

Part III: Recommendations for Further Archaeological Research and Resource Management

A. Introduction

The Quincy Smelting Works is the only historic era copper smelter in the Lake Superior Mining District still standing in substantial condition. Furthermore, a cursory literature survey and anecdotal evidence suggests that it is perhaps the most complete example of its type and age in the world. It reflects the technology of the time, the industrial processes critical to the industry, and the workplace of the men and women who produced copper for industrial and domestic consumption.

Since being closed in 1971, it has slowly deteriorated through exposure to the elements and to the unwanted attention of vandals. Where roofs have failed, serious structural damage, even collapse, has occurred, and water damage is extensive. Even so, enough remains of the major technological artifacts and structures to make this an extraordinary and valuable site, worthy of preservation and use. In order to maximize future value and minimize damage through preservation and development efforts, some additional archaeological attention and resource management is desirable.

B. General Suggestions

Recognition of the unique character and potential of the QSW should result in some general approaches to management. While these approaches may be so commonsense as to go without saying, it seems appropriate to mention them in this context.

First, perhaps the most effective way to preserve the important elements of this site are through conservative development strategies. Whenever possible, retaining existing structures and landscapes, rather than replace or modify. When deciding among competing alternatives, lend priority to the least disruptive or invasive choice. Of course, this approach is common in traditional historic preservation and park settings, such as historic homes and/or constructed landscapes. In such places, the conservative ethic becomes second nature to resource planners and managers. But the QSW is an industrial place, with rough edges and dirty surfaces. The urge to preserve may come a bit harder or slower in such a setting. But it

should come, none the less. The industrial processes represented by some of the resources in this complex, and their unique combination of integrity and preservation make these gritty spaces and things worthy of careful attention, as it they were the homes of presidents of designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

Second, pointed effort must be made to combine architectural preservation with archaeological and landscape perspectives. The structures are critical, but site plan is also a key element. The artifacts remaining on the site, as well as potential archaeological remains, also promise to provide essential information to the planner, the interpreter, and ultimately the public. The integration of these sometimes disparate points of view will be important to the successful preservation and interpretation of the site.

C. Specific Archaeological Suggestions

First, there should be a careful and thoroughgoing inventory of the artifacts contained within the Smelter Complex. This refers particularly to the moveable objects, such as tools and materials, but could also be extended to include fixed equipment, such as steam engines and generators. While some things have accumulated since the smelter ceased operation, due to use by Ventures Group and the Township, the bulk of the objects contained within the complex are directly related to the long-term operation of the smelter by the QMC. As such, they reflect the industrial processes and work that typified the copper industry of the 19th and 20th centuries in North America. The objects can be an important piece of the picture when it comes to understanding and interpreting this industry in this setting. As such they should be inventoried and selected examples should be curated for study and exhibit.

Second, while the bulk of the smelter complex was constructed on fill, stamp sands from the Pewabic and Franklin stamp mills, the northern portions of the property include original shorelines, buried beneath fill and roadways. The shoreline and near shore areas are of archaeological interest because they represent areas that might contain evidence of prehistoric occupations. In an 1865 publication entitled “Ancient Mining on the Shores of Lake Superior,” (Smithsonian Institution Contributions to Knowledge, Number 155), Charles Whittlesey illustrated and discussed the presence of ancient mining pits on Quincy and Pewabic Mine properties along the shore of Portage Lake, in the general vicinity of the

smelter site. While the mine excavations noted by Whittlesey were located about 100 feet above the lake level, there is sufficient reason to expect that the other remains, such as domestic sites, might be located closer to the shoreline. Care should be taken to identify the location and extent of these shoreline and near shore areas and to assess potential damage that might be caused by development and/or construction activities. We have located nineteenth century maps that provide detailed alignments of the original shorelines and have included copies with this report (see Map 6 within the report and the 1906 map from the MTU archives labeled QD2045 and included with a packet of map copies). Any plans for construction in those areas should include requirements for archaeological survey and monitoring with the express purpose of discovery of evidence of prehistoric occupation.

Third, a potentially valuable approach to understanding the QSW property would be a remote sensing study. This should entail a survey of either the entire property, or targeted areas where construction is necessary. Using techniques such as ground penetrating radar and magnetometry, the subsurface can be characterized in ways that indicate the presence of anomalies, such as buried structures or land surfaces. These techniques could be used to confirm the locations of old shorelines, as mentioned above. They could also be used to locate features such as the “Old Water Adit” included on map QD1076 in the MTU Archives Quincy Drawings Collection, copied with this report. Remote sensing can be a cost effective and time-saving means of locating buried features, short of full scale exploratory excavation.

Fourth and finally, any earth-disturbing activities should be monitored by professional archaeologists to evaluate and record archaeological deposits that might be encountered. This includes particularly such activities as trenching for utility placements, drains, roadway and foundation work. Construction schedules must be developed to allow for all excavations to be examined on a timely basis and allow for any buried deposits to be recorded. allowance must be made for delay and/or modification of earth-moving plans to accommodate circumstances where important deposits are discovered.