

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *South Pass City: Changing Perspectives on a Nineteenth Century Frontier Town* by Marcel Kornfield and Julie Francis

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He makes every effort to maximize the usefulness of his findings to his archaeological colleagues unfamiliar with the technical aspects of metallurgical analysis, even to the inclusion of a discussion of the relationship of the technology of axe manufacture and the microconstituents encountered in them and a glossary of metallurgical terms. The use of a fine set of line drawings by J. Renaud to demonstrate the distribution of various constituents and hardness zones makes the information in the essay eminently accessible. Of course, the tables are ridiculously small but this is not Unglik's fault.

The final report of the trio, also by Unglik, is "Ironworking at an Early Nineteenth Century Blacksmith Shop, Fort St. Joseph, Ontario: An Examination of Slag and Iron." Basically it is an attempt to provide information on the early blacksmithing operation by a fine-grained analysis of that most ubiquitous of residuals of the ironmaking trades—slag. What Unglik gives us is a highly technical (such a topic can be nothing but), but surprisingly readable (and this is hard to do!) and generously illustrated report on just what kinds of valuable archaeological information on early ironworking one can glean from such a seemingly prosaic specimen as a slag chunk. Speaking as a person who has done this kind of work and who knows only too well the paucity of comparative data on the subject, this is a particularly valuable and useful study. It may not be for everyone, but whom it serves it serves with distinction.

If your interests lie in the fields of early ironworking, historical metallurgy, or industrial sites archaeology in general, you will want to acquire this slim volume.

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South Pass City: Changing Perspectives on a Nineteenth Century Frontier Town.

MARCEL KORNFELD and JULIE FRANCIS, editors.

Occasional Papers on Wyoming Archaeology, No. 3, Laramie, 1984, vii + 163 pp., 55 figs. No price given.

South Pass, a major passage way through the Rocky Mountains of Wyoming, played an important role in prehistoric times as well as in the settling of the West in historic times. Significant trails; such as the California Trail, Oregon Trail, and the Mormon Trail; wind their way through this break in the high peaks of the Rockies.

South Pass City, occupied primarily from 1867 to 1872, was a town whose economy was sustained by gold mining. Typical of many old mining towns today, there are remnants of later mining activities. In fact, sometimes what usually exists of structures are those of relatively recent activities built by miners who cannibalized the older structures. As with many other mining towns the time of heaviest occupation was the boom period of South Pass City.

This volume is the result of a number of papers presented at the 1983 Plains Anthropological Conference, Rapid City, South Dakota, under a symposium titled "South Pass City: A Late 1800's Gold Mining Town." It consists of fourteen articles written by different individuals who worked on the project. "South Pass City: General Introduction" by Julie Francis and Marcel Kornfeld; "The Fight to Save South Pass City" by Sharon Bollinger; "Century of Decline: A Study of the Interpretation and Restoration of South Pass City, 1867-1967" by Marion Huseas and Roger Doherty; "After the Bust; The South Pass City Mining Area Since 1872" by Mike Massie; "A Remote Sensing Project at South Pass City State Historic Site, Wyoming" by William B. Fawcett, Jr.; "Archaeological Investigations at the Miner's Exchange Saloon" by Julie Francis and Karen Bridger; "The 1979 and 1980 Archaeological Investigations at the Sherlock Blacksmith Shop" by Julie Francis and Karen Bridger; "Archaeological Resources Encountered During the Excava-

tions of the Alarm System Trenches” by Marcel Kornfeld; “Archaeological Investigations at the Black Horse Livery Stable” by Julie Francis; “Analysis of Some Residential Areas of South Pass City” by Marcel Kornfeld; “The Cave: A Dugout Structure in South Pass City” by Lucy Chronic; “The Restoration of South Pass City: Past and Future” by Dan Allen; “the Archaeological Research Design for South Pass City State Historic Site: Cultural Change in a Late Nineteenth Century Mining Town” by Julie Francis; and, “Reflections of History, Archaeology, and Interpretation at South Pass City Today” by Robert A. Murray.

