



# “The Very Pictures of Anarchy”

## *Women in the Oshkosh Woodworkers’ Strike of 1898*

**By Virginia Glenn Crane**

**I**N 1898, a strike by woodworkers in Oshkosh generated some of the most dramatic moments in the history of women in Wisconsin. Immigrant working-class women participated in the strike as wage workers and help-meets, as street fighters and political operatives. The outcome failed to improve wages and working conditions materially, or to change the character of Oshkosh in any significant way, but the events of the summer of 1898 comprise a compelling story of traditionally marginalized women who, for a fleeting moment, spoke truth to power and challenged the hierarchies and conventions of their culture.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century, Oshkosh was a lumbering center with a population of about 28,000. It had long been known as the “Sawdust City” and was dominated economically by seven large companies that manufactured doors, blinds, window sashes, and custom millwork. The Paine Lumber Company, the largest of these, and the other six—Radford, Morgan, McMillen, Williamson-Libbey, Foster-Hafner, and Gould—employed about 2,000 woodworkers in their factories and yards.

*Angry workers rioting at the gates of a millowner’s residence, c. 1898: an etching by the German artist Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945).*

Carl Zigrosser, *Prints and Drawings of Käthe Kollwitz*  
(New York: Dover Publications, 1951)





Courtesy Oshkosh Public Museum: all rights reserved

*Veneer mill workers—three of them female—in an Oshkosh mill, 1903.*

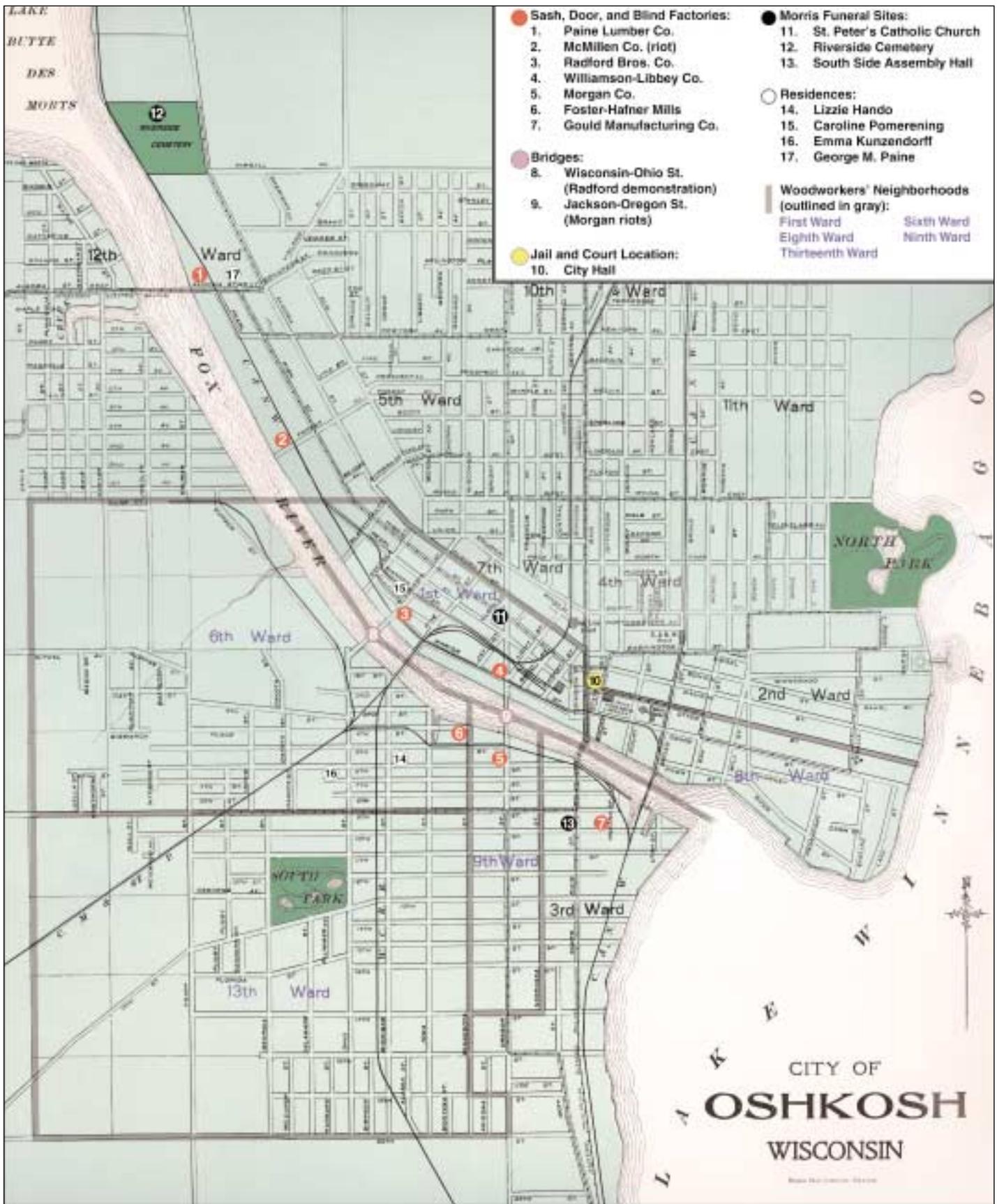
The woodworkers, like other industrial laborers in the city, were mostly German, Irish, Polish, or Danish immigrants. They were separated from their employers and from each other by ethnicity, class, and culture. Their homes were scattered all over town but were concentrated south of the Fox River, a dividing line that split the city into north and south sides. In that working-class community of modest frame houses on unpaved streets, the residents spoke a common language but were divided into Prussian Lutheran and Bohemian Catholic neighborhoods and parishes. The millowners—English-speaking Presbyterians and Methodists—lived a world away, north of the river, in finely crafted Victorian houses set along paved, elm-shaded boulevards.<sup>2</sup>

In 1898, George Milton Paine of the Paine Lumber Company was the corporate monarch of Oshkosh. He dominated the city's millwork industry and employed over 750 woodworkers—about a third of the total. He was sixty-five years

*The international labor press referred to Oshkosh as the “slave wage capital of the world.”*

old, distinguished-looking, dignified, and austere. Like many an industrialist of the Gilded Age, Paine was a tight-fisted conservative who favored trusts and monopoly capitalism, feared anarchists and socialists, hated labor unions, and regarded his employees as objects of contempt.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the 1890s, he and other local lumber company executives imported cheap foreign labor, repeatedly cut wages, and hired women and children for half the pay that men received. Wages in the local millwork industry were so low—about ninety cents for a ten-hour day—that the international labor press referred to Oshkosh as the “slave wage capital of the world.” Advanced technology made possible machine operations that reduced the need for skilled laborers, and by 1898 about a fourth of the experienced woodworkers in town had been displaced by women and children. At the Paine mill, one or two fathers had been discharged from their jobs and replaced by their daughters.

Local woodworkers, hampered by the disproportionate



power of labor and capital as well as their own cultural divisions and the conservatism of their churches, were slow to organize unions. Eventually, however, they established four locals, united under a Woodworkers' Council, and affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. When millowners ignored these novice labor organizations' efforts to increase wages, the rank and file concluded that a strike was the only way to improve their lot. They therefore turned for help to Thomas Kidd, general secretary of the AFL's International Machine Woodworkers' Union.<sup>4</sup>

Kidd was a thirty-eight-year-old Scottish-born union organizer, headquartered in Chicago. There he dabbled in Populist politics with Clarence Darrow, the progressive labor lawyer, and came to admire Eugene Debs, the socialist and leader of the 1894 Pullman strike. Kidd himself never became a socialist, perhaps because he was affiliated with the AFL, a comparatively conservative federation of skilled craftsmen. An affable, honest, and practical man, Kidd passionately articulated workers' grievances, but he considered strikes both disruptive and unproductive. In the mid-1890s he repeatedly responded to invitations to Oshkosh to confer with leaders of the emerging union movement. When he investigated wage levels at the mills and observed sixteen-year-old girls at Paine operating lath rip-saws and lifting heavy pine and hardwood doors for veneering, glazing, and molding, he publicly declared that no other city in the nation was as "disgraced" as Oshkosh by "pauper wages" and by the number of women and children working like "serfs" in the factories. He succeeded in unionizing a majority of the local woodworkers, but he failed in his effort to negotiate with George Paine and the other millwork manufacturers. Reluctantly, in the spring of 1898, he agreed with the workers that a strike was necessary.<sup>5</sup>

Prior to calling for a walkout, the Woodworkers' Council sent a letter to the millowners demanding a pay raise, recognition of the union, and the abolition of female factory labor. The demand that women be removed from the mills was, no doubt, a local reflection of the AFL's national position that

female workers were competitors for jobs—and therefore a threat to male wage levels—and that men were entitled to a family wage adequate for the support of wives and children. Nineteenth-century society was patriarchal, and the notion that a woman's place was in the home cut across class, ethnic, and religious lines. The woodworkers of Oshkosh were too far

removed from the ideological radicalism that existed elsewhere in the country to articulate a class-based attack on capitalist greed and a forthright assertion of the economic self-interest of all working people.

