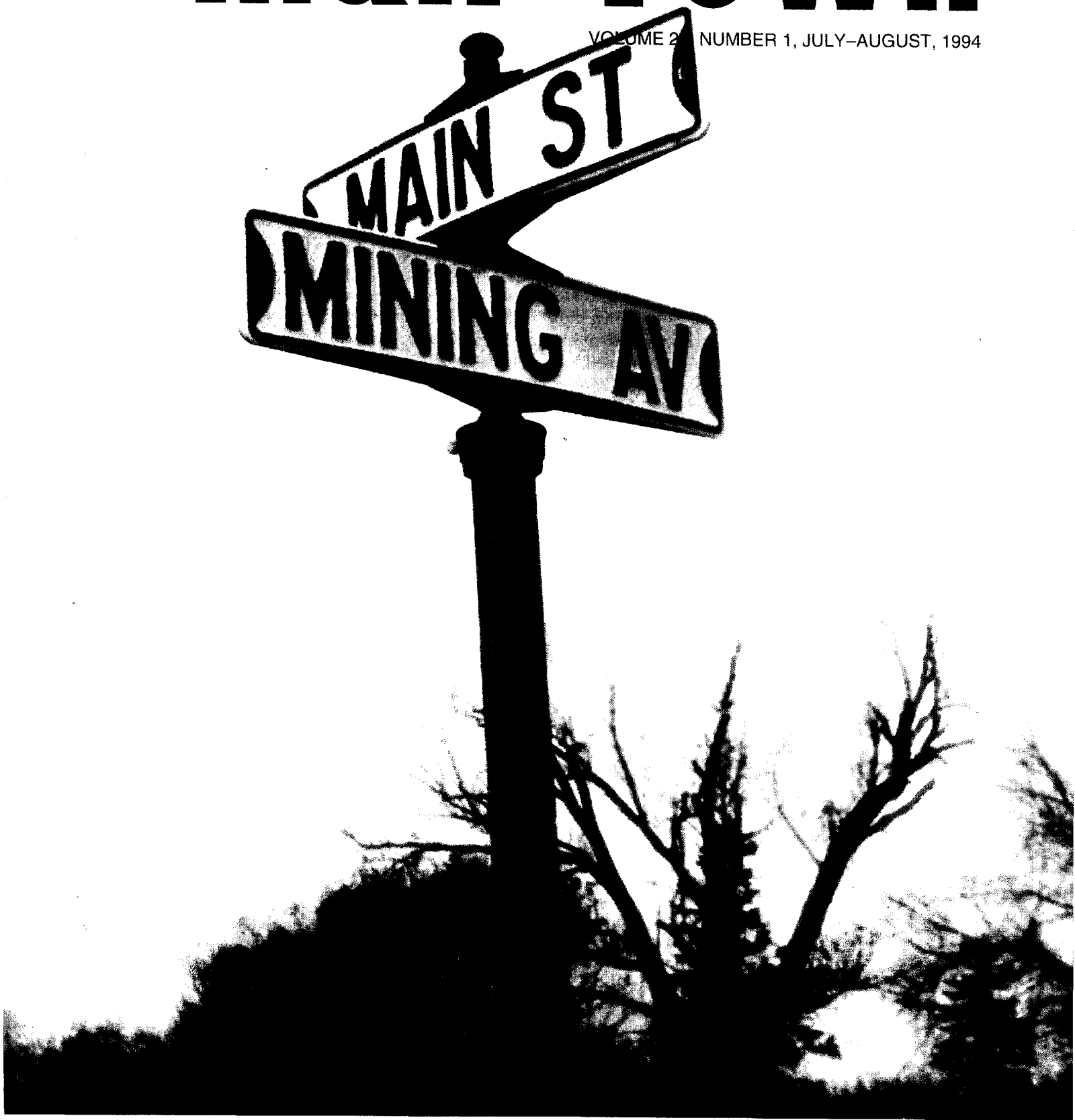
Small Town

VOLUME 2[illegible] NUMBER 1, JULY–AUGUST, 1994

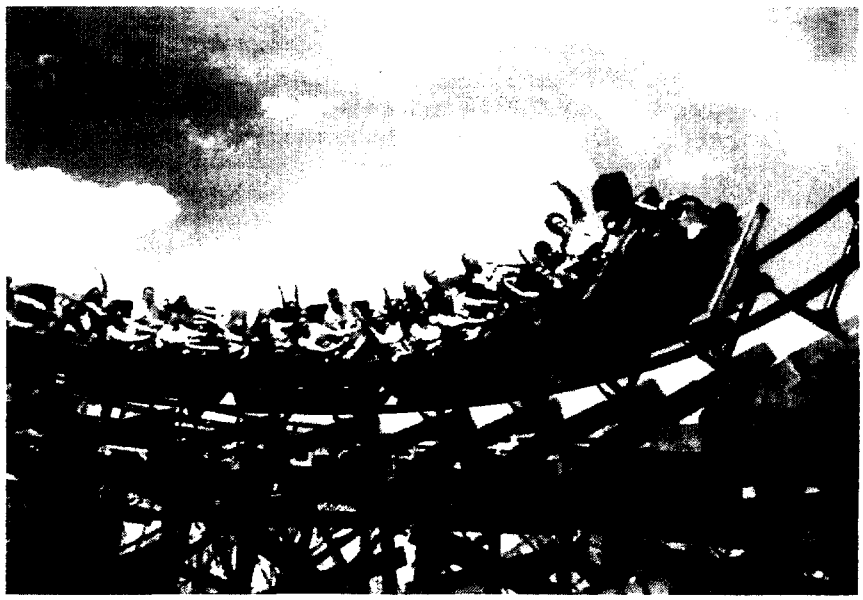


Small Towns Institute
Post Office Box 517 Ellensburg, Washington 98926

Vermont Division for
Historic Preservation
135 State Street, Drawer 33
Montpelier VT 05633-1201

In This Issue...

Volume 25, No. 1 *July–August, 1994*



Thrill-seekers ride the "Thunderation," a wooden roller coaster at Silver Dollar City near Branson, Missouri.

