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# **The Battle Over the Cold Spring Dam: Farm-Village Conflict and Contested Identity among Rural German Americans**

**STEPHEN J. GROSS**

THIS IS A STORY of a fight.

The setting is rural Minnesota, the time is the turn of the century, and the fight was over an old mill dam. The dam, which still stands, lay astride the Sauk River on the eastern edge of Cold Spring in the heavily German-Catholic Stearns County, and in 1900 its future status divided a group of area farmers and a clique of young and ambitious merchants from Cold Spring. The farmers, all of whom were Catholic and of German descent and who generally went to church in the neighboring village of Richmond, pushed for the dam's removal and hoped for the reclamation of pastureland long lost to the dam's backwaters. The merchants, on the other hand, who were also uniformly German and for the most part Catholic, saw the dam as vital to the area's economic growth and anticipated developing the small chain of lakes created by the structure and promoting tourism to the area. This, then, is a story of town and country conflict. But it is also a story about economic development, the shifting patterns of primary economic activities, the implications of regional growth and the integration of the local economy into a larger commercial system.

However, this is, in addition, a story of politics and protest. The final disposition of the dam involved significant negotiation and litigation and ultimately the state's supreme court decided the case. But for local residents, the conflict mobilized support structured along lines of kinship and German regional origins, and "parish pump politics" based on alliance systems, nurtured by past wrongs and preserved by long memories informed the controversy. The patience of participants, though, was tested by the long wait for a court decision, and some men, who apparently had a low tolerance for talk, attempted on a few occasions to end the controversy by more dramatic and violent action. If this story, then, is about politics, it is about a special kind of politics often played by rural people, a politics structured by the tension between the local and the larger world and one in which participants simultaneously distrust

and yet still attempt to use distant sources of power to promote local autonomy. The extent to which this style of politics promotes vigilantism and incorporates the use of violence has in recent years excited significant scholarly contention; however, in this case the periodic outbursts of violence reflect a style of politics born of a specific ethos originating in peasant Germany and kept alive in the homogeneous and relatively isolated ethnic environment of rural Minnesota.<sup>1</sup> This ethos and the moral world it governed was increasingly challenged by village growth and economic development, and the conflict over the dam needs to be understood as part of a larger struggle over basic political rules and behavior.

Still, the politics here were not as straightforward as might first appear. To be sure, the main combatants were farmers and businessmen, but the battle over the dam was contagious and attracted participants without any obvious material interest in the outcome of the controversy. Eventually, since the majority of the farmers belonged to Richmond's Sts. Peter and Paul's parish and sent their children to school in that village, the fight assumed communal qualities, and the residents of both Cold Spring and Richmond invested emotionally in the outcome of the case. This specific battle, then, although long-running, was merely a part of a larger pattern of town conflict which emerged at this time. Community rivalry of this sort, of course, was traditional and expected in rural areas, as young men waiting for their inheritance and anxious to begin the adult portions of their lives fought to protect community honor and preserve marriage choices. In this case, though, the two sets of combatants were also divided by German regional origins. But community tension here was also exasperated by village growth, economic development and the appearance of a new class of storeowners, clerks and salesmen. These men would play a central role in the drama of the Cold Spring dam, but this was secondary to and an extension of their larger function of inventing and dominating new cultural forms and activities. It was town merchants, their clerks, and the occasional salesman who played town baseball, who joined the popular new fraternal groups, who dominated the local commercial clubs, who played in the town bands and sang in the community choirs and who strode the stage in locally-produced plays. All of this behavior, on the surface representing confidence and assuredness, in reality belied a marginal position within the towns' economic and social structures, and members of the new commercial class, many of whom were relative outsiders, sought to protect class interests by assuming leadership positions within the com-

munity and working tirelessly to encourage unity and harmony. Some people, though, resented these efforts, and this resentment—of almost a proto-class quality—fueled the dam fight and ultimately would shape the community's response to the jingoism and anti-German nativism of the World War I years.<sup>2</sup>

Although this story is about a number of things, it is, at its most basic level, a story about ethnic identity, its shifting meaning and how it is created. In recent years scholars of American immigration have engaged in a prolonged debate over the meaning of identity, and today many subscribe to Werner Sollors' notion of ethnicity as a cultural construction, as "widely shared, though intensely debated, collective fictions that are continually reinvented."<sup>3</sup> Ethnicity as invention, then, emphasizes the symbolic dimension of identity and the extent to which people create and invoke a romantic version of the past in order to maintain group solidarity. At the same time, however, this conceptualization minimizes the "real" qualities of identity: the shared attitudes and values springing from a more or less common world view and the patterned behaviors, predictable and understandable, which constitute social experience and structure social bonds. This story explores a specific situation in which an ethnicity, more tied to romance and a fictive reading of the past, is being negotiated; however, the history of the fight over the Cold Spring dam also reveals the extent to which basic social structures and behaviors channeled and constrained this negotiation. Moreover, in seeking to join the recognition of ethnic identity as a cultural construction with an appreciation of the real materials from which it is invented, this short narrative also focuses on a specific sort of social conflict and the intense debate which it produced and asserts, in opposition to earlier models of assimilation, the power of ordinary people, either consciously or unconsciously, to participate in a basic process of self-definition. Other scholars in critiquing Sollors have made much the same point. However, in recounting this small history I assert the role of nascent class conflict in forming the debate and the potential of this process both to rework basic social relations and to disturb the moral world of traditional society.<sup>4</sup>

The dam which would cause the conflict spans the Sauk River on the eastern end of Cold Spring (sometimes in the nineteenth century referred to as Cold Springs) in Wakefield Township, Stearns County and was constructed in the late fall of 1856 when German settlement in the area was just beginning. The village, part of a larger German-Catholic cultural region described elsewhere by Kathleen Neils Conzen, is located about sixty miles north of Minneapolis and less than twenty miles

west of St. Cloud, the county seat, and the Mississippi River.<sup>5</sup> The dam, originally built of elm and basswood, raised the water level of the Sauk by about 7.5 feet. It also filled hundreds of acres of river-bottom land and created a string of small lakes along the river's meandering course between the villages of Cold Spring and Richmond (sometimes known as Torah) in neighboring Munson Township. By March of 1857 the dam's owners—entrepreneurs representing St. Cloud, Little Falls and Hennepin County—had erected a saw mill on the west bank of the Sauk. During the 1860s the property changed hands twice, and after a suspected arson fire destroyed the dam and mill in 1865 two Yankee brothers-in-law from St. Cloud, H.C. Waite and N.P. Clark, bought the property, rebuilt the complex and converted the saw mill to a grist mill. During this period when the dam was under repair the Sauk River resumed its normal course, and local farmers were able to harvest hay in meadow land which had previously been under water. Some farmers later remembered that the mill owners again opened the dam's gates during the grasshopper epidemics in the mid 1870s. At the turn of the century area farmers recalled these events and used them to justify their demand that the dam be removed.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, lured by descriptions of the area in the nation's German Catholic press, thousands of Catholic settlers streamed into the county in the decades after mid-century. A classic example of chain migration, the process of movement and settlement involved at first German-born immigrants who had originally settled in other Midwest states—Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Missouri—and their reports of cheap land and an evolving Catholic majority continued to attract new migrants. Some traveled from those previously settled states to the east and south, but many after the first wave of settlement came directly from the Old Country. Settlers represented a diversity of source areas in German-speaking Europe; Wakefield and Munson Township drew residents from Bavaria, Westfalia, Hanover, the Eifel region of the Rhineland and Luxemburg, to name a few. Many, but not all, clustered in vaguely demarcated rural neighborhoods, and, indeed, the majority of those farmers who later agitated for the removal of the dam could trace common German origins in a specific county, Lingen, in the Kingdom in Hanover.<sup>7</sup>

Cold Spring, the setting of our story, was slow to grow. Founded by a group of Yankee speculators in the same year as the construction of the dam, the town experienced unremarkable growth for the first thirty years or so. In 1870, for instance, the village could boast of only about 100 residents. Development was perhaps delayed by the absence of a Catho-

lic church; Richmond, to the west, was a parish center from the beginning of the settlement period, and two other Catholic churches were within walking distance from Cold Spring. It was not until 1878 and only after significant controversy that construction began on the Church of Saint Boniface. Despite slow population growth, the young village by 1870 was already an established milling center. According to the census, the two Yankee owners of the mill, N.P. Clark and Henry Waite, had five men in their employ and processed 70,000 bushels of wheat in the previous year.<sup>8</sup>

In the succeeding ten years the population doubled, and in 1880 the village hosted four small hotels, a tinsmith, a harness maker, a mason, a printer from Canada, a California-born horse trader, a couple of butchers, a wagon maker and even a photographer. In this decade Michael Sargl, an immigrant from Bavaria, launched a brewery operation, and in 1880 Cold Spring contained at least seven saloons, four in the hotels and three independents.<sup>9</sup> The editor of an out-of-county newspaper remarked in 1877 that Cold Spring had

a fine water power, a good mill with seven run of burrs for wheat and one for feed; two large stores (general stock), four hotels, a saloon in each one, and we were told there were four or five saloons aside from those in the hotels. We made up our minds that this is one of the best fields for temperance workers in the state. Should anyone conclude to visit Cold Springs with a view to talking temperance, we advise him to learn to swim before going and to go iron-clad; for he would surely find Cold Springs a hard road to travel.<sup>10</sup>

The village's milling operation was still the village's major employer, and according to the census forms for 1880, a half dozen men were mill workers of one sort or another. A number of other men—carpenters, teamsters and day laborers—no doubt also found part time work in the milling complex.<sup>11</sup>

Richmond in its early years saw greater growth. By 1870 its original log church had been replaced twice, and a new imposing structure, measuring eighty-eight by fifty feet and with a seventy-foot tower, graced the town.<sup>12</sup> This was surrounded by a number of other buildings. William Wieber, an immigrant from Hesse via Westphalia, Michigan, opened a ten-room hotel in 1867, replacing an original structure owned by Yankees and destroyed by fire. In the same year, an immigrant from Baden built a sawmill on the banks of the Sauk and in the next year added a small woolen mill. Another immigrant, Claudius Weber, with, perhaps,



a keener sense of community priorities started a modest and short-lived brewery in 1864. Other, less grandiose enterprises, were more successful. A number of craftsmen established small shops and stores; the village in 1870 contained three blacksmiths, two shoemakers, two tailors, two carpenters and a cabinet maker. Two of the blacksmiths, one of the tailors, the brewer—Claudius Weber—and Clemens Kost, who owned and operated the sawmill, employed wage labor in their operations, and these five entrepreneurs paid out a total of \$4,000 in wages in 1869. Most of this money no doubt went to supplement family farm income.<sup>13</sup>

