PROPOSAL OF
ORMAND FURNACE, CROWDERS MTN. TOWNSHIP
TO THE GASTON COUNTY HISTORIC PROPERTIES REGISTER
DECEMBER, 1986

GASTON COUNTY HISTORIC PROPERTIES COMMISSION

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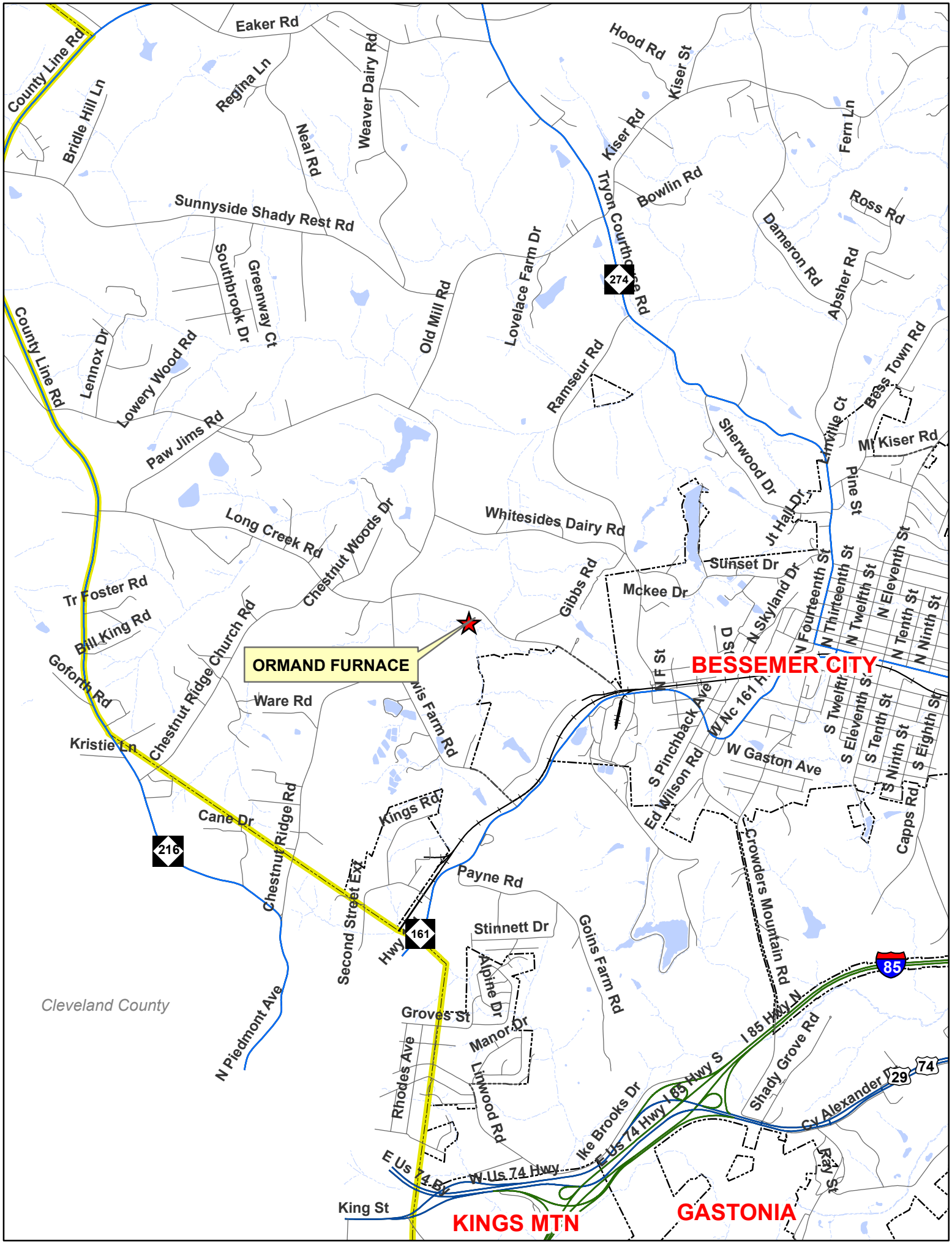
Mr. James F. Love, III

