In Search of a Postextractive Future

Ruin, Recreation, and Militarism in the Upper Midwest

CAMDEN BURD

ABSTRACT *This article examines the various attempts of boosters and regional organizations in Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula as they responded to the shifting economic landscape in the decades after the Second World War. During this time, the regional copper mining industry collapsed, leading to an outmigration of residents and an intense local recession. Boosters went to work attempting to rebrand the region and offset the economic, social, and cultural crisis in the "Copper Country." Their efforts were wide-ranging. Proposals included the expansion of the tourist economy, calling attention to the environmental realities of the region. They also pursued military contracts, hoping to benefit from the postwar military industrial complex. Though varied, each proposal was influenced by the boosters' sense of place. As such, the search for a postextractive future relied upon the unique industrial history and environments that had defined the Keweenaw Peninsula for over a century.*

KEYWORDS *copper mining, deindustrialization, military Keynesianism, Upper Peninsula, vacationland*

Evidence of the copper mining industry abounded throughout Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula by the early decades of the twentieth century. Industrial mining activity had shaped the landscape since the 1840s, leaving a physical record of the extractive economy that had made the region. Dimpled terrain was the first clue, evidence of the mineral veins that once lay beneath. Some were small, mere pits to an untrained eye. But more established sites, like the Quincy Mine in Hancock, Michigan, were harder to miss. Its giant slag piles lined the property like toxic berms. The company grounds were so polluted by industrial smelting that they will forever be a barren alluvial plain, leaving a geologic record of the mine that remained active for nearly one hundred years. Generally considered a subterranean activity, mining shaped all aspects of the Keweenaw environment. The forests had been cleared for fuel and infrastructure so that by the 1940s only scrubby second-growth forests remained. Consider the black sand beaches near Gay, Michigan. A coastline made of unwanted earth, the dismal shore was left behind by nearby

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stamp mill operators who spent decades crushing ancient basalt in search of any scrap of copper embedded within.[1]

The mining industry shaped the land as it shaped the Euro-American settler-colonists who called this place home. Entire communities developed around the mining infrastructure. Whether their homes sat above the mines or in the shadows of shaft houses, those who lived in the Keweenaw Peninsula never doubted the centrality of the industry to their economic and social well-being. In Copper Country, historian Larry Lankton wrote, mining shaped all aspects of life from the "cradle to grave." By digging, extracting, chopping, pounding, burning, smelting, building, and polluting, residents had turned the Keweenaw Peninsula into a place. This was Copper Country.[2]

The extractive economy was an all-consuming fact of that place. As such, a slight dip in copper prices had profound effects on residents' jobs, families, and communities. That reality was all too apparent in the decades after the Second World War. Military contracts expired. Copper prices dropped. Mines closed. Decline rippled throughout the region, setting off a chain reaction. Less mining meant less smelting. Both meant less work, which, in turn, led to a mass exodus from the region. From 1940 to 1960, the three-county region, including Houghton, Keweenaw, and Ontonagon, saw a population decline of nearly 25 percent. Mining firms tried to sell off assets, including company-owned homes and vacant lots. Municipal services declined or stopped entirely. The recession was not simply an economic issue. No, this was a crisis of regional identity. This was Copper Country, after all, bound to a singular economic engine. As that engine stalled, residents and regional boosters began to formulate new plans to remake the Copper Country.[3]

Places, and the meanings people ascribe to them, change over time. It was geographer J. B. Jackson who noted that these changes occur for a variety of reasons, including "economic necessity, technological evolution, [or] a change in social outlook." In short, shifts in the flow of capital or the development of new ideas about the environment can fundamentally reshape the look and social meaning of a place. Such change has been interpreted in different ways depending on geography, political disposition, and historical context. Steven Conn argues that in rural places, such as the Keweenaw Peninsula, change has often been described in flat terms, trapped "between a language of crisis and a language of myth." But fixating on crisis and myth fails to grasp historical reality. It is a framing mechanism that ignores Jackson's basic point: places change in form, function, and meaning. It also overlooks how particular people in particular places understood themselves and their environments amid those shifts. Moving past the crisis and myth framework offers

historians the opportunity to see a place, that unique temporal geography, as it was. Only then, Conn argues, can historians grapple with the obvious fact that rural places are diverse and complex and "reflect the work of most of the major forces that have shaped twentieth-century America."[4]

Although a sense of economic crisis did move through the region, many sought solutions. They adapted. Residents and boosters looked to burgeoning economic, political, and social developments of that era: the expansion of the tourism industry and the rapid growth of military spending. Hoping that those midcentury developments might stabilize the local economy, advocates sought to preserve a sense of place while making something new of the Copper Country. As they saw it, their ideas were modern, forward-looking, and timely.

