

**Heritage Survey  
of the  
Arctic Coal Company  
Svalbard**

**Svalbard's Environmental Protection Fund  
FINAL REPORT**

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## **Preface**

This report presents the results of Michigan Technological University's archival research at the Statsarkivet i Tromsø and archaeological survey in the Isfjorden area of Svalbard, otherwise known as Spitsbergen, made in July and August, 2008. Svalbard's Environmental Protection Fund kindly supported the majority of these efforts.

The report contains two sections: the Svalbard Environmental Fund final report form and an extensive appendices of MTU's analysis of its survey findings. The financial details have been removed from the former in the interests of privacy. MTU retains the copyright to the inventory cards contained in the appendices except for the historic photographs owned by the Michigan Technological University Archives and Historical Collections or the Statsarkivet i Tromsø. These cards are included to assist the Syssemmannen in its heritage efforts on Svalbard.

A full statement detailing the MTU/LASHIPA project, the 2008 project and copyright information is included in appendix A.

# Svalbards environmental Protection Fund

## FINAL REPORT FORM

1. **Project name/title** **Project number.**

Heritage Survey of the Arctic Coal Company, Svalbard	08/10
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2. **Applicant**

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4. **Results of the project**

The 2008 Heritage Survey project took place between July 19<sup>th</sup> and August 7<sup>th</sup> 2008 in Tromsø, Norway and the Isfjorden, Svalbard. It focused on the history of an American coal mining company, the Arctic Coal Company (ACC), an early 20<sup>th</sup> century bituminous coal endeavor responsible for much of the early mining development on Spitsbergen. Archival research at the Statsarkivet i Tromsø uncovered excellent information on the history of the ACC, especially on its early development and on the planning and development of Mine 1 (also known as the American Mine), Longyear Valley. Archaeological survey and documentation efforts in three areas of the Isfjorden completed Michigan Technological University's (MTU) broad survey of ACC remains, and documented several important historic structures. MTU graduate students Seth DePasqual and Cameron Hartnell undertook the project.

### Tromsø

The project team completed five days of research at the Statsarkivet i Tromsø, from July 21 - 25. The archive manages a 241-box collection of documentary material on the ACC, much of which is not available in other archival collections. The project team's primary focus was to complete gaps in historic research, particularly the period from 1902 to 1907, and uncover additional information on the history and development of Mine 1, Longyear Valley.

The team followed a carefully designed protocol to work through the collection. We first identified relevant documents and then transcribed, digitally scanned or photographed them, as appropriate. This approach scanned and photographed documents (correspondence, photographs or plans) with a specific file name and noted these on a research log. The team used photography for large format documents, since large-scale scanning was not possible during the visit. The team reviewed the entire contents of thirty-five targeted boxes and scanned or photographed over 230 separate documents.

Researchers also reviewed portions of a collection of the Store Norske Spitsbergen Kulkompani, the company that purchased the ACC properties in 1916. We found plan drawings supplied to the company by the Arctic Coal Company at the time of the 1916 purchase. Of particular interest were several mine maps depicting both Store Norske and ACC workings. Significant material was digitally photographed.

### Svalbard

The project team undertook archaeological field work on Svalbard between July 27<sup>th</sup> and August 7<sup>th</sup>. The majority of the work was conducted in the Longyearbyen area. The team also made two one-day excursions to Colesbukta and Elveneset.

Our primary objectives in the Longyear Valley were to survey and document ACC Mine #1 and the ACC powerhouse and to digitally map the remains of four historic structures of Old Longyear City. A secondary objective, should time permit, was to complete the survey and documentation of ACC test pits in Longyear Valley, which MTU started in 2007. We accomplished all of these objectives in the 2008 field season.

Documentation efforts at the ACC Mine #1 site consisted of site mapping and photography. These efforts resulted in the location and close inspection of numerous structural and technological features including the mine platform, coal hopper, and Bleichert aerial tramway. The team made a detailed hand drawn site plan using a compass and electronic distance finder. We also photographed many individual structural features and made scale drawings of several important ones. The team complemented these efforts with a digital map made using a Trimble GPS.

