

**Problem Statement: Heritage Resource Documentation and Management, Irishtown Gap Hollow**

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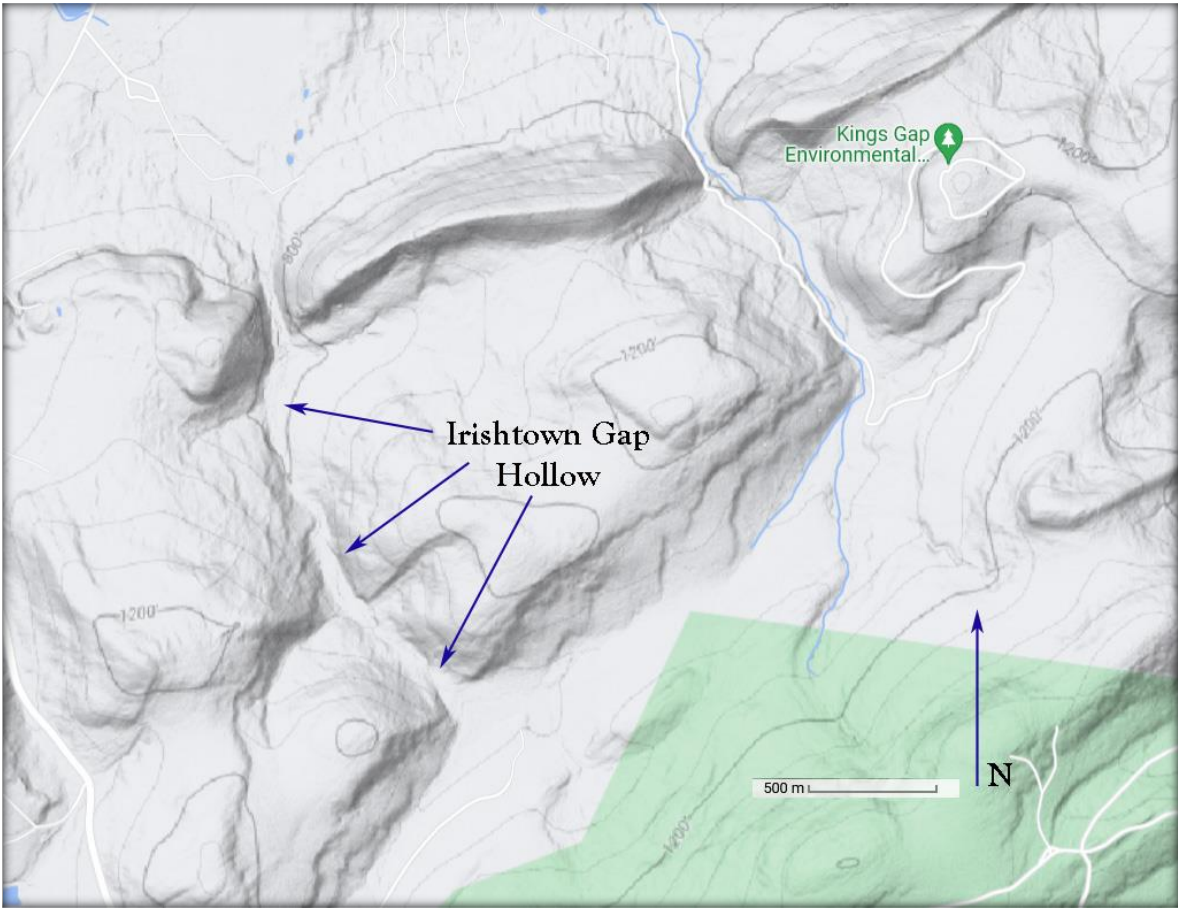
The portion of Irishtown Gap Hollow within the boundary of Kings Gap Environmental Education Center may contain the some remains of a minimally documented 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century African-American settlement, unmapped domestic remains of unknown affiliation, the Keller sawmill complex, and other evidence of an abandoned community. DCNR requires a context and documentation of these resources to properly manage, preserve and interpret them. Minimally this effort would require:

- A historic and environmental context,
- Accurate mapping and recordation of visible features, and the evaluation of suspected below-ground components.
- Recommendations for the study, preservation and interpretation of the resources.