Located: 517 Long Creek Road, Bessemer City



ORMAND FURNACE
BESSEMER CITY
KINGS MTN
GASTONIA
Cleveland County
Eaker Rd
County Line Rd
Bridle Hill Ln
Regina Ln
Weaver Dairy Rd
Neal Rd
Hood Rd
Kiser St
Kiser Rd
Fern Ln
Bowlin Rd
Ross Rd
Sunnyside Shady Rest Rd
Tryon Courthouse Rd
Dameron Rd
Absher Rd
Southbrook Dr
Greenway Ct
Old Mill Rd
Lovelace Farm Dr
274
Lennox Dr
Lowery Wood Rd
Ramseur Rd
Bess Town Rd
Paw Jims Rd
Sherwood Dr
Linville Ct
Mt Kiser Rd
Pine St
Long Creek Rd
Chestnut Woods Dr
Whitesides Dairy Rd
Jt Hall Dr
Sunset Dr
Gibbs Rd
Mckee Dr
N Skyland Dr
N Fourteenth St
N Thirteenth St
N Twelfth St
N Eleventh St
N Tenth St
N Ninth St
Tr Foster Rd
Bill King Rd
Chestnut Ridge Church Rd
Goforth Rd
Ware Rd
N F St
W Nc 161 Hwy
S Pinchback Ave
Ed Wilson Rd
W Gaston Ave
S Twelfth St
S Eleventh St
S Tenth St
S Ninth St
S Eighth St
Capps Rd
Kristie Ln
Cane Dr
Chestnut Ridge Rd
Kings Rd
216
Payne Rd
Crowders Mountain Rd
Second Street Ext
Hwy
161
Stinnett Dr
Goins Farm Rd
85
Alpine Dr
Groves St
Manor Dr
N Piedmont Ave
Rhodes Ave
Linwood Rd
I 85 Hwy N
I 85 Hwy S
Shady Grove Rd
Cy Alexander
29
74
Ike Brooks Dr
E Us 74 Hwy
E Us 74 By
W Us 74 Hwy
Ray St
King St

CHAIN OF TITLE

1. On May 16, 1754 a Patent was issued to Adam Meek for a 400 acre tract of land in Anson County, North Carolina. This patent is recorded in the Lincoln County Register of Deeds in Patent Book 15 at page 14.

2. Adam Meek and his wife, Elizabeth, conveyed 340 acres on the South side of the South fork of the Catawba River on Long Creek to John Hill on August 30, 1765. This deed is recorded in the Mecklenburg County Register of Deeds in Deed Book 2 at page 464.

3. By deed dated April 2, 1771, John Hill conveyed 350 acres to Thomas Espy for the sum of five pounds of sterling silver. This deed is recorded in the Lincoln County Register of Deeds in Deed Book 1 at page 481.

4. Thomas Espy conveyed the same tract of 350 acres to John Sloan on May 14, 1786 for the sum of 200 pounds of North Carolina currency. This deed is recorded in the Lincoln County Register of Deeds in Deed Book 3 at page 484.

5. John Sloan, by means of the following 3 deeds, vested title to the 350 acre tract in William Hill, Joseph Atkinson, and Daniel Bourdeaux.

   a) Deed dated February 3, 1791 to William Hill conveying a 1/3 interest "for the purpose of creating Iron Works in Lincoln County." This deed in recorded in the Lincoln County Register of Deeds in Deed Book 19 at page 78.

   b) Apparently in accordance with that same agreement, John Sloan conveyed "3 undivided sixth parts of said Lincolnton Forge, Washington Furnace, and the Sundry tracts..." to Joseph Atkinson by deed dated October 11, 1793. This deed is recorded in the Lincoln County Register of Deeds in Book 17 at page 26.

   c) The remaining 1/6th interest was conveyed by John Sloan to Daniel Bourdeaux by deed dated October 11, 1793 and recorded in the Lincoln County Register of Deeds in Book 17 at page 32.

6. William Hill, in deed dated December 30, 1806 conveyed "all my right, title and interest, or half part of the undermentioned lands...one of which tracts the Furnace commonly called the Washington Furnace is" to his two sons, William Hill, Jr. and Solomon Hill. This deed is recorded in the Lincoln County Register of Deeds in Deed Book 23 at page 455. Apparently at this point in time William Hill had acquired the 1/6th interest previously owned by Daniel Bourdeaux, giving him a 1/2 interest in the Washington Furnace tract. There is, however, no record of this conveyance from Bourdeaux in Lincoln County.

