

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

(MORGANTOWN)

75°52'30"  
40°07'30"

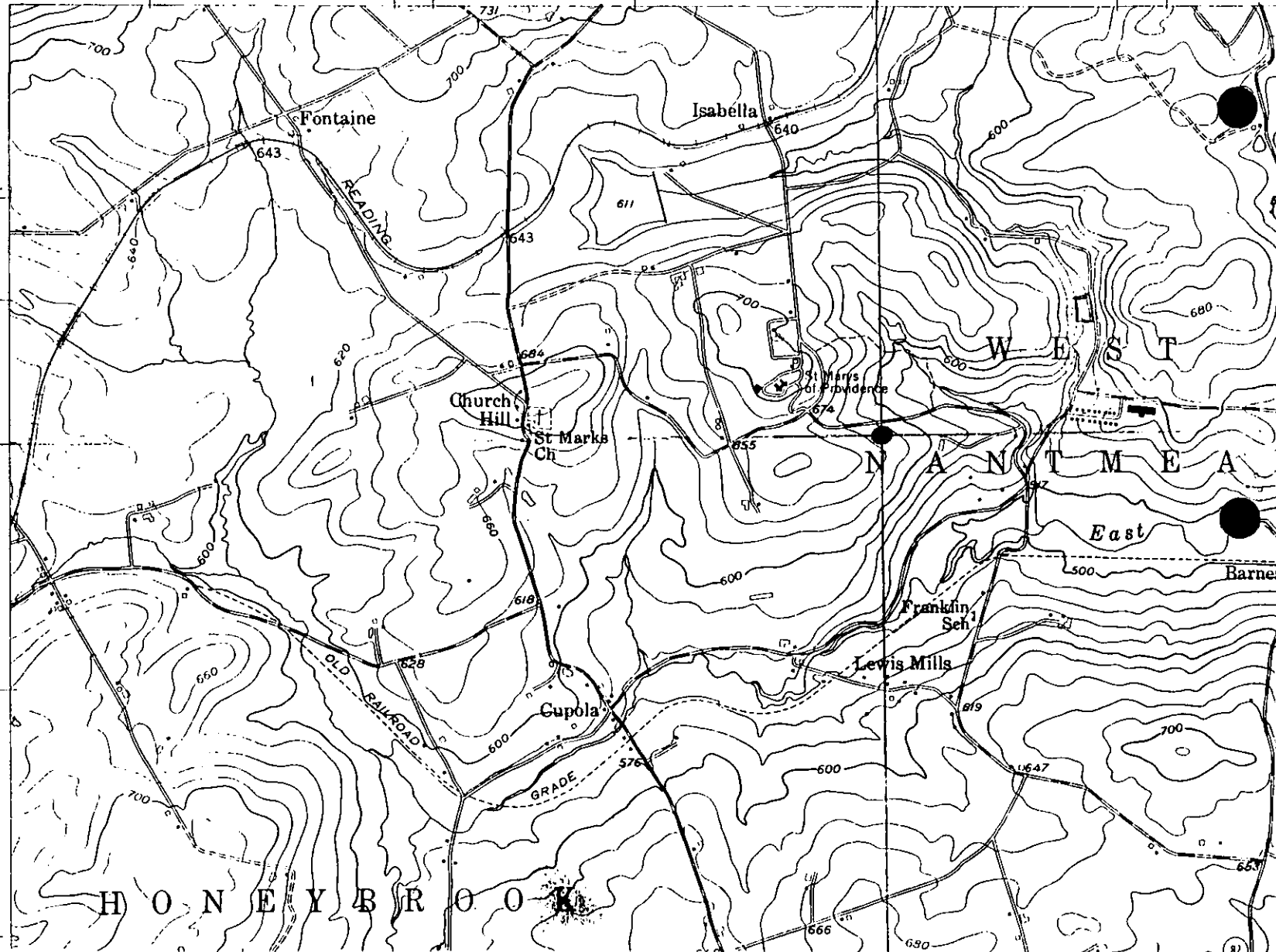
426000m. E.

ELVEPSON 3 MI  
LOAG 0.5 MI

4441000m. N.