As advocates began to envision a new path for the Copper Country, state legislators began to take stock of the economic situation of the region. By 1953, the Michigan Economic Development Commission (MEDC) sponsored an exhaustive study of the Upper Peninsula to evaluate "the attitude of the residents toward further community development, the basic economic situations, and the business and industrial activities of the area." Extractive communities were in decline, state legislators agreed, and the MEDC's study represented a consensus that the economic woes of places like the Keweenaw Peninsula were not simply an economic blip. The MEDC hoped to offer legislators a series of "comprehensive programs for the economic betterment" of the entire Upper Peninsula but with particular focus on those places in steepest decline, the mining regions. Once understood to be vital assets of the American industrial economy, the region's remaining firms were now "generally marginal producers." "The tremendous . . . mining reserves were exploited by early entrepreneurs with little thought of conservation methods," the authors noted. With depressed prices and more competition from western mines, the companies in Keweenaw struggled to maintain their position. As such, the situation "led to the feeling in some sections that the 'good old days' would never return again." The report bluntly noted that "pessimism and a sense of defeatism [are] still strong in some Upper Peninsula Communities."[5]

Though the outlook was bleak, the MEDC offered a few suggestions to improve economic development. First, legislators and community leaders needed to attract new businesses to the region. This would not be an easy task. As the 1953 report noted, the region's isolation was a hindrance to industrial development. The Keweenaw's distance from the urban centers of the Midwest contributed to a perception among onlookers that economic investment in that section of the country was simply not profitable. It would cost

more money to make, ship, and sell goods produced in the mined-out north country than other places closer to consumers. The only solution would be investments. "Better transportation ties . . . are a very great need," the authors of the report noted in several places throughout the document. Infrastructure meant more than roads, though. Investments in "electric power" and "communication facilities" would also modernize the depressed mining communities. For the Keweenaw to attract new industries, the MEDC report noted that politicians and financial institutions would need to rebuild the entire infrastructure of the region, transforming it from a once extractive place into a modern, industrial one.[6]

Infrastructure was only one issue. The other would be shifting the ways that outside investors viewed the Keweenaw and Upper Peninsula landscapes. "The popular conception of the Upper Peninsula as a remote, heavily forested area with an extremely cold, rugged climate may be classed as a liability." The report's authors were explicit: "*One of the major efforts* of future economic and industrial development programs *should be an organized campaign to dispel this popular conception*." The region needed to rebrand itself, to demonstrate that the Keweenaw and the broader Upper Peninsula was not an isolated, run-down tundra. Instead, the authors suggested, investors needed to view the region as ripe with opportunity and on the cusp of a bright future. The MEDC proposed a coordinated effort between tourist organizations, local chambers of commerce, and state agencies. They could, among other things, "encourage favorable legislation," "conduct effective economic development programs," and, perhaps most importantly, "counteract the false adverse opinion . . . held by many outsiders." To preserve those places, the MEDC report charged various bodies to promote the region in novel ways. [7]

As state-level groups grappled with the regional crisis, the national recession of 1958 brought the economic woes of the Copper Country into the national spotlight. Congress created the Special Committee on Unemployment Problems in 1959 to examine the Upper Peninsula and other economically depressed communities. The committee featured several senators from states with high levels of unemployment—places whose economies were closely tied to copper, iron, and coal mining. This was certainly true in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, where unemployment rates approached 14 percent. The three-day hearing featured a range of speakers from government agencies, organized labor, economists, and the business community. The goal was, as chair and senator Eugene McCarthy (D) stated, "to determine what measures can be taken to reduce the social and economic consequences of unemployment." Proposals varied. Some speakers advocated for more robust

unemployment insurance. Others pushed for shorter work days and work weeks to stretch employment opportunities. Representatives from the US Chamber of Commerce noted that unemployment could be a good thing—a market correcting itself. Still others suggested government-sponsored job-training programs and housing grants to assist unemployed groups in gaining new skills and acquiring work in growing markets.[8]

Among the participants was Michigan senator Patrick McNamara (D), who was eager to discuss the economic issues facing mining communities in the Upper Peninsula. "Mining is pretty generally a depressed industry," McNamara noted, "and we have sections in my State, Michigan, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, where we have had chronic unemployment for a long period of time." McNamara was a committed Keynesian, and his comments demonstrated a desire for more direct intervention in Michigan's depressed mining communities. "Isn't it more economical to keep people in the area where they are, in this depressed area, than to encourage them to sell their homes and in effect move out, and the area becomes a ghost town?" he reflected during the hearings. "Isn't it just plain good economics to try and do something about this rather than to just abandon an area because, well, to begin with, we don't know where to suggest they go?" McNamara's line of reasoning demonstrated a basic frustration with the technocratic tone of many of the hearing's presenters. These were people's communities, McNamara emphasized. They built lives here. Simply put, he noted, "these are mining people."[9]

