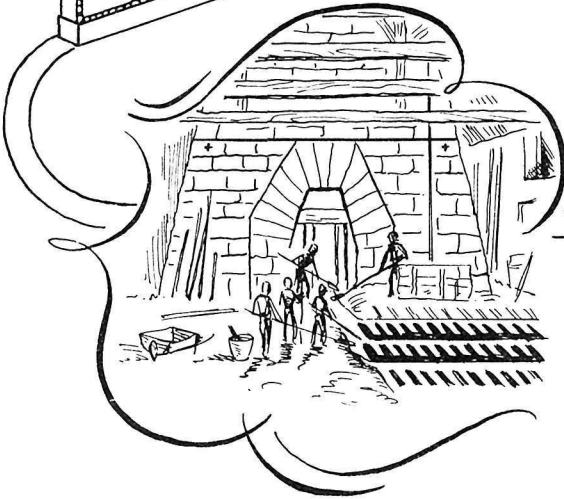


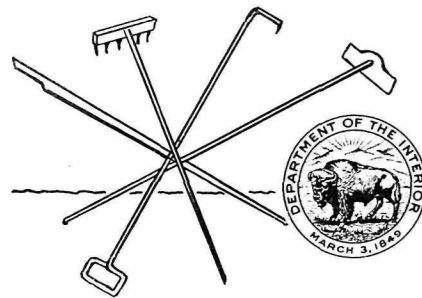
HOPEWELL



Hopewell Village

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Pennsylvania



Hopewell Village

National Historic Site

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
DOUGLAS MCKAY, Secretary

National Park Service, Conrad L. Wirth, Director

Hopewell Village represents the early manorial iron-making communities from which developed the mighty iron and steel industry of modern America.

HOPEWELL VILLAGE, in colonial times, was built around a cold-blast charcoal-burning iron furnace and associated structures. The community life was in some respects similar to the manors of medieval Europe and was largely self-sustaining. This condition prevailed at Hopewell beyond the colonial period, little changed, down through the nineteenth century until the furnace was closed permanently in 1883, after 113 years of activity. The quiet of abandonment gradually settled over the place, and it became a ghost community of another era. Fortunately, the quaint little group of early industrial structures and the surrounding picturesque houses were preserved, even though abandoned except for limited farm purposes, because of the isolated nature of the site in the hills back of the Schuylkill River. The restless hand of modern progress scarcely reached this little vale in the lovely forest-covered hills.

Hopewell Village tells the story not of a single historical event, but rather of a significant phase of American growth and productive effort. From the first attempt at iron-making in the New World (near Jamestown, in 1619), through the days of '76 when an already thriving industry was able to play its part for independence, down to recent times, this story has been an inseparable part of the American saga.

Here is a life-size and authentic display of the social, cultural, industrial, and economic environment of life in an iron-making community of early America. Hopewell Village will afford

for the present and future generations a picture of the humble but ingenious beginnings in our country of this basic industrial enterprise and will provide a striking contrast for measuring the growth and magnitude of the modern American iron and steel industry.

The Early Iron Industry of Pennsylvania

The iron industry in America began largely on "plantations," often comprising several thousand acres of woodland and farm land. One of its early centers was the Schuylkill Valley of Pennsylvania, where extensive resources of limestone, iron ore, water power, and timber for the making of charcoal (all necessary in the cold-blast process of iron manufacture) were found within easy reach of navigable rivers and streams. In this region, near Pottstown, Pennsylvania's first bloomery forge was built in 1716; and 3 or 4 years later the first blast furnace, Colebrookdale, began operations. Two men, Thomas Rutter and Thomas Potts, led the way in these enterprises, and others soon followed. By 1771 there were more than 50 iron forges and furnaces operating in Pennsylvania.

Among the farseeing men whose imaginations were fired with the idea of building an American iron empire was William Bird, who came to Pennsylvania in the early eighteenth century. His exact antecedents are unknown, although it is believed that he was born in Raritan, N. J., in 1703. Working as a wood

chopper for Rutter in 1733, he saved his money and finally went into business for himself. It was in 1740 that he started the construction of his first forge near the mouth of Hay Creek. The spot was destined to become the center of modern, industrial Birdsboro. Within a few years, William Bird had acquired holdings totaling about 3,000 acres along Hay Creek; in the hills west of the Schuylkill had built the mansion which still stands in Birdsboro; and had put three forges into operation. One of these he called Hopewell Forge, the first known use of the name in this immediate vicinity. By 1756 his position as an important figure in the social, political, and economic life of eastern Pennsylvania was secure.