ISABELLA TOWNSHIP  
CHESTER COUNTY  
WAGONTOWN  
ZONE 18

C 429 850  
N 4440 450



H O N E Y B R O O K

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. Name of Property

historic name Isabella Furnace

other name/site number: N/A

2. Location

street & number: Bollinger Dr. (N/A) not for publication

city, town: West Nantmeal Township (N/A) vicinity

state: PA code: PA county: Chester code: 029 zip code: 19520

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: district

Number of Resources within Property:

<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>	
<u>4</u>	<u>—</u>	buildings
<u>3</u>	<u>—</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>—</u>	<u>—</u>	objects
<u>8</u>	<u>1</u>	TOTAL

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the  
National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: Iron and Steel  
Resources in Pennsylvania 1716-1945

**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  
 \_ nomination \_ request for determination of eligiblity meets the  
 \_ documentation \_ standards for registering properties in the  
 National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and  
 professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property \_ meets \_ does not meet the  
 National Register criteria. \_ See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of certifying official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_ meets \_ does not meet the National  
 Register criteria. \_ See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of certifying official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

\_\_\_\_ entered in the National Register. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ determined eligible for the Nat-  
 ional Register. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the  
 National Register. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ removed from the National Register \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Keeper Date  
 of action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions  
 10 industry

Subfunctions  
 10A manufacturing facility

Current functions  
 01 domestic

Subfunctions  
 01A single dwelling

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

other: 99 iron furnace

Materials

foundation	<u>43 limestone</u>	roof	<u>N/A</u>
walls	<u>43 limestone</u>	other	<u>N/A</u>

Describe present and historic appearance:

X see continuation sheet

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

\_ Nationally    X Statewide    \_ Locally

Applicable National Register Criteria: A

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: 160 industry

Period(s) of Significance: 1835-1894

Significant Dates: 1835, c. 1880

Years of Alterations: 1880

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

X See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References See continuation sheetPrevious documentation on file (NPS): preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)  
has been requested. previously listed in the National Register previously determined eligible by the National Register designated a National Historic Landmark recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey 1959 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_Primary location of additional data: State Historic Preservation Office Other state agency Federal agency Local government University Other - Specify Repository: \_\_\_\_\_10. Geographical DataAcreage of property: 4 acresUTM References: Wagontown

	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>		<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
A	18	429850	4440450	C			
B				D			

 see continuation sheetVerbal Boundary Description see continuation sheetBoundary Justification see continuation sheet11. Form Prepared Byname/title Diane B. Reed, Historic Preservation Specialistorganization PHMC/BHPdate March 11, 1991street & number P.O. Box 1026telephone (717)787-8045city or town Harrisburgstate PA zip 17108

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Isabella Furnace is located southwest of Elverson on Perkins Run, a tributary of the East Branch of the Brandywine Creek in a wooded area. The complex is on the west side of Bollinger Rd. near the "T" intersection with Creek Rd. The creek has created a flat valley and there is a sharp rise west of the creek. The furnace complex consists of a charcoal house, machine shop/blacksmith shop, charging ramp and furnace stack ruin, an engine house, wheel house, a stone arch bridge, and the foundations of the stock houses. Although the buildings have lost some of their structural elements due to extensive salvage work done in 1944, enough of the elements of the industrial complex survive to give a good account of its original appearance and configuration.

The furnace property is approached over the stone arch bridge across the creek. The wheel house and engine house are located to the west of the creek on the valley floor. The charcoal house, machine shop/blacksmith shop, and the foundations of the stock houses are located on the ledge above the valley.

In 1944, all metal roofs, trussing and machinery were removed from the complex and sold for scrap, leaving only the walls standing. The present complex includes the following buildings and structures. (see corresponding numbers on district site map):

1. machine shop/blacksmith shop c. 1870

This is a three and a half story building built into the bank, five bays wide and three bays deep, with an ell on the south elevation of three bays. An old photo of this building seems to show that there was an additional frame story on top of this building with a hip roof. The building was converted into a residence in 1973, at which time the present roof was constructed.

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Although its roof structure was removed in 1944, the walls remained standing and in good condition. A new roof frame and roof with bubble-type skylights have been added within the last decade. The most unusual aspect of the charcoal house is the railroad trestle inside the building, which was added in 1880 to allow a narrow gauge railroad spur to come into the building. On the exterior, the arched stone bridge leading into the building remains intact.

3. charging ramp and furnace stack ruin c. 1835

Several years ago the furnace stack collapsed, although up until that time it had appeared to be in good condition. However, the stone charging ramp pillar is still evident, although side walls have been added to it recently to stabilize it. A patio has been built on top of it.

4. steam engine house c. 1880

The steam engine house is constructed of brick, and is the only brick structure on the site. It has one arched doorway on the west facade of the building and double window openings on the other sides, also arched.

5. wheel house c. 1835

This stone building is rectangular in shape, with the center third being two story, running east and west, and the north-south sections one story with a gable. There is a large arched door opening on the south elevation, and windows with brick arches on the other sides of the building. There are no extant doors or windows, and the walls have recently been braced with steel beams.