The two villages continued their slow growth through 1885, but the arrival of the railroad in that year seems to have spurred a burst in population growth. By 1895 the population of Cold Spring stood at 530. Not surprisingly, the village was still difficult terrain for temperance workers, and that year Cold Spring contained two saloons but five hotels, all of which probably included tap rooms. But area men could now visit the local barber, if so inclined, for a haircut and a shave, and they could also choose between six blacksmiths, two harness makers and three wagon makers for maintaining their draft animals and farm equipment. Village residents were able to procure fresh meat at the two local butcher shops, and they bought locally-produced cigars from Ignatz Kremer, who combined cigar manufacturing with local politics. They could hire local carpenters, a local tinsmith and contract with Dinndorf and Sons for their painting needs. Five men were counted as either hardware or general store merchants. Cold Spring could even boast of an attorney, Peter Maurin, the son of the area's most successful businessman. The town also had a doctor, but most women who were about to give birth were probably still visited by Katharine Lardy, who according to the census was the community's midwife. Residents too might recognize Maria Walzimmer on the street and know that this seventy-one-year-old Austrian immigrant was a public charge and was boarding with a young laborer and his wife.

Richmond, though, for the first time fell behind its rival to the east in population, and in 1895 the village contained 398 residents. Still the population had more than doubled in the previous fifteen years, and the village now housed five saloons and two hotels. One half dozen men were enumerated as merchants, selling both general merchandise and hardware. The town contained two doctors, two jewelers, a barber, a cigar manufacturer, a tailor, a shoemaker and a butcher. Four men worked as carpenters, four as blacksmiths, two as masons, two as harness-makers, and one man manufactured wagons. Local residents could buy lumber at

the local lumber yard, they could contract to ship their livestock to South St. Paul, and they could deal with local grain buyers and arrange to sell their produce locally.

Village growth signaled a number of different trends. Obviously, with the arrival of the railroad the area increasingly fell within the overlapping orbits of a number of competing market centers. Farmers found it easier to market their commodities and now found lower priced consumer goods available at the numerous general stores located in the many Stearns County hamlets. The promise of greater ease and a higher standard of living, however, was balanced by a mini-Malthusian crisis, as the second generation came of age and sought farm land. Many, both young men and women, opted for lives in area villages, and they, in turn, were joined by other newcomers, some of whom were recent immigrants from Germany. However, those who moved to the villages faced limited opportunities for economic success. For instance, the number of men listed by the census enumerator as laborers more than doubled between 1895 and 1920. Many of these were "life course servants," the sons of area farmers who either toiled for their fathers for a few years before coming into property of their own or worked for neighbors or perhaps the railroad in order to assemble enough capital and experience to begin farming on their own. But a growing number were older men with diminished prospects and who had to settle for erratic and temporary employment in order to make ends meet. At the same time, the distribution of property, always equitable in the countryside, was increasingly skewed, and wealth was more and more centered in fewer and fewer hands. In 1900 the wealthiest 10 percent of property holders in Cold Spring controlled 38 percent of the village's taxable wealth; that percentage climbed to 42 percent in the next census year, and in 1920 the wealthiest quintile owned 48 percent of Cold Spring's taxable property. Significantly, in that last year the richest ten percent of Wakefield Township farmers controlled only 28 percent of the property in the countryside.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the growing disparity between rich and poor, community elites—the town boosters and merchants—were neither economically nor socially secure. The majority of the merchants in Cold Spring and Richmond at the turn of the century were young men and new arrivals, and they faced the sort of distrust that newcomers traditionally face in relatively closed, insular communities. More importantly, merchants occupied a space at the intersection of two different economies and were forced to broker the needs of a local economy which relied on trust,



long-term credit and, before the 1880s, produce exchange with the demands of a larger, more efficient, more monetized system which operated on a cash basis and rewarded prompt and regular payments. Poor harvests, declining markets, and bad public relations might easily jeopardize the credit rating and financial position of small town shop-keepers. The decade of 1890s, especially, and not only because of the national depression, was a particularly difficult time for rural Stearns County businessmen. For example, in these two little towns at least a half dozen businesses went bankrupt in these years. Two of these involved rather spurious attempts by outsiders to establish a bank and a new hotel, and another was a premature effort to start up a local newspaper in Cold Spring. However, two partnerships, involving relatively permanent and prominent community members also failed during the course of the decade, as did Cold Spring's saddle shop. Financial failures became more unusual after the turn of the century, but only because financially-troubled merchants learned to use advertising and sponsor quick sales, often after consigning all of their goods to an outside broker, in order to raise quick cash.<sup>15</sup> They were also advantaged by the establishment of banks, again a post-1900 development. However, the arrival of the railroad and then the establishment of rural free delivery in 1896 served to expand further consumer choices. Again, as noted above, merchants were often disadvantaged by their status as outsiders, and they needed to find ways to counter the natural suspicion of long-term residents. The more successful ones combined ambition, initiative and, perhaps, vision with a knack for promotion and boosterism. For instance, one Richmond general store owner paid deference to communal needs when he closed his establishment to help with the 1911 wheat harvest.<sup>16</sup> The awkward situation of general store owners was not, however, shared by the men who were to grow the Cold Spring brewery into a major operation in the years after the turn of the century and then build upon that success during Prohibition and move into granite quarrying. But the brewery owners were the exception that proved the rule, and the other businessmen in Richmond and Cold Spring had a more difficult time keeping both their customers and their creditors satisfied.

The majority of these customers, of course, were farmers, and although the farm economy had developed and changed since the days of initial settlement, the role of the farm family and the logic of its governance were for the most part unchanged. At the point of first settlement almost all of the charter group of German settlers had earned previous experience in American agriculture and were attuned to the workings of

agricultural markets. This concern for the state of the market is apparent in a letter authored by a Richmond farmer in 1859 and published in a German-Catholic newspaper based in Cincinnati:

Winter has already begun its visit. On September 1st we received our first frost, and the frost was so hard on a couple of nights that what little corn grown around here was entirely frozen. Since then we have had beautiful days. The harvest has been very good. The farmers complain only about the market. Wheat brings forty cents and oats 25 cents. The lack of cash was the reason that work on the church was stopped for a couple of months. However, we will begin anew and finish the roof before winter.<sup>17</sup>

But if few of the first settlers were unfamiliar with commercial agriculture, their approach to the market was still conservative and cautious.<sup>18</sup> They were reluctant to borrow money to increase acreage and improve productivity; instead they relied almost exclusively on the labor supplied by sons and daughters in the slow and deliberate processes of building their farms and improving the land. An analysis of household-level data from the federal agricultural census in which production measures were computed and family nutritional requirements subtracted reveals that over one half the households did not produce a surplus in 1859, and most families no doubt supplemented their diets with fish and game taken locally.<sup>19</sup> According to the census taken ten years later a quarter of the farmers were still unable to produce a surplus. These were farmers who were just starting out; they were younger than more established farmers, farmed fewer acres and were more likely to use oxen, rather than horses, as draft animals. Interestingly, wheat, the era's primary cash crop, figured more prominently in their crop mix than for their older and more settled neighbors. Younger farmers, of course, were in greater need of immediate capital, but they also lacked the necessary family labor to maintain a more diversified crop mix. That established farmers, at least during the first decade and half of settlement, avoided wheat is significant and sets these German-Catholic farmers off from other settlers in the Midwest hailing from New England and Scandinavia.<sup>20</sup> However, by the mid 1870s, in part in reaction to the devastation spread by hordes of Rocky Mountain locusts, farmers were beginning to move into wheat. The wheat boom, though, was already past its peak at this point, and most of the farmers who were devoting acreage to wheat had already secured a firm subsistence base and pursued wheat only as part of a diversified crop mix. In any case, by the time of the Cold Spring dam controversy an increasing number of area

farmers were investing in milk cows and cream separators.<sup>21</sup> This turn toward dairying, of course, represented an essential compromise with the imperatives of the market, and those farmers who milked cows and marketed their product were able to preserve a level of familial independence denied, say, grain growers to the west. They relied almost exclusively on family labor—including that provided by farm wives—continued to grow and process much of what they ate, avoided long-term debt, refused to mimic the middle-class consumption patterns of their small town cousins and succeeded in large part in keeping the farm in the family.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, at the turn of the century two economies, inter-related, but divergent in form and function, had emerged in rural Stearns County, and the two worlds of town and country increasingly came apart. The resulting tension would no doubt have remained muted and only occasionally expressed in the familiar squabbles between farmers and their merchant-creditors trying to balance their account books. However, in the late 1890s a group of farmers living upstream from the Cold Spring dam began clamoring for its removal, and after the issue became tied up in the courts some men prepared for more dramatic action. So in the early morning on 16 August 1900 someone set off a load of dynamite at the site of the dam. However, this was not the first attempt to blow up the structure; two months earlier local residents had discovered a metal box filled with fifteen pounds of dynamite—according to one observer, enough to have destroyed half the village—perched on a ledge next to the dam.<sup>23</sup> Nor was it to be the last. A year later someone made another try, and twenty years later two more assaults were launched.<sup>24</sup> None of these was successful.

These events were triggered by the dam's purchase in August of 1897 by L.A. Muggli, a local resident and a descendent of Swiss immigrants.<sup>25</sup> Immediately thereafter for a consideration of \$5000 he agreed to resell the dam and mill complex to a consortium of farmers, most of whom resided upriver from the dam just south of Richmond in the adjacent Munson Township. Muggli's motives in purchasing and selling the dam are not entirely clear. It is likely that operating the mill was gradually becoming less profitable after the railroad had been extended to Cold Spring in 1886. Also, steam and gasoline power made the dam and water power redundant. Moreover, as described above, the area's farm economy was undergoing a slow transition from grain growing to dairy farming, and creameries were rapidly replacing grist mills. The farmers' motives in purchasing the rights to the dam are more clear; they planned

to remove the structure and thus regain meadow land which had long been under water. Twenty-four farmers joined the buyers group, and if each farmer regained only ten acres of meadowland—selling at a minimum price of \$20 per acre—he would recapture his investment.