We undertook a similar approach to documenting the remains of the ACC powerhouse, which stands near the currently operational powerhouse. We made a detailed hand drawn map and a GPS digital site plan of the ACC powerhouse site, and also extensively photographed the site.

The team made a pedestrian survey along the southwestern slopes of Longyeardalen. Using a 1912 ACC map of the valley, the team located thirteen ACC test pits and documented them with photography and GPS mapping.

On July 29<sup>th</sup> the researchers took a Zodiac to the east side of Elveneset, in Sassenfjorden, to survey for signs of ACC activity noted on historic maps. The ACC once claimed lands east of Elveneset and built two small huts by the shore for the purpose of mineral exploration. The MTU team surveyed the area for signs of one of these huts, including its associated structures, and for signs of historic prospecting activities. The team identified a small, modified hut and remains in the location identified on historic maps but did not find any evidence of prospecting activities.

The team took a Zodiac to Colesbukta on July 30<sup>th</sup> to find remains of a sod hut and evidence of prospecting that historic documents say existed there. The ACC claimed Colesbukta and the surrounding area for the purpose of mineral exploration and possible exploitation. The ACC claimed an existing sod hut for their own use as a base for prospecting activities. The MTU team surveyed the lower valley area, adjacent the bay, for hut features and climbed the eastern slopes to survey for prospecting activities. It located two potential sod hut features but did not identify any prospecting features. The possible sod hut remains were photographed, measured and drawn, and digitally mapped using GPS technology.

**5. Self-evaluation of project accomplishments**

The MTU team is confident that the 2008 Heritage project was highly successful and exceeded its goals. The information gathered from the archive and field-based research activities provides valuable material pertinent to continued examination and analysis of ACC history as well as the history of arctic industry and mining systems in general and will assist in future heritage protection and interpretation.

Archival research in Tromsø produced a wide body of information on the ACC not found in American-based archival collections. The most notable finds were those pertaining to the preliminary stages of ACC development information that illuminates key planning decisions made by company officials. These decisions offer insight as to how the company perceived the Arctic environment, the regional political situation, and the likely trajectory of their operation. Prior to this research, MTU researchers could only speculate on these subjects. Additionally, the research assisted the subsequent documentation of archaeological features on Svalbard.

The field-based research completed MTU's overview survey and documentation of ACC remains on Svalbard, made in the summers of 2004, 2006, 2007 and 2008. Combined, this work forms a powerful basis for future heritage efforts and a more fine-grained understanding of a highly significant historic activity on Svalbard.

The MTU team produced a detailed documentation of ACC Mine #1, a highly significant historical landmark of Longyear Valley. Other historically significant features were also documented. The collection of site maps, feature drawings and documentary information produced during the 2008 survey enhance the understanding of how ACC interests were manifested on the arctic landscape. Such information is especially useful to modern historians and archaeologists as historic depictions of comparable features are rare if nonexistent.

Field surveys at the Elveneset and Colesbutka locations yielded three archaeological features potentially related to ACC history, two of which were previously unknown to the Sysselmannen's environmental department. The physical information gleaned from the field surveys increases understanding of historic activity at these two locations.

**6. Environmental effects/positive result of the initiative/project, final evaluation**

This project assisted the heritage preservation goals of the Sysselmannen on Svalbard by revealing new information about a historically significant company, the Arctic Coal Company. The archival research drew out new historical information, absent from existing historical studies of the period. The archaeological survey linked historical events with the physical places where they happened. The work provides a powerful basis for heritage planning and preservation action that will benefit the local residents of Longyearbyen and interested parties around the world. In particular, the project made a thorough documentation of the ACC mine 1 and associated structures, which stand as one of the most important monuments to Svalbard's early coal and mineral rush.