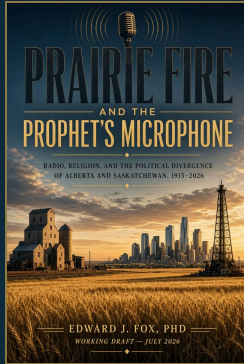
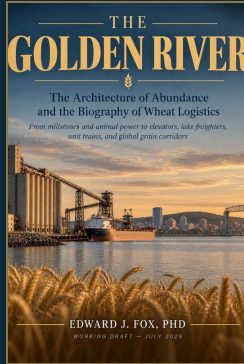


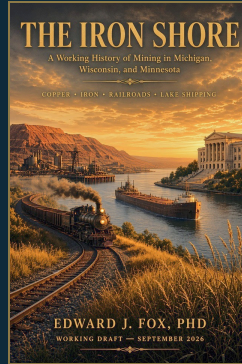
A SERIES ON THE UPPER MIDWEST



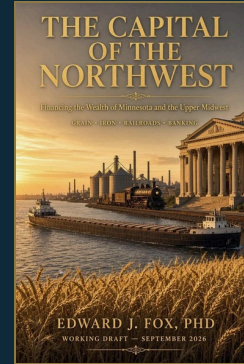
01 RADIO



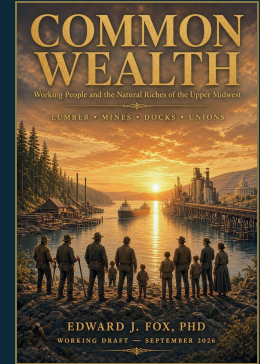
02 GRAIN



03 IRON



04 CAPITAL



05 LABOR

Five Papers. One Region. One Larger Story.

Wheat, ore, money, politics, and the people who did the work: a summary of five working papers on Minnesota, the Upper Midwest, and the Canadian prairies.

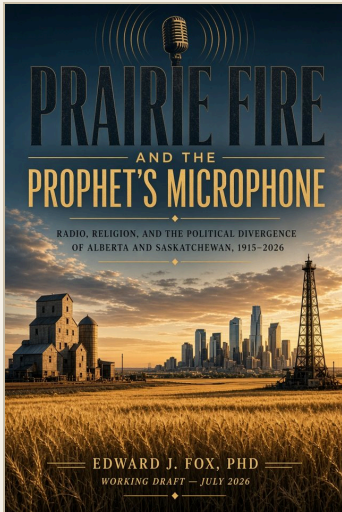
Reading a region through its wealth

These five working papers follow the natural riches of the Upper Midwest and the Canadian prairies: the wheat that moved east through Duluth and Buffalo, the copper and iron of the Lake Superior shore, the capital that financed both, the political movements they provoked, and the working people who turned them into a living.

Each paper can be read alone, and each asks one question. Read together, they return again and again to the same places, Duluth above all, and to the same problem: who controlled the region's wealth, and who stayed behind when it moved.

01	Prairie Fire and the Prophet's Microphone	3
	<i>How did Alberta and Saskatchewan develop different political traditions?</i>	
02	The Golden River	4
	<i>How does a field of wheat become a global commodity?</i>	
03	The Iron Shore	5
	<i>How did the region's mineral wealth shape its economy, communities, and politics?</i>	
04	The Capital of the Northwest	6
	<i>Where did the money behind the region come from, and where did it go?</i>	
05	Common Wealth	7
	<i>Who built the region's economy, and what happened when the work was fixed in place?</i>	

Pages 8–9: threads that connect the series, and a combined timeline. Page 10: about the author.



01

RADIO · RELIGION ·
POLITICAL DIVERGENCE

Prairie Fire and the Prophet's Microphone

*Radio, Religion, and the Political Divergence of Alberta and
Saskatchewan, 1915–2026*

How did Alberta and Saskatchewan, created together and shaped by similar prairie conditions, develop different political traditions?

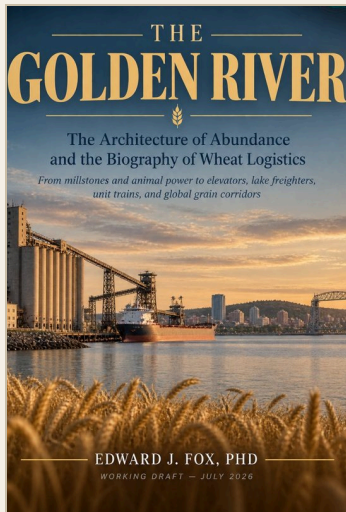
Alberta and Saskatchewan were created on the same day in 1905 and shared the same wheat economy and the same Depression grievances. Both turned to Baptist preachers: William Aberhart, whose radio sermons carried Social Credit to power in Alberta in 1935, and Tommy Douglas, whose CCF won Saskatchewan in 1944.

