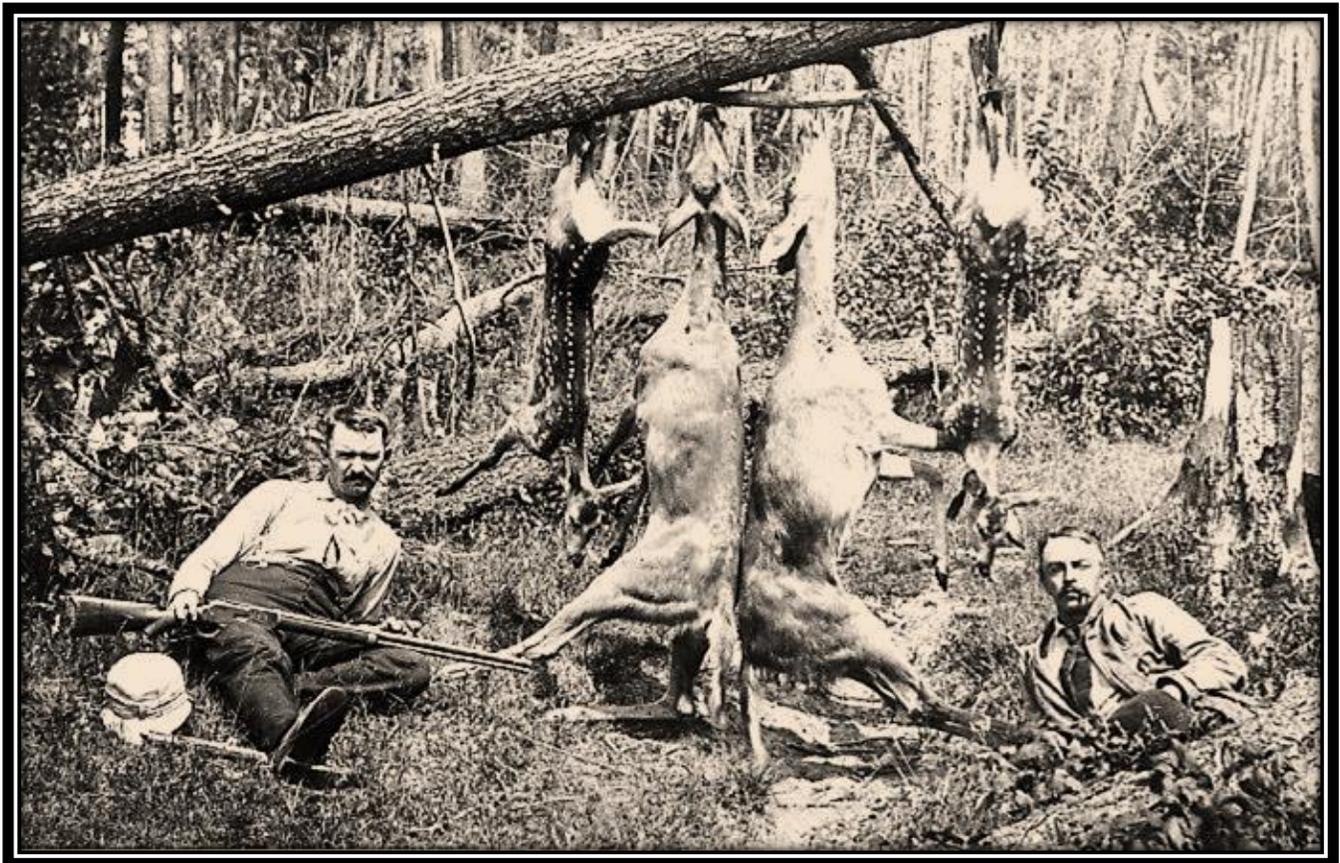


MENOMINEE RANGE MEMORIES 4: NATIVE AMERICAN HUNTING AND FISHING CONCERNS AND THE APPREHENSION OF A MURDERER

By William J. Cummings, Menominee Range Historical Foundation Historian



In 1900 any type of deer was legal game. Ransom L. Hammond, Dickinson County prosecuting attorney, and George F. Seibert, Iron Mountain druggist, posed with their trophies – two does and two fawns. [Gene Derwinski/Dick Ferris]

Local Native Americans, as well as members of neighboring tribes, hunted, fished and gathered berries on the Menominee Range.