The Establishment of Hopewell Furnace

When William Bird died in 1761, his son Mark inherited the family business, which he soon expanded. The following year he went into partnership with George Ross, a prominent Lancaster lawyer, and together they built Mary Ann Furnace, the first iron furnace west of the Susquehanna River. Probably as a consequence of discovering a convenient deposit of iron ore not far from French Creek, Bird erected

Hopewell Furnace on that stream in 1770-71, along the old Birdsboro-Warwick Road.

The new furnace became the nucleus of Hopewell Village, a small manorial settlement of furnacemen, moulders, colliers, teamsters, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, and wood choppers. Most of these employees lived in tenant houses built at the ironmaster's expense, while Bird or his manager at Hopewell occupied the so-called Big House, overlooking the furnace. A common store, tenant gardens, and nearby farms operated by the Bird family supplied all ordinary economic wants. Wagons and other equipment were constructed or repaired in the Hopewell shops, and the farm animals and mules used for hauling purposes were stabled in the community barns.

The workmen were largely of Anglo-Saxon stock. Some were indentured servants, but most represented free labor. Life was hard and the men literally lived at their jobs. Education, at first, was limited to the children of the ironmaster, who employed a tutor or old schoolmaster. Later, a school was built for the village children. Itinerant preachers provided what there was of religious instruction.

Nearly all of the early Pennsylvania furnaces, Hopewell included, cast stoves and hollow

ware, such as pots and kettles, directly from the furnace, in addition to manufacturing pig iron. The first stove castings were flat plates of iron with tulips, hearts, Biblical figures, and mottoes as decorations. Old stoves, marked "Hopewell Furnace," with other representative castings, tools, and furnishings of that period, are on display at the site.

Hopewell Furnace During the Revolutionary War

With the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, peacetime manufacturing at Hopewell gave way to the production of war materials. Mark Bird himself rendered active military service in the patriot cause. In August 1776, he fitted out 300 men of the Second Battalion, Berks County militia, at his own expense. Later he went to Washington's aid after the Battle of Brandywine, September 11, 1777. The papers of the Continental Congress show that he also supplied large quantities of food and Hopewell iron to the Confederation, and that in so doing he ran heavily into debt. Bird's efforts to collect even part payment were apparently fruitless. A flood on Hay Creek added to the ruin of his property, and currency depreciation struck the final blow. Hopewell Furnace was finally adver-

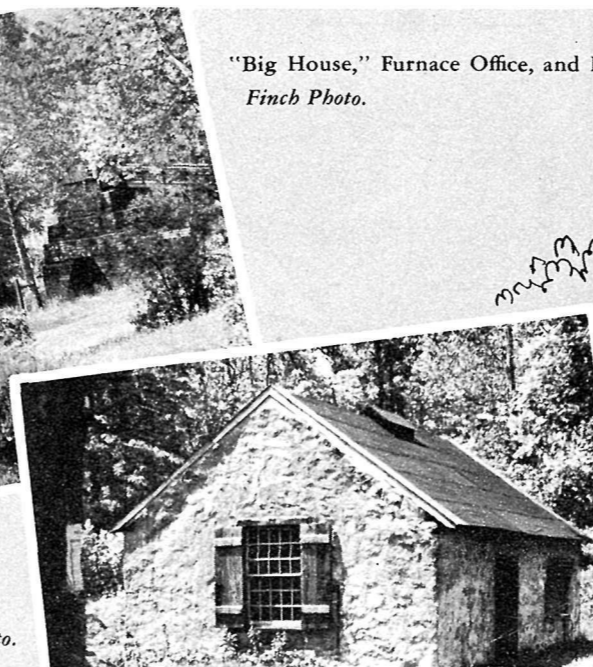
tised for sheriff's sale in April 1788, and at about the same time Bird moved to North Carolina where he died in comparative poverty. In the 1790's, during the brief ownership of James Old who succeeded Bird, Hopewell Furnace recovered somewhat from the economic effects of the war. Castings, especially stoves which then were coming into great demand, brought better prices. However, it was under the energetic direction of Thomas Brooke, who with his brother, Matthew, and brother-in-law, Daniel Buckley, acquired the furnace lands in 1800, that Hopewell Furnace entered on its era of greatest prosperity.

