

ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

WORLD HERITAGE LIST

N° 482

A) IDENTIFICATION

Nomination : Zone including historic monuments of Guanajuato and adjacent mines

Location : State of Guanajuato

State Party : Mexico

Date : December 17, 1987

B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

That the proposed cultural property be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria I, II, IV and VI.

C) JUSTIFICATION

In 1548 the Spaniards, who had settled in the region in 1529, discovered rich outcrops of silver at Cuanaxhuata, which means "Frog Hill" in the Tarasco language. To protect prospectors, miners and the new settlers, four fortified structures were erected at Marfil, Tepetapa, Santa Ana and Cerro del Cuarto, and formed the nuclei of the later town of Guanajuato. Sprawling through a winding valley at an altitude of 2084m, Guanajuato differs from the other colonial towns in New Spain because it was not laid out on the standard grid plan. Instead, the scattered areas grew together through the spontaneous urbanization of suitable sites on the rough, natural terrain.

Founded when the silver mines were opened, Guanajuato had a symbiotic relationship with them up to the 19th century. Its growth, the layout of its streets, including the picturesque "subterranean" streets, its plazas, and the construction of hospitals, churches, convents and palaces are all inextricably linked with the industrial history of the region which, with the decline of the Potosi mines in the 18th century, became the world's leading silver extraction centre.

Since Potosi was included on the World Heritage List in 1987, Guanajuato should be accepted on the same basis. ICOMOS is pleased that in preparing this nomination the Mexican government used the opportunity to provide a better definition of the site's protection and in particular the official ratification of the proposals made by the INAH in 1974. The INAH plan, which

includes not only the superb group of Baroque buildings of Guanajuato but also the mining infrastructure and the town's natural environment, sets out the demarcation of the cultural property which ICOMOS recommends for inclusion on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria I, II, IV and VI.

- Criterion I. Guanajuato possesses several of the most beautiful examples of Baroque architecture in the New World. The churches of La Compania (1745-1765) and above all La Valenciana (1765-1788) are masterpieces of the Mexican Churrigueresque style. In the field of the history of technology, Guanajuato may also pride itself on unique artistic achievements such as the "Boca del Infierno", a mineshaft 12m in diameter that plunges a breathtaking 600 meters.
- Criterion II. The influence of Guanajuato was felt in the majority of the mining towns of northern Mexico from the 16th to the 18th centuries. Though more modest due to the tardy appearance of the process of industrialization, Guanajuato's place in world technological history is nonetheless far from negligible.
- Criterion IV. Guanajuato is an outstanding example of an architectural ensemble that incorporates the industrial and economic aspects of a mining operation. Just as the major 18th-century hydraulic works are inextricably linked to an urban topography determined by the confines of the river path and mineral outcrops, so the Baroque buildings are directly linked to the wealth of the mines. The church of La Valenciana and the Casa Rul y Valenciana were financed by the most prosperous mines. The more modest operations of Cata and Mellado also boasted churches, palaces or houses located near the mines or in town.
- Criterion VI. Guanajuato is directly and tangibly associated with world economic history, particularly that of the 18th century.

ICOMOS, September 1988