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Troy D. Harman

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## Black Labor at Pine Grove & Caledonia Furnaces, 1789-1860

### **Abstract**

Black labor operating under various degrees of freedom found a suitable working environment, if not a safe haven, in several iron forges of South Central Pennsylvania, from the late 1790s through the 1850s. Primary accounts indicate that two in particular, Pine Grove Furnace of Cumberland County, and Caledonia Furnace of Franklin County, harbored runaway slaves to augment their work force. Pine Grove records, dating from 1789 – 1801, specify names of “negro” employees, verifying that black labor coexisted with white, but day books, journals, and ledgers do not denote status.<sup>1</sup> Whether they were free men, or slaves rented out by Pennsylvania slave owners, or runaways from the South cannot be gleaned from the day books. All three combinations were possible, especially in the 1790s. Circumstantial evidence suggests that escaped slaves did bolster the ranks of both forges until 1860. With renowned abolitionist Thaddeus Stevens in ownership of Caledonia, and proprietors sympathetic to the same cause at Pine Grove, the environment favored Underground Railroad activity. When this circumstance is coupled with the presence of a Quaker Meeting House in northern Adams County, and the recognition that both forges were within a thirty mile radius of the Maryland slave-state border, then a recipe existed for hide-outs to be employed in area furnaces. [*excerpt*]

### **Keywords**

Adams County Historical Society, ACHS, Adams County, Pennsylvania History, Pine Grove Furnace, Caledonia Furnace, Iron Furnace, Fugitive Slaves, Black Labor, African Americans, Underground Railroad, Thaddeus Stevens

## **Black Labor at Pine Grove & Caledonia Furnaces, 1789-1860**

*By Troy D. Harman*

Black labor operating under various degrees of freedom found a suitable working environment, if not a safe haven, in several iron forges of South Central Pennsylvania, from the late 1790s through the 1850s. Primary accounts indicate that two in particular, Pine Grove Furnace of Cumberland County, and Caledonia Furnace of Franklin County, harbored runaway slaves to augment their work force. Pine Grove records, dating from 1789 – 1801, specify names of “negro” employees, verifying that black labor coexisted with white, but day books, journals, and ledgers do not denote status.<sup>1</sup> Whether they were free men, or slaves rented out by Pennsylvania slave owners, or runaways from the South cannot be gleaned from the day books. All three combinations were possible, especially in the 1790s. Circumstantial evidence suggests that escaped slaves did bolster the ranks of both forges until 1860. With renowned abolitionist Thaddeus Stevens in ownership of Caledonia, and proprietors sympathetic to the same cause at Pine Grove, the environment favored Underground Railroad activity. When this circumstance is coupled with the presence of a Quaker Meeting House in northern Adams County, and the recognition that both forges were within a thirty mile radius of the Maryland slave-state border, then a recipe existed for hide-outs to be employed in area furnaces.

This study does not seek to recount every detail of iron furnace work in South Central Pennsylvania or to diagram all the particulars of daily operations at Pine Grove or Caledonia. That has been done through exhibit displays and visitor use pamphlets at both sites, along with easily found internet and hard copy references, to illustrate every facet and function of iron production. Instead, this work poses various questions that address the unique contribution of African-Americans to Pine Grove and Caledonia. One such question asks “why were black men attracted to the iron making industry in Cumberland and Franklin Counties?” Secondly, “why was charcoal production their primary trade?” Thirdly, “what were the particular conditions of charcoal making that shaped the daily existence of African-American laborers?” Fourthly, did a division of labor exist between black and white or was the system open to promotion by merit?” Fifth, “did the forge community bear an outward familiarity to southern plantations that might be recognized by former slaves?”

Before entertaining such questions, it is first necessary to establish that African-Americans were located at Pine Grove and Caledonia. Because the Underground Railroad is a subject of growing interest among historians local to Adams, Cumberland, and Franklin Counties, there is an eagerness to take the imaginative leap in claiming that both furnaces were magnets for runaway slaves. It is a powerful thought for an increasing number of Gettysburg historians that a place of such national significance as a pivotal battle and a famous presidential speech could lay additional claim to the destination of “first flight” for many fugitive slaves in central Maryland. Gettysburg as a refuge for “first freedom” captivates not only the faithful who pilgrimage to the Civil

War battlefield regularly, but recharges authors and marketers whose livelihood benefits from added historical prestige and expanded interpretive opportunities.

