

VLR-10/17/72 NRHP-3/20/73

Form 10-300  
(July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Virginia	
COUNTY: Franklin	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Washington Iron Furnace

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Behind 108 Old Furnace Road (slightly to the South and West) on Furnace Creek

CITY OR TOWN:  
Rocky Mount (W. C. Daniel, Fifth District Congressman)

STATE: Virginia CODE: 51 COUNTY: Franklin CODE: 067

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>none</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No			

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Mr. and Mrs. R. Henry Robinson

STREET AND NUMBER:  
108 Old Furnace Road

CITY OR TOWN: Rocky Mount STATE: Virginia CODE: 51

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
Pittsylvania, Henry, and Franklin Counties Courthouses (See Appendix I)

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Chatham Martinsville Rocky Mount STATE: Virginia CODE: 51

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1971  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Room 1116, Ninth Street State Office Building

CITY OR TOWN: Richmond STATE: Virginia CODE: 51

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Virginia  
COUNTY: Franklin  
ENTRY NUMBER  
DATE

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered by time	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Washington Iron Furnace still stands, and in remarkably fine condition, on the old Iron Mine Branch of Pigg River which eventually took a new name, Furnace Creek, from the iron works. Built of granite, the quarry notches are still visible on the faces of the old furnace. The elongated and truncated pyramidal shape is usual in furnaces of its era. The hearth and bellows openings at the base of the furnace curve upwards, then become linear and are capped with a strong stone lintel. The southern face of the furnace measures almost 30 feet, with its opening measuring a little over 12 feet. The eastern face is imbedded in the hillside but the opening is about 9'9" and from the southeast corner to the opening it is also about 9'9". Again as was usual, the furnace is set against the side of a hill so that the iron ore, charcoal, and limestone flux could be dumped into the furnace from the top. The bridge which once led from the side of the hill to the top of the furnace is no longer extant.

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry    |  | <u>history</u>                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  | _____   |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Washington Iron Furnace stands as one of the oldest and best preserved iron furnaces in the Commonwealth. The earliest records of the furnace date from 1770 and are found in the Pittsylvania County records. At that time it was operated by John Donelson (father of Rachel Donelson who married Andrew Jackson) and was called "The Bloomery". The county tax returns for 1773 report that Donelson employed four white men and six slaves to work the furnace:

Tithes at the Iron Works:

John Holaway, Charles Holaway, Amos Spain,  
 Thomas Bolton  
 Negroes Moody, Dick, Harry, Tames, Judith, and Nell.

In 1779, John and Rachel Donelson sold the furnace to Jeremiah Early (great-grandfather of General Jubal A. Early) and James Calloway. Patriot fervor and friendship between Colonel Calloway and George Washington seems to have moved the new owners to rename The Bloomery, as it was previously referred to, Washington Iron Works. The joint ownership was short-lived for soon after the purchase Jeremiah Early died and on March 23, 1781, John Early sold his father's interest to James Calloway (Ann Joplin, "The Washington Iron Works"). The mining interests of Colonel Calloway extended beyond Franklin County, Miss Maud Carter Clements in her history of the furnace appearing in the Virginia Cavalcade reports:

At this time of 1781 he was already the owner of the Oxford Iron Works, located near James River east of the present city of Lynchburg, and the Chiswell Lead Mines on New River, in southwest Virginia.

Under his direction, the furnace seems to have flourished. A letter to a nephew of Colonel Calloway, Dr. Henry Greene Calloway of Callands in Pittsylvania County, gives an idea of the type of articles produced and their prices:

Washington Works, Aug. 19, 1805

Dear Sir,-

I received yours of the 16th inst., by the bearer, Mr. Augustin Dishon and have sent you

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Maud Carter Clement, "The Washington Iron Works", Virginia Cavalcade  
Volume XI, Number 4, Spring 1962.

Ann Saunders Joplin, "The Washington Iron Works", unpublished paper.

Ann Saunders Joplin, "The Saunders Home", unpublished paper.