7. John Fulenwider became sole owner of the 350 acre tract by means of the following three conveyances:

   a) Deed from Beverly Daniel, Marshal of the District of North Carolina, dated May 12, 1809 and recorded in the Lincoln County Register of Deeds in Book 25 at page 451 which conveyed his 3/6 (or 1/2) interest

to Fulenwider. This sale was a result of failure by Joseph Atkinson to pay the "direct tax imposed thereon authorized by an act of Congress 14th July 1798... the sum of ten dollars and two cents."

b) Deed from Solomon Hill to John Fulenwider dated May 2, 1808 conveying his 2/3 interest of the 1/2 interest conveyed to him and his brother, William, Jr., by their father. This deed is recorded in the Lincoln County Register of Deeds in Deed Book 23 at page 501.

c) Deed from William Hill, Jr. and Solomon Hill to John Fulenwider dated May 2, 1808 and recorded in the Lincoln County Register of Deeds in Deed Book 23 at apge 504. This instrument conveys the remaining 1/3 interest of the brothers original 1/2 that they acquired from their father.

Note: Apparently sometime around 1790, William Hill conveyed an interest in the Washington Furnace to Doc. John Allison and James Twaddle in consideration of two notes or bonds which they executed and agreed to pay at that time. Before completion of their obligation to pay, Allison died and his estate conveyed title to John Hill's sons, William, Jr. and Solomon by deed recorded in the Lincoln County Register of Deeds in Deed Book 23 at page 453.

8. On February 10, 1827, Robert H. Burton and H. Fulenwider, executors of the estate of John Fulenwider, deceased, conveyed 350 acres of land "on Long Creek and on which Washington Furnace stands" to Benjamin Ormand for the sum of $350.00. This deed is recorded in the Lincoln County Register of Deeds in Book 32 at page 229.

9. Benjamin Ormand, Sr. who died in 1853, devised to his three sons, John J. Ormand, Benjamin M. Ormand, and Robert D. Ormand, the "ore bank tract and the mineral tract." He also devised a portion of a tract adjoining Major Whiteside, Torrence, and Arrowood to his son Robert D. Ormand. Although their is no formal record, it is believed that around this time, Ormand Mining Company was formed by the three sons, incorporating into the company the ore bank tract, and the mineral tract. Robert, however retained sole interest in the other tract.

10. On November 20, 1918, Ormand Mining Company conveyed 2 tracts of land, the first containing 14¼ acres and the second containing 35 acres, to Robert Ormand. The first of the 2 tracts contained a major portion of the Ormand furnace tract as it exists today. This deed is recorded in the Gaston County Register of Deeds in Book 190 at page 245.

11. Robert D. Ormand retained possession of this property (along with the other adjoining tract devised to his by his father) until his death in 1965. By will recorded in Will Book 12 at page 216 he devised his property to his children, Sarah Ormand Hoover, Robert D. Ormand, Jr., Lucielle Ormand McAuley, and Dorus William Ormand, in equal portions.

12. By deed dated October 28, 1968, Sarah Ormand Hoover and husband E. C. Hoover, Robert D. Ormand, Jr. and wife Mary Frances W. Ormand, Lucielle Ormand McAuley and husband J. F. McAuley and Dorus William Ormand and wife Faye B. Ormand conveyed 2 tracts of land, the second of which was a 139.48 acre tract on which the furnace is located, to Carl J. Stewart and wife Kathryn W. Stewart, William S. Stinett and wife Geralding G. Stinnett, and William I. Kincaid and wife Ernestine F. Kincaid. This deed is recorded in the Gaston County Register of Deeds in Book 994 at page 354.

13. On June 17, 1969, Carl J. Stewart, Jr. and wife Kathryn W. Stewart, William S. Stinett and wife Geraldine G. Stinnett, and William I. Kincaid and wife Ernestine F. Kincaid conveyed an 11.963 acre tract to Joe R. Whitehurst and wife Lida O. Whitehurst. This deed is recorded in Book 1018 at page 664.

