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The Archaeology of Race and Racialization in Historic America

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New Book

The Archaeology of Race and Racialization in Historic America.

By Charles E. Orser, Jr.

208 pages, hardcover, ISBN 13: 9780813031439. University of Florida Press, 2007.

Description from the publisher:

"Orser's analysis of race and racialization as ongoing historical processes liberates us from the commonly accepted idea that race is a fixed social reality. In examining the material lives of the Irish in New York and the Chinese in California, Orser demonstrates the vast impact that the process of racialization has had on immigrant communities in the United States. A must read for any historical archaeologist seriously interested in understanding the meanings of race and ethnicity." -- James A. Delle, Kutztown University

With the advent of this book, the ability of archaeologists to contribute to the study of race no longer can be doubted. By focusing on "racialization," the marginalizing process in which racial categories are imposed on groups of people based on some outward characteristic, Charles Orser shows how historical archaeology can contribute to the study of race through the conscious examination of material culture. He demonstrates this in two case studies, one from the Five Points excavation in New York City focusing on an immigrant Irish population, the second from a Chinese laundry in Stockton, California.

Orser argues that race has not always been defined by skin color; through time, its meaning has changed. The process of racialization has marked most groups who came to the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; this book demonstrates ways that historical archaeology can contribute to understanding a fundamental element of the American immigrant experience.

