

Annotated Bibliography

The story of Minnesota's Iron Ranges is both complex and fascinating. The history of the area is multi-faceted and includes the development of the iron ranges by speculators and corporate tycoons; the polyglot of ethnic groups that created an identity different from the rest of Minnesota; the struggle for economic justice waged by the miners and their families; the development of a unique political culture; and the pivotal role that the Iron Range played in the industrialization of the United States and in the creation of a world power.

Thousands of articles have been written about the Iron Ranges of Minnesota in both popular magazines such as *Life*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Popular Science*, and *Popular Mechanics* and in academic journals such as *Labor History*, *Economic Geology*, and *The International Migration Review*. The most accessible source of articles about the Iron Range is *Minnesota History* magazine. The quarterly journal of the Minnesota Historical Society is available in every library in Minnesota and most of the issues are now available online. To access articles including many that are not included in this bibliography, go to:

<http://www.mnhs.org/market/mhspress/minnesotahistory/index.html>. Type in the search term Iron Range and you will gain access to ninety-seven web pages of articles, news items, and book reviews that highlight the history of the Iron Range. If the article below does not have a web address, it may not be available online.

While the list of books, articles and other resources below is extensive, it is certainly not complete. You can find additional information by visiting the Iron Range Research Center located at the Minnesota Discovery Center in Chisholm, the local historical societies, one of the public or community college libraries in the area, the Minnesota Historical Society Library and Archives in St. Paul, and the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota.

The People

Berger Aulie. *The Milford Mine Disaster*. Virginia, MN: W.A. Fisher Company, 1994. This is the only book about the Milford Mine Disaster that occurred north of Crosby, MN on February 5, 1924. Lake Foley dropped into the mine killing 41 men and filled the workings and shaft to within 15 feet of the surface. Aulie tells the story of the disaster but emphasizes the stories of the men who died.

Ignatia Broker. *Night Flying Woman*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1996.

Night Flying Woman was Ignatia Broker's great-great-grandmother who lived with her people, the Ojibwe, in the 19th century. During her lifetime, the lives of the Ojibwe were irrevocably changed. This marvelous and compelling story reveals much about what it was like to live through those turbulent times in northeastern Minnesota.

Aaron Brown. *Overburden: Modern Life on the Iron Range*. Duluth, MN: Red Step Press, 2008.

Aaron Brown is a fifth generation Iron Ranger who lives in Balkan Township and teaches at Hibbing Community College. *Overburden* is a series of essays about living on the Iron Range and the challenges of making a life in an area so dominated by one industry. Many of the articles were published in *The Hibbing Daily Tribune* where Aaron was the editor of the newspaper and broadcast on KAXE-FM out of Grand Rapids.

Stephanie Hemphill. "Women in the Mines." *Minnesota History*. Fall 2008: pp. 92-123.

Women went to work in the mines of the Mesabi Iron Range during World War II because of a labor shortage. The women in this story describe the work they did, how they felt about it, and what it was like to work in a decidedly "man's world" for a short period of time in the 1940s.

Iron Range: Minnesota Building America. 2009 film documentary produced by the Minnesota Humanities Center, the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board, and TPT-Twin Cities Public Television. Copies of the DVD are available from the Minnesota Humanities Center at <https://minnesotahumanities.org/ironrangedvdpublic.aspx>. Lisa Blackstone directed this superb film about the central importance of Minnesota's Iron Ranges in American history. The film is divided into four themes: The Land, The Mines, The People, and The Work. This is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in learning about the Iron Range.

Michael Karni, editor. *Entrepreneurs and Immigrants*. Eveleth, MN: Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board, 1991.

Entrepreneurs and Immigrants is an excellent resource on the history of the Iron Range. Each chapter highlights life on the Iron Ranges. Topics include the evolution of the term Iron Ranger, the lives of the Bois Fort Indians, Charlemagne Tower's negotiations with the Minnesota Legislature, women on the Vermilion Iron Range, the Cornish miners, Jewish settlement, the movement of Italian miners from Michigan to Minnesota, and Finns in Minnesota.

