing a Citizens' Alliance pin. It seems that within the Upper Peninsula pro-mine opinion was the side to be on, whether or not that was the way people felt behind closed doors and in private is another topic entirely.²⁰

Lower Peninsula

As newspapers from the Lower Peninsula are analyzed, the story strayed from the mine owners and Houghton County relief efforts, to the efforts of the union leaders to stay independent. The *Kalamazoo Telegraph-Press* attempted to paint a more peaceful picture. The article published December 26, 1913, recounted that four investigations into the event were in progress, a number also mentioned in the *Marquette Daily Chronicle*. It further stressed, "The leaders of the peace movement hoped to see an end to the labor strife which has torn the Calumet labor district for several months." Related within the article is the argument as to whether or not relief money should be accepted and whether or not a Citizens' Alliance button was present on the person who caused the disaster. Moyer claimed that he does not blame the Citizens' Alliance, but he will bring five witnesses to who claim to have seen the Citizens' Alliance button present on the man's coat. This article continued the narrative that James MacNaughton, Calumet & Hecla mine manager, was at the Hall that Christmas Eve night. This paper maintained a balance between striking miners and mine owner interests. That could be because this article was provided to the *Kalamazoo Telegraph-Press* by the Associated Press.²¹

The *Bay City Times* did not hide their bias. The newspaper aligned itself with the striking miners. The paper discussed how the man who cried fire was being searched for by the authorities and officials of the union, but does not mention the mine owners. President Moyer, the leader of the Western Federation of Miners union that was striking in Calumet, wired the president of the United States to say: “according to his best information no one in sympathy with the strikers brought about the catastrophe.” With that telegram Moyer laid the blame directly at the feet of the mine owners and the Citizens’ Alliance in Calumet. The article continued to mention that the victims’ families will take care of themselves.²²

Both the *Detroit News* and the *Detroit Free Press* printed reports in favor of the striking miners, which was not surprising considering Detroit’s importance as a union base. The *Detroit News* painted the scene of that Christmas Eve night using story and descriptions to elicit sympathy from readers. There was no fire the paper declared and a jury would be created to get down to the bottom of the cause. Further mentioned is the “fact” that private detectives for the mine learned the man who cried fire had come from a saloon; however, there is no evidence as to whether or not this is true.²³

Steve Lehto noted in *Death’s Door*, that an article published in the *Detroit News* was in favor of the miners. Not only did it support Charles Moyer, leader of the union, but it also painted the scene of a father unable to help his children. Using a tactic like showing the grief felt in the Calumet area was more effective than the pro-company campaign being conducted in the Copper Country against the union. The *Detroit Free Press* continued its support of the striking miners by publishing a quote from Frank Morrison, of the American Federation of Labor, who claimed “it was a dastardly plot, a well thought-out and deliberate attempt to break the strike.”²⁴

The *Detroit Free Press*, like other newspapers, contained errors within its report of the event, claiming "... a tree, with its flaming candles and dangling tinsel, became the center of attraction." As already exhibited Anna Wuolukka testified that in order to prevent such a disaster as a fire, candles were prohibited from the Christmas tree. In addition, the newspaper related a story that Santa was about to speak as the cry of fire rang out. No other reports recounted the presence of Santa, but that the children were in fact in line to go up onto stage and receive their Christmas presents. The inaccuracies continue, but are sufficient at painting a scene that is both horrifying and attention grabbing. Both the *Detroit Free Press* and the *Detroit News* printed inaccuracies that were intended to get the people outside Copper Country in an uproar. While information was lack in Calumet and Houghton, Detroit was full of information, most of which was either skewed or blatantly false.²⁵

Throughout the Midwest

Minnesota was another hub of iron mining, it also became of hub of socialist views and opinions. Duluth's the *Labor World*, a socialist newspaper, related the general feeling that the strike was at an end and that an agreement was going to be reached between the striking miners and the mine owners. In addition, the newspaper conveyed the verdict of the Inquest, adding that the result was what had been expected. The *Labor World* is full of hope and belief that things would get better in the Copper Country. "Although three of the editors of the *Tyomies* are still in jail as a result of the effort made last Saturday to suppress the publication, the paper has been able to appear without missing a single issue." Solidarity between the "Socialist" forces was seen by the commentary contributed by the writers of The *Labor World*.²⁶