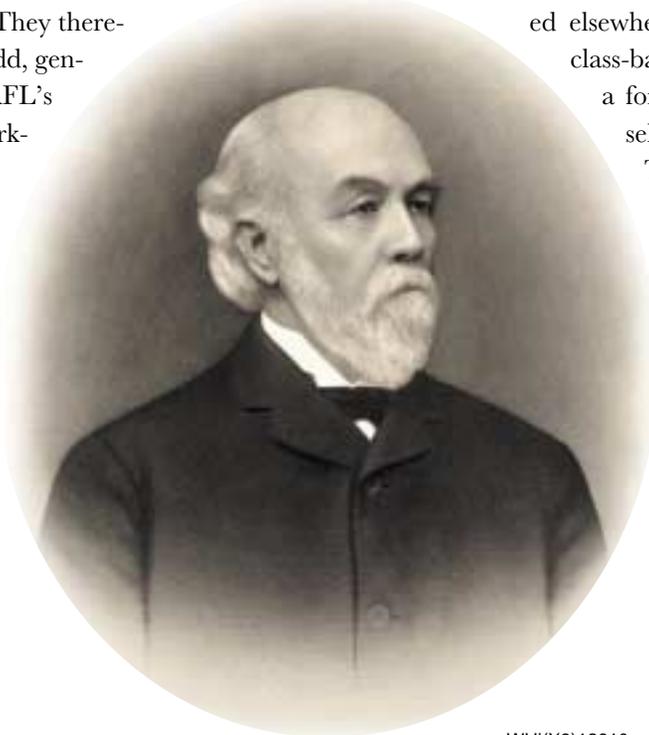
They were also too remote from emerging feminist ideas to demand equal pay for equal work. Their conviction that male responsibility and prerogatives were being eroded led them to focus exclusively against women and, in their demands, to raise no objections to child labor or to new immigrant workers whose meager wages also posed a threat to their livelihoods.<sup>6</sup>

Upon receiving the letter from the Woodworkers' Council, George Paine "assigned it to the wastebasket." He persuaded his fellow industrialists to do the

same and to deal as one with the unexpected audacity of their laborers. When the union received no response from the manufacturers, the members voted to strike. On Monday morning, May 16, 1898, woodworkers at the seven millwork factories walked off the job.

The strike lasted fourteen weeks. During the first month, the owners kept their mills operating with skeleton crews. They recruited replacement workers and hired Pinkerton detectives as spies and saboteurs. Mayor Allison Baptist Ideson—himself a Paine Company executive—hired special police to protect workers who stayed on the job. The union established picket lines, and Thomas Kidd moved to Oshkosh to lead the strike.<sup>7</sup>

During the long conflict, female woodworkers were almost invisible. On those rare occasions when they appeared in the record at all, they were found on both sides of the line, either as strikers or strikebreakers. Resentment against the union, coupled with sheer economic necessity, no doubt impelled many women to continue working. Whatever the individual



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*George M. Paine, chief among the millowners of Oshkosh.*

motivation, women were prominently listed in the press as strikebreakers in the first days of the walkout. At McMillen, females made up half the diminished work crew of thirty; at Paine, forty-three nonunion employees, “including girls,” showed up for work. In contrast with these workers who sided with the company, other female factory operatives walked out with the men. When the union made a final count of strikers after the first week, among the 1,600 listed were fifty “girls.”<sup>8</sup>

But female woodworkers were by no means the only women involved in the struggle. Indeed the success of the labor action depended, in large part, on the support of union members’ wives and mothers. Local newspapers tended to depict the striker’s wife as a desperate, hungry, stoic drudge, but Thomas Kidd preferred to idealize her as a loyal helpmeet and to enlist her in the cause of labor. He invited the female members of strikers’ families to a mass union meeting on the first Sunday of the strike and pleaded with the women to stand by their men. “Ladies” became a regular fixture at all the union’s subsequent public gatherings, and supportive women became the keys to family survival during the long summer months without income.<sup>9</sup>

While most working-class women remained in the domestic sphere, an assertive minority chose instead to play an active public role, and it was those few who gave the Oshkosh woodworkers’ strike its most dramatic and historic moments. In late June, as the strike entered its sixth week, three of the smaller mills had been shut down, but the Radford, Morgan, McMillen, and Paine mills were still operating with small crews of strikebreakers—“scabs,” in union parlance. Friction between scabs and strikers intensified; clubs, fisticuffs, guns, and physical assaults became an increasingly common feature of their encounters. The police began to arrest union men for the slightest provocation. Bail, court costs, and lawyers’ fees depleted the union strike fund. Thomas Kidd himself came under increasing surveillance as manufacturers sought to build a “conspiracy” case against him that would break the union and the strike. Through all this, women who had been attending union meetings had come to believe that scabs undercut labor solidarity and betrayed working-class interests. A small cadre of activists among them decided that, while union men were under fire, women could fill the breach and remove the strikebreakers from the workplace.

### **A Plan of Action**

Their strategy was simple and direct. A single woman pos-

sessed little power, but a mob of women, accompanied by union men and boys, could congregate en masse at the gates of each of the open mills in turn and harass the scabs as they entered the yards in the morning and left in the afternoon. Unrestrained by middle-class prescriptions about female propriety, bold working-class women could freely take to the streets and use a woman’s traditional weapon: verbal aggression. Scabs might hesitate to use violence against women, and the police would surely not arrest and jail the mothers of children. Once the scabs were gone, the scant remaining work crews might be pressured into staying home. The mills would then close, and the strike would be settled. When working-class women began thus to think strategically, their decisions suddenly and unexpectedly took on the dimensions of public policy—a far remove from the idea of woman as merely a helpmeet.

One leader of the group that devised this plan was Louise (Lizzie) Wilhemina Neumann Hando, a sixty-four-year-old widow who had migrated to Oshkosh in 1872 from Posen, in Prussia. She came with her husband, Gottlieb, who went to work at the McMillen factory. Lizzie learned to read English, though she never learned to write or speak the language. The Handos took up residence in a Prussian neighborhood in the Sixth Ward and joined a local evangelical Lutheran church. Lizzie gave birth to nine children, five of whom survived to maturity. When the strike began in 1898, she was living with two of her unmarried offspring: her only daughter Etta (Edna or Ethel), an educated, well-spoken eighteen-year-old, and her son Fred, a striking woodworker formerly employed at the Williamson-Libbey factory. The militant women’s corps was organized, perhaps, around the Hando kitchen table, and Etta Hando was a close associate of her mother’s in planning policy and strategy for the group.<sup>10</sup>

Caroline Lange Pomerening, a prominent participant with the Handos in the women’s organization, was a fifty-one-year-old, Prussian-born, bilingual immigrant who had moved to Wisconsin in the 1870s. She married Herman Pomerening, a woodworker, and they had one child, daughter Minnie. The family originally lived in a Prussian neighborhood in the Sixth Ward and belonged to the same Lutheran church the Handos attended, but when Herman took a job at the Radford mill north of the river, they moved from the south side and bought a house closer to his work. In 1898 Caroline was a housewife; her husband was a striking woodworker; her daughter, a domestic servant.<sup>11</sup>

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Emma Kunzendorff, another leader of the women's group, was the daughter of a French father and Swiss mother who had migrated from France in 1870. Emma learned to read, write, and speak English fluently and in 1881 married Henry Kunzendorff, a Russian-German carpenter. After fourteen years of marriage, she gave birth to her only child, a son. When the strike began, Emma was thirty-eight, her son was a toddler, and Henry, who worked at the Gould factory, was president of the German Machine Woodworkers' Union #57, which held its meetings at a tavern on the south side. The family lived nearby in a rented house in the Sixth Ward.<sup>12</sup>

Women such as these, and the recruits who followed them into the streets, seemed the least likely group in Oshkosh to emerge as a force in shaping the history of a city. The heavily German working-class Sixth Ward on the south side was the core community from which the militant women emerged, but their ranks included residents of both the north and south sides, Prussian Lutherans and Bohemian Catholics, and relatives of strikers at every one of the seven factories. Several, like Lizzie Hando, had little education and could speak no English. They were not, in the terminology of the time, "gainfully employed," though of course, like most women, they performed unpaid domestic labor at home. They were not radical ideologues but conservative mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters who acted in support of their striking menfolk. Informal socializing in neighborhoods, churches, and at union meetings no doubt helped forge their solidarity and formed the basis for their collective identity and labor militancy. The conventional wisdom of their time was of course that the "delicacy" and small brains of females ill suited them for the rough-and-tumble of public affairs. Women were therefore denied the right to vote, to serve on juries, or to participate in politics.

Despite such misogyny and official powerlessness, Hando, Pomerening, Kunzendorff and others in their ranks had leadership qualities, political and military capabilities, and above all courage. In late June, they developed a plan of action. They would conduct mass demonstrations against strikebreakers at each mill in turn—Radford on Wednesday afternoon, June 22; Morgan on Thursday morning, June 23; McMillen on the afternoon of June 23; and Paine on Friday morning, June 24.

