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BATSTO

HISTORIC

THE BATSTO STORY

"Batsto" stems from the word "baatstoo" or "steam bath" used by the Scandinavians, also the Dutch, and was borrowed by the Indians and used as "bathing place." Old deeds often mention "an Indian Batstow."

- 1758 The Batsto lands were acquired from the West Jersey Proprietors by John Munrow.
- 1766 Batsto Furnace was erected by Charles Read of Burlington, a distinguished lawyer, Supreme Court Justice, Assemblyman, confidant of three Governors, and an ironmaster. Read and four others built Batsto as one of a chain of four southern New Jersey iron works.
- 1768 Read sold his interest to his partners Reuben Haines, of Philadelphia; John Cooper, of Burlington; Walter Franklin, of New York; and John Wilson, of Burlington County.
- 1770 Col. John Cox, of Philadelphia, acquired control of the iron works. Ardent patriot and Assistant Quartermaster General, he cast cannon and cannon balls at Batsto for the Revolutionary Army. Batsto was considered so important that men working there were exempt from military service.
- 1778 A British force planning to burn the Batsto Iron Works attacked Chestnut Neck and burned the village, but retreated before moving inland due to the approach of Pulaski's Legion. That same year Batsto was sold to Thomas Mayberry, ironmaster, who constructed a slitting mill.
- 1779 Mayberry sold control of Batsto to Joseph Ball, at a large profit. Ball had served for some time as manager under Col. Cox.
- 1784 William Richards, uncle of Joseph Ball, acquired Batsto. He had worked there earlier, and in 1781 superintended building of the Batsto Forge, about a half mile away, on Nescochague Creek. Richards even earlier had worked for Col. Cox until he took up arms in the Revolutionary cause.
- 1809 William Richards retired to Mount Holly, leaving his son Jesse in charge.
- 1823 William Richards died, and Batsto was bought at auction by his nephew Thomas S. Richards. Jesse remained as manager, bought a half interest in 1829, and rebuilt the furnace. In that year Batsto's gross income was \$41,281.00.
- 1846 The first Batsto glass factory was built.
- 1848 Batsto furnace fires went out for the last time.
- 1854 Jesse Richards died, and his son, Thomas H., carried on the glass and lumbering operations and lived in the mansion.
- 1858 Batsto furnace was dismantled.
- 1867 Batsto's glass enterprises failed.
- 1874 More than half the town was destroyed by fire.
- 1876 Joseph Wharton acquired the Batsto property for \$14,000.00 at a Masters sale. Under the supervision of General Elias Wright, major repairs were made, the house enlarged and the tower erected.
- 1878 Wharton experimented in raising sugar beets and engaged in livestock breeding as well as lumbering. He also began acquiring land in the Pine Barrens, planning to utilize the streams of the area as a source of water for Philadelphia. This was prevented when the New Jersey Legislature passed a law forbidding export of water from the State.
- 1909 Joseph Wharton died.
- 1912 The Wharton Estate of nearly 100,000 acres was offered to the State of New Jersey for \$1,000,000. A State move to accept the offer was rejected in a referendum of the voters in 1915.
- 1954 The Wharton Tract was purchased by the State of New Jersey.

Batsto Furnace was twice rebuilt: in 1786 and 1829. It furnished munitions for the War of 1812 as well as the Revolution. Water pipe for eastern cities was made there, and transported on schooners traveling the Mullica River. Some of the vessels were owned by Batsto and built there. Other Batsto products included many firebricks now in museums, the former fence around Independence Square in Philadelphia, and the cylinder for John Fitch's fourth steamboat. Batsto glass was widely used for the old gas lamps which lighted the streets of New York, Philadelphia and other large cities.

With the mansion on the hill, the workers' houses across the river, and the industries in between — furnace, gristmill, sawmill, glass works, brick yard — Batsto once was a community of nearly a thousand people. It had an important part in the industrial development of the United States.