

DIALOGUE:

Reactions and Views on Controversial Subjects

Dialogue publishes short articles reacting to papers appearing in *Historical Archaeology*. Opportunity is also given for an author to comment on the reactions to his original paper. Hopefully, this section of *Historical Archaeology* will result in lively and profitable debate.

Historical archaeology is a broad field involving individuals from a wide range of backgrounds. Thus their approaches often differ radically. Yet *Historical Archaeology* has no "party line," but is a forum for the expression of diverse views on this rapidly developing field of research.

The following article is a reaction to Vincent P. Foley's discussion "On the Meaning of Industrial Archaeology" which appeared in *Historical Archaeology* 1968 pages 66-68.

On the *Real* Meaning of Industrial Archaeology

ROBERT M. VOGEL

It was with some surprise that I learned from the article having nearly the same title as this one in last year's issue that there is at least one member of the archaeological profession who at this late date views with suspicion and real doubt the right of the term "Industrial Archaeology" to be taken seriously or even to exist. I thought that that had all been cleared up. As Vincent Foley's principal thrusts were directed at Kenneth Hudson, a leading British proponent of the field, it would no doubt be more fitting for Mr. Hudson to make the reply. However, I have been asked to clarify the position of those of us who are concerned with Industrial Archaeology, and am pleased to make the attempt.

One of the most curious aspects of virtually every one of Mr. Foley's points is the distinct thread of defensiveness that prevades them. This seems most patent from Foley's continual attribution to Hudson of "defending" the coining and usage of the term to describe an activity essentially new and different from anything previously practiced. No less than three times Foley speaks of Hudson's "defenses," which leads me to think that it is indeed Foley who is defending. True, Hudson in the introduction of his *Industrial Archaeology, An Introduction*, spends some time explaining (I should call it) what he means by "Industrial Archaeology": why and how the term came

into use, and why it is an extremely good one to have. I had never thought of his remarks, in print, conversation, or lectures as being a defense for or against anything.

Even then, 1963, he speaks of much of the discussion on the introduction of the term as having taken place long since, and finally points out quite simply that the "... Council for British Archaeology — a not markedly revolutionary body — has itself been using the term without even a hint of inverted commas since 1959 . . ." (*Ibid.*: 12). *Since 1959*. The CBA not only uses the term, but in fact has an Industrial Archaeology section. Strange it is then, that Foley, in his second paragraph, sets forth his intention of recording a protest against a term he believes has gained "some" acceptance. Speaking only of Great Britain for a moment, let us look briefly at what "some" really means in this context. There is the above noted recognition by the CBA. There is a quite respectable bibliography on the subject. If like Foley we ignore "site" and geographically oriented regional surveys (of which there are more than a dozen solid examples in print), there are more than twenty books devoted to the general subject and practice of Industrial Archaeology, all selling well and widely. Hudson's 1963 work alluded to is, in fact, now out in a U. S. revised edition (Humanities Press, N. Y., 1966), and was re-

cently reviewed without snicker or shudder in *Archaeology* (June 1969 pp. 242-3).

There are over forty local Industrial Archaeology groups in Great Britain, with several thousand members, publishing a number of serious and respectable newsletters and even journals. BBC saw fit several years ago to produce a lengthy and well received series of TV programs on the subject. There have been perhaps 15 or 20 major conferences and summer courses since 1959, all well attended. The newspaper and journal articles and special bulletins in the field are countless. And so forth.

In the United States the visible manifestations of use and recognition of the term Industrial Archaeology may not be as numerous, but they are quite as real. Articles to the number of 12 or 15 have appeared in a variety of professional and scholarly journals. The Society for the History of Technology has established a subject Committee. Such organizations as the National Park Service, the Hagley Museum, the Smithsonian Institution and many states regularly use the term and are deeply involved in work under that designation. Which all strikes me as a great deal of acceptance to be passed off as "some". If indeed, "Industrial Archaeology" is as inappropriate or false a term as Foley believes it to be, then a vast number of people have been profoundly misled. Mr. Hudson, after reading the Foley article, found himself wondering whether all of the members of all of the local groups listed in his and Neil Cossons' recently published *Industrial Archaeologist's Guide* (David & Charles, Newton Abbott, Devon) were imaginary!