The Last Years of Hopewell Furnace

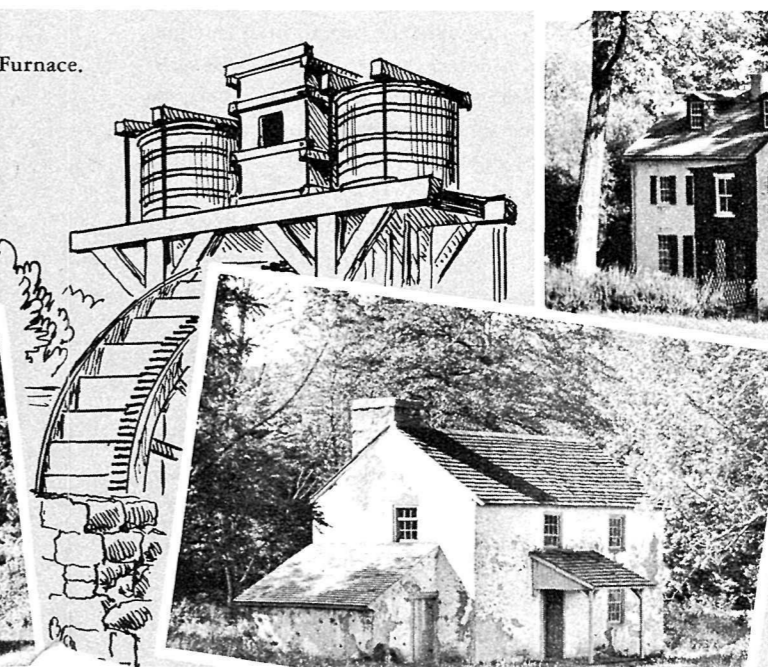
By 1821, twenty-three types of stoves, besides a variety of other castings and pig iron, were manufactured at Hopewell. And in the record blast of 1836 (lasting 14 months and 24 days), with well over 150 workmen employed, 720 tons of castings and 459 tons of pig iron were produced. Hopewell Furnace remained in operation until 1883, when it was "blow'd out" for the last time. It was never converted to the hot-blast process, which came into general use after 1850 and inaugurated a new era in the iron industry. Castings continued to be made at the



Blacksmith Shop. Finch Photo.



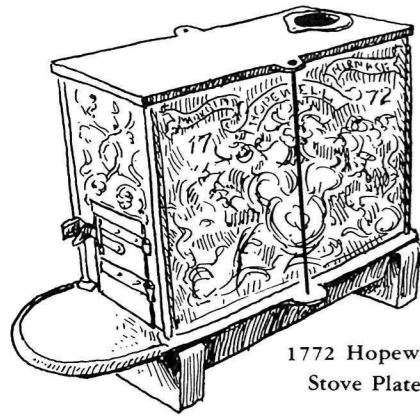
"Big House," Furnace Office, and Furnace. Finch Photo.



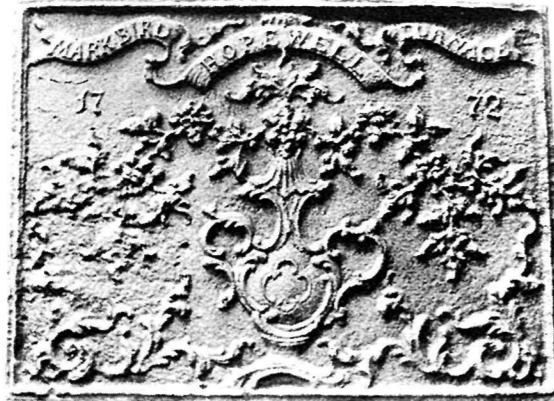
Tenant House. Hallman Photo.



"Big House," Ironmaster's Residence. Hallman Photo.



1772 Hopewell Stove Plate.



village until about 1845. After this, under the management of Dr. C. M. Clingan, nearly all Hopewell pig iron went into various forges in Pennsylvania, bringing prices ranging from \$28 to \$45 a ton, except in 1864, when demand for it, brought about by the Civil War, skyrocketed the price to \$99 a ton. From 1870 to 1883, the entire Furnace output went to a Philadelphia carwheel manufacturer. It is probable, therefore, that Hopewell iron has rolled over several of the Nation's transcontinental railroads.

After 1883, when the making of cold-blast charcoal iron ceased to be profitable and the works closed down, the adjoining woodland continued to yield good returns in marketable charcoal for several years. The active days at Hopewell were over, however, leaving behind them but a memory of its colorful and useful past.

Hopewell Village Today

Long years of inactivity and neglect have left their mark on Hopewell Village, but enough of it survived to justify the establishment, in August 1938, of Hopewell Village National Historic Site as a unit in the National Park System. The area contains 848 acres and many of the old structures are still preserved, including the furnace stack, a large charcoal house, the blacksmith shop, some of the old tenant houses, and the Big House and several of its outbuildings. The water raceways to and from the furnace are also in evidence.

