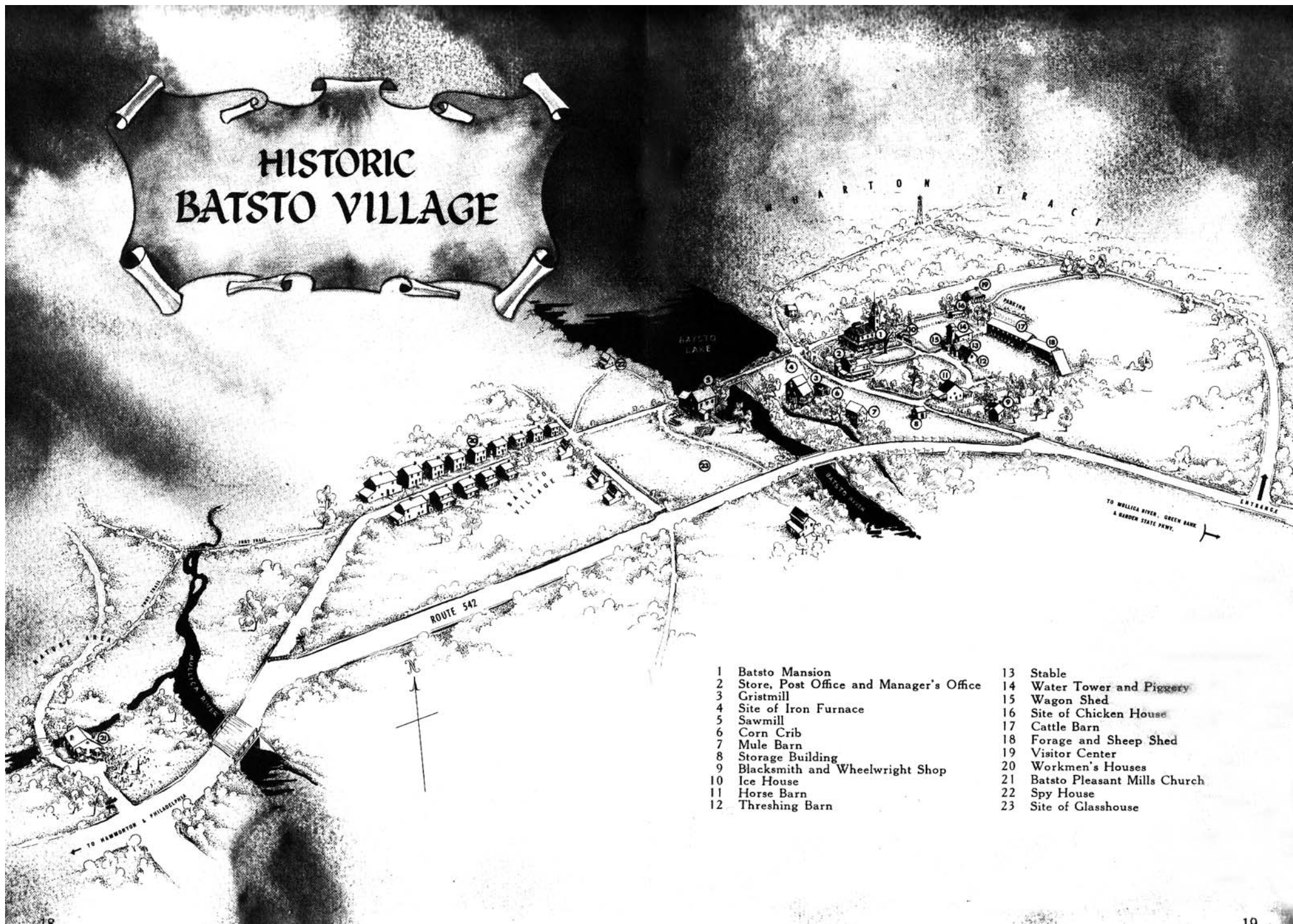


# HISTORIC BATSTO VILLAGE



- |                                           |                                 |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 Batsto Mansion                          | 13 Stable                       |
| 2 Store, Post Office and Manager's Office | 14 Water Tower and Piggery      |
| 3 Gristmill                               | 15 Wagon Shed                   |
| 4 Site of Iron Furnace                    | 16 Site of Chicken House        |
| 5 Sawmill                                 | 17 Cattle Barn                  |
| 6 Corn Crib                               | 18 Forage and Sheep Shed        |
| 7 Mule Barn                               | 19 Visitor Center               |
| 8 Storage Building                        | 20 Workmen's Houses             |
| 9 Blacksmith and Wheelwright Shop         | 21 Batsto Pleasant Mills Church |
| 10 Ice House                              | 22 Spy House                    |
| 11 Horse Barn                             | 23 Site of Glasshouse           |
| 12 Threshing Barn                         |                                 |