Learning from America's Preserved Historic Mining Landscapes:

Some New Perspectives on Community Historic Preservation

by Richard Francaviglia

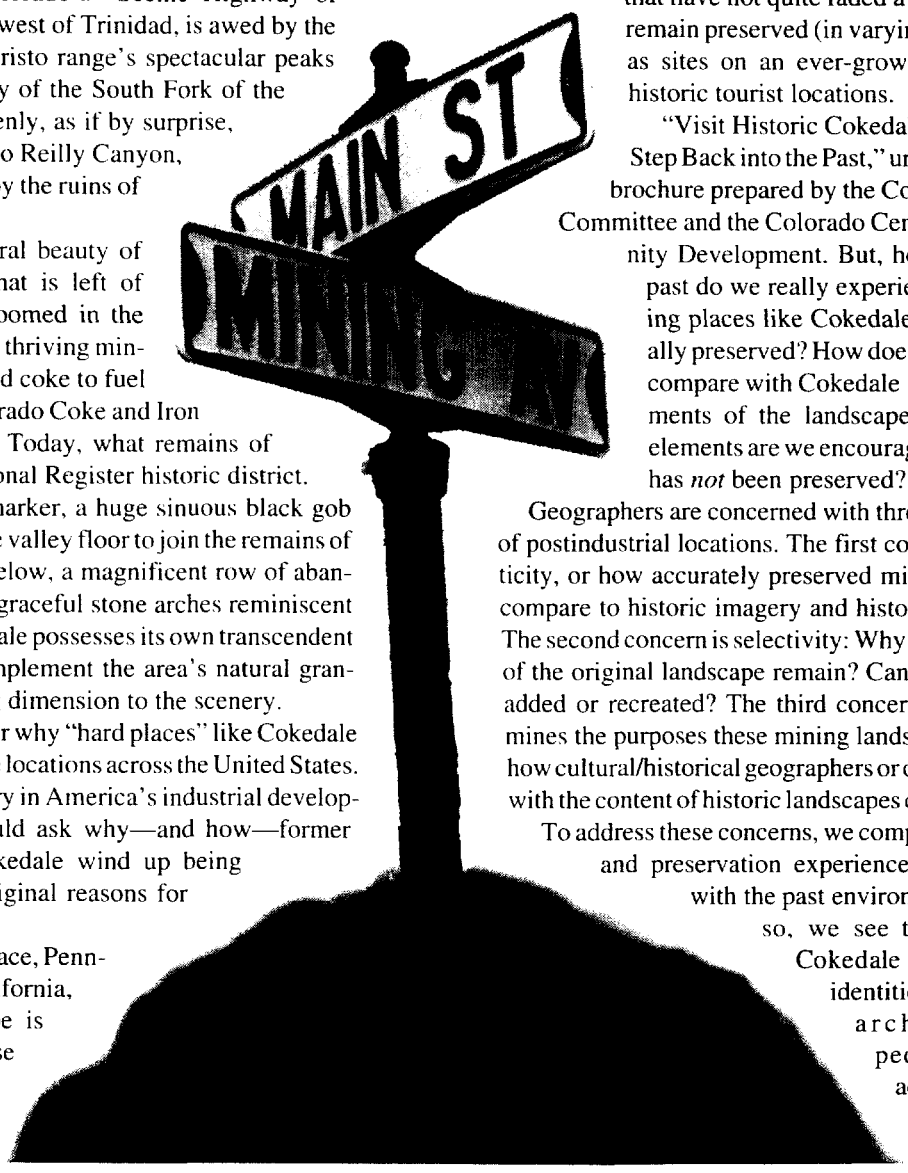
The traveler on Colorado's "Scenic Highway of Legends," Highway 12 west of Trinidad, is awed by the rise of the Sangre de Cristo range's spectacular peaks opposite the deep valley of the South Fork of the Purgatoire River. Suddenly, as if by surprise, the highway plunges into Reilly Canyon, a small valley branded by the ruins of the mining industry.

Here, amid the natural beauty of the Rockies, stands what is left of Cokedale. The town boomed in the early 20th century as the thriving mining community produced coke to fuel the furnaces of the Colorado Coke and Iron Company's steel mills. Today, what remains of this enterprise is a National Register historic district.

Behind an historic marker, a huge sinuous black gob pile marches down to the valley floor to join the remains of the town's buildings. Below, a magnificent row of abandoned coke ovens bear graceful stone arches reminiscent of ancient Rome. Cokedale possesses its own transcendent beauty. Its artifacts complement the area's natural grandeur and add a haunting dimension to the scenery.

One needs not wonder why "hard places" like Cokedale sprang up in such remote locations across the United States. That is part of a long story in America's industrial development.[1] Rather, we should ask why—and how—former mining towns like Cokedale wind up being preserved after their original reasons for being disappear.

From Hopewell Furnace, Pennsylvania, to Bodie, California, the American landscape is dotted with places whose heydays passed in the early 20th century—former mining towns that have not quite faded away, but instead remain preserved (in varying states of ruin) as sites on an ever-growing itinerary of historic tourist locations.



"Visit Historic Cokedale," and "Take a Step Back into the Past," urges an attractive brochure prepared by the Cokedale Tourism Committee and the Colorado Center for Community Development. But, how much of the past do we really experience when visiting places like Cokedale? Is the past really preserved? How does Cokedale 1994 compare with Cokedale 1910? What elements of the landscape remain? What elements are we encouraged to see? What has *not* been preserved?

Geographers are concerned with three major aspects of postindustrial locations. The first concern is authenticity, or how accurately preserved mining landscapes compare to historic imagery and historic descriptions. The second concern is selectivity: Why do only portions of the original landscape remain? Can lost features be added or recreated? The third concern, utility, determines the purposes these mining landscapes serve and how cultural/historical geographers or others concerned with the content of historic landscapes can utilize them.

To address these concerns, we compare the touristic and preservation experience of the present with the past environment. By doing so, we see that places like Cokedale have multiple identities: historic, archaeological, pedagogical and aesthetic.

We know that the

Many of the mining communities that prospered during the late 19th and early 20th centuries often possess a rich legacy of historic architecture, as demonstrated in this 1983 view of downtown Houghton in the "Copper Country" of Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula. Photograph by Richard Francaviglia.

Cokedale we view today is not—and can never be—the same boom community it was 84 years ago. Thus, we must interpret the site as a postindustrial artifact. Seen this way, places used by today's culture to explain the past serve many purposes, including educational, political and aesthetic roles.

Historical geographers have to reckon with our culture's need to preserve landscapes that become more interesting and attractive after they have failed. Two geographers recently noted:

> Mining towns seem to be unusual, perhaps unique, among American settlements in being problems when they are booming but desirable when they have failed....Americans have...remade into romantic sagas the histories of their early mining towns.[2]

Mining landscape preservation is a relatively recent phenomenon. Although a few visionaries began documenting and saving the physical heritage of mining towns as early as the turn of the century, and more joined the cause later in the 1920s and the 1930s, it was the period following World War II that witnessed growing interest in our romanticized mining heritage.