Concerns from politicians prompted boosters and other regional leaders to find ways to offset the harshest aspects of the contracting economy. Although continued attempts would be made to attract manufacturing industries to the region, the most visible economic change would come through a tourism-based economy in the upper reaches of Michigan. In this way, the Copper Country followed the well-worn path of other postextractive communities whose leaders managed to turn geographic isolation, low-population density, and proximity to forests, water, and natural scenery into economic assets. Mining and industrial communities throughout twentieth-century America attempted to reinvent and repackage themselves in the face of dramatic economic decline. Mines, mining towns, and toxic sites have been turned into heritage sites, ski resorts, and golf courses. In each variation, the community and its boosters hope to remake places once deemed disheveled and dangerous into destinations. These changed landscapes represented larger transitions in the global economy as well as larger American tourist sensibilities. Depending on the destination, tourists traveled to these places to celebrate

industrial pasts, new experiences with nature, or some combination of the two.[10]

Copper Country was no different. As mining collapsed in the region, policymakers and boosters took the advice of the MEDC seriously and sought to transform the economy and the overall image of the region in a way that would appeal to outside tourists—downstate and metropolitan residents who sought new experiences with the natural world in the decades after World War II. Copper Country, the planners hoped, would become an idyllic destination known for its forests, beaches, and cool summer temperatures, all while improving the devastated economy.[11]

The task of developing the Copper Country's tourism industry largely fell on the shoulders of Kenneth L. Dorman. Originally born in London, Ontario, Dorman attended school in Canada and Michigan before working for General Motors and the Ford Motor Company. After serving in the Army Air Corps during World War II, he moved his family to Houghton, Michigan, where he got involved in economic development projects. He started his own consulting firm, Kenman Associates, and helped reorganize the Upper Peninsula Development Bureau into the Upper Michigan Tourist Association. Though each of his organizations had their own directive, their underlying missions were all interconnected: develop the regional economy. In his role with the Upper Michigan Tourist Association, he made connections with tourist-adjacent industries, restaurants, and local chambers of commerce to promote the region in various ways. He published brochures, attended regional conferences, and hoped to demonstrate the economic opportunities in the region. In fact, Dorman was most likely the unnamed individual noted in the MEDC report for his "long-time efforts" for promoting the region: "For years he has been as a 'voice crying in the wilderness' promoting programs that paid off years later because of his constant energy and enthusiasm."[12] The MEDC report emphasized a social reality about rural places like the Keweenaw Peninsula. Boosters like Dorman often play an outsized role in reframing how residents and onlookers come to understand a place. It was their job to attract capital, shape the economy, and manage the image of a community in the eyes of onlookers. In short, boosters like Dorman are place-makers.[13]

Dorman's efforts to develop tourism required demonstrating to residents how that industry touched all aspects of the regional economy. "Tourism is not just one business," he wrote in one pamphlet promoting the Upper Michigan Tourist Association. "It is many businesses rolled into one."[14] Hotels, motels, vacation rentals, gas stations, and retail stores are "largely

dependent on tourists for their profit margin."[15] Growing that industry, he pleaded to politicians and local businesses, was good for all businesses. In materials distributed to regional companies, he encouraged managers and employees to adjust their practices toward seasonal visitors. Restaurant servers should learn local history, and managers should direct visitors to nearby tourist destinations. Together, the booster argued, they served as liaisons to the broader community. "Right now your community needs more business and the tourist business holds [the] greatest promise for expansion. If you and your co-workers are better hosts, business will be better."[16] The goal was to "rebrand" the Upper Peninsula. The booster didn't want visitors to view the Copper Country as a rough, mining country going through economic struggles. Tourists wanted friendly faces, memorable experiences, and residents knowledgeable of the local history and optimistic about the future of the region.

Over the years, the Upper Michigan Tourist Association distributed a slew of brochures advertising the region as a "Waterfall Wonderland" for the summer tourist and celebrating the skiing, skating, ice fishing, and snowmobile amenities.[17] Any visitor to Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula during the 1950s and 1960s would have been familiar with Dorman's work. His pamphlets, maps, and brochures filled the kiosks at hotels and motels across the region. As such, travelers would have a clear sense of the various tourist-friendly features of the peninsula. Dorman made sure to highlight those destinations in tourist maps (fig. 1). From the bear pits near Silver City, to the agate beaches of Eagle Harbor, as well as the various state parks throughout the region, Dorman made sure to highlight and promote the numerous locales that he believed made the Copper Country an ideal tourist destination.

