Archaeologists investigating sites of craft and industrial enterprise often puzzle over a domain of bewildering ruins. Locations of remarkable energy, tumult, and creativity stand silent. This book provides an overview of the archaeology of American craft and industrial enterprises, outlines developments in theories, research questions, and interpretative frameworks, and presents case studies from a wide range of subjects.

Research focused on industrial enterprises traverses a spectrum of perspectives. Some limit their efforts to recording, mapping, and studying the mechanics of a site. Others examine comparative questions of changes of technologies over time and space. Many analysts look away from the buildings and equipment of the workplace and focus instead on the workers, their families, residences, lifeways, and health experiences. With many sites presenting standing ruins, historians and archaeologists often encounter local stakeholder groups who wish to promote heritage themes and tourism potentials.
All of these perspectives can be pursued with significant advances in research and curation methods. Investigations often range from microscopic analysis of product constituents to large-scale, three dimensional recording of locations and features with high-resolution, laser technologies. Past debates questioned whether primary emphasis should be on heritage recording or on archaeological research questions. More recent trends focus on collaborations across interest groups.

_The shapes arise!_

*Shapes of factories, arsenals, foundries, markets;*
*Shapes of the two-threaded tracks of railroads;*
*Shapes of the sleepers of bridges, vast frameworks, girders, arches;*
*Shapes of the fleets of barges, tows, lake and canal craft, river craft._

— Walt Whitman, 1871, in _Song of the Broad-Axe_

Table of Contents

1. Introduction: Craft, Industry, and Heritage
   Manufacturing and Anthropogenic Impacts
   Definitions, Methods, and Theories
   Excavating Histories of Craft and Industrial Enterprises

2. Making and Harvesting Commodities: Episodes of Craft Growing to Industry
   Rivers and Textiles
   Winning and Losing in Cornell’s Pottery
   Spinning Whimsies at Dyott’s Glassworks
   Hand Tools, Trip Hammers, and Castaways at John Russell’s Cutlery
   Making Do in Schroeders’ Saddle Tree Factory
   Of Oysters, Abalone, and Salmon
   Many Storied Domains of Bread, Biscuits, and Cheese
   Artisan Support for an Armaments Factory
   Bottles and Beer at Work and Home in Harpers Ferry
   Binderies, Tanneries, and Social Perceptions
   Races, Lime, and Fire at Shepherdstown Cement Mill
   Some Observations and Affordances

3. Arteries and Flow
   Rivers, Canals, and Shipping
   Building the Rail Lines
Iron Trajectories and Wasteful Impacts
Pullman’s Rail Cars and Factory Town
Trends and Intersections

4. Extraction
Rails and Wood Cutting in West Virginia
Assemblies and Tools of Mining
From Cornwall to the Great Lakes
Colossal Montana
Hydraulic Assaults
Working the Cortez and Comstock Terrains in Nevada
Comparative Cases of Ethnicities, Cohesion, and Prejudices
Carving Coal in Berwind and Ludlow, Colorado
Mining and Murder at Lattimer, Pennsylvania
Ridge Barriers, Man Camps, and Magnetometers among the Oil Fields
Fueling Other Industries

5. Forges, Furnaces, and Metallurgy
Methods for the Melt
Early Smelting in New Mexico
Saugus Iron of Massachusetts
Trenton Steel Works of New Jersey
Strategies and Bloomeries in the Chesapeake
Landscape Challenges in Blacklog Narrows
Iron Plantations in South Carolina and Maryland
Women of Iron
Bluff Furnace of Tennessee
Tahawus Blast Innovations in New York
West Point Foundry on the Hudson
Jackson Iron Company of Michigan
Tredegar Iron and Cannons in Virginia
Hawks Nest Tunnel in West Virginia
Innovations, Pragmatic Choices, and Personal Costs

6. Craft at a Prodigious Scale: Potteries of Edgefield, South Carolina
Manufacturing Stoneware in Regional and Atlantic Contexts
Archaeological Revelations
Diverse Research Initiatives

7. Heritage Dynamics and Concluding Observations
Evolving Questions and Methods
Heritage Preserved and Repurposed
Future Prospects

References
Other books:

Crossroads and Cosmologies: Diasporas and Ethnogenesis in the New World
Broken Chains and Subverted Plans: Ethnicity, Race, and Commodities
Revealing Landscapes
African Diaspora Archaeology
Investigations of Craft and Industrial Enterprise

Author Profile

Industrial archaeology

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