HOPEWELL FURNACE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE
Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site
Intersection of State Route 345 and Hopewell Road
Hopewell
Chester County
Pennsylvania

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
NORTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Custom House, 3rd Floor
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106
HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

HOPEWELL FURNACE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

HALS NO. PA-22

Location: Park entrance is at the intersection of State Route 345 and Hopewell Road, Berks and Chester Counties, Pennsylvania.

Latitude: 40.207173, Longitude: -75.767312 (Park entrance, Google Earth, Simple Cylindrical Projection, WGS84).

Mailing Address: Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, 2 Mark Bird Lane, Elverson, Pennsylvania 19064.

Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site landscape boundary begins at the intersection of Shed Road and PA Route 345 north of the Visitor’s Center. It then runs parallel to PA Route 345, approximately 1,000 feet before turning SSW to follow Park Road for roughly 2,500 feet. From there the property line heads SSE in an irregular line to the northeast corner of State Game Lands #43. Turning east, the boundary runs approximately 2,000 feet, coming to the intersection of Harrison Lloyd Road and Bethesda Road. From this intersection it turns and runs back NW parallel to Harrison Lloyd Road for 500 feet, before turning NNE and heading towards French Creek roughly 1,350 feet. The boundary parallels French Creek nearly 800 feet before turning WSW for 750 feet to a point near the site of the Harrison Lloyd House Ruins. From there it runs NNW for 650 feet before heading NNE and running approximately 1,750 feet parallel to the Berks/Chester County Line. The property line then turns ESE, running 1,800 feet to encompass the Bethesda Church before heading NNW along Hopewell Road for nearly 1,100 feet. Next the boundary runs roughly NE for 600 feet before turning NNW approximately 1,000 feet to the confluence of the Berks/Chester County Line and the Raccoon Trail. From there it turns WNW for 1,500 feet before turning NNW 2,700 feet to the Mill Creek Trail. Finally, the property line runs parallel to the Mill Creek Trail approximately 3,000 feet to its point of origin at Shed Road and PA 345.

Significance: The purpose of Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site is to preserve and interpret iron plantation life and operations, and to enhance public understanding of the American evolution of iron-making and its impact on the region and the nation. Of particular interest is the role of African-Americans and women in the 100 plus year history of the iron furnace.

Women played a significant role in the history of Hopewell Furnace, primarily for breaking down barriers and venturing into formerly male only occupations.

Description: Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site sits downstream from two dams
Hopewell and Scotts Run. If either of these dams failed, the historic village would be inundated. In addition, poor drainage and road erosion creates flooding hazards in both the upper and lower village. Berks County Conservancy has been working with park staff to re-establish drainage in the upper village and the Army Corps of Engineers has been consulted about the historic district.

Generally the historic buildings in the village are in fair to good condition. The grounds in the historic district are in excellent condition, the surrounding woods have an unacceptable level of fire load. Park staff is working on the problem but staffing limitations make it a slow process.

The park desires to expand and improve the Iron Master’s garden and to dedicate it to all the women of Hopewell who contributed so much to the history of this site.

History: Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site sits in the middle of what was once America’s iron country. The natural resources (iron ore, limestone, wood to produce charcoal) existed here in abundance and the geography favored iron production.

Mark Bird inherited the Hopewell land from his father, William Bird, and opened Hopewell Furnace in 1771. Mark Bird was the largest slave owner in Berks County and some or all of his ten male slaves may have helped build the furnace.

Bird supported the American Revolution and, as a result, lost the furnace as sheriff’s auction. Bird lent money to the Continental Congress; money that the new country had no means of repaying.

Subsequent owners dealt with natural disasters such as flood and economic fluctuations in the national economy. However, the furnace eventually prospered making the famous Hopewell Stoves.

Anthracite coal became the favored fuel of cold blast furnaces and the furnace operation moved from Hopewell in 1885. The site was established as a National Park Service unit in 1938.

Of particularly interest to historians is the community at Hopewell and the seeming equality enjoyed by African-Americans and to a lesser extend women. Subsequent to the era of Mark Bird there were never slaves at Hopewell Furnace. Both free African-Americans and those freeing themselves from slavery enjoyed equal pay for equal work and many rose through the ranks of furnace labor to relatively high and well paying positions.

Hopewell plays a vital role in women’s history for two reasons. First, women
also enjoyed equal pay for equal work at Hopewell and some occupied traditionally male positions such as wood cutter or collier. Second, the Hopewell stove and similar cooking stoves played a vital part in improving women’s lives and in giving them free time to pursue activities such as joining the suffragette movement. Cooking on a stove was easier, quicker, and safer than cooking over an open hearth.

It is this special role of women at Hopewell that the National Historic Site wants to celebrate at the Iron Master’s House Garden (pictures attached) and in other location around the historic village.