The first target, the Radford Company, was located at the north approach to the Wisconsin–Ohio Street bridge. Many



Courtesy Oshkosh Public Museum: all rights reserved

*Veneer mill workers, probably at the Paine mill, c. 1900.*

of the strikebreakers who worked there lived on the south side and had to walk home to or through the Sixth Ward. When the mill whistle blew at six o'clock on the afternoon of June 22, signaling the end of the workday, a throng of south-side men, women, and children—with women making up about half the gathering—poured out of their houses. Within five minutes, they assembled at the south approach to the bridge. When the scabs started across the bridge, angry women in the crowd greeted them with a din of hisses and hoots and a volley of rotten eggs. Police soon arrived to escort the strikebreakers to safety but were confounded by the spectacle of "ladies" behaving in unusual ways. The officers used no force and were quickly swept aside by the multitude. Only when all the frightened workers had made their way home through the hail of eggs and epithets did the crowd disperse.<sup>13</sup>

The following morning, the demonstrators reappeared—this time at the Morgan mill south of the river at the Jackson–Oregon Street bridge, a short walk from the Sixth Ward. Well before six o'clock, a mass of south siders, "following a preconcerted plan of action," assembled near the mill. When strikebreaking workers came into sight, the street in front of the entrance and at the south ramp to the bridge quickly filled curb to curb, and women demonstrators "took complete control of the thoroughfare." Several of them carried handkerchiefs filled with eggs described by one observer as "back



Courtesy Oshkosh Daily Northwestern

*In this cartoon from the Oshkosh Daily Northwestern of New Year's Day, 1899, angry workers (including women) pelt a millowner with eggs, sticks, and stones.*

numbers . . . in various stages of incubation.” Others had pouches of sand tied in front of their aprons or paper sacks filled with salt or pepper to throw into the eyes of the opposition. A few, armed with clubs and urged on by the crowd, “swung up and down the street,” halting pedestrians and chasing away any man dressed in laborers’ clothes who was not recognized as a union member. During lulls in the action, knots of women stood or sat at the curb talking animatedly in German and “broken English” about the strike and what they would do to the next scab who appeared on the scene. At the first sight of this mass of protesters, most strikebreakers who lived on the south side stopped short of the mill. Those from the north side (along with Morgan foremen, managers, and proprietors) halted or turned back at the bridge. The police tried and failed to disperse the crowd, and only when it was announced that both Morgan and Radford would close as a result of what the local papers labeled “the riots” did the demonstrators melt away. McMillen and Paine were still operating, however, and word passed along the street that McMillen would be the next target at closing time.<sup>14</sup>

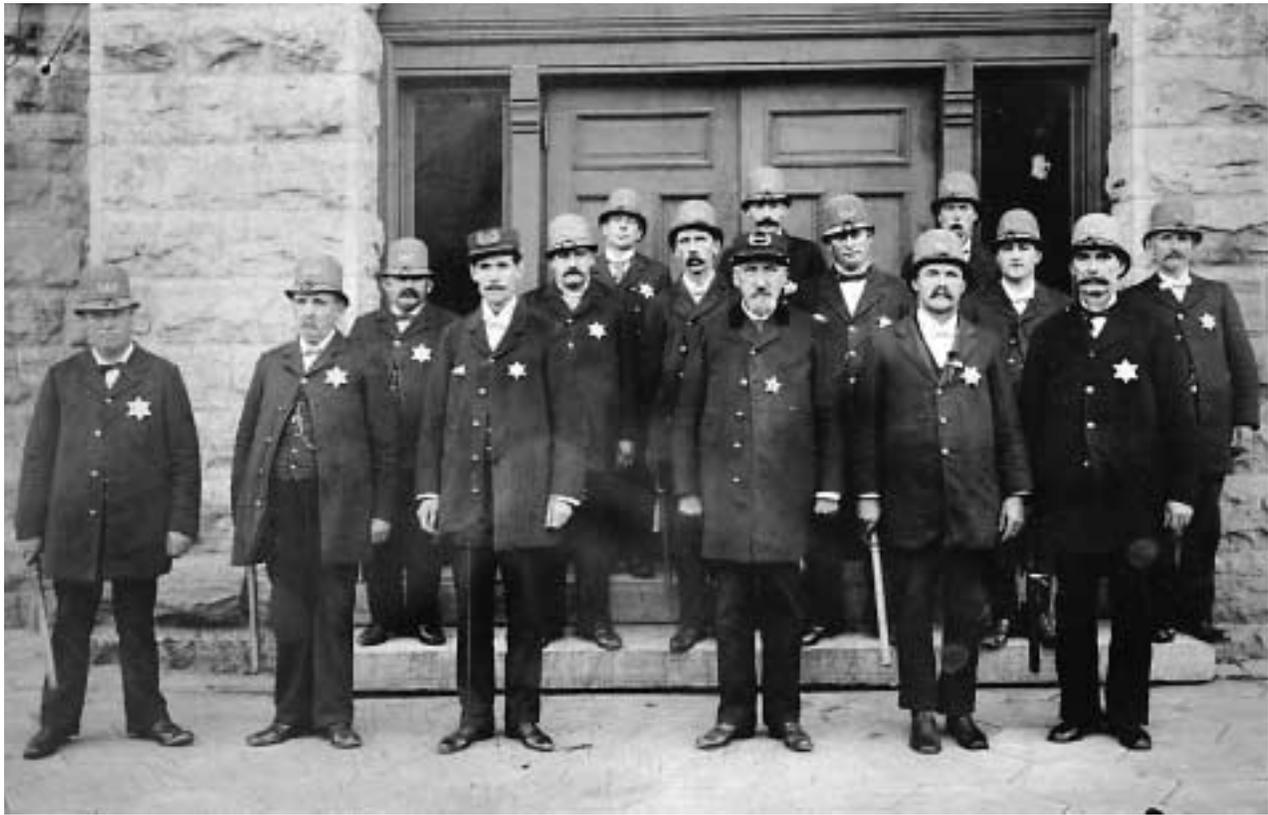
City officials heard about the demonstration planned for

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the afternoon and, at midday on June 23, an agitated Mayor Ideson proclaimed: “Oshkosh is in the hands of a mob.” Sheriff Florian Lampert deputized strikebreakers and volunteers, armed them with tin stars and billy clubs, and dispatched them to the targeted mill. All through the afternoon, crowds of reporters and curious spectators also gathered at the McMillen gates in anticipation of the excitement to come.

Shortly before five o’clock, about a thousand demonstrators arrived at McMillen’s and formed a solid mass outside the fence that surrounded the plant. A few men and teenaged boys were in the assemblage, but women were in the majority. The whole group seemed to be led by a half-dozen women, especially one who had been conspicuous at the Morgan mill that morning. Without doubt, this was Lizzie Hando. Accompanied by her son Fred and daughter Etta, and her friends Caroline Pomerening and Emma Kunzendorff, Hando had her troops under “tight control.” Witnesses later described them as “deliberate & cool as if they were going to a picnic.”

When the mill whistle blew, marking the end of the workday, McMillen strikebreakers began emerging from the factory. At the sight of these hated scabs, the crowd began to



Courtesy Oshkosh Public Museum: all rights reserved

*There was nothing comical about the Oshkosh police force (1899).  
Chief Rudolph J. Weisbrod is the bearded man at the center of the  
first row.*

chant. Unnerved, the workers promptly retreated into the mill. They soon regrouped, however, and a few bold ones reemerged, armed with planks and stones. They were led by mill engineer Edward Casey, a husky sixty-seven-year-old Canadian of Irish heritage. Casey reeled out the company fire hose, opened hydrants, and directed a powerful torrent of cold water through the fence. The soaked demonstrators, in a fury, wrenched the factory gate from its fastenings and smashed it to the ground, then swarmed through the breach into the millyard. There was a short, confused clash. The scabs were quickly overwhelmed, and most of them fled back into the mill. Casey dropped his hose but picked up a heavy plank and stood his ground. Jimmie Morris, a sixteen-year-old striker and Paine Company painter who was in the van of the surging crowd, turned his head and shouted: "Look at them. The women are fighting harder than the men." At that moment, Casey struck Morris on the head with his club. The boy fell to the ground. The tumult stopped and Casey bolted into the mill. As friends bore the unconscious youth away, the demonstrators instantly became "a different people." A "deep, terrible growl reverberated in the air" and a chilling chant went up: "Engineer! Engineer!" "Bring out Casey." "Arrest Casey." "He has killed the boy."

Police and deputies, who had previously tried and failed to disperse the crowd, were now reinforced by a new contingent of sheriff's deputies. Trouble broke out afresh, however, when one of the deputies was recognized as a strikebreaker at Paine. Lizzie Hando and others promptly accosted him. The deputy hit Mrs. Hando on the head with his billy club. She was removed to the sidelines but was replaced by other women warriors who soon put to flight the offending scab and the sheriff's entire force.