But just what is it about the whole business of Industrial Archaeology that makes Mr. Foley feel so uneasy? It is not the general area of study, for he admits that "the historic sites of the industrial era are culturally important and are proper areas of study for archaeology," and that "Hudson's and Pannell's arguments (J. P. M. Pannell, *The Techniques of Industrial Archaeology*, 1966) in defense of Industrial Archaeology present valid justification for such study *even though they may not be arrived at logically*" (my italics). Foley then does tell why Hudson and Pannell are misguided and the basis for his reservations. There are three, which I would like to examine out of Foley's order.

First, he is upset that the industrial archaeologist is almost as concerned with the preservation of the sites he studies as with the study

itself. It that bad? Does the typical historic sites archaeologist pride himself on a lack of such concern? Or is it simply that since he occupies himself primarily with digging (about which more later) and thus normally the "destruction" of the site almost by definition, he is not accustomed to thinking in terms of preservation? Foley does allow that the historic sites archaeologist frequently works toward and advises on preservation, but feels that this is "outside his professional *raison d'être*;" and that if he becomes actively involved in a preservation project it is "extra-archaeological." This strikes me as a strangely narrow view and one which I cannot believe is widely held by Foley's colleagues. He claims that the archaeologist *cum* preservationist tends to become trapped in the time slot in the site's history toward which preservation is directed, and so is reluctant to remove evidence from that period in the search for possible evidence of earlier periods significant in the site's history. There are so many practical approaches to that problem, if in fact it is a problem, that I do not consider it a very convincing reason for Foley's stand, at least with regard to the type of sites usually studied by industrial archaeologists. And recall, that is who Mr. Foley's article is about.

Second, Foley is concerned about "professionalism," or rather lack of it in Industrial Archaeology, to a degree leading to the impression that he feels his own status and that of the field is in some way threatened by an incursion of bumbling amateurs. As evidence he has Hudson allegedly state that ". . . the study [of Industrial Archaeology] is far better done by amateurs than professionals, for it is . . . unreasonable to expect . . . (the latter) to look for quite the same details or to find quite the same satisfaction as . . . (the former)."

Now if we look at what Hudson *really* says, it does not have quite the "antiprofessional" ring which Foley has erroneously read into it. Hudson (1963:34) tells us at the opening of his chapter, *The Approach*, that "According to the person involved, Industrial Archaeology, like archaeology in general, can be regarded either as an *academic subject* or as an *agreeable hobby*. It can be either a discipline or a pleasure, a means of adding to the World's Store of Knowledge or a way of increasing one's personal awareness of the past. It would be unreasonable to expect the university lecturer in pursuit of promotion or a higher degree to look for quite the same details or to find quite the same satisfaction as, say, the school-master or the railway en-

thusiasm" (My emphasis). How Foley drew from this the conclusion that Hudson favored the amateur's efforts over those of the professional or that Industrial Archaeology in Great Britain is "oriented toward the diletante" is impossible to imagine.

Hudson points out at considerable length just what the amateur is and what he can and cannot do in furthering the ends of Industrial Archaeology. Recall that the professional photographer, while not a professional industrial archaeologist, obviously can, with his skills and a measure of enthusiasm, as an *amateur* make superb photographic records

of sites and structures. Similarly the architect, the traditional historian of technology, the surveyor, etc., amateurs all in the industrial archaeological sense, are all capable of their own fully professional contributions to the recording of the available evidence. Even the educated, interested layman, the real "amateur," has the potential for a contribution. Foley states his awareness of the necessity for such a catholic approach to a site, but again only in the narrowest, academically oriented professional terms; speaking of physical anthropologists, paleontologists, paleobotanists, etc.

