ISHKOODA COMMUNITY
(Ishkooda Mining Camp)
Birmingham Industrial District
Spaulding and Ishkooda Rds.
Birmingham vic.
Jefferson County
Alabama

HAER No. AL-119

HAER
ALA
37-BIRM.V
9-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, DC 20013-7127

ADDENDUM TO
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

ISHKOODA COMMUNITY
(Ishkooda Mining Camp)

HAER No. AL-119

Location: Wenonah-Ishkooda Road (JC 66), Birmingham Vicinity, Jefferson County, Alabama.

Date of Construction: est. 1860s

Project Information: This report is based upon written documentation donated by the Birmingham Historical Society, reformatted to HABS/HAER guidelines.

DESCRIPTION

Remaining today are the commissary, adapted for reuse as a health-care facility, and housing in the black miners' camp to the west of Powderly Road and white miners' camp to the east of this road. A home for the resident physician also remains. At the site of the Eureka No. 1 and No. 2 mines, just to the west of Graces Gap, U.S. Steel began development of Oxmoor Industrial Park in 1971.

Ishkooda-TCI White Camp (1900s-1920s)
East of Powderly-Ishkooda Road (JC 66)

Ishkooda-TCI Black Camp
West of Powderly-Ishkooda Road (JC 66)

Ishkooda-TCI Doctor's House (1910s)
Pine Avenue at Powderly-Ishkooda Road (JC 66)

Ishkooda-TCI Commissary (1910s)
Formerly MacDel Health Care Facility, now vacant
12th Way just off Spaulding-Ishkooda Road

Ishkooda-TCI Red Ore Mines Nos. 13 and 14 (Eureka Mines No. 1 & No. 2) (1872, 1872; 1862, 1862)
Now U.S.X-Oxmoor Industrial Park
USGS Quad: Birmingham South UTM: 0, to south of Wenonah-Ishkooda Road (JC 66) on Red Mountain

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In 1862, John T. Milner and Frank Gilmer, then building the South and North (later L. & N.) Railroad into the Birmingham District, bought the land just to the west of Graces Gap where the Ishkooda mines are located. Baylis Earle Grace, whose large farm was

located at the gap, made the sale, the first of Red Mountain lands for industrial purposes. Throughout the Civil War, the mines known as the Eureka Mines supplied ore for furnace operations at Oxmoor, just two miles to the south in Shades Valley. In the early 1870s, when Daniel Pratt and Henry DeBardeleben reopened the Oxmoor works, the slopes then known as Eureka No. 1 and No. 2 continued to supply the ore. Joseph Squire built a tramway from the mines to Oxmoor. By 1892, the mines consisted of seven openings between Graces Gap and Redding and were known as the Ishkooda group. J. W. Worthington & Company worked the mines under contract with TCI (Tennessee Coal & Iron Co.) until the turn of the century. By 1900, TCI had built at the mine site a large merchandise store, office and pumping station, blacksmith and carpenter shops, powder magazines and other buildings, including housing for several hundred employees.

Historian Ethel Armes provides a vivid description of mining operations at Ishkooda circa 1909: "The mines at Ishkooda hold a commanding site. Red Mountain, shorn of timber, stands in long, clear-cut, deep red lines, sharp against the sky, as one looks out to Birmingham. The railroad track, ascending by a series of switchbacks, runs along the slope near to the summit, then curves down in and out of the gaps. It is an interesting sight to watch an ore train heavily laden with its rich cargo wind its way slowly down the hillside and go on its journey to the blast furnaces."

TCI built housing, schools, churches, a commissary and other community facilities for the hundreds of employees and their families at Ishkooda. When a tornado wiped out No. 10 and No. 11 Villages and other portions of the community in 1917, the TCI staff replaced the dwellings in the same year. By the 1920s, an estimated 1,500 persons lived at Ishkooda. The mines closed in 1955.

Sources Consulted

Photograph, 1937 View of Wenonah Camp, Birmingham Public Library Archives

White, Marjorie, The Birmingham District, pp. 211-212

Field Visit, 6/28/91

Bergstresser Inventory, 1990