Regular police officers on the scene were aware that the women who now controlled the yard would not disperse until Edward Casey was removed from the mill. Accordingly, they negotiated an agreement whereby the crowd would keep still while a police squad entered the factory, arrested the engineer for assault, and escorted him safely to jail. All went well until Casey, pale with fright, emerged through the doors surrounded by a flying wedge of officers. As the cordon moved forward, a roar went up from the crowd and a shower of missiles rained down on the police and their prisoner, who were dripping with eggs when they reached the patrol wagon and galloped away. After Casey's removal, the angry women began clamoring for the strikebreakers still trapped in the mill. A committee of striking union men rescued them by fol-

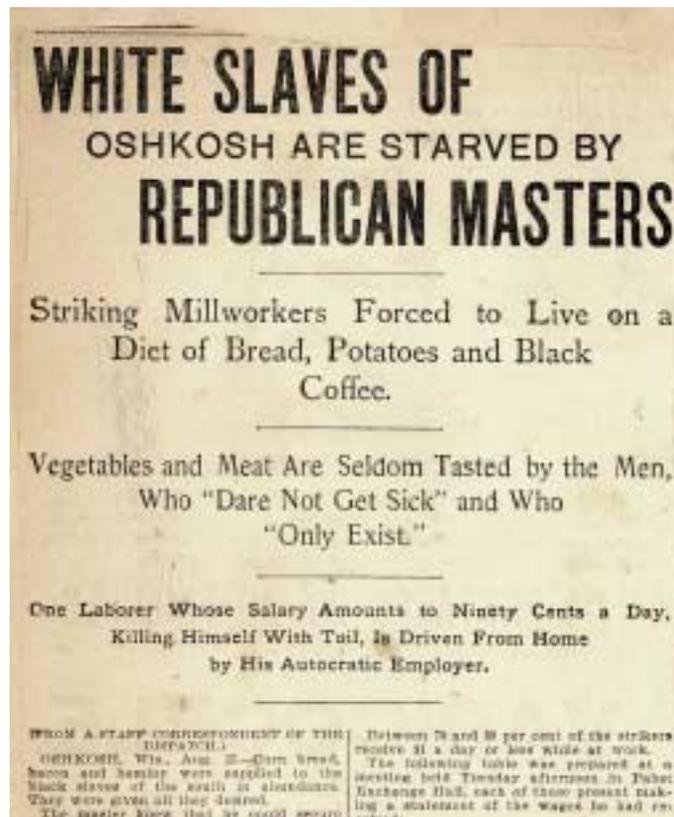
lowing the police tactic of negotiating an agreement with the demonstrators. By its terms, the scabs would be allowed to leave the grounds without harm if they promised not to return to work the following day. The hapless strikebreakers promised to stay at home and, guarded by the strikers, eventually departed, with only harsh words from the women to mar their exit.

Shortly afterward, McMillen's superintendent announced that the company would close its factory. The crowd began to disperse amid whispered reminders that the Paine Lumber Company would be the target for the last of the demonstrations the following morning.

That evening, a play entitled *Darkest America* was on the bill at Oshkosh's Grand Opera House. Inside the theater, the well-fed audience knew nothing about the drama taking place outside—but they were about to learn. Shortly after ten o'clock, Jimmie Morris died of a fractured skull. News of his death spread swiftly. Angry men and women poured out of their houses on the south side and milled about the streets all over town. When police authorities heard that there was talk in the crowds about lynching Edward Casey, they "spirited" him "out of the city in a hack."<sup>15</sup>

### Military Occupation

In assessing blame for the riot, local pundits cited insurgent strikers or Thomas Kidd. One ethnocentric observer explained that the mob was made up of "a type we do not often meet with in this country . . . mostly Polish & Bohemians, dark skinned & dark eyed, fierce, cruel & pitiless." The *Milwaukee Sentinel* echoed this xenophobic theme, blaming "vicious" foreigners and the "perfect viragoes" who led the mob.<sup>16</sup> There was at least one element of truth in this diatribe. Immigrant women had indeed instigated, planned, and led the demonstrations without the benefit of masculine brawn or brain. The local patriarchy was unprepared for the sight of women leading men, much less attacking them and taking



Thos. Kidd scrapbook, SHSW

Clipping from an unidentified newspaper, August 13, 1898, in Thomas Kidd's scrapbook.

charge of public space, but that was what the female protesters had done. Disregarding the nearly universal weight of gender and class bias in their society, and without the confidence-building weapons of socialist or feminist ideology, these wives and mothers and sisters of the strikers demonstrated that organization and militancy were not exclusively a male preserve. Their aims were traditional, but their actions were radical. They asserted themselves as active agents in supporting the family economy, not as breadwinners but as street fighters. They chose anger and action over despair and helplessness.<sup>17</sup>

By Thursday, June 23, 1898, after two days of protests at Radford, Morgan, and McMillen, the initiative in the

woodworkers' strike had passed from the control of the manufacturers and the woodworkers' union to the women's action group. It was a moment fraught with irony. George Paine closed his factory to prevent the demonstration planned for Friday morning. Asked by a reporter why he could not "control" the dissident women, Thomas Kidd responded that he could do nothing with women who were "making the trouble" since they were not union members subject to union discipline. City officials proclaimed that "nothing short of military rule would have any effect on the excited mobs," and they asked Governor Edward Scofield—himself a former lumberman—to send in the national guard.<sup>18</sup> The last time Wisconsin state troops had been dispatched to protect manufacturers in a labor dispute was in 1886 at Bay View near Milwaukee. On that occasion, guardsmen had fired into a crowd of striking ironworkers and killed five. Despite that bloody episode, the governor agreed to the request, and the morning after the McMillen riot—Friday, June 24—Oshkosh was under military occupation. Infantry, cavalry, and artillery units armed with rifles and Gatling guns took up positions at the Paine Company gates and at the other mills and prepared for the next confrontation.

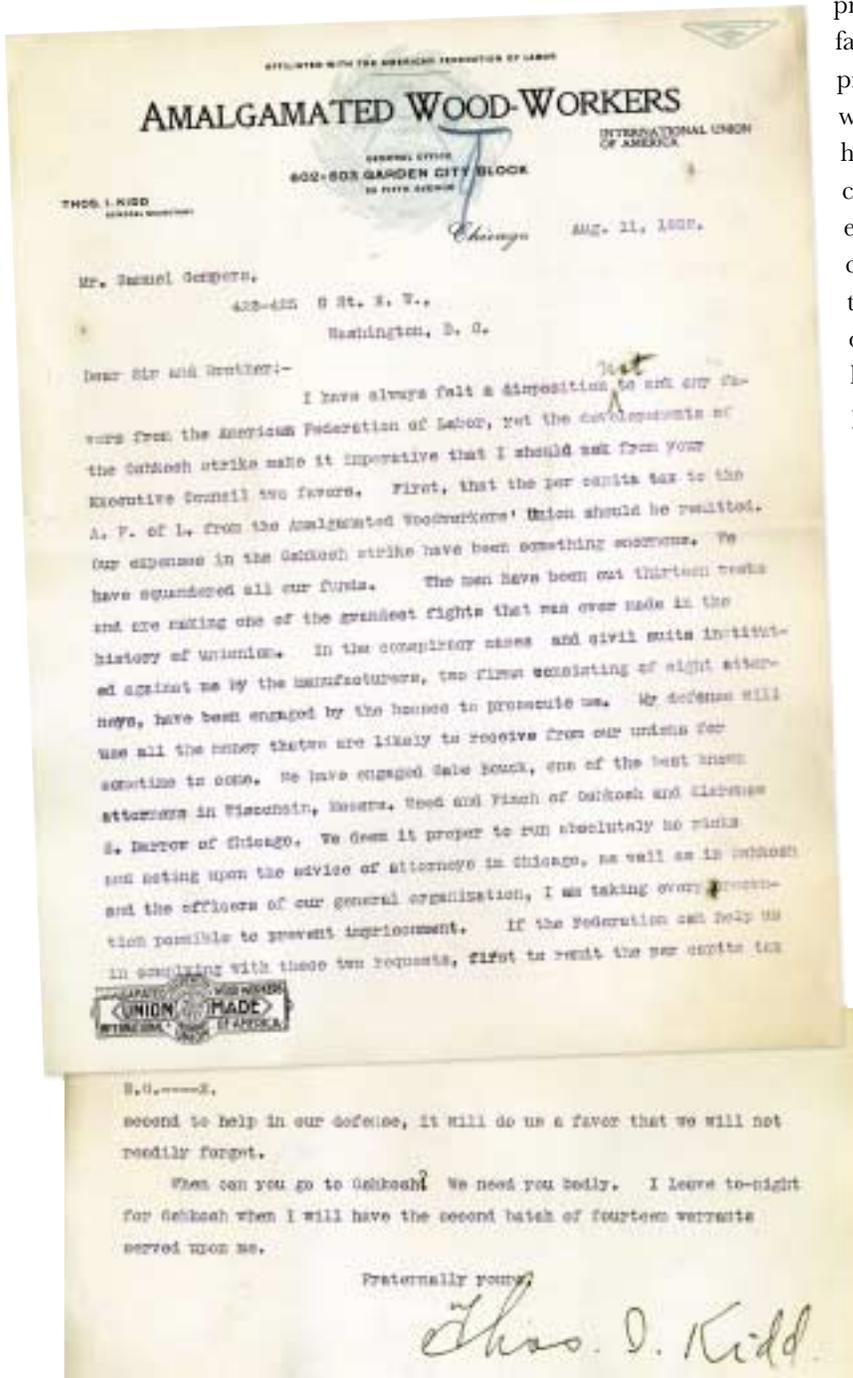
Emma Kunzendorff was up early that morning, mobilizing

the south side women's corps for the planned demonstration at Paine. She was unaware that George Paine had closed his mill or that armed troops were at the gates. Thomas Kidd also knew nothing about those developments and had focused his attention that morning on preventing another protest that would damage the union's image with the public. He hurried over to the rendezvous in company with William Dichmann, a local businessman who had stood by the union, and the two men begged the women not to march. Kunzendorff and the others had great respect for Dichmann, listened to his pleas, and abandoned the scab attack scheduled for that day.

