

Redwell-Isabella Furnace Historic Park and Trail

Vision and Mission: The Redwell-Isabella Furnace Historic Park and Trail will preserve the unique natural and historic resources while sharing the compelling history of the blast furnace site and its significant impact in the development of Luray as well as its national contributions. The Redwell-Isabella Furnace Community gave birth to the Town of Luray as the population and skilled workers increased beyond agriculture. Luray incorporated in 1812 and became the Page County seat in 1831.

Values - Goals:

1. Creatively extend the northernmost section of The Luray Greenway, blending wellness and history. Construct a historical-period pedestrian bridge to cross the Hawksbill Creek. The 1,100-foot trail and the Redwell-Isabella Furnace Park will have environmental & historical information signage to enhance the individual's experience, as they cross the second bridge at the Yager Spring dam and enter the park.
2. Honor the various ethnic communities of artisans, craftsmen, and all individuals who contributed to the success of the Furnace operations. They developed the land, buildings, furnace, and crafted the important necessities of life with artistic flair, as recognized by The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts. Preserve & restore the integrity of the historic resources. This will be achieved by archaeological & historic research data of the many operations that were once on the site. Focusing first on the Furnace period, and when possible, with accuracy restore/preserve the relevant remaining structures.
3. Recognize, respect, and sustain the ecological significance of the karst spring on the park's site. Preserve Yager Spring for future generations, for its beauty, historical relevance and most importantly for its valuable water resource for the Town of Luray citizens.
4. Educate the public in the park atmosphere by identifying and interpreting the significant and diverse history of the Redwell-Isabella Furnace site. Emphasizing how this early industrial site built the foundation that developed the Town of Luray. Sharing the significant role that the Redwell-Isabella Furnace played in our Virginia and National story is valuable now and for future generations.

Redwell-Isabella Furnace Brief History



Redwell-Isabella Furnace Mural at Luray Caverns Shenandoah Heritage Village, Artists: Keeler Chapman and Rod Graves 2010

Records lead us to believe the furnace land was purchased from Emanuel Ruffner, a son of Peter Ruffner Sr., around 1785 to create Spring Forge. When harnessed Yager Spring served as the main power source for the entire Redwell-Isabella Furnace property. The spring produces about eight million gallons of water per 24-hours; spilling into the Hawksbill Creek & then to the Shenandoah River. At that time in our history iron furnace operations were often self-sufficient and were called iron plantations. Redwell encompassed 1,500 acres of land. A very modest amount for the size of the operation & the many types of quality products produced. Various ethnic communities of craftsmen developed the land, built the buildings & furnace. There were at least six stone residences, grain mill, sawmill, slitting mill, cafeteria, dairy, blacksmith shop, barns, and storage sheds. The Blast Furnace was most likely 35 feet tall and operated by a bellows powered by the water of Yager Spring. Redwell Furnace had many families from diverse ethnic backgrounds living on the property. There was a school on the property for the children of the workers. The school was located across the creek from the furnace. The Furnace casted some of the most important specimens of decorative cast iron that became known as southern folk-art in America. They crafted the important necessities of life with artistic flair. Most notably were the stoves to heat homes, cook meals, heat water for bathing, etc. The markets for the Furnace products were Charlottesville, Staunton, Fredericksburg, Shenandoah Valley, and communities in the western part of Virginia. Redwell Furnace received orders for pig iron from Harpers Ferry Armory to manufacture guns for our national armory & arsenal. Heavy Road Wagons were built to haul the heavy iron. Wagons took iron by roadways to the markets & to Bixler's Ferry or Sandy Hook to be shipped on the Shenandoah River to Harper's Ferry. The park & trail will present the full Redwell-Isabella Furnace history.

Park and Trail Development

- 1/10/2022 - 6/2023 The Greenway Foundation and Town Council conducted an engineering feasibility study. At the conclusion of the all-encompassing study, this project was declared possible and extremely worthwhile
- 9/11/2023 - 5/1/2024 The Town Council approved the project to move to final design including a deeper archaeological study. That study revealed artifacts requiring additional research important to the site's history.
- 6/10/2024 Town Council approved the comprehensive research for this important historical site.
- Your donation will help fund the archaeological study as-well-as build the park and trail in the future

Donation Opportunity

The Greenway Foundation is a tax exempt 501c3 organization. Your donation offers you a tax benefit.

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number(s): _____

Donation Amount: _____

Please make your check payable to:
Hawksbill Greenway Foundation

Mail to:
Hawksbill Greenway Foundation
P.O. Box 629
Luray, Virginia 22835

Gratefully,
The Luray Hawksbill Greenway Recreation Foundation
and The Luray Parks and Recreation Department