Before mining towns could be preserved or restored, however, Americans developed a romanticized vision of their place in history and nature. Merging prose, poetry and art, Americans depicted the rich landscapes left in the wake of mining. Among the most effective were Muriel Wolle's popular drawings and books. These works on Colorado ghost towns defined the image for a generation of Americans.

Colorado, one contemporary 1880s observer described, "...conjures up forsaken mining camps, ragged ravines and barren mountains, rocks, plains and precipices that go to make up a very uninviting view...."[3] The state was among the earliest significant centers of mining landscape preservation efforts. This may partly explain why "mining towns" and "western" are so closely linked in the public mind, despite the fact that mining towns can be found in the East and upper Midwest.

Few writers have captured the sentiment of time and place better than the dean of popular historians, Lucius Beebe, and his associate, Charles Clegg, who wrote this ode to the western mining landscape:

> The false fronts of once populous mining camps are good for a decade or so of Colorado winters at the most.

Richard Francaviglia is an historical geographer who has served in a wide range of teaching and administrative roles, including college professor, environmental planner, mining museum director and deputy state historic preservation officer. He presently serves as Director of the Center for Greater Southwestern Studies and the History of Cartography at the University of Texas-Arlington, P. O. Box 19497, Arlington, Texas, 76019-0497.

The tailings and mine dumps are only a little more lasting and a few centuries will have eroded them past discerning to the most perceptive archaeologists. The elemental earth is quick to reclaim the cuts and fills of vanished railroads. Thus, while for a brief period the tangible souvenirs are at every hand, their impermanence is there also, implicit in the very nature of the society and its economics that mined the hillsides for precious metals. A rags-to-riches social emergence was not notably aware of its mortality. It didn't build for the ages.[4]

These descriptions helped create a sense of urgency while generating an appreciation for the venerability of our mining landscapes. Beebe and Clegg were among the first to recognize the greatness of our mining heritage—even though this heritage was both ephemeral and pretentious. Landscapes of theatrical proportions displayed a montage of quickly-built ornate sets emulating the high cultures of Europe and the East. Yet, time's relentless march, together with the elements, underscored the vulnerability of this historic fabric while providing an almost perversely beautiful sense of desolation and decline. If every culture needs ruins to emphasize its past accomplishments and its relationship to nature, then our once prosperous mining towns are among the most powerful cultural symbols.

Students of the American West have noted that mining towns often refuse to die after their main reason for existence—mining—comes to a close. The small community of Rochford, in the Black Hills of South Dakota, is one of many such communities. Photograph by Richard Francaviglia.

In my book, *Hard Places*, I show that two very different motives lie at the roots of our fascination with history. These roots affect how we perceive and preserve our mining towns. On one hand, we need to recognize their former greatness, to show how, with limited technology, the miners dominated nature to win mineral riches. On the other, we need to venerate their antiquity by showing how this greatness fell to the hands of nature and time. Small wonder, then, that two types of mining town landscapes are preserved for tourists today: boomtowns and ghost towns.

Ghost Town Preservation

Few places capture the imagination better than ghost towns. But, historians debate the technical definition of a ghost town. Some insist that the place should be completely depopulated, although it must contain standing buildings or ruins. Others say that a few living hangers-on (perhaps ten or fewer) may be permissible, as long as the town once had a much larger population. Others say that a true ghost town is a place where all above-ground signs of habitation, including buildings, have vanished.

These distinctions are, of course, academic. The public views a ghost town as a tangible but depopulated place inhabited only by the memories of former occupants. Ghost towns imply former activity, perhaps even former greatness, as manifested in now decrepit buildings reclaimed by nature. We take an almost perverse interest in the aesthetics and symbolism of time marching into, and over, such forlorn places.

Ghost towns are instructional, for they depict risk-taking, a revered trait in our culture. In creating the popular Knott's Berry Farm in Orange County, California, in 1953, Walter Knott recognized the iconography. He was among the pioneers of a politically conservative school of educators creating mythical places to reaffirm the values of American greatness. Ghost Town was built anew in Los Angeles basin's fertile farmlands, but it depicted a wild and woolly, rough-hewn mining town main street wherein visitors could even pan for flecks of real gold. We are told that:

> Ghost Town depicts an era in our nation's history when men were forging ahead and crossing new frontiers. Ghost Town also represents an era of free people who carved out their individual empires from a new land, asking only to work out their own salvation without let or hindrance. The people, the things, the buildings of Ghost Town are long dead, but the same pioneer spirit still lives on.[5]

Although Ghost Town was a fictional town, it stood as a model for real places, such as the silver mining town of Calico, in California's Mojave Desert. It was Walter Knott, "a direct descendant of early day pioneers," who recognized the deeply-held American fascination with the past and capitalized on it. Calico, "site of one of the most spectacular silver strikes ever made in California," was one of the earliest resurrected ghost towns. In 1953, the public was told, "today the town-site, with its handful of ruins, is gradually being restored by the Knott family."[6]

Calico emerged as one of the more popular booming ghost towns, an attraction not too far from the otherwise uneventful highway between Los Angeles and Las Vegas. Sequestered in the colorful, forlorn Mojave desert hills that gave it its name, Calico became the liveliest of our mining ghost towns and one of the region's most successful tourism ventures.

Most ghost towns are not as vibrant as Calico. Many, like Ballarat in eastern California's Panamint Valley, are little more than historic markers standing near the melting adobe and splintered wooden walls of former buildings. The grandest of our mining ghosts is the silver mining town of Bodie, California. It symbolizes our culture's desire to stop time. Set in a sagebrush-covered, bowl-shaped valley in the high desert, it was one of the roughest and most isolated boom towns.

Mining towns such as Virginia City, Nevada, now present their mining history in educational, as well as recreational ways. In the above photograph, a mannequin bar girl swings from the ceiling of a vintage saloon in order to convey something of the "wild west" days to tourists. Photograph by Richard Francaviglia.

Like most of its sister mining towns, Bodie had experienced devastating fires; one of which, in 1932, burned down half of the business district and further contributed to the town's forlorn quality. A watchman looked after the remains of the town throughout the 1940s and 1950s, deterring souvenir hunters and scavengers. Private ownership by the wealthy Cain family guarded against Bodie's nearly sure fate of obliteration by scavengers.

In contrast to Columbia, the gold rush town in California's mother lode—another state park that attempts to capture the vibrant spirit of an active mining town—Bodie is dead, and proud of it. Since its opening as a state park in 1962, visitors to Bodie find themselves face to face with solitude. The town appears to be desolate and unoccupied. In reality, everything is carefully preserved in a state of arrested decay. Buildings lean at precarious angles, seemingly ready to topple with the next windstorm. They will not, however, for they are carefully propped up by hidden supports.