The booster's attempts appeared to be successful. By 1950, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* described the Copper Country as a place where "other treasures" were "just beginning to be exploited"—a gesture to the region's extractive past. "Small resort hotels and overnight tourist cottages and fishing camps have grown up since the war," the article outlined. Now tourists could experience a region known for its "scenery, summer climate, and romantic history." In 1959, the *New York Times* ran a similar story: "For those who enjoy the sigh of cool breezes in the pines, who love to battle with a fighting game fish, who like to camp on the wooded shore of a sparkling lake or who would like merely to tour and view man-made as well as natural wonders, Michigan's Upper Peninsula exercises a potent lure." The tone of these articles depicted the Copper Country as the sort of place where one traveled to "get away" from the stress of modern, industrial life. If places like Chicago,

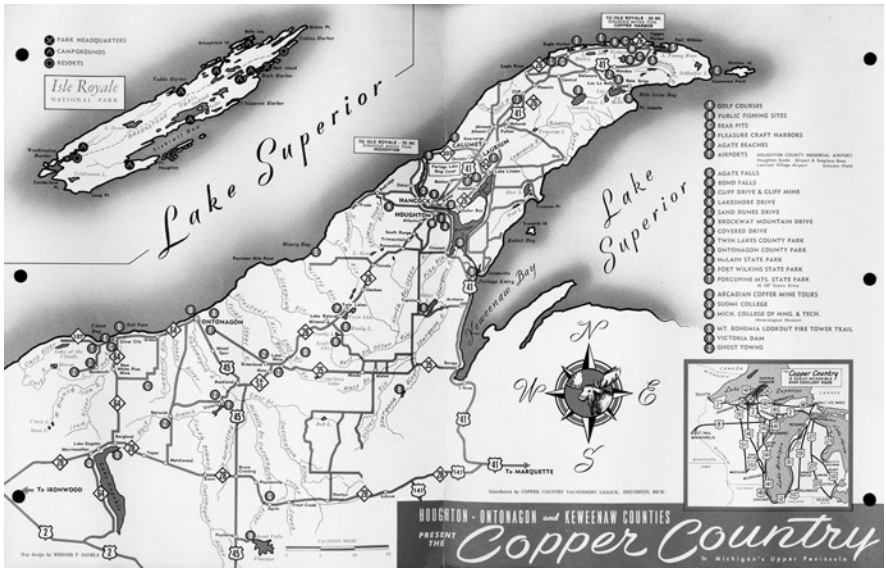

FIGURE 1. Houghton, Ontonagon, and Keweenaw Counties Present the Copper Country in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. KLDC, series 5, box 5, folder 31.

Detroit, and Milwaukee represented the unsavory aspects of life in the mid-century United States, the Copper Country was the antidote.[18]

The articles helped the broader project to gloss over—or ignore—the very real hardship still ongoing in the Keweenaw Peninsula. The booster wanted to present the Copper Country like one of his many tourist maps: clean, orderly, and inviting. In the recreational Keweenaw, one would encounter a series of destinations including beautiful beaches, scenic hikes, and historic landmarks, all easily accessible within a day's drive. There was no industrial ruin on these maps. No hint of suffering. That is because regional promoters simply understood that sadness didn't sell. News of unemployment statistics, the closing of public schools, and empty storefronts would not bring in the tourists. Promoters like Dorman simply did not talk about that—especially not to the potential tourists whose money might alleviate some of the region's economic ills. Dorman was not lying to himself when he gussied up the image of the Copper Country for potential tourists living further south. But his biggest task *was* shaping the opinions of those onlookers.

Tourism was not Dorman's only plan to bolster the regional economy. Beginning in the late 1950s, the booster began imagining the Upper Peninsula as an ideal destination for federal funds as the nation geared up to combat the looming specter of communism. His was not a novel idea. Military

Keynesianism had been a point of debate for policymakers, military officials, and labor leaders since World War II, but it picked up renewed interest in 1950. The economic downturn of 1949 and the onset of the Korean War in 1950 created a unique political situation for military planning. Pressured by organized labor as well as politicians who represented depressed areas, President Harry S. Truman eventually directed military leadership to consider "labor surplus areas" when awarding contracts for military production.[19]

Bases, runways, and the influx of troops equated to economic activity. Entire towns could develop around these installations. And the period after the Second World War was one of tremendous growth. From 1947 to 1960, hundreds of military projects dotted the American landscape. Some of these were large training facilities. Others were hospitals, barracks, labs, and nuclear silos. Though their size and scope ranged, the projects equated to one thing—economic activity. In nearby Sawyer, Michigan—a small town in a string of depressed iron-mining communities—the Air Force activated the K. I. Sawyer Air Force Base in 1956. By 1960 the base boasted three thousand active-duty personnel. Within a decade of activation, Sawyer grew to be the Upper Peninsula's fourth largest city.[20] Encouraged by recent events, Dorman hoped to do the same for the Copper Country. As such, he soon developed a plan to militarize the peninsula's substratum, transforming the hollowed earth of abandoned mines into bunkers, missile silos, and underground cities.

