National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms Type all entries—complete applicable sections

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Early Ironworks of Northwestern South Carolina T_{R} historic

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state South Carolina 29211

Columbia city, town

depository for survey records

7. Description

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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Early Ironworks of Northwestern South Carolina thematic resources nomination includes ten sites (38CK2, 38CK67, 38CK68, 38CK69, 38CK71, 38CK72, 38CK73, 38CK74, 38YK216, and 38YK217) which were integral parts of the region's early iron industry from c. 1775 to c. 1870. These sites are located in the Piedmont counties of Cherokee and York (see Figure 1). This is the only region of the state containing the four essential resources necessary for iron production: iron ore, limestone, abundant hardwood forests to provide charcoal for fuel, and fast flowing streams and rivers with numerous rapids and waterfalls to provide power for operations.

The ten sites included in the nomination contain both surface and subsurface remains of ironworks and associated iron and limestone mines. Discernable site features include the remains of furnaces, dams, sluiceways, canals, roads, slag and ore heaps, as well as remains of forges, bloomeries, rolling mills, warehouses, and other structures.

The most striking features at several of the sites are the remains of iron furnaces (see Figures 2 and 3). Iron furnaces served essentially as crucibles in which locallymined iron ore and limestone were melted down by burning charcoal. These materials were fed into the furnace through an opening in the top. As the charceal in the furnace burned, fanned to high temperatures through the use of large water-powered bellows. the iron ore and limestone became molten. The molten limestone chemically drew off unwanted minerals such as quartz from the iron ore, producing a molten calcium glass of low density. The molten iron had a higher relative density and settled to the bottom of the furnace with a distinct layer of calcium glass above it. The two distinct layers were drawn out of the furnace separately. The calcium glass was skimmed off first to produce a waste product called slag. The molten iron was drawn off into sand-paved casting beds to form pig iron, long bars of iron which generally ranged from three to ten feet in length, were at least five inches in width, and were at least four inches thick.(1) The designation pig iron is a descriptive term derived from the way the molten iron looked in the sand casting beds, like a large sow with suckling pigs attached.(2)

After casting, the pig iron was transported to other locations for forge processing into blooms, or pasty masses of malleable metal, suitable for processing into bar or wrought iron for the subsequent manufacture into objects requiring a high tensil strength. At other locations the pig iron was also remelted and poured into molds to form cast wares like pots and stoves. This subsequent processing took place at specific locations known as forges or bloomeries, rolling and cutting mills, and at casting houses. Bloomeries were buildings containing small forges or furnaces at which blooms were produced (see Figure 4). It was at these forges that the iron was annealed or strengthened through repeated heating and cooling. Large trip hammers were also associated with these forges. These hammers were used to shape the iron as well as remove impurities through repeated pounding. The rolling mills contained large rollers where malleable iron was formed into sheets for further processing. Most sheet iron was processed at cutting mills, where large blades cut the iron into usable strips or objects such as nails and spikes.(3)

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Cherokee County Courthouse E. Floyd Baker Boulevard Gaffney, S.C.

York County Courthouse 100 South Congress Street York, S.C.



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At all the iron manufacturing locations water was the principal source of power. Large waterwheels were used to harness power and to drive shafts attached to such equipment as bellows, hammers, and rollers. Sluiceways and canals channeled the water diverted from nearby streams and rivers to these waterwheels. The canals also facilitated water transportation. The canals along with wooden rail tram roads, for horse drawn wagons, provided the principal means by which the manufactured products were transported between processing localities and the means by which finished goods and supplies could be exchanged with distant markets.

<u>Survey Methodology</u>: The survey of the early ironworks of northwestern South Carolina was conducted by the Wofford College Department of Geology, under the direction of archaeologist Terry Ferguson; with the assistance of Robert Entorf, archaeologist; Helen Mary Johnson, geologist; Thomas Cowan, graduate student in Applied History, University of South Carolina; and Wofford College students participating in a month-long program of independent archaeological study during January 1985 and 1986.

