



# One Day for Democracy: Independence Day and the Americanization of Iron Range Immigrants

*Mary Lou Nemanic*

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Just before the turn of the twentieth century, immigrants from eastern and southern Europe who had settled in mining regions of Minnesota formed a subculture that combined elements of Old World traditions and American culture. Their unique pluralistic version of Americanism was expressed in Fourth of July celebrations rooted in European carnival traditions that included rough games, cross-dressing, and rowdiness. In *One Day for Democracy*, Mary Lou Nemanic traces the festive history of Independence Day from 1776 to the twentieth century. The author shows how these diverse immigrant groups on the Minnesota Iron Range created their own version of the celebration, the Iron Range Fourth of July. As mass-mediated popular culture emerged in the twentieth century, Fourth of July celebrations in the Iron Range began to include such popular culture elements as beauty queens and marching bands. Nemanic documents the enormous influence of these changes on this isolated region and highlights the complex interplay between popular culture and identity construction. But this is not a typical story of assimilation or ethnic separation. Instead, *One Day for Democracy* reveals how more than thirty different ethnic groups who shared identities as both workers and new Americans came together in a remote mining region to create their own subculture.

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