A cursory review of the evidence does lend credibility to the assertion of both sites as working havens for former slaves. Bradley Hoch's relatively new work on Thaddeus Stevens sheds some light on the subject through examination of the 1850 Census for Franklin County. He states that,

According to the United States Census of 1850, Green and Guilford Townships, in rural Franklin County, Pennsylvania, contained 308 African Americans in a total population of 6,625 people – 4.6 percent. Most reported their birthplace as Pennsylvania. It was the safe answer. A few listed Maryland, one or two Virginia, another West Indies, and one elderly man said he was born in Guinea, Africa. Surely the area's Underground Railroad and employment with Thaddeus Stevens as an iron miner or collier encouraged the development of this African-American community in the mountains of south central Pennsylvania.<sup>2</sup>

Thaddeus Stevens's financial interest lay with Caledonia furnace but Hoch's research suggests the abolitionist had a connection with Pine Grove in nearby Cumberland County. Hoch links the operations directly when he writes,

[Hiram] Wertz [of Quincy, Franklin County] reported that fugitive slaves hid in his family's barn during the day, and when night fell, he guided them eight miles north [of Quincy] to the African-American settlement at Africa. From there, Robert Black of Greenwood and Steven's iron furnace superintendent William Hammett made sure that the fugitives got to Pine Grove furnace.<sup>3</sup>

McCauslin and Alosi make similar claims about Pine Grove in particular. They maintain that,

From the Cyrus Griest home fugitives could be conducted to York Springs, to the home of William and Phebe Wright (Griest relatives), or further north to Pine Grove Furnace in Cumberland County, just over the Adams County line, where a number of African Americans were employed. The iron master's house at Pine Grove Furnace was also reported to be an Underground Railroad station.<sup>4</sup>

A former superintendent Horace Keefer reminisced about Pine Grove in 1934, remembering as far back as 1879 when, "The forge workers were all negroes and a finer lot of men I never worked with. The wood chopping was mostly done in the winter by the surrounding farmers and the charcoal burners who lived in self-constructed cabins in the woods."<sup>5</sup> Because the primary task of black labor was making and carting charcoal, as we will see, his memory of self-constructed cabins fits the black labor experience all around. And though Keefer's experiences at Pine Grove were post slavery, the "negroes" he harkened back to may have, in part, descended and apprenticed from earlier generations of fugitive slaves.

If this was the case, it should not be considered unusual for African-Americans, even former slaves, to gravitate to a forge working community. It is now accepted that Hopewell Furnace, which was situated like Pine Grove only a few miles north of the Maryland border, benefited from former slaves joining the workforce. The official National Park Service policy follows that,

Blacks worked at Hopewell throughout its history. Before Pennsylvania abolished slavery in 1780, it is likely that some of Mark Bird's slaves worked at Hopewell. In the early 19th century, southeastern Pennsylvania became a refuge for runaway slaves from Maryland and Virginia. Since Hopewell was only a short distance over the Mason and Dixon Line, some of the blacks employed there probably came from the South. Most held menial jobs and worked irregularly and for only a short time before moving on. Some became long term employees, however, usually as laborers or teamsters, and a few held semi-skilled jobs.<sup>6</sup>

Recognizing that escaped slaves working for Pine Grove and Caledonia Furnaces as probable is one matter, but verifying it with specific names, dates, and detailed stories is more difficult. One problem is that by June 26, 1863, during the Gettysburg Campaign, the Confederate army burned the Caledonia ironworks to the ground. Thaddeus Stevens was an ardent abolitionist and a natural target for rebel vengeance and had to make his escape on horseback to Shippensburg the night before.<sup>7</sup> More importantly for historical purposes, the daily accountant books, journals, and records were destroyed in the blaze, leaving the historian with vagaries.

Conversely, Pine Grove avoided sudden disaster and operated under different authorities, namely the South Mountain Mining and Iron Company, 1877-1914, surviving with records intact located now in the Manuscript Groups of the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg. The total collection is impressive, spanning from 1785-1914, covering 60 cubic feet of archival space. Bloom, cash, day, provision, time and ware books, along with ledgers and journals are among the stacks.<sup>8</sup> Through trial and error one learns that the journals are the most useful for easy identification of black workers. Due to the extent of the books, I focused in on the daily journal entries, logged between 1789 -1801. For the provision books, I followed the sundry purchases made through the company store up through 1848.

Visually scanning through several thousand water spotted, dusty, rag-paper pages of names yields a lot of repetition, but one is rewarded with the names of Negro Jonathan, Negro Ben, Negro Thomas, Negro Bob, and Negro Peter, all of whom appear on the company rolls.<sup>9</sup> The trouble with this approach of course is that without the trip word "negro," then black employees can remain concealed on the page. McCauslin's census work has added a few more names that are concretely linked with area furnaces prior to the Civil War including Peter Butler, Thomas Butler, and Benjamin Mars, junior and senior, all listed as "forge-man" in 1860. Peter was listed as a 33 year old mulatto laborer from Maryland in the 1850 Census. Benjamin Mars was noted to be 40 years

of age in 1850, of mulatto color, from Maryland, and living with Peter and Harriett Butler. In 1820, a Benjamin Mars, probably senior, bears the mark of being free and of color. McCauslin's discovery of Jacob Buckmaster, listed as a black "woodchopper," is significant too from the standpoint of skills required for charcoal making. The dozen or so day laborers she notes in the census prior to 1860 also likely point to the charcoal process. Another careful screening of the journals and provisional books, with certain predetermined names in mind, could uncover a few more sleepers, who made regular transactions with the company store.