Some of the items quoted below may have overtones not acceptable by today's standards, but, unfortunately, reflect the times in which they were printed.

An article in the September 12, 1885 edition of *The Florence Mining News* described an annual visit from a tribe of Pottawatomie Indians from Waupaca County, Wisconsin.

"A tribe of Pottawatomie Indians, from Waupaca county, were in town on

Saturday. They are upon their annual hunt and berry-picking. The squaws rode astride their ponies, did the bulk of the hard work and the tribe embraced other characteristics of the typical redman. Notwithstanding they looked well for Indians, had good ponies and seemed to be happy in spite of their waning numbers. The Indians in this region tendered them a reception and Negaunee Geezic, of Badwater, was particularly hospitable.

Two months later the November 14, 1885 issue of *The Florence Mining News* reported the following:

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“About forty bucks, squaws and papooses have been camping on the Keyes lake road. They hail from the Indian reservations below and are up on their annual hunt.

“A horde of Pottawatomie Indians from Keshena have been hunting south of Florence. They came to town on Tuesday, got full of fire water and made the woods resound with their wild whiskey war whoops.”

In the October 31, 1885 edition of Norway’s *The Current*, under the column “Quinnesec’s Quotum,” the following item appeared:

“Wm. Tucker, Quinnesec’s noble red man, killed 16 deer in five days. The pale faces seem to be no good.”

The following week, again in the “Quinnesec’s Quotum” column, *The Current* reported:

“Mr. Stevens, Indian agent at Keshena, Wis., is the guest of Wm. Tucker. Tucker is showing him how to kill deer.”

Another concern to some was the custom of Native Americans building fences for hunting deer. Indeed, the town of Fence, Wisconsin, was named for this practice.

The July 22, 1882 issue of *The Florence Mining News* noted: “Complaints have been made by a chief of this great family regulator, that the ‘injuns’ – that is the aborigines, away over in Michigan, across the foaming current of the romantic Brule, are wantonly slaughtering deer by unorthodox methods, to wit: building deer fences of immense length and ever so high, behind which the lazy red skin lies and pops them over for their hides. Whether this is so or not THE MINING NEWS man could not conscientiously stand up and say, but if it is, it should be stopped, and we think the people in the vicinity of the

nuisance will see that it is suddenly abbreviated.”

In a column titled “Iron River Ripples” in the September 13, 1883 edition of *The Florence Mining News*, the following editorial, dated Iron River, September 13, 1883, appeared:

“EDITOR MINING NEWS: – *Dear Sir*, I have waited some time hoping someone else would make a move in regard to the wanton and wholesale slaughter of deer in the vicinity of Iron River and Sand Lake, where the Indians have constructed what is termed a ‘deer fence,’ extending a distance of eighteen miles and another to Lake Chicagoan about twelve miles long. During a period of ten days three Indians slaughtered 165 deer, bringing their pelts into town and disposing of them and leaving their carcasses in the woods to decay. If this continues it will not be long before their [*sic – there*] will not be a deer in this section of the country. Now, what I would like to know is, whether there is not a law prohibiting such wanton slaughter and what steps should be taken to put a stop to it. If you will give this an insertion in your valuable paper, you will confer an inestimable favor upon one who loves hunting but not in the way it is practiced in this part of the country. SPORTSMAN.”

The following item appeared in “Iron River Ripples” in the June 23, 1883 edition of *The Florence Mining News*:

Fish are becoming very plentiful in the town. Besides the baskets which are being almost daily filled by pleasure parties, the Indians are bringing in large supplies from the surrounding lakes.

Native Americans played an integral role in bringing a murderer to justice, as reported in the September 26, 1889 edition of Iron Mountain’s *The Menominee Range* under the headline “Fouly Murdered.”