The story begins with North Dakota's Nonpartisan League, broken within six years while its state bank and mill, upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court, outlived it. The paper then follows Alberta's broadcast-born politics into the digital era, from Wexit to Take Back Alberta.

THE ARGUMENT

The medium through which a political movement is founded determines its organizational form, and the form outlives the medium, the doctrine, and the founder.

Saskatchewan inherited institutional memory. Alberta inherited narrative memory.



02

GRAIN · RAILROADS ·
ELEVATORS · GREAT LAKES

The Golden River

The Architecture of Abundance and the Biography of Wheat Logistics

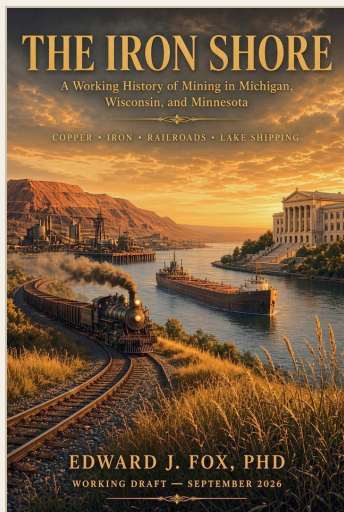
How does a field of wheat become a global commodity?

The book follows wheat from its domestication in the Fertile Crescent and Rome's grain fleets to Joseph Dart's 1842 steam-powered elevator in Buffalo, the grading systems of the Minneapolis exchange, and the Peavey-Haglin experiment of 1899–1900 near Minneapolis that proved grain could be stored in cylindrical concrete.

It follows North Dakota's Nonpartisan League and its state mill and elevator, the concrete cathedrals of Duluth–Superior, the 1959 St. Lawrence Seaway that undid Buffalo, and Cargill's Elevator B in Duluth, built for unit trains before the 1980 Staggers Rail Act. It ends with a narrower golden river and a trade dominated by four firms.

THE ARGUMENT

The story is not really about grain elevators. It is about how a continent learned to move its abundance.



03

COPPER · IRON · RAILROADS ·
LAKE SHIPPING

The Iron Shore

A Working History of Mining in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota

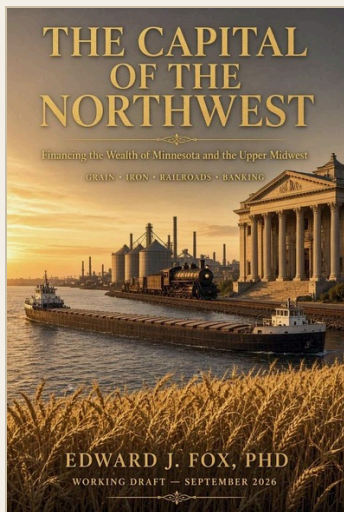
How did the mineral wealth of the Upper Midwest shape its economy, communities, and politics?

Native peoples worked Lake Superior copper for thousands of years and traded it as far as the Ohio Valley. The paper follows the Keweenaw copper rush of the 1840s, when Michigan came to supply more than 95 percent of U.S. copper, and Minnesota's Vermilion, Mesabi, and Cuyuna ranges. The Mesabi shipped more than two billion tons of ore from 1892 to 1961.

It traces the U.S. share of world iron ore from a 1945 peak of 56 percent to about 2 percent today, the taconite transition, and a tax system that let Hibbing build its high school on ore still in the ground. It closes with the Duluth Complex, a copper-nickel deposit that remains unmined and contested.

THE ARGUMENT

The larger pattern is adaptation. The geology has not changed; what has grown is the list of things people ask it to support: industry, communities, recreation, treaty rights, and clean water.



04

GRAIN · IRON ·
RAILROADS · BANKING

The Capital of the Northwest

Financing the Wealth of Minnesota and the Upper Midwest

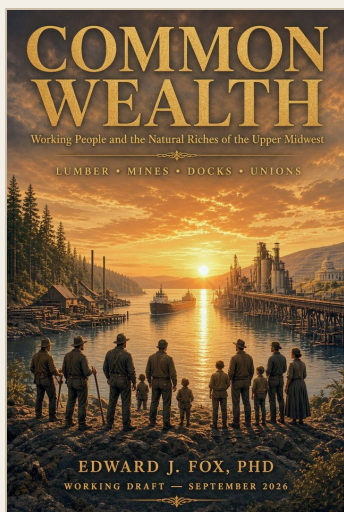
Where did the money behind the Upper Midwest's expanding economy come from, and how was regional wealth financed and reinvested?

Duluth moved the region's commodities, but the Twin Cities organized the money behind them, a division the Federal Reserve confirmed in 1914 by placing the Ninth District bank in Minneapolis. Minneapolis brought grain and milling capital, St. Paul railroad and wholesale capital. The paper follows farm credit, banking, and investment through the bank failures of 1930–1933.

