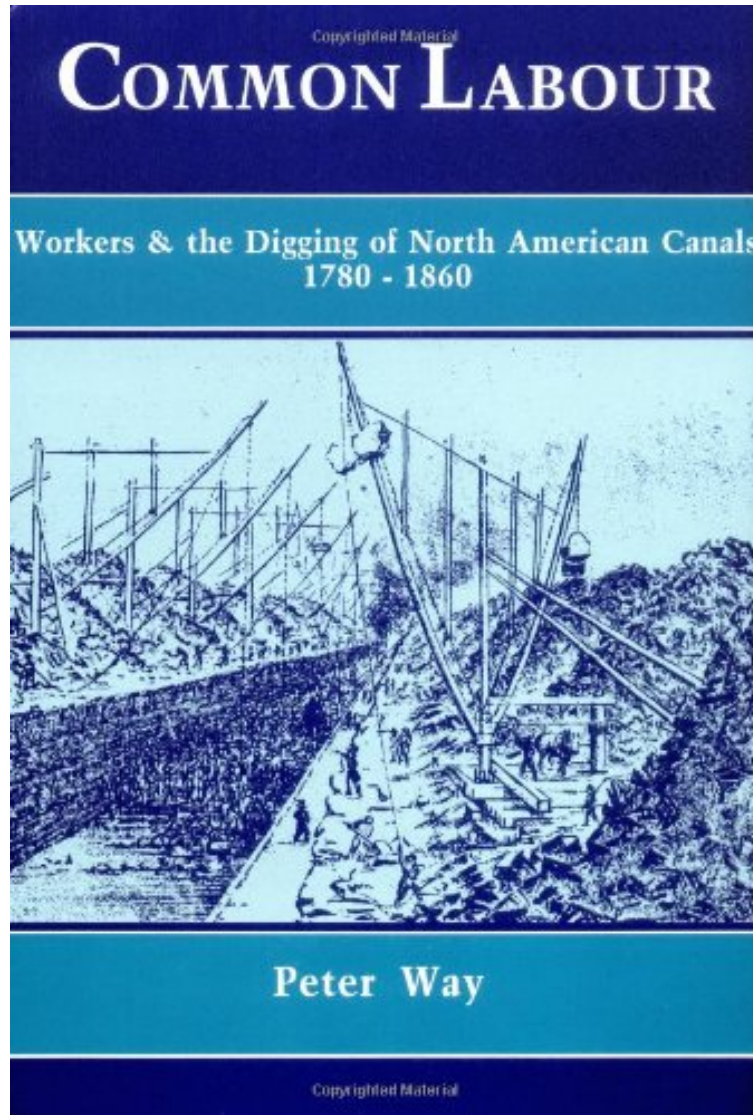


(Read free ebook) Common Labour: Workers and the Digging of North American Canals 1780ndash;1860

Common Labour: Workers and the Digging of North American Canals 1780ndash;1860

Peter Way

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Peter Way : Common Labour: Workers and the Digging of North American Canals 1780ndash;1860 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Common Labour: Workers and the Digging of North American Canals 1780ndash;1860:

This study of canal construction workers between 1780 and 1860 challenges labour history's focus on skilled

craftsmen and the model of working-class culture it generated. Canallers, part of the mass of unskilled labour thrown up by industrial capitalism, had an experience that differed in many ways from artisans. Once on the labour market, they were wholly alienated, more fully exploited, worse off economically and socially fragmented. Their struggle as members of a class pivoted on material conditions not on skill and shop-floor control. Canal construction played a significant role in the rise of industrial capitalism by opening new markets, providing an army of workers and initiating the statendash;capital ties so important in later years. Increasingly dominated by Irish immigrants the workforce lived in shanty towns at the work site or in nearby cities, the setting for much vice and violence. These were not the vibrant working-class communities of later labour history and the situation deteriorated in the late 1830s as labour surplus caused massive unemployment and depressed wages. The history of canal workers traces another strand of the labour story, one where the absence of skills bred powerlessness that made common labour's engagement with capital markedly unequal.

"Peter way is a gifted writer who presents here an enormous amount of new information about the canal workers and their families, the totality of which he sees as elements in the process of class formation....Way is powerful and eloquent in his descriptions of the conditions under which these men--an woman and children--had to work....a veritable storehouse of information, with scattered data on individual canal projects and considerable detail on the demongraphics of the laborers, pay rates, hours, and the omnipresent riots and strikes. It thesis about class formation is clear and persuasive, and Way is not bashful about challenging interpretations by others." American Historical "...distinguished by a prose style of eloquent brevity and irony that makes its insights stand out all the more sharply....Ways book will be long unsurpassed in its convincing rendition of the canaller industrial experience in the bleak terms of a Hobbesian and Malthusian universe." s in American History"...the book is unmatched as a descriptive account of manual labor in one of North America's earliest industries." The Annals of the American Academy"Way's book... has much to recommend it... an interesting book, quite ambitious in its attempts to describe the working conditions and culture of unskilled labor in the antebellum United States and Canada, the links between these factors and the rise of industrial capitalism in the northern United States and Canada, and the drama of conflicts between workers and owners." Industrial and Labor Relations "...exceptionally thought-provoking. Like the internal improvements of the Canal Era, Way's book cuts through uncharted territory; it is truly path-breaking. And like the transportation revolution itself, Way's success results from a combination of creative vision and arduous labor. Whether or not future historians agree with his findings, they will need to grapple with his argument that workers can be at once downtrodden and fully human." Carol Sheriff, William and Mary Quarterly"...what will surely be the definitive account of the world of the unskilled, often Irish, laborers who built the network of canals that crisscrossed the north-east within a few decades of U.S. independence." Work History News"...a model of historical reconstruction and of monograph writing....[Way] has given us a rich and complex book, the kind of breakthrough study that moves a field of history onto a new plateau. His work offers a fresh view of the social and economic dynamics of the period, and deserves the attention of all those interested in antebellum social and economic theory and history." Milton Cantor, Journal of the Early Republic"This is an extremely nuanced, balanced, and valuable contribution that expands our understanding of the diversity of the working-class experience in the United States." Eric Arnesen, Journal of American History"...a work rich in description, illumination, and irony. His prose is often of a caliber reserved for fine essays and novels. He has done a masterful job of weaving government records, travel accounts, and memoirs of clergy, businessmen, and community leaders into his fascinating account of the lives, both on and off the job, of tens of thousands of workers who built the canals of America and Canada...Way's Common Labour...was awarded the prestigious Frederic Jackson Prize by the Organization of American Historians in 1994...an ably argued and beautifully written study which will reward any reader who wants to explore development of antebellum business enterprise and working class life within the trenches and along the banks of North America's canals." John P. Beck, Michigan Historical "...this is a very good book....Way has produced a fine book....the book is written in colourful and often powerful prose, it only increases its appeal..." Michael S. Cross, Northern MarinerFrom the Back CoverComposed increasingly of Irish immigrants, Way explains, the work force was housed in hastily built shanty towns along the path of canal construction.