In Bodie, the preservation of the ghost town image finds man ironically resisting the elements and forestalling the inevitable. Such efforts may miss their mark. Recognizing the extreme fire danger in Bodie, state park preservationists painted the buildings with a clear coating of fire retardant. To their chagrin, this treatment actually accelerated the deterioration of the wood that they were trying to protect!

Nevertheless, the overall effect of the behind-the-scenes stabilization of ruin is stunning. Bodie has an artistic patina. The Standard Mill stands at the edge of town, its corrugated zinc metal sheathing burnished to a dull whitish-blue. Dark basaltic rock foundations stand forlorn and geometrical. A hundred seasons have given the ramshackle wooden buildings a silvery-golden hue. The gray-green sagebrush flourishes along with fat cattle grazing at the site. Left unattended, the elements and scavengers would reduce the place to an archaeological site in a matter of months. Bodie is preservation as theater, and its landscape is so provocative that the drama needs no "living history" actors, only a stage of deserted buildings to tell its story.

This preservation drama has been heightened recently with the National Historic Register's proposed nomination of the town and its mining-related landscape as an historic landmark—an action which the active Bodie Consolidated Mining Company opposes. In pursuing the nomination, mining preservationists recognized that the original boundaries did not include topographic features, such as ore dumps and tailings, which frame the historic townsite. Therefore, they believe Bodie's historic district should be expanded. Renewed mining activity adjacent to Bodie would no doubt damage the

The attractive main street of Virginia City, Nevada, has prospered since the 1950s because many of the businesses there cater to the thousands of tourists who have annually flocked to the town in search of mining history. The money that they provide has given building owners the ability to fix up their buildings and keep them attractive. Photograph by Richard Francaviglia.

feeling or ambiance of this historic mining town. This point, however, is of little concern to the present mining industry.

Preservation of Boom Towns

Not all mining town sites are ghost towns. Often, people remain behind to pursue new careers or retire in the places where mines have played out. Former mining community landscapes often convey a sense of the past that attracts visitors—a point not lost on merchants who see their own potential gold mine in marketing the history.

Tombstone, Arizona, was one of the earliest towns to capitalize on its mining-related boom town heritage. A state park established at the historic Cochise County Courthouse (complete with its gallows) further encouraged visitation. The traveler senses the spirit of the place when driving past Boot Hill on the way into town, arriving at a main street lined with false front buildings emblazoned with gaudy "wild west" signs and fake porches.

The town's spirit is best revealed by a bumper sticker merchants promoted in the late 1970s, "Tombstone: The Town Too Tough To Die." Actually, toughness has less to do with Tombstone's survival than popular culture fads. Beginning in the 1950s, television westerns, including "Tombstone Territory," saved the town from oblivion. However, the emphasis of the rough and tumble downtown along Allen Street did little to preserve Tombstone's mining history.

By the 1960s, Tombstone had become a tourist town capitalizing on its bawdy, violent history as a frontier mining and cattle town. By the late 1970s, however, the preservation movement had matured to the point that two consultants were able to advise merchants to remove the fake wild west trim and recover the rich historical fabric. But the merchants resisted, saying, in effect, "why question success?" As the sophistication of tourists increases, they may be forced to reconsider this decision.

Hoping to capture some of Tombstone's tourist trade, nearby Bisbee launched into an aggressive marketing campaign in the early 1980s. By promoting its copper mining history, the "Queen of the Copper Camps" hoped to reverse the decline that followed the 1975 closing of its large open-pit copper mine. Not to be outdone by Tombstone, wags in Bisbee designed a sequel bumper sticker that, too, said something about the town's tenacity: Bisbee: The Town Too Dumb to Die.

Bisbee holds a rich historical legacy. Much of the downtown commercial core consists of buildings constructed prior to 1925. It is this downtown, as well as the mine tour, that draws thousands of visitors hungry for history. Bisbee has many touristic counterparts. Among them are the fabled Virginia City, Nevada, Virginia City, Montana, Park City, Utah, and Black Hawk and Central City in Colorado.

These types of revitalized mining towns are subject to intense development pressure as a result of tourism. Gambling is probably the most demanding of these, for it precipitates rapid commercial development, as in Central City, Colorado. Communities with preservation expertise (Deadwood, South Dakota) or with preservation ordinances (Jacksonville, Oregon) can mitigate the impact.

Some mining towns, such as Aspen, Colorado, have been inundated by skiing tourism, losing much of their industrial character. Others, like Park City, Utah, are trying to regain their historic character through participation in the Certified Local Governments (CLG) program jointly sponsored by the National Park Service (NPS) and the State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs).

Preserving Company Town Landscapes

A third type of mining community—the company town—is increasingly experiencing preservation restoration. Most of these company towns are coal mining based and are found in Appalachia or Pennsylvania's anthracite country.

Eckley, Pennsylvania, features a museum depicting the mining community's various historic phases. But the major attraction is the town itself, which consists of several dozen historic buildings, some moved to the site in the 1960s. Eckley's centerpiece is the breaker, a huge tipple/minehead structure built for the 1970s film, *The Molly McGuires.*

Eckley provides tourists with an interesting blend of industrial and cinematic history. It is interesting to note that the public sector accomplished this preservation of corporate history. Their future looks bright. Preservation planners speak of the "Coal Road," a West Virginia-based tour of restored and preserved company towns that will be part of a tourism itinerary to stimulate regional revitalization.

Historic Preservation and the Landscape

Due to the historic preservation movement, old housing and commercial buildings in mining towns are more likely to be restored or rehabilitated. Preservation, much of it done in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's guidelines for rehabilitation, has given mining communities a distinctive, upscale preserved look. This look confirms that preservation has become big business—and very popular.

In fact, a Gallup Poll conducted for the Urban Land Institute in 1986 revealed that a majority of people support the objectives of historic preservation. "Retaining a sense of the past," was rated as the most important objective of historic preservation.[7]

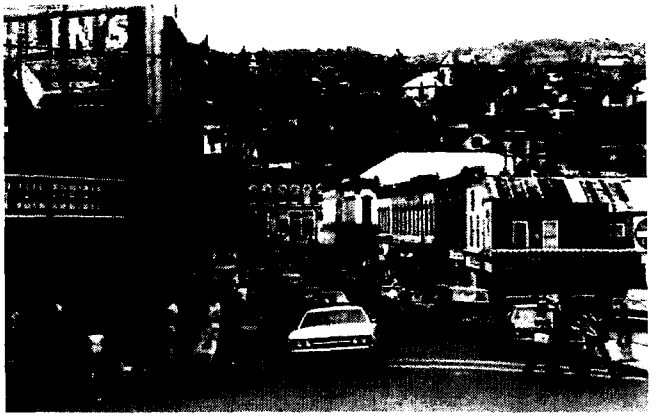
Historic preservation has two faces: the popular (or recreational/aesthetic) and the professional (or interpretive/educational). To the average person, historic preservation means saving and restoring historic buildings—usually historic homes and commercial buildings. To professionals, it is a process by which all historic properties (historic here includes both prehistoric archaeological and historic-architectural resources) are identified, evaluated and protected. These may also include industrial structures and other features.