It also shows how often the region's wealth was owned from elsewhere. Jay Cooke's Philadelphia money made and nearly unmade early Duluth, Rockefeller and U.S. Steel took control of the Mesabi, and lumber fortunes moved west with the pine. The paper closes with the Duluth steel plant, from its first steel to the cleanup of its site today.

THE ARGUMENT

Duluth moved the region's commodities while the Twin Cities organized its capital, and that division determined where the wealth of the Upper Midwest was financed and held.



05

LUMBER • MINES •
DOCKS • UNIONS

Common Wealth

Working People and the Natural Riches of the Upper Midwest

Who built the Upper Midwest's economy, and what happened when the work was fixed in place?

The paper follows work from the mobile white-pine frontier through mining, shipping, steel, manufacturing, and the service economy. Lumber could move, and its workers won only when the calendar gave them a chokepoint, in the 1937 timber strikes. Mines and harbors could not move, yet the Mesabi strikes of 1907 and 1916 and the Copper Country strike of 1913–14 still failed.

Lasting gains came when fixed work met immigrant cooperative traditions, Farmer-Labor politics, and federal labor law. Duluth, home to both AFL craft and CIO industrial unions, is the central case. The paper closes as processing, distribution, and manufacturing left, and hospitals and public institutions became the new fixed employers.

THE ARGUMENT

Mobility limited worker leverage, while fixed location created potential leverage, but geography alone did not decide the outcome. Durable gains came when workers joined it to organization, political support, and labor law.

Four threads that tie the papers together

Duluth, the hinge

Duluth appears in every paper: as a grain port and the site of Elevator B, as the ore docks at the head of the lakes, as the commodity gateway that moved wealth the Twin Cities financed, and as the city where craft and industrial unions organized side by side. Its steel plant at Morgan Park links The Capital of the Northwest to Common Wealth.

Wealth owned from elsewhere

Jay Cooke's Philadelphia money made early Duluth, Rockefeller and U.S. Steel took the Mesabi, and in 2018 Duluth's Pioneer National Bank passed to a Minneapolis owner. The Capital of the Northwest traces the money; The Iron Shore shows what stayed behind through taxation, in schools like Hibbing High.

What can move, and what cannot

Lumber could follow the pine west; mines, docks, and elevators were fixed in place. Later, steelmaking and manufacturing proved mobile too. That difference shapes Common Wealth's account of organizing and The Iron Shore's account of taxing ore in the ground.

Institutions that outlast their founders

North Dakota's Nonpartisan League links Prairie Fire and The Golden River: its state bank and its mill and elevator, upheld by the courts, outlived the movement. Prairie Fire makes that persistence of form its central argument.

TIMELINE

Key dates across the five papers

Millennia ago	Native peoples work and trade Lake Superior copper	IRON
1840s	Keweenaw copper rush begins	IRON
1842	Joseph Dart's steam-powered grain elevator, Buffalo	GRAIN
1899–1900	Peavey-Haglin concrete elevator near Minneapolis	GRAIN
1905	Alberta and Saskatchewan created on the same day	RADIO
1907	First Mesabi Range strike	LABOR
1914	Ninth District Federal Reserve Bank placed in Minneapolis	CAPITAL
1915	Nonpartisan League founded; Duluth Works makes its first steel in December	RADIO · CAPITAL
1916	Second Mesabi Range strike	LABOR
1919	Bank of North Dakota opens	RADIO · GRAIN
1930–33	More than 900 Ninth District banks close	CAPITAL
1934	Minneapolis Teamsters' strike	LABOR
1935	Aberhart's Social Credit wins Alberta	RADIO
1937	Minnesota timber workers' strikes	LABOR
1944	Douglas's CCF wins Saskatchewan	RADIO
1945	U.S. share of world iron ore peaks at 56 percent	IRON
1959	St. Lawrence Seaway opens	GRAIN
1971	Duluth Works ends ironmaking and steelmaking	LABOR
1978	Cargill moves Duluth grain exports into Elevator B	GRAIN
2018	Pioneer National Bank passes to Minneapolis-based Park Financial Group	CAPITAL
Today	Debate over copper-nickel mining in the Duluth Complex	IRON

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Edward J. Fox, PhD

Edward J. Fox is a retired health policy researcher and practitioner based in Portland, Oregon. His three-decade career in Tribal health administration and policy produced the Indian Health Financing Series.

Before that career, he worked on the construction of Cargill's Elevator B in Duluth, Minnesota, gaining firsthand experience with the slip-form concrete construction described in *The Golden River*. That experience is one of the roots of this series on the Upper Midwest.

A NOTE ON METHOD

These papers are working drafts. AI tools were used as research and editorial aids, including for source exploration, organization, drafting, editing, and selected graphics. All AI-assisted material was reviewed and revised by the author, who bears full responsibility for the accuracy, interpretation, and conclusions of the papers.

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