The plans of these farmers competed with those of Philip H. Kray, a Cold Spring businessman and booster. Like the farmers, Kray was a long-time resident of the area, and also like them he could detail extensive family ties within the community. Unlike his rural neighbors, however, he came from a family of innkeepers, and his commitment to Catholicism was late-coming and probably suspect.<sup>26</sup> He further distinguished himself from other residents by harnessing his ambitions to the development of the village and to new economic adventures. In 1896 when Kray was thirty-six years old he purchased 270 acres of land located just south of town and nestled between two of the many small lakes produced by the dam. At least part of this land was destined for a “pleasure resort,” and to this end he spent \$500 in improving the land. He invested another \$500 in the construction of a boat house in Cold Spring and then bought a small steamboat for \$1000 to ply the lakes. Kray was already the owner of a small hotel in Cold Spring, which he and his brothers, Joseph and Valentine, had purchased from their father. Philip later bought out his two partner-brothers. At the time of the dam controversy he was mayor of the village, owner of the local creamery, a part-time farmer, and he also ran a saddle shop and loaned money.<sup>27</sup> Kray’s important position within village circles paid dividends; the village council contributed \$100 to his resort and excursion plans, and five other local stockholders joined in his development plans. Eventually, one of the stockholders, Marcus Maurin—easily the richest man in Cold Spring and one of the wealthiest men in the county—joined his brother, Peter, in buying 110 acres of Krays’ holdings. Obviously, the destruction of the dam would destroy Kray’s plans and those of the other investors, as well as the hopes of other villagers who anticipated an influx of tourist dollars.

After Muggli and the farmers made known their plans, Kray moved quickly and procured an injunction which prohibited the farmers from removing the dam. Later the Wakefield Town board joined the suit; they maintained that the removal of the dam would accelerate the Sauk’s flow and as a result endanger a township bridge. After the district court granted the injunction, Muggli and the farmers appealed the decision to the state supreme court. The supreme court reversed the lower court and while requesting a more intensive effort to determine fact sent the case

back down to the district level. Other area residents also became involved. Jacob Friedman, another old-time resident and property holder along the Sauk, filed suit against Muggli and the farmers. Friedman owned pasture land on the outskirts of Cold Spring, and the mill pond formed a perfect, unfenced boundary for his land. The removal of the dam, he argued, would force him to build a fence and pump drinking water to his livestock. Since he also provided pasturage for the livestock of village residents, he maintained further that the destruction of the dam would be detrimental to the good people of Cold Spring.

Although the Minnesota Supreme Court would eventually rule in favor of the Cold Spring interests, in the summer of 1900 the courts were still considering the merits of the case. A few people, though, were anxious for a speedier resolution of the issue. At 4:15 A.M. on August 16, the village was awakened by the sound of an explosion coming from the dam. Dam-owner Muggli and two of his sons were among the first to arrive at the site of the explosion; they quickly assayed the damage, which they determined was minimal, and then discovered two sets of footprints.<sup>28</sup> The Mugglis followed the prints—one was of a barefoot man and the other of a man in his stocking feet—for about two miles down a little-used road heading west until it intercepted the main road to the south. Their detective work finished, the Muggli men returned to town and notified the village authorities of their findings.

Upon their return, the Mugglis conferred with Philip Kray and his brother, Valentine, the town marshall. After a brief discussion the two Kray brothers decided to give chase, hopped on their bicycles and pedaled out to where the mill-owner had abandoned the trail. They followed the tracks another mile and a half along the main road and then veered back west, as the footprints now followed the road to the village of Richmond. Along the way they passed within 200 feet of the John Zumwalde farm. At this point one of the trackers probably recalled that Zumwalde had recently hired a local man, Joseph Erwig, to grub stumps. Zumwalde was one of the farmer-defendants in the case, and the searchers' suspicions were aroused as the hired man had been working with dynamite. Perhaps, too, they had other reasons to be suspicious. In any case, the Krays awakened the farm's occupants and discovered that Erwig had left for Richmond by team the previous evening in the company of young Ben Dinndorf, Zumwalde's new brother-in-law.

The two Kray brothers made measurements of the footprints at this point. (Somewhere around here the two suspects had put their boots on again.) They then set out for Richmond where about 7:00 A.M. they



discovered Erwig and Dinndorf asleep in the saloon owned by Peter Nierenhausen. While the suspected dynamiters slept the Krays measured their feet and decided that they matched the footprints found in the sand. The detectives also discovered that the legs of their trousers were wet. The Cold Spring officials awakened the two men, arrested them and transported them back to Cold Spring for questioning. Later the suspects were placed on a train to St. Cloud, the county seat, where they were each held on a \$500 bond.

A month later the two men appeared at a preliminary hearing before a St. Cloud judge. Philip Kray testified that he and his brother had found fine sand in the boots of the two suspects and that their boots and stockings were wet. He stated further that Joseph Erwig's stockings had a distinctive cross on the soles and that these matched exactly one of the set of footprints. The patrons of the saloon swore they had seen young Dinndorf and Erwig leave the bar around 11:00 P.M. the evening of the explosion but did not see them return. The judge focused most of his attention on Erwig, who bought and used dynamite in the course of his work, and a few Richmond merchants testified they had sold dynamite and waterproof fuses to Erwig in the weeks before the explosion. However, a friendly witness was able to allay the judge's suspicions and "alleged that the dynamite was used for *the purpose of killing fish in the lakes* [my italics]."<sup>29</sup> The attorney of the two argued further that the complainants, the Kray brothers, did not own the damaged property and, therefore, did not have legal grounds for action. The judge dismissed the case and released the two suspects.

The night before the hearing the barn belonging to John Kray, the father of Philip and Valentine, burned to the ground. People in Cold Spring suspected arson.<sup>30</sup>

Clearly these events represent a basic conflict of interest between farmers and merchants; however, it is equally clear that when the story is further excavated the conflict extends deeper. For instance, contemporary observers and some later commentators saw the situation as pitting the one village against the other.<sup>31</sup> This is not an inaccurate reading. Whatever benefits which would have resulted from the maintenance of the dam and Philip Kray's development plans would have naturally accrued to Cold Spring. Members of the Cold Spring city government were aware of this and arranged for the city to help defray legal expenses.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, the majority of their opponents lived in or near Richmond. Even those farmers who lived in Wakefield Township, it appears, shopped in Richmond; they went to church there, and almost all sent their children to District School 20 in Richmond.<sup>33</sup>



From the beginning this conflict played upon tensions between the two villages and as a result attracted residents without any direct, material interest in the case. In the spring of 1898, while the case was in the early stages of litigation and fully two years before the assault on the dam, about forty residents of Richmond and environs—misinterpreting a judge's preliminary ruling and believing that they now enjoyed rights to the dam—piled their wagons with picks and shovels and invaded Cold Spring with the intent to tear down the dam in broad daylight. Their train of wagons and buggies traveled through the heart of the Cold Spring, and a crowd of 200 village residents quickly assembled at the dam site. Not surprisingly, a scuffle broke out between members of the two groups. George Weis, the Richmond village constable and the leader of the Richmond contingent, grabbed a pick and attempted to begin demolition, but Mike Koebl, the manager of the grist mill, resisted the constable's plan, and a short battle ensued. The Cold Spring authorities broke up the melee before any serious damage was done to person or property, and the outnumbered Richmond people returned home.<sup>34</sup>

The communal nature of the dispute is apparent in other ways. In 1901, after the state supreme court handed down its final decision in favor of Kray and the other plaintiffs, Cold Spring residents organized a parade to celebrate their victory and, it seems, to rub salt in their neighbors' wounds. The grand procession was led by the town band and by ten coaches filled by the village "*Honoratioren*" (elites). When the dam controversy was again rekindled in 1917, the Richmond newspaper recalled the earlier dispute and noted that the Cold Spring town band had "serenaded" the farmer-defendants after the supreme court had passed down its decision.<sup>35</sup>

Obviously, village rivalry here was a reality, and the boosters of the respective communities—including newspaper editors, merchants and real estate dealers—contributed more than their share in shaping this competition. For example, two of the petitioners for the dam's removal, M. A. Bussen and Gerhard Braegelmann, combined farming with other business activities. In 1903 Bussen purchased the *Richmond Standard*, and as a small town newspaper publisher he became the village's primary booster. Braegelmann went on to become president of Richmond's German-American State Bank, and another syndicate member, John Gertken, later became president of the Richmond village council.

