

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------------|
| Introduction..... | ii |
| Chapter 1: Settling the Catoctin..... | 1 |
| A. Native Americans..... | 1 |
| B. Early White Exploration and Settlement | 8 |
| C. Settling Western Maryland | 12 |
| D. The French and Indian War | 21 |
| E. The Arrival of Iron..... | 25 |
| F. The Road to Revolution | 29 |
| Chapter 2: War and Industry on the Mountain, 1776-1859 | 33 |
| A. Introduction..... | 33 |
| B. Forging a Revolution | 34 |
| C. Revolution and the Furnace | 37 |
| D. Rumsey's Steamboat | 41 |
| E. Early Industry..... | 44 |
| F. Wheat and Whiskey | 48 |
| G. Catoctin Furnace from the Top Down | 52 |
| H. Catoctin Furnace from the Bottom Up: Slavery | 58 |
| I. The 1838 Riot | 66 |
| J. The Furnace After Brien | 71 |
| Chapter 3: Civil War and the Decline of Industry | 75 |
| A. Introduction..... | 75 |
| B. Catoctin's Civil War..... | 75 |
| C. "The Sound of the Steam Whistle Twice a Day" | 90 |
| D. The Furnace: A Relict Industry..... | 91 |
| E. Life and Labor at the Catoctin Furnace | 98 |
| F. The Rise of Tourism | 101 |
| Chapter 4: The Eve of Acquisition | 110 |
| A. Introduction..... | 110 |
| B. The End of Industry on the Mountain..... | 110 |
| C. "Pleasure Seekers": The Growth of Tourism..... | 112 |
| D. The Wreck of the Blue Mountain Express..... | 119 |
| E. Fire and Fire Control..... | 120 |
| F. Moonshining and Blue Blazes | 122 |
| G. The Mountain on the Eve of Acquisition..... | 129 |
| Chapter 5: A New Deal for the Mountain | 138 |
| A. Introduction..... | 138 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| B. The Depression in Washington and Frederick Counties..... | 138 |
| C. The New Deal in Western Maryland | 148 |
| D. Bessie Darling..... | 150 |
| E. The Birth of the Park..... | 153 |
| F. The Ordeal of Acquisition, Part I..... | 161 |
| G. Construction and Labor at Catoctin, Part I | 166 |
| H. The Ordeal of Acquisition, Part II | 171 |
| I. Construction and Labor at Catoctin, Part II | 176 |
| I. Use and Segregation | 178 |
| I. The CCC in the Catoctins | 181 |
| Chapter 6: War and Politics Shape the Park | 194 |
| A. Introduction..... | 194 |
| B. The Winds of War..... | 194 |
| C. War..... | 196 |
| D. Shangri-La..... | 200 |
| E. Wartime Road Construction | 208 |
| F. The War Reshapes the Park | 210 |
| G. The Fate of the Park | 211 |
| H. Conclusion | 217 |
| Prospects for Future Research | 218 |
| Selected Sources | 221 |
| Maps and Appendices..... | 230 |

Introduction

Present-day Catoctin Mountain Park encompasses 5,770 acres, nestled in the hills of western Maryland. To visitors the site is both majestic and serene. No matter how crowded the park, a hiker can always find long stretches of trail to him or herself. The quiet and peace of the park today, however, masks a long and complex history. Since settlers first arrived in the region in the 1740s, the park area has witnessed both subsistence and commercial farming, industry, tourism, recreational hunting, and military usage (both during the Civil War and World War II).

Over the years, the National Park Service has made numerous efforts to document and interpret the history of the park. The lost art of charcoal making and the workings of an early sawmill, for instance, are on active display for interested park visitors. This historic resource study is part of that continuing effort to better understand and interpret the abundant cultural resources present within the park boundaries. It seeks to “address the relevant contexts for the park” and to offer “an historical framework for future interpretive and preservation efforts, and to provide baseline information for development of the Park General Management Plan.”

The six chapters presented in this study depict the several overlapping phases of mountain development. The first chapter treats the Native American presence and the early, largely German, settlement of the region. Chapter 2 introduces industry to the area in the form of the Catoctin Iron Furnace. Included is a discussion of the presence of slavery at the furnace. The third chapter, focusing in particular on the Civil War, the slow decline of the iron furnace, and the emergence of a tourist industry, carries the story

to the end of the nineteenth century. The mountain area on the eve of acquisition by the federal government is the subject of the fourth chapter.

The narrative takes a new direction in Chapter 5. In 1935, as part of a New Deal program to develop recreation areas near urban populations and address the problem of farmers working “submarginal land,” the federal government began purchasing mountain land for a planned “recreational demonstration area.” The acquisition and construction process, chronicled in Chapter 5, was anything but smooth. The final chapter treats the military’s use of the park during World War II as well as the establishment and early use of the presidential retreat President Franklin D. Roosevelt called Shangri-La. Finally, tensions between the state of Maryland and the federal government over the fate of Catoctin Recreational Demonstration Area are described. In the end, a compromise allowed the National Park Service to retain a large portion of the originally-purchased area, while the state of Maryland took over the southern portion of the park. This compromise between two opposing forces might be seen as representative of the many compromises and accommodations made over time—all of which ultimately shaped the present-day park.

My study comes of the heels of others, including historical work by Former Park Superintendent Frank Mentzer and author Dale Nelson. Barbara Kirkconnell’s excellent administrative history of the park, covering in detail many of the important decisions that shaped the park offers an excellent companion piece to this HRS .

In the preparation of this report, I was especially indebted to members of the Catoctin Mountain Park staff who gave generously of their time, in particular to James Voigt, Roger Steintl, Sally Griffin, and Park Superintendent J. Mel Poole. Gary Scott,

regional historian for the NPS, National Capital Region, proved a helpful and patient overseer. Among the many archivists and libraries who have generously of their time is Ann Cissel of the Thurmont Historical Society, as well as Louis O'Donoghue and Mary Mannix of the Frederick County Public Libraries Maryland Room. Janet L. Davis, historical preservation planner for the Frederick County Planning Commission provided expert counsel and opened her files for my use. In addition, the staffs of the Maryland Department of National Resources, the Maryland Hall of Records, the Maryland Historic Trust, and the Frederick County Historical Association proved particularly helpful. Special thanks also goes to Judith Early, of the NPS, National Capital Region, who generously read and edited draft chapters of this report.

