

R E436320 N4418100
S E441500 N4418220
T E444500 N4419100



4424
57'30"
4423
ROMANVILLE O.S. NY
5863 1 NW
(UNIONVILLE)

Coatesville
Quad
49-10
House at Upper
laurel
Iron Works
Newlin
Twp

D E434700 N4417930
C E433300 N4418000
E E434270 N4418900
F E434280 N4418900
G E434280 N4418910
H E435120 N4418900
I E435100 N4420650

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FORM
 OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION Box 1026
 PA HISTORICAL & MUSEUM COMMISSION Harrisburg, PA 17120

7. Local survey organization
 Brandywine Conservancy

8. property owners name and address
 Buck and Doe Associates, L.P.
 1001 Wilmington Trust Center
 11th and Market Streets
 Wilmington, Delaware 19801

9. tax parcel number / other number
 49-1-56

10. U.T.M. zone 18 Easting 433310

11. status (other surveys, lists etc.)

Northing 442104310

usgs sheet: Coatesville

12. classification
 site () structure () object ()
 building (X)
 in N.R. district yes () no ()

13. date(s) (how determined)

14. period
 1800-24 (04)

15. style, design or folk type

Banked house

19. original use
 120202P, 130201A

20. present use
 VACANT

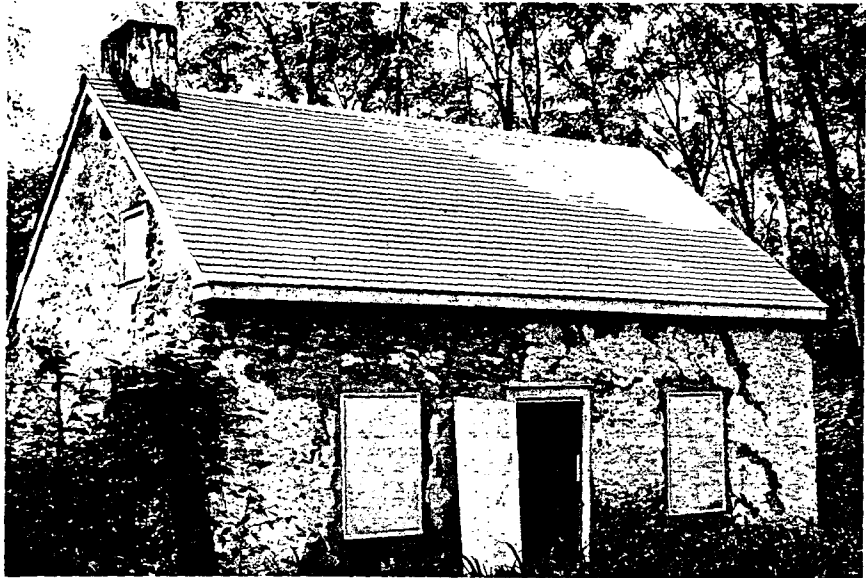
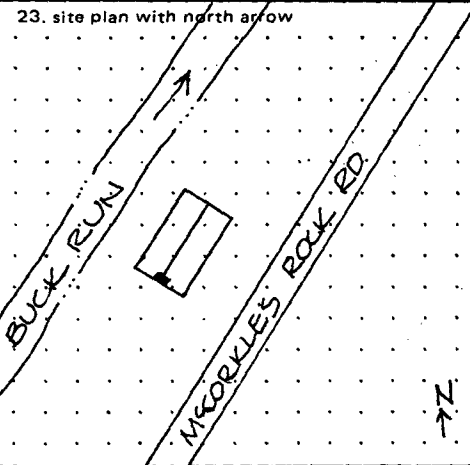
16. architect or engineer

17. contractor or builder

18. primary building mat./construction
 02-Stone

21. condition
 Fair

22. integrity
 Good



24. photo notation
 PL Martha Wolf
 PV South Elevation
 PD 1984

25. file/location
 Brandywine Conservancy

26. brief description (note unusual features, integrity, environment, threats and associated buildings)

The House at Upper Laurel Iron Works is banked into the hill which rises from Buck Run, a major tributary of the West Branch Brandywine River. It faces southeast and McCorkel's Rock Road, a dirt road lined with native ferns, phlox, and mountain laurel which winds through hundreds of acres of woodlands and which once joined two iron forges in the Scenic River Corridor.

The building is stone, stuccoed, and plain in character. Its upper level is accessed by a centered entrance on the southeast elevation. Currently this floor is one large room with a moderate size fireplace in the south gable end. The interior walls are plastered stone. The ground floor of the building is entered on its river side. Here, also, is a fireplace, beneath that on the first floor. The plain gable roof currently is shingled with asphalt and it features a plain box cornice. A round-headed window opening is found on the north gable end. This and all (continue on back if necessary)

27. history, significance and/or background

Despite its unassuming appearance, the House at Upper Laurel Iron Works is significant for its historical associations with a major industry which flourished in this location on the Buck Run for more than a century. Although there are traces of that now-vanished industry nearby--stone ruins and foundations and pieces of iron slag--this building alone has survived with its primary components intact.

