



Foundation Document Overview

Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site

Pennsylvania



Contact Information

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Purpose



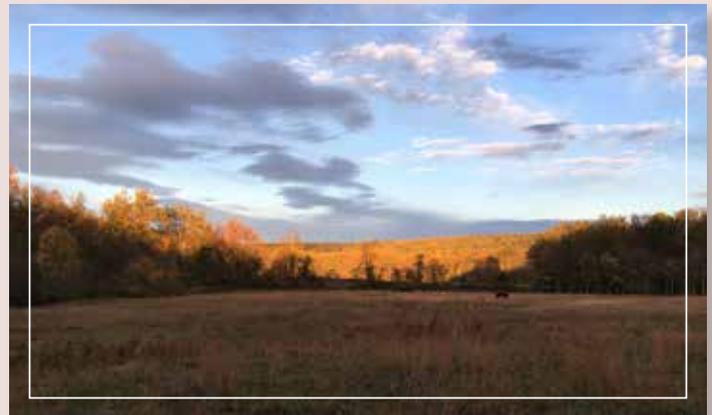
HOPEWELL FURNACE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE preserves the late 18th and 19th century setting of an iron-making village, including the charcoal-fueled furnace, and its natural and cultural resources. This village illustrates the essential role of industrialization in the growth of the early United States.



Significance

Significance statements express why Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site interprets an early iron-making village that operated from 1771 to 1883. Its buildings, associated landscape, and its people illustrate the American industrial past. Together, the site's structures and landscape maintained their completeness through many distinct time periods and a wide variety of uses.
- Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site possesses an extensive documentary collection of company records that reveal the daily business operations and activities of the people who lived and/or worked at the furnace.
- Historically, Hopewell's flowing water, forest, and geology provided the necessary resources for the development of a cold blast furnace operation. Today, the preservation of the natural setting and its biodiversity provide a high quality environment that has not been overwhelmed by modern intrusions.
- Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site is part of the "Hopewell Big Woods" that is within the congressionally designated ecologically unique Highlands region: an asset for public recreation and unique scientific, cultural, and natural resources.



Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Historic Buildings and Structures**
- **Collections**
- **Cultural Landscape Associated with the Iron-Making Village**
- **Visitor Understanding of Early Iron Industry**
- **Natural Resources**



Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Connectivity Corridors**
- **Civilian Conservation Corps Sites and Stories**

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- The cycles of Hopewell Furnace’s growth and recession in the 18th and 19th centuries demonstrate the impacts of industrialization, the growth of the labor pool, and the development of consumer culture, profoundly influencing the United States, a story that resonates with the reality of life in contemporary America.
- The use of land around Hopewell Furnace, as well as the Furnace’s fortunes and demise, reflect society’s changing views over time of economic forces and values from resource extraction and agriculture to conservation and recreation.
- The archive of Hopewell Furnace’s extensive business records provides an unusual look in the lives of everyday people, the shape of early American industrialization, and its impact on its people.
- The men of the Civilian Conservation Corps helped create the park while participating in President Franklin D. Roosevelt administration’s recreation development program to create jobs at a time of high unemployment.



Description

Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site encompasses 848 acres of land in southeastern Pennsylvania and is surrounded by French Creek State Park. The furnace site straddles the border between Berks and Chester Counties and stands astride French Creek, a tributary of the Schuylkill River, which flows from the Appalachian Mountains across the Pennsylvania Piedmont and empties into the Delaware River at Philadelphia, 40 miles from Hopewell.

Southeastern Pennsylvania had already become known for its furnaces, forges, and bloomeries by the time Mark Bird began his iron-making operations at Hopewell about 1771. Bird actively supported the American Revolution and served as deputy quartermaster for the Continental Army, and it is likely that Hopewell Furnace supplied cannon and shot for the American forces. Due to the financial difficulties of Bird and other early owners, Hopewell Furnace was sold several times in the 18th century before being purchased by the Buckley and Brooke families in 1800. These families retained ownership of the property until the federal government purchased it in 1935. The furnace reached its peak of production and prosperity during the 1830s under the direction of manager Clement Brooke and went out of blast for the final time in 1882.

During its period of operation, which lasted from 1771 to 1883, the iron-making complex at Hopewell comprised several buildings, including the furnace, wheel house, bridge house, charcoal storehouse, connecting shed, cast house, employee housing, barns, and various sheds and shops. The operation produced pig iron and cast iron products such as stove plates and kettles, employing, for most of its history, the cold-blast method of iron production and using charcoal for fuel. In this process, a blast of cold air provided by bellows or blowing tubs intensified the furnace's heat to smelting temperature. Cold-blast furnaces required certain natural resources—iron ore, wood to make charcoal, limestone for the smelting process, and water to power the blast machinery—that were readily available in the Schuylkill Valley.

The large tracts of land and numerous workers needed for such an operation resulted in the development of iron-making villages, of which Hopewell Furnace is an example. Similar to the agricultural plantations of the southern United States, these communities sought self-sufficiency.

They provided housing and food for workers; raw materials, technical expertise, and machinery for production; and marketing and transportation systems to deliver products for sale. The landscape of Hopewell Furnace during its period of operation was therefore many times larger than the national historic site. Thousands of acres provided fuel for the furnace, ore, limestone, farms, and other housing. The landscape provided the needs for an industrial operation and a community of more than 100 people.

Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site includes representative examples of most of the kinds of structures—restored or reconstructed—that were present when the furnace was in operation. Numerous other historic resources associated with the furnace operation, such as farmsteads and charcoal hearths, are also extant outside the boundaries of the historic site on former furnace land.