While these individuals gave kindly of their time, and while their insights and help have made the study richer, any oversights remain the responsibility of the author.

Chapter One

Settling the Catoctins

For centuries before the arrival of European whites, the Catoctin mountain area sat largely uninhabited with the exception of occasional groups of roaming Native Americans, lured by the rich natural resources of the area. Even as white colonists settled other areas of Maryland, the western part of the state remained sparsely populated. Then, beginning in the 1740s, whites began arriving in greater numbers. Early settlers were mostly Germans, escaping the political and religious turmoil of Europe. They carried with them an intense religious devotion and proficiency in farming. Life for the early pioneers could be hard, even terrifying when war broke out. Yet the availability of large, bountiful tracts of land offered real rewards. As the revolution approached, eastern elites, largely of English origin, also began noting the rich resources of the Catoctin area. Among them were Thomas Johnson, future governor of Maryland, and his partners who planned to build a iron furnace at the foot of the mountain. Chapter 1 then is the story of pioneers, rapid development, and swift change.

Native Americans

Traveling through Maryland in the 1680s, Dutch explorer Jaspas Danckaerts was impressed by the burgeoning colony, but he sensed that something was missing. “There are few Indians,” noted the Dutchman, “in comparison with the extent of the country.” He blamed the English for having “almost exterminated” the native population.¹ The relative paucity of Indians

¹Frank Porter, “Behind the Frontier: Indian Survival in Maryland,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 75 (March 1980), 42.

in Maryland actually was a permanent feature of the region and predated the arrival of the English by centuries. But Danckaerts' general point was correct: Native Americans did not populate Maryland as heavily as they did other areas of North America. And within the Maryland region, no area had a smaller Indian population than western Maryland, which reflected the general trend of sparse inhabitation found in the northern and central Appalachian region.²

During the Paleo-Indian era (1300-7500 BC) the first Native Americans entered the continent by crossing the Bering Strait. Nomadic hunters, these early travelers left few traces. Still, archeologists have uncovered enough evidence to establish that such early natives did inhabit the region that became Maryland.³ Gradually as the climate warmed and forests developed, the early Indian population increased--especially around the waterways of the Chesapeake. By the Woodland period (2000 BC-1600 AD), agricultural villages and organized tribes had emerged in the coastal areas.⁴

The Blue Ridge and Monocacy Valley areas, however, contained significantly fewer occupants than eastern areas. Some scholars have theorized that during the Woodland period and after western Maryland served as a buffer zone between coastal settlements and the western Indians occupying the Ohio Valley.

Yet archeologists have uncovered significant evidence that western Maryland was not

²Robert Mitchell, "Revisionism and Regionalism," in *Appalachia: A Regional Geography*, Mitchell, Raitz and Ulack eds. (Boulder, Co., 1984), 9.

³Frank W. Porter, *Maryland Indians: Yesterday and Today* (Baltimore, MD, 1983), 2-3.

⁴Porter, *Maryland Indians*, 5-11, 30. Scholars continue to debate the total number of native Americans in Maryland at the point of contact with Europeans. Estimates range from roughly 6,500 to 8,500. By 1756, a conservative estimate had only 140 Indians living in Maryland.

completely uninhabited. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, amateur archeologists such as E.R. Goldsborough began making surveys of the Monocacy Valley and Catoctin area. His surveys pointed to numerous sites containing evidence of Native American inhabitation. Although Native American sites in Eastern Maryland continue to draw the majority of scholarly interest, by the second half of the twentieth century, building on the work of Goldsborough, professional archeological surveys were underway in western Maryland. These studies suggest that native Americans did value and seek to exploit the rich natural resources available in the region.

More than anything else, the Catoctin and Monocacy areas served as fertile hunting grounds for eastern tribes. Around the mountains, exploring parties pursued deer and other game. In order to facilitate hunting in the uninhabited territory, Native Americans set brush fires to clear out game. At times the fires burnt with such fury that they could be smelled forty miles away.⁵ Also of value were the rich deposits of rhyolite available in the western mountains.⁶ Rhyolite could be fashioned into arrowheads, hoes, and other important tools. Those in search of the compound would dig small pits into the flattops of ridges.⁷ The work of local archeologist Spencer O. Geasey in the 1960s and 1970s, focusing on rock shelters and rhyolite pits in Frederick County, stirred interest and suggested the need for more archaeological work.⁸

⁵Robert Brugger, *Maryland: A Middle Temperament, 1634-1980* (Baltimore, 1988), 67.

⁶Dennis C. Curry and Maureen Kavanaugh, "The Middle to Late Woodland Transition in Maryland," *North American Archaeologist*, 12 (1991), 3-28.

⁷C.E. Schildknecht, *Monocacy and Catoctin*, vol. 1 (Shippensburg, PA, 1985), 8.

⁸Spencer O. Geasey, "Albert's Cave," *Maryland Archeology* 9 (March-September 1973), 3-9; Geasey, "The Tuscarora-Rock Shelter," *Journal of the Archeological Society of Maryland*, 7

Between 1978 and 1980, the Maryland Geological Survey conducted an "intensive archeological reconnaissance" of upper Frederick County. As part of the survey, Michael Stewart excavated "aboriginal quarries" along the west slope of Catoctin Mountain near Foxville. Seeming to date from the Woodland period, the site was "characterized by large amounts of primary chipping debris, few diagnostics, and occasionally by small pits against the face of the outcrop." Finding ample evidence of rhyolite manufacturing, Stewart and the survey group concluded that the site might have been part of a larger "rhyolite procurement and processing system." Although, little is known of the mechanics of this system, archeologists hypothesize the existence of "a regional exchange network operating between bands or by movement of groups from the Coastal Plains to the interior processing camps."⁹ What one archeologist characterized as "periodically revisited temporary" camps existed in the area to support to the rhyolite extraction.¹⁰

Other Western Maryland excavations have indicated more permanently inhabited sites. State archeologist Tyler Bastian excavated a Monocacy Valley site called Biggs Ford Village, where he found an ornament and other artifacts from the Late Woodland Period.¹¹ More

(March 1971). Geasey also reports finding pottery bits on Catoctin Mountain, .5 miles southwest of Hamburg Fire Tower.

