

PH0351164

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED MAY 10 1976
DATE ENTERED AUG 3 1977

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Alabama Iron Works
AND/OR COMMON
Cedar Creek Furnace

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Just south of Russellville near Rockwood
CITY, TOWN
Russellville
STATE
Alabama
VICINITY OF

CODE
01
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
4
COUNTY
Franklin
CODE
059
NOT FOR PUBLICATION

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Pasture land and woods

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Mr. and Mrs. Odie L. Holden - Furnace site, STREET & NUMBER Shook and Fletcher Road, RFD CITY, TOWN Russellville	VICINITY OF Mill race and building site	NAME Mr. Johnny Dill - Cemetery STREET & NUMBER Shook and Fletcher Road, RFD STATE Alabama
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5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
STREET & NUMBER
CITY, TOWN
Franklin County Courthouse
Jackson Avenue, N.W.
Russellville
STATE
Alabama

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
DATE
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
CITY, TOWN
STATE
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Cedar Creek Furnace is today an overgrown mound of earth and rock about 40 feet in diameter at the base, 15 feet high and 8 feet in diameter at the top. It is located just south of Russellville and near Rockwood in Franklin County, Alabama. It was built on the bank of the creek, from which it derives its common name, and where the latter stream makes a deep loop of about a mile in length, but is only 600 feet across at the neck.

The furnace was a very simple affair, similar to a limekiln in appearance, and not unlike furnaces of the colonial period that were already built and in use in nearby Tennessee. It was constructed of limestone quarried nearby and lined with firebrick, handmade on the site and still visible from the top. In shape it was somewhat conical and is estimated to have been about 25 or 30 feet in diameter at the base and tapering at about 25 feet into a short smoke-stack. A bellows-like apparatus which supplied the blast that heated the furnace was powered by water from the sluice.

The sluice, or mill race, built across the neck of land between the loop of the creek, carried water from the dam constructed on the upstream side to the waterwheel, the large forge hammer, the grist mill and the saw mill on the downstream side. Originally, about 12 feet wide and 8 feet deep, time and erosion have greatly changed the appearance of the mill race, though it is still easily recognizable.

Evidences of other structures and the slag heap are also still identifiable. About 100 yards south of the furnace and also on the creek bank is the remains of a slave-laid stone wall, said to be the foundation of the warehouse. Nearby, is the stone foundation of the overseer's house, where a spring was located in the basement. Foundation or chimney remains indicate the locations of several other structures. Evidently, all of the original structures on the site were log, or frame, on stone foundations.

In the side of a nearby hill there are still evidences of old mining pits and on the top of another nearby hill a cemetery contains around a dozen graves. Of the latter, only two even have limestone markers, with no inscriptions; the rest of the graves are only indicated by sunken holes.

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Additional information on boundaries:

The land between the furnace and the cemetery is the iron ore site and the furnace cannot be understood without the iron ore recourse.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1818, 1832 and 1836

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Joseph Heslip

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Cedar Creek Furnace was the first iron ore furnace built in Alabama. Joseph Heslip constructed this furnace with slave labor in 1818 and named it the Alabama Iron Works; it derived its more common name in later years, due to its location. Previous to this the frontier Alabama smith wrought chiefly out of imported bars and blooms and little use was made of local iron ore.

The abundance of iron ore had been duly noted by many and especially the Tennessee followers of Andrew Jackson who often passed through the area in the early days before settlement. Large boulders of iron ore literally covered the ground in the area where the furnace was built and limestone was plentiful there also.

Heslip, the son of a surveyor, was a partner in an iron works in his native Pennsylvania from 1809 until he and his family moved to West Tennessee in 1812. He remained in the latter location, where he was connected with the Grey Iron Works and the Red River Iron Works, until he moved to Alabama. Heslip obtained the property, on which he constructed the furnace, by patent from the United States Government on November 11, 1818, although he may have already been squatting on it.

Slaves constructed the furnace on a side of the horseshoe bend of the creek out of local limestone and lined it with fire brick they made by hand. They built a dam on the upstream side of the creek and dug a mill race across the neck of the horseshoe which brought water power. Water power turned the waterwheel which activated the bellows and provided the blast for the furnace, lifted the great 500 lb. hammer of the Catalan forge, and provided power for a grist mill and a saw mill. Slaves also made charcoal for the furnace by cutting and burning the great Cedar forests found in the vicinity.

