

## **MUNICIPAL OVERVIEW: WHARTON BOROUGH**

**“TRADITION WITH PROGRESS”**

**TOTAL SQUARE MILES: 2.1**                      **POPULATION: 6,298 (2000 Census)**

**TOTAL SURVEYED HISTORIC RESOURCES: 61**



**SITES LOST SINCE 1986<sup>1</sup>: 2**

- 256 South Main Street, part of 1439-0040, South Main Streetscape. Demolished and replaced with new construction.
- 1439-0028, “Wharton and Northern Railroad Station.” Demo permit record indicates station was destroyed in 2005.

**RESOURCES DOCUMENTED BY HABS/HAER/HALS: 0**

**RESOURCES LISTED IN OR DETERMINED ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER BY NJHPO<sup>2</sup>: 2**

Morris Canal, Existing and former bed  
SHPO ID# 2784, NR ID# 74002228

Saint Mary’s Roman Catholic Church  
(South Main Street and US Route 46)  
SHPO ID# 57

**RESOURCES NOTED IN THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION ELEMENT MORRIS COUNTY (HPEMC):**

The Borough of Wharton is in Region “F”, with 1 site:

F30 Morris Canal, Canal Prism and Lock, West of Pine Street on Stephen’s Brook

**MUNICIPAL HISTORICAL COMMISSION: No**

**LOCALLY DESIGNATED/REGULATED RESOURCES: None**

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION ELEMENT IN MUNICIPAL MASTER PLAN? No**

**HISTORICAL SUMMARY:** Wharton, initially known as Irondocks and later, Port Oram, attracted its first European inhabitants in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century due to its location near the Rockaway River. The construction of the Morris Canal, the wide availability of iron ore, and the establishment of the Morris & Essex Railroad directly influenced the growth of the town during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, turning it into one of Morris County’s key industrial centers. Robert Oram, town founder and business and real estate entrepreneur, capitalized on these opportunities, furthering the growth of Port Oram by owning several successful mines and storehouses. Wharton was originally part of Randolph and Rockaway Townships until its incorporation in 1895, named Port Oram after its most influential resident. The municipality changed its name to Wharton in 1902, after Joseph Wharton, famous steel industrialist, took over most of Robert Oram’s business holdings.

**ADDITIONAL FACTS:**

- First Post Office: 1867
- First Library: 1899
- First School: 1867

<sup>1</sup> Documentation gathered, including completed investigative memorandum, can be found in the “Lost Sites Documentation” file, located at the Morris County Planning Office, Morristown, New Jersey.

<sup>2</sup> Resources with National Park Service and/or NJ Historic Preservation Office determination.

- First Police Department: 1895
- First Fire Department: 1904
- St. Mary's Church was designed by New Jersey architect **Jeremiah O'Rourke** (1833-1915) Jeremiah O'Rourke was born in Dublin, Ireland, and graduated from the Government School of Design in 1850. After graduation, he immigrated to the United States and established a practice in Newark, New Jersey. During the administration of Grover Cleveland, O'Rourke joined the office of the United States Supervising Architect and prepared designs for a number of federal post offices.
- Wharton native **Kirk Allyn** was the first actor to portray Superman from 1948-1950.
- 1439-0060, 100 Irondale Road, originally documented in Mine Hill (Acroterion #1420-021), is actually in Wharton. All mapping and survey data are now identified by the new inventory number.

**LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY:** Yes

Wharton Historical Society  
P.O. Box 424 Wharton, NJ 07885  
(973)361-1545

The society was founded by Martin Trengrove in 1952.  
Society meets on the second Wednesday of every month at the Wharton Library

**MUNICIPAL WEBSITE:** <http://www.whartonnj.com/>

**SOURCES:** Wharton website (<http://www.whartonnj.com/>); Acroterion; NJ Historic Preservation Office website ([www.state.nj.us/dep/hpo/1identify/lists/morris.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/dep/hpo/1identify/lists/morris.pdf)); Morris County Department of Planning and Development, Preservation Trust; KSK, "Cultural Resources Inventory, Morris County, NJ", Phase II (2011); American FactFinder (<http://factfinder.census.gov/>); Charlotte Kelly, Wharton Historical Society president.