⁹Maureen Kavanagh, "Archeological Resources of the Monocacy Region," (Annapolis, MD, 1982), 68, 97-100.

¹⁰Ibid., 117. In 1980, the survey group excavated one such "periodically revisited temporary camp," named Myers' site, on Owens Creek in the foothills of Catoctin Mountain. Projectile points found on the site suggest habitation in the late Archaic to Middle Woodlands eras.

¹¹Tyler Bastian, "Preliminary Notes on the Biggs Ford Site, Frederick County, Maryland," (1974), Maryland Geological Survey, Division of Archeology, File Report 16.

recently, in 1992, the Archeological Society of Maryland initiated a major effort to excavate a Late-Woodland site high on a bluff over the Monocacy river, northwest of the present site of the Frederick Airport. While preliminary investigations do not lend themselves to absolute conclusions, the Rosenstock Village site, as it was named, did contain evidence of a possible permanent settlement.¹² Future digs may someday fill out the picture of prehistoric life in the Monocacy Valley region, but preliminary surveys suggest that temporary camps existed in the Catoctin Mountain area, while more permanent, yet still small, dwelling areas lay to the south--especially along the Potomac.

Clearly, the major source of transportation for the Native Americans sojourning in Western Maryland were the Potomac and Monocacy Rivers. But there also appear to have been a series of Indian trails allowing for passage through some of the more difficult terrain. Although nearly impossible to recreate, such trails do seem to have provided the basis for the later Monocacy wagon road, which sliced diagonally through the region from eastern Pennsylvania to central Virginia (see Map 1).¹³

With the arrival of European settlers in Maryland, beginning in the 1630s, a clearer picture emerges of the native population in the region. Early accounts from white settlers suggest a state of tension between coastal Indians and their neighbors to the northwest. Smaller tribes--in

¹²Archaeological Society of Maryland, "Field Procedures for the 22nd Annual Field Session in Maryland Archeology: the Rosenstock Village Site," 1992; Donald Peck, "Archaeological Resources Assessment of the Monocacy River Region," January 1979, 178. Other sites which may have featured permanent inhabitants include those on Nolands Ferry and near Devilbiss bridge.

¹³John Dern and Grace Tracey, *Pioneers of the Old Monocacy, 1721-1743* (Baltimore, 1987), 50; Schildknecht, vol.1, 15.

particular the Piscataway (also known as the Conoys) and Nanticokes, both from the Algonquian language group--occupied the Chesapeake area.¹⁴ To their north and west were the Susquehannock, a more warlike tribe, which made its home on the Susquehanna River. The Susquehanna--related to the Iroquois-- but not part of the confederation--frequently clashed with both their Algonquian neighbors to the south and the confederacy to the north.¹⁵ These series of raids and battles may have discouraged permanent settlement in the western reaches of Maryland, which sat as disputed territory between warring tribes.

Intertribal tensions also shaped early relations with the newly arrived Europeans in the 1630s. The Chesapeake Algonquian tribes strove to establish good relations with the whites, so as to tip the scales against the Susquehanna. They shared their technology with the newcomers and introduced Europeans to maize, beans, pumpkins, and squash.¹⁶ But good relations were not to last. Lord Baltimore, after essentially removing the Susquehanna threat, turned on his Indian allies.¹⁷ By the late seventeenth century, the proprietary government of Maryland had forced the Piscataway out of the Chesapeake region. Most moved to Pennsylvania, but some settled temporarily near Point of Rocks, on Heater's Island, on the Potomac River.¹⁸ By the 1720s, the

¹⁴Barbara Leitch, *Concise Dictionary of Indian Tribes of North America* (Algonac, MI, 1979), 447-485.

¹⁵*Ibid*, 292-3.

¹⁶Porter, *Maryland Indians*, 12-14.

¹⁷Elizabeth Kessel, "Germans on the Maryland Frontier: A Social History of Frederick County, Maryland, 1730-1800," (Ph.D. diss., Rice University, 1981), 16.

¹⁸*Ibid*, 18-19.

tribe had left Maryland completely.¹⁹

The displacement caused by the arrival of white Europeans brought other Native American tribes briefly to the Monocacy Valley region. Leaving their native South Carolina, the Algonkian Shawnee tribe temporarily inhabited the region before moving further north.²⁰ At other junctures, the Delaware and the Catawbas used the Monocacy River for travel and hunting purposes. The Tuscarora tribe, originally from the Carolinas, moved northward, after the Tuscarora war in 1711-1713. An English map from 1721 clearly shows a Tuscarora village at the mouth of the Monocacy River on the Frederick County side. The tribe, of course, also gave its name to the creek flowing to the south of the present-day park.²¹ Like other eastern tribes during the difficult eighteenth century, the Tuscarora only briefly made Maryland their home before moving westward.

By the second decade of the eighteenth century, then, most Indians tribes had passed through western Maryland onto points further west. Although they dramatically reasserted themselves during the French and Indian War, on the eve of the white settlement of western Maryland, Native Americans were simply not a factor in the region.

Early White Exploration and Settlement

¹⁹James Merrell, "Cultural Continuity Among the Piscataway Indians of Colonial Maryland," *William and Mary Quarterly*, (1979) 36, 548-570. Frank W. Porter, "A Century of Accommodation: The Nanticoke Indians in Colonial Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 74 (June 1979), 175-188. The Nanticokes of the Eastern Shore followed a similar route of exile, reaching Pennsylvania by the 1940s.

²⁰Kessel, 17, Frederick Hoxie, *Encyclopedia of North American Indians* (Boston, 1996), 582-583.

²¹Hoxie, 650.