Another Minnesota paper, Bemidji's the *Pioneer*, exhibited the opposite stance. The *Pioneer*, in reference to the Coroner's Inquest, stated "all had testified to the effect that that they had not seen any one wearing a Citizens' Alliance button come up the stairs, nor any person wearing an alliance button in the hall." This is not true, as seen in the Coroner's Inquest, as witnesses testified both that they had seen someone wearing a button, that they had seen no button at all, and that they could not see whether or not the person had had a button on at all. The paper also related that Annie Clemenc had been one of the people claiming that she had seen someone wearing a Citizens' Alliance button, but on the day of the Inquest "disclaimed any knowledge of that kind and asserted that she had seen no one affiliated with the Citizen's Alliance." Within the Inquest, Annie Clemenc does in fact testify that she did not see someone wearing a Citizens' Alliance button. However, the newspaper report fails to add that Annie Clemenc herself did not see the person who had cried fire as it was too crowded near the doorway where the man had been. While these two papers existed within the same state, they recount two very different stories, providing another example of the "two sides to every story" mantra as well as the different reporting techniques used in the wake of the tragedy.²⁷

The pro-union reporting was prevalent in Chicago newspapers. The first article about the event was published on December 25, 1913. The article described the event in detail, focusing on the children and how patiently they waited, how joyous the occasion was for the striking miners, and how the chaos itself ensued. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Mrs. Caesar saw the man who called fire and grabbed him by the shoulders to make him yell it that there was not fire. He shook her off and ran out of the Hall before the tragedy occurred. The paper further narrated that the police prevented parents from helping or getting to their children, by forcefully holding them back.²⁸

The article published on December 28, 1913 further established the *Tribune's* pro-union stance. The report came from a union meeting and discussed an affidavit that was submitted. This affidavit was full of bias information that had no evidence to back it up, but was effective at provoking readers, which was its intention. First, the affidavit mentioned that deputies drove away rescuers, but they themselves did not do any rescue work, just stood by and watched. Second, the affidavit claimed that deputies allowed women and children to continue to pile up in the already chaotic mess. Third, a deputy clubbed a man who announced that there was in fact no fire. Last, "a deputy in the hall caught a little girl 5 or 6 years old and killed her by twisting her neck." While all of these claims were printed as fact, nothing in the Inquest nor any of the further reports corroborated this "fact". Full of discrepancies, the article was published as truth because the pro-union forces wanted support in Chicago. Arguably though the more support the Union had nationwide, the more likely a federal congressional investigation would follow.²⁹

Cincinnati, Ohio's the *Enquirer* informed readers on Christmas Day of the tragedy and pointed to an Austrian miner as the culprit. As the report continues, the unfortunate disaster is conveyed with neutrality. Firsthand accounts are used to describe what had happened at the Hall. The paper comments that strikers had put forth the idea that a Citizens' Alliance member had been the culprit while also adding the Alliance denied involvement. There is commentary describing some of the miners, their grief and some background information on their lives and potential losses. The *Enquirer* also narrates the various relief efforts taken up by Calumet and Houghton residents.³⁰

Three separate Pittsburgh newspapers each provided their own perspective as to what had happened on Christmas Eve at the Italian Hall. The *Pittsburgh Post* reported that the culprit had been "an unidentified miner", to which there was no evidence. After this remark, the paper

related the event without bias toward either side, but used vivid description to gain the reader's attention. In addition to the miner accusation, the paper also recounted the claim that the person who cried fire had originated from the saloon below the Hall. In the December 27, 1913 edition of the paper, the relief funds collected by residents and their outright refusal is recounted. The report related that the money was offered, but the families had been promised sufficient aid from the Western Federation of Miners. "Members of the relief committee selected yesterday blamed this unprecedented condition on the rumor that the man who started the panic among the striking copper miners' children wore the emblem of the Citizens' Alliance, an organization opposed to continuance of the strike." However, the explanation circulated by Charles Moyer, Western Federation of Miners president, is that the union would take care of their own.³¹

Pittsburgh's *Gazette Times*, used an article from the Associated Press, which maintained its neutrality to both sides. The *Pittsburg Press* used an article from the United Press which reported on the failure of the federal government to conduct an investigation of the Christmas Eve tragedy. While no federal investigation occurred, an individual was sent in to make a report and contribute federal feelings. Both newspapers used outside sources rather than send in their own reporter, which would appear to make the *Post* more reliable as they actually had a man in Copper Country.³²