How To Reach the Site

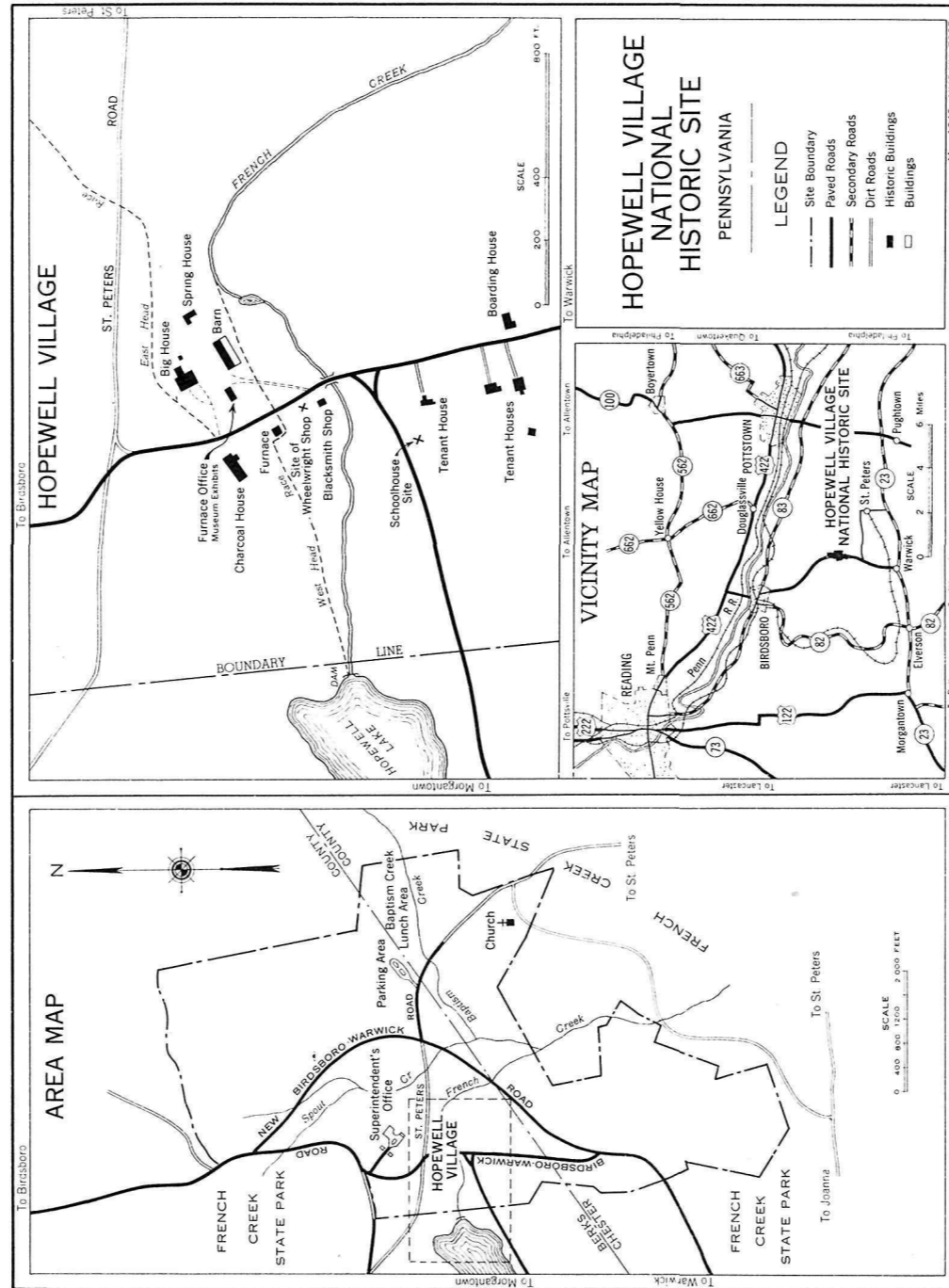
Hopewell Village National Historic Site is situated 5 miles southeast of Birdsboro, Pa., and is reached from the north by U. S. No. 422, State Route 82, and a hard-surfaced county road. From the south it is reached over State Route 23 and a hard-surfaced county road. There is a station of the Reading Railroad at Birdsboro.