The absence of hostile Indians, however, did not lead to the immediate European settlement of Western Maryland. Indeed the first whites to come to the mid-Atlantic region (arriving in 1607) remained primarily in the Chesapeake area for almost a century. The appeal of the Tidewater region rested on the profitability of tobacco. By the late seventeenth century--while western Maryland remained largely uninhabited--thriving plantations, a self-indulgent gentry, and an African slave-based labor system had sprung up in the Chesapeake. Since good tobacco could not be cultivated in the western reaches of the colony, there existed little interest in exploration and development.²² The absence of a navigable river in central western Maryland, the threat of Indian raids, and an ongoing border dispute between Maryland and Pennsylvania also worked to discourage settlement of the region.²³ While eastern Maryland thrived, western Maryland sat virtually vacant of white settlers.

By the early-eighteenth century, however, the market for tobacco had softened and the colonies began to diversify their economies.²⁴ Like the Native Americans whom they had displaced from the Tidewater region, European settlers began to look west in hope of exploiting the rich natural resources of the region. Trappers, traders, and missionaries were frequent visitors to the area by the early part of the century. In 1712, explorer Baron de Graffenried climbed Sugar Loaf Mountain and recorded: "We discovered from this height three chains of mountains, the last higher than the one before, somewhat distant and a very fine valley between

²²Brugger, 73.

²³Frank W. Porter III, "From Backcountry to Country: The Delayed Settlement of Western Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 70 (1975), 329.

²⁴Kessel, "Germans on the Maryland Frontier," 22.

the first ranges.” Soon squatters and a few other hearty souls began setting up permanent homes in the region.²⁵

The Chesapeake gentry, seeking investment opportunities, also grew interested. In 1727, a Chesapeake planter, Benjamin Tasker acquired a patent for 7,000 acres, west of the Monocacy, roughly twelve miles up the Potomac. The investor called his purchase “Tasker’s Chance,” as if to underscore the still risky nature of western ventures. Maryland’s colonial government--seeking to encourage settlement of the backcountry--issued a proclamation in 1732 waiving the usual 40 shillings Sterling per 100 acre fee to anyone who would settle land in the western holdings of the colony.²⁶

Yet settlement was hampered by a bitter debate over the exact boundaries of Maryland. Pennsylvania claimed much of the land west of the Susquehanna (which, of course, would include the present-day park). Indeed, Maryland’s interest in populating the area had everything to do with efforts to buttress its claims against Pennsylvania. Quickly the dispute turned violent and a bitter war broke out in the 1730s. English-born pioneer Thomas Cresap--a robust Daniel Boone-type character--was Maryland’s chief defender. His wife, known to sport a gun, two pistols, a scalping knife, and a tomahawk, was no less committed to the cause. To Cresap, area farmers loyal to Pennsylvania were “poachers.” When captured by Pennsylvania authorities in 1736 and brought to Philadelphia to stand trial, Cresap infuriated his captors by declaring Penn’s

²⁵Paul and Rita Gordon, *A Textbook History of Frederick County* (Frederick, Md, 1975), 9-11.

²⁶Kessell, 110-111.

city, “one of the Prettyst [sic] Towns in Maryland.”²⁷

The bitter conflict slowed settlement of the Monocacy Valley region even as immigrants began passing through the region and noting its potential. Fleeing religious persecution and dwindling economic opportunity, Germans, especially from the Palatinate region of the Rhine, began migrating in large numbers to Pennsylvania in the 1730s. By 1750, the population of Pennsylvania was one half-German. Seeking inexpensive but fertile land, some Germans moved southwest from Pennsylvania, along the Monocacy Road or “Great Wagon Road.”²⁸ Most likely an outgrowth of the old Indian trail through the region, the Monocacy route began in Pennsylvania on the west side of the Susquehanna at Wrightsville, then proceeded through York and Hanover counties to Taneytown, Maryland. From there, the road moved into the future Frederick County through the future Williamsport, then southwesterly across the Monocacy and Potomac.²⁹ Germans traveling the road might have been tempted to join the smattering of settlers already in western Maryland, but, despite the promises of Maryland’s leaders, they feared paying double taxes or getting caught in the violent cross fire between warring colonies.³⁰ Most, therefore, pressed onward to the Shenendoah Valley.

²⁷Brugger, 68; also see Charles Dutrizac, “Local Identity and Authority in a Disputed Hinterland: The Pennsylvania-Maryland Border in the 1730s” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 115 (1991), 35-61.

²⁸John Hinton, “A New Maps of the Province of Maryland in North America,” from *Universal Magazine* 66 (1780), in *Atlas of Historical Maps of Maryland, 1608-1908*, Papenfuse and Coale, eds. (Baltimore, 1982), 44. Hinton’s map designates a “Great Wagon Road to Philadelphia.” Also see Park Rouse, Jr., *The Great Wagon Road, Philadelphia to the South, How the Scotch-Irish and Germanics Settled the Uplands* (Richmond, Dietz Press, 1995).

²⁹Kessell, 48-49.

³⁰Porter, 329.

By the 1740s, the conflict had settled somewhat, although it would fester for another thirty years. By that time Benjamin Tasker's son-in-law, Daniel Dulany, was ready to take the initiative in settling the area. Acquiring his father-in-law's land in 1744, Dulany hired Thomas Cresap to conduct a survey of western Maryland. Cresap reported that land in the Monocacy Valley equaled if not surpassed "any in America for natural Advantages." Encouraged, Dulany patented other land in the area, and subdivided Tasker's Chance, initially offering plots at bargain prices.³¹ Although a member of the Chesapeake gentry, Dulany actively sought to attract Germans to his holdings. With a reputation as solid, industrious farmers, Dulany thought them to be the perfect pioneers to tame his land, and he offered them land sometimes at below cost.³²

Many Germans took up Dulaney's offer. The 7,000 acres that made up Tasker's original chancy purchase soon became the site of a thriving city named for Lord Baltimore's son, Frederick. Many others, having accumulated enough money to purchase land themselves, took up residence to the north of Tasker's Chance, along the Monocacy River, near the Catoctin Mountains. The area had real appeal to German immigrants. The attractions, according to historian Elizabeth Kessel, included a "large measure of civil and religious freedom and unprecedented opportunity of owning . . . and accumulating large amounts of land . . . for a simple fee and only a minor obligation of a quitrent (annual tax), and land could be passed on to heirs with full force of law."³³

Settling Western Maryland

³¹Brugger, 67-69.

