

Stories in the Pines / Batsto Village Visitor Center, Hammonton, NJ

Exhibition Design by Lee H. Skolnick Architecture + Design Partnership
Exhibition Text by Josh Feinberg, 2005



Selected Texts from the Exhibition:

[Exhibit Introduction:]

Batsto: Stories in the Pines

Welcome to Batsto Village. This once-bustling company town is now quiet. The iron furnace that gave it purpose has been cold for more than 150 years. The pine forests sway silently in the breeze. But if you look closely and listen carefully as you journey through the village, you will find that the restored homes and buildings now scattered across the grounds have many fascinating stories to tell.

The area's early Native American residents learned to thrive in the unique and often harsh landscape of the New Jersey Pine Barrens. Industrial pioneers pushed the boundaries of American trade and technology with hard work and innovation. Factory workers toiled long hours before fiery furnaces to support their families.

Their stories—and many others—still echo through the pine forests of Batsto Village.

[Sample Wall Texts:]

Town Life

Batsto's owners took care to provide basic necessities for residents of the town. Workers rented their homes from the owners of the estate. They worked long hours in the factories, earning enough to buy what they needed for their families at the company store. Many attended Sunday services at the nearby Batsto-Pleasant Mills Methodist Church. The village of Batsto was brought to life by the vitality of the people who lived, worked, and played here.

The General Store

The company store provided for the daily needs of the workers and their families. Because it was difficult to transport goods to and from the Pine Barrens, the Batsto general store was often the only place the village residents could obtain necessary goods. William Sooy and Helena Albor were among those who worked as store clerks, keeping the shelves stocked with groceries, medicines, dry goods, hardware, notions, shoes, stationery, crockery, cosmetics, and other sundries.

The Strike of 1867

Workers were tied to the Batsto general store by more than just convenience. In the 1860s, Batsto's workers received payment in the form of store credits or company scrip, which was accepted only at the company store. Since workers could not shop anywhere else, owners were free to set prices as high as they wanted. In February 1867, Batsto workers went on strike, demanding wage payments in cash.

The Post Office

Jesse Richards established the Batsto post office in 1852 and served as its first postmaster. Located just above the general store, the office operated until 1870 and again from 1882 to 1911. When the office was reopened in 1966, the U.S. Postal Service chose not to assign it a zip code because of its historical significance. Batsto is one of only four post offices in the country with this unique distinction.

The Church

When the Elijah Clark Meeting House in Pleasant Mills proved too small for the growing population of workers in the early 1800s, the Richards family donated land for the construction of a new church. Bishop Francis Asbury dedicated the newly constructed Batsto-Pleasant Mills Methodist Church on April 21, 1809. Landowners, workers, and families from Batsto and other neighboring communities soon packed the sanctuary for weddings, funerals, and weekly services.