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6. stone arch bridge 19th. century

A small stone arch bridge spans Perkins Run.

7-8. foundations of stock houses c. 1835

There are foundations for two stock houses located to the north of the charcoal house. These foundations have been incorporated into the design of gardens associated with the residence in the machine shop/blacksmith shop.

9. swimming pool - non contributing c. 1975

kidney shaped swimming pool with concrete skirting.



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Isabella Furnace is nominated under Criterion A under the area of significance of industry. Isabella represents one of the longest running iron furnace complexes in eastern Pennsylvania, having persevered from 1835 through 1894. It was also one of the last iron furnaces built in Chester County, and few iron furnaces were still in operation anywhere in Pennsylvania when it closed in 1894. Isabella Furnace is also significant under Criterion C for engineering. The complex still retains many of its original buildings, including the charcoal house, the engine and wheel house, and the machine shop/blacksmith shop. Most unusual and unique is the stone arch railroad bridge which brought the narrow gauge railroad into the charcoal house on the upper bank, allowing easy unloading of the cars. There is no other known resource of this type in Pennsylvania. Although this property has been altered over the years, it still retains enough integrity to make a significant contribution to our understanding of the iron industry in Pennsylvania.

Isabella Furnace was originally built in 1835 by Henry Potts and John P. Rutter. When they acquired the forty nine acres of land, the property included a sawmill and a fulling mill. The furnace was named Isabella in honor of the wife of Henry Potts, Isabella Ritter. In 1836 David Potts, Henry's younger brother, became the manager of the furnace. David had become knowledgeable in the iron business working with his father Joseph Potts who operated the Glasgow Forge.

Under David Potts' management the furnace prospered. Ore was secured from the St. Peter's and St. Mary's mines in Chester County. However, the severe depression of the 1850's adversely affected the iron industry, and in 1856 the furnace and sixty four acres of land were sold to John Ireby and James Butler, who lived near the furnace. Beside the furnace, the complex consisted of a forge, two steam engines, seven tenant houses, a large coal house, stone smith shop, carpenter shop, stone stable, frame barn, and a mansion house. The location of this earlier mansion house is unknown. By 1860, Ireby had bought out Butler's share. Ireby lacked the expertise to run the furnace, and in 1864 he sold it to the Smith brothers who operated nearby Joanna Furnace.

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Col. Joseph Potts, the son of David Potts, approached the owners to sell the furnace back into the Potts family, and by 1880 he had acquired the property. It was at this time that the drive for the hot blast for the furnace was converted to steam power, and the brick engine house constructed. A narrow gauge railroad siding was also constructed to the furnace from the Downingtown branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Despite the improvements made to the furnace, by the 1890's it had ceased to be profitable, and it was finally closed in 1894. Just prior to the closing of the furnace, Potts began construction of an elaborate mansion 3/4 mile west on a nearby hill. Although he died before its completion, his family occupied the home until it was purchased by the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence.

The furnace property fell into decay, and the iron trusses and machinery were sold for scrap in 1944. In 1973 the property was purchased by Daniel and Patricia Lieberman, who converted the machine shop/blacksmith shop into a residence.

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Canby, Henry Seidel. The Brandywine. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1941.

Isabella Furnace Records, 1880-1921 ms. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

MacElree, W. W. Down the Eastern and up the Black Brandywine. Sanford: Microfilming Corp. of America, 1980.

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Photographs

Isabella Furnace

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All photos: Isabella Furnace  
Bollinger Drive, West Nantmeal Township  
Chester County, PA  
date of photographs: 9/1989  
photographer: Diane B. Reed, PHMC/BHP  
negatives: PHMC/BHP