Vienna C. Saari Maki, translator. *Ready to Descend: A Minnesota Iron Ore Miner In The Underground, 1908-1913*. New Brighton, MN: Sampo Publishing, Inc., 2000.

Ready to Descend is a rare book because it is the journal of an underground miner on the Mesabi Iron Range in the period between the 1907 and 1916 strikes. Matti Hallila Pelto was a 27-year old Finnish immigrant who arrived in 1908 to work in the Pettit Mine. The working conditions, the dangers, and the frustration with the oppression all are vividly told through the pages of his journals. Unfortunately, this important first person account of what it was like to work underground in the early 20th century is out of print but should be available in libraries.

Mary Ellen Mancina-Batinich. *Italian Voices: Making Minnesota Our Home*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2007.

A simply marvelous book about Italians in Minnesota is based on oral histories of people who settled in the state. The author tells the stories of their lives in a new land. A large number of the stories in this book are about the Iron Range.

Mary Lou Nemanic. *One Day for Democracy: Independence Day and the Americanization of Iron Range Immigrants*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007.

Mary Lou Nemanic grew up in St. Paul but married an Iron Ranger from Aurora. Iron Range Fourth of July celebrations fascinated her so she devoted years to researching the tradition and evolution of the holiday. She explores why the Fourth of July still matters so much to Iron Rangers. A fascinating book about one of the traditions that makes the Iron Range, the Iron Range.

Additional Resources on the People:

Clark A. Chambers. "William J. Bell: Disciple of the Social Gospel." *Minnesota History*, Summer 1985: pp. 241-251. <http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHHistoryMagazine/articles/49/v49i06p241-251.pdf>

William J. Bell was a Presbyterian missionary who served the people of the Mesabi Iron Range in its formative years. Although his "mission" was to spread the gospel, he was committed to the ideas of the Social Gospel and worked with his assistants to minister to the physical needs of the people he served. His commitment is today commemorated in the William J. Bell Building at the Range Mental Health Center in Virginia, MN.

Ivan Čizmič. "Yugoslav Immigrants in the U.S. Labor Movement, 1880-1920" in *American Labor and Immigration History, 1877-1920s: Recent European Research*. Editor. Dirk Hoerder. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983.

Čizmič's chapter on "Yugoslav Immigrants" is an excellent introduction to the Croatians, Serbians, Montenegrins, Albanians, and Slovenians who came to America. Many of them settled on the Iron Range and contributed much to the growth of the region and the nation.

Edmund J. Danziger. "They Would Not Be Moved: The Chippewa Treaty of 1854." *Minnesota History*, Spring 1973: pp. 175-185. <http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHHistoryMagazine/articles/43/v43i05p175-185.pdf>

The author describes the efforts of the U. S. government to get the Ojibwe to sign over their lands around Lake Superior, and the bands' successful efforts to keep some of their homeland. Long-lasting economic hardships were created by the 1854 Treaty cessions. Danziger also describes the way that lumbermen and mining speculators used fraudulent "half-breed scrip" land claims to gain control of large tracts of land.

Linda LeGarde Grover. "The Vermilion Lake Indian School," *Minnesota History*, Winter 2002-2003: pp. 224-240.

Grover traces the history of the Vermilion Lake Indian School during its long history and how the Bois Forte people are using the area where the school was located today.

<http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHHistoryMagazine/articles/58/v58i04p224-240.pdf>

June Drenning Holmquist, editor. *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981.

If one wants to learn about the forty-three ethnic groups who settled the Iron Ranges, this is the best resource available. Each chapter highlights a specific ethnic group. The Minnesota Historical Society is publishing updated books about many of the groups including Norwegians, Swedes, Germans, Chinese, Hmong, and Finnish. Books about the other groups will be published in the future.

Scott Kuzma. "Rural Revolution: A Retrospective on the Kinney Secession," *Minnesota History*, Spring 2010: pp. 18-28.

