

EVERETT IRON COMPANY, IRON FURNACE
.25 Miles S. W. of Everett
Earlston
Bedford County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-379-A

HAER
PA
5-EARL,
3A -

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Location: .25 Miles S. W. of Everett
Earlston
Bedford County
Pennsylvania

Date of Construction: 1884

Present Owner: Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission

Present Use: Highway Maintenance and Storage Facility

Significance: Although the Everett iron furnace was a financial failure soon after it was put into blast in 1884, Joseph E. Thropp acquired the property and successfully operated the pig-iron producer through the first two decades of the twentieth century. Thropp's Everett iron furnace was among the few in the Upper Juniata Valley, one of the nation's leading pig iron producers in the ante-bellum years, to operate into the twentieth century.

Historian: Elaine J. Will, 1991

Project Information:

The results of the study of Bedford County were published in 1994: Kim E. Wallace (ed), Bedford County and Fulton County, Pennsylvania: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service). The contents of the publication were transmitted to the Library of Congress as individual reports. Research notes, field photos and copies of historic photos collected during the project were transmitted to the AIHP Collection, Special Collections, Stapleton Library, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA 15705.

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Several buildings remain intact and in use on the site of the Everett Iron Company property. The locomotive shop and blacksmith's shop are large, brick buildings resting on concrete foundations, both with new metal roofing. A two-story brick and stone building that served as the company's office stands up the hill from the ironworks. It is a two-and-one-half-story building with a full basement. It contains a hipped roof and a projecting bay above the basement level. Also remaining are several concrete piers that once supported dump cars.

The Everett Iron Company was incorporated in 1874. Jacob B. Williams worked for several years to secure a modern furnace for Everett. He bought or leased 12,000 acres in Black Valley as a source of iron ore and tracts of coal land in the Broad Top area of the county. He recruited investors including several New York capitalists as well as James P. Kimball, Samuel D. Williams, and other Everett businessmen. During 1882 and 1883 construction began for a railroad branch from the Mt. Dallas station near the proposed furnace site to the Black Valley ore mines a few miles to the south. Finally, in 1884, the Everett Iron Company's furnace was constructed just west of town. It went into blast December 10, 1884.

The furnace complex was built on the former Smouse farm at the west end of Everett on the south side of the Raystown branch of the Juniata River. Early maps indicate that two ore trestles ran directly through the large iron ore warehouse, which was located about 25' west of the furnace itself. Sanborn insurance maps indicate that the site also included three hot blast stoves, a "battery of 12 boilers, 70' long, 2 tiers one over the other," two engine houses, a blacksmith's shop, and a building that served as a general warehouse and workshop.

The company's financial report at the end of the first ten months of operation showed a significant loss, which was blamed in part on the use of poor quality ore. Company officers were unable to reverse the losses and the company was put into receivership. An auction of the property was held in 1887, but it was not until 1889 that a serious investor purchased the company and outfitted it to resume production. The new owner, Joseph Earlston Thropp, expanded the company's holdings, adding a limestone quarry at Ashcom just west of the original furnace site, and in 1906, he purchased the former Powelton blast furnace near Saxton, closer to the company coal fields. By 1900, a fourth hot blast stove had been added and the capacity of the furnace was doubled--from 100 tons to 200 tons per day. In 1910, the furnace employed 150 men and had a capacity of 300 tons per day. By that time, a large locomotive shop had been constructed, along with several storage buildings, a slag elevator bin, and a two-story office building complete with a "laboratory" in the basement.

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Under the Joseph E. Thropp Company, the name of the Everett Furnace and the village that grew up east of the furnace was changed to Earlston, Thropp's middle name and the name of his son. The company operated a store in Earlston at the south end of the bridge that crossed the river from Everett. Company stores were also set up in Saxton and in the coal-mining communities of Kearney and Minersville. On a hill just west of the Earlston furnace complex, Thropp built a mansion that boasted sixteen rooms, three baths, indoor basement plumbing, as well as servants' quarters, a garage, and stables. The main house is still standing. Thropp also built a house for his son Earlston and a superintendent's house adjacent to the furnace property. Workers' houses were also built near the furnace, and houses built for ore miners were moved to Ashcom when the Black Valley mines were closed.

Thropp ran the blast furnace and foundry until his company went bankrupt in 1924; at that time the operation was permanently closed. The New Enterprise Stone and Lime Company purchased the Ashcom limestone quarry in the early 1930s. The furnace property was eventually taken over by the Pennsylvania State Turnpike Commission, which uses the old furnace buildings for storage of vehicles and equipment. In 1948 the Commission built a new maintenance headquarters building on the site. In 1958, the New Enterprise Stone & Lime Company won a contract to reclaim the slag piles on the site. Large magnets salvaged the iron and the remainder of the slag was used as road cushion material in the reconstruction of U.S. Route 30 between Breezewood and Everett. A number of the company workmen's houses remain along SR 1004 and have been remodeled as private residences. The brick, two-story Earlston Thropp house still serves as a residence just west of the company office building. The Joseph E. Thropp mansion and stable are still maintained by private owners. Beginning in the 1950s, about seventy acres in the southern part of the mansion property was subdivided for residential building lots. Although officially named the "Hillvue" development, it is popularly known as the "Foor addition" to Everett.

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