Heslip found a ready market for his iron bars among the local blacksmiths and forge operators. A great quantity of the pig iron was also transported by oxen over a winding road to a point on the Tennessee River, near the present day Pickwick Landing. From there, it was shipped to New Orleans and some reports say a great deal of it was consigned to Liverpool. The hollow-ware castings of the furnace such as cooking pots and pans, and plows were also in great demand by the local settlers. Many pieces produced at the furnace were in use locally until recent years.

In 1820 forty-four slaves were employed by Heslip at the site, but the latter part of the year a great epidemic spread over the land, killing many. Heslip himself was dead by December 16, 1821, and is possibly among those buried in the unmarked graves at the cemetery on the hill above the furnace.

On December 5, 1825, the furnace, forge, grist mill, saw mill, and surrounding 16 1/2 quarter sections of land were sold to the highest bidder

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Armes, Ethel, The Story of Coal and Iron in Alabama. Reprint of the 1910 edition. New York: Arno Press, 1973.

Lauderdale County, Alabama, Will Book I, Lauderdale County Courthouse, Florence, Alabama.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 83 acres.

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,6	4,2,8	3,2,0	3,8	1,4	2,8,0	B	1,6	4,2,8	8,4,0	3,8	1,4	2,6,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING
C	1,6	4,2,8	8,2,0	3,8	1,3	4,8,0	D	1,6	4,2,8	3,3,0	3,8	1,3	6,9,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Starting at a point located at UTM 16/428320/3814280 proceed east approximately 1650 feet, thence south approximately 2500 feet, thence northwest 1750 feet, thence north approximately 1900 feet to the point of origin.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Jackson R. Stell, Historic Resource Coordinator II

ORGANIZATION

Alabama Historical Commission

STREET & NUMBER

725 Monroe Street

CITY OR TOWN

Montgomery

DATE

April 22, 1976

TELEPHONE

(205) 832-6621

STATE

Alabama 36130

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Wils B. Howard Jr.

TITLE SHPO

DATE May 3, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Wm. M. Stoltz

DATE

8/3/77

ATTEST: *Charles D. ...*
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
DATE 7-29-77

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by order of the Franklin County Court. Aaron Wells, a Tennessee iron master, was the purchaser and he operated the furnace around four years in cooperation with three other iron makers.

Dr. Robert Napier of Nashville purchased the furnace in 1826 and operated it until sometime between 1832 and 1836. During this time many improvements were made and for a time the furnace was a commercial success, turning out an excellent grade of pig iron.

One source blames the demise of the industry on the collapse of the smokestack and another says a fever killed off most of the workers. Excavations into the furnace proper in recent years indicate that the creek rose to an unusually high level and flooded the furnace, cooling the molten metal in it and making the furnace unusable. This would have necessitated the building of a new furnace. The profit margin of the operation being small, due to the bad roads and the distance involved in transporting the product to market, precluded this and the furnace was abandoned forever.

Here at the Cedar Creek Furnace, under Joseph's Heslip's efforts, began Alabama's iron industry, which in time led to the extensive iron ore mining operations and the great steel mills in the Birmingham area. Heslip can truly be called "The Father of the Iron Industry in Alabama."

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Correction: Paragraph 3, line 6-8.

John H. Lewis obtained the property, on which the furnace was constructed, by patent from the United States Government on November 11, 1818. Heslip obviously acquired the property from Lewis soon after this date, although he may have already been squatting on it.

Correction: Paragraph 7, lines 1-3.

Aaron Wells, a Tennessee iron master, was the purchaser and he operated the furnace around two years in cooperation with three other iron masters.