Chronology of significant events in the history of Hopewell Furnace:
1757 - Established Road opened from Reading to Coventry Forge.
1770 - Hopewell Mine opened circa 1770.
1771 - Furnace erected (date in cast arch).
1772 - Ironmaster’s House extant by this date.
1773 - Cast House constructed circa 1773.
1775 - Blacksmith Shop constructed circa 1775.
1782 - Bethesda Church built by Thomas Lloyd.
1784 - Earliest mention of Store in records. Bird offered property at public sale – 4,000 acres of land, 5,000 cords of wood, 800 loads of ore.
1786 - Sold Sheriff’s sale in April – 5,163 acres to Cadwallader Morris & James Old (included 250 tree apple orchard).
1788 - Morris’ brother Benjamin becomes sole owner of Hopewell Furnace.
1791 - James Old buys property for $37,000 and resells to James Wilson.
1800 - Morris sells furnace property to Daniel Buckley and brother-in-laws Thomas & Matthew Brooke.
1800 - Buckley & Brooke make extensive alterations to furnace; rebuild hearth walls, reorient water wheel east-west, build new West Head Race; construct new Coal House; as well as a log and timber Charcoal House.
1804 - Public road from Birdsboro to Hopewell opened.
1805 - Stamping Mill erected. Stone Tenant House is constructed (possibly the west section of Boarding House).
1806 - North end of Spring House is constructed.
1807 - Damaged Dam bursts three times during the year. Furnace out of blast, lawsuits against furnace; at least three houses extant at mines.
1816 - New Cast House erected. $8,000 worth of repairs are made in preparation to restart the furnace after long hiatus.
1818 - Wheel House erected (designated as "new"). Lloyd Tract willed to Thomas Lloyd – possible house additions.
1823 - Bake Oven built near Ironmaster’s House.
1825 - Tenant House with excavated cellar constructed (Church House?).
1826 - Built Furnace makes door frames and other items for New State Penitentiary. (Note now Eastern State Penitentiary)
1827 - Cast House enlarged. Formal organization of Baptist congregation at
Bethesda Church.
1828 - Smokehouse built. Major masonry repairs to furnace; possible removal of south shed and construction of new shed.
1829 - Greenhouse constructed 9 (based on glass purchases). Furnace purchased and planted 160 apples trees. Supposed construction of the Boarding House east addition.
1832 - Stone steps installed in garden.
1832 – 1833 - Garden Wall constructed (records).
1834 - Furnace purchased and planted 304 apple trees. Public school located at furnace—built at company expense.
1844 - Stove casting halted at Furnace.
1845 – 1854 - Tenant House No. 3 built around this time.
1853 - Anthracite Furnace erected.
1856 – 1857 - Nathan Care House built. AME Mount Frisby Church constructed (3 miles from furnace).
1856 - Anthracite machinery moved to Monocacy circa Ca.1859 - Hopewell listed as a Post Office. Nathan Care Barn built.
1869 - New school built along Jones Mine Road (approximately one mile west of Hopewell) circa
1879 - Wheel House rebuilt with roof to Bridge House.
1880 - Charcoal House and north shed rebuilt
1881 - Boiler installed to provide auxiliary power to furnace
1932 - Federal Government purchased Hopewell property (approximately 6,000 acres).
1935 - Two Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps located in area (about 400 men).
1935 - CCC workers raise dam on French Creek 8 feet, increasing lake from 12 to 62 acres.
1935 - Work Progress Administration restoration work begins on site.
1938 - CCC clean out tail race. Hopewell Village National Historic Site established.
1939 - Pennsylvania Route 345 loop road completed.
1941 - CCC workers complete Furnace restoration. Land Transfer Federal government deeds approximately 5,000 acres to the state of Pennsylvania; 848 acres retained as Hopewell Village National Historic Site.
1950 - Blacksmith Shop restored.
1952 - NPS restores waterwheel and blast machinery. Birdsboro-Warwick Road through Hopewell Village closes to the public.
1957 - Bridge House reconstructed. Considerable work completed on the interior of the Ironmaster’s House.
1958 - Visitor Center, Upper Parking Lot, Maintenance Building, and Residences built.
1959 - Tenant Barn stabilized and re-roofed.
1960 - Orchard planted.
1961 - Store restored.
1961 - Barn restored.
1965 - Cast House reconstructed.
1965 - Bethesda Cemetery Wall restored.
1965 - Spring House restored.
1965 - Charcoal House reconstructed.
1973 - Cedar Pasture cleared of all but cedars.

Sources:


List of Classified Structures
National Park Service
www.hscl.cr.nps.gov

National Park Service
Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site
Cultural Landscape Inventory

Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site
Historic Resources Study – Final
Robinson & Associates, Inc.

Hopewell Furnace NHS
Alternative Transportation Study
John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center
Research and Innovative Technology Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation

Historian: Frances K. Delmar, Chief of Interpretation and Education
Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site
2 Mark Bird Lane
Elverson, PA 19520
610 582 8773
Frances_Delmar@nps.gov
July 2013
2013 HALS Challenge Entry: Documenting the Cultural Landscapes of Women
Interior of Ironmaster’s Garden (Christine Hawthorne, 2013 NPS).

Ironmaster’s Garden showing steps to Ironmaster’s House in background (Christine Hawthorne, 2013 NPS).
Ironmaster’s Garden with Ironmaster’s House in background. Hopewell women, both white and African-American worked in the house and the garden. Some of the African-Americans were runaway slaves seeking refuge. (Christine Hawthorne, 2013 NPS).

Aerial photograph showing the historic village, Visitor Center, and parking Lot (Ron Takacs, donated to NPS).
Cast House, Village Store, and barn. Women worked at the Cast House and sold produce to the Village Store for extra money. (Ron Tackacs, donated to the NPS).