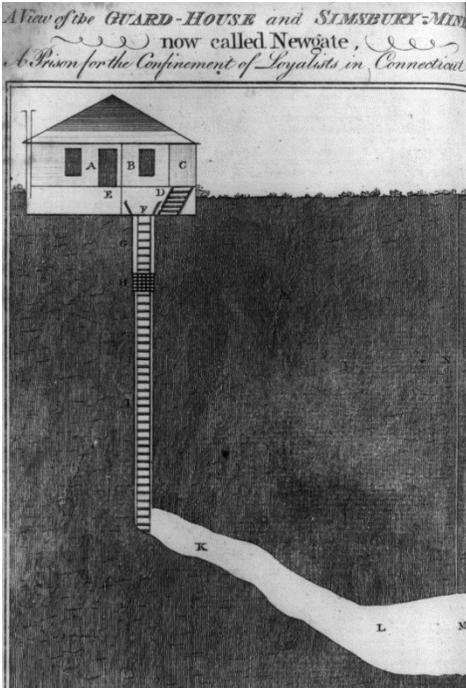


Old Newgate Prison and Copper Mine East Granby, Connecticut

In the early 18th century copper was discovered on the western side of Talcott Mountain in



Simsbury (now East Granby), Connecticut; a mine was operating on the site by 1707. The mine closed in 1745, and in 1773 the mine shafts, up to 70 feet deep, were converted into a prison named Newgate after the infamous prison in London. During the Revolutionary War, Tories and British prisoners of war were kept at Newgate. In 1790 Newgate became the first state prison. It included a brick guardhouse, bake house, storage buildings, and a wooden palisade, which was later replaced with the current high fieldstone wall. Prisoners of all ethnicities lived together, worked in a nailry during the day, and slept in the mine shafts at night. In its isolated location, Newgate became its own community, with offices, shops, a granary, a mess hall and a treadmill to grind grain. Over the years there were a number of escape attempts, some successful. For a time in the early 19th century, the prison was also a tourist destination; in 1810 the overseer reported that 5,400 people had visited Newgate. In 1827 Newgate closed and the prisoners were moved to a state-of-the-art facility in Wethersfield. After a few failed attempts to revive copper mining, Newgate once again became a tourist destination, with a hotel, dance hall, and observation deck added in the late 19th

century. In 1968 the property was acquired by the State of Connecticut and made into a state park. Newgate was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1970 and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1972. The property is also a State Archaeological Preserve. Until it was temporarily closed for renovation a few years ago, Newgate had been Connecticut's most-visited state-owned historic site. AHS has conducted archaeological investigations at Newgate in several projects, most recently in 2013, related to renovation work at the guardhouse. We recovered thousands of artifacts from deep prison-era deposits including prisoner-made tools and utensils, food remains, clothing items, and ceramics. These artifacts provide new insights into the daily lives of the prisoners and guards who lived and worked at Newgate Prison.

