

1996 Review of Mining Archaeology and Historic Preservation

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Mining archaeology often reflects the contrasting research pathways of those who are interested in the history of mining technology, such as archaeometallurgy, and those who are interested in the miners themselves, the mining community. In an effort to bring the two groups together, A. Bernard Knapp of the University of Glasgow, Vincent C. Pigott of the University of Pennsylvania, and David Killick of the University of Arizona organized a conference on "Social Approaches to an Industrial Past" at the Rockefeller Conference Center in Bellagio, Italy, from which I have just returned. The 21 conferees included archaeologists, anthropologists, and historians from England, Scotland, Cyprus, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. They reported on current mining archaeology research geographically throughout the world and chronologically from the ancient beginnings of mining and metallurgy to the present, ranging from Bronze Age Europe and China to twentieth-century Australia and North America. The conference papers are being revised for publication.

Other notable mining archaeology events during the year include the publication of Paul T. Craddock's book *Early Metal Mining and Production* (Smithsonian Institution Press/Edinburgh University Press, 1995). Craddock synthesizes what is known about metals mining and archaeometallurgy from its ancient beginnings to the Industrial Revolution. The author, who is affiliated with the British Museum and a well-known authority on archaeometallurgy and the history of metal technology from the Bronze Age to the present, does a wonderful job of bringing together a massive amount of information about the origins and operation of early metal technology. In a related article, Gill Juleff reports archaeological evidence of an ancient wind-powered iron smelting furnace in Sri Lanka in a recent issue of *Nature* (1996, volume 379, number 6560, page 60). And in another related report, the September 1995 issue of *Antiquity* contains a research note on archaeological evidence of the

origins of bronze-casting at a site in Croatia.

Still, as in previous years, most of the research taking place in mining archaeology and historic preservation is reported in the "gray literature" and at the annual meetings of professional societies. The Society for Historical Archaeology sponsored a session on "Mining And Lumber Towns: Power, Consumption, And Ethnicity" at its 1996 annual meeting in Cincinnati. In the session were papers on the archaeology of Bolivia's colonial Potosí, violence in Pennsylvania coal mining towns, trash disposal in a model coal company town in Kentucky, ethnicity in the Silver Bell Mining District in Arizona, a salt-mining town in California's Mojave Desert, and the zooarchaeology of gold mining towns in Wyoming and of taverns in Nevada's Virginia City. In addition, the Society for California Archaeology's 1995 annual meeting included a session on "Investigations of Work Camps in the Western United States" that included papers on mining camp archaeology.

Alaska continued to be a hotbed of mining archaeology and preservation during the year. The Alaska Regional Office of the National Park Service reports more fieldwork and research for the Cultural Resources Mining Inventory and Monitoring Program. Established in 1986, the program inventories and evaluates mining sites for National Register eligibility in several national parks and preserves in Alaska. Most recently, an historic landscape inventory of the Gold Hill and Chisana sections of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve in east-south-central Alaska was completed. Gold Hill was the site of a placer mining rush in 1913. In addition, the University of Alaska Fairbanks supported two archaeological field schools during the summer of 1995 at three historic mining town sites in interior Alaska: Tofty, Coldfoot, and Wiseman.

Outside of Alaska, the American West continues to be the leading region for research in mining archaeology. Some of the reported projects, for example, include Priscilla Wegars' archaeological study of the "Ah Hee Diggings" at Granite, Oregon, a placer mine

worked by Chinese miners from the late 1860s to the 1890s (University of Idaho Anthropological Reports Number 97, Alfred W. Bowers Laboratory of Anthropology, Moscow, Idaho). The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks stabilized 10 buildings at Bannack, an early gold mining town and territorial capital of Montana. Limited archaeological excavation around building foundations was conducted as part of the project.

Elsewhere in the world, Heritage Victoria (Victoria, Australia) reports that the Historic Mining Sites Survey has nearly completed the survey and assessment of goldmining sites in central Victoria. Finally, Janice Wegner at James Cook University of North Queensland (Australia), completed a mining archaeology-related doctoral dissertation entitled "Croydon: Technology Transfer on a North Queensland Goldfield, 1885-1915."