City editors at the *Times* and the *Northwestern* gloated in their Friday editions that while the tin stars and billy clubs of "pleading police" and "timid" deputy sheriffs had had no effect on the mobs at Radford, Morgan, and McMillen, the "bristling bayonets" of the military had frightened the rioters away from Paine. They also printed a rumor that Jimmie Morris had been killed not by a McMillen company man, but accidentally, by a demonstrator. In response to these hostile press accounts, Emma Kunzendorff wrote a letter to the editor of the *Enterprise* on behalf of those men and women who had been most active in the strike. In it, she refuted the "falsehoods" in the press and scoffed that an "honorable" paper would state facts or keep still. William Dichmann, not the troops, had prevented the demonstration at Paine. She had witnessed with her own eyes the assault on Jimmie Morris. The police had not pleaded with the demonstrators, and the cowardly, club-wielding deputies had not been timid in dealing with elderly women armed with overripe eggs. As for the masculinity of the scabs: "Let those that cannot be man enough to stay out, go to work," and "the people" would take care of them in due time. The soldiers could stay in town as long as they liked. The strikers and their families were patient and would simply wait them out.<sup>19</sup>

In fact, the guardsmen remained in the city for a week and, while troops protected the factories, the strikers and demonstrators were quiet. Reporters who came from afar to cover the occupation were disappointed that not even a "quarrel with an ill-tempered woman" could be found to write about. In their preoccupation with news of noisy confrontations, the outside journalists failed to report adequately a remarkable event that occurred while the troops were in town. Recognizing that the tragedy of a union comrade who had fallen in a strike required a suitable ceremonial observance, Thomas Kidd and the Woodworkers' Council organized a massive public funeral for Jimmie Morris. On Sunday morning, June 26, the body lay in state in a pine casket at the largest public meeting hall on the south side, with a placard reading: "Here lies the young martyr who died for the union." The casket was transported to St. Peter's Church for a funeral mass and then on to the city's Riverside Cemetery for burial. The funeral cortege, led by two local bands playing dirges, included 1,300 union men, a horse-drawn hearse, a carriage for the Morris

*When he needed help during the strike-torn summer of 1898, Thomas Kidd called upon his colleague Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor.*



family, and numerous other vehicles filled with mourners. As the silent marchers moved from the south side across the Main Street bridge en route to the church, thousands of observers were struck by the magnitude and solemnity of the procession.

Father James O'Malley, who officiated at the funeral mass, must have been burdened with the knowledge that both Jimmie Morris and Edward Casey, the man accused of killing him, were members of St. Peter's congregation.

In happier times, Casey's children and the young striker had "played ball and attended church together." Anton Morris, the dead boy's father, was a painter who had been disabled in a work accident several months before. Jimmie, the oldest of seven children, had responded to his family's financial destitution by dropping out of school and going to work at the Paine mill.

There he earned forty-five cents a day, which he turned over to his harried mother, who was recovering from a recent childbirth and had an infant to care for along with her husband and other children.

This bleak biography of a "humble working boy" was on Thomas Kidd's mind on Sunday evening as he delivered an impassioned funeral oration before an audience that overflowed the south-side meeting hall. In a voice that broke with emotion, he expressed his sympathy to Jimmie's shabbily dressed brothers and sisters, to the grieving father, and to the "poor, heartbroken mother . . . with a little babe at her breast." In the name of justice, he demanded that Edward Casey be tried for murder, warning local authorities that the international union would not allow them to "hoodwink" the working people of Oshkosh by "conspiring to shield the killer." He scoffed at the mayor and the sheriff for calling in the armed forces because of a "little rotten eggging." He recited the long history of brutality against workers in the Oshkosh mills, concluding with a rousing affirmation of the dignity of labor and a firm declaration that Jimmie Morris, a martyr in a noble cause, had not died in vain. The editor of the generally pro-union Oshkosh *Enterprise* reported Kidd's speech favorably and commented that the funeral services had been "attended by the largest number of people who ever paid respect to the memory of a dead citizen"—remarkable considering Jimmie Morris's age, financial status, and "obscurity" as a living member of the community.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to the prominent public funeral for one of the union's own, the other Oshkosh event of consequence during the military occupation was a criminal prosecution. Oddly enough, it had nothing to do with Edward Casey, whose

lawyers had succeeded in getting his case postponed and shifted out of town. Rather, on Monday morning, June 27, District Attorney Walter W. Quatermass, taking advantage of the protection afforded by the national guard, inaugurated criminal proceedings against alleged riot leaders. About thirty "foreigners," most of them women, were named as targets for investigation, and warrants were issued for the immediate arrest of

Lizzie Hando and Caroline Pomerening. Charged with unlawful assembly and riot—a felony punishable by a sentence of three to seven years in prison—the two women were jailed and promptly bailed out by union supporters. A preliminary hearing date for their case was scheduled for July 13. In reporting these proceedings, the Oshkosh *Enterprise* approvingly echoed an Appleton editor's opinion that it

was disgraceful for a woman to become a "mobite." If she "unsexed" herself in that manner she should expect to face the "policeman's club, the discharge of musketry or the Gatling gun."<sup>21</sup> Transgressive women obviously had the power to disturb as well as disrupt.

By June 30, when the guardsmen pulled out, it appeared to many in the city that the strike had been broken by force of arms. The woodworkers, however, had decided not to surrender, and the union's strike activities resumed. The mills remained closed, and the walkout dragged on, without further demonstrations, throughout July.

### **Trial and Negotiations**

The Hando-Pomerening hearing on July 13 attracted the attention of masses of south-side women who packed the municipal courtroom at city hall and jammed the streets outside. Witnesses for the prosecution were police officers and deputies, one of whom identified the defendants as ringleaders at the McMillen riot. During the testimony, there was a "continual shaking of heads and whispered contradictions" from the audience. When Judge Arthur Goss found the evidence sufficient for a trial and formally closed the proceedings, pandemonium broke loose. Mrs. Pomerening shouted, "They lied! They lied! . . . There is a God in heaven and I'll have my witnesses here if I have to take it to the higher court." She then broke into German and delivered what one reporter on the scene described as a tirade. Lizzie Hando hotly denied the witnesses' testimony about her role at McMillen's, and her daughter Etta corroborated her account. One "comely," "neatly dressed," "sincere" young woman—perhaps Etta Hando—attracted the reporter's attention because she was "rather refined and intelligent appear-

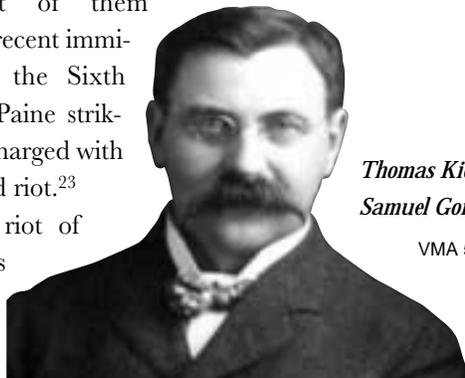
*Kidd scoffed at the mayor and the sheriff for calling in the armed forces because of a "little rotten eggging."*

ing” and spoke good English. When a cluster of German-speaking women from the audience crowded around—all talking at once, accusing the state’s witnesses of perjury and vowing to take the stand for the defense—the linguistically challenged reporter dismissed their contributions as the “most indescribable babble.” The noisy crowd moved toward the exit, where they encountered one of the deputized scab witnesses. “Shrieking” and “calling names,” they shook their fists in his face and let him know, in several languages, how he stood with them. The reporter surmised that the municipal court had never before been the scene of such great excitement—a replay, as it were, “of the McMillen riot without the eggs.”<sup>22</sup>

The Hando-Pomerening trial was set for August 3. Coincidentally or by design, the manufacturers chose that day to reopen their mills. When the whistles blew and small crews of strikebreakers returned to work, all was quiet on the streets. The women who might have been at the factory gates harassing strikebreakers chose instead to attend the trial at city hall and show support for their leaders. Testimony went on for two days, and the court recessed. No session was scheduled for Friday, August 5, and early that rainy morning a crowd of men and women—said to have been composed largely of the “troublesome foreign element from the terrible Sixth ward”—gathered outside the gates at the Morgan mill and prepared once more to put the scabs to flight. When police clubbed their way through the crowd and began hauling men off to the patrol wagon, a dozen or so of the “toughest looking women eyes ever looked upon” emerged from hiding places and surged forward, determined to protect their men. A reporter at the scene described the combatants as “wild-eyed” Bohemian and “Dutch” women, the “very pictures of anarchy.” They wore varicolored kerchiefs around their hair, and some had “no stockings but wore flapping slippers.” A few carried umbrellas. Others had stones or clubs. One was reportedly armed with a “big bottle of gin.” In the clash that followed—said to have been the most serious between the police and civilians in the history of the city—the women fought hand-to-hand with the arresting officers until they were bested and dragged off to the city lockup.

