

Teachers' Companion to the 2012 Michigan Archaeology Poster *Fayette Historic Town Site*

For 4th Grade Teachers

Michigan's Upper Peninsula has abundant natural resources: water, forests, and minerals.

Iron mining is an important industry in the U.P. Michigan ranks second in iron ore production in the U.S. Minnesota is the only state that produces more.

Iron mining began in Michigan in 1846. Iron ore was dug out of the ground. Then, the iron ore was melted and formed into bars of iron. The bars of iron were shipped to factories where the iron was used to make things. Much of the iron from Fayette was used to make rails for railroad tracks, and wheels for railroad cars.

To melt the iron ore, mining companies built big furnaces. Beginning in 1867, the Jackson Iron Company built two blast furnaces on the shore of Snail Shell Harbor located on the Garden Peninsula. Quickly, the town of Fayette grew up around the furnaces, with cabins for workers, a superintendent's house, a doctor's residence, a hotel, a blacksmith shop, barns for livestock, a school, and a company store.

The poster features a photo of the men who worked at Fayette unloading iron ore from incoming ships, operating the blast furnaces, and loading iron bars on outgoing ships. There are also some kids in the foreground of the photo; they are undoubtedly children of the workers. Kids did not work at the furnaces; they probably just wanted to be in the photograph.

Historians have collected quite a bit of information about Fayette from documents like newspapers, letters, and company records. But, **archaeology** also helps us learn about the people who lived at Fayette.

Archaeology studies artifacts – the things that people made and used – to learn about people who lived in the past. Historians go to libraries and archives to gather information. **Archaeologists** dig in the earth at places where people used to live to recover artifacts that were lost or thrown away. Artifacts can be almost anything. At **archaeological** sites where Native American people lived hundreds or even thousands of years ago, **archaeologists** find spear points and arrowheads made of stone, and pieces of pottery made of clay. At more recent **archaeological** sites like the town of Fayette, **archaeologists** find household items like pieces of broken dishes, bottles, and even toys. They also find artifacts like nails and bricks from structures at the site, and tools used in the iron work that took place there.

Look closely at the four photographs in the lower left-hand corner of the poster. What do you see? Can you identify those items? Are they artifacts? What do you think

archaeologists might learn about the people who lived and worked at Fayette by studying those items?

The four artifact photos in the lower left-hand corner of the poster:

Upper left: shoe leather

Upper right: bottles

Lower right: tools

Lower left: ceramic vessels

State Archaeologist

State Historic Preservation Office, Michigan State Housing Development Authority