The *New York Times* reads as a newspaper that tries to balance itself. Narrated is the tragedy itself, mentioning the number of victims of what occurred that night. Emphasizing the tragedy and horror, the article described adults crushing children in the chaos of the stairway. It also recounted the claims and denials of Citizens' Alliance Involvement, as well as gave an account of the various relief funds started by the citizens of Houghton. The *New York Times* reported that the woman who grabbed the man who cried fire could identify him. However, the

woman, Mrs. Caesar, or Mrs. Kaisor, in the Inquest described what the man looked like, but never said she could identify the man if she saw him again.³³

The next day, and the days following, the newspaper maintained the established balanced. First, the December 26, 1913 edition related the claims of the striking miners and union men that the man responsible must be a member of the Citizens' Alliance. The paper then conveyed the claims circulated by mine leaders and Citizens' Alliance members that the man had originated in the saloon below and was a drunk. A discrepancy within the paper occurs when the paper claims that Mrs. Caesar (Kaisor) and Mrs. Lustig saw the man who cried fire, and that Mrs. Lustig tried to calm the man. However, Mrs. Lustig testified at the Inquest that she did not even see the man who cried fire; she was behind the curtain on stage when the cry occurred.³⁴

The *New York Times* continued to report on the event. These articles contained bias statements on both sides. The *Times* narrated the various citizen efforts occurring and investigations being made, it also reported on what the striking miners and union leaders were claiming. While managing to maintain an equilibrium as far as reporting time, the newspaper also contained inaccuracies, whether there on purpose or there as a result of misinformation.

Conclusion

As indicated by the newspaper articles, there were many conflicting stories about what happened that day in 1913. Whether it was a union bias or company bias, these preferences inevitably seeped into the newspaper articles. Regardless of what did or did not happen that day, the fact remains that seventy-three lives were lost that Christmas Eve. It does not matter if it was a drunk man walking home, a shady looking figure with a Citizens' Alliance button, or even

someone who genuinely thought there was a fire; someone yelled fire and caused seventy-three lives to be lost.

The first amendment of the Constitution protects the freedom of speech and the freedom of the press. However, that freedom seemingly did not extend into Copper Country after the Italian Hall Disaster. On the other hand, the newspapers in New York City and Chicago, while maintaining their freedom of the press, published stories that were far from the truth. While evaluating the different newspapers and their writers it is easy to see that bias is prevalent in each of them. Correct information was hard to print because in the torn Copper Country there were two sides to the story which meant there were two sets of facts. The first amendment guarantees us the freedom of the press, but it does not guarantee that what is printed is the truth. Perhaps if the newspapers had focused on printing the truth instead of printing their view of the truth, people would not have to rely on folk songs for information as to what happened in 1913 Copper Country.

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- ¹ Woody Guthrie, "1913 Massacre," in *Struggle*, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 1990, <http://www.folkways.si.edu/woody-guthrie/struggle/american-folk-protest/music/album/smithsonian>
- ² Jerry Stanley, *Big Annie of Calumet: A True Story of the Industrial Revolution* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1996), 67-68.
- ³ "X-MAS TREE PANIC COSTS 80 LIVES," *The New York Times*, December 25, 1913.
- ⁴ "73 PERISH WHEN FALSE CRY OF 'FIRE' IS GIVEN AT CALUMET CHRISTMAS EVE," *The Escanaba Daily Mirror*, December 26, 1913.
- "SEVENTY-FOUR ARE DEAD IN ITALIAN HALL DISASTER," *The Calumet News*, December 24, 1913, afternoon edition.
- "X-MAS TREE PANIC COSTS 80 LIVES," *The New York Times*, December 25, 1913.
- ⁵ "SEVENTY-FOUR ARE DEAD IN ITALIAN HALL DISASTER," *The Calumet News*, December 24, 1913, afternoon edition.
- ⁶ Steve Lehto, *Death's Door: The Truth Behind Michigan's Largest Mass Murder* (Troy: Momentum Books, LLC, 2006), 100.
- ⁷ Al Harvey, "1913 Strike," interview by Art Puotinen, FINNISH FOLKLORE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE GREAT LAKES MINING REGION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT 1972-1978.
- ⁸ "While Copper Country Mourns for Its Dead, Moyer Tries to Make Capital of Disaster," *The Daily Mining Gazette*, December 25, 1913. (Houghton, Michigan).
- ⁹ Steve Lehto, ed., *Italian Hall: The Official Transcript of the Coroner's Inquest* (Troy: Momentum Books, LLC, 2007), 93.
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- ¹⁰ Arthur Thurner, *Rebels on the Range: The Michigan Copper Miners' Strike of 1913-1914* (Lake Linden: John H. Forster Press, 1984), 168.
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