

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**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

Clifton Furnace

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

Approximately .5 mile SE of Clifton Forge;
west bank of Jackson River; approximately 150 feet east of U.S. Route
STREET & NUMBER 220; approximately .5 mile NW of the intersection of U.S. Route
220 and Town Route 701 (Town of Iron Gate)

CITY, TOWN

Clifton Forge

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Sixth (M. Caldwell Butler)

STATE

Virginia

CODE

51

COUNTY

Alleghany

CODE

005

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: none

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Commonwealth of Virginia - Virginia Department of Highways and Transportation
c/o Mr. J. E. Harwood, Commissioner

STREET & NUMBER

1221 East Broad Street

CITY, TOWN

Richmond

VICINITY OF

STATE

Virginia 23219

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Alleghany County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Covington

STATE

Virginia

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey

DATE

1976

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, 221 Governor Street

CITY, TOWN

Richmond

STATE

Virginia 23219

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Clifton Furnace is a cold blast charcoal furnace set in the side of a steep bank (as are all iron furnaces of this type), overlooking the Jackson River in scenic Rainbow Gap, one mile south of the city of Clifton Forge. It is situated within a Virginia Department of Highways right-of-way with U. S. Route 220 located on the slope above it and the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad immediately in front of it. The furnace is a typical example of the many found in Virginia's piedmont and mountain areas. Built of large, rough-hewn, rectangular stones, the sides and face taper towards the top. The width of its base is approximately thirty-four feet and the width of the flue opening is approximately eight-and-one-half feet. Like its sides, the jambs of the furnace mouth are tapered in a gentle curve towards the top. Above the flue opening the back wall of the mouth is corbeled to the lintel. The top of the furnace, or charging floor, is level with the highway roadbed, and a small wayside there enables visitors to walk towards the top of the flue where the ore was melted. At the wayside is a bronze plaque erected in 1956 by the Rainbow Ridge Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, which provides a brief history of the furnace.

Although the furnace receives little or no maintenance, and is much overgrown, it survives in a generally good state of preservation. It is the only surviving structure of a once-busy operation. The immediately adjacent areas are potential archaeological sites and may yield artifacts and foundations that could tell more about Virginia's early iron industry.

CCL

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 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 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

Located in the scenically beautiful Rainbow Gap, one of the Commonwealth's most outstanding natural formations, Clifton Furnace is rich in historical associations. Here, during the mid-nineteenth century, was concentrated a significant portion of Alleghany County's iron industry, the foundation of much of the areas early economy. It was this site that provided the name for nearby Clifton Forge, a major railroad junction and division point and one of the principal cities of western Virginia. Although the forge operation was located in Rainbow Gap, Clifton Forge Post Office and depot was situated north of the Jackson River in the area now known as Cliftondale Park, east of the present city. What is now the city of Clifton Forge was formerly the village of Williamson. In 1882, when the Richmond and Alleghany Railroad was completed to Williamson and joined with the Virginia Central Railroad, the name of the junction was changed from Williamson to Clifton Forge.

By 1800 the demand for iron was so great in Virginia that the whole eastern portion of the Appalachians became dotted with charcoal-fired iron furnaces. Although now dormant, Virginia's iron industry once formed a significant portion of the state's economy. Alleghany County was especially rich in iron deposits, and by the 1820s several furnaces had been established in the vicinity where the Jackson and Cowpasture Rivers converge to form the James. A forge producing wrought iron was in operation as early as 1822 at Rainbow Gap. The operation proved to be so successful that in 1846 its owner, William Lyle Alexander decided to produce pig iron from the same ore mined nearby. The stone structure erected for this purpose is the existing cold blast charcoal furnace overlooking the scenic gap.

William Alexander was a native of Rockbridge County. The name of his family farm there, Clifton, provided the name for his industry. Prior to his taking over the operation of the Clifton forge and furnace, Alexander was associated with John Jordan, a noted builder and iron maker from Lexington who had set up several furnaces in the region.

For eight years pig iron was produced at the Clifton furnace at the rate of two-and-one-half to three tons a week. However, during this period wrought iron increased in demand over pig iron and the furnace went out of blast in 1854 though the forge continued to operate. The structure was revamped in 1874 with the expectation that it might again go into blast but it never did. The furnace was completely abandoned in 1877.

Today the massive stone structure stands as the only reminder of a once busy place. Located within a highway right-of-way, on the slope between U.S. 220 and the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, the overgrown stones symbolize both a vanished Virginia industry and the beginnings of a prosperous city.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Scott, Ruth B. "Many Stories Given Origin for Clifton Forge's Name, " Roanoke Times, Roanoke, Va., February 5, 1956.