Historians have long tracked how bombs, forts, and soldiers have stressed and reorganized the surrounding environment. Human health has also been affected as military activities often place soldiers and nearby residents in close contact with chemicals and munitions. Historians have identified the political and economic dynamics that turned parcels of earth into militarized landscapes. As Edwin Martini writes, these sites often "reinforce the inherent connections between physical sites and various frameworks through which that site is understood." For Dorman, and many others who lamented the passing of the extractive era, the mines represented the essence of that past place *and* a possible future for military investment. Dorman's plan to transform the hollowed earth represented continuity for those who still wanted, maybe needed, those mines to matter. If the mines were the defining aspect of this region, a plan to restore or preserve their significance offered a chance to preserve residents' sense of place.[21]

In 1958 Dorman compiled his *Report on the Michigan Copper Country* for the Department of Defense. It was a proposal he had been inspired to write after attending a symposium on "Protective Construction" hosted by the RAND Corporation, a nonprofit military and strategy think tank founded

alongside the United States Air Force. While attending plenaries and listening to speakers, he found a sympathetic cadre of intellectuals who theorized the vital importance of mining regions in the ongoing Cold War. The panels were mostly technical, with sessions ranging in focus from "Rock Stabilization through Bolting" to "Some Factors to Consider in Site Selection and Design of Underground Protective Structures" to "Tunnel Damage from Nuclear Explosions." It was a symposium he later described as "one of the most worthwhile conferences that I have ever attended."[22]

Though several panels interested the booster, it was Herman Kahn's presentation, titled "Why Go Deep Underground?," that caught his attention. Kahn was a futurist, civil engineer, and nuclear planner employed by the RAND Corporation. Kahn was less of a cold warrior and more of a Cold War planner. Throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, Kahn explored the possible implications of a nuclear war with the USSR. To be clear, Kahn was not interested in nuclear armament. Instead, Kahn promoted a vision of civil defense spending that considered the characteristics of a postnuclear society: its economy, population, production, and social stability. He did not believe that a nuclear war would wipe out the global population. As such, Kahn thought deeply, and creatively, about how this new society would need homes, food, and factories—the very items that would ensure humans did not just survive nuclear war but instead thrived and began the process of creating a new, stable economy. "It is reported that the government is now spending $10 million a year on mobilization studies," he began in his critique of current government priorities. In this model, experts assumed that "a war involving an initial exchange of a large number of thermo-nuclear weapons" would lead American officials to "mobilize a multimillion-man army to send overseas." Kahn flatly called this "unreasonable." In place of mobilization planning, Kahn urged officials to think broadly. "We expect the first phase of an all-out thermonuclear war to be short," he argued. "Because the outcome may be settled in a matter of days, government goals should not be directed toward restoring war production but toward protecting civilians, aiding their survival, and rebuilding the economy, not because any of these activities would aid the war effort but simply because the preservation of people and property is a major responsibility of government." This meant stockpiling food, water, and building materials; securing factories; and providing electricity so that Americans could rebuild in the immediate aftermath of nuclear war. This led Kahn to consider mines as vital military infrastructure, noting that nearly 750 million square feet of vacant floorspace were already available for construction. "In terms of military uses . . . or civilian uses, such as storage or protection

of people, these suitable mines can be readily adapted." Cities, factories, and strategic centers could easily fit into America's underground infrastructure. All that was needed, he argued, was some "imaginative thinking."[23]

Kahn's ideas directly informed Dorman's *Report on the Michigan Copper Country*, a document that argued that the Copper Country was ideal for military installations including "command posts, storage depots, manufacturing plants, and service facilities." The report was the product of a man steeped in the very local concerns of the Keweenaw Peninsula but attuned to the larger anxieties of the nuclear age. The report assured readers that the Copper Country and its inhabitants were well prepared to support "offensive and defensive strategy in the atomic age."[24]

The report outlined several reasons why the region was ideal for defense spending. First, the Keweenaw Peninsula was geographically removed from the main population and industrial centers to the south and east; and, Dorman argued, it was isolated from the furthest reaches of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). The region could also boast defense-ready capabilities including deep harbors in nearby Lake Superior for shipbuilding and other wartime industries. Food and water were available as well as the raw materials—such as lumber, copper, and iron—for production of various goods. The climate and topography were suitable for radio transmissions—better than mountainous regions in the West. Additionally, given the region's outmigration, the Copper Country could handle a growing population to build and sustain defense projects. In various letters to RAND employees and government officials, Dorman continued to argue why this place was better suited for these projects than others. In one letter, he noted that "there are some one hundred and ninety missile contracts listed in factories located within fifty miles of vulnerable pacific coast areas." "In other words," he noted, "too many eggs in a vulnerable basket." Such concerns could be assuaged if planners took seriously the various benefits that Michigan's Copper Country had to offer. In writings and letters, Dorman hoped to repackage what outside capitalists saw as the region's most notable liabilities (economic isolation, harsh winters, and the lack of a diversified workforce) into the Department of Defense's biggest assets. Though Dorman noted these qualities as natural advantages, they were hardly the most important. What was important was the mines.[25]