Although Bussen, Braegelmann and Gertken were community elites—more precisely Richmond village elites—their involvement on the part of the farmers did not mean this was simply a struggle between two

rival groups of the respective communities' most powerful. To be sure, these farmers were not poor, but their success placed them only within the top 50 percent of area's property holders. The participants on the other side were more uniformly part of an elite. Philip Kray's plans for his "pleasure resort" represented only one of his many business interests; his hotel, for instance, was the second most valuable structure in town. His position as village council president certainly set him apart from other men, and holding office allowed him a strategic position in promoting his development schemes. More importantly, the Krays were connected to other business leaders, including the aforementioned Marcus Maurin.<sup>36</sup>

Maurin's involvement and support and that of Jacob Friedmann suggests that elements of patron-clientage underlay the conflict. Although Marcus Maurin did not control everything in Cold Spring, he was easily the most powerful man in town. In 1898 he and his brother bore almost one half the village's personal property tax burden, and, obviously, he had a clear economic interest in the outcome of this case.<sup>37</sup> He, perhaps, also harbored an old grudge. Thirty-five years earlier he and his brother, Peter, briefly owned the dam and mill, but they sold their interests after a fire destroyed the mill. At that time the two brothers were defendants in a law suit pressed by two local farmers, Theodore Weres and Bernard Bock. As their sons would argue thirty years later, Bock and Weres insisted that the Sauk River dam caused a backwater and flooded their pasture land. In their answer to the complaint, the Maurins charged that the mill fire was the result of arson. Suspiciously, the fire had occurred just a little over two weeks before Bock and Weres dated their complaint, and the two farmers were obviously attempting to prevent its reconstruction.<sup>38</sup>

On the side of the farmers, Ben Dinndorf, one of the alleged saboteurs, was John Zumwalde's brother-in-law, and Joe Erwig was his hired man. On another level, both affinal and consanguineal kin ties connected the individual farmers involved in the action. There were four pairs of brothers among the twenty-four consortium members and a number of brothers-in-law. For example, the two Schlangen brothers were brothers-in-law to Anton Braegelmann and to the two Schleper brothers (Braegelmann had married Elizabeth Schlangen, Tobias Schleper had married Regina Schlangen, and Gerhard Schleper had married Catharine Schlangen). Braegehnann, in turn, had another brother involved in the suit. Most of the farmers—nineteen of the twenty-four—could trace their ancestry to Hanover and Oldenburg in Northwest Ger-

many, and many were from a small cluster of villages in Kreis Lingen of what had once been the Kingdom of Hanover. It is likely that cousin ties joined some of the farmers.<sup>39</sup>

It is evident here that alliance systems were based on both blood and interest, although the two often overlapped. Interest here was defined by land. For the most part, these were men in the prime of life (the mean age for the farmers was 48.33) who worried about providing farm land for adult children coming of age. These were also farmers who were moving into dairying and who required more pasture land for their cattle. However, as we have seen, involvement on either side did not necessarily depend upon having a clearly defined interest in the outcome of the case. John Kray, Philip's father, did not have an obvious stake in the outcome of the case, but this did not prevent his barn from being fired. Family honor was at stake here; the involvement of other relatives and household members—such as, Ben Dinndorf and Joseph Erwig—testifies to the ease in which community members attached notions of family honor to property during disputes.

The primary issue in the case was property. Legally, the case involved two distinct contests of property rights. First, the law suit pitted the individual property rights of the farmers-defendants against those of Philip Kray, Marcus Maurin, Jacob Friedman, etc. The other contest, at least according to the Cold Spring merchants, involved the individual rights of the farmers versus the general welfare. From the perspective of Kray and his Cold Spring investors the two contests were not necessarily distinct. When during the course of the trial Philip Kray was asked why the village of Cold Spring donated money to his venture, he responded, "To improve the running business and to help along to draw people to the town, what we make the trade better for the town and for the boat business."<sup>40</sup> It is clear, despite the garbled syntax, that Kray associated the community's interest with his own. Likewise, Jacob Friedmann called for an injunction based on his role in providing for a common need—the requirement of village residents for pasture land for their livestock.

Men like Kray and his partners, having chosen business careers and having forged commercial connections outside their village and township, occupied a unique position in their localized, rural society. As merchants and as public officials it was to their advantage to assume a symmetry of public and private interests. Because they functioned as cultural and economic brokers, their sense of self and purpose rested on a vision of a homogeneous community, and as boosters—as promoters

of community interests—they presented that picture of the ideal community to the outside world. Using those cultural materials at hand and which they, of course, held in common with their rural cousins, village boosters and merchants in the years around the turn of the century busied themselves in the construction of new institutional forms. They sponsored theater groups, choral societies, baseball teams, new fraternal organizations, commercial clubs, to name a few, as well as assuming leadership roles in the community's political and religious life. One of their primary goals was to banish conflict from this ideal, ethnic community, as they sought to subsume individual interest to a larger common good and one which they, incidentally, determined. Two central ironies, though, betrayed the merchant pose of defining and serving the public good: merchants who insisted on the organic unity of society advanced a new economic order which relied upon the pursuit of self-interest; at the same time they both preached the need to protect local autonomy and undermined the same autonomy by introducing new products and ideas.<sup>41</sup>

This insistence on social harmony was expressed on a regular basis in the columns of Richmond's weekly paper, the *Standard*. Here the editor, M.A. Bussen, would chastise those citizens who were still out on the streets at night making noise after the saloons closed or who were tardy in cleaning their yards of winter's refuse after the spring thaw. He was concerned not only with sanitation and good order, but he also fought battles against chicken stealing, swearing and spitting on sidewalks. On one occasion he criticized citizens who were overly boisterous at a play presented by a theater troupe from a neighboring village, noting that, "It is a disgrace to our town to have an unruly mob...prevail at our theatre."<sup>42</sup> Most of his efforts, though, were intended to encourage buying at home and to suppress expressions of envy and enmity. In February, 1915 he advanced a theme, which he was to develop further after the United States entered World War I; "Our boys and girls as well as the men and women of the farm should develop team work. They should get together and work together for a common cause as the soldiers." On the same page he printed an item entitled "The Home Merchant" in which he contrasted the neighborliness of the home town store owner with the impersonal quality of big city merchant houses and mail order firms. The home town merchant was "your neighbor—your friend—your helper in time of need. Don't you think that you ought to trade with him, and be his friend and his helper in the time of his need?" Two years later he expanded on this argument: "By trading with home merchants you will

be getting what you want at the right price and will be doing your share toward keeping as much as possible of our money in circulation among our own people, where it belongs and where you will have an opportunity of seeing some of it yourself.” Interestingly, the editor is both advocating the maintenance of a “moral economy” and appealing to self interest in supplying a rationale for buying at home.<sup>43</sup> Bussen’s devotion to his community, however, did not prevent him from publishing occasional advertisements for mail order, patent medicines, and on at least one occasion he ran a half page ad for one of St. Cloud’s premier department stores.<sup>44</sup>

As a newspaper man, Bussen was privy to all the town gossip and scandals, and residents were often eager to come forward and volunteer stories about their neighbors. Bussen attempted to discourage this practice, and he accused gossips of sowing discord and disharmony. Sometimes, citizens mailed reports to Bussen but then neglected to sign their correspondence. In a column published in February, 1912 Bussen took his anonymous contributors to task:

The *Standard* wishes to emphasize particularly that in the future any communications sent to this office for publication, be it news or other items, must be signed by the writer or they will not be published. It often occurs that someone thru [sic] spite or ill feelings towards his neighbors sends in a batch of news, among which are items that throw a bad light upon the one it is intended for and usually these items are exaggerated and totally untrue.<sup>45</sup>

Bussen touched upon these themes on a number of different occasions and scolded his neighbors not only for their predilection for gossip, but also about the evils of envy and malice.

This concern for order and harmony was hardly unique among these villages, and it was common for small town editors nationwide to harp constantly on these themes. Nor was the fascination with constructing new civic associations specific to this locale; indeed, a hallmark of the nation’s social history during the Progressive Era was the contagion of volunteerism and association building. In fact, many new organizations in these villages, like baseball teams, were ostensibly American, but others like singing clubs and drama societies more overtly straddled the margins of American and German-Catholic culture. For example, in April of 1896 the St. Boniface Dramatic Club in Cold Spring presented in English “The Sacred Drama of St. Philomenia,” which described the attempted seduction and ultimate martyrdom of a Greek virgin at the

hands of the Roman emperor, Diocletian. The production of the "Sacred Drama" was accompanied by some selections played by the town band and songs contributed by the church choir, and following this, the drama society performed a German farce, "*Trau-Schau-Wenz*," which the St. Cloud papers reviewed favorably. German, though, was still the preferred language with which to approach the sacred; the Richmond players a few years later presented "*Das Hirtenmädchen von Lourdes*" (the shepherdess of Lourdes), which undoubtedly carried much the same message as "The Sacred Drama."<sup>46</sup>

The most German of new organizations, but also the one which most clearly represents the accommodation of the small town Progressive impulse with the principal tendencies in German-Catholicism, was the German-Catholic Central Verein (*der Deutsche Römisch-Katholische Central-Verein von Nord Amerika*). The Central Verein could trace its origins to the mid-1850s, and a certain defensiveness, born of the rampant Know-Nothingism of that period, continued to mark the organization at the turn of the century. Initially a loose grouping of German-Catholic benevolent societies, the Central-Verein underwent a massive reorganization in 1905, and within a few years and at a time when *das Deutschtum* in the United States was supposedly in a state of decline, membership in the Verein almost doubled and approached the 100,000 mark.<sup>47</sup> Paralleling the Progressive search for consensus and social harmony, the Central Verein advanced a social program which addressed the problems associated with industrialization and urbanization but which also, by evoking the tenets of medieval corporativism, sought to deny the reality of class. This program, labeled "Solidarism," a name developed by the German Jesuit, Heinrich Pesch, was equally antagonistic to socialism and capitalism. In their stead, as advocated by Pesch, a new social order would emerge, but one based on self-help, volunteerism and the organic unity of all estates of which the *Mittelstand*, farmers and petty proprietors, would serve as a leavening force. It was precisely this vision that merchants in alliance with parish priests brought to rural Stearns County hamlets.