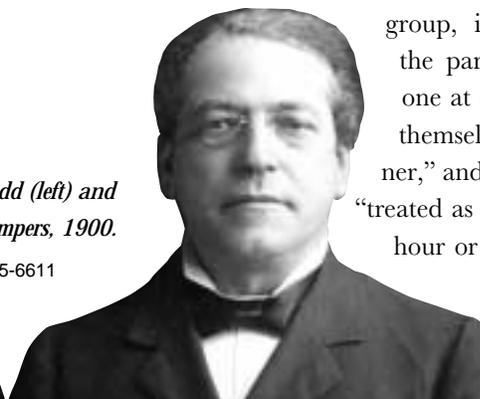
Nine women—most of them Bohemian Catholics, recent immigrants, residents of the Sixth Ward, and wives of Paine strikers—were jailed and charged with unlawful assembly and riot.<sup>23</sup>

Shortly after the riot of August 5, Thomas



*Thomas Kidd (left) and Samuel Gompers, 1900.*

VMA 5-6611



Kidd was arrested on a charge of criminal conspiracy. He was presently bailed out, but when the local and national unions mobilized to fight his case in court, attention and funds were diverted from the Oshkosh strike.

As before, women activists filled the void, transforming themselves from street fighters into negotiators and mediators. On the morning of August 6, a delegation of about fifty women marched from the south side to city hall and demanded a meeting with Mayor Ideson, the one person in town who was in a position, they believed, to work out a strike settlement. The mayor reluctantly agreed to meet with them and, according to one press account, was in “custody” for nearly an hour. At first, he was overwhelmed by “a thousand questions” hurled at him without system, and in a “babble of tongues.” After a time, an “intelligent and refined appearing lady” who spoke good English established order and translated the concerns of the anxious women. Wild rumors afloat in the city were reported and effectively countered by Ideson. (One tangible achievement of this unorthodox gathering was rumor control, an essential first step toward conflict resolution.) Members of the delegation described for the mayor the impact of what they called “pauper wages,” thus forcing the leader of the city’s representative government to hear firsthand about the suffering of his constituents’ families. They asked that he have millowners close the factories temporarily, get rid of the scabs, raise wages, and provide assurances that an increase would not be merely a ploy to end the strike. In response, the mayor promised to ask for a conference of millowners and strikers and expressed his opinion that the minimum wage in Oshkosh would be raised by at least ten cents a day.<sup>24</sup>

From the point of view of the women, matters went so well at this exceptional conference that Caroline Pomerening led a second body of female activists to city hall on Monday morning, August 8, and demanded another meeting with Mayor Ideson. The gathering this time included both “wives” and “strikers”—the only reference in the 1898 strike to women woodworkers acting in concert with unionists’ female family members.

Pomerening, who spoke for the group, informed Ideson that the participants would speak one at a time, would conduct themselves in a “ladylike manner,” and expected in turn to be “treated as ladies.”<sup>25</sup> For the next hour or so, questions that one city editor described

as “impertinent” were asked, but not in an “impertinent manner.” One question in particular the women raised was to ask why local industrialists had failed to keep a promise, made to workers in 1896, that if Republican candidate William McKinley won the presidential election, wages would be raised. Questions about deceit of that sort were naturally “hard to answer,” but the mayor “talked when his turn came” and the delegation left, evidently relieved that they had stated their position. One baffled journalist described the meeting as “extraordinary.”

What came next was even more extraordinary. A body of fifteen or twenty members of the delegation proceeded directly from city hall to the Paine Lumber Company to confront George M. Paine. Mayor Ideson was considered to be Paine’s puppet, and the women intended to talk to the man who pulled the strings. When curious pedestrians saw a band of working-class females striding briskly toward the Paine mill, they anticipated another street fight and tagged along to “see the fun.” At the company office, the women stood outside the window and shouted for Paine to meet with them. A corps of uninhibited females making an appointment in such an unorthodox manner may have startled the millowner, but he eventually agreed to meet them, though only in groups of four. The selected delegates reportedly elicited from the city’s industrial giant a promise that, when the strikers returned to work, he would take no retaliatory action against them.<sup>26</sup>

One city editor concluded of these meetings that “nothing came of them.” He clearly knew nothing of gender politics. Something was indeed accomplished that day when poor and hitherto voiceless immigrant women discovered that they could challenge corporate capitalism and myopic government with dialogue as well as rotten eggs. Oshkosh women, for the first time in the city’s history, confronted official power without apology or self-abnegation. They called on a business executive to solve a problem by acting responsibly. They spoke plainly and articulated their demands. They contested prevailing notions about class and gender. They behaved, in short, like citizens who expected the government of a republic to be responsive to the needs of its people.<sup>27</sup>

Emboldened by this first taste of political action, the south-side women “adopted a novel plan of settling the strike” by talking to each of the millowners in turn. Whether this new mediation effort was a decisive factor in ending the strike cannot be determined, but, within a week after the first city hall meeting, proprietors at each of the companies began holding de facto collective bargaining sessions with committees of their striking employees. When these negotiating sessions began in mid-

August, only about half of the 1,600 or so woodworkers who had walked out in mid-May were still on strike. A few union men had abandoned the cause and returned to the local mills as strikebreakers. At least 700 others had left town in search of work. In August, when individual settlements were negotiated with each of the companies in turn and approved by the union, all the remaining strikers returned to work. Modest pay increases were granted at three of the mills, but none of the settlements

included recognition of the union. On August 19, after three months of hardship and strife, the Oshkosh woodworkers’ strike came to a close.

Much of the city rejoiced that the crisis had passed. For Thomas Kidd, however,

and for thirty or so others who had been charged with assault or riot, the ordeal was far from over. When the criminal proceedings resumed on September 21, Caroline Pomerening asked for a change of venue, charging prejudice in the Oshkosh municipal court. Her case was shifted to the Winnebago County circuit court, and when her case was heard at the December term, she was acquitted. Lizzie Hando’s trial in municipal court began on September 21 and went to the jury two days later. After twenty-four hours of deliberation and thirty-seven ballots, the deadlocked jury was dismissed and the judge ordered a new trial for September 29. This time, the jury deliberated a full day, took dozens of ballots, and deadlocked again. On October 2 the case was dismissed a second time. A third trial was scheduled for October 20 but, prior to that date, the district attorney asked that the Hando case and all other riot and assault cases before the court be dismissed.<sup>28</sup> By then Thomas Kidd’s criminal conspiracy trial was on the court docket, and that case required the district attorney’s full attention. Clarence Darrow had come up from Chicago to defend Kidd, and he was a formidable opponent who attracted national press attention wherever he went. On October 14, 1898, Oshkosh became the setting for one of the most celebrated trials in Wisconsin history. Ultimately, Darrow was to have the last word.<sup>29</sup>

### **“One Episode in the Battle for Human Liberty”**

What the union men and women of Oshkosh had set out to accomplish in 1898 was to increase workingmen’s wages, and, more profoundly, to induce capitalists to share their profits and power with labor. It was an impossible dream. In practical terms, the woodworkers’ strike was a failure. Wages were raised at selected companies by a few pennies a day but, overall, the millowners prevailed. Union leaders were blacklisted and union strength eroded. The exploitation of women workers continued as before.<sup>30</sup> George Paine went to his grave in 1917 with no union at his mill,

*One woman was  
reportedly armed with a  
“big bottle of gin.”*

and there was none there until 1956.<sup>31</sup> Jimmie Morris lay in an unmarked grave, and Edward Casey was tried and acquitted for the boy's murder.<sup>32</sup> Lizzie Hando and her cohorts gained nothing from their moment of heroic struggle, and all died in obscurity.<sup>33</sup> Working-class wives and mothers throughout the city sank back into domesticity and silence. The millowners enticed a new cohort of workers from eastern Europe as cheap, nonunion labor, and when the newcomers settled into neighborhoods adjoining the old Bohemian community, all the old provincial and religious enmities that had divided laborers in the past were revived. After 1898, as before, Oshkosh remained a patriarchal, cheap-labor, anti-union town.