Once a sign of the region's economic grandeur, now a reminder of its decline, the mines, as Dorman reimagined them, would become essential components of the American Cold War apparatus. "Within the relatively small area of the Copper Country are approximately 100 shafts with their

associated rooms and tunnels," he noted. "Without undertaking a complete survey of usability at this time, it is evident that many of these mines could be renovated and adapted to defense needs." Take for instance the booster's description of the Quincy Mine—one of the more productive mines of the copper boom—which he believed was already well suited for military purposes. "The mine descends through a series of 91 levels to a depth of about 6000 feet . . . [and] . . . extends a horizontal distance of about 2½ miles." The rock that made up these mines is "very tough and strong," mostly consisting of basalt. The hard rock would be advantageous for construction underground but also protection from any nuclear blast above. "It is clear . . . that all bomb bursts in this district would be, for all practical purposes, surface blasts and the major effects would be dissipated." Additionally, the mine, like most mines in the region, lacked coal, oil, and explosive gases, meaning that "danger from these sources to personnel and stored material, particularly stores such as food or oxygen, is non-existent." Mines like Quincy were large and safe enough to support people, food, water, and infrastructure—all the components necessary to support and maintain entire communities underground. Recognizing that some walls and openings would need additional support to avoid air blasts and rock bursts (explosions caused by overloaded pillars), Dorman noted that "it is to be expected that all openings used for military or industrial purposes would be lined with reinforced concrete."[26]

The mines provided the shell that, with additional government spending, would support housing, factories, oxygen storage, and food storage. "It may be difficult for the visitor to visualize the change from the dark and crude mine workings to a well-lighted, concrete-lined, dry, and ventilated modern facility," he acknowledged. But those were the failures of uninformed and unimaginative critics to see the potential future in the postextractive Keweenaw region. To Dorman, these changes could be "easily engineered." Parroting Kahn's argument, the Michigan booster noted that if the government was going to act, it should look to the Upper Peninsula. "It is faster and more economical to use mined-out areas at great depths in hard rock than it is to start from scratch," he wrote. "With well-understood, modern engineering, Copper Country underground workings could easily be transformed into practical and even internally attractive quarters for all types of command post, storage, manufacturing, or service installations." Though the world he imagined was implicitly grim, he pitched a future vision that would improve the economy of the Keweenaw Peninsula.[27]

Prominent members of the community supported Dorman's vision. At least two individuals joined the booster in California for the RAND

Symposium. The first was Lawrence Adler, a faculty member at the Michigan College of Mines and Technology who specialized in mining engineering. They were joined by Colin Campbell, a high-ranking official for the nearby Hecla Mining Company. In correspondence with individuals at RAND, Dorman noted that the Michigan group was now "compiling a . . . portfolio of concepts of underground construction to help solve many of the challenging problems that were presented at your symposium." He was quick to note that "Dr. Van Pelt, the President of Michigan Tech has expressed keen interest and close cooperation with the problems that arise from our work." He continued, "If any of the many capable staff and members of the Michigan College of Mining and Technology can be helpful to either the Rand Corporation or the defense department . . . please do not hesitate to contact us." As he saw it, this was a regional effort. Those whose work and lives had been built around the mines had a vested interest in this project. It should be no surprise then, that Dorman's initial proposal had support from various members of the region including executives at two mining companies, the president and faculty members at Michigan College of Mining and Technology, several representatives from regional development bureaus, and the president of the local newspaper, the *Mining Gazette*.[28] He was no Cold War kook. Or maybe he was. If so, he was a kook with supporters—a cadre of individuals who sought to sustain their sense of place by envisioning an updated version of the old one.

Dorman must have felt some excitement in the early years. The booster's correspondence brought two RAND representatives in to explore the mines. One complimented Dorman, noting that they were "deeply impressed by your enthusiasm and imagination concerning the potentialities of the vast mine openings in the Houghton area." Congressman John B. Bennet, representing parts of the western Upper Peninsula, wrote to Dorman noting that his proposal to turn mines into fallout shelters was receiving "serious consideration" from the Office of Civil Defense. A year later, Senator Philip Hart wrote that he would contact the Air Force about hardened missile sites, seeking to learn "what they have done in terms of studying the possibility of locating such sites in Michigan's Upper Peninsula." At one point, Dorman even sent a letter to President Dwight D. Eisenhower. "The information that I am furnishing you in this letter is so important that I am sure at some time in the future it could save hundreds of thousands of lives," he declared in the opening line. "This can be all accomplished . . . by preparing here in the very heart of the North American Continent an impregnable underground defense setup." In an eight-page letter, Dorman shared his plans, walking the

president through each component of the project. "As a simple American . . . [I] wanted to use my observations and abilities to help build an impregnable American defense system and at the same time save billions of dollars on underground sites for all purposes." The president never wrote back.[29]