By the first decade of this century, at least in the Midwest, members of the association were holding both state-wide and local congresses (*Katholikentage*). A typical *Katholikentag in Kleinen* was held in Richmond on Pentecost Monday in 1912. The program began in the morning with a mass; in the afternoon a parade made its way through the specially-decorated streets of the village. A few horse-drawn coaches carrying area priests and the officers of various *Vereine* led the procession;



behind the “*Honoratioren*” (elites) and the “*Geistlichkeit*” (clergy) marched the members of the “*Männervereinen*” from Richmond and the surrounding towns. A neighboring town contributed a band which cooperated with Richmond’s “*Musikkapelle*” to provide music for the march. After the parade, the participants retired to the village hall to listen to speeches. John Gertken, Richmond’s mayor and president of the town’s *Männervereinen*, led off and delivered a welcoming speech. He was followed by the parish priest and then by a Benedictine from St. Cloud who spoke on the “*Vereinswesen*” (club life). The last speaker, George Stelzle of Minneapolis, delivered a moving speech on social reform. After singing “*Grosser Gott*,” everyone adjourned for dinner in the basement of the hall. In the evening the crowd returned to listen to the Richmond town orchestra and to enjoy a farce, “*Der gelungenste Schwabenstreich*,” presented by the local men. The evening was capped by a magic lantern show of Yellowstone park. A local priest provided the narrative.<sup>48</sup>

The congress’s program was remarkably similar to a celebration sponsored six months earlier by Richmond’s St. Joseph’s Society in commemoration of the centennial of the birth of Ludwig Winthorst, a German-Catholic patriot from Hanover and a leader of the Catholic Center party during the *Kulturkampf*. Appropriately, editor Bussen, a native of Hanover, devoted almost an entire page in his paper to Winthorst’s biography. The program that day was much like that of a *Katholikentag* but without the parade. The Richmond orchestra provided music, both sacred and secular, and a home-grown Benedictine priest delivered an address describing Winthorst’s life and accomplishments. The program even included a magic lantern show, but this time the presentation was of the *deutsche-katholische Volksvereinhaus* in München-Gladbach, a center of the German-Catholic social reform movement.<sup>50</sup>

Although many elements of traditional piety—the parade, the music and the deconstruction of the community into corporate groups—were still present in these two events, the message was one which spoke most directly to the interests of the merchant class. Both celebrations worked to define an identity, based on descent and common religious beliefs and dependent upon a political-religious movement in the Fatherland. They proclaimed a common *katholisch-Deutschtum*, but one still under siege both in America and in the homeland, and reminded residents of their common heritage and their membership in an international community. Once cognizant of their unity, as well as of the common threat posed by both socialism and capitalism, community members might

acknowledge their common interests and place community harmony, loyalty to place and Christian love above self-interest. It should be noted, however, that these appeals for social peace and unity did not imply the need for a democratic reordering of society. Average citizens should still listen to, respect and perhaps obey the "*Honoratioren*" and the "*Geistlichkeit*," those men, in other words, who rode at the head of the procession and who would lead this new idealized community.

Of course, much of this message was directed at farmers. No doubt many area merchants had internalized a critique emanating from St. Cloud's Yankee elites that the county's Germans were too often brutish, drunken and violent. Indeed, abusive drinking was a problem, and as Kathleen Conzen has demonstrated, Germans in the area, although more respectful of property than other ethnic groups, were much more likely to be charged with violence against persons.<sup>51</sup> It would seem in addition that the sons of farmers were, in fact, more aggressive than their village cousins. For example, a group of farm boys descended on Cold Spring in 1897 to witness and burlesque a bastardy hearing scheduled before the justice of the peace. However, as was often the case, the interested parties, their parents, and the town justice had already negotiated a settlement, the young people agreeing to marry, and this, according to a St. Cloud newspaper, was enough to instigate a small riot.

Those country boys, that came in to-day to witness the Bruner-Klein "hochzeit" [marriage] were disappointed the matter having been previously settled, and they started to make amongst themselves, resulting in a fight, wherein a dozen or more took part, and broken chairs, torn off fingernails and many a black eye are the trophies. Dr. Dechman is in possession of a whole fingernail found on the battlefield.<sup>52</sup>

Obviously, these fighters were not as self-controlled as village young men, who lived under the vigilant eye of the parish priest, the town fathers and their parents. In a comparable incident from 1892 a group of farm boys from neighboring St. Nicholas invaded Cold Spring and with a total lack of respect managed to steal the star from the local constable.<sup>53</sup>

Interestingly, farmers—the same people who were pursuing communal justice in the above incident—were also indictable, at least at first glance, on charges of selfishness. After Minnesota's supreme court sent the Cold Spring dam case back to the district court and during the hearing which followed, Christ Weres, one of the farmer-defendants,

stated very simply and clearly how he thought individual and communal interests should be balanced.

Question (Plaintiffs Attorney): You don't care whether the taking out of the dam hurts Phil Kray or not?

Answer (Weres): Of course not.

Question: You don't care whether it takes out the bridge or not, do you?

Answer: No.

Question: You don't care whether [it] destroys the navigation of those lakes or not, do you?

Answer: No sir.

Question: You don't care whether it destroys Friedman's pasture or not, do you?

Answer: No.

Question: Your object is to get the dam out, isn't it, that is what you are trying to do, is to get the dam so that you will have more land than now?

Answer: Yes sir.

Question: And you don't care who it hurts?

Answer: No, of course not.<sup>54</sup>

Interestingly, the merchant, Philip Kray, was pretending here to be more "traditional" in his vision of community than Christ Weres, his rural neighbor. After all, Kray, along with his associate Jacob Friedman claimed to be only concerned with the common good. However, as we have seen, small town merchants found that talking the talk of organic unity was essential to walking the walk of petit bourgeois capitalism. At the same time, Weres and his neighbors were hardly primitive communitarians willing to sacrifice all for the common good. But neither were they modern capitalists. Instead, Christ Weres and friends, much like the Württemberg peasants described by David Sabeau in his multiple works, viewed community as a bounded set of reciprocal rights and duties and based on the control and maintenance of private property. According to Sabeau, "All social transactions take place within a field of rights, duties, claims and obligations, which taken together comprise the system of property holding." Thus, among peasants, "whose emotional lives appear peculiarly dominated by the dynamics of mate-

rial interests,” property functioned as the primary mediator of social relations.<sup>56</sup> In rural Stearns County and well into this century, it continued to drive the life course of individuals, determined the timing of marriage and retirement, influenced family size and structure and regulated the quality of relationships between neighbors and among family members. Property also helped determine status within the community; more significantly, it offered a means of defending family autonomy against meddling neighbors and the power of an at-times intrusive state. Of yet greater importance, property—its acquisition and its distribution—stood at the center of a community value system and helped define a moral order. As described by the anthropologist, Jane Schneider, European peasants utilized an “ethic of equity” to guide behavior and influence relationships, both sacred and profane.<sup>57</sup> To clarify all of this, property mediates relationships through acts of exchange. Exchange in rural Stearns County could take different forms, some more or less important than others. For instance, some children spent years working on their parents’ farm, and others anticipated a future of caring for and supporting aged parents in exchange for a portion of the family’s property. Parents, in turn, dictated their last wills and testaments according to principles built around an almost obsessive need for fairness.<sup>58</sup> Neighbors lent tools or draft animals or their childrens labor for future favors or considerations. During the early years men met in the local general stores and then later in saloons to talk, smoke and buy each other drinks in highly ritualized acts of exchange. This same sort of ritualized treating was integral to the political system, and local candidates generally offered an ample supply of beer to remind constituents of their need of deference and support. Even, and perhaps especially, in religious life, these German Catholics used a language of exchange to bring order to a sometimes frightening universe. In public devotionals and religious processions farmers, their wives and children promised to sacrifice their time, their labor and their prayers for good harvests and fair prices.<sup>59</sup>

The equity consciousness which underlay this system was expressed in high rates of property ownership and by a persistent egalitarianism. But, as noted earlier, the local ethos also gave birth to a high level of contentiousness, as local residents, although reluctant to commit crimes against property, fought battles in both the local courts and the local saloons to defend both property and honor. This should hardly be surprising, as the system was hardly perfect, not all exchanges were equal, and power, based on age, status and gender, tended to infuse those negotiations over rights, claims and privileges. Thus, parents fought

with children, brothers with sisters, neighbors did battle with neighbors and occasionally large segments of the community were mobilized to confront either the church or the state. Each of the three parishes in these two townships, like virtually every other parish in the larger cultural region, witnessed church battles over a variety of issues, including control over church property, trustee power and parochial education. And if farmers were not hesitant to confront the leaders of the Church, they had even fewer qualms about fighting among themselves. They battled over boundary lines, over the swine and cattle which refused to honor those lines and over access to outlying parcels of land. In short, they fought over property and in the process worked to reapportion the rights and privileges which accrue to property. But when fueled by alcohol they also fought over honor—over insults to their good name, over the refusal of some to participate in rounds of treating and communal drinking—and here too rituals of violence worked to reestablish status and the bounds of community.

But if Christ Weres, who in court denied any concern with how the removal of the dam would affect other men, seems to have been driven by material concerns, he and his fellow farmers were hardly selfish and did, indeed, recognize a common good. But they were hard-headed and distrusted Philip Kray's grandiose claims that his resort plans somehow represented that good. That the situation was defined by such an obvious conflict of interest between the community's two most powerful corporate groups and that it was equally obvious that only merchants and their village neighbors could possibly benefit from the tourist trade, of course, magnified their suspicions. Moreover, the determination of the larger good was never an easy matter and always had to do with the delicate balancing of rival claims and of negotiating future reciprocal rights and duties. In rejecting that course and in automatically assuming that the merchant class was capable of ascertaining and representing a broader community interest and one separate from that of area farmers, Philip Kray and other merchants challenged the traditional community ethic and substituted one reliant on their sense of a mystical community bond. Judging by the curtness and brevity of Christ Weres' remarks, he saw this as a burlesque which disguised class-based interests with an appeal to the common good. In a real sense, Philip Kray and friends were inventing *Gemeinschaft*, and Christ Weres wanted to have nothing to do with it.

But Philip Kray was doing more than re-figuring a sort of moral calculus; he was also challenging the meaning of ethnic identity. For

many immigrants the process of adjusting to a new environment and culture was simultaneous with adopting middle-class values. However, the process of *embourgeoisement* is necessarily uneven, and in this setting the responses of merchants and farmers to the imperatives of commercial capitalism were relatively dissimilar. Ironically, it was merchants and their clerks who rushed to the defense of community and who busied themselves creating “tradition.”<sup>60</sup> Perhaps, though, the irony was a chimera. After all, a hallmark of bourgeois development in both the United States and Europe was the posing of universal claims and the assumption of a general moral authority. But in ethnic enclaves like rural Stearns County, Minnesota middle-class development could be accompanied by the invention of a more romantic and idealized vision of ethnic identity. The emphasis here was on descent and the imagined unity of all who could trace origins to Catholic Germany. To be sure, men like Christ Weres recognized the boundaries on community provided by language and religion; these two villages and the surrounding countryside were, after all, almost exclusively German and Catholic from the time of their inception. But Weres and those other residents who made their living from the soil also expected that life within those boundaries would work according to commonly understood rules and proceed according to a familiar pace and rhythm. These patterns structured all the everyday rituals which lent meaning to life and affirmed the bonds, generated through countless reciprocities, which held the community together. Going to mass, sharing drinks, trading gossip, helping sick neighbors with their chores, playing cards, haggling over the price of livestock, keeping a vigil with a dying neighbor and a brother or sister in Christ: these and countless other prosaic activities supplied the content of local identity. Ethnic identity here was not merely symbolic nor simply given to the defense of communal boundaries; rather, it referred to real behaviors, values and beliefs—in short a consistent world view with a history and logic of its own.