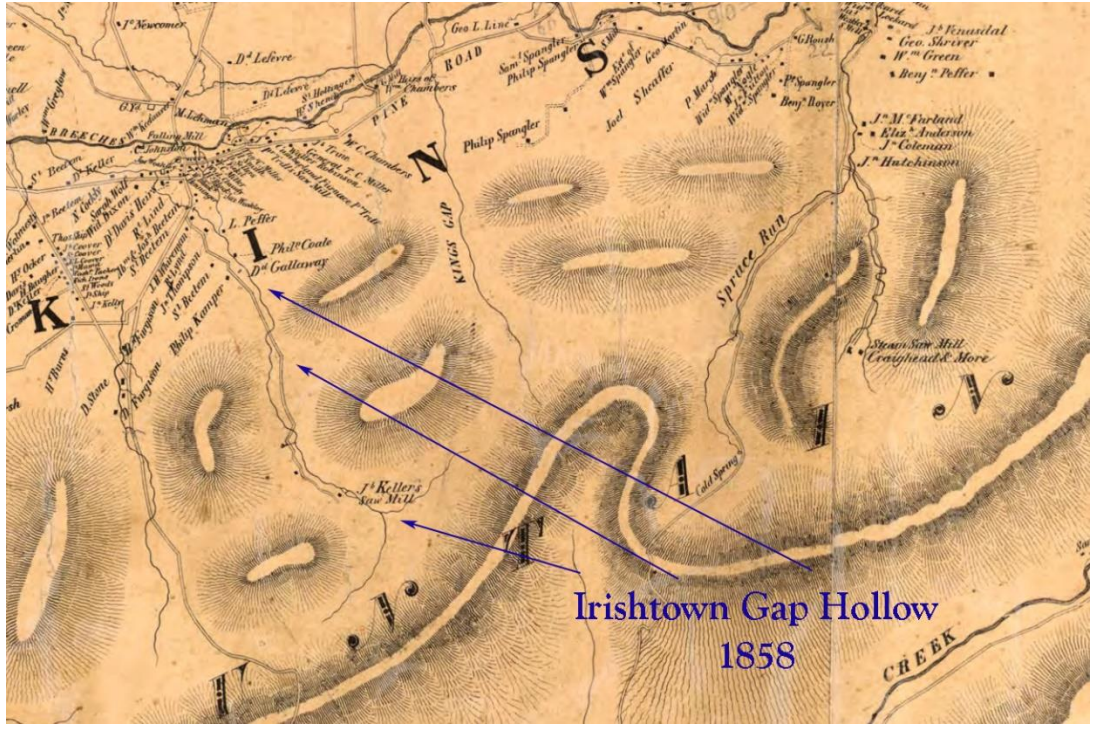
***Attachments:***

DCNR Lunch and Learn Presentation on Underground Railroad (with short discussion of Irishtown Gap)

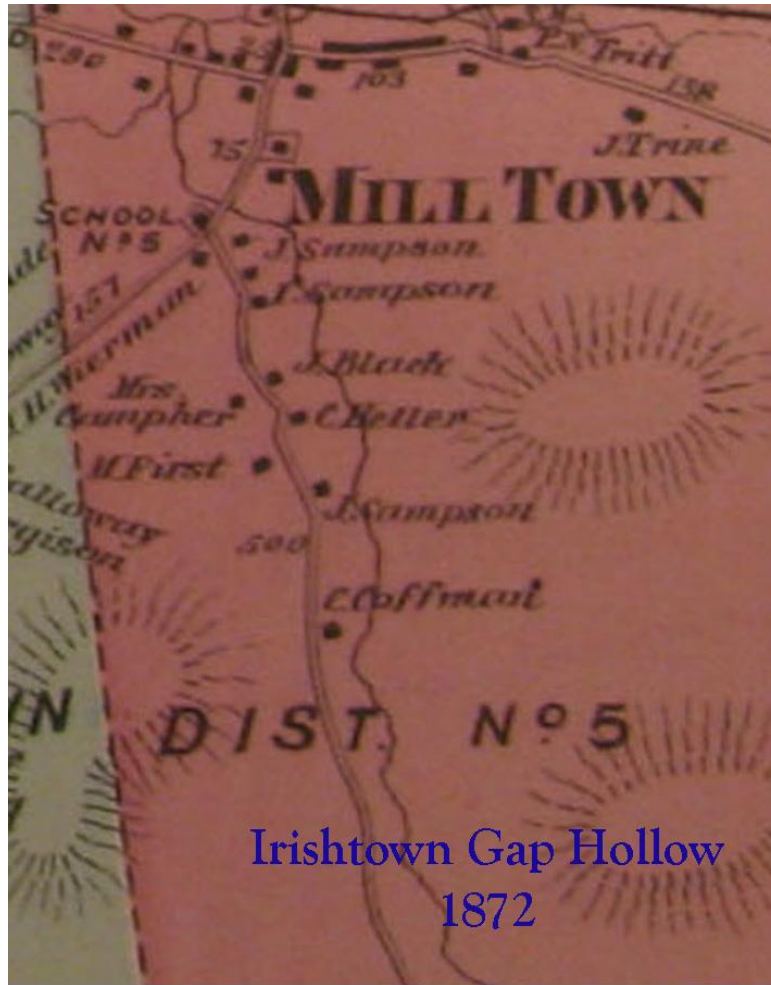
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJWG9VbmHds>