Though brimming with optimism, the booster watched as the Department of Defense shifted its defense strategy in the early 1960s. Less focused on the establishment of bases, military leaders instead chose a more flexible approach. The newly developed Minuteman ICBM allowed for long-range warfare from any point in the United States. Governmental officials began installing missiles across the American landscape, with a particular focus on the Midwest and the Great Plains. Only requiring two acres, an eight-foot chain-link fence, and a buried, hardened shell to protect from outside attacks, these missiles were well suited for installation across the flat, sparsely populated, rural landscapes of the American heartland. In the years between 1961 and 1967 the Air Force installed nearly one thousand Minuteman missiles across the region.[30]

Believing that the isolated region of the Keweenaw was still well suited for this new approach, Dorman again set out to attract those government dollars. He grabbed a nearby map, the ones that were neatly displayed in countless hotel kiosks across the region. He likely had boxes of them packed away in his office, home, and trunk of his car. With pencil and pen, he started to scribble notes across the Keweenaw Peninsula, sketching a militarized landscape on top of the tourist one. He circled some space near the region's Sand Dunes Drive, a place that he had advertised to countless visitors before. They could probably fit an ICBM there, he thought. Maybe another by the agate beaches, the Mt. Bohemia Fire Lookout Trail too. It never troubled Dorman that tourists would be hiking, camping, fishing, and skiing atop a nuclear arsenal. There was no conflict between those two landscapes.

No military bonanza with its bases and bombs ever came to the Copper Country. As the years passed, Dorman eventually abandoned his plans. It was recreation, his first pursuit, that would define the region. Today tourist signs dot the Keweenaw Peninsula, welcoming visitors to the Copper Country. But the Copper Country of today is not the one of the 1950s and 1960s. There are still abandoned mines and stained earth, to be sure. But this is a recreational place of campgrounds and National Parks. Historical landmarks and heritage areas preserve something of the mining past as part of something new. Mines turned heritage sites encourage visitors to remember—not dig or bunker. And though it would be all too easy to include the Keweenaw story alongside other postextractive and rural histo-

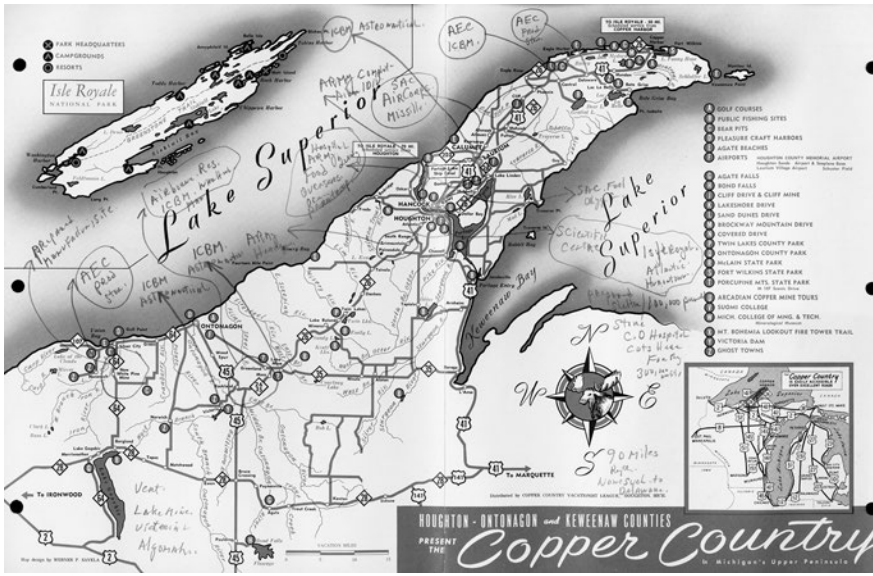

FIGURE 2. Marked-up Houghton, Ontonagon, and Keweenaw Counties Present the Copper Country in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. KLDC, series 5, box 5, folder 31.

ries, doing so risks flattening the complexity of the Copper Country. To do so would erase the economic realities of the postwar moment, the residents who felt them, and the plans of politicians, boosters, and business leaders who sought to make something new out of something old. It would erase the unique histories of mining, recreation, and militarism that overlapped in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

CAMDEN BURD is assistant professor of history at Clemson University. He is the author of *The Roots of Flower City: Horticulture, Empire, and the Remaking of Rochester, New York* (2024).

Notes

1. Dickman and Leefers, *Forests of Michigan*, 193–94; For more on toxicity, see Weston Solutions, *Summary Report for the Torch Lake Area Assessment*.

2. Lankton, *Cradle to Grave*.

3. Houghton County (1940 census: 47,631 residents), (1960 census: 35,654 residents); Keweenaw County (1940 census: 4,004 residents), (1960 census: 2,417 residents); Ontonagon County (1940 census: 11,359 residents), (1960 census: 10,584 residents). For the 1940 census, see Bureau of the Census, *Number of Inhabitants*, 507, 508, 510. For the 1960 census, see Bureau of the Census, *Characteristics of the Population*, 24–38. On the decline of copper mining in the late-1940s and 1950s, see Lankton, *Hollowed Ground*, 245–50.