The story of the creative steps the Kinney city government took to draw attention to its need for a new water system is traced in Scott Kuzma's article. He skillfully captures all of the humor and sheer chutzpah of the story. Mary Anderson, one of the political power brokers on the Iron Range in the last decades of the 20th century, is the pivotal character in this story of creativity and determination.

The landscape of the Iron Range:

Arnold R. Alanen, "The "Locations: Company Communities on Minnesota's Iron Ranges." *Minnesota History*, Fall 1991: pp. 246-253. <http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHHistoryMagazine/articles/48/v48i03p094-107.pdf>

Dr. Alanen has done extensive research on the location communities that formed next to iron mines. Alanen describes the kinds of locations and the type of company housing that miners lived in on the Iron Ranges in the Lake Superior Mining District.

Arnold R. Alanen, "Years of Change on the Iron Range" in *Minnesota in a Century of Change: The State and Its People Since 1900*. Edited by Clifford E. Clark, Jr. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989.

In this chapter Dr. Alanen describes the demographic changes on the Range during the 20th Century.

Jeff Forester. *The Forest for the Trees: How Humans Shaped the North Woods* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2004).

This book is a "must read" for anyone who wants to learn about the last white pinery and the evolution of forestry practices in northeastern Minnesota. Focused primarily on the Fall Lake watershed and the growth of the lumber industry in Winton, Minnesota, it is a fascinating story filled with colorful characters.

Rod Halunen. *Ghost Towns and Locations of the Mesabi Iron Range*. Virginia, MN: Range Printing, 1992. Reprint of 1966 publication. Originally a master's thesis, University of Minnesota.

This book is a historical examination of the changing landscape of the Iron Range. The focus is on the towns and mining locations that have disappeared since mining began in the state in 1884.

Iron Range Country: A Historical Travelogue of Minnesota's Iron Ranges. Eveleth, MN: The Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board, 1979.

A richly illustrated book that divides the story of the Iron Ranges into five sections. The introduction, for example, introduces the reader to the experiences of Iron Rangers. The Vermilion, Mesabi, and Cuyuna Iron Ranges each have a section that includes self-guided driving tour. Finally, recreational opportunities are explored with information on the BWCAW and Voyageurs National Park as well as camping, skiing, snowmobiling and other activities in the region.

Marvin G. Lamppa. *Minnesota's Iron Country: Rich Ore, Rich Lives*. Duluth, MN: Lake Superior Port Cities, Inc., 2004.

An excellent resource for anyone interested in the economic history of northeastern Minnesota. Special emphasis is placed on the development of the mining communities that stretch from Ely to Riverton in Crow Wing County.

This book is a companion to *Iron Country*, a 12-hour documentary film series that traces the history of the Iron Ranges that was produced by the public television station WDSE-WRPT.

D. J. Tice. *Minnesota's Twentieth Century: Stories of Extraordinary Everyday People*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

"Save Your Breath And Start Climbing" is the story of Frank Hrvatin, Jr. who survived the Milford Mine Disaster. He was fifteen at the time, and he managed to climb the ladder to safety. By the time he reached the top, he knew his father was dead. In the story about Veda Ponikvar, the "Iron Lady" of the Iron Range, Tice reveals the amazing story of the political power broker and publisher of the *Chisholm Tribune*.

Labor and Politics

Neil Betten. "Strike on the Mesabi, 1907." *Minnesota History*, Fall 1967: pp. 340-347.

<http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHHistoryMagazine/articles/40/v40i07p340-347.pdf>

Betten tells the story of the first major organized strike on the Mesabi and Vermilion Iron Ranges that caused 10-16,000 men to walk out of the mines. The strike was managed by the Western Federation of Miners, the forerunner of the I.W.W. and was generally peaceful throughout. The strike failed in part because a struggle against the power of the United States Steel Company was impossible and in part because the miners were not supported by the business community or by local government officials.