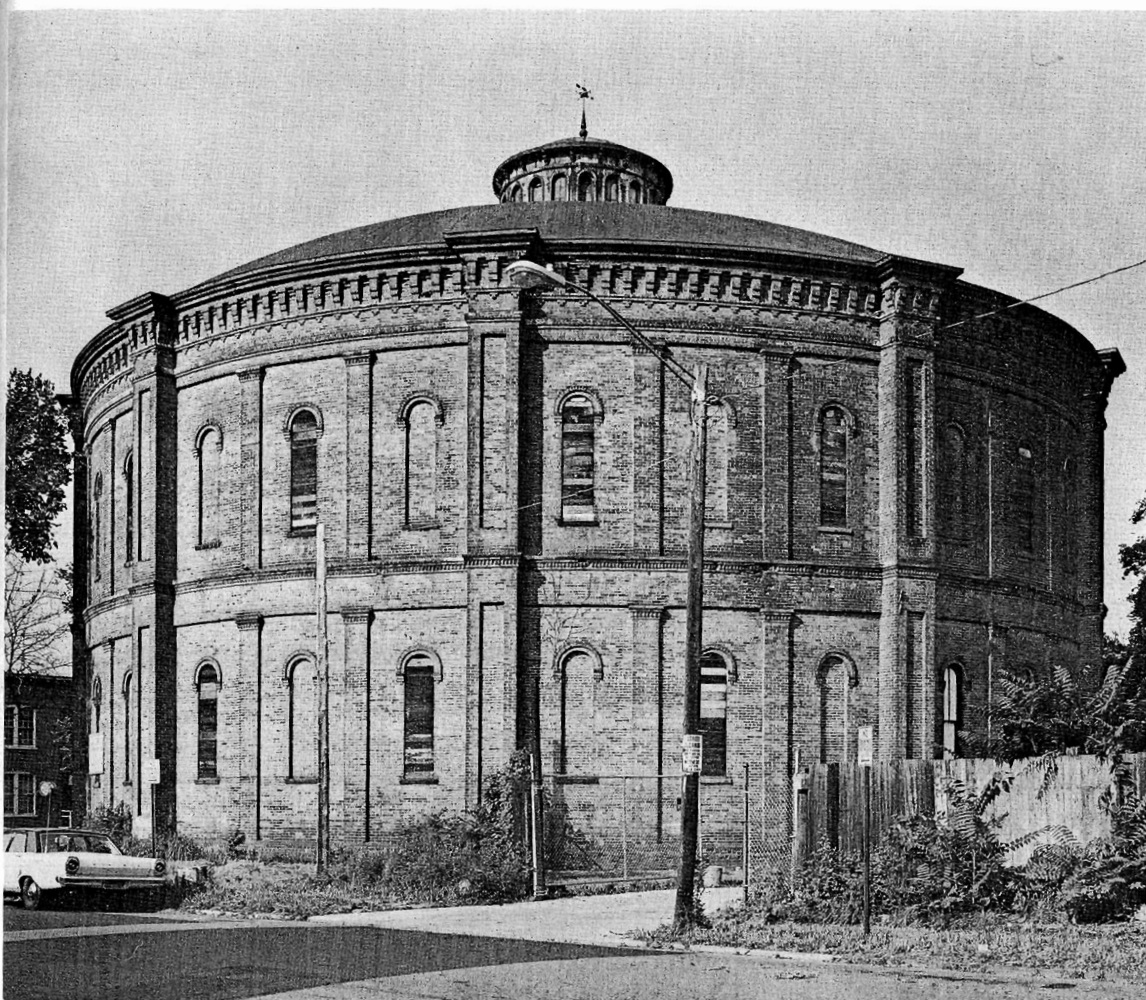


FIGURE 1. *In Full View But Invisible.* While hardly hidden from sight, this great circular building in Troy, New York, built in 1873 to house a gas holder, has up to now been as obscure to historians of technology as though it were underground. Such enclosures, large and small, plain and elaborate, of frame, brick and stone, were erected in the Northeast during a brief period in the 1870s and 80s to prevent freezing of the gas holder waterseal. The Troy structure was recorded in the summer of 1969 by a party of industrial archaeologists working under sponsorship of the Smithsonian, the National Park Service, the American Society of Civil Engineers and the New York State Historic Trust.