14. On December 31, 1971 Joe R. Whitehurst and wife Lida O. Whitehurst conveyed the same 11.963 acre tract to The Old Furnace Foundation Inc. This deed is recorded in book 1080 at page 531 in the Gaston County Register of Deeds. This non-profit organization is the current owner of the Ormand Furnace.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE ORMAND FURNACE

The few sketcy records concerning iron-making in the area now known as Gaston County indicate that the area's first furnace was known as Washington Furnace. Later it changed ownership and became known as the Ormand Furnace, which is what it is called at the present day.

The Ormand Mine was at one time one of the best known mines in the state. It was located one and a half miles west of Bessemer City in a series of talcose-quartz schists on the northwest side of the railroad. Its greatest depth during production was 80 feet. The deposits have been worked at intervals as far back as the Revolutionary War.(1)

Some sources and oral tradition date the Washington Furnace being in operation prior to the Revolutionary War. One source states that Colonel James Johnston was at John Sloan's Washington Furnace with cannonballs made from the furnace. The same source states that Colonel Campbell ordered Johnston to be in reserve and that the cannonballs would not be needed at the Battle of Kings Mountain. (2) Definitive historical proof concerning the existence of the Washington Furnace as early as 1780 has not been located. The earliest evidence that the furnace existed is to be found on an original piece made from the furnace in 1788. The chimney backing, which is owned by John Hovis of Boone, N. C., has the following inscription: "Washington Furnace 1788".(3) A photograph of the fireback is enclosed within this packet.

While the Washington Furnace was in operation as early as 1788, it may have been in operation some years before. On May 14, 1786, John Sloan purchased 250 acres from Thomas Espy. Within this 250 acre tract was the site of the Washington Furnace. In 1786 the area was known as Lincoln County. (4) One may assume that John Sloan had made his newly built furnace profitable. He had buyers who wanted to purchase interest in his operation. The reason for Sloan to sell the Washington Furnace is not known. The records do indicate as early as February 3, 1791, William Hill purchased 1/3 interest "for the purpose of creating Iron Works in Lincoln County." On October 11, 1793, Joseph Atkinson purchased 3/6 interest in the operation and Daniel Bourdeaux purchased 1/6 interest in the furnace at the same time.(5) John Sloan maintained ownership of the Washington Furnace lands from 1786 until 1793. He is credited with construction of the furnace and with its initial operation.(6)

By the early 1800's the Washington Furnace had established itself as a profitable enterprise which was highly regarded in the area. The discovery of iron had encouraged the state to pass a law in 1788. This law allowed persons wishing to pursue iron-making to accumulate a great amount of property which would be exempt from taxation if the operation was successful.(7) John Fulenwider had already established himself in the then Lincoln County area as an iron master with great ambition and energy. Fulenwider, always the speculator, had noticed the Washington Furnace. He needed a source of iron ore for his

foundry which was located at High Shoals in present Gaston County. On May 2, 1808, Fulenwider purchased one half interest in the Washington Furnace from the two sons of William Hill Sr. On May 12, 1809, he purchased the remainder of the tract which had belonged to Joseph Atkinson. (8) So by 1809 Fulenwider had complete ownership in the Washington Furnace.

John Fulenwider, a German born in Rowan County, ran one of the most successful iron-making operations in the state. The High Shoals Iron Foundry was a very integral part of his empire. He also owned the Maiden Forge on Maiden Creek in current Catawba County and the "ore bank Little Mountain", which was also in Catawba County. On his 1817 tax listing he was listed with "old furnace Land" which was listed with 4740 acres valued at $1185. The existence of the "old" Washington Furnace on this land with the large iron deposits surrounding it made the land quite valuable.(9)

In 1819 John Fulenwider was taxed for 32,698 acres valued at $20, 940. He was also taxed for 37 black poles male and female. A close reading of the tax list shows an additional furnace which Fulenwider had constructed. The new furnace was noted as "furnace timber much cut" with 5299 acres valued at $1600. Below it on the list was "old furnace timber cut" with 4950 acres valued at $1500.(10) Truly John Fulenwider was a wealthy man by the standards of the day. Since he had built the new furnace the value of the "old furnace" or Washington Furnace would decrease during the next few years. Both furnaces were used to furnish pig iron for use at the High Shoals Foundry.