The first report describes the environment, pre-historic and historic background, and includes a discussion of the developmental and interpretive plans of the city. Historically, South Pass City is important because it was the largest “gold rush” town in Wyoming and “the birthplace of woman’s suffrage.” Bollinger in the second paper describes a rather typical evolution of citizens trying to establish a historic state park with commissioners who do not know the procedures, expenses, or importance of historic sites. Huseas and Doherty present further history of the town in a discussion of remaining buildings dating to later activity. They ask numerous questions that relate to future interpretation of the site and suggest as a solution, that in restoring structures be interpreted “to the time of their most significant use.”

Massie, in a historical resource survey (field and documents), concludes that mining continued in the South Pass area long after the town had boomed. Fawcett and Larson report on the use of a proton magnetometer in specific sections of the town site. However, they fail to explain their precise purpose in using this instrument, other than to locate anomalies. They conclude only that archaeological research should be part of the restoration and management of South Pass City.

The purposes of excavating the Miner’s Exchange Saloon, reported by Francis and Bridger, were to date the structure, features and trash; find evidence of the original structure; and determine use of the building. Although they found many artifacts, they provide no counts or detailed de-

scriptions. A reader is unable to verify their conclusions. Yet, by listing some of the artifacts, they conclude that the saloon dates “between the late 1800s and early 1900s.” Francis and Bridger also describe the excavations at the Sherlock Blacksmith Shop, which turned out not to be the original blacksmith shop. I found it interesting that of 1320 artifacts recovered, “very few were temporally diagnostic,” and yet the building that turned out to be a garage, dated to “the mid-20th century.”

Kornfeld describes the results of backhoe trenching within the city to install an alarm system. Several trash areas were found and counts made on the various specimens analyzed. Animal bones were detailed more than any of the other items recorded.

Francis reports on the excavation of the Black Horse Livery Stable, which turned out not to be the original stable. He discovered that the existing stable was constructed of “re-used logs,” but a second structure dated to pre-1820. Again, however, of 495 artifacts unearthed in 1983 “few temporally diagnostic artifacts” were available for dating, and this does not include the 1607 items found in 1982. Needless, following this statement many artifacts are listed that were used to date various features, especially square and wire nails. Francis concludes that the livery stable was built in the 1890s on the site of the original Black Horse Livery Stable.

Kornfeld’s analysis of residential areas of South Pass City was to determine the function of one section of the city, to see if the area was used for family residences. The result of this effort was the categorizing of eleven features into four classes, namely “dwelling/homes, outbuildings, trash dumps and enclosure remains.”

Chronic citing research and excavation data describes the construction history of a dugout structure, known as The Cave. In the twelfth article of this group, Allen discusses the restoration plans for the city.

The most interesting article of this series is the research design presented by Francis. It not only suggests a plan for research but methodology and implementation guidelines for restoration and management.

A review such as this permits little specific comment on all the individual articles. Since these articles were presented at a conference that likely allowed only limited time for presentation, I assume that the data were not fully presented. In many cases I found myself wondering about details that were not forthcoming. Many of the reports focused on methodology, when actual results might have been of more use. This project is apparently a restoration effort by the state of Wyoming and private individuals and institutions, as such it likely operates on limited financial resources. The history of the site is based on limited historical documentation. At least it appears that way, since references are few and from secondary sources.

Again the most disturbing part of this volume is the lack of detailed artifact studies. I can only assume that several thousand items were recovered during the excavation of at least six areas.

The unifying concern of this report seems to be archaeological analyses for the purpose of restora-

tion. The research design for the project as now conceived in the most interesting and detailed portion of the publication. What is presented is adequate for the original purpose of these articles, a conference. The articles are not complete reports, as the editors acknowledge, only a synthesis. Yet therein lies the major weakness of the report.

In spite of deficiencies, the researchers appear to be competent and this report is a welcome contribution to the growing literature on historical archaeology of the West. More of such information should be made available for comparative analyses of sites in this region of the country.

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