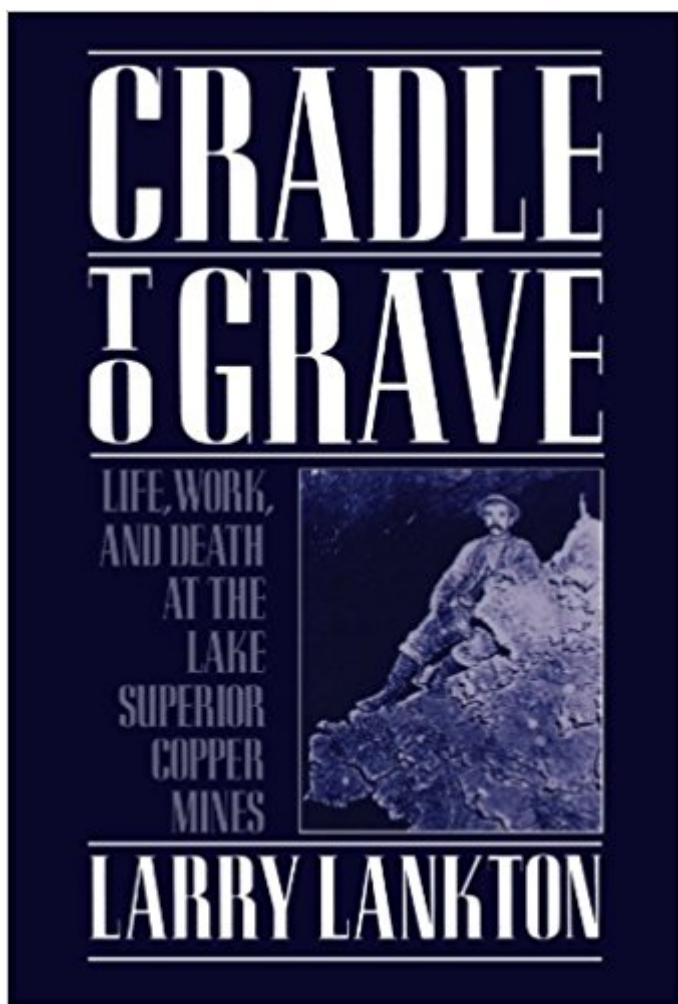


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# Cradle To Grave: Life, Work, And Death At The Lake Superior Copper Mines



## **Synopsis**

Concentrating on technology, economics, labor, and social history, *Cradle to Grave* documents the full life cycle of one of America's great mineral ranges from the 1840s to the 1960s. Lankton examines the workers' world underground, but is equally concerned with the mining communities on the surface. For the first fifty years of development, these mining communities remained remarkably harmonious, even while new, large companies obliterated traditional forms of organization and work within the industry. By 1890, however, the Lake Superior copper industry of upper Michigan started facing many challenges, including strong economic competition and a declining profit margin; growing worker dissatisfaction with both living and working conditions; and erosion of the companies' hegemony in a district they once controlled. Lankton traces technological changes within the mines and provides a thorough investigation of mine accidents and safety. He then focuses on social and labor history, dealing especially with the issue of how company paternalism exerted social control over the work force. A social history of technology, *Cradle to Grave* will appeal to labor, social and business historians.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"An exceptionally thoughtful, thorough and well-integrated account of labor, business, community and technological change in a fundamental sector of America's second industrial revolution."--Philip Scranton, Rutgers University"Precisely what is needed in the field: a work which combines personal experience, community life, descriptions of work and a specific physical environment. It allows

readers to 'feel' what life was like for these miners and their families."--Patrick Gagnon, Silver Lake College"Offers rich and thoughtful accounts of technological change as it transformed copper mining....Lankton has offered a penetrating exploration of an important sector of American mining and a model for exploring the interconnections of technological change, management policies, and workplace traditions during industrialization."--Technology and Culture"Will be quite useful to historians...for its many insights into the paternalistic approach to management, especially in its mediation of technological and economic change."--Industrial and Labor Relations Review"Should appeal to a large and varied audience....I recommend it to all readers who enjoy stories of the past."--Wisconsin Magazine of History

Larry Lankton is at Michigan Technological University.