At the same time, of course, neither Philip Kray in conflating his private interests with the larger good nor the other members of the merchant class in evoking an image of a mystical and transcendent community intended to disrupt all that was comfortable and familiar. They did, however, seek greater control over their social and economic status and sought to reign in the contentiousness intrinsic to the equity consciousness which centered the traditional moral universe. They also strove to capture and dominate a cast of cultural symbols which could be later mobilized in ways consistent with their own self-image and self-



interest. Thus, they tended toward the romantic and preferred a notion of ethnicity which emphasized its symbolic qualities. Scholars today, of course, have grown very interested, if not so much in the Philip Krays of the world, at least in the situation of a more secure bourgeoisie and their more intellectual brethren and their role in writing those "collective fictions" that sustained new "imagined communities." And the merchants of Cold Spring and Richmond obviously devoted themselves to that task. Consider, for instance, the 1906 visit of Chicago's German consul, Hans Grunow, to Cold Spring, where he was feted and treated to a steamboat ride on the Sauk while "lovely German song echoed within the sheltered banks of the stream."<sup>61</sup> Or consider Marcus Maurin, Cold Spring's most prominent merchant at the turn of the century, inviting a traveling company from Milwaukee's Pabst *Theatergesellschaft* to visit Cold Spring.<sup>62</sup> On these and other occasions, such as when the communities hosted German musicians or when they sponsored *Katholikentage*, residents, the majority of whom by the turn of the century had been born in Minnesota, were encouraged to dream of a *Vaterland* they had never seen. But none of this demonstrates a total rejection of "real" ethnicity; indeed, merchants as both economic and cultural brokers are compelling characters, not because they embraced the modern and attempted to lead the community toward assimilation, but because they were so marginal and so divided in their interests and loyalties. Merchants, then, were often torn, as was the community they hoped to lead, but the result was a sort of creative tension which engendered in these years a remarkably rich and diverse community life.

In a sense, the task of the merchant class was to play with and blend the fictional and the real qualities of ethnic identity, and what forced this task was the changing quality of economic and social life. Werner Sollors, the premier champion of the notion of ethnicity as invention, has been criticized for removing "ethnicity from historical circumstances" and for "posing an egalitarian, pluralistic vision of democracy in which everyone has equal access to any narrative."<sup>63</sup> He has also been charged with over-emphasizing the "fictional" quality of identity and ignoring the extent to which ethnicity as an invention "incorporates, adapts, and amplifies preexisting communal solidarities, cultural attributes, and historical memories."<sup>64</sup> The story of the fight over the Cold Spring dam supports both these complaints. But it also shifts the arena of conflict back from that cultural space between immigrant culture and the culture of the dominant group to those contested areas within the ethnic community. Moreover, the history of this battle and the larger context in

which it was fought demonstrates the limits to which identity might be invented. Ultimately, the ability of the commercial class in these two little towns to rework community relationships and play with new cultural forms was compromised by its own tenuous status within the community. Merchants could go only so far in reforming the old ethos without sacrificing their own sense of self and purpose. In addition, the mutuality inherent to the traditional ethos was constantly reinforced by the nature of rural life and the continued symmetry of the economic and domestic functions of the farm family. Finally, World War I and the assumption of German war guilt removed a key reference point around which a romantic ethnic identity could be built, and indeed the events of the war years polarized the community and pitted the two main streets, whose members more generally supported United States war aims, against local farmers, who complained about the draft, the shortage of farm laborers and the state-managed campaign against sedition and dissent. Farmers, who flocked to the new populist-inspired Nonpartisan League, mounted a long campaign of low-level protest, threatened to boycott those area merchants who opposed the League and, in contradiction to the blandishments of the government and against their own best interests, actually removed wheat from cultivation.<sup>65</sup> The substance of their language and their behavior was an extension of the local ethos: that the war at home was being unfairly waged, that certain groups were being allowed to profit while others bore an unfair burden, and that the government had abandoned its reciprocal obligation to its citizenry.<sup>66</sup>

In short, despite the efforts of local elites to romanticize identity and to tie local culture to a larger cosmopolitanism, everyday life—especially among farmers—continued to work according to familiar rules and patterns. Rural residents still organized their lives around the twin posts of family and farm, still managed to hand down the farm to children in exchange for future support and continued to insist on fair play and reciprocity as the basis of moral action. It ought not be surprising, then, that in 1921 and then again in 1922, after the dam complex had been taken over by a recently-formed granite-quarrying firm, someone tried to blow up the Cold Spring dam. No one was arrested.<sup>67</sup>

## NOTES

1. See, for instance, Catherine McNicol Stock, *Rural Radicals: Righteous Rage in the American Grain* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1996). Kathleen Neils Conzen describes the style and content, as well as the peasant origins, of German-American political

culture in Stearns County in "German Americans and Ethnic Political Culture: Stearns County, Minnesota, 1855–1915," Working Paper no. 16/1989 for the John F. Kennedy-Institut für Nordamerikastudien, p. 7.

2. Much of the literature on immigrant brokers, based on the pioneering work of the social psychologist Kurt Lewin, emphasizes the marginal status of ethnic leaders and their tendency toward alienation. See Lewin, *Resolving Social Conflicts: Selected Papers on Group Dynamics* (New York, 1948), pp. 195–97. John Higham's essay, "Leadership," in Stephen Thernstrom, et al., eds., *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), pp. 642–46, is consistent with this model. See, in addition, his piece, "Introduction: The Forms of Ethnic Leadership," in Higham, ed., *Ethnic Leadership in America* (Baltimore, 1978), pp. 1–18. Victor R. Greene, on the other hand, downplays the marginality of leaders and argues that leaders experienced little conflict or trauma. See Greene, *American Immigrant Leaders, 1800–1910: Marginality and Identity* (Baltimore, 1987). Specific discussions of German immigrant leaders include: Frederick Luebke, "The Germans," in Higham, ed., *Ethnic Leadership*, pp. 64–90; Greene, "The Germans," in *American Immigrant Leaders*, pp. 41–64 and Willi Paul Adams, "Ethnic Leadership and the German-Americans, in Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh, eds., *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History*, vol. 1, *Immigration, Language, Ethnicity* (Philadelphia, 1985), pp. 148–59.

3. Werner Sollors, editor, *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York, 1989), p. xi.

4. See Kathleen Neils Conzen, David Gerber, Ewa Morawska, George E. Pozzetta, and Rudolph J. Vecoli, "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 12 (Fall, 1992): 3–41; and April R. Schultz, *Ethnicity on Parade: Inventing the Norwegian American through Celebration* (Amherst, Mass., 1994). Other influential works which consider the social construction of ethnic or national identity include: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983; revised and extended, 1991, reprint, 1992, London, 1994); Eric Hobsbawm and Terance Ranger, editors, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983); and John R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations* (Princeton, N.J., 1994). Works which deal with the role of class differences in urban German-American communities include: James M. Bergquist, "German Communities in American Cities: An Interpretation of the Nineteenth-Century Experience," *Journal of American Ethnic History* (Fall, 1984): 9–30; Kathleen Neils Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee 1836–1860: Accommodation and Community in a Frontier Community* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976); Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in New York City, 1845–80* (Urbana, Ill., 1990); and Hartmut Keil and Heinz Ickstadt, "Elements of German Working Class Culture in Chicago, 1880 to 1890" in Keil, ed., *German Workers' Culture in the United States, 1850 to 1920* (Washington, D.C., 1988) pp. 81–108.

5. See, especially, Kathleen Neils Conzen, *Making Their Own America: Assimilation Theory and the German Peasant Pioneer* (German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C. Annual Lecture Series, No. 3, 1990).

6. Much of this story was constructed from the court transcript contained in the Minnesota Historical Society (henceforth, MHS), Stearns County District Court Records, Civil Case File 9552, *Philip H. Kray v. Anton Muggli et. al.*, 1 March 1901. The transcript, especially the testimony of Henry Waite—the long-time dam owner and Yankee merchant from St. Cloud—suggests ongoing conflict over the dam and the flooding it caused. This impression is reaffirmed by a lawsuit filed in 1865 by Theodore Weres and Bernard Bock, two area farmers, against the Maurin brothers, then the dam owners. The suit followed the fire which destroyed the mill and part of the dam, and the farmers asked that the Maurins be enjoined from

rebuilding the structures. The Maurins in their response argued, "that on or about the 18 day of July A.D. 1865 the said mill maintained by these defendants as aforesaid on said dam was a-set on fire, burned down and destroyed by an incendiary or incendiaries as these defendants verily believe;" Civil Case File, 172, *Theodore Weres and Bernard Bock v. Marcus and Peter Maurin*. See also the St. Cloud *Journal-Press*, 24 October 1878, which described another attempt at sabotage, "Some unknown person or persons cut the sluice boards that hold the surplus supply of water at the dam in this place on Tuesday night, letting off the water to such an extent as to make it doubtful if the mill can run all winter."