28. sources of information

Chester County Historical Society--Clipping Files; Laurel by L.S. McKinstry, 1928; "The Laurels" in Antiques Show 1984 by Nancy Mohr; letters in possession of the Stone family.
 (continue on back if necessary)

29. prepared by:

M. L. Wolf

30. date
 1984

revision(s)

1. County 029 - Chester
 2. municipality Newlin Township
 3. street address or specific location McCorkel's Rock Road
 4. survey code 029-49-10
 5. present name House at Upper Laurel Iron Works
 6. other name (historic name if any)

Continued

Window openings (which are rectangular) are devoid of their original sash and are presently boarded over.

That the building has been unoccupied for most of this century, it is a small miracle it stands at all. Of the score or more buildings which once occupied this tract, only the House at Upper Laurel Iron Works has survived. Its new owner has made plans for its rehabilitation.

Continued

At its demise about 1890, an iron forge had been in operation on the banks of Buck Run at least since 1793. Tradition maintains that this forge had been an improvement of an earlier one which had stood on the same site since before the Revolution.

One of the earliest records of the Laurel Forge is a copy of a road petition dated 1793 signed by the Laverty Brothers, Samuel, William, and Jesse, requesting that a road be laid out to a "Double Forge known by the name of Laurel Forge" which they had erected at great expense." A second petition, dated 1797, was accompanied by a sketch showing the shapes and locations of the forge, a coal house, and a saw mill. This Laurel Forge operated both the Rokeby Mill on Buck Run (also known as the Federal Slitting Mill) and the Brandywine Mills in Coatesville. (The Brandywine Mills were the forerunners of the famous Lukens' legendary rolling mills, now Lukens Steel Company.)

In 1840 the Laurel Iron Works, then owned by Joel Pennock, was lost at Sheriff's sale to John Pyle, a farmer. Pyle promptly leased the operation (described in an advertisement as a rolling mill capable of producing boiler, sheet, and bar iron) to Hugh E. Steele and John P. Edge. Three years later Steele purchased the mill with 114 acres and with his partner, Sheshbazzar B. Worth, guided the business to prosperity.

In 1872 Steele built another rolling mill and a row of worker's dwellings on the West side of Brandywine alongside the tracts of the new Wilmington and Reading Railroad in which he had invested heavily. At their peak the two iron works employed approximately 75 men.

The business panic of the 1870s combined with his partner's death and the failure of the railroad brought the company to the brink of bankruptcy. In 1874 Steele had mortgaged his properties to James Biderman, then of Paris, for \$100,000. Steele then leased the iron works to several companies, among them Andrews and Genner and Carmichael, Cornog, and Adams. When he died in 1885 the property was still heavily mortgaged and by 1890 was sold at Sheriff's sale.

Interestingly, Steele's mortgage to Biderman had far-reaching impact. Biderman was the father of Evelina G. duPont Biderman, whose brother, Henry A. duPont, bought the property in 1890. (Henry duPont served as President of the reorganized Wilmington and Northern Railroad. His estate in Delaware was developed into the famous Winterthur Museum by his son, Henry F.)

The property stayed in the duPont family, eventually falling into the hands of Lamont duPont who had plans of creating a reservoir for the City of Wilmington (Delaware) in this area. The project was never realized and instead his holdings, known as the Buck and Doe Run Farm, were used for agriculture. Save for the House at the Upper Laurel Iron Works the industrial buildings and houses at the Laurel Iron Works gradually fell to ruin. The Ranch of Texas acquired the Laurel property in 1946 and like its predecessor used the property for farming. In 1984 5,367 acres of the ranch was acquired by a limited partnership and restricted by a conservation easement (See continuation sheet)

EVALUATOR(S)

#27 continued:

which will protect in perpetuity the natural landscape. 800 acres adjacent to the House at Upper Laurel Iron Works will become a nature preserve; the house itself will revert to individual ownership and be rehabilitated.

Because the house at Laurel sits on a several-hundred-acre tract, the boundary has been drawn to include its frontage on McCorkels Rock Road and Buck Run and minimal land around the building which, given its size and simplicity, seems appropriate:

Boundary Description (49-10):

Beginning at a point in the middle of McCorkel's Rock Road, approximately 1600 feet in a southwesterly direction from the intersection with Brandywine Creek Road; then proceeding along McCorkel's Rock Road in a southwesterly direction approximately 200 feet to a point; then proceeding in a northwesterly direction approximately 100 feet to a point in Buck Run; then proceeding down Buck Run in a northeasterly direction approximately 200 feet to a point; then proceeding in a southeasterly direction approximately 100 feet to the place of beginning. Containing .5 acres, more or less.

Area of Significance

x industry

Acre: .5

Period

x 1800-1899