The investigations initially consisted of the location, documentation, and evaluation of specific areas in Cherokee, Spartanburg, and York counties that were identified by archival research and informants as having the potential to contain sites associated with early iron manufacturing. Archaeological reconnaissance survey located a total of nineteen distinct sites associated with iron manufacturing in the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries. An extensive information search, using primary and secondary sources, was conducted as an integral part of the investigations. Field methods involved pedestrian reconnaissance utilizing systematic transects, of no greater than twenty meters, across suspected or identified site areas. Each site was minimally documented by sketch maps, field drawings, and the recording of information necessary to complete state site inventory forms. At the furnace sites of Cowpens, Ellen, and King's Creek, more detailed site maps and profile drawings of well-preserved site features were also made. Systematic subsurface shovel testing was only attempted at the King's Creek Furnace Site in an attempt to define more clearly the nature of confusing archaeological features. This shovel testing involved the systematic placement of twenty-three 50x50 centimeter shovel tests with an approximate volume of twenty liters along three parallel transects. These investigations were only minimally successful and were not implemented at any of the other sites. No subsurface testing was conducted at any of the sites to determine boundaries or integrity. It was felt that all sites located were sufficiently well defined by the presence of structural remains/remnants and earthen features to warrant following a no-testing strategy. Such a no-testing strategy is consistent with procedures

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outlined for documentation of charcoal iron furnaces for a thematic nomination in National Register guidelines.(4)

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Evaluations of the sites located were guided by application of National Register criteria. Site preservation and contextual integrity of site features and deposits as well as significance were considered, and ten of the nineteen sites investigated were determined eligible for the National Register. The ten sites included in this nomination have surface features, and evidence gathered during the course of field investigations suggests that subsurface features are most probably intact. Such evidence consists of large areas of stone rubble around furnaces and other features that appear to retain sealed off and preserved deposits. Other evidence indicating the presence of undisturbed archaeological contexts can be found in the lack of landscape alteration around site features such as sluiceways. This indicates that very little impact has occurred on these sites as a result of farming and logging activities. The other nine sites identified during the course of the investigations are not eligible due to extensive landscape erosion, significant alterations. or total destruction by subsequent development of textile mills or other damaging activities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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## Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 1800–1899 1900–	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric agriculture architecture art commerce communications	heck and justify below community planning conservation economics education engineering exploration/settlement industry invention	iandscape architectury law literature military music philosophy politics/government	e religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
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#### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Early Ironworks of Northwestern South Carolina thematic resources nomination includes ten sites that were integral parts of the earliest large-scale industry in South Carolina. These ironworks utilized geologic resources in present-day Cherokee and York counties to produce iron products for much of the state's Piedmont region (see Figure 1). The iron industry existed from c. 1775 to the 1860's with an early period of development extending from c. 1775 to c. 1820 and a later period extending from c. 1820 to c. 1870. The range of sites included in this nomination documents the evolution of industry in the state from the plantation iron furnaces of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to the larger iron manufacturing companies that developed by the mid-nineteenth century. The demise of the state's iron industry began on the eve of the Civil War when companies in other regions adopted broader-based raw material procurement and marketing strategies and a more advanced coal-based production technology. These factors coupled with resource depletion and the loss of the slave-based labor structure led to an inability to remain economically competitive.

The resources for iron production can be found in most of the eastern United States and ironworks first appeared in eastern Massachusetts in the 1640's (5) By the beginning of the American Revolution nearly one hundred ironworks had been established from Maine to North Carolina

The first interest in iron manufacture in South Carolina was initiated by the need for iron supplies and cannon during the Revolution. In 1775 the South Carolina Provincial Congress offered payment of "one thousand Pounds currency" for the establishment of iron furnaces. (6) By 1778, Hill's Ironworks and Wofford's Ironworks had been established in present-day York and Spartanburg counties.

Hill's Ironworks (see inventory form A), also called Hill and Hayne's Ironworks was developed by William Hill (1741-1816) after he received loans of L1,000 and L7,000 from the State Assembly of South Carolina between 1776 and 1778. Hill's Ironworks was erected

and by 1795 consisted of the following: two furnaces, the Aera and the Aetna; a forge, probably located at the Aera Furnace, which had four fires; and two forge hammers. The site also contained four grist mills, two saw mills, a two story brick house measuring thirty-five by forty feet, other "necessary buildings," and two dams, one for each furnace site. Both dams were "strong-frame" dams, built of crisscrossed logs covered with planks and mud, each about 150 feet long and about 10 feet high. All of these operations were situated on at least 17,527 acres of land by 1798. In 1801 Hill's works consisted of a single furnace, a forge with four fires and two hammers, a rolling mill, and nail factory with three nail-cutting machines. (7)

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William Hill entered several partnerships, the first with Isaac Hayne in 1778. The British burned Hill's Works in 1780 and hanged Hayne in 1781. In 1786 Daniel Bourdeaux, Joseph Atkinson, and Pierce Butler advanced Hill L4,105 to rebuild the Aera Furnace and erect a new one, the Aetna Furnace, Hill's new partners experienced financial troubles and in 1795 the heirs of Hill's first partner, Isaac Hayne, sued for their interest in the works. The works were put up for sale and purchased by William Edward Hayne of Charleston in 1796. Hayne entered a partnership with Hill, in which Hill continued to operate the ironworks.(8)

