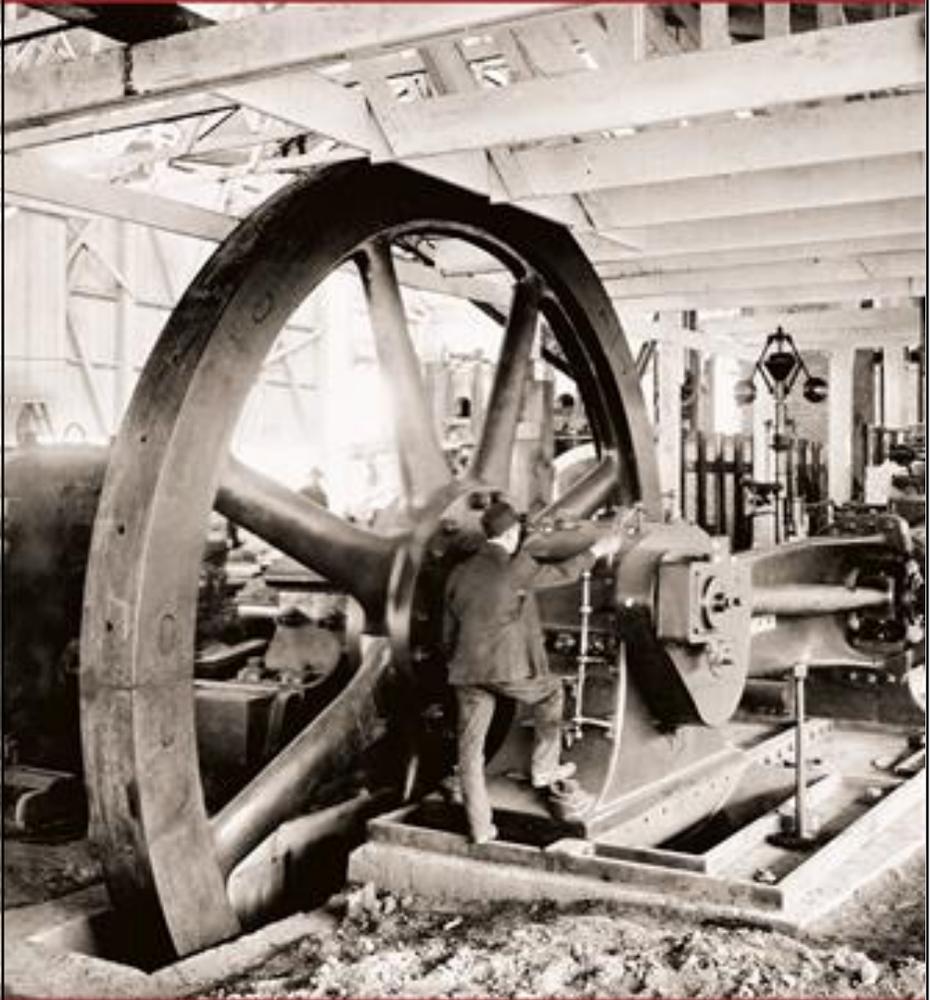


THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF CRAFT AND INDUSTRY



Christopher C. Fennell

★ *The American Experience in Archaeological Perspective*

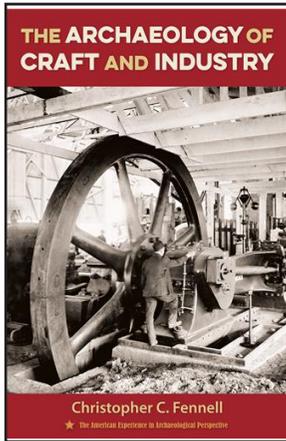
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The Archaeology of Craft and Industry

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Reviewed by Metin I. Eren, Department of Anthropology, Kent State University, Kent, OH

Perhaps as far from my Pleistocene archaeology expertise as possible, *The Archaeology of Craft and Industry* focuses on American historic-era industrial archaeology. Yet, I was captivated by this book. My

fondness for this volume likely stems in part from the demolishing of my preconceived and unfounded bias against industrial archaeology as merely architectural history in disguise, or some sort of servant of 17th–20th century history. I could not have been more wrong (I'm sorry!). Christopher Fennell has penned a fascinating, enlightening work.

The book is comprised of seven chapters. Chapter one introduces the book, the sub-field, definitions, concepts, and the continuity between craft and industry. This chapter also lucidly explains why industrial archaeology provides information that is not readily available from history: many industrialists (1) focused on output to the neglect of record keeping or (2) prized secrecy. With respect to the latter, it would have never occurred to me that some industrials chose to avoid patents to protect innovation! And, like the archaeology of any complex society—ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Maya, and so on—industrial archaeology gives life, and often some sort of voice, to the masses that history failed to record.

Chapters two through five discuss different industries or aspects of industry across North America. While the information provided in these chapters is consistently interesting, what makes these chapters shine are the lights cast on human experiences. For example, metal remainders that could have been re-melted were found in a pile outside a window, clearly having been cast out by workers. One interpretation of this pattern is that employees could defy quality-control surveillance, avoid penalty for screwing up, or “stick it to The Man” by discarding raw materials. In another example, that no workers of Chinese heritage were included in the famous “Golden Spike” ceremony photograph, despite the hardship they experienced revealed in part by industrial archaeology, speaks volumes about prejudice and class. Later in the book Fennell notes how these same workers were often wrongly stereotyped by past archaeologists as opium addicts, when in reality they likely took the substance to manage pain (as did other ethnic groups).

Chapter six focuses on a case study, the potteries of Edgefield, South Carolina, a site Fennell himself investigated. This chapter is packed full of compelling details, ranging from the pottery inscriptions of an enslaved artisan (Dave Drake) to the import of various cultural traditions (e.g., dragon kiln, west African stylistic influences on pots).

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The chapter also touches on the nature of the industrial archaeological work itself, as well as its influence on modern perspectives and heritage, both themes continued in the concluding Chapter seven.

Craft and Industry is well produced. The figures are clear and well chosen (as far as I can tell any image blurriness has to do with the historic nature of photograph, not the printing), and the reference list and index are exhaustive. Having griped about the quality of other University Press of Florida volumes in other book reviews, I found no problematic issues here.

Fennell has composed an achievement. Without reservation, I recommend that all archaeologists and anthropologists read this book. As someone from Cleveland, Ohio, growing up in the heart of the rustbelt, I now have a new and enduring appreciation for the industrial archaeology around me, and for the countless people who lived their lives in and among historic craft and industry. As an experimental archaeologist, my mind is racing regarding what an experimental industrial archaeology might look like. For these enhanced perspectives, I am in Fennell's debt.