There are several bits of information that might be revealing in the journal entries. For instance, it is clear that Negro Bob, Negro Peter and Negro Ben frequently enjoyed tobacco, and that they all needed shoes, mittens, stockings, and at least two of them purchased a vest.<sup>12</sup> One can also gain a sense of whom pays-in-full versus cash installments. Negro Jonathan tended to build up his account and then gradually paid down on the balance.<sup>13</sup> Of greater significance though is mention of payment for hauling or of transactions charged to teamsters, thus giving insight into type of work.<sup>14</sup> All indications are that African-American labor at Pine Grove and Caledonia involved both hauling and chopping.

One might argue that a distinct division of labor existed in this respect, with blacks working almost exclusively in the forests of South Mountain to haul in fuel for the furnaces or to cart loads of ore from the mines. A careful study of the daily books from Pine Grove indicates a closed system with regards to promotion and variance in semi-skilled or skilled trades, at least from the 1790s to 1840s. The three forge-men that McCauslin has discovered appear to be directly involved in the daily operations of a furnace, but not until at least the 1850 census. If Superintendent Keefer's recollection from circa. 1879 is correct that, "The forge workers were all negroes" at Pine Grove, then a form of advancement system could have evolved from 1789-1850, elevating black labor from the woods, quarries, and mines to the forge.<sup>15</sup> An open system, then, for upward mobility, might have evolved by mid-century, but there's not enough evidence at this point to be certain.

Keeping with the idea that Pine Grove's black labor population transported goods, from the 1790s to early 1800s, it must be understood that their cargo involved more than one commodity. If the teamster's experience at Hopewell furnace is any indicator of routine in Cumberland and Franklin Counties, the assortment of loads they lugged required a fairly wide radius of travel. The data collected at Hopewell reveals that,

Among the important semi-skilled workers were the teamsters. Most were independent contractors, but during the furnace's heyday about 10 were regularly on the payroll. They hauled ore from the mines, charcoal from the forests, and limestone from nearby quarries. But most important of all, they carried the finished products to markets far and near... Teamsters were paid by the load, plus expenses, meals, lodging, and turnpike and bridge tolls. They also performed services for the less mobile ironmaster and employees, buying goods in the city,

paying bills, and occasionally transporting friends and neighbors who were going there way. A teamster's average income was considerably less than a skilled worker's at a furnace. Usually it amounted to less than a \$100 a year...<sup>16</sup>

The teamsters at Pine Grove had similar latitude in transporting their bars of iron to Baltimore. Roads connecting the furnace to Mount Holly Springs were finished for this purpose. Frank Mullen, whose father and grandfather were collier's for charcoaling at Pine Grove noted that, "The iron furnace was started in 1764 and it wasn't until 1895 that the railroad was built for transport. Between those years iron was hauled by wagon train to Baltimore the nearest port."<sup>17</sup> He added that, "The return trips brought back molasses, sugar, bacon, tobacco, crackers, cheese, calico and wine."<sup>18</sup> For good measure Mullen elaborated on roadway engineering stating, "In order to expedite the building of the road to Baltimore as the shipping point they did not use a transit or surveyors instrument but would line up kegs of tar and light them at night on top of the various hills and you will find this is the straightest stretch of road we have anywhere near by."<sup>19</sup> Because the Pine Grove Furnace daybooks and early census records indicate that black laborers and teamsters abounded, then it is fair to imagine their involvement in the construction of roads as well as hauling goods to and from Baltimore, or at least up to the Maryland border. Special papers were needed to risk the journey into that state.

Teamsters worked closely with the charcoaling process too. Frederick Weiser's family memories of charcoal management for Pine Grove help the reader to envision the environment that colliers, wood choppers, other laborers, and teamsters lived in. Addressing the Hamilton Library of Cumberland County in 1954, he explained that,

Charcoal was made in what was termed a 'charcoal pit.' Perhaps 100 feet diameter, a workman was sent out to rake chestnut timbers into a cone shaped pile. Small openings ran inside; the entire 'pit' was covered with wet ground. The workman built himself a shanty of wet wood, which he occupied for a week at a time, watching the fire to prevent it from blazing. As his supplies, he took potatoes, onions, bacon, two loaves of bread, and a pound of Arbuckle's coffee. What remained when the pit smoldered out was charcoal.<sup>20</sup>

The collier who supervised the procedure watched the low flame carefully for days and often managed "eight or nine pits at a time."<sup>21</sup> Only hardwoods "such as chestnut, oak, and hickory were cut into lengths by woodcutters and later piled on end in cone-shaped stacks six feet high."<sup>22</sup> For eventual use in the forge they were about pole size in diameter and stacked in a ring covering the pit. Leaves and dust were shoveled onto the tee pee like stacks of charcoal wood to damper and contain the fire from a blaze large enough to destroy the heap. The collier periodically poked around the top of the ring for soft spots that might indicate a faster burn than prescribed and for extra precaution he made sure that, "openings were made near the bottom of the pile to allow the right amount of oxygen to enter."<sup>23</sup> From start to finish the procedure usually lasted "from eight to ten days...and sometimes twelve days elapsed before the mass was cold enough

to haul to the furnace.”<sup>24</sup> From afar Weiser described it all with a touch of romance noting that, “in the summer, sitting on the porches of their houses, the workmen could watch the smoldering charcoal pits on the side of the mountain like so many stars in the sky.”<sup>25</sup> Through candy-coated lenses again he added, “Huckleberries always grew up in the wake of charcoal pits, and those not sold to the peddler for three cents a quart made delicious pies and puddings.”<sup>26</sup>

