

Umpqua Mine & Maud S Mine: Summary Cultural Assessment

Medford BLM Abandoned Mine Lands Unit

Heritage Research Associates Report No. 224 (George Kramer, 1999) recommended that the Umpqua Mine should be considered potentially eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A. Kramer's recommendation was based primarily upon the integrity and interpretability of the site, and how it was representative of Oregon's quicksilver industry. Based on the available documentation provided by the Roseburg BLM office, it is unclear if a determination of eligibility was ever completed for the site beyond Kramer's report. At some point subsequent to Kramer's evaluation, the NRHP contributing elements and characteristics of the site were irretrievably lost thru an attempted cleanup/removal action, presumably by BLM. The structural integrity and associated interpretability of the rotary furnace plant has been completely destroyed, with most elements now dismantled in secondary deposition and/or missing. Likewise, based on subsurface exposures associated with the 2017 EE/CA performed by Applied Intellect, it is evident that the site integrity has been impacted at depth by road building and cleanup actions. All of the 2017 EE/CA test pits were sterile with regard to cultural materials. Surface artifacts in the associated habitation and support areas at the mine appear to be mostly intact -- but no subsurface testing was done in these areas to confirm deposition. Finally, even if there are in-situ artifacts and living surfaces in these areas, there are better examples of intact Depression Era mercury sites throughout Oregon that will be more informative. Therefore, the AMLU recommendation is that the Umpqua Mine is NOT ELIGIBLE for the NRHP due to its dramatically impaired integrity.

It is worth mentioning that the *separate* but associated site, the Maud S Mine, located a short distance up slope from the Umpqua on private ground, probably IS eligible for the NRHP based on Criteria A, C, and D, but because it is a private holding the site remains unevaluated. The Umpqua Mine and Maud S Mine were jointly operated. NRHP Criterion A states that an historic property contributes to the major patterns/themes of American history. Criterion C states that the property exhibits distinctive architectural/structural characteristics and construction. And Criterion D states that the property has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to history. In the case of the Maud S, while it is a small-scale operation, it is one of the best-preserved Scott Furnaces in Oregon and perhaps in the Western States, representative of ca. 1915-1930's era mercury mining, of which Oregon was an important domestic producer (Criterion A). The brickwork superstructure of the furnace exhibits the skill of local masons (Klamath Falls area), coupled with proprietary hearth/flue technology adapted from the expertise of the California mercury industry – and it is in excellent condition compared to most other mercury processing plants that our team has studied throughout Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Nevada (Criterion C). Finally, the layout of the plant with Scott Furnace, condenser array, reduction mill, and associated artifacts and debris halo suggests that the site has significant information potential for understanding small/middling scale mercury operations in Oregon during the period of significance, as well as some limited archaeometallurgical data recovery possibilities (Criterion D).