³²Kessell, 58.

³³Ibid, 330.

Who were these German and German-speaking Swiss immigrants? Most journeyed to the New World as a result of the religious, social, and economic chaos plaguing Germany in the decades following a costly series of religious-inspired wars. The War of Spanish Succession in 1701, in particular, ravaged the area along the Rhine known as the Palatinate, the homeland of many who later moved to the Monocacy and Catoctin region.³⁴ Not yet a united country, Germany contained what one historian called a “myriad of petty principalities,” each with its own authoritarian leader, imposing his religion on his subjects.³⁵ Protestant sects such as the Dunkards (German Baptists), the Mennonites, and the Moravians often suffered persecution, as could Lutherans or Catholics if they found themselves in the wrong municipality. Likewise, land had grown scarce and costly. A twelve-acre farm actually represented a substantial holding in eighteenth-century Germany.³⁶

There then existed compelling religious and economic “push” factors encouraging emigration. At the same time, honest men such as William Penn and less honest speculators and shippers, seeking to profit from the desperate population, aggressively advertised along the Rhine. The promise of land and help on the journey created powerful “pull” factors for already discontented Germans in the area. Not all the pull factors, however, proved quite to be all they were made out. Dishonest schemers lay in wait for the eager migrants, and some were cheated

³⁴Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America* (New York, 1986), 34. The Palatinate, itself, was something of a “melting pot,” and, at times, a catchall term. Anyone traveling down the Rhine, including a Bavarian, a Westphalian, or a Swiss, might have been called a Palatinate at the time.

³⁵Jerome R. Reich, *Colonial America* (Saddle River, NJ, 1998), 138.

³⁶Elizabeth Kessel, "Germans in the Making of Frederick Country, Maryland," in *Appalachian Frontiers: A Regional Geography*, Mitchell et als. eds., (Boulder, 1984), 95.

out of their money. For most, even under the best of circumstances, the journey to the new world was expensive and difficult. Forty toll barriers sat along the Rhine. Authorities often slapped taxes on migrants, and Dutch officials in Rotterdam also sought their share of money from the pockets of immigrants. Some travelers might actually go broke en route and suffer the indignity of being sold into servitude in the New World in order to pay off passage, a process known as “redemption.”³⁷ But the allure of cheap land and religious freedom resonated for thousands of immigrants.

While often impoverished, the migrants did bring skills with them to America. Germans had the reputation of being particularly industrious farmers. Many had other skills as well. Philadelphia physician Benjamin Rush noted of the immigrants, “the principal of them were farmers; but there were many mechanics, who brought with them a knowledge of those arts which are necessary and useful in all countries. These mechanics were chiefly weavers, tailors, tanners, shoemakers, combmakers, smiths of all kinds, butchers, paper makers, watch makers, and sugar bakers.”³⁸ It is little wonder that one of the future settlements of these German migrants was christened Mechanicstown.

German and Swiss migrants settled throughout the North American colonies. But the majority established themselves--at least temporarily--in Pennsylvania. By the late-seventeenth century, Penn’s colony was home to over 100,000 Germans. In fact, the vast majority of Germans and Swiss who settled the Catoctin region arrived in the early 1730s and initially settled

³⁷Bailyn, 36-40, 71.

³⁸Kessel, “Germans on the Maryland Frontier,” 75.

in Pennsylvania before pressing on into western Maryland.³⁹

One of the earliest settlers in the Catoctin area, Daniel Leaterman (also spelled Lederman or Letterman), a bishop in the Church of the German Baptist Brethren, emigrated from Germany in 1727. He briefly ministered to a church in Conewago, Pennsylvania before establishing himself in the 1740s on a farm he called Sandbergen (named for its sandy soil) southwest of the future Catoctin Furnace.⁴⁰ Yost Harbaugh (at times spelled Herbech) led his family from a village near Pfalz, Switzerland to Berks County and then York County, Pennsylvania. Yost's son George moved down the Great Wagon Trail to settle in what became known as Harbaugh's Valley in 1758 or 1759. The mountainous surroundings, it was said, reminded Harbaugh of his native land. In 1761 he married Catherine Willard, also originally from Switzerland. Later one of their daughters married a member of the Eyler family from Germany, who settled in the valley after having passed through Adams County in Pennsylvania.⁴¹

Some of the families later settling in Western Maryland actually traveled to the New World on the same ship. Such was the case with twenty-four year old Lenhart Firohr, who, in 1731, crossed the ocean on a ship with the Devilbiss family. Firohr arrived in Philadelphia, moved to Adams County and later settled east of Catoctin Mountain. Once in Maryland, the Firohrs found the Devilbiss family to be their neighbors to the south. In 1760, with area's

³⁹Kessel, "Germans in the Making of Frederick County," 95. Kessel notes an "average ten-year span between the immigrant's's arrival in Philadelphia and appearance in Frederick County records." Most, she concludes, settled for a period in Pennsylvania.

⁴⁰Tracy and Dern, 33-35.

⁴¹Albert L. Oeter, *The History of Graceham, Frederick County, Maryland*, (Frederick, 1913), 12; Schildknecht, vol., 1, 91, 86; Schildknecht, vol. 3, 81, 127; Thomas Scharf, *History of Western Maryland* (1882, reprint, Baltimore, 1967), 612.

population growing, the Firohr family acquired land for the construction of the Lutherans and Reformed Apple's Church.⁴² A descendent of the original Devilbiss family, Alexander Devilbiss owned a plot of mountain land (tract 215), later incorporated into Catoctin Mountain Park.