There is a reference to activities at the works in the records of Andrew and Solomon Hill, William Hill's two sons in the York District records. In 1813, three years before his death, William Hill divided the ironworks lands among two of his sons, but it appears that his sons had taken over management of the ironworks as early as 1809.(9) One final reference to the works is a reference to "Hills Old Ironworks" on Mills's Atlas in 1825.(10)

In 1775 William Wofford received loans from the South Carolina legislature to erect an iron furnace and forge

Wofford soon after joined in a partnership with Joseph Buffington and the works were in production by 1780. The ironworks were sold to Simon Berwick and other investors primarily from the the Charleston area in 1778 and were burned in 1781 by the British. The works were rebuilt and operated until c. 1810. During the late eighteenth century these works provided bar iron, nails, and castings to the inhabitants of the surrounding counties.(11)

During the early nineteenth century several additional furnaces were established, including Nesbitt's Furnace (built c. 1810), Jackson's Furnace (built c. 1815) and Cowpen's Furnace (built c. 1807). Little is known about the early history of these furnaces. South Carolina ironworks established prior to c. 1820 were largely self-sufficient plantations typically employing about one hundred slaves who carried out most of the skilled and unskilled tasks of cutting timber, making charcoal, mining ore and limestone, growing crops, and operating the furnace. After about 1820 iron manufacturers began in increasing numbers to consolidate their operations into large sites along major rivers. The casting of wares and processing of bar iron was shifted to these main sites, and furnace sites were limited to the simple smelting of iron ore into pigs. Companies also expanded regular markets to Columbia and the eastern portions of North Carolina and Georgia with the opening of canals in the 1820's and railroads in the 1850's.(12). Post-1820 iron manufacturing operations included the Nesbitt or Coopersville Ironworks, later named the Swedish Iron Manufacturing Company,



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Cherokee Ironworks and also bought a mill seat with a grist mill situated across the river from the main ironworks.(19)

In 1830 a group of Upcountry and Columbia merchants and planters formed a partnership to buy the Cherokee Ironworks and began to build a rolling mill at the mill seat across the river from the ironworks. In 1832 they bought the Jackson's Furnace, which had been sold by Stroup in 1825 to the New York group of investors. Soon after they began construction of another furnace

(20) Thus at the height of production the King's Mountain Iron Company was composed of the Cherokee Ironworks, which included the Cherokee Furnace, a forge, a blacksmiths shop, grist mills, saw mills, and a number of buildings for housing laborers; the two outlying furnaces

(21) The King's Mountain Iron Company existed under the organizational structure of the 1936 charter until just after the Civil War.(22)

The South Carolina Manufacturing Company (see inventory forms G and H), a partnership between Abner Benson, Andrew B. Moore, and Wilson Nesbitt was incorporated in 1826 but did not start development until 1834 when Simpson Bobo, Gabriel Cannon, and William Clark were added as investors. In 1834 the South Carolina Manufacturing Company purchased and rebuilt the Cowpens Furnace, the south Carolina which had been originally built c. 1807. At this time the South Carolina Manufacturing Company also began to purchase large tracts of land containing iron deposits including land adjacent

Also in 1834, they built an ironworks

which included the Hurricane Cold-Blast Furnace and the Hurricane Rolling Mill and Nailworks. The rolling mill and nailworks consisted of five heating furnaces, one train of rolls, three nail machines, and one water driven hammer. In 1859 the company also maintained blacksmith and machine shops in addition to the furnace and rolling mill. The operation for the state of evolved into textile manufacturing during the 1860's.(23)

One furnace operation, Nesbitt's furnace (see inventory form I), apparently deviated from the trend toward consolidation exhibited by most of the nineteenth century operations. Nesbitt's Furnace, located in the western part of present-day Cherokee County, had been developed c. 1810, probably by Wilson Nesbitt, and utilized iron ore from nearby deposits the nearby Nesbitt's Furnace was apparently an independent operation which either died out in the early 1800's or was possibly incorporated in the second quarter of the nineteenth century into either the South Carolina Manufacturing Company of Spartanburg District or the Nesbitt Company.(24)

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 Nesbitt's Limestone Quarry (see inventory form J),
 Image: Continuation of the state of t

nineteenth century in a series of deposits

Initial quarrying activity began with the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century operations. (25)