**Irishtown Gap Hollow Location**



Irishtown Gap Hollow  
1858



Irishtown Gap Hollow  
1872

# About Penn Township....Irishtown

Robert Smith wrote, "South of Huntsdale there was a community named Irishtown. It is said that a number of freed slaves settled there. This may well be the case but it leaves the name unexplained. It is known that a number of black people lived there. Several cabins and a church stood along the road leading into the mountain. One abandoned cabin remains. The names of Sam and Dutch Johnson and Hun Shultz are recalled.

In 1934 or '35 Hap Seiders bought land in the area, including part of the settlement. At one time much of the acreage was owned by the iron interests. The nearby Cumberland Furnace and other furnaces such as Pine Grove and Boiling Springs were a market for the ore. In the 1870s the Crane Iron Company was the owner."

Rev. John Kuhn remembers, "About one half mile south of Huntsdale, back an old mountain road, we find this little hamlet. This area was originally known as Irish Gap Hollow. There is some mystery about just how it came to be known as Irishtown, when in later years the population became all black. There is a legend that tells us that it was started by freed slaves, but that could not be, because the settlement was here long before the Civil War.

From some of my historical papers, I have learned that prior to the Civil War, there were six families living in the hollow. The family that lived in the last house deep in the hollow was the David Galloway family."

Some Irishtown residents:

1858	1872	1920's – 1930's
David Galloway	C. Coffman	S. Johnson
Philip Coale	J. Sampson	P. Scott
Philip Kamper	C. Heller	J. E. Raglan
S. Beetem	J. Black	J. Sampson
I. Pepper	I. Sampson	H. Shultz
J. Thompson	M. First	Penn family
R. Lynd	Mrs. Campher	(All Black)



Rev. Kuhn writes, "The [residents] built for themselves log cabins and houses and a small church and established a cemetery on the south side of the church. On the north side of the church they built a pavilion, covered the top with tree branches and at night it was lighted with several coal oil lanterns. In this little pavilion they held camp meetings.

Today (2003) this little hamlet has vanished... The only things left to remind one of the past is a pile of rubble from one of the log cabins and the little cemetery with its marked and unmarked graves and the cornerstone from the little church mounted on a pedestal in the one corner of the cemetery with the following inscription: Elverson Memorial AME, Zion Church June 19, 1892."



In 1993 James Hollenbaugh, son of Township residents Rachel and James Hollenbaugh, researched and accomplished the cleanup of the Irishtown cemetery for his Eagle Scout project. He wrote, "During the 1800's the Cumberland Furnace was a major employer in the Huntsdale area. A great many employees of the furnace lived in small log dwellings provided by the company. These employees included Irish, German, Welsh, and Afro-American individuals. It is believed that the original inhabitants of Irishtown moved to this area, south of Huntsdale, following the closing of the Cumberland Furnace." "This small community ... consisted of ten houses and a church. It is believed that John Sampson [was] the original founder of Irishtown and may be buried in the cemetery. The last person known to

have been buried in the cemetery was Bice Penn. She died about 1944."

**Sources:**

Penn Township 125 Years by Robert J. Smith, 1985  
Days of Yore in Cumberland Valley by Rev. John L. Kuhn, 1989  
Harvest Time Prior to 1920 by Rev. John L. Kuhn, 2003  
 "The Irish Gap Cemetery—A Brief History" by James Hollenbaugh

*Looking for pictures and memories of the village of Huntsdale. If you have information to share, please call the Township office at 486-3104.*