



The Puddler Revisited

One of our readers submitted an excerpt from the manuscript (1970) shown right. It reads:

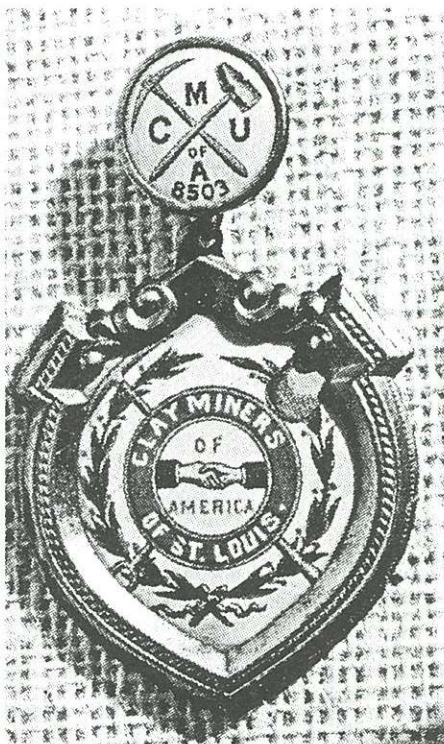
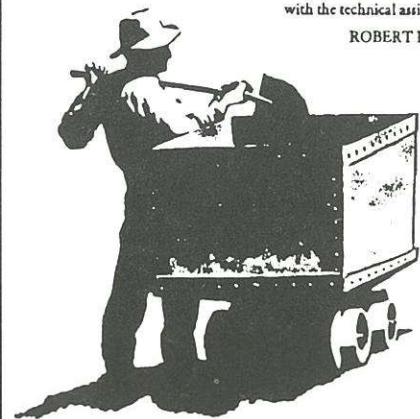
“Now and then placer men encountered exceptionally stiff clays which contained enough free gold to be worth working, even though clay was singularly aggravating to deal with, being too stiff and cohesive to be run through a sluice and too plastic to be crushed. Clay, usually the product of the weathering of the feldspar component of granitic rocks, was found both in placers and in mines; it was an unmitigated nuisance wherever encountered. It could be placered by **puddling**, or mixing the clay and a quantity of water in some sort of container, such as a barrel or a mortar boat, and stirring and raking until a more fluid gumbo was bailed away, and the remaining mess was panned or riffled. Though still practiced, **puddling** is not recommended except to persons who are enamored of hard labor and short commons or who, like early-day slaves, are in no position to refuse the work.”

Western Mining

AN INFORMAL ACCOUNT OF PRECIOUS-METALS PROSPECTING, PLACERING, LODGE MINING, AND MILLING ON THE AMERICAN FRONTIER FROM SPANISH TIMES TO 1893

by Otis E Young, Jr.

with the technical assistance of ROBERT LENON



Clay Miners' Badge

Speaking of puddling clay, there were those who actually made a living of mining the substance. This colorful badge is from the Clay Miner's Union of America from St. Louis, MO. Submitted by Dave Johnson, he has not been able to find any historical reference to this organization. A question to be answered is whether the number 8503 refers to a union local or to the membership number of the miner who originally owned this piece.