



SOCIETY FOR INDUSTRIAL ARCHEOLOGY

NEWSLETTER

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THE OSWEGO IRON HERITAGE TRAIL

A new heritage trail, dedicated to Oregon's pioneer iron industry, opened this January in Lake Oswego, Ore., eight miles south of Portland. The Oswego Iron Heritage Trail is small compared to New England's Iron Heritage Trail, a driving tour of iron heritage sites in the Upper Housatonic Valley, and Michigan's 48-mile Iron Ore Heritage Trail, however, Oregon's eight-mile route can be walked in a day. The seven major destinations on the trail are located in city parks and on city property and include the sites of two furnaces, a pipe foundry, a worker's cottage, an iron mine, a charcoal pit, and a pioneer cemetery.

The centerpiece of the trail is the 1866 **Oswego Furnace**, the first iron smelting operation on the Pacific Coast. Before 1867, when this furnace went into blast, virtually all iron on the West Coast was shipped around the Horn of South America. In 1865 a group of Portland merchants,

hoping to capitalize on the discovery of iron in Oswego, incorporated the Oregon Iron Co., and recruited George D. Wilbur, of Sharon, Conn., to supervise construction of the charcoal hot blast furnace. A protégé of Connecticut's master furnace builder, Isaac Newton Bartram, Wilbur modeled the facility on the furnaces of the Salisbury Iron District.

The Oswego Furnace's basalt stack was originally 34-ft. high and had four Gothic arches formed in red brick at its base. In 1878 the stack was raised to 44 ft. to improve productivity. Three different companies owned and operated the works between 1867 and 1885. A larger ironclad furnace, half a mile north, replaced the first furnace in 1888. Production reached its peak in 1890, but Oswego's dream of becoming the Pittsburgh of the West came to an abrupt end in 1894, when a series of financial and technological difficulties forced the second furnace to close.

The 1866 stack is the only charcoal blast furnace still

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Susanna Kuo

The restored Oswego Furnace stack.

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CALENDAR

2012

July 3-7: 4th International Congress on Construction History, Paris, France. Info: www.icch-paris2012.fr.

Aug. 10-16: The Assn. for Industrial Archaeology Annual Conference, Chelmsford, Essex, England. Info: www.industrial-archaeology.org.

Sept. 19-22: Textile Society of America Biennial Symposium, Washington, D.C. Theme: Textiles & Politics. Info: <http://textilesociety.org>.

Sept. 20-23: Preserving the Historic Road 8th Biennial Conference, Indianapolis, Ind. Info: www.historicroads.org.

Sept. 26-29: Society for Commercial Archeology Annual Conference, Wildwood, N.J. Tours of resort architecture and historic transportation. Info: www.sca-roadside.org.

Sept. 26-29: Pioneer America Society: Assn. for the Preservation of Artifacts & Landscapes Annual Conference, Philadelphia, Pa. See call for papers in this issue. Info: www.pioneeramerica.org.

Sept. 27-30: Society for the Preservation of Old Mills (SPOOM) Annual Conference and Mill Tour, Bucks County, Pa. Info: www.spoom.org.

Sept. 29-Oct. 4: Assn. for Preservation Technology International Annual Conference, Charleston, S.C. Info: www.apti.org.

Oct. 4-7: Society for the History of Technology Annual Meeting, Copenhagen, Denmark. Info: www.historyoftechnology.org.

Oct. 18-21: SIA FALL TOUR, UTICA, N.Y. Tours of industrial sites in the Mohawk Valley and the Adirondacks. Info: www.sia-web.org.

Oct. 31-Nov. 3: National Trust for Historic Preservation Annual Conference, Spokane, Wash. Info: www.preservationnation.org.

Nov. 2-3: Construction History Society of America Meeting, MIT, Cambridge, Mass. Paper proposals requested. See article in this issue. Info: www.constructionhistorysociety.org.

Nov. 4-11: The XV Congress of the International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage (TICCIH), Taiwan. Info: www.mnactec.cat/ticcih.

Nov. 6-11: Assn. of Railway Museums (ARM) and Tourist Railway Assn. Fall Conference, Montreal, Que. Hosted by Exporail, The Canadian Ry. Museum. Info: www.railwaymuseums.org.

2013

Jan. 9-12: Society for Historical Archaeology Annual Conference, Leicester, England. Info: www.sha.org.

Apr. 10-14: Society of Architectural Historians Annual Conference, Buffalo, N.Y. Info: www.sah.org.

Apr. 17-20: National Council on Public History, Ottawa, Ont. Info: www.ncph.org.

June 5-8: Second National Covered Bridge Conference, Dayton, Ohio. Call for papers in this issue. Info: www.wood-center.org. ■