



Ironville's Main Street, seen from the rear across Penfield Pond, the former source of power for the hamlet's iron works.

The Penfield Homestead Museum

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IRONVILLE — Looking for a pretty, low-key, one-day expedition out of Lake Placid?

Try the Penfield Homestead Museum, in Ironville.

And where, you might ask, is Ironville?

The handsome remains of this little hamlet, once a thriving Adirondack iron-working community, have been preserved on the edge of a beautiful, islanded pond in Crown Point township

Ironville is situated in southeastern Essex County at the center of a triangle whose points are Port Henry to the north, Ticonderoga to the southeast and Schroon Lake to the southwest.

The Penfield Museum is a historic site operated by the Penfield Foundation, a nonprofit organiza-

tion. The 550-acre site includes the Federal-style Penfield home, several farm buildings, the Federal-style parsonage that houses the Penfield Foundation's offices and research facilities, Ironville's Second Congregational Church, and a guided walk through the remains (only stone foundations are left) of the hamlet's 19th century iron works.

The Penfield Homestead Museum makes much of its significance in the history of world industry as the site where an electromagnet was first used to separate the iron out of crushed iron ore, billed on the hamlet's historic marker as "the first industrial use of electricity."

The real "draws" of Ironville and the Penfield Museum, however, have little to do with this footnote to industrial history:

- The site itself is well-maintained, the surroundings are peaceful, and the country is beautiful. Ironville is worth a visit for these features alone.

- The Penfield Homestead itself is a very well maintained small museum of local history, worth visiting if for no other reason than to see how well the town of Crown Point has done at preserving its own history.

- Most of the Homestead's rooms present authentic, well-preserved displays of Victorian furnishings.

- The museum's Community Room is a great visual resource for those interested in Crown Point township history, from its display of local families' Bibles to its complete album of photographs of the region's old one-room schoolhouses.

The Penfield tour

Start your visit to Ironville at the front door of the Penfield Homestead, built in 1827. Interpretive material in the hallway will tell you more about the house and the family that built it, while views of the front parlor and Allen Penfield's office will give you a sense of what life was like there.

Passing through the Community Room, placed in the home's former

dining room on the ground floor, you'll first enter the Penfield's original kitchen, with its huge fireplace, then the "new" summer kitchen, an addition built onto the back of the house in the 1840s.

A doorway off the summer kitchen leads into the homestead's huge wood shed, built to store a winter's worth of fuel for the house's six fireplaces. The wood shed now serves as additional display space for the museum, showing off 19th century farm implements and a huge hand loom as well as a section on the Ironville iron works.

Of particular interest is a photo album on the wood shed wall that contains an excellent collection of pictures shot by famed Adirondack photographer Seneca Ray Stoddard. The photos show Crown Point Iron Company facilities throughout the township as they were in the late 19th century.

On the second floor of the house are two bedrooms with period furnishings, plus a couple of specialized displays: one of antique dolls and toys, another of items memorializing the involvement of local men in the Civil War.

Behind the Penfield house are several outbuildings, including the



family's old carriage house. Today, the Penfield Homestead Museum uses the carriage house to display its collection of nearly a dozen period carriages and sleighs, including a fully equipped horse-drawn hearse.

Across the street from the Penfield home is Ironville's Second Congregational Church, a handsome though austere Greek Revival structure built in 1843. The large, open sanctuary, its large windows fitted with ancient, wavy glass, looks out onto beautiful Penfield Pond.

There, on the edge of the pond, a walking tour takes visitors through the very minimal remains of Ironville's iron works. An interpretive display next to the church contains a map of the walk, while a brochure available inside the Penfield house explains the significance of each stop along the way.

