
Book Reviews

Paul J. White. *The Archaeology of American Mining*. (American Experience in Archaeological Perspective Series.) Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017; 215 pp., 30 b&w illus., 6 maps, 1 graph, ref., ind., cloth, \$74.95. ISBN: 9780813054551

Paul Justin White has written a book that I wish I could have read a decade ago. He draws upon his extensive experience to provide a concise, well-organized overview of the evolution of mining archaeology in the U.S. over the last ninety years. It is particularly well supported through scores of examples taken from archaeological studies, and includes an excellent bibliography. This book is sure to be relevant to those practicing in the various disciplines involved in mining archaeology today and to those non-archaeologists, avocational archaeologists, and prospective archaeologists who share an interest in mining history.

To set the stage for the archaeological discussion, White provides a quick review of the last four centuries of mining in America by focusing attention on three time periods. The first starts with small-scale mining by Native Americans, continues with the iron forges and furnaces of the Colonial settlers, and ends with the push inland to discover gold in the Carolinas, copper and iron in the Lake Superior region, and lead in the Upper Mississippi Valley. The second period starts with the 1848 discovery of gold in California and continues through the mineral rushes that followed during westward expansion and urbanization. The third period runs from the late-1890s, through two World Wars, and into the Cold War, with the explosive growth in demand for miner-

als, including petroleum, to support our standard of living and strategic needs.

He next draws a parallel between the typical mining prospecting-development-extraction stages and the similar stages through which mining archaeology has evolved from the 1920s to the present. The 1920s, the prospecting period, saw archaeological studies such as those at James Marshall's gold discovery at Sutter's Mill and a few other sites in the subsequent decades; however, the general interest in mining sites remained low.

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 gave a major push to mining archaeological research, in particular on the public lands of the West. It was the start of the developmental stage and, in the author's words, the "Age of Acronyms." Cultural Resource Management (CRM) considerations in federal construction projects brought the requirement (and funding) for archaeological studies. Concurrently, the rebirth of the U.S. gold industry brought additional need for archaeological studies as part of the permitting process. A large number of mining sites were nominated for the National Register of Historic Places.

White provides useful insight into the friction that developed during the 1960s between industrial and historical archaeologists. It was variously characterized, at the time, as a conflict between those with interests in technology and engineering versus history and anthropology, workplaces versus settlements, and preservation versus subsurface information collection. An organizing research agenda was needed.

The 1990s marked the start of the extraction stage, which continues to the present.

The research conducted during the “Age of Acronyms” produced an increased number of publications, many of which reflected the divisions between historical archaeology and industrial archaeology mentioned above. However, researchers began to appreciate the detrimental effects of adhering closely to these traditional lines of research.

Several perceptive chapters are devoted to what we have learned to date from archaeological studies conducted at different scales: the mining settlements and their supply chains, the miners and their evolving social networks, and the mines themselves and the artifacts on the surface of and underneath the mining landscape. At each level of scale, White skillfully summarizes the findings of a number of examples of significant research. His extensive bibliography greatly facilitates the reader’s learning more about the individual projects.

The author observes that the public encounters our mining heritage in many forms, from monuments and restored historic towns to movies and theme parks. The latter group—he skipped over mining-themed casinos—often presents caricatures of mining which tend to blur historical reality. The growing awareness of mining’s environmental impacts has shaped the public’s opinion about the industry’s value. This is especially apparent when new projects are proposed. Cleanups in some historic mining districts have also brought conflicts between local historic preservationists and zealous environmentalists wanting to remove all traces of mining.

From White’s careful analysis of the last ninety years of archaeological research, he points out several promising directions for future work. He finds that more can be done to “broaden public awareness about the enormous depth and breadth of American mining” by looking outside the western states, by expanding the list of commodities beyond precious metals and coal, and by looking beyond the periods of settlement of the western states and the industrial age. The author also ad-

vocates for greater synthesis of the information gained through more narrowly focused historical archaeology and industrial archaeology studies, and the value of exploring the tie-ins with labor history, environmental history, and the social, political, and economic factors underlying technological change.

White reminds us that the legacy of American mining is still being written. As the industry continues to operate and evolve to meet the increasing demand for its products, it will continue to be a fertile area for archaeological research. Opportunities for future study include greater recording of the human scale of mining; the impacts of the increasing operational scale of surface mining, including those on the environment; and the effects of globalization of the industry, which connect mines and miners worldwide.

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Brian James Leech. *The City that Ate Itself: Butte, Montana and Its Expanding Berkeley Pit*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2018; 424 pp., 22 b&w illus., 4 maps, notes, bib., ind., cloth, \$39.95. ISBN: 9781943859429

Brian James Leech’s *The City That Ate Itself* offers a compelling account of the profound impact of the Anaconda Copper Corporation’s Berkeley Pit in Butte, Montana. The third volume of the emergent Mining and Society Series of the University of Nevada Press, Leech’s meticulously researched book, with its fast-paced narrative, takes the reader on a journey into the post-World War II transition from underground to open-pit mining. He convincingly argues that this shift in approaches to extracting copper ore altered the work, residential, social, and environmental spaces of Butte and environs. His principal focal point, and perhaps to a certain degree his villain, is the Berkeley Pit itself.

Leech sets the scene in Part I by narrating the