Photo by Jack E. Boucher

Admittedly there is need to be more wary of the amateur when digging for one's evidence, where there usually is only one shot, and so no allowance for reruns if it is bungled. But since we are speaking here of Industrial Archaeology, where the evidence is generally not disturbed by the act of examining and recording it, there is every reason to encourage "amateurs" to make their contribution, there being nothing to lose and everything to gain thereby. Which brings us finally to Mr. Foley's third—actually his first—cause for distress. It is by far the most important one for us to consider, and in my opinion the one where he is on the weakest ground.

The key issue, it appears, is that to be considered an archaeologist—any type of true archaeologist—one ". . . must dig for his data." He emphasizes this in several ways as an express means of declaring his belief in the legitimacy of the historic-sites and classical archaeologist vis-a-vis the interloping industrial archaeologist. "The industrial archaeologist," we are told (after ten years, the inverted coma syndrome once again), "is performing archaeology only when he excavates at site." Moreover, "He is not [even] an archaeologist, however, if this excavation is only occasional or accidental to his normal method of procuring data." But Foley's most damning blast is again at Hudson and Pannell who in

their presumption deal mostly with ". . . relics of the 'industrial' age that are *self-evident to all*." They [Hudson and Pannell] do not depend upon, or in fact consider as applicable, those talents peculiar to the professional archaeologist, that is *making visible* and intelligible those material remains of the past that lie *underground* (or water), *hidden* from view." (My emphasis). This would appear to cast the professional archaeologist primarily as a sort of magician, and only secondly as an interpreter of data. If you can not see it, it's legitimate and if you bring it to light you are an archaeologist. If you *can*, see it, it's beneath notice and you are not an archaeologist.

Such reasoning continues to amaze me, as I find it impossible to believe that many archaeologists of any persuasion can really imagine that there is more validity or significance in the data on a building gleaned from a fragment of its foundation painstakingly excavated, than in a similar building still standing more or less intact. Since Mr. Foley is as concerned with professionalism as he obviously is, it should occur to him that the interpretation of data and evidence is a far more professional oriented activity than simply making it visible. I have never been aware that the classical, traditional (a word Foley uses to defend his version of archaeology) archaeologist customarily stops short in his investigations of the remains of ancient