Marshall Wingfield, Franklin County, Virginia: A History (Berryville,  
Virginia: Chesapeake Book Company), 1964.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	0			36	59	14	79	53	31
NE	0								
SE	0								
SW	0								

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **Less than 10**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Anne Carter Lee**

ORGANIZATION: **Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission**      DATE: **September, 1972**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Room 1116, Ninth Street State Office Building**

CITY OR TOWN: **Richmond**      STATE: **Virginia**      CODE: **51**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name J. R. Fishburne

Title **J. R. Fishburne, Director**  
**Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission**

Date **OCT 17 1972**

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Virginia	
COUNTY Franklin	
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ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

#8 Significance

by his return the different castings you wrote for as stated below, except the six gallon pott of which we have none on hand at this time. We shall shortly be in blast again, if you should want any other article of castings shall be glad to furnish you.

I am Dear Sir,  
Very Respectfully  
Yr Mo O b't  
Wm. Crump.

1 10 Gallon Pott.....	0.16.8
1 Large Oven.....	0.14.0
1 Middle size oven.....	0.12.0
1 Large Skillet.....	0. 5.0
1 Deep Skillet.....	0. 3.0
1 Pair Fire Dogs.....	0.15.0

Another product of the furnace was found several years ago by the grandson of the present owner who while playing around the furnace pulled out an old casting dated 1786 which may have been intended as a fireback. C. J. Davis of Rocky Mount also has some pig iron which is reputedly a product of the old iron works. Finally, many of the roads in the vicinity are supposed to have been laid with slag from the furnace..

The importance of the iron works was recognized very early in the history of Franklin County. Although the project was not fully carried out,

As early as 1796, the Legislature considered a Bill for making the Pigg River more navigable from its mouth to the Washington Iron Works. James Callaway, Benjamin Cook, Samuel Duval, Swinfield Hill and Josiah Wood were named as supervisors of the deepening and clearing of the channel (Wingfield, p. 40)

Around 1820, the Saunders brothers, Peter, Jr., Samuel, and Fleming purchased the Washington Iron Furnace as well as the Carron Furnace on Story Creek near Ferrum from the heirs of James Calloway (Clements, 1818, Joplin, 1820). The furnace seems to have continued to flourish under the direction of Peter Saunders, Jr. who managed it. The following advertisement appeared in the July 31, 1830 edition of The Milton Gazette and Roanoke Advertiser, published in Milton, North Carolina, a town on the Dan River in Caswell County near the Virginia line:

Iron  
Samuel Watkins & Co.  
Have on hand and will continue to receive from the  
Washington Iron Works a complete assortment of Iron,

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(Continuation Sheet)

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Virginia	
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#8 Significance

which they will sell at \$5, per 100 pounds cash.  
May 29th (Clements)

In an 1836 Gazeteer of Virginia it was reported that one hundred men were employed at the furnace and forge. Many lived on the hill just across the creek from the furnace. Their comings and goings up and down it eventually gave this rise the name Skufflin Hill. The Gazeteer also reported that one hundred sixty tons of bar iron and castings were being manufactured each year. Clearly this was an extremely important industry for a town with a population, excluding the iron workers, of under two hundred.

