

Hopewell Furnace

Built by Mark Bird in 1770–1771, Hopewell was one of the last of the charcoal-burning, cold-blast iron furnaces operated in Pennsylvania. It continued in operation long after most charcoal furnaces were replaced by more modern ones. The most productive years for Hopewell Furnace were 1830 to 1837. Castings were the most profitable product, especially the popular Hopewell Stove (fig. 2). More than 80,000 stoves were cast at Hopewell, which produced as many as 23 types and sizes of cooking and heating stoves. Beginning in the 1840s, the iron industry shifted to large-scale, steam-driven coke and anthracite furnaces. Despite a short reprieve during the Civil War, Hopewell could not compete against the new iron and Bessemer steel industries. When the iron and steel industries consolidated in urban manufacturing centers like Pittsburgh, Bethlehem, and Chicago, small independent rural enterprises like Hopewell could no longer compete, and the furnace ceased operations in 1883 (Kurjack 1954).