Though the danger had not passed with embers ever ready to reignite and consume both cargo and wagon, the teamsters began their work hauling charcoal they hoped had cooled. Driving their team down trails that led deep into the woods to the pits, the teamsters began their work of transport. Methods and equipment at Pine Grove and Caledonia were comparable with other furnaces in Pennsylvania. It was common for instance, that the collier or wood boss work closely with teamsters during the loading procedure. The output was fairly consistent too among the more productive forges, with 100 to 400 bushels of charcoal serving as the standard per wagon. Moreover the wheeled vehicles resembled the basic prototype of a funnel or coffee mill grinder configuration, wide at the top and narrow along the bottom, for easier coal dispense during unloading. One description at Hopewell furnace provides a glimpse into the standard operating procedure:

The same collier’s baskets which were used to carry leaves to the head of the pit were employed to fill the wagon with charcoal.

The teamster carried the basket on his head after the collier had raked it full and helped him swing it into position. Charcoal wagons varied in size but those generally...held 100 to 300 bushels of coal.

All were drawn by six-mule teams and equipped with high sideboards and a bottom that would pull out.<sup>27</sup>

The formula for Pine Grove differed little from the Hopewell model regarding design of the transport vehicles and overall productivity of charcoal. The final consignment was shuttled in “specially constructed wagons, narrow at the base and sloping outward to the top....The loads thus carried from hearth to furnace depending on the number of mules employed, were from two to four hundred bushels to load.”<sup>28</sup>

Because of piece-meal evidence, we are never likely to know the degree to which runaway slaves were involved in assisting the charcoal process. It was the most likely business for them to have participated in though. The greatest number of jobs needed to support iron production were semi-skilled and unskilled, such as cutting trees, chopping wood, driving a team of mules, loading & unloading, and spreading the charcoal. Each of these fall under the category of day laborer and teamster, titles associated with Negro Jonathan, Negro Ben, Negro Thomas, Negro Bob, and Negro Peter in the Pine Grove journals and day books. Unless the white collier deputized a black laborer to supervise one of eight or nine fires, then the skilled designation of collier proved elusive to African-Americans, at least officially until the 1850s at Pine Grove.

All of this beckons the question of why black laborers, even escaped slaves, invested so much time working in charcoal? What drew them to the rigors of felling timber and

heavy lifting? Why spend so many hours on the side of mountain in the woods? One answer may originate with division of labor. Due to many of the skilled jobs being directly related to working in the forge, consisting of the founder, fillers, gutter men, and moulders, there existed in the early 1800's an intended or unintended segregation in the work force.<sup>29</sup> Such an arrangement might have proved convenient for white workers who preferred it that way. One can only hope this was not the case. Owners and managers at Pine Grove including Michael and Peter Edge, and Thomas and Joseph Thornburgh were rumored to be connected with the Underground Railroad and sympathetic to the slave plight, but that is altogether different from being committed to egalitarianism.<sup>30</sup> Neither the genealogy of the Edge family nor the furnace records shed any real light on this.<sup>31</sup> Manager concealment of extra-legal workers appears to have staid out of the official books anyway.

Answering why black labor gravitated to tasks associated with charcoaling deep in the hills of South Mountain is also linked with the hard, dirty nature of the jobs. As migrant workers in the orchards today of South Central Pennsylvania are willing – it is alleged – to do chores that many Americans will not, so too were runaway slaves agreeable to tedious responsibilities. They clearly did not have leverage to make demands as fugitives in the eyes of the law, and were prepared to accept any available work. If the forge chose to pay them less for a shipment of charcoal, who could they petition? Because their options were limited, the issue of wages and profit depended on the mercy of the iron master. If a lower bidder came along, or if charcoal quality failed to meet standards, then black teamsters might be passed over or forced to settle for a minimum.

A division of labor and a readiness to perform hard, dirty jobs are important answers to why African-American men were drawn to the woods of South Mountain, but there is one more answer that encompasses all. That is, the forest, hills, logger trails, and constant teamster movement around Pine Grove and Caledonia provided cover, concealment, transience and an overall shroud of secrecy.<sup>32</sup> It is this very secrecy that makes a work like this one difficult. Site specific information about runaway slave labor is scarce because the operation was hush to begin with. Both furnaces were mysterious to the surrounding counties then as they are today. It is this mysterious quality that stirs the imagination and moves us to such places in the quest to add missing pieces to an incomplete puzzle.