While many of the early settlers were members of either the larger German Reformed or Lutheran strands of Protestantism, members of the smaller Moravian sect also arrived in the Catoctin area. Among the more prominent Moravians in the area was the Harbaugh family. The Moravians also managed to attract converts. Jonhann Jacob Weller from Diedenshausen, Germany, in 1737 stepped off the Andrew Galley ship in Philadelphia, a member of the German Reformed Church. By the time he settled in Western Maryland in what became Mechanicstown, Weller had become an active Moravian. For a time, traveling Moravian ministers actually conducted services in Weller's home. His cousin, Johannes Weller, who also settled in what was later the Mechanicstown area, however, was associated with the Lutherans.⁴³

Other influential German families who settled in the area included the family of Lawrence Creager (Krueger), originally from a village northwest of the city of Marbugh (roughly 50 miles north of Frankfurt) in Westphalia. Creager moved the family to York County, Pennsylvania in 1738, then to the Monocacy Valley in 1747.⁴⁴ The Creagers later owned mountain land--a plot known as "Creagers' Surprise" (later tract 163). Friedrich Wiblheit (Willhides) and his wife Lucretia left their village near Sinsheim southeast of the Heidelberg in

⁴²Schildknecht, vol. 1., 168; Tracey and Dern, 212.

⁴³Schildknecht, vol. 1, 63, 97,134, 158; Dern and Tracy, 210-213.

⁴⁴Ibid, 105.

1731. Their son Frederick Jr. bought land on the northeast side of Hunting Creek in 1752.⁴⁵

The Rouzers, originating, as did the Willhides, from the area near Sinsheim also firmly established themselves in the Catoctin area. Unlike the others, the Rouzers, led by Gideon Rauscher, an elder in the Dunkard Church, settled first in New Jersey. Gideon's son, Martin Rouzer (1734-1777), then moved to the Rocky Ridge area. His son Daniel settled in Mechanicstown, probably in the late eighteenth century, where he began a tanning business. Daniel married Sophia Shover, the daughter of Peter Shover, Revolutionary War veteran and another owner of land later incorporated into the Catoctin Mountain Park.⁴⁶ Yet another immigrant from Sinsheim was Georg Philip Dodderer, who migrated in 1724. Georg's grandson Conrad later owned a mountain lot optimistically entitled "Worth Something," which was part of the park acquisition tract 153.⁴⁷

Many of the founding families mentioned above probably owned land in the area that now encompasses the park and certainly the names of their decedents can be found throughout Catoctin mountain land records. Early land records, however, for the Catoctin area are incomplete. Along with the families and persons noted in census, tax, and church records, there were no doubt other records either lost or destroyed. Likewise, squatters, settling unofficially on land and avoiding taxation or other charges, also certainly occupied the mountain land.

One of the few original settlers who does show up in the limited land records of the

⁴⁵Ibid, 48; Scharf, 473. Willhides' son, also named Frederick, served in the colonial army, fighting at Brandywine, Trenton, and Yorktown.

⁴⁶Schildknecht, vol. 3, 56-57; Scharf, 630. As of 1806, Peter Shover was recorded owner of the land that later became tract 5 purchased as part of the Catoctin RDA.

⁴⁷Schildknecht, vol., 3, 124.

eighteenth century was Leonard Moser, a fascinating pioneer figure. Moser arrived in Philadelphia in September 1732 aboard a ship appropriately named “Adventure.” Probably in his twenties, Moser traveled from Germany with his large family, who ranged in age from eight to forty. Very quickly, Moser became caught up in the Pennsylvania-Maryland dispute as an ally of Thomas Cresap. In 1735, Pennsylvania authorities captured Moser just south of Wrightsville. After a brief prison term, young Leonard retreated further south with Cresap and by 1736 settled in the Monocacy area. A close friend of Jacob Weller, Moser eventually joined the Moravian Church in Graceham. Moser was a weaver by trade, and, in 1751, he took on eleven-year old Michael Coker, a relative of his wife, as in apprentice. Moser also owned land along Great Hunting Creek, and in 1764 sold a thirty-acre tract on what was called Nolin Mountain (park acquisition tract 91) to a farmer named Mark Harmon (see Map 1).⁴⁸ Moser's family remained very much an active part of life on and around the mountain--as the presence of Moser Road in Thurmont attests.

Pioneer life in the Catoctin region was hard at first. Migrants, generally chose homesteads near running streams or creeks and built homes from logs. In the absence of nails, they carved notches into the logs to fit walls together. Rocks and clay provided raw materials for chimneys. As farms prospered, Germans and Swiss sometimes abandoned their log houses and constructed larger homes of wood and limestone, utilizing traditional German designs, often featuring central chimneys. In other cases, log houses were sheathed in clapboard or vertical board. Barns were large and built into bank slopes. The barn basement served as a stable and the

⁴⁸Dern and Tracey, 196-198; Schildknecht, vol. 3, 64-65. Moser name intermittently appears as Leonard Mozar, Johann Leohardt Moser, and Leonart Moser.

first floor for storage and threshing. A popular German feature on barns were decorative ventilation slits on the gable ends.⁴⁹ Alongside their sturdy architecture and productive farms, Germans quickly gained notice for their hearty baked dishes that incorporated preserves made from huckleberries (generally found on the mountain, especially burned-over land), strawberries, grapes, and cherries.⁵⁰

While early historians of the upper Monocacy Valley postulated the existence of a lost town called Monocacy somewhere south of later Creagerstown, such a town appears never to have existed. Instead, settlers established dispersed farms, eschewing the example of the cramped villages of Europe.⁵¹ In the Monocacy Valley, Germans kept close kinship relationships, helping to preserve German culture for generations. Until the 1830s, German was the dominant language of central and northern Frederick County. Remarkably, today many of the same founding families continue to occupy the region in significant numbers, and evidence of traditional German culture can still be found.

Religion alongside kinship was the other glue that held early Catoctin society together. Germans brought numerous versions of Protestantism with them to North America. “There exist so many varieties of doctrines and sects,” noted an observer of the Germans, “that it is impossible to name them all.”⁵² Settlers constructed the first church in the region, known as the

⁴⁹Paula Stoner, “Early Folk Architecture of Washington, County,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 72 (Winter 1977), 513, 522; Charles S. Martin and Thomas Rose, *The History of Wolfsville and the Catoctin District* (Frederick, 1972), 9.

⁵⁰Brugger, 71-72; Gordon, 15.

⁵¹Kessel, “Germans and the Making of Frederick County,” 96.