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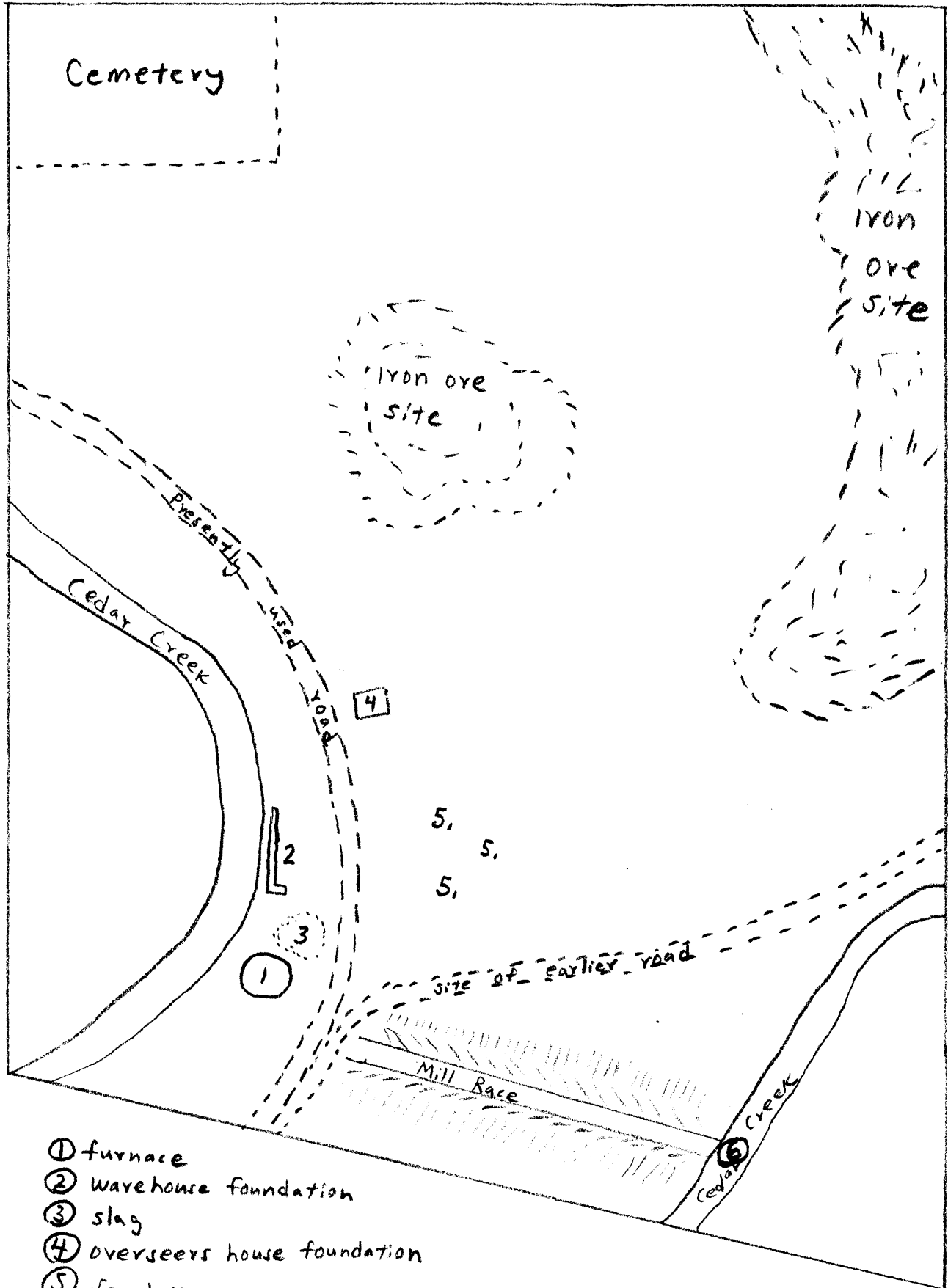
O'Reilly, Allen W., Russellville, Alabama. Letter to the Alabama Historical Commission, January 15, 1971.

O'Reilly, Allen W., Russellville, Alabama. Personal interview with, March 18, 1975.

Sheridan, Richard C., "Alabama's First Iron Furnace," The Journal of Muscle Shoals History. Florence: Tennessee Valley Historical Society, 1975.

The Cedar Creek Furnace

near Russellville, Franklin County, Alabama



- ① furnace
- ② warehouse foundation
- ③ slag
- ④ overseers house foundation
- ⑤ foundations
- ⑥ diverting stone dam site

J. Still