# BATSTO'S PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION

**S**MOKE FROM THE BIG FIRE of '74 had hardly cleared from the ruins of Batsto when the village and surrounding lands were offered at a Master's Sale. Joseph Wharton, Philadelphia industrialist and speculator, envisioned a profitable business venture and offered a successful bid of \$14,000 for the tract. He proceeded promptly to add to his holdings in the area by purchasing surrounding acreage.

His idea: to dam the rivers and streams that coursed through the desolate Pine Barrens and cedar swamps creating vast reservoirs for water storage. Once accomplished, the water would be exported from New Jersey to provide a supply for the City of Philadelphia, then expanding rapidly in both population and area.

The plan was blocked when the New Jersey Legislature stepped in and prohibited the ex-

port of water from the State. Despite the setback, Wharton retained his holdings. He had remodeled the huge Ironmaster's Mansion in the architectural style peculiar to the waning years of the 19th Century in 1876, and enjoyed his "country home."

This unusual chain of events, the thwarting of Wharton's ambitions, saved for Jerseymen and Americans everywhere one of the finest unbroken tracts of wilderness, rich in both its historical and natural lore, to be found East of the Mississippi River.

Despite its decay from neglect, and the partial destruction from fire, the mansion house, general store, grist and saw mill, dependency structures and some eighteen worker's houses remain of the now venerable iron furnace village. Included in the vast surrounding lands of some 96,000 acres, were, and are the ruins of two other Revolutionary War period iron furnaces, two forges, miles of stage roads, colonial tavern sites, including the famed "Washington Tavern," and a paper manufacturing town called Harrisville.

Wild game ranging from squirrels to the Virginia white tail deer, and from quail and duck to grouse and geese populate the tract. More than 150 wildflowers, including 32 species of wild orchids grow on the area, and isolated rivers and streams have for years offered the pioneering canoeist trips of as much as 60 river miles without sign of disturbing civilization.

When Joseph Wharton died in 1909, he had unintentionally preserved for posterity a treasure that might have otherwise been lost.

But Jerseymen failed to recognize the significance of this legacy. The State of New Jersey, appreciating the importance of the "Wharton Tract's" potential 300-million-gallon-plus daily water supply attempted to purchase the lands for \$1 million in 1912. When the issue was finally presented as a referendum in 1915, the proposition was defeated by a vote of 123,995 to 103,456.

Four decades were to pass before the preservation of Batsto Village and the sprawling Wharton Tract was to be insured, and then curiously, only as a result of a threat to the preservation of the Tract.

Early in the 1950's, the United States Air Force began seeking a site for a giant jet-airport supply depot. Forced to discard plans for a location near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, by irate farmers who placed a higher value on the rich soil, they blandly announced plans to take over the Wharton lands. The air-depot would center on the 17,000 acres

*The parlor in the Ironmaster's Mansion, restored by the Atlantic County Historical Society.*



*... A window in the grist mill.*

of land immediately around old Batsto Village.

The then Governor, Alfred E. Driscoll, a very conservation minded public official, stepped in, opposing the plan. Aided by the New Jersey State Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, and some historical societies, the Governor waged a winning fight to preserve the Wharton lands. One of his last public acts was to sign in 1954 legislation setting aside \$2,000,000 to purchase a 56,000 acre parcel of land centering around Batsto, and an option for the remainder.

The final acquisition program was accomplished during the administration of Robert B. Meyner, when \$1,000,000 was paid for the remaining 40,000 acres of the lands accumulated by Joseph Wharton.

The historic village and the forestland surrounding that had faced so many trials was finally secure. An ambitious restoration program was launched by the State of New Jersey in 1958.

