

HISTORIC SPEEDWELL

This National Historic Landmark Site preserves what remains of the Homestead Farm of Stephen Vail, builder and proprietor of the Speedwell Ironworks in the early 1800s. It includes Stephen's home and the Factory, where his son, Alfred, and Samuel F. B. Morse demonstrated the perfected electromagnetic telegraph in 1838. The site also includes three historic houses moved from the center of Morristown to save them from demolition in the 1960s.

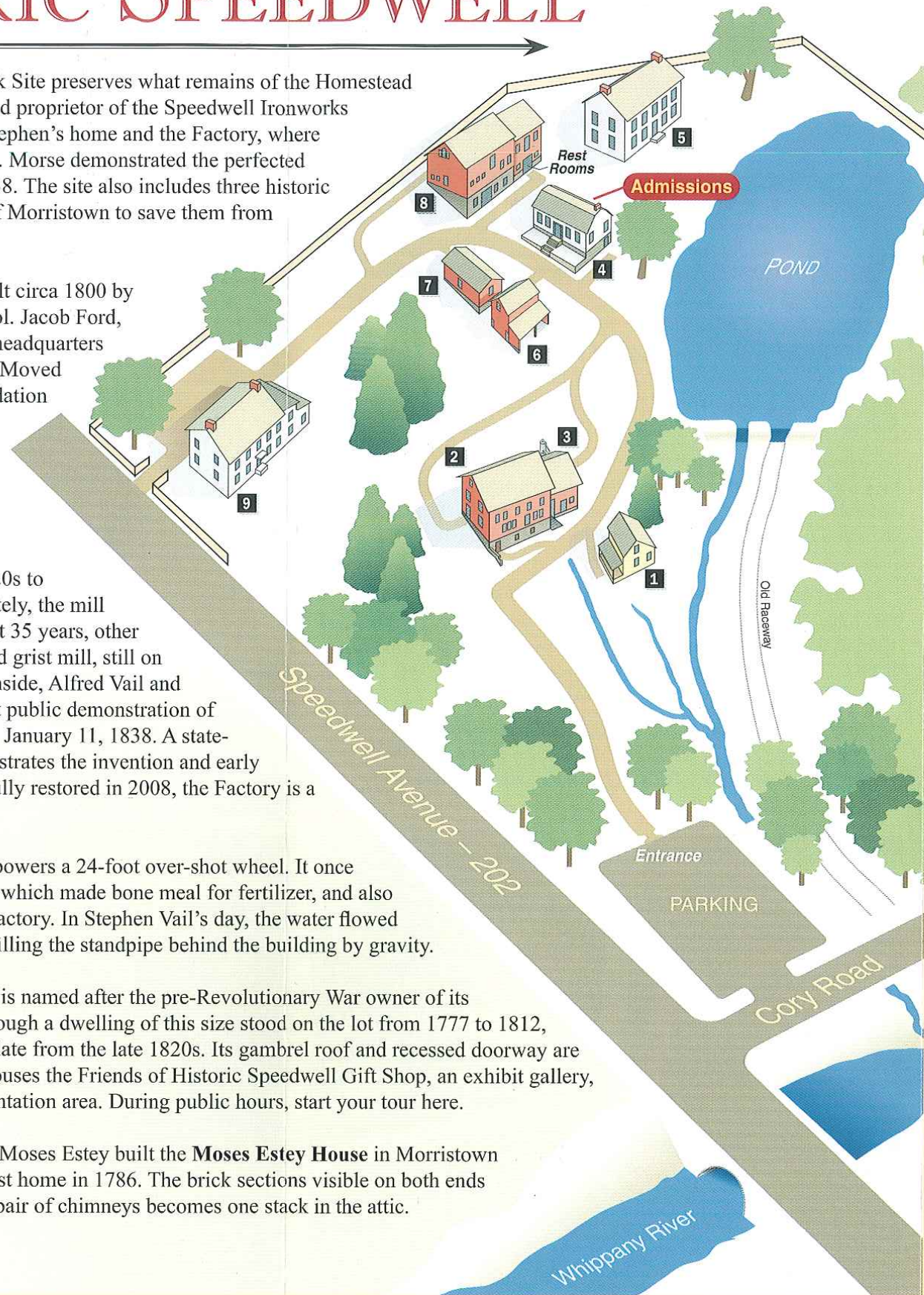
1 The **Ford Cottage** was built circa 1800 by Gabriel Ford, Jr., grandson of Col. Jacob Ford, whose home was Washington's headquarters during the winter of 1779-1780. Moved from Morristown to an old foundation here, the house retains its small paned windows and wide, untapered clapboard. Not open to the public.

