

Lehigh Crane Iron Works
(Thomas Iron Works)
Front Street
Catasauqua
Lehigh County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-154

HAER
PA,
39-CATS,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HAER
PA,
39-CATS,
1-

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

LEHIGH CRANE IRON WORKS
(Thomas Iron Works)

HAER No. PA-154

Location: Front Street, Catasauqua, Pennsylvania.

Description: Little remains of these extensive works which stretched for about 1760 feet along the Lehigh Canal (supplying the water power) on either side of Lock 36. Surviving amidst the present works of the Gatex-Fuller Company are several walls and a late 19th century brick office.

History: The Lehigh Crane Iron Company was organized in 1839 shortly after the arrival of David Thomas (1794-1882) from Wales. To encourage the production of anthracite iron, the Lehigh Canal and Navigation Company had invited David Thomas to take over the management of the new company. The company was named after Mr. George Crane, owner of the Ynisedwyn Works in Wales.

The first of six furnaces was blown on July 4, 1840 (11 foot bosh; 47 foot stack), and others in 1842, 1846, 1849, and 1868. Though others were experimenting with the use of anthracite coal, Thomas was the first to make use of the hot blast essential to anthracite iron production. In 1899, the plant passed into possession of the Empire Steel and Iron Company organized that year for the purpose of acquiring a number of idle blast furnaces.

Source: David Thomas, Father of the Anthracite Iron Trade (n.p., n.d. [1883]) pamphlet in Lafayette College Library.

Samuel Thomas, "Reminiscences of the Early Anthracite-Iron Industry," (1889 Address), Transactions of the American Institute of Mining Engineers, vol. 29, pp. 901-929.

"Transfer of Technology to the U. S. in the Nineteenth Century" University of Delaware Dissertation (1975), Ch. 5.

Historian: Peter H. Stott, HAER Inventory card, prepared 8/1/79.

ADDENDUM TO:
THOMAS IRON COMPANY
(Thomas Iron Works)
North Front Street
Hokendauqua
Lehigh County
Pennsylvania

HAER PA-154
HAER PA,39-CATS,1-

INDEX TO PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

ADDENDUM TO:
HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
THOMAS IRON COMPANY
(Thomas Iron Works)
HAER PA-154

This report is an addendum to the 1-page report previously transmitted to the Library of Congress.

Original survey name: Lehigh Crane Iron Works

Original address: Front Street
Catasauqua, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania

Corrected survey name: Thomas Iron Company

Corrected address: North Front Street
Hokendauqua, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania

The works was located in the vicinity of latitude: 40.663965, longitude: -75.486032. This point represents a remaining structure. It was obtained on March 29, 2016, using Google Earth. There is no restriction on its release to the public.

The name for this survey has been corrected from Lehigh Crane Works to Thomas Iron Company, and the location from Catasauqua to Hokendauqua.¹ The secondary name (Thomas Iron Works) remains the same.

History: The information provided in the original report is about the Lehigh Crane Iron Company, not the Thomas Iron Company. The Thomas Iron Company was organized in February 1854 and received a special charter from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania two months later. The company was named for

¹ The change to the name and location was suggested by a Library of Congress patron. Reference Librarian Marilyn Ibach verified the correction using these sources: Craig L. Bartholomew and Lance E. Metz, *The Anthracite Iron Industry of the Lehigh Valley*, ed. Ann Bartholomew (Easton, PA: Center for Canal History and Technology, 1988); Randolph L. Kulp, ed., *History of Lehigh and New England Railroad Company* (Allentown, PA: Lehigh Valley Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, Inc., 1962); and Duane Sedlock, "Explore the Thomas Iron Works Ruins," *Allentown Outdoor Examiner*, April 6, 2012, accessed March 29, 2016, <http://www.examiner.com/article/explore-the-thomas-iron-works-ruins>.

David Thomas, who served as the first trustee of real estate. His son, Samuel, served as the first superintendent. The first board of directors included E. A. Douglas, William H. Talcott, Ephraim Marsh, Peter S. Michler, John Drake, Samuel S. Chidsey, and C.A. Luckenbach. The furnaces were built in 1855 (nos. 1 and 2), 1862 (no. 3), 1863 (no. 4), 1873 (no. 5), and 1874 (no. 6). Samuel McHose of Allentown, Pennsylvania, was awarded the contract for masonry and bricklaying. The furnaces were located on land that the company had purchased from Thomas Butz, “about one mile upstream from Catasauqua. The company town subsequently laid out became the nucleus of present-day Hokendauqua.” Changes and improvements were made to the stacks in the 1890s. The site remained active until 1927. The company surrendered its charter in June 1942.²

Sources:

Bartholomew, Craig L., and Lance E. Metz. *The Anthracite Iron Industry of the Lehigh Valley*. Edited by Ann Bartholomew. Easton, PA: Center for Canal History and Technology, 1988.

Kulp, Randolph L., ed.. *History of Lehigh and New England Railroad Company*. Allentown, PA: Lehigh Valley Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, Inc., 1962.

Sedlock, Duane. “Explore the Thomas Iron Works Ruins.” *Allentown Outdoor Examiner*, April 6, 2012. Accessed March 29, 2016. <http://www.examiner.com/article/explore-the-thomas-iron-works-ruins>.

² Bartholomew and Metz, *Anthracite Iron Industry*, 40, 166-169. The quotation is from page 168.