Professional preservation involves rather mundane recordation of sites and structures that would or will normally be lost to progress or the elements. The professional

Ghost towns may virtually vanish, only to be reconstructed after a fashion as preservationists move buildings back to the site. In the company coal mining town of Thurber, Texas, preservationists have moved St. Barbara's Catholic Church (foreground) and a miner's home back to the site. Prior to this relocation, the site was only marked by a few remaining features such as the smokestack (right center) and an abandoned company store (left center). Photograph by Richard Francaviglia.

preservationist's most effective role is determining the historic significance of resources and providing this information to the public or private sector who may or may not actively advocate actual preservation.

If, for example, mining company officials have been informed by preservationists that a particular mine tipple is the



Historc mining towns draw tourists, as seen in this view of Central City, Colorado, taken 15 years ago. Since the photograph was taken in 1978, legalized casino gambling has further transformed Central City's tourist landscape. Photograph by Richard Francaviglia.

last of its kind in the region, the owners are ideally expected to take that information into account when making decisions. The tipple might be saved on site, relocated or, at the least, recorded using professional preservation techniques such as those used by the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) or the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS).

Preservationists must also provide this information to public officials considering demolishing certain city-owned properties, such as an early miner's hall that later served as a community hall, or a mining company office building that later served as city offices. When federal funds are involved in the project, administrators are required to participate in a review to determine the proposed project's impact on historic properties. If the impact is negative, they must find ways to mitigate the adverse effects.

Preservationists face tough decisions in dealing with abandoned mining lands. What remains is often both historically interesting and extremely dangerous. Hazardous mine openings are understandably sealed up (sometimes with screens or grates). However, many other features, such as tipples and headframes, are often demolished because they pose tax liabilities. Different opinions exist as to what constitutes an unsound structure, but building inspectors not supportive of preservation almost always find them unsafe—especially when their superiors want the building or historic feature demolished.

The Preservation Process

Preservation works at three levels: local, state and national. Preserving mining landscapes reveals just how complicated the interrelationship between these levels can be. Experience shows that the importance of a particular feature ironically increases with each step up toward the federal level, probably because those who administer the federal program (the National Park Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior) review material from across the country and have a wider base of knowledge regarding what is historic. Sometimes it is the local residents who are the most ignorant about a particular mining-related feature's importance. This is especially true for those whose interest in development or fear of large government leads them to reject information that puts a particular feature in a broader context. Yet, properly informed and understanding locals are often the strongest and most knowledgeable preservation advocates.

Intermediate in the preservation process are the State Historic Preservation Offices, created by the 1966 Historic Preservation Act. The officer, as appointed by the governor, is responsible for implementing the preservation program adopted by congress. It is he or she who determines National Register eligibility for historic resources.

Preserving mining-related landscapes challenges the SHPO, however, because the state agencies responsible for stabilizing and reclaiming abandoned mine lands may not work closely with the officer. The task of educating all agencies involved with historic mining resources is formidable. Few public agencies want to be perceived as standing in the way of powerful mining interests that create jobs and fuel the local or regional economy.

While not all states have addressed this issue, South Dakota's State Historical Preservation Agency has taken steps to reduce the problem by hosting a workshop on historic mining resources. This 1987 meeting brought mining preservationists together from agencies across the country. In the last five years, numerous states, including Montana, have taken a stronger interest in preserving their mining-related heritages.

Both the strongest and weakest mining landscape preservation advocacy occurs at the federal level. The agencies' track records depend largely on the demography of their constituents. Agencies with little appreciation of mining heritage often represent either mining or environmental interests. Preservationists claim that the Office of Surface Mining (OSM) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have their own agendas and little or no awareness of historic resources and their preservation. One of the most sensitive issues in the 1990s, hazardous site clean up (some of them "superfund" sites), involves areas such as Butte and Anaconda, Montana, which contain important historic resources.

As of this writing, the National Park Service has maintained the strongest interest in identifying and preserving significant historic mining-related resources. The NPS, recognizing that a comprehensive effort is needed to protect the historic resources of an aggressive industry that operates nationwide, hosted a conference in Death Valley in January, 1989. The conference was aimed at increasing public-private

sector understanding of the challenges involved in preserving mining-related features and landscapes. Summarized in an eight-part report by NPS mining historian Robert Spude,[8] the conference dealt with identifying, interpreting and preserving mining features in the context of existing programs. The conference led to several resolutions, namely:

- Mining sites themselves, not just the legends and architecture of the mining frontier, must be looked at.
- Federal agencies must continue responsible management, and those which do not must be made accountable.
- Mining companies can continue their work while responding to public concerns and federal requirements.
- A national mining initiative, including congressional directives, is needed to identify and protect mining-related resources.

The National Register and Mining Districts

Preservationists use the National Register of Historic Places as a yardstick to evaluate historic properties. The Keeper of the National Register in Washington, D.C., under NPS administration, maintains this historic listing. According to the NPS, "historic districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association" may be listed on the register when they possess significant quality in American history, architecture, engineering and culture.

Listing on the register identifies a property's significance at either the local, state or national level. After more than 25 years, the register lists more than 50,000 historic properties. The list of several hundred mining-related resources reveals two major types: either very notable individual buildings or assemblages of historic resources. Almost all of them were more than 50 years old when listed.

Preservationists judge an historic property using one or more of the following questions:

- Is it associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history?
- Is it associated with the lives of persons significant in our past?
- Does it embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction? Does it represents the

Ghost towns have a special appeal to tourists. The remote and abandoned community of Bodie, California, has been a state park since 1962. Although visitors get the impression that they are experiencing a forlorn, disintegrating town, Bodie is carefully maintained in this state of "arrested deterioration" by the efforts of the park staff. Photograph by Richard Francaviglia.

work of a master, or possess high artistic values? Does it represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction?

- Has it yielded, or will it likely yield, information important to history or prehistory?

