

[Redacted text block]

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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

There may have been iron operations here as early as the Revolutionary War or before. Moses Stroup appears to have had at least a forge here as early as 1820. By 1832 it was brought by Graham, Black, and Johnson and either here or nearby, large furnaces, puddling mills, rolling mills, forges and a company town were installed. In 1837 this company appears to have become the Magnetic Iron Company with a quarter of a million dollar expansion. The industry weathered the depression years of the late 1830's and flourished during the Civil War but went broke thereafter. In any event there was a huge operation here including a company town, furnaces, mills, and forges that supplied iron products ranging from munitions to nails, kitchen implements and strap marketed to all parts of the state and throughout the South.

Presently existing remains of these operations are most impressive, even if one cannot see much of them through the dense undergrowth. Above ground remains include four large buildings of the furnace and factory complex, a blast furnace complex, a small canal with a turnaround, an ore dump, a tramway grade, an old railroad grade, a building used as company offices, a cemetery, and the prehistoric and historic Cherokee Indian Ford crossing [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] is a cemetery area apparently of the Iron Works Period. [REDACTED] a single well-preserved blast furnace and small canal, [REDACTED]

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The historic importance of this site to the people of South Carolina is clear. Here is a classic example of a segment of America's 19th Century Industrial Revolution. It has been preserved from the ravages of modern progress of that same Industrial Revolution in the 20th Century. It is a potential educational exhibit of major importance to illustrate to the visitor a segment of the way of life of a people undergoing Industrial Revolution. It can be a reminder to generations yet to come how American industry developed from infancy to maturity. One may be reminded that without historic examples of early industry, those generations will know only the end result of a long industrial development. A very similar, though earlier, (17th Century) iron works was restored at Saugus, Massachusetts during the 1940's and 1950's, and is today a notable landmark of historic understanding. Here in South Carolina is the ruin of another historic phase of the early iron industry.

In addition to the 19th century industrial use of the site the shoals were used as a river crossing in both historic and prehistoric times. While aboriginal remains are scarce, a chipped quartz biface, found on the surface, testifies to the prehistoric use of the site. In addition to the use as crossings, shoals were also well suited for the construction of Indian fish traps. The traps were constructed at points in the river where the swift moving current would force fish into a V shaped trap where they could be caught in baskets.

Before and during the Revolution, iron was so important that the British government prohibited its manufacture in the colonies. Thus, during the Revolutionary War, the British concentrated on destroying iron operations in the South Carolina Piedmont. When peace returned, additional furnaces and forges were built here and elsewhere, and iron production became a major industry in South Carolina.

Historical importance of the site also stems from the use of Cherokee Ford, during the summer of 1780, as the campsite for Col. McDowell, North Carolina patriot directing military operations for northwestern South Carolina. The American army crossed at the Ford in October 1780 on their way to the Battle of King's Mountain.



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(Revisions)

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CHEROKEE FORD IRON WORKS

Because of its geographical location and geological features, Cherokee Ford [redacted] and the area around it were used by both prehistoric man and the early settlers.

[redacted]  
the location ideal for stone fish traps constructed by both prehistoric and historic Indians. There is a good probability that an intensive archeological survey of the area would locate Indian camp sites near the ford.

When the Scotch-Irish settlers moved into the area in the 1750s, the upper reaches of the Broad and Catawba Rivers, with their fast-flowing tributaries, were ideal locations for primitive furnaces and bloomeries to produce pig iron. The area had all the natural resources needed to produce iron--iron ore, hardwood for charcoal, limestone for a flux, and fast flowing water to operate bellows and water wheels. Many small furnaces and bloomeries were established before the Revolution and well into the 1820s.

Most of the buildings shown on the sketch map (included in supplementary material for the nomination) were constructed between 1820 and 1840 by the Nesbitt Iron Manufacturing Company, later changed to the Magnetic Iron Company and finally to the Swedish Iron Manufacturing Company. The blast furnaces and shops along the river, the canals, rolling mill, office building, tramway, cemetery, and living quarters were all built during this period. Unlike the smaller previous iron enterprises, the factory established here was the most up-to-date and competitive with the northern iron industry.

The railroad tracks were built in 1896 to connect the towns of Blacksburg and Gaffney and were abandoned in the 1920s. They were never a part of the Cherokee Ford Iron operations; by the time the tracks were completed, the iron industry in the area was almost extinct. The South Carolina mines and factories could not compete with the northern iron industry at this time due to a lack of coal and to the industrial network in the northern states.