Pamela A. Brunfelt. "Karl Emil Nygard: Minnesota's Communist Mayor." *Minnesota History*, Fall 2002: pp. 168-186. <http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHHistoryMagazine/articles/58/v58i03p168-186.pdf>

In 1932 a 23-year old man from Crosby, Minnesota was the first communist ever be elected to serve as a mayor in the United States. Brunfelt describes the circumstances that led to his election, his term as mayor in 1933, and his activities as a spokesman for the Communist Party of the United States between 1932 and 1935. Although Nygard is the focus of the article, the story is as much about the people of Crosby as it is about a young political activist.

Robert M. Eleff, "The 1916 Minnesota Miners' Strike Against U.S. Steel" *Minnesota History*, Summer 1988: pp. 63-74. <http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHHistoryMagazine/articles/51/v51i02p063-074.pdf>

Eleff's article provides an excellent overview of conditions on the Mesabi Iron Range between 1901 and 1916. He also describes the failed effort to improve miners' pay and working conditions, the contract wage system, the blacklist and the espionage system used by the mining companies to control union organizing efforts. The article is an excellent introduction to the turbulent 1916 strike, one of the most violent in Minnesota history.

Palmer, Frank L. *Spies in Steel: An Expose of Industrial War.* Denver, CO: The Labor Press, Inc., 1928.

The United States Steel Corporation established an espionage program to monitor the miners and government officials on the Mesabi Iron Range. Palmer exposed the spies, who lived among the miners and sent daily reports to Oliver Mining Company officials in Duluth, in this small book. The information was so explosive in 1928 that the company paid \$5 for copies of the book that originally sold for 50¢! The story is told in a marvelous documentary, *Spies in Steel*, made by filmmaker Tom Selinski.

Betty Wilson. *Rudy! The People's Governor*. Minneapolis, MN: The Nodin Press, 2005.

Rudy! The People's Governor is the first book length biography of the only Minnesota governor from the Iron Range. Governor Perpich was a fascinating man who believed that government could help improve people's lives. He was a visionary who never forgot he was first and foremost an Iron Ranger.

Additional resources on Labor and Politics:

Neil Betten. "Riot, Revolution, Repression in the Iron Range Strike of 1916." *Minnesota History*, Summer 1968: pp. 82-94. <http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHHistoryMagazine/articles/41/v41i02p082-094.pdf>

Neil Betten's article on the 1916 strike is focused on the role of the I.W.W. in coordinating the strike. The I.W.W. had not been on the Mesabi Iron Range in great numbers before the strike, but union organizers arrived soon thereafter to assist the miners in their titanic and ultimately doomed struggle against the might of United States Steel Corporation, the smaller mining companies and law enforcement in Crow Wing, Itasca, and St. Louis Counties.

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

While Carl Chrislock's book, *Watchdog of Loyalty*, is not primarily about the Iron Range, it is a valuable resource for understanding the working conditions miners dealt with before the 1930s. At the same time that mining companies on all three ranges spied on the miners, the state of Minnesota was creating an espionage system during WWI. The Minnesota Commission of Public Safety sent its spies to the Iron Ranges, and they sent in daily reports of labor activity among the miners. It was insidious, and this book helps one understand why Iron Rangers became suspicious of outsiders during the first decades of the 20th century.

Mark Harvey. "Sound Politics: Wilderness, Recreation, and Motors in the Boundary Waters, 1945-1964." *Minnesota History*, Fall 2002: pp. 130-145.

Mark Harvey's article is an excellent description of the political struggle and controversies involved in the development of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. Ely, MN was originally the center of mining on the Vermilion Iron Range and later became an outfitting center for people who are going into the BWCA wilderness. Harvey's article is an excellent resource for anyone interested in the Vermilion Iron Range and the BWCAW.

John E. Haynes. "Revolt of the 'Timber Beasts': IWW Lumber Strike in Minnesota." *Minnesota History*. Spring 1941: pp. 162-174.