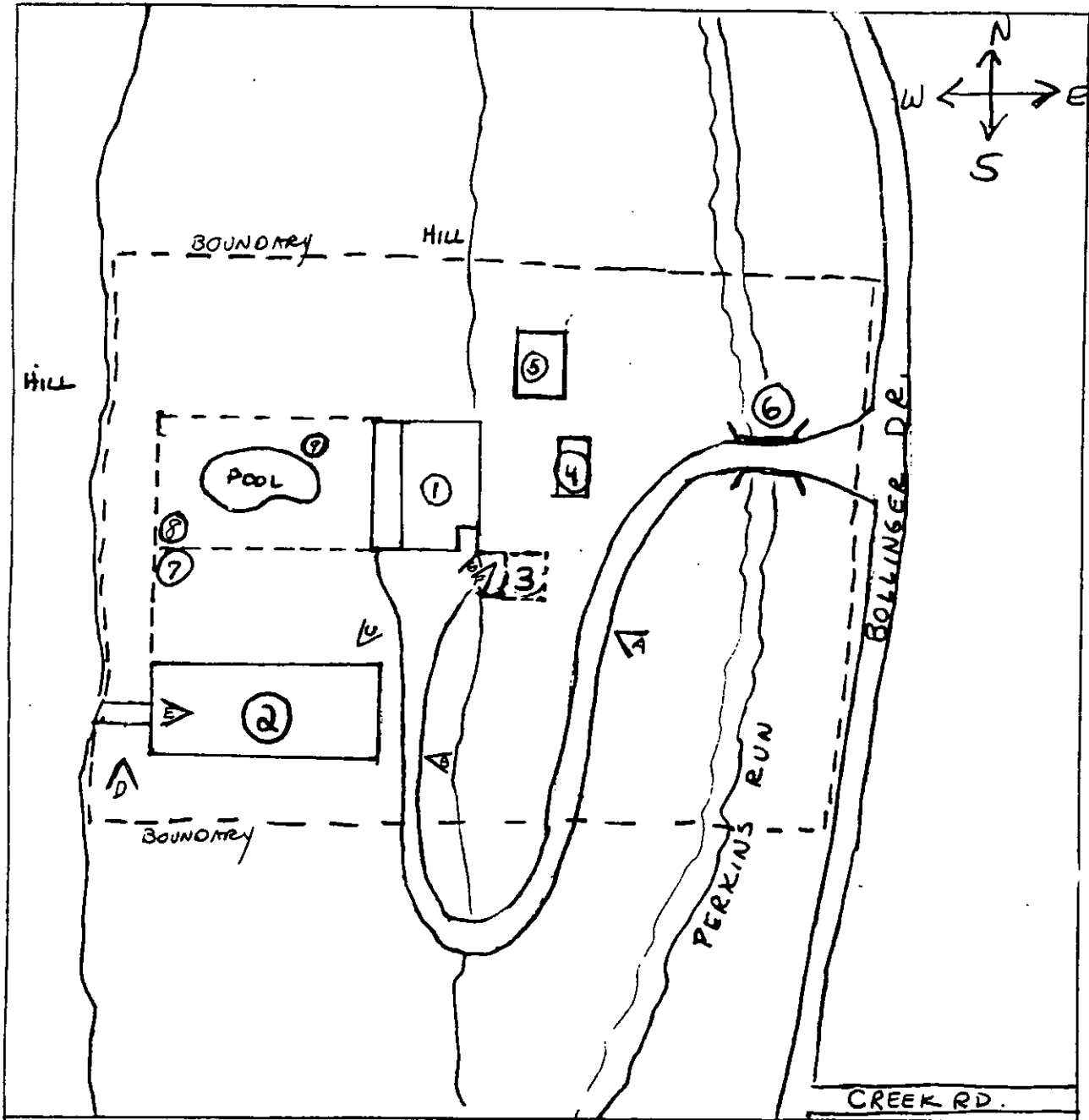
photo key

- A. machine shop/iron furnace ruin  
camera points west
- B. charcoal house  
camera points west
- C. charcoal house  
camera points south
- D. railroad trestle into charcoal house  
camera points north
- E. interior, charcoal house  
camera points east
- F. engine house  
camera points northeast
- G. wheel house  
camera points northeast

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Verbal boundary description: The nominated property includes the furnace complex and its immediate environs. It begins at a point on the west side of Bollinger Dr., approximately 1000' north of its intersection with Creek Rd. Thence approximately 800' south to a point, thence approximately 600' west to a point at the crest of the hill, thence north approximately 800' to a point, thence east approximately 600' to the place of beginning. Being a portion of a 26 acre parcel #23-5-111, recorded at the Chester County Register of Deeds, Book 437, page 479.

Boundary justification: The nomination includes the structures associated with the furnace complex, and extends only to incorporate those elements. There are no buildings or structures outside the nominated area which are known to be associated with the complex with the exception of the Potts Mansion, which is located 3/4 mile west of the furnace. Since this mansion was completed and used after the period of significance of the furnace, it is not included in this nomination.



ISABELLA FURNACE

← A PHOTO VIEW

1. machine shop
2. charcoal house
3. charging ramp and ruin of furnace stack
4. steam engine house
5. wheel house
6. stone arch bridge
- 7-8. foundation of stock houses
9. swimming pool - non contributing