[redacted] nominated property incorporates an area of high archeological potential.

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No extensive archeological investigations have been made of the area to date; however, several archeologists have walked the area, mapped the most prominent remains, and surveyed the area from the air. Due to the dense undergrowth and brush on the site, detailed archeological investigation cannot take place until some clearing is done.



*OK*  
6/1/76

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Moss, B.G. "Cooperville: Iron Capital of South Carolina," South Carolina History Illustrated. May, 1970, pp. 33-35, 64-68.

(X) NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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SOUTH CAROLINA INVENTORY FORM FOR HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND  
INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES IN A MULTIPLE PROPERTY SUBMISSION

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NAME OF MULTIPLE PROPERTY SUBMISSION: Early Ironworks of Northwestern  
South Carolina

PREFERRED NAME OF PROPERTY: Coopersville Ironworks Site (38CK2)  
and Susan Furnace Site (38CK67)

HISTORIC NAME OF PROPERTY: Coopersville Ironworks, The Nesbitt Iron  
Manufacturing Company, The Swedish Iron  
Manufacturing Company  
Susan Furnace

COMMON NAME OF PROPERTY: Cherokee Ford Ironworks

LOCATION: The Coopersville Ironworks Site is located on wooded tracts



CLASSIFICATION: site, structure

DESCRIPTION

Coopersville is the largest surviving antebellum iron manufacturing complex in South Carolina. The complex includes foundations of four large factory buildings, each approximately thirty meters square, with a system of canal/sluceways between them (see Figure 1), and the remains of three furnaces. One of the furnaces, Susan Furnace (see Figure 2), was an outlying operation that was geographically separated, but connected to the main operation by a log rail tramway whose bed is still visible through a portion of the property. Other structural remains located within the property boundaries are the foundation and partially collapsed brick and plaster walls of the main office building; the foundations of other unidentifiable structures, possibly



worker or slave housing; and other manufacturing related structures. Also located within the boundaries are numerous ore pits, most of which have been almost completely filled in due to slump and soil erosion.(1)

#### SIGNIFICANCE

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Archaeology-Historic  
Engineering  
Industry

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE:   N  

#### SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Coopersville Ironworks complex exhibits the most complete and intact set of features associated with the early iron industry in northwestern South Carolina. The Coopersville Ironworks and Susan Furnace were developed between 1835 and 1843 by the Nesbitt Iron Manufacturing Company, the largest iron company in South Carolina. The Nesbitt Company was dissolved in the late 1840's, and the Swedish Iron Manufacturing Company of South Carolina operated the ironworks from 1850 until the Civil War. The main factory complex, Coopersville Ironworks Site [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] is the best preserved factory complex of any of the nineteenth century iron manufacturing companies of the region.

The outlying furnace, Susan Furnace [REDACTED]

[REDACTED], exhibits a partially collapsed furnace and associated features, including foundations, sluiceways, slag heaps, and adjacent ore pits. This site is one of the best preserved furnace operations in the area with the only disturbance being an early [REDACTED]

The sites of Coopersville and Susan Furnace along with another outlying site, Ellen Furnace (see inventory form D), when viewed as an operationally-related set of sites offer probably the best single research opportunity of any of the nineteenth century company complexes. The research potential of this site is extremely great, particularly in terms of understanding site patterning and organization and for the comparison of variability in site feature construction.

The site retains excellent integrity, as subsequent to the decline/termination of the manufacturing process, the site was abandoned. The majority of the site, presently forested, has not been significantly impacted by farming, logging, or any other activity. As a consequence, the surface structural remains retain excellent integrity and subsurface features have not been disturbed. The diversity, density, and clarity of the surface structural features contribute to the integrity and significance of the site.

#### FOOTNOTES

(1) Terry A. Ferguson and Tom Cowan, "The Early Ironworks of Northwest South Carolina" (unpublished, report of investigations conducted from 1985-1986 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 SCDAH, pp. 32-38.

(2) Ibid., pp. 39-41; Oscar M. Lieber, "Geognostic Map of the Itacolumite, Iron, and Limestone Region of Union, Spartanburg, and York District, South Carolina," Reports on the Mineralogical, Geological, and Agricultural Survey of South Carolina, 4 vols. (Columbia: R. W. Gibbes, 1856-1860), vol. 2. Plate 7.