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# CENTRE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## CENTRE FURNACE MANSION

1001 East College Avenue ☎ State College, Pennsylvania 16801 ☎ 814.234.4779

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March 7, 2007

David C. Breon, Chairman  
Benner Township Board of Supervisors  
1224 Buffalo Run Road  
Bellefonte, PA 16823

Dear Mr. Breon,

We are pleased to learn that a master plan and management plan are going to be developed for Rockview lands before they are transferred from state ownership to public use. As these planning studies get underway, we urge that historical archaeological sites related to the Philip Benner ironmaking operation and village at The Rock be part of the evaluation and subsequent preservation and interpretation.

### **Master Plan**

The Master Plan should include an archaeological investigation of the area that was known as The Rock to identify and provide context for remaining structures and remnants, objects, and landscape features, in order to develop an archaeological district reflecting the importance of this ironmaking site for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Under the direction of archaeologists who specialize in industrial sites, the investigation should include:

- archival research
- preliminary field study
- recording of information
- and, based on the analysis of those findings, an extensive survey in order to evaluate, describe and provide documentation of their significance for a National Register submittal.

### **Management Plan**

The Management Plan should include information about the archaeological district – what was found, how the archaeological resources related to each other and to the ironmaking village, and the role this early charcoal ironmaking operation played in Centre County's role in the Juniata Iron Region.

- Signage should be developed that will tell the story of Philip Benner and his early industrial enterprise at Rock.
- The boundaries of the village and its ironmaking components should be identified.
- Individual archaeological remains should be identified – foundations, landscape features, etc., if they lend themselves to specific interpretation.
- Examples of smaller artifacts could be displayed in a secure case.
- A description of the process of identifying and developing a contextual story in the creation of a National Register archaeological district should be provided.
- Maintenance of the archaeological district should be included in the management plan so that it does not become overgrown or vandalized.

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As we indicated in our November 3, 2006 letter to Benner Township, it is rare for a historic and cultural property as rich as this one to have been publicly “off limits” for so many years. This transfer of Rockview land to the public offers a unique opportunity for Benner Township, Centre County, and the Commonwealth to provide new information about this area’s early history in order to share it with present and future residents and visitors.

The Centre County Historical Society would be happy to assist in providing background and archival information, and in developing interpretive materials, if needed. And, as we also indicated in our earlier letter, the opening of this beautiful portion of Spring Creek as a new public resource is a wonderful gift to current and future residents, and we endorse it wholeheartedly. In order to make it as historically rich as possible, we urge that these recommendations be included in the master plan and the management plan.

Please contact me if you have questions, either by e-mail at [melander@uplink.net](mailto:melander@uplink.net), or by calling 234-4779 (Centre Furnace Mansion) or 238-8247 (home).

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Melander  
President