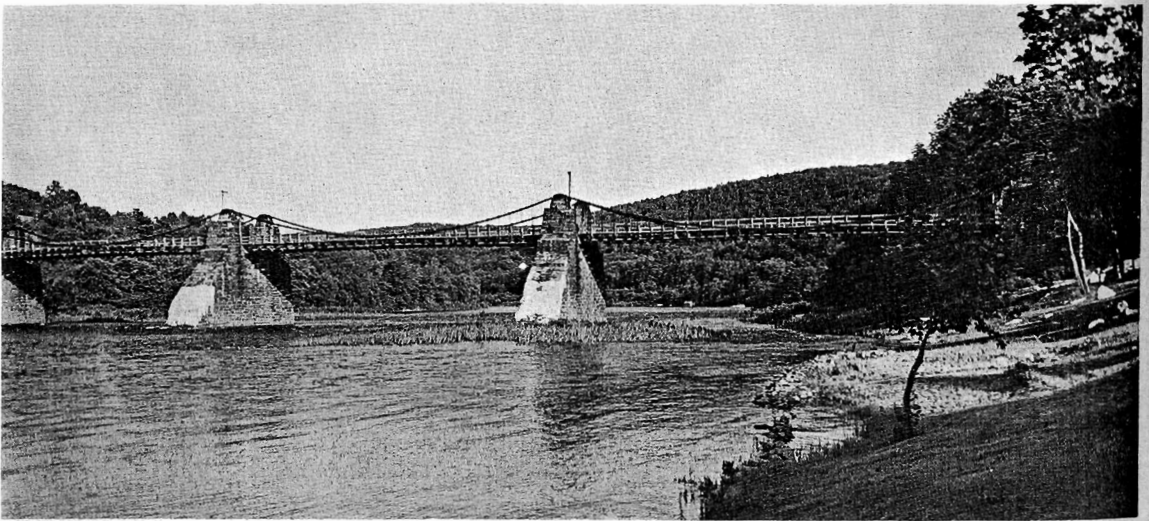


FIGURE 2. *The Oldest Suspension Bridge in the U.S. crosses the Delaware at Lackawaxen, Pa. Now carrying a minor county road, it was built in 1848 by John Roebling as an aqueduct for the Delaware & Hudson Canal. Embodied in the structure are principals and details that still are the basis of most suspension bridge design. Privately owned and not always well maintained, this hallowed engineering relic has an uncertain future. The time to examine the evidence in which it is so rich is now, not after it has fallen. Three companion spans on the canal, demolished following its closure, have left us with nothing more than some masses of masonry and a few iron links. The bridge was, in fact, recorded by the same team that studied the Troy gas-holder house.*

Photo by Smithsonian Institution

civilizations at ruins and structures that by chance have remained above ground, "self-evident to all."

The point of this is that evidence that is physically "in full view" is by no means necessarily in view at all. It is entirely possible for a structure — particularly an obsolete industrial structure — to have reposed openly in the center of a city for decades, and yet from the standpoint of there being any clear understanding of its original function or significance in the development of the particular industry, it will have lain there virtually unseen. The industrial archaeologist is concerned with "making it visible" in that sense — in the making "visible" of forgotten and neglected evidences of the industrial past on the basis of its physical remains — seemingly a fitting archaeological occupation.

A prime example of the need for industrial archaeological work is the former Tredegar Iron Works in Richmond, a bastion of Confederate ordnance production during the Civil War and an industrial complex of major importance in the South before and after. It stands today in near ruinous condition, totally neglected. A careful study of the remaining buildings and their relationships to the site and each other would reveal a great deal about the firm and its development that could not be told from the extant records. Presumably Mr. Foley would not touch such a site because there it all is, in full view. Then

who, in his view, should? The technological historian? He traditionally will do no more than study the records, which as part of it, is well and good. Should the buildings be allowed to fall and the rubble be hauled away and six feet of earth accumulate over the site before our interest is aroused? Why not study and record now, Mr. Foley? If there is validity in excavating and studying the ruins of forts of the Colonial wars, why not in the important structures of later wars? To say nothing of the structures that have made the real contributions to the progress of civilization — in industrial structures?

When, in discussing the general semantic, academic and general professional inaptness of the name Industrial Archaeology, Mr. Foley makes the analogy of a surgeon over a patient asking for a scapel by some term whimsically invented on the spot because it had more "flavor," he suggested that it was a "somewhat strained" analogy. I suggest that irrelevant would be closer to home. Neither Mr. Hudson nor any of the other "creators" (Foley's term) or Industrial Archaeology, of whom I am aware, ever coined or used the term because it had more "flavor" than another, preexisting one that meant exactly the same thing. Read the final paragraph of Hudson (1963:13) again, Mr. Foley.

As an illustration of this rather important concept, I would once again ask Mr. Foley to advise us who, and operating under what