Using these criteria, one sees that mining communities possess a wide range of historic features associated with numerous themes, such as ethnic history, industrial history and transportation history. However, given their cosmopolitan quality and their feverish productivity, most mining districts contain a wealth of features, making it difficult to select a boundary point where preservation begins or ends. To exacerbate the problem, new developments may have intruded on the site, causing one to question whether or not the mining district is still historic.

Public participation may also deter a site's chance at historic distinction. Local residents may or may not recognize the significance of their community's mining heritage. Property owners may care little for history, especially if it threatens their development options. A mining company might fear its property's listing on the National Register will hamstring its ability to further develop future mining operations. These fears, however, are unfounded: The National Register listing imposes no constraints on what an owner can do with private property. If changes prove detrimental to the historic property, it will simply be deleted from the list.

Change and attrition poses problems for preservationists interested in historic mining districts. For example, abandoned mining-related topographic features which, over time, have further eroded or revegetated present a dilemma regarding their historic integrity. Placing an historic mining-related property or feature on the National Register involves an assessment of its present condition compared with its historic condition. Historic features, including tailings piles and ore dumps, can be compared with historical photographs. A value judgment is required to determine how much change is acceptable before a feature loses its visual associative character or feeling.

Historic Districts

Although individual buildings and features are listed on the National Register, there is a growing tendency to think in terms of historic districts. An historic district is defined as a:

> ...geographically definable area—urban or rural, large or small—possessing a significant concentration, linkage or continuity of sites, buildings, structures and/or objects united by past events or aesthetically by plan or physical development.[9]

An historic district is largely a visual phenomenon. We know when we are in one because the place has a "feel" based on the presence of a significant number of historic buildings. There are few, or relatively few, modern intrusions.

The historic district in Jacksonville, Oregon, conveys this feeling of significance. The town prospered during the gold mining booms of the mid-19th century. A preservationist tells us that "...following a series of devastating fires, ordinances were passed that mandated the use of brick along the main street."[10] This contributes to the commercial district's sense of permanence.

Following the closing of the mines, "fruit raising and a minimum of local commerce kept the settlement from becoming a ghost town, while poverty kept it from changing." This condition enabled the town's historic architecture to survive into the middle 1960s, when "...more than a hundred 19th-century buildings in the town were placed on the National Register of Historic Places."[11] These buildings epitomize the term historic district—an identifiable place that dates from a particular historic period.

The commercial core or downtown area of Bisbee, Arizona, similarly displays a kind of historic architectural integrity. There are over 200 historic buildings packed into a rugged canyon setting. With relatively little new construction and no vacant lots resulting from demolition, nothing spoils the impression that one has stepped back in time.

Preservationists placed the Bisbee historic district on the National Register in 1979. As is often the case, this first nomination identified the best of the historic resources. Today, historic preservationists are anxious to expand the Bisbee historic district to include other historic resources, including homes, overlooked in the earlier effort.

Multiple Resource Areas

Historic districts, so aesthetically pleasing, are the gems of the preservation world. Many could, with a few adjustments, serve as period movie sets or filming locations. More often, however, we visit historic mining districts where time has not stopped. Historic buildings, structures and even districts may stand next to modern features that would seem to compromise the location and historic character. Important features may have been removed to such an extent that the community or location does not possess the feel of an historic district. This does not mean, however, that the place is any less interesting.

Even though its visible historic resources are scattered, the site may still have an important historic story to tell. A multiple resource area, then, displays a discontinuous distribution of important historic resources. Each resource plays a part in revealing the history of the area. Looking carefully at such areas, one sees that they are actually as interesting as historic districts because they permit us to see the impact that more recent developments—what some call progress—have had on the mining community.

That is just the feeling conveyed by the Tintic Mining District Multiple Resource Area in Utah. Here one sees an historic montage: In Eureka's once-prosperous central business

Mining leaves a powerful signature on the land and mining communities would do well to remember that the topographic, structural and engineering features associated with mining are as important to the town's history as the fine commercial buildings that exist on the main street. Black Hawk, Colorado, seen in 1978 before the town boomed with the establishment of casinos, provides an example of the legacy that mining leaves in the landscape. Photograph by Richard Francaviglia.

district the remnants of old Victorian bonanza buildings stand side-by-side with modern commercial buildings. There are gaping holes where historic buildings recently stood. Nevertheless, the district is a veritable museum of scattered engineering features, such as headframes, stamp mill sites and ore bins.

The Tintic Mining District's National Register nomination form states that the "primary significance of the historic resources...is their value in the documentation of metal mining history, both on the state and national level."[12] A wide range of historic resources associated with numerous uses, from commercial to residential to engineering, abound in this area. Some historic resources are readily visible despite the intrusions. Others are archaeological in the sense that they are below ground level.

The area is, in fact, rich in sites of historic archaeological significance. These sites, too, can tell us much about the location—provided that we have the ability to read them using methods that supplant those we rely on to interpret the visible landscape.

Vanishing Landscapes: The Historical Archaeology of Mining Districts

Not all historic mining landscapes look as though the clock stopped just after they were abandoned. Some have essentially vanished from view. Although we are most likely to know about the gems, such as Virginia City or Central City, that have many extant buildings and structures, there is another, more subtle, landscape associated with mining: the historic site where virtually nothing remains above ground.

Aurora, Nevada, fits this description. Whereas, just 30 years ago, one could see the shells of abandoned buildings, the 1990s reveal only a sagebrush-covered site. Does this make the location any less historic? The answer, of course, is no—provided that we know how to read other, more subtle or hidden clues, such as eroding tailings piles, ore

dumps, building foundations and other below-ground works of man that nature is slowly reclaiming.

One of the most important and overlooked aspects of the National Register in evaluating historic resources is the potential of the property to yield information about the history or prehistory of a site. This brings us to the realm of historical archaeology, which is concerned with what the physical remains of fairly recent literate societies—such as the sites of mining towns—can tell us about the people who lived there. The physical record can be supplemented by the written records that were sometimes left by these people.

Mining communities such as Chinese Camp, California, often make good use of older buildings. This historic store, dating from about 1860, serves as a visitors' information center and makes a tangible connection with the past. Photograph by Richard Francaviglia.

In the case of the mining areas, the physical record can also tell us much about the processes that the miners either did not understand well enough to document or chose not to write down at the time. Historical archaeologists are often concerned with the housing and commercial trade of mining areas. Their colleagues, interested in the heavier industrial features, such as smelting and ore concentration, are part of a related field called industrial archaeology.