Archaeology-Historic: Sites included in the Early Ironworks of Northwestern South Carolina thematic resources nomination exhibit almost the complete range of variability for the various types of sites that were involved in the early manufacture of iron. They have the potential to yield information about the nature of early southern industrial activity, site patterning, and early industrial slave lifeways. Sites also have the potential to yield basic information relating to the role of iron in antebellum southern material culture. One specific research problem for which the archaelogical remains of these sites are particularly suited is the comparative investigation of furnace construction and style to determine the range of variability present in the area and the inclusion or omission of technological features developed in other regions. Another specific research problem relates to the delineation and comparison of mining and quarrying technologies, particularly between eighteenth and nineteenth century operations. A more general research problem relates to the definition of the types of iron products manufactured at these sites. Finally, these sites have the potential to generate both inter-site and intra-site patterning necessary to achieve an understanding of the functional and economic distributions of iron manufacturing activities. The good integrity of archaeological context exhibited by these sites is the principal contributing factor in their archaeological and historic potential.

Engineering: Three furnace structures associated with the early ironworks of northwestern South Carolina retain sufficient integrity to be of significance to the field of industrial engineering. Cowpens Furnace c. 1810), Susan Furnace (c. 1837), and Ellen Furnace (c. 1838) have significant portions of the original furnace stack still standing.(26) These furnaces are constructed of quarried stone and are about thirty feet square at the base and originally tapered inward slightly to a height of about twenty-five to thirty feet. The style of construction is closely associated with that employed in the construction of furnace stacks in the upper South and middle Atlantic states and is characterized as a Pennsylvanian furnace type.(27) The interiors of the furnaces are chimney to egg-shaped with the widest interior dimension near the base, or bosh, being about eight feet. Currently the upper 25 to 35 percent of the furnace stacks has eroded due to vegetation growth and frost action. Lower arched openings about Continuation sheet 8

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eight feet across at the widest point and lined with brick or stone are preserved as are square openings in the stone work which once contained structural timbers of buildings and sheds originally attached to the furnace stack.

<u>Industry</u>: The sites associated with the early ironworks of northwestern South Carolina document the earliest large-scale industry of the Carolinas. Each iron furnace or works typically employed over 100 slaves and a number of additional skilled free workers and annually produced between 100 and 300 tons of iron products. Most manufacturing operations also controlled from 9,000 to 15,000 acres of timber land utilized for the annual production of upwards of 500,000 bushels of charcoal.(28) The scope of early iron manufacturing ventures in South Carolina was not matched until the rise of the textile industry after the Civil War.

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(1) J. Lawrence Poole, <u>America's Valley Forges and Valley Furnaces</u> (Dalton, Massachusetts: The Studley Press, Inc., 1982), p. 193.

(2) <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 191-195.

(3) <u>Ibid</u>.

(4) Terry A. Ferguson and Tom Cowan, "The Early Ironworks of Northwest South Carolina," unpublished report of investigations conducted in 1985-86 under grant no. 45859103 administered by the South Carolina Department of Archives and History and the United States Department of the Interior, on file at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History; "Charcoal Iron Furnace Thematic," National Register of Historic Places Bulletin # 12, <u>Definition of</u> National Register Boundaries for Archeological Properties, pp. 18-19.

(5) Edward Neal Hartley, <u>Ironworks on the Saugus</u> (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), <u>passim</u>.

(6) Journal of the South Carolina Provincial Congress, November 28, 1775, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, S.C.

(7) <u>City Gazette and Daily Advertiser</u> (Charleston, S.C.) May 12, 1795; John Drayton, <u>A View of South Carolina</u> (Charleston, S.C.: W.P. Young, 1802), pp. 150-152.

(8) Ernest W. Lander, "The Iron Industry in Antebellum South Carolina," <u>The Journal of Southern History</u> 20 (1959): 339, 352-53.

(9) Book 1, pp. 449-453, York County Plats, York County Courthouse, York, S.C.

(10) Robert Mills, <u>Atlas of the State of South Carolina</u> (n.p., n.p., 1825; new facsimile ed., Columbia, S.C.: Lucy Hampton Bostick and Fant H. Thornley, 1838).

(11) Lander, p. 337.

(12) Kings Mountain Iron Company Minute Book, p. 119, York County Courthouse.

(13) Lander, pp. 343-348; J.P. Lesley, Iron Manufacturer's Guide

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see continuation sheets

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Figure 3. Typical furnace showing interior structure. (From Maxwell: 1966)



Figure 4.

Forge or bloomery fire used in the converting of pig iron into bar or wrought iron. (From Overman 1850: 246) Name

State

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018 3/31/87

United States Department of the Interior **National Park Service** 

## **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section number _____ Page __

Nomination/Type of Review

			Μ	ultiple Resource Area Thematic Group
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