Service to the Public

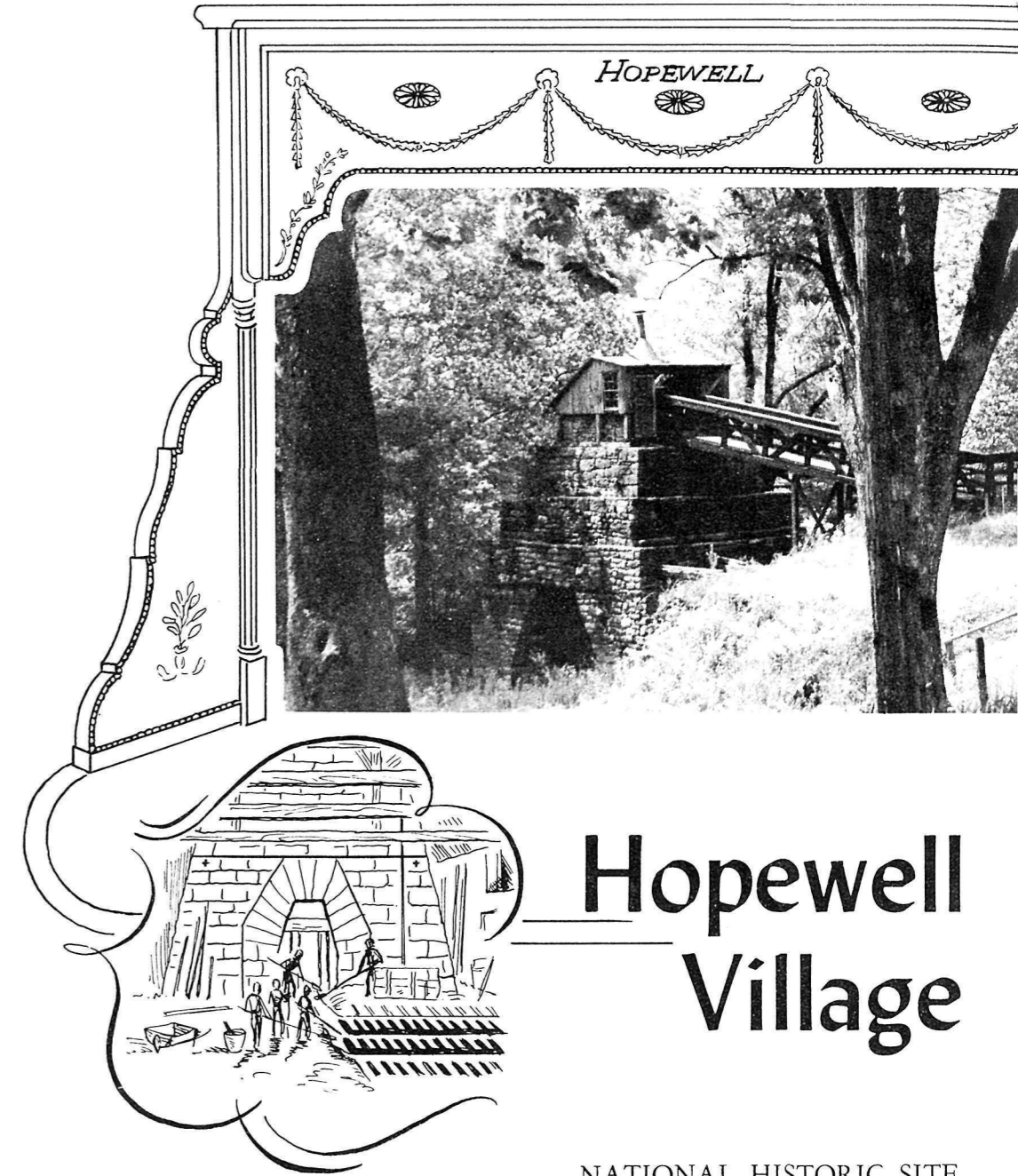
Hopewell Village is open to visitors daily from 8 a. m. to 4:45 p. m. (from 9 a. m. to 6 p. m. on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, from May through October). Exhibits of original iron castings produced at Hopewell Furnace, objects and tools associated with the operation of an eighteenth and nineteenth century cold-blast charcoal furnace establishment, as well as original records, are on display in a temporary set-up. Services of a historian are available. Organizations and groups are given special service if arrangements are made in advance with the superintendent.

Administration

Hopewell Village National Historic Site is a part of the National Park System and is administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior for the benefit and inspiration of the American people. Communications should be addressed to the Superintendent, Hopewell Village National Historic Site, Birdsboro, Pa.



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