And as if fate tried to further gag future historians on this matter, a Confederate division razed the Caledonia iron works by June 26, 1863, likely reducing all slave records there to ashes. Unrelated to war were other tragic misfortunes affecting area knowledge of the extent of underground activity around both iron forges. For example, even former slave grave yards were obscured or lost altogether. McCauslin's detective work has uncovered several stone stubs or bases of broken tombstones at Yellow Hill in Adams County, helping to raise awareness of otherwise buried black culture.<sup>33</sup> On a more tragic note, part of the Pine Grove Furnace cemetery succumbed to a mud slide caused by ore pit excavations dug too close to the necropolis edge.<sup>34</sup> Human remains likely found there way into a "great mass of tangled undergrowth."<sup>35</sup>

For the escaped slaves, either indirectly or directly involved in charcoaling, every part of the business was appealing from a secrecy standpoint. The housing, for example, consisted of temporal, primitive lean-two shelters. Structures like these lasted only as long as wood choppers needed to clear-cut an area. More permanent housing was not much better, with quarters made of logs or clabber boards, long since decayed from termites, rot, fire, and time. Many of the better made stone and brick Pennsylvania Deutsch houses survive today, but the primitive dwellings of runaway slaves are barely traceable. It is this ephemeral quality, of former slave life in the furnace community, that gives iron works in Cumberland and Franklin counties an added aura today.

A final issue this work seeks to answer revolves on the question of “did the forge community bear an outward familiarity to southern plantations, recognizable to former slaves?” On the surface, this seems to be a strange question to pose, but the more one studies the community surrounding a forge, the more similarities cross the mind. For starters, there’s the “Big House,” home to the iron master and his mistress. It served as the center of gravity for the furnace community characterized by the circulation of administrative orders, directives, and business transactions. Simultaneously it was the social center for those who lived and worked close by. Biscuits and other food stuffs, for example, were occasionally passed out during the mornings to forge-men and laborers. Special parties and gala affairs were conducted too at the big house during holidays and unique events. A special sense of accomplishment and boost in self-esteem accompanied living and working out of the big house. James Swank describes social interaction there for us stating,

...a tie of common interest, stronger than exists today under similar relations, bound master and workmen together. Whether the workmen were their own masters or not they were virtually fixtures of the furnace or the forge. The ladies of the ‘big house’ disdained not their poorer sisters, but were often their teachers, often their nurses and physicians, and always knew them by name and would recognize and greet them with politeness. If daily toil was the common heritage of the workmen and their families it may be said that their wants were few and their aspirations were humble.<sup>36</sup>

What might a former slave have taken away from this similarity to plantation life if indeed the big house was this cheery and benevolent under slavery? One can be assured that warm, fuzzy feelings about a desire to return to slave life was not part of their thought patterns. If anything the opposite was true. Perhaps the former slave experienced emotions of discomfort, uneasiness, and hesitation to approach the Pine Grove or Caledonia big house altogether. Whatever their comfort level with the central mansion, one message would be conveyed by its presence. That is, it was clear that central power stemmed from such a place, and that the grandeur and comforts of this home accompanied financial success and influence. The big house was a reminder of hierarchy and a visual measure of the finer things that people aspired to.

The big house was not the only community cross-over from plantation to furnace. The self-sufficiency of both institutions is yet another common trait that stands out. For instance, general studies of plantation life in the Chesapeake, where runaways to Pine Grove and Caledonia could have originated, reveal self-sustaining communities where all major trades and services are accounted for within.<sup>37</sup> Blacksmiths, carpenters, coopers, cobblers, teamsters, wood choppers and any number of skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled trades were performed daily by slaves to make Chesapeake plantations self-reliant. Even churches were built near quarters for slaves to gather and worship separately, albeit with unwelcome planter interference, but they nevertheless existed in increasing numbers in concert with an outgrowth of plantation ministries in the 1830's.<sup>38</sup> Separate cemeteries near churches were cultivated too.

Analogous in several ways to this were the communities for both Pine Grove and Caledonia, where social activities in general reinforced the gathering place of the forge. This was true not only in similarities regarding skilled artisans, but in spiritual matters where going to church was more than a leisure interest. The Methodists were particularly vigorous at Caledonia. Itinerant preachers were recorded to have made their way to the area, stirring up revival meetings. Methodist meetings, as they might be called, emerged according to Hoch as, "one of the few entertainments" for the workers of whom a "vast majority resided nearby."<sup>39</sup> The Methodist denomination historically reached out to African-Americans in the early nineteenth century and the audience for such meetings was probably interracial. Though speculative, it is likely that the Episcopal place of worship at Pine Grove appealed more to a white audience, perhaps management staff.<sup>40</sup>

Communal social activities were not confined to church either. Illustrating the lighter moments of camaraderie shared around the turn of the century at Pine Grove, Weiser thoughtfully described his perspective of the relationship between labor and management on special holidays stating,

J. C. Fuller was close to his employees; and Jay Cooke, the financier behind the company, gave a party every Fourth of July for them.

Lemonade, sugar cakes, fireworks, and races and contests were the order of the day. Prizes were awarded for safety during the year. One teamster, 'Biz' Dougherty, who was paralyzed in one arm, always got the award.<sup>41</sup>

If such festive occasions were common throughout the 1800s at Pine Grove or Caledonia, then fugitive slaves would have related to the scene depicted by Weiser from their earlier condition. It is readily known by historians of African-American studies that a majority of masters on southern plantations made a big deal of Christmas, Easter, weddings and funerals as both a stress release and a motivator to accomplish more work in the frenzied days leading up to celebration.<sup>42</sup> Of course, this comparison ends with any precise association made over commemorating July 4, because southern planters avoided drawing attention to thoughts of liberty, freedom, human rights, and language of all men are created equal. Observing July 4 with slaves was too risky for slave owners. Still, the parallels of a master from the big house pulling out all stops for a holiday were in full view.