Beware! There are copies of this book in circulation that are missing pages. A copy I just purchased was missing p165-196. This was a printer/manufacturing error. The book is in great condition otherwise. Check your copy as soon as you get it. This is a decent but not very innovative or exciting history. Some will appreciate Lankton's focus on mining technology and the views of mine management/ownership. Lankton is very good at describing the workings of technological apparatus. This is essential because he spends a substantial amount time discussing mechanical devices and the book has almost no illustrations to help the reader understand what he's writing about. It is very readable though and a solid, comprehensive, and well researched history.

An search for my family's rare Italian surname turned up a brief mention in this book, and when I realized the reference was to my great grandfather who immigrated to the Lake Superior Copper Mines in 1907 from near Turin, Italy, I decided to order it. Knowing little of the story of my ancestors, it helped paint a picture of what life was like in the years following their arrival in Keweenaw Peninsula. And for that I am grateful to Lankton. My favorite parts of the book are those that provide social context to what life was like in the mining communities, as well as those passages on the struggle between labor and management. Imagining Italians, Finns, Austrians, Irish, Germans and Cornish workers "fresh off the boat" working, living, organizing side by side in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan 100-150 years ago is fascinating.

Very enlightening historical documentation of the lives of the copper miners in Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula. The process of the blending of the various ethnic groups that make up this

region is eye-opening. The research behind this book is very in depth and portrays a very real picture of the good and bad events of every day life in Copper Country. I enjoyed this book very much along with others of Mr. Lankton.

Terrific book with amazing detail. A must read for Upper Michigan area lovers and early U.P. mining industry enthusiasts. Particularly the Keweenaw Peninsula area!

Cradle to Grave is an somewhat academic history of copper mining in the Keweenaw Peninsula of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Written by a history professor at Michigan Technological University (formerly the Michigan College of Mines), the book gives insights into the life of miners, many of them first-generation immigrants, in this rather remote region of the Midwest. For a span of about a hundred years from shortly before the civil war, until labor demands forced the final shuttering of the last mine in 1970, men and machines pulled ore from the depths of the Keweenaw through great exertion, with few luxuries and frequent loss of life. The book covers much of the sociology of the mining environment stressing the influence of technological change over the decades, as well as the paternalistic control that mine owners eventually exerted over nearly all aspects of workers' lives. The last two chapters are perhaps the most interesting to the person primarily interested in local history. These cover the strike of 1913-14, the Italian Hall tragedy, and final decline of copper mining in the Lake Superior area. These latter chapters are also a good introduction to those visiting the Quincy Mine and Hoist (Part of the Keweenaw National Historical Park) or the Quincy Smelter during parents' Weekend at Michigan Tech. The book also puts into perspective the many decaying and overgrown remnants of the mining era that are impossible to miss as one traverses this beautiful area of the country.

While tracing my ancestry back to Polish copper miners in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, I picked this book up simply to help me learn more about life in those times. Though I was looking for something lighter than this scholarly work, I was captivated nonetheless. The relevance of this work extends far beyond just copper mining, and describes conflict between labor and management on several fronts- finding balance between social welfare vs. social control; technological innovation vs. resistance to change, improved efficiency vs. diminishing resources, and the ultimate labor union vs. management showdown. Without wholly casting management as a villain, this book uncovers some raw truths by delving into management correspondence. Everything's under a microscope- the management's fear of lawsuits from injured workers, resistance to conceding an eight hour work

day, resistance to development of a railroad (a threat to facilitate striking?!), spying on suspected union activists, and surreptitious infiltration of the Finnish press to manipulate employee morale. At the same time, management is often portrayed for being humane- sparing jobs for the men with the largest families, providing decent housing for most employees, and giving back to the community during economic depressions. Lankton perhaps best acknowledges the double-edged sword of corporate paternalism in the closing chapter - "paternalism was not only a means of social welfare, but a means of social control, and the companies had no intentions whatsoever of sharing control with their men."Unfortunately, we get much more of a glimpse of the internal conflicts of management rather than the day-to-day life of the miners, presumably because management correspondence is much better documented.The only other criticism I have of this book, which is common to most other works of its type, is its often thoughtless avalanche of statistics. Lankton description of costs of mining equipment, wages, numbers of injuries and deaths, etc. isn't put into context by displaying overall rates and dollar figures adjusted by inflation. So the Quincy mining company spent \$26,557 on rock-drill equipment in 1872-73... what does that mean in today's dollars? So what if "In 1906, men took 24,675 baths courtesy of their company"... how many is that per person? Some tables and charts would also help illustrate statistical trends, but there's not a one in this book.But that doesn't even put a dent in the value of this sweeping review of technology in society.

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