4. Jackson, "Ghosts at the Door," 107–17; Conn, *Lies of the Land*, 1, 15.

5. Ebasco Services, *Ebasco Report on Michigan's Upper Peninsula*, xiii, 65, 82.

6. Ebasco Services, *Ebasco Report on Michigan's Upper Peninsula*, 8.

7. Ebasco Services, *Ebasco Report on Michigan's Upper Peninsula*, 95, 24.

8. Greene, *Employment Trends in Michigan's Upper Peninsula*, 1; *Hearings before the Special Committee on Unemployment Problems,* Part 1, 86th Cong., 1st Sess., October 5, 6, and 7, 1959, 3.

9. *Hearings before the Special Committee on Unemployment Problems*, part 1, 161, 163.

10. Limerick, "Seeing and Being Seen"; Rothman, "Shedding Skin and Shifting Shape"; Curtis, "Greening Anaconda."

11. For a broader history of tourism in the Upper Midwest, see Shapiro, *Lure of the North Woods*; Burd, "Imagining a Pure Michigan Landscape"; Burd, "In the Land of Hiawatha."

12. Ebasco Services, *Ebasco Report on Michigan's Upper Peninsula*, 116.

13. Similar figures have been documented throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*; also Farmer, *On Zion's Mount*.

14. *The Upper Michigan Tourist Association: 1911–1967*, Kenneth L. Dorman Collection, (hereafter KLDC), series 2, box 2, folder 36, Michigan Tech Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections.

15. *Upper Michigan Tourist Association*.

16. Upper Michigan Tourist Association, *How You Can Become a Certified Host of Upper Michigan*, KLDC, series 2, box 2, folder 26.

17. *Waterfall Wonderland of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan*, series 2, box 2, folder 26; *Michigan's Upper Peninsula Winter Calendar of Events*, KLDC, series 2, box 2, folder 22.

18. Hal Foust, "Copper Country Gives Tourists Scenic Wealth," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 16, 1950; Damon Stetson, "Michigan's Remote Upper Peninsula Country," *New York Times*, June 7, 1959.

19. Wehrle, "'Aid Where It Is Needed Most.'"

20. For a history of Sawyer, Michigan, and the community's relationship to the military, see Conn, *Lies of the Land*, 52–69.

21. For one collection of essays, see Closmann, *War and the Environment*. Other prominent works of military environmental history include Biggs, *Footprints of War*; Russell, *War and Nature*; Tucker and Russell, *Natural Enemy, Natural Ally*; Flintham, "Shoeburyness Complex"; Childers, "Incident at Galisteo"; Martini, "Bases, Places, and the Layered Landscapes of American Empire," 13.

22. *Report on the Michigan Copper Country for the Department of Defense, July 28, 1958*, KLDC, Series 5, box 5, folder 41; Kenneth Dorman to Hugo A. Facci, April 13, 1959, KLDC, Series 5, box 5, folder 39; O'Sullivan, *Proceedings of the Second Protective Construction Symposium*.

23. For more on Herman Kahn, see Ghamari-Tabrizi, *Worlds of Herman Kahn*, 181–202; Kahn, *Research Memorandum*, 3, 11, 101.

24. Kahn, "Why Go Deep Underground?"; *Report on the Michigan Copper Country for the Department of Defense*, 1–10.

25. *Report on the Michigan Copper Country for the Department of Defense,* 2–10; Kenneth Dorman to Hugo A. Facci, April 13, 1959, KLDC, series 5, box 5, folder 39.

26. *Report on the Michigan Copper Country for the Department of Defense*, 12–17.

27. *Report on the Michigan Copper Country for the Department of Defense,* 16.

28. Kenneth Dorman to John J. O'Sullivan, April 13, 1959, KLDC, series 5, box 5, folder 39; *Report on the Michigan Copper Country for the Department of Defense*, ii.

29. Samuel M. Genensky to Kenneth Dorman, July 29, 1959, KLDC, series 5, box 5, folder 39; Helen M. Dubino, Administrative Assistant to Congressman John B. Bennet, to Kenneth Dorman, October 24, 1961, KLDC, series 5, box 5, folder 39; Helen M. Dubino, Administrative Assistant to Congressman John B. Bennet, to Kenneth Dorman, October 24, 1961, KLDC, series 5, box 5, folder 39; Philip A. Hart to Kenneth Dorman, March 15, 1962, KLDC, series 5, box 5, folder 39; Kenneth Dorman to Dwight D. Eisenhower, January 12, 1958, KLDC, series 5, box 5, folder 31.

30. Two books explore the history, economic significance, and political economy of these military projects: Heefner, *Missile Next Door*; and Stock, *Nuclear Country*.

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