There were obvious differences between the outward appearance of the forge community and a southern plantation. This concerned the existence of schools for the children of employees, though admittedly it is not clear whether the sons and daughters of black laborers attended. In all likelihood, most escapees were single men anyway, at least in their new status. Nevertheless schools were part of the community at least by the middle 1800s, if not earlier.<sup>43</sup> Private tutoring out of the iron master's mansion became an option for some. Apprenticeships were another continual form of education, a system where various trades and skills from clerk to forge-man were passed on from one generation to the next. In this sense, the whole furnace was a perpetual industrial school. For runaway slaves at Pine Grove and Caledonia, this form of education must have resembled methods and patterns for artisan apprenticeships among slaves in the Chesapeake.

As with schools, company stores were found in furnace villages but were not universal to plantations. Pine Grove was no exception. Weiser described the one there in a later time perhaps closer to 1900 as hopping, "with storekeepers Jack Croft and Jack Norton, selling everything imaginable."<sup>44</sup> Pine Grove daybooks from a century earlier support this assertion. They indicate that every conceivable sundry could be found in the company store. All miscellaneous items naturally were obtainable for certain pounds, shillings, and pence in the 1790s, or dollars and cents in the early 1800s. Smaller articles listed as "Sundries" represented a wide spectrum including,

Bacon, salt, beef, straw, flour, rye, butter, small ovens, blanket, linen, rails, axe, kettle, buckles, whiskey in ½ gallons, sugar, pots, pans, lid for oven, clock case, floor carpet, chocolate, boxes, trunks, corn, suit clothes, books, coat, wheat, frying pans, peaches, griddles, shawls, stockings, oil, tar, shoes, flax, muslin, cords of wood, oats, thread, plate, feed, Dutch ovens and tobacco.<sup>45</sup>

Larger merchandise on record as procured through the company store were, "cows, horses, wagons, and full size wood stoves."<sup>46</sup> Commodities for sale, large or small, were likely brought in by teamsters from their round trips to Baltimore or from business transactions made in Cumberland, Adams, and Franklin Counties, as we have seen earlier.

As for tangible structures representing the self-reliant village concept at Pine Grove, Weiser rounded out the "other buildings in the community [which] were the mill, the blacksmith shop, mule stables, office buildings, and the Big House, or Mansion House."<sup>47</sup> Between 1830 and 1860 an "engine house, blacksmith shop, boarding house, worker's housing and manager's house," were added to Laurel Forge of the Pine Grove estate.<sup>48</sup> A refinery for purifying metal, an icehouse, carpenter shop and sawmill eventually made up the complex.<sup>49</sup>

In conclusion, several questions were raised in this work regarding the issue of black labor primarily in two furnaces with an emphasis on Pine Grove. The first one asked "what would attract black men to labor in support of iron making in Adams, Cumberland and Franklin Counties?" Secondly, "why was charcoal production their primary trade?"

Thirdly, “what were the particular conditions of charcoal making that shaped the daily existence of African-American laborers?” Fourthly, did a division of labor exist between black and white or was the system open to promotion by merit?” Fifthly, “did the forge community bear an outward familiarity to southern plantations, recognized by former slaves?”

Before any of these queries were investigated, this paper established that black laborers did indeed work at Pine Grove and Caledonia furnaces. It was important to lay this foundation. While Caledonia records were destroyed in June 1863, during the American Civil War, by contrast many records still survive from Pine Grove that provide concrete names of black laborers in employment from 1789 to 1801. McCauslin’s work with the census and intimate knowledge of the Yellow Hill community provide more names of black workers associated with Pine Grove up through the 1860s. This combined together with vignettes connecting both forges to the Underground Railroad, along with the presence of the Quaker Meeting House, the pro-emancipation reputation of owners Thaddeus Stevens and Michael Edge, and multiple strains of the circumstantial evidence, all point to fugitive slaves working the woods and hills of South Mountain. The final proof is the abundant written evidence, paired with some visual verification in 1883, that male African-Americans were well represented at all work levels of the forge after 1879.<sup>50</sup>

In answering the questions of why escaped slaves gravitated to woods and mountains around these two furnaces, we identified three reasons. The first was the natural division of labor perhaps imposed on them by exclusion from the forge proper until 1850. Secondly, limited in their options escapees were accepting of the hard, dirty labor that others were less willing to do. Thirdly, the forests and constant movement of wood cutting for the charcoal process allowed for the necessary vanishing qualities commanded by a magician. A fourth reason to add for good measure was there were a couple thousand free African-Americans living in the area, permitting new runaways a chance to disappear in the crowd.<sup>51</sup>

As for the final matter of concern regarding cross-comparisons in community structure between the furnaces and southern plantations, we identified that at least some of the outward appearances were the same, but the intent and purposes were different. It was an interesting comparison and contrast nonetheless, offering a few cross-over parallels such as the big house, the self-sufficient autonomous economic and social structure, and a single-minded purpose towards community activities including common worship and holiday celebrations. It is impossible to know how former slaves viewed the parallels, but they must have noticed them immediately. Because the furnaces over time allowed for advancement and promotion, the reminders likely faded away with the passage of years, if not immediately.