Unpublished mss. in archives of the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,7	6,0,5	8,7,0	4,1	8,5	1,6,0	B						
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING							
C					D								

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Staff

ORGANIZATION

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE

February 1977

STREET & NUMBER

221 Governor Street

TELEPHONE

(804) 786-3144

CITY OR TOWN

Richmond

STATE

Virginia 23219

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

TITLE Junius R. Fishburne, Jr., Executive Director
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

DATE FEB 15 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST

DATE

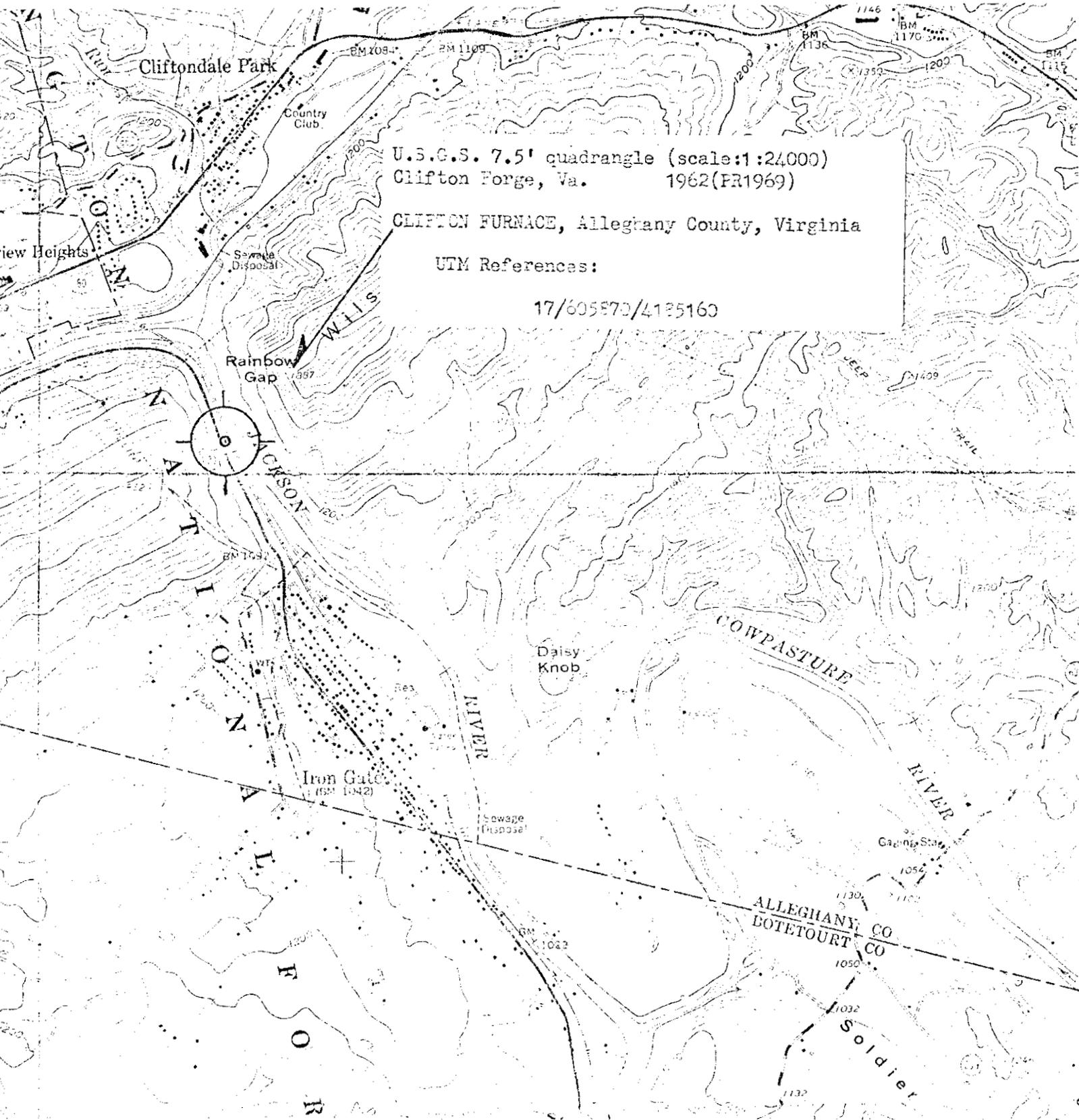
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission
221 Governor Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

CLINTON FURNACE, Alleghany County, Virginia
Credit: Va. Historic Landmarks Commission
1974
Negative Filed: Va. State Library, Richmond VA

View from East

1 of 1



U.S.G.S. 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)
Clifton Forge, Va. 1962(PR1969)

CLIFTON FURNACE, Allegheny County, Virginia

UTM References:

17/605870/4185160