A restoration architect was retained; a master plan developed; a Citizens Committee to advise and assist appointed; and the

*Restored worker's cottage No. 6, and houses on Bridge Street.*

*The living room in the restored worker's cottage.*





painstaking job of precise and authentic restoration launched. Restoration, done correctly, is a slow, time-consuming proposition, but the beneficial effects of the program are paying dividends.

House No. 6, situated on Bridge Street has been restored and will serve as a prototype for the remaining structures. The grist mill is in operation, barns have acquired new supporting timbers and shingled roofs. The sawmill is restored. Through the efforts of Mr. Edward Pfeiffer, a member of the Batsto Citizens Advisory Committee, a large exhibit of South Jersey glass, including Batsto Glassworks pieces is on display. The first unit of a large visitor reception center housing storage facilities for valuable reference books, maps and papers has been built.

This reception center was dedicated in spring of 1964 by the Hon. Richard J. Hughes, Governor of the State of New Jersey, and Batsto proclaimed a State Historic Site.

In the future, as funds are made available, a museum and small auditorium will be added. Public road route 542, now passing within sight of Batsto Vil-

lage will be rerouted, removing a disturbing modern intrusion on the historic scene. The iron furnace, long ago dismantled, will be reconstructed carefully to its original dimensions.

The State of New Jersey has found valuable allies in four organizations deeply interested in the Batsto Restoration: The Batsto Citizen's Advisory Committee, the Atlantic County Historical Society, the Antique Collectors Club of Atlantic City, and the Pine Barrens Conservationists, all of whom have contributed heavily to the restoration program.

Commissioner of Conservation Salvatore A. Bontempo spearheaded the initial restoration programs at Batsto Village during his tenure of office. Robert A. Roe, who assumed office as Commissioner of Conservation in 1963 has vigorously introduced additional impetus to the restoration program.

Batsto, because of its natural attributes and tremendous historical background; its effort during the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 is of National importance. Its preservation and restoration is benefitting us all.



The old cemetery at Pleasant Mills  
Resting place of many Batsto citizens.

## A VISIT TO HISTORIC BATSTO

### A Self Guided Walking Tour

(See Map, Pages 18 and 19)

#### 1. *The Ironmaster's Mansion.*

Called also the Great House or Big House. Such a residence for the manager of the iron works existed in Batsto from the beginning, in 1766, and a square house marked "W. Richards" is shown on a map of the early 1790's. The present structure may include a portion of this original building but historical, architectural, and archaeological investigations have not been completed to this determination. The front portion of the mansion was built by the Richards family, and the entire structure remodeled several times, most notably by Joseph Wharton about 1876. The Mansion is open to tour, and the interior has been carefully furnished in part by the Atlantic County Historical Society, the Antique Collectors Club of Atlantic City and many generous private citizens.

2. *Company store, manager's office & post office.* It was here the employees of Batsto Furnace and later the glass works shopped. Little cash was exchanged, and most business was "on the book", not to be settled until the furnace closed down for the winter. It is believed the eastern portion of the building was built before the Revolutionary War, and the remainder added in 1847. The bell in the belfry was used to summon workers to their tasks.

3. *The gristmill.* A small iron plate high on the wall of this building provides the structure's date of construction, 1828. Originally, this mill, built by Thomas

S. Richards, was operated by a water wheel, with the water pouring through a sluiceway from Batsto Lake. The wheel was replaced by a turbine later in the 19th Century. The gristmill is now capable of operation, and corn and wheat can be milled.

4. *Site of the iron furnace.* Little remains today of the huge iron furnace of Batsto. Once a great stone stack, about thirty feet tall, loaded by sweating workers from the top with iron ore, limestone and charcoal, only the foundations remain. During the early days of Batsto, the furnace operated day and night, until the lake froze and stopped the water wheel that powered the bellows providing the blast for the furnace fire. (see color plate, page ).

5. *The original sawmill.* Built at Batsto in 1761 by one John Fort. Logs were brought to the mill by teams or occasionally floated down the lake. The present restored building is the 1882 structure erected by Joseph Wharton, and articles of equipment inside can be operated to produce cedar shingles, siding, and other wood products.

6. *The corn crib.* An exceptionally large crib, built on iron pipe believed cast at Batsto, such pipe being a principal product at the furnace.

7. *The mule barn.* An early structure slated for restoration.

8. *A storage building.* No special significance.

9. *The blacksmith and wheelwright shop.* One of Batsto's most interesting buildings, this