More research is needed to work through these questions and others to reconstruct not only the communal relationships between black and white, but those involving the established black laborer and fugitive slave, all within the construct of furnaces at Pine Grove, Caledonia and others in South Central Pennsylvania. With further study, the

recovery of important lives and stories will not be the lone benefit, but rather a better sense will emerge of how important Cumberland, Franklin, and Adams Counties were to Underground Railroad activity. One unofficial promotional slogan that was floated for advertisement consideration in Gettysburg a few years ago proposed a marketing blitz centered on the catch phrase “Freedom Begins Here.” Off the record there were conversations back-and-forth about the shortcomings in Gettysburg’s past regarding the issue of freedom, namely minor resistance of some its citizens to celebrate after the reading of Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863. Other inconsistencies were put forth too, until the enthusiasm for the catchphrase died out. However, with honest and earnest efforts directed by historians of the three neighboring counties towards exploration of the cultures and subcultures at Pine Grove, Caledonia, and other forge communities, a whole new approach to doing history on Gettysburg may materialize along with perhaps the re-emergence of a dismissed slogan.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>MG-175, Pine Grove Furnace, PGE Collection, *Journals 1789-1801*, 5 Vols. FISH #'s 3864-3868, LOC# 17-1438.

<sup>2</sup>Bradley R. Hoch, *Thaddeus Stevens in Gettysburg: The Making of an Abolitionist* (Gettysburg, PA: Adams County Historical Society, 2005), 208.

<sup>3</sup>Hoch, 212.

<sup>4</sup>Debra Sandoe McCauslin, *Reconstructing the Past: Puzzle of a Lost Community* (Gettysburg, PA: For the Cause Productions, 2005), 11. John Alosi, *Shadow of Freedom: Slavery in Post-Revolutionary Cumberland County, 1780-1810* (Shippensburg University Press, 1994), 84.

<sup>5</sup>Horace Andrew Keefer, Superintendent at Pine Grove 1879, "Recollections, Historical and Otherwise, Relating to Old Pine Grove Furnace," *Potomac Appalachian Trail Club Bulletin* (PATC), October 1934, 3. Cumberland County Historical Society, Vertical File - Pine Grove Furnace.

<sup>6</sup>National Park Service, *Hopewell Furnace Official Handbook* (Harpers Ferry Center, West Virginia, copyright 1983), 56-57.

<sup>7</sup>Fact Sheet, Caledonia State Park, Ranger Station & Visitor Center, Vertical Files -- Caledonia Furnace.

<sup>8</sup>Catalogue Sheet, MG-175 Pine Grove Furnace Collection, 1785-1914, 60 cu. ft., 1.

<sup>9</sup>MG-175, Pine Grove Furnace, *Journals 1789-1801*, 5 Vols.

<sup>10</sup>McCauslin, 37-42.

<sup>11</sup>McCauslin, 40.

<sup>12</sup>MG-175, PGE Collection, *Journal 1793-1798*, Harrisburg: Pennsylvania State Archives, FISH #3866, 178, 194.

<sup>13</sup>MG-175, PGE Collection, *Journal 1799-1801*, Harrisburg: Pennsylvania State Archives, FISH # 3865, 3-4.

<sup>14</sup>MG-175, PGE Collection, *Journal 1789-1791*, Harrisburg: Pennsylvania State Archives, FISH # 3864, 369.

<sup>15</sup>Keefer, 3.

<sup>16</sup>*Hopewell Furnace Official Handbook*, 56.

<sup>17</sup>Frank S. Mullen, *Things worth mentioning of early history of Pine Grove Furnace 1764-1986*, Interview near his 87th birthday, April 19, 1989, 2, Cumberland County Historical Society – Vertical File for Pine Grove Furnace.

<sup>18</sup>Mullen, 2.

<sup>19</sup>Mullen, 2.

<sup>20</sup>Frederick Sheely Weiser, *Family Memories of Pine Grove Furnace*, Address to Hamilton Library of Cumberland County, November 18, 1954, Address to Adams County Historical Society, December 7, 1954, 9.

<sup>21</sup>National Park Service, *American Charcoal Making: In the Era of the Cold-blast Furnace*, History No. 14 (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, 1941), 8. Caledonia State Park, Ranger Station & Visitor Center, Vertical Files -- Caledonia Furnace

<sup>22</sup>Martha Gibbons, daughter of last ironmaster Colonel Jackson Fuller, *Pine Grove Furnace once an industrial complex*, originally written after World War II, *The Sentinel*—Page D7, Sunday July 13, 2003, Cumberland County Historical Society, Vertical file for Pine Grove Furnace.

<sup>23</sup>Caledonia State Park, *Thaddeus Stevens Historical Trail: A Self-Guiding Tour* (Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, 1998), 9.

