

Worman's Mill Civic Association Program on Catoctin Furnace

In some places history lies buried far beneath the ground, covered over by years and the ever-encroaching march of progress. In other places it is right in front of us, proudly displayed for all to see. The picturesque village of Catoctin Furnace is one of the latter places. Its history is basically the history of the Industrial Revolution in the United States.

After the settlers came to the Monocacy River Valley at the foot of the Catoctin Mountain, rich hematite ore deposits were found. This led to industrialization sweeping the valley. The area was ideally suited to iron production at Catoctin Furnace due to the rich ore deposits, flowing streams that could drive bellows and a large forest where they found charcoal.

As early as the Revolutionary War it produced ammunition for the Continental Army, including shells fired at the Siege of Yorktown.

In the early days enslaved Africans provided a large part of the labor force at Catoctin Furnace. More than 80 slaves were there at one time. Many slaves became skilled blacksmiths, colliers, founders and forge men. There is a graveyard containing the remains of some of the enslaved workers located in the area

By the middle of the 19th century, the number of enslaved workers at Catoctin declined sharply as large numbers of European immigrant workers moved into the area. Hiring them was cheaper than keeping a large enslaved population to work at the furnace.

The growth of large corporations which could produce iron more efficiently along with improved technology, markets and transportation, would ultimately doom the Catoctin Furnace complex. Today one stack remains of Catoctin Furnace.

But, from 1776 to 1903, iron companies mined the rich ore near Catoctin Mountain, smelted it in furnaces and cast raw pig iron and iron implements of every description.

We learned about the history of Catoctin Furnace and the individuals who made the Furnace a success.

The presenter was Phillip S. Greenwalt who is Chief of Interpretation and Education at Catoctin Mountain Park.

It was a hybrid presentation held at the Clubhouse and virtually on May 17, 2023.

You can view the presentation on 5.17.23 by Phillip Greenwalt on Catoctin Furnace by clicking on the link below

<https://youtu.be/pgeSG7oNVpM?t=6>