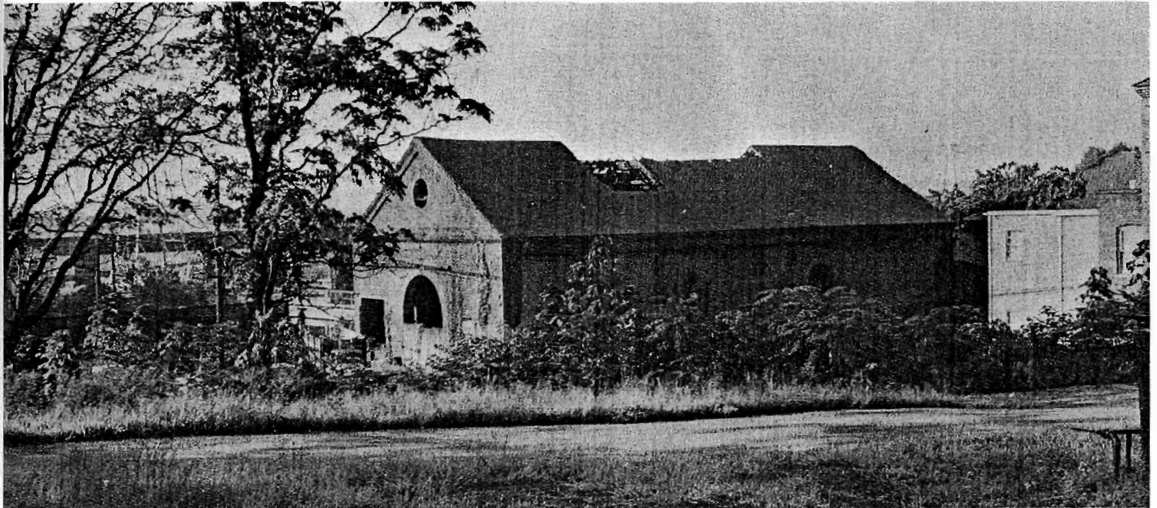


FIGURE 3. *Tredegar Iron Works Today.* One of the Confederacy's most vital industrial facilities, supplying much of its ordnance and heavy machinery, Tredegar lies derelict today on the Richmond river front, slowly disappearing as it is vandalized, weathered and intentionally demolished by the site's owners. Since preservation of the complex is probably not feasible, it cries out for fully study and recording before the evidence is lost forever. A "dig" years hence would produce a minute fraction of the evidence concerning building techniques, site development, and manufacturing procedures available today.

Photo by Edward F. Heite

disciplinary term, would conduct a total documentation of the last of the mechanized wood-wheel manufacturers in the United States, including measured drawings of plant and

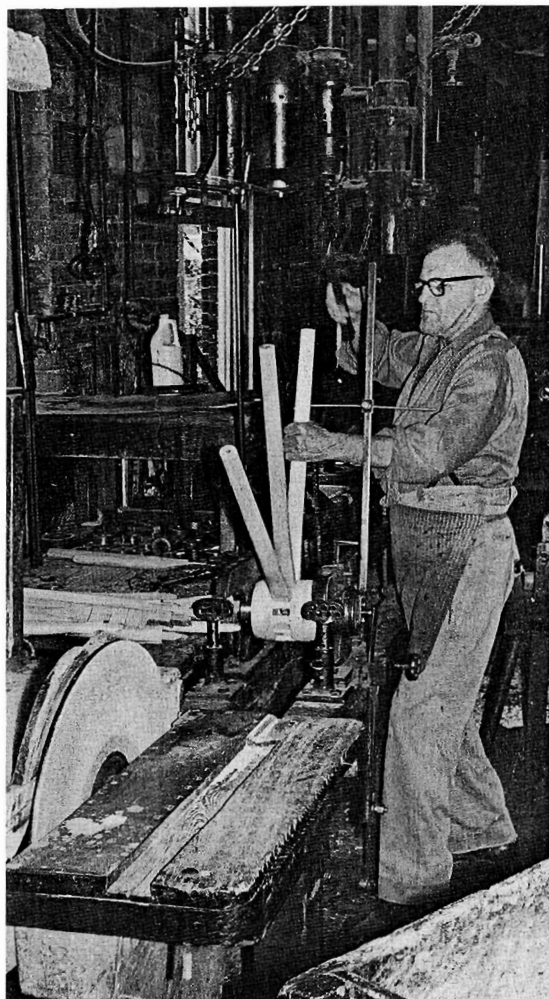


FIGURE 4. *The Study of Declining Industries.* The manufacture of wood wheels, once a major American industry, while not quite dead, is not in the best health. The peculiarities of wheel construction gave rise to an entire highly specialized group of manufacturing procedures and production machinery. Hoopes Bro. & Darlington of West Chester, Pa., one of the last firms employing both, was recently thoroughly documented by the techniques of industrial archaeology: architectural measured drawing; still and movie photography; oral interview; examination and analysis of production sequence; archival research; and so on. Shortly after the survey, HB&D, a nearly perfect reflection of late 19th century wheel making technology, was purchased and will in time be drastically altered. Had its story not been extracted now, it could never have been. If such recording projects ought to travel under the banner of Historical Archaeology, then where are the historical archaeologists who have taken an interest in such work?

