



# SOCIETY FOR INDUSTRIAL ARCHEOLOGY

## NEWSLETTER

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## CUPOLA ART TEACHES IRON HISTORY AT BLUFF FURNACE

The Bluff Furnace site, located in downtown Chattanooga, Tenn., is known to SIA members primarily from three sources: a 1987 IA journal article (*Innovation and Change in the Antebellum Southern Iron Industry: An Example from Chattanooga, Tennessee*), a 1992 book (*Industry and Technology in Antebellum Tennessee: The Archaeology of Bluff Furnace*), and more recently, as part of the 2008 SIA Fall Tour. The remains of this antebellum hot-blast furnace were first discovered by the late Jeffrey L. Brown and later excavated by University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC) archeologists. Through the integration of documents, photographs, and archeological data, the archeologists confirmed the site's transition from a charcoal-fired furnace to one that used coke as a fuel—the first in the 19th-century South to do so.

Both the site's historical significance and its location made it an ideal candidate for public interpretation. Bluff Furnace is adjacent to the Hunter Museum of American

Art, the Tennessee Riverwalk, and the Walnut Street Bridge, and the concatenation of these attractions generates tens of thousands of pedestrian visits each year. Accordingly, in the early 1990s an ambitious interpretive program was implemented that included (1) an on-site scale model of the furnace (in its coke phase); (2) traditional signage at three locations adjacent to the site; (3) an outdoor interactive computer display (DOS-driven!) that highlighted the blast furnace process, the archeological excavations, and local history; and (4) most impressive of all, a full-scale replica of the hot-blast cupola on the original furnace foundations. Based on historic photographs and archeological information, a stainless-steel framework was constructed at the furnace location and covered with a vinyl fabric painted to resemble the 1860 ironclad cupola. All the materials and expenses for these displays were grant-funded or donated by local businesses, including a powerful light that illuminated the furnace from inside the frame.

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Close-up of the artistic representation of the furnace cupola.

### In This Issue:

- Digital Photography Tips
- Preview of SIA Fall Tour to Connecticut
- SIA Seattle Registration Will Open Soon
- Digital SIAN Now Available!
- General Tools Award Nominations Due Apr. 16
- SIA Election Slate of Candidates

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## CALENDAR

### 2011

**Mar. 27: Waterworks Museum, Grand Opening, Boston, Mass.** Located in the 1887 High Service Pumping Station at Chestnut Hill Waterworks (Tour site—1984 joint SIA/TICCIH conference—Romanesque building housing three steam pumping engines including ASME landmark Leavitt-Reidler engine). Info: [www.waterworksmuseum.org](http://www.waterworksmuseum.org).

**Mar. 31-Apr. 2: Business History Conference, St. Louis, Mo.** Info: Carol Lockman, (302) 658-2400, ext. 243; [clockman@hagley.org](mailto:clockman@hagley.org).

**Apr. 9: Hagley Fellows Conference: "Disaster! A Conference on Disasters in History," Hagley Museum & Library, Wilmington, Del.** How disasters in history have impacted technology, society, and culture. Info: [clockman@hagley.org](mailto:clockman@hagley.org).

**Apr. 14-16: On the Surface: The Heritage of Mines and Mining, Innsbruck, Austria.** Info: [www.tourism-culture.com/news\\_2.html](http://www.tourism-culture.com/news_2.html).

**Apr. 20-23: Southwest/Texas Popular Culture Assn. and American Culture Assn. Joint Conference, San Antonio, Tex.** Paper sessions on topics of IA-related interest. Info: [www.swtspca.org](http://www.swtspca.org).

**May 23-27: National Park Service Archeological Prospection Workshop, Palo Alto Battlefield, Brownsville, Tex.** See article in this issue. Info: [www.nps.gov/history/mwac](http://www.nps.gov/history/mwac).

**May 31-June 4: Vernacular Architecture Forum Annual Conference, Falmouth, Jamaica.** Info: [www.vafweb.org](http://www.vafweb.org).

**June 1-5: SIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE, SEATTLE, WASH.** See article in this issue. Info: [www.sia-web.org](http://www.sia-web.org).

**June 20-26: National Railway Historical Society Annual Convention, Tacoma, Wash.** Info: [www.cascaderails2011.com](http://www.cascaderails2011.com).

**Oct. 12-16: SIA FALL TOUR, QUINNEBAUG VALLEY, CONN.** See article in this issue. [www.sia-web.org](http://www.sia-web.org).

**Nov. 3-6: Society for the History of Technology (SHOT) Annual Conference, Cleveland, Ohio.** Call for papers deadline, March 31. Info: [www.historyoftechnology.org](http://www.historyoftechnology.org).

**Nov. 17-18: The Life of New Materials Conference, Hagley Museum & Library, Wilmington, Del.** Co-sponsored by the Chemical Heritage Foundation and Philadelphia Area Center for History & Science. Info: [www.pachs.net/newmaterials](http://www.pachs.net/newmaterials).

**Nov. 17-20: The 14th National Conference on Planning History, Baltimore, Md.** Society for American City and Regional Planning History. Paper sessions and tours on architecture, planning, geography, and landscape design. Info: [www.dcp.ufl.edu/sacrph](http://www.dcp.ufl.edu/sacrph).

### 2012

**July 3-7: 4th Int'l Congress on Construction History, Paris, France.** See call for abstracts in this issue. Info: [www.icch-paris2012.fr](http://www.icch-paris2012.fr). ■