On August 4, 1826, John Fulenwider wrote his last will and testament. A close reading of the will fails to expose his wishes for the Washington Furnace and the lands surrounding it. He may have included it within land bequeathed to Henry Fulenwider, his son, or he may have simply wanted it to be sold. Henry Fulenwider was given the High Shoal Forge and lands surrounding it. Apparently because the "old furnace" was not as profitable as necessary, on February 10, 1827, Robert H. Burton and Henry Fulenwider, Executors for John Fulenwider, deceased sold the 350 acre Washington Furnace tract to Benjamin Ormand.(11) For 20 years the furnace had been a part of the Fulenwider empire. Its significance had gradually decreased with age. Yet, the little furnace was not finished.

It is not known when the Washington Furnace became known as the Ormand Furnace. It probably just evolved since this family would maintain ownership of the property for the next 162 years. Although the Ormand family was present in the area during the Revolutionary period, they were merely neighbors of the furnace until 1827 when they received legal ownership. James Ormand Sr. (1665-1756) settled in Mecklenburg County in 1750. His gravesite is in the cemetery of Providence Presbyterian Church on the road from Pineville to Charlotte. His son, James Ormand II (1716-1769) is buried beside him.(12)

The Ormand family repeats a family tradition which establishes that Benjamin Ormand, son of James Ormand II, was in the area in 1781. The tradition tells of how in January of 1781 Lord Cornwallis passed

very near to the Benjamin Ormand home. Cornwallis was pursuing General Daniel Morgan. Some members of Colonel Tarleton's cavalry plundered the Ormand home using the blanket from the baby cradle as a saddle blanket and the old family Bible as the saddle. The Bible was discarded later at Beatty's Ford where the British crossed the Catawba River. The Bible was returned to the family and is said to still be in descendant's possession. (13)

Little information has been uncovered concerning the Ormand Furnace after its purchase into the Ormand family. Apparently it was a family business which supplemented other farming operations. The Ormands may have cooperated very closely with the High Shoals Foundry, where their iron ore could have been sold. In the Industry Schedule for the Federal Census of 1850 William E. Rose is listed as owner of the High Shoals Ironworks and Forge. He annually used 936 tons of iron ore and operated a rolling mill, a nail factory, one blast furnace with six blowing fires, and one feedling (fredling) furnace. It is not known whether the last furnace mentioned could have been the Ormand Furnace. (14) On July 12, 1853, Benjamin Ormand Jr. wrote his last will and testament. While he does not specifically mention the Ormand Furnace in his will, he does devise to his three sons, John J., Benjamin M., and Robert D. Ormand, the "ore bank tract and the mineral tract". He also gives another tract to Robert D. Ormand. Within these lands was the furnace. (15)

After the death of Benjamin Ormand Jr. the brothers started the Ormand Mining Company. They apparently incorporated both the furnace and the highly profitable Ormand Ore Bank within their corporation. The practice of iron making had become a very integral part of the family occupation. The family-oriented industry persisted long after the best markets had dried up. (16) The Civil War brought increased activity with the mining operation and the Ormand Furnace. Iron products were needed for the Confederate cause and all available resources were utilized to increase production. Just as the war had brought increased interest, the war's end brought despair, bankruptcy, and a depressed economy for the South and especially for the ironmaking industry.

Following the Civil War, efforts were made to revive the iron industry in the Gaston County area. The first attempt came in 1873. F. Winter, a geologist with the Federal government, wrote a "Report on the High Shoals Property in Gaston County, North Carolina." In his report Winter noted that although the High Shoals lands, buildings, and factories were in somewhat disrepair he considered "the High Shoals as a property of the greatest value." Winter also noted that the area gold mines could be made profitable. He observed that the Ormand Ore Bank was especially rich in manganese which made it fit for the manufacture of "Spiegeleisen". He also noted that the Confederate government had extensively worked the mine but that they had not properly worked the mine so that much of the ore had disintegrated and had been contaminated with other minerals. While Winter did not mention the Ormand Furnace, his map locates the Ormand Ore Bank and the furnace would be slightly to the northwest of it. Certainly the

small Ormand Furnace would not figure significantly into the grand plans for iron manufacture which Winter had in mind for the High Shoals lands. (17)