<http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHistoryMagazine/articles/42/v42i05p162-174.pdf>

Before the iron could be mined, the timber had to be logged. Haynes describes the connections between the 1916 Mesabi strike and the strike by loggers and sawmill workers in northern Minnesota. Because Virginia was the site of the largest white pine mill in the world, much of the action takes place in the Virginia area.

Peter Rachleff, "Labor: Three Key Conflicts," in *Minnesota in a Century of Change: The State and Its People Since 1900*. Edited by Clifford E. Clark, Jr. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989.

Dr. Peter Rachleff tells the stories of three pivotal strikes in Minnesota History: the 1916 Mesabi strike, the 1934 Minneapolis Teamster's Strike, and the 1986 P-9 strike in Austin. He argues that the three strikes illustrate the "central themes of solidarity and disunity" in the labor movement.

Iron Mining and Steel and Iron Ore Shipping

Dana Thomas Bowen. "Great Lakes Ships and Shipping." *Minnesota History*, Spring 1954, pp. 9-16.

<http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHistoryMagazine/articles/34/v34i01p009-016.pdf>

Dana Bowen was an expert on the history of shipping on the Great Lakes. He traces the transformation of Great Lakes shipping from small schooners to the giant ore carriers of the mid-20th century.

Edward W. Davis. "Pioneering with Taconite: The Birth of a Minnesota Industry." *Minnesota History*. Autumn 1955: pp. 269-283. <http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHistoryMagazine/articles/34/v34i07p269-283.pdf>

Edward W. Davis describes the first attempt to use taconite in the area around Babbitt. Davis spent nearly forty years working to concentrate the iron content in taconite. He describes the development of the first concentrating plant and the results in the early 1920s. Although the initial effort failed, Davis learned much about working with taconite. This article is especially valuable if one wants to know more about the man who developed the process that ensured mining would continue in Minnesota long after the high grade natural ore was gone.

Douglas Alan Fisher. *The Epic of Steel*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963.

The Epic of Steel was the first history of the steel industry published in the United States. Fisher traces the use of iron and its central importance in world history, but the central theme of the book is the transition from the Iron Age to the Age of Steel. The gargantuan quantity of iron ore available in the Lake Superior Mining District, especially from the massive Mesabi Iron Range, guaranteed that the United States would become the economic behemoth of the 20th Century.

Richard Hudelson and Carl Ross. *By the Ore Docks: A Working People's History of Duluth*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

The iron ore of Minnesota would have stayed in the ground without the railroad men, dockworkers and sailors who

moved the ore from the Iron Ranges to the eastern steel mills. The men who worked in Two Harbors, Duluth and Superior were important to the success of the steel industry. Hudelson and Ross trace the history of the dockworkers and their struggle for economic justice in the first half of the 20th century.

Frank A. King. *The Missabe Road: The Duluth, Missabe and Iron Range Railway*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. Originally published by The Duluth, Missabe and Iron Range Railway in 1972. *The Missabe Road* is a fabulous book filled with marvelous photographs of the monstrous engines that pulled long ore trains from the mines on the Mesabi to the docks in Two Harbors and Duluth. It is an invaluable resource for anyone who wants to understand the role the railroads played in mining history.

David A. Walker. *Iron Frontier: The Discovery and Early Development of Minnesota's Three Ranges*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1979.

The *Iron Frontier* might be the single best volume on the discovery and early development of the iron mining districts located around Lake Superior. Although the book is specifically about Minnesota's Iron Ranges, Walker also describes the three ranges in Michigan and Wisconsin. This is a fascinating story of the men, who in spite of the logistical and economic challenges they faced, opened the world's largest mining district and transformed the world.

Additional Resources:

Thomas R. Huffman, "Enemies of the people: asbestos and the Reserve Mining trial," *Minnesota History*, Fall 2005: pp. 292-306. <http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHistoryMagazine/articles/59/v59i07p292-306.pdf>

Dr. Huffman's article provides a thorough overview of the Reserve Mining case that eventually forced the mining company to stop dumping taconite tailings into Lake Superior. Huffman describes why the years long dispute between the Reserve Mining, the State of Minnesota, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency was important in testing whether the new environmental movement could challenge the economic power of corporations. Federal District Court Judge Miles Lord, who was born in Crosby on the Cuyuna Iron Range, played a central role in the outcome of the case.