⁵²John B. Frantz, “The Awakening of Religion Among German Settlers in the Middle

Monocacy Church, out of logs as early as 1745. According to local historian Elizabeth Anderson, the church sat at the present junction of Hessing Bridge and Blue Mountain Road.⁵³ While apparently of Lutheran denomination, the church appears to have served all of the early settlers. With a great shortage of ministers in the back country, traveling Lutheran missionary Pastor Johann Caspar Stover from Pennsylvania served the church as part of his regular rounds.⁵⁴

Very quickly, however, dissension between religious sects broke up the early ecumenical Monocacy Church (also known as the Log Church, see Map 1). The 1740s, the era of the Great Awakening, was in fact a time of great religious enthusiasm. Germans enjoyed their own revival of religious fervor. German missionaries, such as Michael Schlatter of the German Reformed Church traveled through the Maryland frontier attracting large audiences. Despite the language differences, Germans also flocked to the religious revivals held by English evangelical George Whitefield.⁵⁵ With the population growing and farmers increasingly prosperous, settlers wanted their own churches in which they could worship their own way. Moravians began meeting at the home of convert Jacob Weller and, in 1758, built their own church in Graceham. Meanwhile the Lutherans constructed Apple's Church in the future Mechanicstown. Later, as settlers began filling up the west side of the mountain, the Hauver family, led by German immigrant Peter Hauver, and area Lutherans built the Mount Moriah Lutheran Church (on present-day Foxville

Colonies," *William and Mary Quarterly* (April 1976), 268.

⁵³Elizabeth Anderson, *Faith in the Furnace A History of Harriet Chapel* (1985), 3.

⁵⁴Millard Milburn Rice, *New Facts and Old Families* (Redwood, CA, 1976), 173-174; Frantz, 270-271.

⁵⁵Frantz, 281-283.

Church Road, see Map 1).⁵⁶

Writing in the nineteenth century, historian of western Maryland, Thomas Scharf reported real rivalries and occasional violence between “Swizzers” (Swiss immigrants) and Germans in northern Frederick County (at this time Frederick County included present-day Montgomery, Frederick, and Washington Counties). These conflicts, Scharf suggested, were outgrowths of political tensions. Unfortunately, he provided no evidence for his claim, nor can any be readily found. One can surmise that there were differences, especially along the lines of religion, but any real conflict went unrecorded in historical sources.⁵⁷

Rather than conflict between nationalities, the pioneers appeared more interested in material gain from increasingly commercialized agriculture. Upon arrival, first generation settlers quickly surveyed and appropriated the best land in the region, most acquiring tracts averaging 152 acres. The settlers cleared and plowed fields and established a grain-based mixed farming economy in sharp contrast to the tobacco grown in Eastern Maryland. Wheat was the primary crop but the German migrants also raised livestock, and grew small grains such as rye, barley, oats, buckwheat, flax, and hemp.⁵⁸ Credit networks among the settlers helped the

⁵⁶Scharf, 614.

⁵⁷Ibid, 614; Paul and Rita Gordon, 184, picked up Scharf’s claims in their 1974 history of Frederick County.

⁵⁸Richard Walsh, “The Era of the Revolution,” in Richard Walsh, *Maryland: A History* (Annapolis, 1983), 83. “The wheat farmer,” noted historian Richard Walsh, “brought changes to the economic structure. By 1775, Maryland was in a transitional stage economically with all of its attendant uncertainties of promise for some and altered conditions. As a saleable commodity, wheat had its benefits and limitation...good for the small producer, since there was no restriction locally such as the tobacco inspection Act.” But it remained on the list of enumerated items that must be sold either locally or to the motherland (England).

Germans establish themselves and, sometimes, expand into more commercial farming.⁵⁹ While most farms remained family operations, more prosperous farmers did hire servants and some bought slaves. The first generation of Catoctin area farmers thrived despite adversity. Land holding at death frequently exceeded 400 acres.⁶⁰

The French and Indian War

Despite the general success experienced by the pioneer generation of Germans and Swiss in the Catoctin area, the area suffered a significant upheaval in the decade following the initial settlement. As the English colonial frontier edged westward, conflicts grew over the fate of the Ohio Valley, claimed by both France and England. The two nations long had been at each other's throats and had fought several wars, the most recent of which ended in 1748. Seeking to lay a claim to land west of the English colonies, the French, with the help of their Native American allies, built a series of forts in western Pennsylvania in 1752 and 1753. Their efforts culminated in 1754 with the construction of Fort Duquesne (present site of Pittsburgh). Angry English authorities sent a young George Washington and a small group of Virginia militiamen to warn the French away. But the future president and his forces met a much more determined enemy than they had expected. Fighting broke out and the overwhelmed Virginians were forced to flee eastward.

Washington's defeat sparked an international war--the Seven-Year's War. The war in America put the colonists in a difficult position. Many, especially the Germans, had little loyalty to the British. Mennonites and Moravians, as pacifists, opposed both oath-taking and bearing

⁵⁹Kessel, "Germans in the Making of Frederick County", 101.

⁶⁰Kessel, "Germans in the Making of Frederick County," 95-98.

arms; they felt particularly uncomfortable under pressure to fight for an imperial power with which they had little connection. Even colonists of English descent seemed to feel no great commitment to the battle. There was little interest in organizing a central administrative body among the colonies and real resistance to supporting financially the English army in the colonies.

Angry at the American colonists but determined to defeat their enemies, the English, in the summer of 1755, organized a large army under General Edward Braddock to march on Fort Duquesne. Braddock spent several weeks marshaling his forces at Fredericktown, where he headquartered at a Tavern on West All Saint's Street. There, he was joined by Washington and about 250 Virginia militiamen as well as by Thomas Cresap and a contingency from western Maryland. The colonists found Braddock to be an arrogant commander, contemptuous of their advice and knowledge of the back country.⁶¹ In June Braddock rallied his troops, numbering some 2,500, toward Fort Duquesne. They stayed their first night on South Mountain before pressing further west.⁶²

Although the English greatly outnumbered their adversaries, the French with the aid of a group of war-seasoned Indians took the offensive. They ambushed Braddock's army as it attempted to cross the Monongahela River, roughly six miles from the fort. Braddock and nine hundred men died in the fighting. Washington had two horses shot from under him. Defeated for a second time, Washington led the remaining forces back to Frederick County.