A second study on the feasibility of operating the Gold Mines in and around the present Pasour Mountain area which was the property of the High Shoals Company was discussed in 1885. Arthur Winslow, an engineer and geologist from Raleigh, suggested that the gold was in sufficient quantities and of sufficient quality to mine successfully. An accompanying map again failed to show the location of the Ormand Furnace since it only showed the High Shoals property and not the Ormand property. (18) Both reports did encourage speculation in iron and gold mining and manufacture. However, the suggested profits were not realized.

There were numerous transactions during the later half of the Nineteenth Century by the Ormand Mining Company. The brothers continued to carry on the family business. The decline of the iron industry was due to several reasons. The amount of charcoal needed for the furnace made it very expensive to operate. Since the Ormand operation was like most ironing interests in North Carolina, it was closely allied to the plantation system and failed to reach out beyond a local market. The Ormand Furnace was a special example of catering to a specific local market. Primitive techniques were often not replaced by more sophisticated manufacuring methods based solely upon science. Coal was not extensively used in North Carolina and there is no evidence it was ever used at the Ormand Furnace. Finally poor transportation facilities limited proper marketing. (19) Certainly the Ormand Furnace and Mine suffered from some of the above deficiencies.

The 1890's saw great changes for the area surrounding the Ormand Furnace. In 1892 John A. and Turner Smith chartered a new town called Bessemer City. It was located on part of the old High Shoals property and part of the Ormand Mining Company property. While the name Bessemer City paid homage to ironmaking with its reference to the Bessemer process for making steel, the new town was to be both a resort with a 50-room hotel built on Whetstone Mountain and a textile community with a cotton mill also being built. (20) The Ormand Mining Company about the same time ceased to be an effective business operation. According to family recollections the Ormand Mine ceased to be productive when the smelter in Greensboro burned sometime around the turn of the century. Since the only other market was Birmingham, Alabama, transportation costs made shipment such a long distance not economical. On November 20, 1918, The Ormand Mining Company conveyed the land where the Ormand Furnace was located to Robert D. Ormand. Apparently the desire was to keep it in the family. It remained in the Robert D. Ormand family until 1968 when his children sold two tracts of land to a group of Bessemer City investors. One year later on June 17, 1969, the investors sold the land upon which the Ormand Furnace stands to Joe R. and Lida O. Whitehurst. The Whitehursts who are supporters of the Ormand family then on December 31, 1971 deeded the same tract to "The Old Furnace Foundation Inc." in order to

preserve and care for the old structure.(21)

Currently (1986) the Old Furnace Foundation maintains the property with care. A couple of years ago brush and trees were removed from the base of the furnace. The Foundation has built a covered picnic area which is used by the Ormand Family for reunions and for other non-profit purposes. The Foundation attempts to preserve an important part of the heritage of Gaston County.

Footnotes Ormand Furnace Historical Sketch

1. W. S. Bagley, Deposits of Brown Iron Ores in Western North Carolina, Bulletin 1925, pp. 70-72, #31.

2. Robert F. Cope and Manly Wade Wellman, County of Gaston, Gaston County Historical Society, 1961, p. 22, p. 35, p. 114, p. 142, hereafter cited as Cope & Wellman.

3. Interview with Starr N. Stacey Jr. of Boone, N. C., August 23, 1986. Interview with John Hovis of Boone, N. C., September 6, 1986.

4. Tryon County Deed Book 1, p. 481, Register of Deeds, Lincoln County Courthouse, Lincolnton, N. C.

5. Ibid., Book 19, p. 78; Book 17, p. 26, p. 32. This area became Lincoln County in 1779; however, Lincoln County Courthouse has deed records for both Tryon and Lincoln Counties.

6. Cope & Wellman, p. 22.

7. Joseph Hyde Pratt, The Mining Industry of North Carolina, North Carolina Geological Survey, Economic Paper #6, p. 28.

8. Lincoln County Deed Book 23, p. 501, 504; Book 25, p. 451.

9. "A Duplicate of Taxables in Captain John B. Harry District for the year 1817", Tax Lists, Lincoln County Collection, Department of Archives & History, Raleigh, N. C.