Yet despite this grim reality of loss and retreat, the naive and courageous pursuit of an unattainable goal of equality by a powerless working-class community makes the story of the Oshkosh strike all the more compelling. In human terms, it succeeded as one of those rare instances when oppressed men and women broke through the barriers of class and culture and seized their rights as autonomous citizens. Female wage workers sought labor solidarity across gender lines. Strikers' wives and mothers, sisters and daughters stood firm for the union. An intrepid band of working-class women liberated themselves from their "place" in the kitchen and beside the cradle. They took a new position—on the street and in the council hall—where they dictated policy and held government officials and lumber barons accountable for their actions. Most importantly, they shredded the fabric of that most universal of nineteenth century myths: the inferiority and weakness of women.

It was left to Clarence Darrow to give eloquent voice to all these achievements. His two-day summation to the jury in the Thomas Kidd case was published worldwide and became a pivotal declaration of human rights. He told the jurors that he was in Oshkosh to speak not only for Thomas Kidd but also for a long line of the "despoiled and downtrodden people of the earth"—those "dumb, despairing millions" who needed "a trumpet to tell the world of their humanity." The issue before the court was whether or not workers who voluntarily withheld their labor from their employers could be imprisoned as criminals. "I take it," he said sarcastically, "that in a free country where George M. Paine

<sup>1</sup> This article is adapted from the author's book, *The Oshkosh Woodworkers' Strike of 1898: A Wisconsin Community in Crisis* (Oshkosh: Wisconsin Sesquicentennial Commission, 1998), which contains more detailed documentation. For a hundred years, the strike was virtually obliterated from community memory in Oshkosh, and most people grew up knowing little or nothing about this epochal event in their city's history. When the Wisconsin Sesquicentennial Commission in 1998 awarded me a grant to write a history of the strike, and a play based upon my book was being readied for performance, a representative of the Oshkosh chamber of commerce warned me that the city would not countenance any sesquicentennial project that had to do with the woodworkers' strike.

<sup>2</sup> Wisconsin State Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, *Eighth Biennial Report, 1897-1898* (Madison: Democrat Printing Company, 1899), 964-967, 346-347; *Randall's Atlas of Oshkosh, Wisconsin* (1895); *Sanborn Insurance Maps of Oshkosh, Wisconsin* (1903), in the Wisconsin State Archives, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Abstract of the Twelfth Census of the United States* (Washington, 1900), 104, 110, 113, 126-127, 357; *Wisconsin Blue Book, 1895*, p. 489; Winnebago County Naturalization Papers, Area Research Center, Polk Library, University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh; *Oshkosh Directory, 1898-99* (Oshkosh: Globe Printing Company, 1898); Clarence Jungwirth, *The "Bloody Sixth Ward": A History of the Sixth Ward in the City of Oshkosh from 1880-1940* (Oshkosh: Clarence Jungwirth, 1991).

## The Author



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does not rule supreme, every person has the right to lay down the tools of his trade if he shall choose." In May 1898, said Darrow, the woodworkers of Oshkosh had done just that—not as part of a "conspiracy" but because of inhumane working conditions created by the "miasma of capitalist oppression." Righteous anger against cruel oppression had led to the strike, to the riots, to the death of Jimmie Morris. The "stones of Oshkosh should rise in mutiny and cry out" against the men who took the boy's life. To Darrow, the Oshkosh strike was but "one episode in the great battle for human liberty," a battle that would not end so long as employers "grew fat and rich and powerful through their robbery and greed."

On November 2, 1898, Thomas Kidd was acquitted by a jury of his peers.

In his great summation, Clarence Darrow had stood Oshkosh on its head, reducing the millowners to a clique of bonded males swollen with mediocrity and guilty of perjury, bribery, and criminal conspiracy. He had robbed George Paine of his legitimacy, mocking and belittling him as a lying hypocrite and a moral pygmy. In the course of diminishing the mighty, Darrow had also elevated the humble, transforming a seemingly unsuccessful labor action in a relatively obscure place into a drama of struggle, endurance, and principle. Through the power and poetry of Darrow's language, the Oshkosh woodworkers' strike became an epic that, for a moment at least, pushed back the darkness and ennobled the human spirit. ❧

<sup>3</sup> George M. Paine, "Recollections," and interviews with Paine Company woodworkers (undated, conducted by Charles Nevitt[?]), both in the Paine Lumber Company Papers, Paine Art Center, Oshkosh; George Paine, "Trusts and Pools," *Oshkosh Sunday Times*, 26 March 1889.

<sup>4</sup> Working conditions and efforts at unionization in the Oshkosh mills did not differ significantly from those in other industrial centers in the late Gilded Age. See David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). By 1894, Oshkosh had emerged as a center of labor-union activity second only to Milwaukee, with numerous unions and a newspaper, the *Labor Advocate*. That same year, the city hosted the annual convention of the Wisconsin State Fed-

eration of Labor. Data for this study on wages, working conditions, and unionization came principally from union sources. See, for example, clippings from international labor newspapers in the Thomas Kidd Scrapbook, Wisconsin State Archives: *Labor Advocate*, 4 August, 8 September, 13 October, 3 November, 1893, and 17 March and 7 April 1894; *International Wood Worker* (November 1897 and May 1898); "Argument of Clarence S. Darrow in the Case of State of Wisconsin v. Thomas I. Kidd, et al.," reprinted in Lee Baxandall, ed., *Green Mountain Quarterly* #3 (1976), 35–92. Lumber company records seem to exist only for the Paine Company. Paul Cigler of the Wisconsin Labor History Society, who made an extensive examination of those papers, states that the volumes for 1898 that might have supplied critical employment information for the history of the strike are missing from the collection.

<sup>5</sup> "Autobiography," in Kidd Scrapbook: Oshkosh *Times*, 25 October 1898; Kidd to August McCraith, 5 May 1896, and Kidd to Frank Morrison, 16 and 27 September 1897, both in the American Federation of Labor Papers, Wisconsin State Archives (hereinafter AFL Papers); Deirdre Moloney, "Thomas I. Kidd and the Oshkosh Strike, 1898" (unpublished Labor History 902 research paper, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1988); *International Wood Worker* (November–December 1898).

<sup>6</sup> Oshkosh *Enterprise*, 14 May 1898. The position of early unions on women wage workers is treated in Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) and Philip Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement: From the First Trade Unions to the Present* (New York: Free Press, 1982), 1–119. On the family wage concept, see Martha May, "The Historical Problem of the Family Wage," *Feminist Studies* 8 (Summer 1982): 399–424; Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). Ava Baron's "Questions of Gender: Deskill and Demasculinization in the U.S. Printing Industry, 1830–1915," in *Gender and History*, 1:178–199, assesses male workers' fear of female competitors. Baron's *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991) explores how workers like the Oshkosh unionists replicated social hierarchies in their struggles with management.

<sup>7</sup> Samuel Gompers to Kidd, 16 May 1898, AFL Papers. Information for this study on day-to-day strike activity and millowners' responses derives in large part from Oshkosh's three newspapers: the *Daily Northwestern*, the *Enterprise*, and the *Times*. Despite my historian's reluctance to rely on uncorroborated newspaper sources, I have been obliged to use press accounts because of the almost total absence of other information. The *Enterprise* covered the developing labor action from the start and became the most pro-union press, reporting both manufacturers' and workers' comments, positions, and activities. The staunchly Republican *Northwestern* was the most consistently pro-business, anti-union, and unapologetically biased of the three, but it provided valuable insight into the manufacturers' thinking and actions. The *Times*, a local Democratic organ, wavered between tepid support for the union and mushy appeals for a restoration of peace and harmony.

<sup>8</sup> *Enterprise*, 17 and 18 May 1898; *Northwestern*, 16, 17, 18, and 20 May 1898. The role of female wage workers in the Oshkosh strike differed markedly from that of activist women in the early days of industrialization. In the 1820s, women, especially in New England, joined men or acted alone to protest working conditions, organize associations and strike to improve their lot. Most of this activity, however, was in "soft" industries such as textiles, shoes, carpets, and the needle trades, which employed large numbers of female machine operators. By contrast, wood manufacturing was a "hard" industry that used relatively few women and effectively marginalized them. See Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826–1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Ardis Cameron, *Radicals of the Worst Sort: Laboring Women in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1860–1912* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Susan Levine, *Labor's True Woman: Carpet Weavers, Industrialization, and Labor Reform in the Gilded Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); Joan M. Jensen and Sue Davidson, eds., *A Needle, a Bobbin, a Strike: Women Needleworkers in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984); Mary H. Blewett, *Men, Women, and Work: A Study of Class, Gender, and Protest in the Nineteenth-Century New England Shoe Industry* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988); and Ruth Milkman, ed., *Women, Work, and Protest: A Century of Women's Labor History* (Boston: Routledge, 1985).