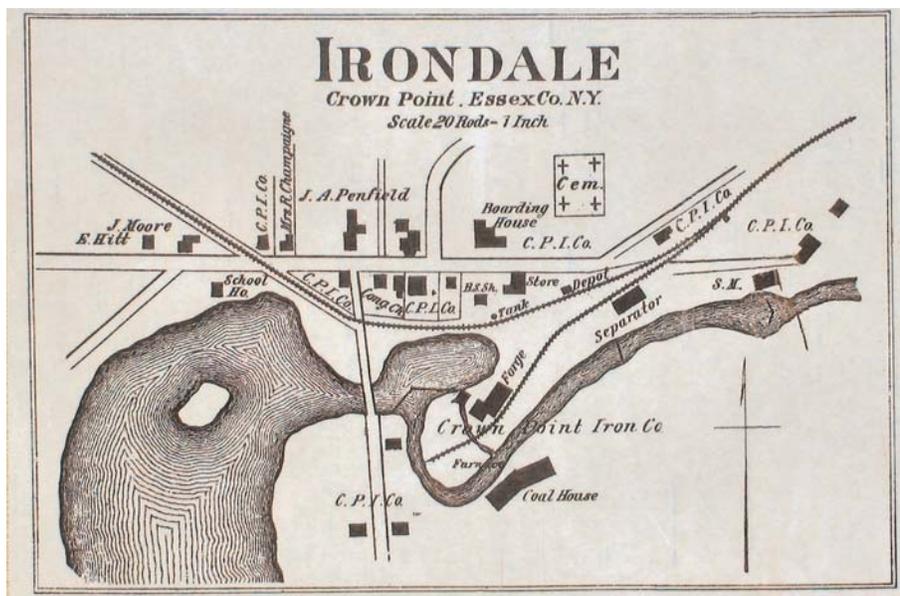
The Penfield calendar

The Penfield Homestead Museum opened for the season last Saturday, June 5, with its annual all-you-can-eat pancake breakfast. Staff members say the Opening Day breakfast draws about 100 guests each year.

Ironville's annual mid-season Heritage Day festival will be held this year on Sunday, Aug. 15. The festival features a craft fair, flea market and chicken barbecue.

The museum's season ends on Sunday, Oct. 10, with the annual Apple Folkfest. Homemade chili (both meat and vegetarian), hot dogs, fresh donuts made on site and "every apple dessert imaginable" are the featured fare of the day.

Between June 5 and Oct. 10, the Penfield Homestead Museum is



open Thursday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is \$4 per person.

For more information, visit the museum's Web site at PenfieldMuseum.org, or call the Penfield Foundation at (518) 597-3804.

Getting there

It's about a 60-mile trip to Ironville from Lake Placid. Because most of the trip is on two-lane roads, it will take about an hour and a half to get there from here.

From Lake Placid, take Route 73 to Route 9, through Keene and Keene Valley, to the Northway (I-87). Go two exits south on I-87 to the Schroon Lake exit, and take Route 74 east toward Ticonderoga. After traveling a little more than 12 miles, you will see a sign pointing you northward on the Corduroy Road to the Penfield Museum, a little over 3 miles away.

Caution: If you look at the right map (or the wrong map, depending on how you think of it), you will see that a back road will take you directly from North Hudson, halfway between the Keene Valley and Schroon Lake exits on I-87, to Ironville. The preferred route from North Hudson to Ironville is about 22 miles, while the back way takes only 15 miles — but there are several very good reasons to take the longer route.

The back way runs on Johnson Pond Road out of North Hudson, a windy, narrow, uneven road that is unpaved after a few miles. About half way to Ironville, it joins the Old Furnace Road — still unpaved — which takes a sharp (and unmarked!) right-hand turn after a few miles before delivering travelers to Ironville.

Granted, the back way is pretty, but it's very rough going — and

unless you know exactly where the Old Furnace Road makes its right-hand turn, you will get lost.

Our recommendation: Stay on the main roads. Even though they take 7 miles longer, they'll save you time — and perhaps an axle.

Bed & breakfast

If you feel like making an overnight trip of your visit to Ironville, you're in luck. Right next door to the Penfield Museum is the

former home of Allen Penfield's son-in-law, a Federal-style house that now goes under the name of the Harwood Homestead B&B. The inn has four guest rooms. Rates are modest (\$50 to \$70 a night), and the view from the Harwood front lawn of Penfield Pond, just across the road, is absolutely lovely. For information or reservations call proprietor Michaela McNamara at (518) 597-3429, or e-mail her at mmcnamar@bluemoo.net.



Kerry Burris, granddaughter of Crown Point historian Joan Hunsdon, works at the 19th century loom in the "woodshed" behind the Penfield house.