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“When a dispatch was received in this city by Mrs. Sol E. Felch last Friday, stating that her husband was dead and to come at once and bring the sheriff, no one supposed that Mr. Felch had been slain in cold blood. The request for the sheriff was rather mystifying, but as the dispatch did not state that Mr. Felch had been murdered, it was generally believed to be a case of suicide or sudden death from natural causes.

“Mr. Felch left for his homestead, about 20 miles west of Florence, last Friday morning, taking with him a quantity of provisions and two gallons of whisky. It was his intention to hire some Indians near his place to help him with some logging and the whisky was taken along for them.

“The next word received here was the announcement of his sudden death and the request that Mrs. Felch come out to the farm at once and bring an officer with her. She secured the services of Wm. O’Hara, deputy sheriff, and left for the scene of the tragedy as soon as possible.

“At Florence Sheriff Parmenter joined the party. The road from Florence to their destination is a very rough one, and their progress was necessarily slow. It was Saturday morning before they reached the end of their journey. Here they learned for the first time the details of the terrible affair.

“When Mr. Felch reached his homestead he sent Charles Steiglitz, familiarly known as Dutch Charlie, to the station on the Soo road, about 2 1/2 miles distant, for his provisions. Steiglitz, it appears, after receiving the provisions, proceeded to get drunk, and between the station and the homestead, with the aid of some Indians he fell in with, the two gallons of whisky disappeared.

“There is a camp of Indians who are gathering a medicinal herb near Mr. Felch’s

homestead, and after attending some matters about his place Mr. Felch went over there to hire the men he wanted. Here he found Steiglitz, who demanded the wages due him. Mr. Felch told him he should have his pay, but he had no money with him at that time.

“This did not satisfy the drunken Steiglitz, who declared that if Felch did not pay him then and there he would kill him. Felch replied, “O, go away, Charlie,” picked up his rifle and walked away.

“Steiglitz was also armed with a rifle, and followed after, and when within fourteen paces of his victim fired, the bullet striking him in the back of the head, at the base of the brain, and coming out under the left eye, causing a wound that produced instant death.

“Two Indians witnessed the crime, and the manner in which they secured and guarded the prisoner is somewhat remarkable. They seized him, and with the aid of their companions bound him hand and foot. His legs were tied together with a clothes line wound closely from the ankles to the knees, and his arms folded across his breast and wound in the same manner from the wrists to the elbows.

“Then the Indians took him to one of their cabins and three of them, decorated with beads and feathers, and their faces smeared with war paint, and each grasping his rifle, they sat in front of their prisoner and watched him till the officers arrived, that is about 24 hours.

“It was four o’clock Saturday afternoon before the officers were ready to return with the murderer and the corpse of his victim, and the road was so bad they could get no farther than a house known as the halfway, about eight miles from Florence, that night.

“An early start was made Sunday morning, Sheriff Parmenter, with the

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murderer and Mrs. Felch reaching Florence in season for Mrs. Felch to take the morning train home, and O'Hara arriving in this city late in the afternoon with the corpse.

"The murderer and the two Indian witnesses were taken to Marinette on the afternoon train where the trial will be had, the crime having been committed in Marinette county.

"Mr. Felch was 43 years of age. During the war he did honorable service for four years as a member of Co. F. 85th New York Infantry, enlisting a second time after his first term of enlistment had expired.

"Funeral services were held in the Presbyterian church last Tuesday afternoon, members of the G.A.R. [*Grand Army of the Republic*] in this city and Florence attending in a body, and following the remains of their departed comrade to its last resting place."

The headline "Guilty of Murder in the Second Degree" in the October 24, 1889 issue of *The Menominee Range* provided the details from the trial, as follows:

"The trial of Chas. Steiglitz for the murder of Sol Felch terminated in Marinette, Wis., last Friday, with a verdict of murder in the second degree.

"The circumstances of the shooting, as revealed by the trial, are substantially the same as given in these columns at the time the murder was committed. The defense made a futile effort to show that Felch was killed by the Indians, and that they bound Steiglitz and charged the crime upon him in order to save themselves from punishment.

"Steiglitz was sentenced to 20 years in state's prison last Monday."