Photo by Smithsonian Institution

machinery; interviews with operatives; analysis and recording of the production sequence; assembly of specimen artifacts; detailed photography; and filming of the manufacturing sequences (a study currently underway), if Industrial Archaeology had not come into being, with an approach to the study of physical remains *entirely different* from any in common use.

Even the term *industry* comes in for its share of attack, Foley believing that as generally understood by industrial archaeologists (and I presume others interested in the subject) to mean the period starting with the Industrial Revolution, "... it is an economists' and historians' term," and is thus "restrictive in scope and implies denial of an historical-culture continuum." This, because it does not consider the primitive industries practiced in prior periods.

If the industrial archaeologist does ignore such early industrial manifestations, it is only because they have left us few remains and these have already been fairly well documented by others, including, of course, archaeologists. The remains of the Industrial Revolution have *not* been so well documented, and as we are confronted today with their destruction at an accelerating rate, it is in that area that our concern logically lies. The term *industrial* used in this sense is no more restrictive than the terms *historic* and *historical* employed by Mr. Foley to designate his particular endeavors.

Which, in view of the relative newness of those terms as applied to the general field of archaeology, leads me to wonder at Mr. Foley's shrill concern that a group of people — a good sized one, if he will allow — have concluded that there exists a serious gap in a vital area of our physical history, and established a disciplinary area to deal with it. Was there a similar reaction from the Egyptological Archaeologists and the Graeco-Roman Archaeologists, *et al*, when first someone proposed that there was need for a sub-area to be known as Historical Archaeology?

Foley suggests in his concluding paragraph that since we are all concerned with Historic Sites, and that since the term is well understood intra-professionally, we would all be "safer" (from what hidden dangers?) to "... simply add a hyphen followed by the term 'Industrial.'" Does that make things simpler? Or clearer? Why then, is Mr. Foley not a Archaeologist, who, when further modification is needed for papers, conventions, etc.

(the rare occasions, he suggests, for use of hyphens), becomes an Archaeologist — Historic Sites,

The most disturbing conclusion to be drawn from the Foley article is that there really is no place at all for most industrial archaeologists. On the one hand he advises at the outset that “. . . historic sites of the industrial era . . . are proper areas of study for archaeology.” He then tells us that we cannot be archaeologists if we don't dig (and it should be noted that only a tiny proportion of structures from that era have disappeared leaving significant amounts of evidence below ground); and that we “. . . should not expect

the technological historian to be archaeologist, nor the latter the former.” And finally, we really are: Historic Sites Archaeologists — Industrial, despite lacking the “vital qualifications.” If Messrs. Hudson and Pannell have arrived at their conclusions illogically, where does that leave Mr. Foley?

Confusion in the scholarly world and the need for continual redefinition of the term Industrial Archaeology loom large to Foley if we do not hasten to rid ourselves of this ill conceived denomination. I see that danger as totally fanciful; the real one being unwillingness to admit the validity of useful and needed new areas of study.

Reply to Vogel

VINCENT P. FOLEY

I am somewhat at a loss to understand the surprise inherent in Robert Vogel's philippic reaction to my recent article “On the Meaning of Industrial Archaeology.” The article is the printed version of a paper I delivered at the January, 1968 meeting of the SHA. The paper was one of three presented by a three-man panel of which Vogel was a member.

I shall not engage in a lengthy hysterically *ad-hominem* copy of Vogel's exception to my paper. I believe that I presented my opinions fairly and addressed myself to the subject. It will have to be left to any readers who may chance upon these papers to determine for himself whether Vogel did likewise. I must agree with Vogel that if a reply to my article were thought necessary, Mr. Hudson might be better qualified, and undoubtedly would have done so with more integrity.