2 Stephen Vail rebuilt the **Factory Building** in the late 1820s to support a cotton mill. Unfortunately, the mill never materialized. Over the next 35 years, other ventures, including a sawmill and grist mill, still on display, were more successful. Inside, Alfred Vail and Samuel F. B. Morse held the first public demonstration of the electromagnetic telegraph on January 11, 1838. A state-of-the-art, interactive exhibit illustrates the invention and early development of the telegraph. Fully restored in 2008, the Factory is a National Historic Landmark.

3 In the **Wheelhouse**, water powers a 24-foot over-shot wheel. It once ran both the heavy bone grinder, which made bone meal for fertilizer, and also the machinery in the adjoining Factory. In Stephen Vail's day, the water flowed underground from a high pond, filling the standpipe behind the building by gravity.

4 The **L'Hommedieu House** is named after the pre-Revolutionary War owner of its original site in Morristown. Although a dwelling of this size stood on the lot from 1777 to 1812, the present house is believed to date from the late 1820s. Its gambrel roof and recessed doorway are noteworthy. The building now houses the Friends of Historic Speedwell Gift Shop, an exhibit gallery, and the site's admission and orientation area. During public hours, start your tour here.

5 Revolutionary War veteran Moses Estey built the **Moses Estey House** in Morristown shortly after fire destroyed his first home in 1786. The brick sections visible on both ends are the backs of fireplaces; each pair of chimneys becomes one stack in the attic. Not currently open to the public.



6 The **Granary** was built by the Vails on stone piers, with spaces under its clapboards for ventilation. Hand-crafted wooden farm tools and 19th century ice-harvesting equipment are on exhibit.

7 The **1849 Carriage House** was once used to shelter the overflow vehicles of the Vail Family. Today, the building is home to Historic Speedwell's orientation video and education programs. These programs include lectures, workshops, and programs for adults, families, senior groups, home school groups, scout groups, and school groups.

8 Although the date 1808 is scratched into one of the foundation stones, the **Homestead Carriage House** may not be that old. Today, the main floor houses an exhibit dedicated to the Speedwell Ironworks. This exhibit illustrates how the Ironworks developed, owing to the growth of mechanical technology and Stephen Vail's involvement in a complex business network. Stephen Vail bought into the Ironworks in 1807, and became the sole proprietor in 1815. The Ironworks stayed in the family until the early 1870s, when the business moved to Brooklyn.

9 The **Vail House**, occupied by the Vail family and its descendants from the 1820s to the early-20th century, was completely renovated by Stephen Vail in the 1840s. A 20th-century restoration has revealed a central heating system he installed, as well as plaster cornices, grained woodwork, and painted floors that are once again the setting for much of his furniture. Portraits of Stephen and his wife, Bethiah, painted by Samuel F. B. Morse in 1837, hang in the main hall. The front porch, with its Doric columns, overlooks a grassy area that was the formal garden in Stephen Vail's day.

BECOME A MEMBER!

Join the Friends of Historic Speedwell, a not-for-profit institution that assists the site through the funding of restoration projects and special events. Benefits of membership include a quarterly newsletter, 10% off in the Gift Shop, free admission during weekday hours, and a discount on weekend events.



For information and hours, please call:

973.285.6550