

INTRODUCTION

The HAER Inventory of Blair and Cambria Counties

The HAER Inventory is an ongoing, comprehensive research project which identifies and analyzes through written documentation, oral history, and historic structures inventories, the nation's significant engineering and industrial sites. Its purpose is to provide historians, engineers, planners, preservationists, and others interested in the fields of industrial archeology, and economic and technological history with information on these significant sites. The HAER Inventory is intended to be a guide to America's historic industrial and engineering resources.

As past HAER Inventory projects have demonstrated, the final results of such work provide a thorough compilation of historic engineering and industrial structures each of which is described, referenced, and evaluated. Beginning in January 1987 HAER made major changes to its inventory procedure by introducing for the first time a computerized format for recording much of the data obtained from the field. This advance makes it possible to identify and analyze more rapidly historical information on the nation's many engineering and industrial sites.

HAER recognizes no absolute cutoff dates in the history of engineering, industry, and technology, although most resources included in the HAER Inventory are generally 50 years of age or older. For the most part, the HAER Inventory records sites that have substantial above-ground remains: archeological sites are generally not included in the inventory work. However, a few representative archeological sites, including several containing the remains of stone-constructed blast furnaces, coke ovens, coal-mining structures, and lime kilns, were recorded in the HAER Inventory of Blair and Cambria counties to provide a better understanding of the broad range of industries in the region.

Given unlimited funds and endless amounts of time and personnel, an ideal HAER Inventory project would comprise detailed information on virtually all types of engineering and industrial resources. Such is not the case in the "real world," and therefore a well-defined methodology outlining the types of resources that are to be included in the documentation, as well as the amount of information compiled for each documented resource, is required.

Methodology

Much of the HAER Inventory of Blair and Cambria counties was conducted during the summer of 1987. During this time, five historians carried out the initial field work, and conducted the preliminary research and writing on the historic industrial and engineering resources in the two counties. The first half of the summer was devoted largely to field work and the last half to intensive research and writing. The drafts prepared by the HAER team formed the basis of the written material for this publication.

Additional inventory work was carried out during the summer and fall of 1988 by HAER staff in Washington, D.C., to verify previously collected information, and to gather information on several more important sites. During this time the draft manuscript was extensively edited and newly uncovered research materials were incorporated into the many short histories and overviews that constitute this publication.

Introduction

Preliminary Research

One of the major aspects of the preliminary work was a literature search at local libraries and institutions, conducted to identify useful primary and secondary sources. State industrial directories and mine reports were among the first primary sources consulted. In addition, such secondary sources as county histories and celebratory histories of several towns in the two counties were consulted. A great deal of preliminary research, however, involved working with maps. This helped identify the kinds of industries that were important in the region, as well as pinpoint the location of many late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century industrial companies. The most useful were the Sanborn insurance maps, county atlases and county maps, and early twentieth century United States Geologic Survey (USGS) maps. Contemporary USGS 7.5 Minute Series (Topographic) quadrangle maps were used to identify extant industrial and engineering structures. Much of this preliminary research was assembled into an annotated bibliography, reproduced at the end of this publication.

Site Selection

The HAER inventory team utilized the annotated bibliography, as well as the various county histories, articles from technical journals, and maps, to locate the region's important industrial sites. These sites were then recorded on USGS maps and investigated in the field. In addition to the larger industrial sites, HAER included a range of locally significant smaller industrial companies to provide a better context for understanding the region's industrial development. The initial site selection using written materials resulted in the identification of about three-fourths of the resources included in the inventory. The remaining one-quarter of sites recorded by HAER were identified through oral sources or simply by running into them during the field work.

Field Work

The field work was organized geographically by township. Each township received comprehensive coverage, with particular attention given to industrial areas in the towns and boroughs. Each site visited was recorded on a field form developed by HAER. The information on the field form included a description of the major extant structures, including data uncovered from drawings on site, builder's plates, and oral interviews. In addition, 35 mm black-and-white photographs were taken at each site showing general views, as well as select details of buildings and machinery.

Research and Writing

The field work mainly provided information about present site conditions. Research in local libraries, historical societies, and company offices, was also carried out with the aim of writing brief histories of the companies and sites. Various sources -- oral, written, and visual -- were consulted after the field work was completed. Often, oral sources provided reliable information about the history and development of a site that was not otherwise available. Whenever possible, the information obtained through oral sources was verified through written materials. Where available, historic photographs were used to trace changes to industrial sites.

Evaluation

This publication includes for each site: (1) database information, (2) a brief narrative history and description, and (3) a list of references. The information for each resource was evaluated, edited, and, when additional information was uncovered, rewritten. The descriptive and historical information, along with the photographs, provided the basis for evaluating the technological significance of each resource. The priority ratings were developed to reflect whether the historical and technological significance of the resource warrants additional documentation by HAER:

Priority 1 resources are nationally significant. They may also be regionally or locally significant resources that retain much (or all) of their historic materials of construction or machinery. Priority 1 resources warrant further documentation in the form of measured drawings, in-depth histories, and large-format photography.

Priority 2 resources are regionally or locally significant and retain some of their historic materials of construction or machinery, although some alterations may have taken place. They warrant in-depth histories and large-format photography.

Priority 3 resources are locally significant and warrant large-format photography.

Priority 4 rating is assigned to resources that do not warrant any documentation beyond that of the HAER Inventory.

Many factors entered into the determination of significance and the designation of ratings. One factor centered on the importance of the resource or its impact on the county's social, political, or economic history and development. Other questions that were considered included: is the resource endangered or threatened with demolition? is it one of the few remaining examples of a particular industry? or is this type of resource represented in the HAER collection? As the inventory progressed and a more complete assessment of each county's resources became available, the priority rating of each structure was reviewed by the HAER staff in Washington, D.C.

Conclusions

The inventory of historic engineering and industrial resources in Blair and Cambria counties included about 250 industrial sites, twenty-five railroad bridges, twenty highway and pedestrian bridges, and six railroad tunnels. The HAER Inventory is intended to serve as a guide to the region's historic industrial and engineering resources, and to promote further research into its industrial past. The results of the Inventory will be used by HAER to plan further research and documentation projects in this region.