10. "John Fulenwider Return of taxable property in 1819", ibid.

11. John Fulenwider will, Wills, Lincoln County Collection, ibid. Lincoln County Deed Book 32, p. 229.

12. RRev. Benjamin Ormand, Ormand Family History and Descendants of James Ormand, Sr. 1669-1766, 1983, pp. 28-35.

13. Minnie Stowe Puett, History of Gaston County, The Observer Printing House, Inc., Charlotte, N. C., 1939, p. 171. Ormand, Ormand History, p. 28-35.

14. Libby Wyatt Goodnight, Linda Adams Bell, Robert C. Carpenter, comp. & abst., The Complete 1850 Census of Gaston County, North Carolina, Yates Publishing Co. by Gaston County Historical Society, 1985, p. 186.

15. Benjamin Ormand Will, Wills, Gaston County Collection, Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, N. C.

16. "Iron Making--A Forgotten Industry of North Carolina", North Carolina Historical Review, (October 1932), Vol. IX, No. 4, pp. 331-349.

17. "Report in the High Shoals Property in Gaston County, North Carolina" by F. Winter, Geologist, Federal Archives, Washington, D. C.

18. Annual Report North Carolina Experiment Station 1883, "Report on Pyrites in North Carolina" by Arthur Winslow, book found at North Carolina State Univ., pp. 92-99.

19. "Iron Making", NCHR, pp. 331-349.

20. Cope & Wellman, p. 134.

21. Gaston County Deed Book 190, p. 245; Book 994, p. 354; Book 1018, p. 664; Book 1080, p. 531, Register of Deeds, Gaston County Courthouse, Gastonia, N. C. Interview with John Hovis, Boone, N. C. on September 6, 1986.

Ormand (Washington) Furnace

The iron ore furnace known as the Ormand Furnace is located on Long Creek Road (S.R. 1402) west of Bessemer City in the Crowders Mountain Township of Gaston County. The site is close to a modern roadway on land owned by the Ormand family, but not part of any immediate residence or farm. The entire property is enclosed with a fence of barbed wire. The furnace itself is surrounded by a chain link fence with eight to ten feet between fence and furnace.

Local historians have always indicated a construction date of late 1700's for this furnace. A fireback with "Washington Furnace 1788" in relief has recently surfaced. It is claimed that this fireback came from this furnace which was originally known as Washington Furnace before the Ormand family acquired the property during the nineteenth century. The design and construction of this furnace do indicate an early building date.

All that remains of the furnace today is the substantial base and a short amount of the stack. At the highest point, the stack measures approximately twenty-five feet above the ground. The base area is approximately twenty feet by twenty feet. However, one half of the base is covered with vines; making a closer measurement difficult without possible disturbance of the site. The best example of the masonry work on the furnace is seen on the northwest corner. Partially dressed granite is laid in fairly consistent courses to a height of about twelve feet with a well executed corner at the back of the furnace. Above the base, the remaining stack has an appearance of a rubble construction more than coursed stone.

However, a great deal of dressed stone is scattered over the site, including the area behind the base which is intact. This dressed stone probably was used originally in the stack area; giving it a better appearance as well as more strength.

The front or south side of the furnace shows its opening with angled, hearth walls. A metal lintel still supports the fireplace opening which is filled with rubble at this time. The rubble prevents anything but a cursory examination of the interior of the furnace base. No examples of processed ore are seen on the surface of the site nor near the hearth opening, although the site is more than likely to be rich in archaeological material. Evidence of early iron manufacturing cannot be found without disturbing the site. Archaeological excavation is suggested, but only by qualified professionals.

The only other structure on the property is a substantial picnic shelter built by members of the Ormand family to host annual reunions. This modern shelter is of wood and metal construction on a concrete pad. It is situated near the entrance to the property on Long Creek Road. A farm gate in the property fence indicates the possibility of vehicles being driven onto the site. The owners of the property have been cautious in protecting the furnace with the additional fence. They should be cautioned in the possible damage to archaeological evidence by driving vehicles over the site, especially the area between the furnace and the creek which is approximately one hundred feet away.