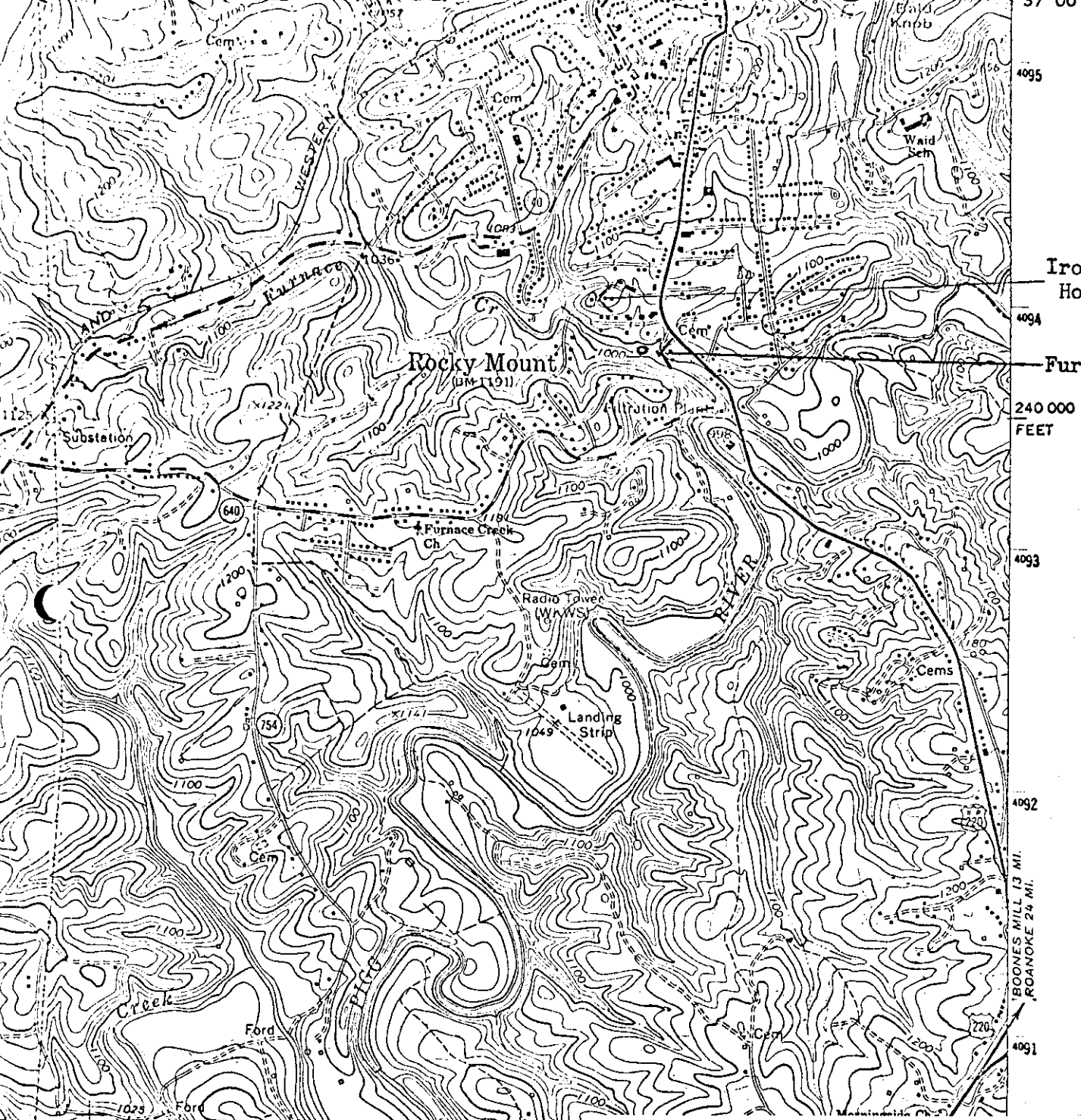
On a hill neighboring the iron works stands The Farm at the Furnace which is now owned by Dr. Francis Anos. This seems to be the dwelling that was constructed about 1818 for Peter Saunders Junior. An extensive remodelling in 1850 converted the house into a Classical Revival structure.

A. C. L.

ROCKY MOUNT QUADRANGLE  
 VIRGINIA—FRANKLIN CO.  
 7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)  
 NW/4 ROCKY MOUNT 15' QUADRANGLE

5058 III SE  
 (REDWOOD)

96 55' 97 | 1 590 000 FEET | REDWOOD 4.6 MI. 2.3 MI. TO U.S. 220 79°52'30" 37°00'



Ironmaster's House

Furnace

240 000  
 FEET

ROONES MILL 13 MI.  
 ROANOKE 24 MI.

U.S.G.S. 7½' quadrangle (scale:1;24000)  
 Rocky Mount, Va. 1965

WASHINGTON IRON FURNACE  
 latitude 36°59'14" longitude 79°53'31"