<sup>9</sup> *Northwestern*, 21 and 23 May 1898; *Enterprise*, 23 May 1898. In this article I have followed the narrative of traditional

labor history (the so-called Commons, institutional, or "Wisconsin school"), delineating worker oppression and positioning the strike as an arena of willed action in opposition to that oppression. However, the theoretical framework of this study derives from the "new labor history" with its focus on gender, class, and community as the broad context within which the working class in general, and strikes and unions in particular, can be more fully understood and analyzed. Two tenets of the new labor history that I found particularly useful for the Oshkosh strike are that class consciousness is formed in part by culture, and that gender and ethnicity in the workplace and community cultures of immigrant groups are an essential ingredient in working-class history. See E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon, 1966); Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History* (New York: Knopf, 1976); Mari Jo Buhle, "Recent Contributions to Women's History," *Radical History Review* 11 (1975): 4–11; and Jane Lewis, "The Working-Class Wife and Mother and State Intervention, 1870–1918," in her *Labor and Love: Women's Experience of Home and Family, 1850–1940* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

<sup>10</sup> Confirmations, 31 May 1877 (263 #18), 8 January 1880 (267 #44), 23 Sep. 1895 (291 #47); Marriages, 23 July 1892 (392 #14) and 8 June 1898 (409); Funerals, 6 June 1897, all in Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church Records, Oshkosh Public Library; Marriage Records, 16 August 1887 (7:15 #250), July 1894 (8:85 #716), 8 June 1898, (8:362 #2375); Death Records, 6 June 1897 (5:73 #437), all in Vital Records Office, Winnebago County Court House, Oshkosh; Wisconsin Census (1895); U.S. Census, 1880 (#102), 1900 (81/139/5/92); Oshkosh city directories, 1876–1898; Winnebago County Naturalization Papers, 22 October 1884 (#7910).

<sup>11</sup> Marriages, 10 January 1874 (385 #1), Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church Records; Marriage Record, 10 Jan. 1874 (1:608 #4160), Vital Records Office, Winnebago County Court House; Oshkosh city directories, 1879–1898; Wisconsin Census (1885 and 1895); U.S. Census, 1900 (80/5/132/76); Winnebago County Naturalization Records, 29 October 1888 (#8874).

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Census, 1900 (81/3/140/42); Oshkosh city directories, 1883–1898.

<sup>13</sup> *Times*, 23 June 1898; *Enterprise*, 23 June 1898.

<sup>14</sup> *Enterprise*, 24 June 1898; *Northwestern*, 23 June 1898; *Weekly Times*, 25 June 1898; *Chicago Record*, 24 June 1898.

<sup>15</sup> *Times*, 24 and 28 June, 22 and 27 October, 8 and 9 December 1898; *Weekly Times*, 9 July 1898; *Enterprise*, 23, 24, 27, and 28 June, 13 and 21 July, 22 and 27 October 1898; *Northwestern*, 24 and 28 June, 8 and 13 July, 22, 25, and 26 October, 6 and 8 December 1898; *Chicago Record*, 24 June 1898; Lee Baxandall, "Fur, Logs, and Human Lives: The Great Oshkosh Woodworker Strike of 1898," *Green Mountain Quarterly* #3 (1976): 24; St. Peter's Catholic Church Death Index (May 1882–February 1925), Archives, Office of the Green Bay Archdiocese, Green Bay, Wisconsin.

<sup>16</sup> Milwaukee *Sentinel*, quoted in Baxandall, "Fur, Logs, and Human Lives," 23; Ben J. Daly to his brother, 30 June 1898 (File 131.1-Unions, Strikes), Archives, Oshkosh Public Museum.

<sup>17</sup> Women had controlled the streets in labor actions in the United States long before the Oshkosh strike, but in most such episodes female wage workers, rather than male strikers' wives and mothers, were the central figures. My approach to the militant Oshkosh women of 1898 borrows from Eric Hobsbawm's contested argument that women's family life rather than their work experience had the major impact on their behavior and consciousness, and that their family role served as a conservative force in molding their behavior. It seems to me that Lizzie Hando and her cohorts were indeed shaped by family and community rather than wage work, and they chose class rather than gender identity in supporting the union's position for a family wage. They nonetheless behaved radically in defense of their conservative position. See Hobsbawm, "Man and Woman in Socialist Iconography," *History Workshop* 8 (1978): 121–138; Sally Alexander et al., "Labouring Women: A Reply to Eric Hobsbawm," *History Workshop* 8 (Autumn 1979): 174–182; Ava Baron, *Work Engendered*, 7, 11, 28–29; and Gerda Lerner "Rethinking the Paradigm: Class," in *Why History Matters: Life and Thought* (New York: Oxford, 1997), 146–184.

<sup>18</sup> *Northwestern*, 24 June and 5 August 1898; *Times*, 24 June 1898; *Enterprise*, 24 June, 8 August 1898.

<sup>19</sup> Mrs. H. Kundendorff to the Editor, *Enterprise*, 27 June 1898.

<sup>20</sup> *Enterprise*, 14, 17, and 27 June 1898; *Northwestern*, 27 June 1898; St. Peter's Catholic Church Death Index (1882–1925);

Riverside Cemetery Records, Oshkosh; Oshkosh city directories, 1879–1898.

<sup>21</sup> *Enterprise*, 27, 28, 29, and 30 June 1898; *Times*, 25 and 28 June 1898; *Northwestern*, 27, 28, and 29 June 1898.

<sup>22</sup> *Enterprise*, 13 July 1898; *Times*, 14 July 1898; *Northwestern*, 13 July 1898.

<sup>23</sup> *Northwestern*, 5 August 1898; *Enterprise*, 5 and 10 August 1898.

<sup>24</sup> *Times*, 7 August 1898; *Enterprise*, 6 August 1898.

<sup>25</sup> The demand to be recognized as "ladies" suggests that Caroline Pomeroy and others in the delegation were—unconsciously perhaps—seeking to construct a class and ethnic identity for themselves, not as deviants, but as part of the respectable American middle class. Barbara A. Schreier's *Becoming American Women: Clothing and the Jewish Immigrant Experience, 1880–1920* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1994) deals with issues of working-class identity and assimilation. See also Joan Wallach Scott, "On Language, Gender, and Working-Class History," in her *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 53–67.

<sup>26</sup> *Enterprise*, 9 August 1898; *Northwestern*, 9 August 1898; *Times*, 9 August 1898.

<sup>27</sup> See Judith Butler, "Implicit Censorship and Discursive Agency," in *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Mary P. Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City During the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Hearing Women's Words: A Feminist Reconstruction of History," in her *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Knopf, 1985).

<sup>28</sup> *Enterprise*, 21–24, 26–27, and 29 September, 3 and 18 October 1898; *Criminal Docket, Municipal Court, City of Oshkosh and Winnebago* (25 May 1895–24 June 1909), 1: 106, 127–128, Oshkosh Public Library.

<sup>29</sup> *Municipal Court Criminal Docket*, File #107, 1:108–109, 130–132; *Chicago Record*, 14, 16–19, 21, 24–28, and 30–31 October, 1 November 1898; *Northwestern*, 29 September, 1, 10, 14–15, 17–22, and 24–29 October, 2–3 November 1898; *Enterprise*, 14–15, 17–22, 24–29, and 31 October, 1–3 November 1898; *Times*, 15, 16, 18–22, and 25–28 October, 3 November 1898. Following the Oshkosh strike, Thomas Kidd remained active as a union leader for a time, but he eventually dropped out and went into business selling billiard tables. See Kidd, "Autobiography." Clarence Darrow grew increasingly famous as "Attorney for the Damned" following the Scopes "monkey trial" in Tennessee and the Leopold-Loeb kidnap-murder case in Chicago. See Arthur and Lila Weinberg, *Clarence Darrow: A Sentimental Rebel* (New York: Putnam, 1980), 326; and Arthur Weinberg, ed., *Attorney for the Damned* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957).

<sup>30</sup> AFL Internationals, Wood Workers–America Folder (Box 220), United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America Papers, Archives and Manuscripts Division, University of Maryland at College Park.

<sup>31</sup> George M. Paine passed the company on to his son Nathan, who beat back a strike in 1920. In 1925 he organized a company bank and persuaded his employees to deposit their savings there, but the bank failed in the stock market crash of 1929. During the Great Depression, rumors circulated that a new Paine mansion, then under construction, would be bombed if Nathan moved in. The building was soon donated to the city as a museum. See "Paine Story . . . Is One of Industrial Genius," *Wisconsin Magazine* (Oshkosh edition, December 1950) 24–26; and Robert W. Ozanne, *The Labor Movement in Wisconsin: A History* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1984), 19–25.

<sup>32</sup> In the end, no party on either side of the struggle was ever legally sanctioned for any of their strike activities. See the *Northwestern*, 5–8, 10, and 12 December 1898; and the *Times*, 8, 9, and 11 December 1898.

<sup>33</sup> Lizzie Hando died in 1917, aged eighty. She was survived by Etta and by Fred and three other sons who continued as woodworkers. Caroline Pomeroy's husband became a street sweeper, and her daughter continued to work as a domestic. Both outlived Caroline, who died about 1920, aged seventy-four. Emma Kundendorff's husband Henry worked as a carpenter and a grocer after 1898 and the family moved from one rented house to another, always on the south side of the Fox River. See U.S. Census, 1900 (80/5/132/76, 81/3/140/42, 81/139/5/92); Oshkosh city directories, 1900–1920; Funerals, 3 October 1917, Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church Records.