Historical archaeologists have shed much light on mining landscapes. Their painstaking field work often results in a wealth of information that is not otherwise visible in the landscape. Historical archaeologist Ronald Reno has noted that, "there are four major types of archaeological studies of mining camps: model, inventory, assessment and mitigation."[13]

Reno states that a model based on a review of existing literature would predict distributions of cultural remains—what we might expect to find *before* field work is completed. Inventory includes all information that has been obtained from archaeological surveys. Assessment includes surveys of historic properties and historic significance completed for National Register nominations. Mitigation refers to work done in response to projects that are likely to disturb, perhaps actually destroy, a particular historic mining site.

In the latter case, renewed mining activity is often an issue. In fact, Reno noted that "the areal destruction caused by the shift from underground to open pit methods and the large scale of work required for companies to turn a profit is unprecedented in Nevada."[14]

Among the most important information revealed by historical archaeologists are patterns that express themselves on at least two levels: vertically on a social scale, where artifacts may be used to determine the social status of the artifact's user in the community, and, horizontally on a geographic scale, where the actual spatial organization or layout of the community is determined. Historical archaeology field work by Pat Martin, for example, has shed much light on the location of ethnic communities in the Copper Country of Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula. Field research by Don Hardesty has helped clarify social and developmental conditions in several Nevada mining districts.

Historical archaeology's value in answering important questions about the mining's impact on the landscape was underscored by a recent study that applied dendrochronology techniques (tree ring analysis) in the Cortez mining district of Nevada. Researchers determined that the:

> ...tree-ring record of historic archaeological features, including stump and construction materials, provides an absolute chronology for the varying woodland use through time and for other human activities using pinyon logs. These data provide details of the magnitude and history of deforestation unavailable in other lines of research.[15]

The authors correlated the use of pine trees throughout the

major time periods or phases of the mining district's development with the existing stands of vegetation through time and concluded that "correlation of tree ring data with other data bases reveals changes in woodland use and structure to be mainly associated with mining activity," but that "the presence of old age trees indicates that the magnitude of the 19th-century deforestation may have been less severe at Cortez than is claimed for other mining districts."[16]

Two historical archaeologists, David Gradwohl and Nancy Osborn, have conducted extensive field research at the site of a long-vanished coal mining town, Buxton, Iowa, and wrote a book about their search entitled, *Exploring Buried Buxton.* When they first found the Buxton townsite in 1980, it was little more than a few forlorn ruins in an otherwise rural countryside of pastures and cornfields. Armed with historical information, they set about to find the lost town's features. Much of the place had begun to vanish almost 60 years before they began their research. Buxton was founded in 1900 and abandoned in the 1920s. "Standing in the middle of a patently featureless pasture, holding a panoramic view of Buxton as photographed in 1907 in one hand and in the other hand a town plat map drawn up in 1919," they began to ask several questions—the first being, "Where is Main Street?"[17]

With the help of their student interns and others, they began systematic archaeological work that uncovered the foundations and sites of houses and commercial areas. They soon experienced a situation that is typical of archaeological digs in mining communities: They found a nearly overwhelming quantity of artifacts. As the project developed, they saw patterns emerge; they found residential areas that revealed information about the lifestyle of laborers and managers. Their work, supplemented by primary and secondary historical records, helps one to better understand the social life of the largely Black mining community.

Clearly, many of our vanished historic mining districts have the potential to yield an incredible amount of information about both the occupants and the environment. Yet, our emphasis on the preserved or restored mining community/landscape obscures the fact that we may be able to learn as much from places with little above-ground remains. For every mining-related site on the National Register, there are dozens of others about which little or nothing is known.

It should be remembered that listing on the National Register can be a mixed blessing. The designation often attracts well-meaning development efforts that lead to a reconstructed postindustrial landscape at the expense of our historic understanding of the original mining landscape.

Historic Landmarks Associated with Mining

The National Historic Landmarks (NHL) program focuses on sites of national significance that "...commemorate and illustrate the history and culture of the United States." These properties are identified by a theme. Mining-related resources are included under two main categories, westward expansion and business. This is an interesting breakdown, for it reveals certain preconceptions about history, even among professionals. It tends to romanticize the westward movement, or, at least, remove it from its context of eastern financing. Moreover, it assumes that western and eastern mining activities were fundamentally different when, in fact, they were part of the same industrial system.

Because only nationally-significant, well-documented properties may qualify for listing as National Historic Landmarks, it may be thought of as a refinement of the National Register program. Describing the process by which mining-related NHLs were selected in the early years of the program, NPS staff historian Robert Spude, notes that "the historic sites and building inventory looked at over 100 mining sites and selected 17 as potential National Historic Landmarks...unfortunately, the NPS evaluation system reflected the popular view of looking only at the towns, rather than at the mines or mills," and "thus, significant mine structures or mills standing at the time were not recognized."[18] This oversight—a disregard for the engineering features of a mining district and a fascination with their residential or commercial architecture—remains a problem. It has certainly yielded a lopsided or distorted visual legacy in the preserved historic mining landscape.

However, as it has evolved, the National Historic Landmark program has become more comprehensive and inclusive. Thus, Jacksonville, Oregon, is also listed as a National Historic Landmark under "westward expansion," as is the Bodie Historic District in California. A number of the classic mining extraction sites, such as Minnesota's Hull Rust open pit mine, are NHLs associated with "business," as is the mansion of steel magnate, Andrew Carnegie, and the Elkins Coal and Coke Company historic district in West Virginia. There are now about 50 mining-related NHLs.

Conclusion

Mining landscapes are preserved for one of two basic reasons: recreational (often through private commercial ventures) and educational (often overseen by the public sector). We are either supposed to have fun or to learn something from such landscapes. In reality, of course, many preserved mining landscapes fall somewhere in between in intent and content. These are interactive landscapes. As we experience them using our leisure time, they often convey political/social agendas (for example, the virtues of private enterprise or the importance of labor organization) that we assimilate as consumers.

As with all historically contrived landscapes, preserved mining landscapes are complex. Many are not accurate; postindustrial (current) sentiments affect what is preserved. Preservation advocates operate using certain biases that result in selective preservation. Therefore, historical geographers need to approach any preserved mining landscape with a great deal of caution.

The state of South Dakota has recently authorized casino gambling in the old mining town of Deadwood. One of the reasons for this decision was to raise money to revitalize the town's historic buildings. The tax money has helped meet the goal, but the change in the town's focus has resulted in many other social changes, such as new population, new development, displacement of low-income residents and much higher real estate prices. Small Towns Institute photograph.

A look at the Blue Heron Coal Mining Camp on the Big South Fork of the Cumberland River in southern Kentucky is instructive. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers developed the property into an interpretive historic site and recently (1991) turned it over to the National Park Service.