My paper was, of course, directed towards archaeologists in the New World, and referred to the importation of what I believe is an improper and misleading term. If Vogel found such opinions intolerable, I suggest that he could have better bolstered his case by presenting the titles, dates and journals of the “12 or 15 (American articles which) have appeared in a variety of professional and scholarly journals,” prior to the date of the original presentation of my paper.

There are too many areas of fundamental misunderstanding in Vogel's paper to answer them all, but several are important enough to be mentioned. The first involves the difference between archaeology as a technique, and the use of archaeological data. Again let me emphasize that I am using the word “archaeology” in its proper sense — the excavation of data. Interpretation of evidence derived from archaeological excavations is obviously colored by the disciplinary orientation of historians, anthropologists or art historians — each would have differing interests and emphasis. These differences are determined by the investigator's major discipline. It is therefore somewhat incorrect to refer to the professional archaeologist as interpreting his evidence unless we also remember that his archaeological endeavors are a means of collecting data for an end which is dictated by the discipline from which his research stems. While oversimplified, the emphasis of the anthropologist would lie on the cultural and social organizational dimensions of the data, while the historian might place more emphasis on any historic events to which the remains testify.

The second important point revolves around scientific terminology, definition and professionalism. The latter word involves at its conceptual heart the idea of high standards and

ethical performance. When professionalism is compromised, no matter what the supposed cause, a discipline ceases to be a discipline. Recently a colleague informed me that although he agreed with my paper fully, he was afraid it would hurt someone's feelings. I do not believe that any archaeologist, professional or amateur, can take offense at my paper.

In the realm of terminology and definition, Vogel circled an important point (his third from the last paragraph), when he attempted to turn my statements against me, by concluding that I, by definition, would be "an Archaeologist — Historic Sites." Interestingly enough, he almost grasped my meaning by his conclusion — but did not go far enough. In my case, first I am an anthropologist, who uses the techniques of archaeology (exhuming evidence from the ground) to uncover data; who specializes in the Americas; and who is presently engaged in the study of sites of the historic period, which by happenstance are industrial in their economic nature. Without becoming involved in certain other knotty issues, the facts allow the same organization for any professional archaeologist as is, or with such modifiers as historic, prehistoric, Old World, military, and so on.

It is only reasonable that a person interested in the history of a particular technology or trade, who desires to call himself an archaeologist, present a similar organization and be able to justify it with the addition of his background and degrees in archaeology.

The crucial point concerns the completeness and validity of data produced by a study when at least one of its proponents holds the premise that sufficient historical and technological information is obtainable from extant industrial structures. The building, if a century or more of age, has undoubtedly undergone numerous periods of change and modification. There may occasionally be an example of a structure abandoned during the height

of industrial occupation and kept in its pristine state, but I would doubt it. Vogel's narrow premise can best be shown to be inaccurate by posing a few questions to the readers who are real archaeologists, professional or amateur.

What archaeologist has ever attempted a study of a site without recourse to records when they exist? In the case of industries, records would include histories of the trade involved. If the building is still extant, architectural and technological investigations would augment his research.

What archaeologist has not found a structure a century after principal use to be so changed as to defy more than partial interpretive reconstruction? What archaeologist has not found archaeological deposits from a few inches to many feet in depth around such structures, extant or razed? How many archaeologists have not found excellent data on that industry's history from those layers, as well as evidence of the times and types of changes and modifications that took place? Changes that frequently obliterate earlier internal structural evidences unrecorded by chroniclers?

In summary, it appears to me that Vogel either did not really read my paper, or deliberately used words out of context in his rush to answer. Nowhere in my paper did I say that the study of industrial period sites from a historical-technological point of view was not a worthwhile endeavor. To the contrary, I applaud such work. The point is there are schools all over the country offering well-defined curricula in archaeology. There are practitioners all over the world who immediately recognize the inherent relationship between archaeology and excavation. Why should they adjust their definitions and directions to agree with a small group desiring to call their non-archaeological studies by a name that has little relationship to their activities and no relationship to their methodology?