7. This short description of settlement patterns is taken from a variety of sources, including: local newspapers, plat maps, the two townships' original tract entry books, federal and state manuscript census reports, land deed records, transcribed oral histories (originally conducted by the W.P.A. in the 1930s), as well as family histories compiled by local genealogists. A few local histories, including parish histories, were very useful. See Brice J. Howard, *Sts. Peter and Paul's, Richmond—One Hundred Years* (n.p., 1956), and *Jacobs Prairie—100 Years* (n.p., 1954). A brief history by a charter community member was an invaluable source in reconstituting settlement patterns; G. H. Bruning, "Zur Geschichte von Richmond," Stearns County Heritage Center, Richmond file. Bruning wrote this short history around the turn of the century, and it was later transcribed by Alexander Pallansch in 1939 for the Works Project Administration, Stearns County Museum Project. John Decker and Robert Lommel, archivists at the Stearns County Heritage Center (henceforth, SCHC) in St. Cloud, were of invaluable assistance. For works describing German immigration to the United States, see: Mack Walker, *Germany and the Emigration: 1816–1885* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964); Wolfgang Köllman and Peter Marschalk "German Emigration to the United States," in *Dislocation and Emigration: The Social Background of American Immigration*, ed. Bernard Bailyn, Perspectives in American History, 7 (Cambridge, Mass., 1973) and Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Deutsche Einwanderer im ländlichen Amerika: Problemfelder und Forschungsergebnisse," in *Auswanderer, Wanderarbeiter, Gastarbeiter: Bevölkerung, Arbeitsmarkt und Wanderung in Deutschland seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Klaus Bade (Ostfildern, Germany, 1984); Walter Kamphoefner, *The Westfalians: From Germany to Missouri* (Princeton, N.J. 1987); A.G. Roeber, *Palatines, Liberty and Property: German Lutherans in Colonial British America* (Baltimore, 1993). A more detailed discussion of settlement patterns, as well as a broader discussion of rural-village conflict and the shifting meaning of ethnic identity, is provided in my dissertation: Stephen J. Gross, "Family, Property, Community: Class and Identity among German Americans in Rural Stearns County, Minnesota, 1860–1920" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1995).

8. The population schedules listed two millers living in town: one a thirty-year-old Irishman and the other a twenty-six-year-old German. The latter shared quarters with August Winter, a cooper from Denmark, who also no doubt worked at the mill. United States, Manuscript Census Forms for Wakefield Township, and Census of Industry, 1870. Much of the following discussion is based on United States, Manuscript Census forms for Wakefield and Munson Townships, and Cold Spring and Richmond Villages, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, and 1920; and State of Minnesota, Manuscript Census Forms for Wakefield and Munson Townships, and Cold Spring and Richmond Villages, 1895 and 1905.

9. *Der Nordstern (St. Cloud)*, 28 August 1879.

10. *Journal-Press*, 22 February 1877.

11. United States, Manuscript Census Forms for Wakefield Township, and Census of Industry, 1880.

12. See Howard, *Sts. Peter and Paul's*, pp. 15–43. See also the *St. Cloud Democrat*, 29 June 1865, which reported, “The immense bell for the Catholic church at Richmond arrived at this place on Saturday, and on Monday evening started for its destination, twenty three miles above St. Cloud. It is the largest bell in the state.”

13. United States, Census of Industry for Munson Township. Much of this account was taken from Bruning, “Zur Geschichte,” and the United States, Manuscript Census Forms for Munson and Wakefield Townships.

14. MHS, Stearns County Assessor, Tax Lists for 1900 and 1920.

15. Newspaper stories describing business failures include: *St. Cloud Times*, 7 October 1885, 2 December 1891, 9 December 1891, 23 February 1893, 1 March 1893, 1 January 1896, 19 February 1896, 24 June 1896, 6 January 1897, 3 February 1897, 10 February 1909; *Journal-Press*, 3 December 1891, 9 January 1896, 23 January 1896, 26 March 1896, 7 January 1897; *Der Nordstern*, 19 December 1901, 4 February 1909. John C. Hudson in *Plains Country Towns* (Minneapolis, 1985), pp. 106–112, observes that small town merchants, especially those starting out, were generally short of cash and that the typical small town business in turn-of-the-century North Dakota closed after about five years. He also notes that the smaller the town the more rapid the turnover. Low rates of persistence, however, did not necessarily reflect business failures; rather, the more energetic and successful businessmen were likely to pull up stakes and move to more lucrative locations.

16. *Richmond Standard*, 28 July 1911.

17. *Wahrheits-Freund* (Cincinnati), 20 October 1859.

18. Historians in recent years have waged a long battle over the timing and pace of the transition to rural capitalism. Some of the more important works in this debate include: James T. Lemon, “Early Americans and Their Social Environment,” *Journal of Historical Geography*, 6 (1980): 115–131; James A. Henretta, “Families and Farms: *Mentalité* in Pre-Industrial America,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 35 (1978): 3–32, and “The Transition to Capitalism in America,” ed. James Henretta, Michael Kammen and Stanley Katz, *Transformation of Early American History: Society, Authority and Ideology* (New York, 1991); Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780–1860* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1990); Michael Merrill, “Cash is Good to Eat: Self-Sufficiency and Exchange in the Rural Economy of the United States,” *Radical History Review*, 3 (1977): 42–71; Winifred Barr Rothenberg, *From Market-Places to a Moral Economy: The Transformation of Rural Massachusetts, 1750–1850* (Chicago, 1992); Daniel Vickers, “Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 47 (1990): 3–29. Allan Kulikoff has offered a synthesis of the debate in an effort to locate a compromise position. See his *The Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism* (Charlottesville, Va., 1992).

19. See Gross, “Family, Property, Community,” pp. 187–211, for a detailed account of agricultural development in these two townships. See, in addition, Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman, “Self-Sufficiency and the Marketable Surplus in the Rural North, 1860,” *Agricultural History*, 58 (1984): 296–313; and Raymond C. Battalio and John Kagel, “The Structure of Southern Agriculture: South Carolina, A Case Study,” *Agricultural History*, 44 (1977): 25–37.

20. Jon Gjerde, *From Peasants to Farmers: The Migration from Balestrand, Norway to the Upper Middle West* (New York, 1985), pp. 178–82; Robert C. Ostergren, *A Community Transplanted: The Trans-Atlantic Experience of a Swedish Immigrant Settlement in the Upper Middle West* (Madison, Wisc., 1988), 198–200; Allan G. Bogue, *From Prairie to Corn Belt: Farming on the Illinois and Iowa Frontier in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, 1963), pp. 123–24. See, in addition, D. Aiden McQuillen, *Prevailing Over Time: Ethnic Adjustment on the Kansas Prairies, 1875–1925* (Lincoln, Nebr., 1990), pp. 163–70.



21. County-wide milk production grew from 3,920,526 gallons in 1890 to 8,337,777 gallons in 1910, and the total number of milk cows increased from 16,348 in 1890 to 35,090 twenty years later. The gravitation toward dairying was matched by the decline of wheat growing. Wheat production peaked in 1900 at 3,022,230 bushels. Ten years later county-wide wheat figures had fallen by almost one third: U.S. Census Office, *Tenth Census: Statistics of Agriculture in the United States in 1880* (Washington D.C., 1883), pp. 159, 194; *Eleventh Census: Statistics of Agriculture in the United States in 1890*, (Washington D.C., 1896), pp. 293, 372; *Twelfth Census: Agriculture in the United States in 1900*, (Washington D.C., 1902), p. 284.

22. Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Peasant Pioneers: Generational Succession Among German Farmers in Frontier Minnesota," in *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation: Essays in the Social History of Rural America*, ed. Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude, (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1985), pp. 259–292, and Stephen Gross, "Handing Down the Farm: Values, Strategies and Outcomes in Inheritance Patterns among Rural German Americans," *Journal of Family History*, 21 (1996): 192–217.

23. *Cold Spring Record*, 16 May 1900. For a description of comparable conflicts, see Gary Kulik, "Dams, Fish and Farmers: Defense of Public Rights in Eighteenth-Century Rhode Island," in *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation*, ed. Hahn and Prude, pp. 25–50.

24. *Times*, 22 May 1901, and *St. Cloud Journal-Press*, 23 May 1901.

25. Much of the following is from MHS, *Kray v. Muggli*.

26. According to a parish census conducted in 1892 Philip Kray had "left the Masons and joint [sic] the Church." St. Boniface Parish Census, SCHC, St. Cloud, Minnesota. For a family biography see William Bell Mitchell, *History of Stearns County Minnesota* (Chicago, 1915), p. 921.

27. *Der Nordstern*, 4 July 1901.

28. According to the *Times*, 17 August 1900, "three logs were wrenched from their places, but the structure is not greatly damaged. The glass in the mill windows was all smashed by the concussion." According to another St. Cloud paper, "From all appearances the charge was not properly placed and was too light, for if the same line of action had been carried out as employed in the previous attempt, there would not have been enough dam left to kindle a fire," *Journal-Press*, 23 August 1900.

29. *Record*, 19 September 1900.

30. According to *Der Nordstern*, 22 September 1900, "Es wird allgemein angenommen, dass das Feuer gelegt wurde." The *Journal-Press*, 20 September 1900, reported, "It is being said at Cold Spring that the fire was started by some enemy of the Kray family, who have been specially prominent in the efforts to secure the conviction of the two young men charged with having tried to blow out the dam."

31. See, for instance, Howard, *Sts. Peter and Paul*, pp. 42–43.

32. *Times*, 9 March 1898. One Cold Spring resident, John Weis, asked the district court to restrain the village from contributing to the dam's legal defense. Unfortunately, Weis's house was located in the middle of a platted, but undeveloped street. After the St. Cloud authorities acceded to Weis's request and served papers on Village President Philip Kray, the village ordered John Weis to move his house. Weis promptly dropped the suit. See *Times*, 3 May 1899, and 10 May 1899, and *Journal-Press*, 4 May 1899, and 11 May 1899.

33. Information on school attendance is taken from the personal and real property tax rolls for Munson and Wakefield townships. MHS, Stearns County Assessor Records, Wakefield and Munson Townships, 1900. The tax rolls listed school dis-



strict numbers. Parish membership was derived from the 1892 "St. Boniface Parish Census," SCHC, St. Cloud, Minnesota. See also Ingolf Vogeler, "The Roman Catholic Culture Region of Central Minnesota," *Pioneer America*, 8 (1976): 71–83. Vogeler includes a map depicting the boundaries of St. Boniface parish in Cold Spring. In the 1970s farmers living in the western sections of Wakefield still went to church in Richmond.

34. The story of all the legal maneuvering is confusing and includes a number of parties, who are only marginally involved in the case's outcome. The legal proceedings, although not always relevant to this discussion, did, nevertheless, inform the behavior of the participants outside of court. In this instance, a woman from outside the area had a long standing claim on the dam and mill and asked for a court order, restraining the farmers from removing the dam. Judge D.B. Searle of St. Cloud denied her request but left another temporary injunction intact. The Richmond people misunderstood the judge's ruling; thinking that all injunctions had been removed, they loaded their buggies and wagons with tools and traveled to Cold Spring to do justice. *Times*, 20 April 1898, and 27 April 1898.