Grace Lee Nute. *Lake Superior*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000. Originally published in 1944 by The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

Grace Lee Nute was an eminent historian who loved the North Country. Her book, *Lake Superior*, is an excellent introduction to the power and majesty of the lake and of the people who have lived along its shores. Without the ore boats that have hauled the iron ore to eastern steel mills since the 1850s, industrialization in the United States would have been very different.

David A. Walker, "Lake Vermilion Gold Rush," *Minnesota History*, Summer 1974: 42-54.

<http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHistoryMagazine/articles/44/v44i02p042-054.pdf>

The Lake Vermilion Gold Rush in 1865 opened the search for mineral wealth in northeastern Minnesota. While some gold was found, the real wealth was located just a few miles away at Soudan. The gold rush, however, led to the development of the first major trail carved out of the harsh and rugged landscape between Duluth and Lake Vermilion.

The Developers

Russell H. Bennett, *Quest for Ore*. Minneapolis: T. S. Denison & Company, Inc., 1964.

Russell H. Bennett wrote his memoir to chronicle his long career—43 years at the time he wrote the book—as a mining engineer. The story begins on the Mesabi Iron Range in 1920 when he went to work in his family's company, the Meridian Iron Company. The book provides excellent information about mining processes and the work of mining engineers.

Paul de Kruif. *Seven Iron Men: The Merritts and the Discovery of the Mesabi Range*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2207. Originally published in 1929 by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

The classic tale of the Merritt family's search for and discovery of iron ore on the Mesabi Iron Range is both an adventure story and a cautionary tale. The Merritt Brothers were the first developers to ship iron ore from a mine

on the Mesabi, but they lacked the business savvy to play by the rules of Gilded Age financiers and tycoons. Undercapitalized in a depressed economy, they were doomed to fail.

Harlan Hatcher. *A Century of Iron and Men*. Indianapolis, IN: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1950. Because Cliffs Natural Resources continues to be an important mining company on the Mesabi Iron Range, this book is a valuable resource. The author concentrates on the Marquette Iron Range but includes three chapters on the mining activities of the large independent mining companies that operated on the Mesabi and the Cuyuna Iron Ranges: Pickands, Mather; The M. A. Hanna Company, and Cleveland-Cliffs. The author also describes the mergers that occurred in the iron mining and steel industries as a result of the Panic of 1893.

Henry Oliver Evans. *Iron Pioneer: Henry W. Oliver, 1840-1904*. Very few names are more identified with the Mesabi Iron Range than Henry W. Oliver. As one of the first eastern investors in the Merritt Family's iron ore operations, Oliver was the man most responsible for getting Andrew Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick to invest in the Mesabi. The result was the merger of Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller's holdings into the gigantic United States Steel Corporation in 1901. The mergers meant that the Oliver Mining Company dominated the iron mining industry on the Vermilion and Mesabi Iron Ranges.

Additional Resources:

Charles R. Morris. *The Tycoons: How Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, Jay Gould, and J.P. Morgan Invented the American Super Economy*. New York: H. Holt and Co., 2005.

An excellent overview of the role that Carnegie, Rockefeller and J. P. Morgan played in the development of the Mesabi Iron Range. Although they are more famously known as the "robber barons," their investments in the future of the Mesabi guaranteed that the United States would be a world power in the 20th century.

David Nasaw. *Andrew Carnegie*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2006.

According to David Nasaw, Andrew Carnegie was a reluctant investor in Minnesota Iron lands, but he ended up playing a pivotal role in the development of the Mesabi Iron Range. His investments and those of John D. Rockefeller led to the formation of the world's largest corporation, the United States Steel Corporation, in 1901. This is an excellent biography.