

Early Furnaces

In 1818, the first area blast furnace was built in Argillite, KY, and thus began the Hanging Rock Region. This region of furnaces encompassed more than 1000 square miles, extending into parts of West Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio, with its center in Ironton, Lawrence County. The Ohio counties included were Vinton, Jackson, Lawrence and Scioto.

There has been some debate on the total number of furnaces in Ohio, but history notes that Scioto County had ten. Scioto County was noted for its great deposits of iron ore, coal and fire-clay.

In 1827, Daniel Young built the first in Scioto County and called it Franklin Furnace. The furnace was located in the original French Grant in Green Township. It had a capacity of producing 7 tons of iron per day. The furnace closed in 1860. When it was dismantled in 1888, the sandstone blocks were used to repair canal locks and as a foundation for the schoolhouse.

Young and the other owners built a second furnace in 1828 and called it Junior Furnace. Originally called Franklin Junior, it was located 3 ½ miles further southwest along the Ohio and ceased operation in 1876.

Bloom Furnace was built in 1832 by Christian Benner and sons. Several men had operated the furnace until its shutdown in 1874. In 1879, three new owners bought the furnace and named the company, J. D. Clare and Co. The company owned 7,500 acres of land and about 100 houses for the workmen. In October 1898, the furnace was placed into receivership, and in December, James D. Clare died.

Scioto Furnace was built in 1828 by William Kendall and was located in Bloom Township. He sold it in 1829 to William Salter.

Over the years, the furnace had many owners until its close in 1892. During its operation, iron was hauled by wagon to the Ohio River at Sciotoville. When the railroad was built, the iron went by rail. In 64 years, the furnace produced 160,000 tons of iron.

Located in Vernon Township, Clinton Furnace was built by William Kendall in 1832. The furnace changed many owners until its end. It was blown out in 1873. Over the years, this furnace produced about 50,000 tons of iron.

Close in proximity to Junior Furnace was Ohio Furnace. Built by David Sinton in Green Township, the furnace went into blast in 1845 and lasted 37 years.

Joseph Glidden and brother, Obadiah, built the Empire Furnace in 1847. Many owners operated the furnace until 1876 when it was abandoned. During its operation, the furnace produced 72,000 tons of iron.

Howard Furnace was built by Campbell, Woodrow and Company in 1853. It closed in 1881. During the years of operation, the furnace employed 250 workers and produced 60,000 tons of iron.

In 1853, Harrison Furnace was built about 2 ½ miles south of Minford by Sebastian Eifort. In 1872, it was closed by the owners McConnell and Sommers because it failed to prosper. The land was sold for farming. In 19 years of operation, the furnace produced 30,000 tons of iron.

In 1856, Pioneer Furnace was built by Tracy Colvin and associates. The furnace was located in Bloom Township on Brady Creek Road. The furnace produced 12 tons daily.

Each furnace had a community which consisted of the employees and their families. During the peak of the furnace era, Scioto County had 3,000 of its population working in the furnaces.

Cemeteries in the immediate areas usually bore the name of the furnace. The ten Scioto County furnaces produced over 1,000,000 tons of iron for the foundries and rolling mills in the area. The furnaces began the early history of steel in Scioto County.