35. *Der Nordstern*, 4 July 1901, and *Standard*, 28 April 1916.

36. For a biography of Maurin, see Mitchell, *History of Stearns County*, pp. 971–72. Maurin was Slovenian-born but spoke German. Of solid middle-class origins, he claimed a gymnasium education. He immigrated in around 1855 when he was only nineteen and moved to Chicago, where he found employment as a fur trader and then traveled throughout the Upper Midwest. He married in 1863, moved to Cold Spring and opened a store with his brother Peter. At various times the two brothers operated branch stores at St. Joseph, Little Falls and Elizabeth. In 1872 Peter Maurin left Cold Spring and took charge of the Elizabeth store.

37. *Times*, 15 February 1899. According to this report the combined taxes of the firm, Maurin Brothers, and those of Marcus Maurin were \$5.49 less than one half the village's total assessment.

38. District Court, Civil Case File 172, *Weres and Bock v. Marcus and Peter Maurin*. Christ Weres, Theodore's son, was one of the farmers involved in the later suit, and Bernard Bock's son, Michael, although not a litigant in the later action, did testify for the farmers. Interestingly, the Maurins advanced an argument which was to be rehashed 35 years later: the farmer's meadow land was really nothing but "floating bog" and that the dam was standing before Bock and Weres purchased their land. See also the *St. Cloud Democrat*, 27 July 1865.

39. The petitioners for the removal of the dam were, as follows: Christian Weres, Andrew Schroeder, John Zumwalde, Andrew Zumwalde, Henry Schlangen, F.X. Zumwalde, John Suerken, Henry Suerken, B.H. Geers, Gerhard Braegelmann, John Gertken, Heinrich Osendorf, Mathias Esplan, Jacob Beumel, John Schneider, Gerhard Schleper, John Schlangen, H. Flint, Anton Abeln, Joseph Tschumperlin, Martin Knaus and Kasper Schaefer.

40. MHS, *Kray v. Muggli*, 109.

41. See Sally Foreman Griffith, *Home Town News: William Allen White and the Emporia Gazette* (Baltimore, 1989), for a discussion of small town boosterism at the turn of the century. Boosterism, as an exemplar of American exceptionalism, was a major theme of Daniel Boorstin's, *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York, 1965). For an earlier treatment, see Lewis Atherton, *Main Street on the Middle Border* (Bloomington, Ind., 1954). My observations correspond in part with those of Thorstein Veblen, whose insightful commentary on the small-town business class was surely informed by his rural Minnesota boyhood. While in general agreement with Veblen in regard to the economic weakness of small-town merchants and their dependence on urban wholesalers and distributors, I cannot view

farmers as a “kept class,” at least in the sense that they enjoyed little power in dealing with neighborhood merchants. Viewed another way, merchants were not simply “toll-gate keepers for the distribution of goods and collection of customs for the large absentee owners of the business.” In this setting it makes more sense to emphasize the role played by merchants as both economic and cultural brokers and the amount of local resistance directed at a class which displayed such ambiguous loyalty. Thorstein Veblen, *Absentee Ownership and Business Enterprise in Recent Times: The Case of America* (1923; reprint, in Wesley C. Mitchell, ed., *What Veblen Taught: Selected Writings of Thorstein Veblen* (New York, 1964), pp. 368–422. See, in addition, Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780–1860* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1990), pp. 156–91. Both Jane Marie Pederson and Royden Loewen discuss immigrant merchant-boosterism among, respectively, Norwegians in Wisconsin and Mennonites in Manitoba, and both maintain that boosterism and entrepreneurship were a source of tension. See Jane Marie Pederson *Between Memory and Reality: Family and Community in Rural Wisconsin, 1870–1970* (Madison, 1992); and Royden K. Loewen *Family, Church and Market: A Mennonite Community in the Old and the New Worlds, 1850–1930* (Urbana, Ill., 1993).

42. *Standard*, 24 May 1912.

43. *Standard*, 26 February 1915, and 8 December 1916. E.P. Thompson, in *Customs in Common* (New York, 1993), offers an especially expansive discussion of “moral economy.”

44. *Standard*, 1 January 1915.

45. *Standard*, 9 February 1912.

46. *Times*, 8 April 1896; *Journal-Press*, 22 April 1897; and *Der Nordstern*, 14 January 1903.

47. This discussion is based on Philip Gleason’s *The Conservative Reformers: German-American Catholics and the Social Order* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1968). Robert H. Wiebe’s, *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* (New York, 1967), is still the best discussion of the homogenizing impulse behind progressive reform.

48. Stelzle addressed a similar gathering in St. Cloud five years earlier and lectured on “The Duties of the Catholic Man in Private Life,” *Times*, 30 October 1907.

49. *Standard*, 24 May 1912, and 31 May 1912; *Der Nordstern*, 3 June 1909.

50. *Der Nordstern*, 12 January 1912, and 19 January 1912.

51. Conzen, *Making their own America*, p. 25.

52. *Times*, 26 May 1897.

53. *Times*, 27 January 1892. See also, 1 November 1893, the following item from Cold Spring: “Last week was a great week for fights here. Several toughs from up country came to the village, and tried to ‘run the town out.’ In less time than it takes to tell it, some one ‘walked on their collars’ and peace rained [*sic*] for a few hours. In the evening two town lads proceeded to do themselves ‘up.’ The police lowered their ardor and ‘everything was lovely’ again.”

54. MHS, *Kray v. Muggli*, pp. 208–09.

55. David Sabean, *Property, Production, and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700–1870* (New York, 1990), p. 17.

56. *Ibid.*

57. Jane Schneider, “Spirits and the Spirit of Capitalism,” in *Religious Orthodoxy and Popular Faith in European Society*, ed. Ellen Badone (Princeton, N.J., 1990), 24–53.

58. See Gross, “Handing Down the Farm,” pp. 198–203.

59. I expand upon these observations and those of the next paragraph in Gross,

"Family, Property, Community;" see, in addition, Conzen, "German Americans and Ethnic Political Culture."

60. E.P. Thompson argues that crowd behavior in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe almost always evidenced a "legitimising notion" based on "traditional rights and customs." In this case, the Cold Spring businessmen attempted to seize and control the legitimising notion. The farmers had their own version of the concept, based on the ownership of property, and they pursued collective action by first buying the dam, then by fighting their battle in court and finally, at least for some, by employing extralegal methods. E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century" in *Customs in Common*, p. 188.

61. *Der Nordstern*, 23 August 1906.

62. *Der Nordstern*, 22 May 1902, 7 May 1903, and 14 May 1903.

63. April Schultz, *Ethnicity on Parade*, p. 18.

64. Conzen, et. al., "The Invention of Ethnicity," p. 5.

65. The annual crop and labor survey required by the Commission has survived for Wakefield, and in 1918 the average farmer took almost two acres of wheat out of production. Looked at another way, despite the government's pleading to grow wheat and despite high prices, only 23.5 percent of the township's farmers increased their wheat acreage from the previous year. MHS, Commission of Public Safety, Farm Crop and Labor Reports for Wakefield Township. Christopher C. Gibbs, *The Great Silent Majority: Missouri's Resistance to World War I* (Columbia, Mo., 1988), pp. 109–34, reports wide-spread rural opposition to government war policies in that state. Most farmers responded with caution to high prices, increasing their wheat production but retaining corn as their primary crop.

66. Useful studies of war-time activities in Minnesota include: Carl H. Chrislock, *Watchdog of Loyalty: The Minnesota Commission of Public Safety During World War I* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1991); and Robert L. Morlan, *Political Prairie Fire: The Nonpartisan League, 1915–1922* (Minneapolis, 1955). An important early work is Franklin F. Holbrook and Livia Appel, *Minnesota in the War with Germany*, 2 vols. (St. Paul, Minn., 1928 and 1932). See also Carol E. Jenson, "Loyalty as a Political Weapon: The 1918 Campaign in Minnesota," *Minnesota History*, 43 (Summer 1972): 42–57; and LaVern J. Rippley, "Conflict in the Classroom: Anti-Germanism in Minnesota Schools, 1917–19," *Minnesota History*, 47 (Spring 1981): 170–83. Sister John Christine Wolkerstorfer in, "Nativism in Minnesota in World War I: A Comparative Study of Brown, Ramsey, and Stearns Counties, 1914–1918," (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1973), pays special attention to the role of German-American newspaper editors. For a work more national in scope, see, Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German Americans and World War I* (DeKalb, Ill., 1974).

67. *Journal-Press*, 9 January 1922, 16 January 1922; *Der Nordstern*, 12 January 1922; *Times*, 9 January 1922, 10 January 1922. The dam complex had recently been taken over by the Rockville Granite Company and remodeled to work stone. Granite had been quarried in the region since the late 1860s and in Rockville Township, just to the east of Wakefield, since at least 1906. But the battle over the dam had continued unabated over the course of the first two decades of the century. The farmers did succeed in purchasing the complex in 1904; they operated the mill for a while but apparently did not see fit to maintain it. They sold out in 1907 to a Yankee from the county seat, but the night after the sale was completed someone again planted dynamite and treated the citizens of Cold Spring to another explosion. On this occasion the dam was severely injured, and the original wooden structure was replaced by concrete. Two years later Philip Kray, who had fought to defend the structure at the turn of the century, finally bought a controlling interest in the

complex. He operated the mill until 1916, when a fire destroyed the buildings, and a year later he declared bankruptcy. In the months before the fire and during the spring runoff local farmers complained that the milling company was using flash boards atop the dam and that unusually high water was the result. They employed a civil engineer who recommended the construction of a county ditch to lower the water level. In September, 1916 over 100 residents living upriver from the dam signed a petition asking for the construction of a ditch, and at the end of the month the county board met and ordered a survey of the drainage area. Seven months later the survey was completed, and in June, 1917 the county board of commissioners ordered the removal of the dam. Members of the Cold Spring business community immediately appealed the decision, and a judge ordered an injunction preventing the removal of the dam or work on the ditch. The case finally went to court the following spring, and a district court judge reversed the decision of the county commissioners. The state of Minnesota, more specifically the Fish and Game Commission, joined forces with Cold Spring to combat the county board. The case was still pending before the supreme court in January, 1921 when someone again decided to put an end to all the talking.