Winner of a Federal Design Achievement Award in 1992, the camp is reached by road, or, better, by excursion trains of the Big South Fork Scenic Railway.[19] Upon arriving in the camp, the visitor finds a coal tipple looking much as it did in the 1930s, but the rest of the landscape—a church, company store and miners' houses—consist of ghost structures which "...are a reflection of the skeletal remains of a once-thriving community and are intended to convey the spatial relationship of the community that was once there."[20]

At this former mining camp, preservationists and interpreters have attempted to integrate a corporeal scene of implied activity around the tipple (under which stand numerous coal hopper cars) with the ghosts of buildings and people whose stories are told through an audio program. It is significant that "the ghost structures are designed to blend into the surrounding environment and to withstand the periodic flooding, achieving an aura of ghostly immortality,"[21] something that could never be said of the original camp. At Blue Heron Camp, we see our culture's attempt to make former mining landscapes more bucolic and idyllic than they ever were.

The landscape contains other messages too, and the major lessons learned from preserving mining landscapes fit into several categories that correspond to cultural issues.

Man-Nature Reconciliation. At the Blue Heron Camp, and many other restored or preserved mining camps, the most visible features of mining—the waste dumps and other unpleasant signs of environmental degradation—are often removed to present a scene of natural beauty that disguises the full extent of the former mining activity. If not actually removed, such features are often stabilized or revegetated. These actions reassure us that man's activities are reversible, if not ephemeral.

The Creation of Artifactual Symbols. A study of preserved mining landscapes reveals that certain features, such as headframes and ore hauling equipment, come to symbolize mining activity and are preserved as landscape icons. Other less associative or poorly understood features, such as ore sampling equipment, may be considered too mundane to be preserved and, therefore, disappear. Whereas active mining

landscapes contain features (machinery, buildings and structures) that are associated with a full range of activities, usually only those that symbolize ore extraction and sometimes ore processing remained in preserved mining districts.

The Preservation of the Aesthetic. While attempting to preserve the significant or valuable material culture associated with the past, historic landscapes inevitably satisfy aesthetic sensitivities. Thus, in preserved mining landscapes we find impressive (sometimes beautiful) features such as arched coke ovens and attractive Victorian miners' homes being preserved. One rarely sees rows of shacks preserved. Rather, those that feature some trim or indications of architectural "style" remain. Likewise, the chaotic assemblages of discarded equipment characterizing active mining operations are reconstituted as "artifact gardens."

The Reinterpretation and Reaffirmation of Power. Active mining landscapes, especially company-owned towns, exhibit the strong role of owners and managers in decision making. Through selective preservation, power may be reinterpreted or reaffirmed. In Thurber, Texas, for example, the tension between labor and management in this former Texas and Pacific Coal Company town is nowhere apparent today—the company removed all of the miner's wooden homes years ago when it abandoned the town.[22]

The Reaffirmation of Gender. Active mining landscapes are "male" landscapes in that men shaped virtually all of the mining, transportation and settlement patterns. They remain so. Symbolically, tall smokestacks and erect headframes are among the most commonly preserved features in the mining landscape—as a look at Butte and Anaconda, Montana, reveals. Mining landscape preservationists are beginning to discover an important, but invisible, role of women in community life. Often, however, only the bawdy houses and homes of the mining managers (whose wives were influential in community affairs) are preserved and interpreted. We can expect this to change as an appreciation of the role of women in the life of mining towns grows.

In retrospect, the concept of a preserved mining landscape is a contraction in terms, for active mining landscapes are in a constant state of flux and, therefore, are impossible to stabilize without compromising the integrity of the processes that created them. Those that are preserved are usually sanitized to satisfy health, safety and aesthetic standards that simply did not exist when they were created. Nevertheless, preserved mining landscapes are important postindustrial environments that tell us much about the way contemporary cultures reshape the past to meet the needs and values of the present.

[1]Richard V. Francaviglia, *Hard Places: Reading the Landscape of America's Historic Mining Districts*, Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1991.
[2]Thomas R. Vale and Geraldine R. Vale, *Western Images, Western Landscapes: Travels Along U.S. 89*, Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1991, p. 48.
[3]William Ralston Balch, *The Mines, the Miners, and Mining Interests of the United States in 1882*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Mining Industrial Publishing Bureau, 1882, p. 769.
[4]Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg, *Narrow Gauge in the Rockies*, Berkeley, California: Howell-North Press, 1958, p. 8.
[5]Knott's Berry Farm, *Ghost Town and Calico Railway*, Buena Park, California: Knott's Berry Farm, 1953, p. 59.
[6]Knott's Berry Farm, 1953, p. 59.
[7]*A Gallup Study of Public Attitudes Towards Issues Facing Urban America*, 2 vols., Washington, D.C.: Urban Land Institute, 1986.
[8]Leo Barker and Anne E. Huston, *Death Valley to Deadwood; Kennecott to Cripple Creek—Proceedings of the Historic Mining Conference, January 23-27, 1989, Death Valley National Monument*, San Fransisco, California: National Park Service, September, 1990.
[9]William Murtagh, *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America*, Pittstown, New Jersey: The Main Street Press, 1988, p. 215.
[10]Randolph Delahanty and Andrew McKinney, *Preserving the West*, New York, New York: Pantheon Books, 1985, p. 123.
[11]Delahanty and McKinney, 1985, p. 125.
[12]Utah State Historical Society, Historic Preservation Office, Salt Lake City, Utah, National Register Nomination, the Tintic Mining District.
[13]Ronald Reno, "Archaeological Studies of Nevada Mining Camps," paper presented at the Society for Historical Archaeology Annual Meeting, Reno, Nevada, January, 1988.
[14]Reno, 1988, p. 2.
[15]Eugene M. Hattori and Marna Ares Thompson, "Using Dendrochronology for Historical Reconstruction in the Cortez Mining District, North Central Nevada," *Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1987, pp. 69-70.
[16]Hattori and Thompson, 1987, p. 71.
[17]David Gradwohl and Nancy Osborn, *Exploring Buried Buxton: Archaeology of an Abandoned Iowa Coal Mining Town with a Large Black Population*, Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1984, p. 5.
[18]Robert Spude, Historic Mining Conference, *CRM Bulletin*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 1990, pp. 16-18.
[19]"Designers Win Arts Award for McCreary Mine Camp," *Lexington Herald-Leader*, January 19, 1992.
[20]National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, "Blue Heron Community," brochure of the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, n.d., n.p.
[21]"Blue Heron Community" brochure.
[22]Richard Francaviglia, "Black Diamonds and Vanishing Ruins: Reconstructing the Historic Landscape of Thurber, Texas," *Mining History 1994 Annual*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1994, pp. 51-62.