

In 1826 Jackson County found itself in an economic crisis. The salt making industry, which in 1800 looked like it would have no end, just met its end. A much stronger salt brine found in West Virginia had spelled the doom of salt making here. From peak production, reached in about 1810, the industry output fell each year and by 1826 all production ceased.

Aside from agricultural endeavors Jackson County was reduced to a dwindling population with very little prospect for improvement. However, the one thing this area had in its favor was its incredible natural resources.

In the 1840s discoveries of iron ore throughout most of the county changed its course forever. In addition to the ore incredible expanses of forests existed. When wood was reduced to charcoal and combined with iron ore and limestone the result was charcoal iron.

In 1836 the first Charcoal Iron Furnace was erected in Hamilton Township of Jackson County.

Called Jackson Furnace it produced 12 tons of iron per day. Soon to follow were:

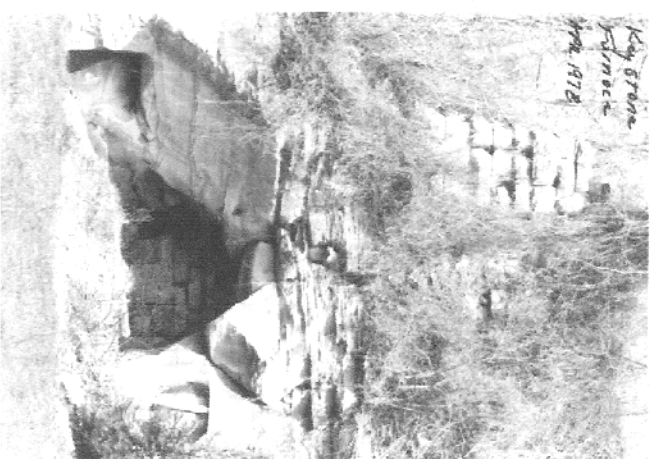
Keystone Furnace erected in 1848 located on Little Reconn Creek in Bloomfield Twp.,

Buckeye Furnace in Milton Twp., in 1851. The railroad arrived in Jackson County in 1856. The iron industry then boomed as nine furnaces were built in the three year period of 1854-1856.

Cornelia Furnace built in Milton Twp. in 1853-54; **Latrobe** in Milton Twp. 1854; **Jefferson** in Jefferson Twp. 1854; **Monroe Furnace**, Jefferson Twp. built in 1854 was also the biggest of the charcoal furnace erected in Jackson County. **Cambria Furnace** built in Jefferson Twp., 1854; **Madison** built in 1855 in Madison Twp., **Young America** in Lick Twp. built in 1856 was the last charcoal furnace built in the county.

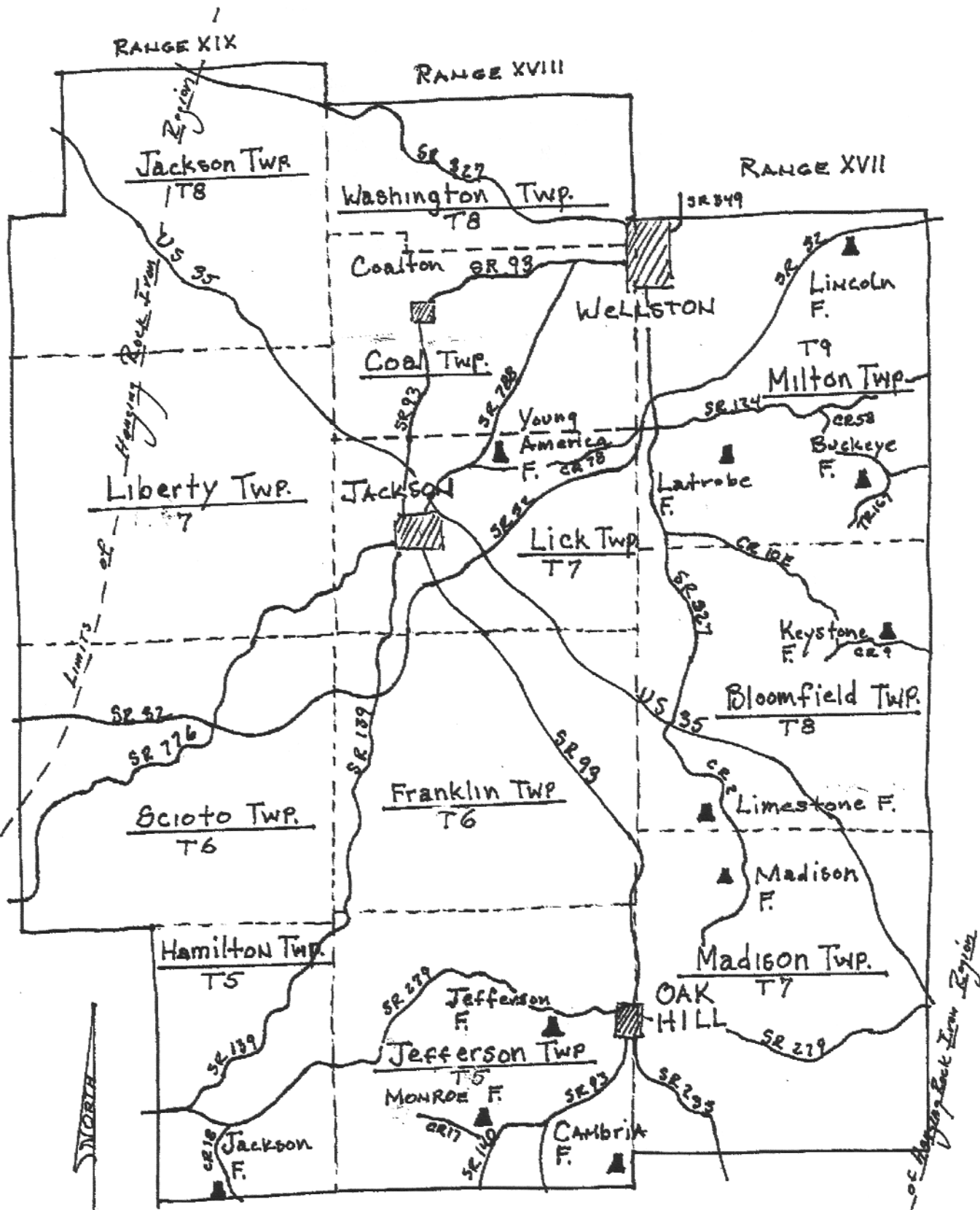
With their incredible need for fuel, the virgin forests within the county were rapidly depleted. However, a new type of furnace using a new technology, the use of coal (coke), for fuel rapidly replaced charcoal iron furnaces. With the incredible amounts of coal here the charcoal iron industry ended almost abruptly as it began. As the newer, more profitable coke fired furnaces were built, the charcoal furnaces began to cease production. One by one they disappeared forever, only their magnificent stacks surviving. **Limestone & Young America** were the first to close in 1860; It was followed by **Jackson Furnace** in 1874. **Cambria** in 1878; **Monroe** stopped in 1882. **Keystone**, **Latrobe & Cornelia** in 1885. **Buckeye** ceased in 1894; **Madison** in 1902 and last was **Jefferson Furnace** which closed in 1916 was the last charcoal furnace to close in Ohio. Taking a tour of the charcoal

THE HISTORY OF THE IRON INDUSTRY IN JACKSON COUNTY, OHIO



Keystone Furnace, 1978.

Courtesy of:
The Jackson Historical Society
City of Jackson Tourism Board
Jackson County Genealogical
Society



Location of Charcoal Iron Furnaces
Jackson County, Ohio