<sup>24</sup>Goodyear, Benjamin K, Esq., *Blast Furnaces of Cumberland County*, Paper read before historical meeting of the Hamilton Library Association, Carlisle PA Oct. 23, 1903. Reprint from Shippensburg News. Also Lenore Embrick Flower, *History of Pine Grove Furnace*, Paper Read before the Cumberland, Perry, and Juniata Historical Societies at the Cumberland County Annual Pilgrimage to Pine Grove Furnace, June 27, 1933, 9.

<sup>25</sup>Weiser, 11.

<sup>26</sup>Weiser, 11.

<sup>27</sup>*American Charcoal Making*, 24.

<sup>28</sup>Flower, Paper read on *History of Pine Grove Furnace*, 9.

<sup>29</sup>*Hopewell Furnace Official Handbook*, 49-51.

<sup>30</sup>Debra Sandoe McCauslin, Personal Interview on April 15, 2007, Author of *Reconstructing the Past: Puzzle of a Lost Community*. McCauslin states: “At the Iron Master’s mansion in Pine Grove they show a hiding place where it is contended that UGRR folks sought refuge. The Ege’s and Thornburgh’s owned that one and were reported to be abolitionists.”

<sup>31</sup>Reverend Thompson P. Edge, *History and Genealogy of the Edge Family in the United States, 1738-1911* (Harrisburg, PA: The Star Printing Company, 1911).

<sup>32</sup>*A Closer Look at Franklin County in the 1850’s: African-American Lives, The Valley of the Shadow*, <http://valley.vcdh.virginia.edu/usingvalley/interpretations/presence/frblack.html>  
“Franklin [County] offered refuge for refugee slaves. The mountains that stood on either side of the county offered places to hide in their thick trees and rocky outcroppings. Fugitives followed the Appalachian Trail, worn by Indians generations before, into upstate New York and then into Canada.”

<sup>33</sup>McCauslin, 30-35.

<sup>34</sup>Lenore Embrick Flower, *History of Pine Grove Furnace* (Carlisle, PA: Cumberland County Historical Society, 2003), 20.

<sup>35</sup>Flower, 20.

<sup>36</sup>Flower, *History of Pine Grove Furnace*, 27. James M. Swank, *History of the Manufacture of Iron in All Ages and Particularly in the United States from Colonial Times to 1891* (Philadelphia: The American Iron and Steel Association), 1892.

<sup>37</sup>Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

<sup>38</sup>Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: University Press, 2004), 151-210. See Chapter 4, “Rule of the Gospel Order” for a full explanation of separate black churches under slavery, and of substantial inroads made by the Baptist and Methodist denominations therein.

<sup>39</sup>Hoch, 208.

<sup>40</sup>Raboteau, 207. “...black ministers were extremely rare or nonexistent” within the Southern branch of the Episcopal denomination. Baptists and Methodists were considerably more successful with courting African-Americans, North and South.

<sup>41</sup>Weiser, 10.

<sup>42</sup>Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll Jordan Roll: The World Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972, 74, 76), pp 566-584. \*Refer to Part 2 and Chapter on “De Big Times” for a full explanation of the magnitude of holidays on the plantation.

<sup>43</sup>Keefer, 6. Mullen, 1. Mullen writes, “I can remember two different school houses, the first one along the main road near Toms Run built of stone and the second one of brick between the old furnace stack and the creek.”

<sup>44</sup>Weiser, 9.

<sup>45</sup>MG 175-Pine Grove Collection, *Daybook 1797 –1800*, NL 17-1332 OL 7-4293. Harrisburg: Pennsylvania State Archives. Also see *Daybooks: 1794, 96, 98, 99, 1803-04*, 5 vols. NL 17-1331, OL 7-4292, *Sundries to Store, Teams, and Individuals*.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Weiser, 9.

<sup>48</sup>Cumberland County Historical Society, *Cooke Township – Iron Furnaces, Cumberland County: An Architectural Survey* (Carlisle, PA: Cumberland County Historical Society, 1990), 92. Caledonia State Park Ranger Station & Visitor Center, Vertical Files -- Caledonia Furnace.

Mullen, 3. Mullen remembered the icehouses stating, “Later a large ice house was built and tons of ice were cut and stored here and ice was also hauled by train to Carlisle where they had large ice houses...This really stopped suddenly as a mountain fire too close by ignited the building and burned it away from this large pile of ice. This happened in the summer time and I can remember streams of water as thick as your body running out of the ice until it was entirely melted.”

<sup>50</sup>Flower, *History of Pine Grove Furnace*, 16-17. Two page fold-out photograph of the furnace taken in 1883, prominently showing black workers, including one large man at the focal point of the panoramic image.

<sup>51</sup>*A Closer Look at Franklin County in the 1850's: African-American Lives, The Valley of the Shadow*, <http://valley.vcdh.virginia.edu/usingvalley/interpretations/presence/frblack.html>

“Franklin County was home to a large number of African Americans: 1,788 people identified in the census as black or of mixed race lived there.” This made it easier for runaways to blend in.