Settlers on the Maryland frontier reeled in horror at the specter of their defeated troops in

⁶¹Thomas J.C. Williams, *History of Frederick County*, (1910, reprint, Baltimore, 1967), 29-34.

⁶²Gordon, 27.

retreat. Now there was nothing between them and the French and Indians. Hundreds of settlers fled their farms to the relative safety of Fredericktown, which quickly became an armed camp.⁶³ Paranoia swept not only western Maryland but the entire colonies. Fears swirled of Indian attacks, slaves uprisings, and Catholics plots.⁶⁴ Worried about their own security, eastern Maryland elites seemed little concerned with the fate of western homesteaders. Thomas Cresap, infuriated that the colonial government had not sent reinforcements west, threatened to lead a protest march on Annapolis.⁶⁵

But Cresap and the other pioneers could not leave their western holding for fear of a French and Indian invasion. They organized a volunteer militia at Elizabethtown (the future Hagerstown), and Cresap turned his Potomac River outpost at Oldtown into an armed fort.⁶⁶ Tensions grew even greater as Indians began raiding and attacking settlements in western Maryland. Spurred by their French allies, Native Americans attacked Emittsburg. The small Moravian church at Graceham recorded 1756 as a year of “great danger and distress.”⁶⁷ *The Maryland Gazette*, the colony’s main newspaper, reported numerous scalplings in 1756 and 1757. Equally horrifying were the abductions. Native Americans kidnapped colonists, especially women and children, holding them hostage, sometimes for several years. In the Catoctin region,

⁶³Ibid, 30.

⁶⁴Mark Stegmaier, “Maryland Fear of Insurrection at the Time of Braddock’s Defeat,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 71 (Winter 1976), 467-482.

⁶⁵Gordon, 33.

⁶⁶Brugger, 94.

⁶⁷Oeter, 22.

Indians abducted the daughter of Caspar Schmidt, listed in the Graceham Moravian records as a “farmer in the mountains,” in 1757. The kidnapping apparently took place directly in front of her father. With a treaty signed in 1758 requiring the release of all captives, the Schmidt girl found freedom but was apparently claimed by a family living in Philadelphia. Schmidt was forced to travel north to reclaim his daughter and the final outcome is unrecorded.⁶⁸

The several years of war had a profoundly dislocating effect on life in the Monocacy Valley. After having established farms, churches and homes, the settlers abandoned everything and fled. With the English victory in North America in 1760, the pioneers were eager to reestablish themselves and, no doubt, hoped for peace. But war, tumult, and change continued.

The Arrival of Iron

Security having been restored after the end of the French and Indian War, settlers returned to their homes. At the same time, easterners began looking anew at western Maryland with an eye toward investment opportunities. Just as eastern Maryland’s Native Americans had mined the mountains for rhyolite, white easterners sought to extract their own bounty from the region in the form of iron.

Iron was, in fact, an increasingly important colonial commodity. England, the mother country, had developed a strong metalworking industry by the mid-eighteenth century. But the forests of Britain quickly became severely depleted, depriving English iron makers of necessary fuel for iron furnaces. By 1720, England was importing over 20,000 ton of iron, mostly from Sweden. To the English, committed to the mercantile economic ideals of the times, dependent colonies--and certainly not profiteering outside countries--should provide raw material and ready

⁶⁸Oeter, 22.

markets for finished products. Great Britain thus set about to encourage iron making in the North American colonies. In 1719, the Maryland General Assembly passed “An Act for the Encouragement of an Iron Manufacture within this Province.” The far-reaching act allowed an entrepreneur interested in iron manufacturing to obtain a “writ ad quod damnum” or a special condemnation to acquire a water-powered site capable of producing iron. An unfortunate owner of a targeted site would lose his land unless he or she produced proof of an intention to build an iron works. If no proof was forthcoming, the land would go to an entrepreneur, who was required to begin furnace construction within six months.⁶⁹

Iron manufacturing in the colonies presented challenges. English colonial officials, while eager to encourage the colonists to produce pig and bar iron, were less enthusiastic about the colonial manufacturing of finished products from iron. Parliamentary acts pertaining to iron in 1750 and 1757 allowed for the duty-free shipping of the metal but prohibited manufacturing of finished products and declared all “machines for hammering or drawing metal” as “common nuisances” to be destroyed within thirty days. Nevertheless, some colonial manufacturing of iron did continue in defiance of British authorities and money still was to be made from the production and exporting raw iron.⁷⁰

Inspired by colonial incentives, a nascent iron industry in Maryland sprang to life. The

⁶⁹Michael Thompson, *The Iron Industry in Western Maryland* (Baltimore, 1976), 14-15; Michael Robbins, *Maryland's Iron Industry During the Revolutionary War Era*, (Baltimore, 1973), 6-8.

⁷⁰Michael W. Robbins, *The Principio Company: Iron-Making in Colonial Maryland, 1720-1781* (New York, 1986), 13.

Principio Company in Cecil County became the colony's first iron furnace in 1720.⁷¹ The erection of several other furnaces for the manufacture of pig iron quickly followed. By 1762, eight iron factories existed in Maryland.⁷² With greater security on the western frontier following the French and Indian War, investors targeted the western portions of the colony for development. Entrepreneurs from the lower Tidewater area erected the Hampton Furnace, one mile west of Emmitsburg in 1764.⁷³ The furnace boasted 3,000 acres of land. African-American slaves provided the bulk of labor. But operations at the furnace lasted only a few years before it went broke.⁷⁴

Undeterred by the apparently risky nature of the venture, other wealthy Marylanders also began investing in western enterprises.⁷⁵ As early as the 1750s, prominent investor Charles Carroll, eventually planning to construct an iron-making plant, purchased a large tract of land in western Maryland.⁷⁶ By the 1760s, another wealthy easterner, Thomas Johnson, a prominent lawyer, entrepreneur, and future governor of Maryland, also took an active interest in western

⁷¹Ibid, 1-12,

⁷²Walsh, 85.

⁷³Basil L. Crapster, "Hampton Furnace in Colonial Frederick County," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 80 (Spring 1985), 1-5.

⁷⁴*Maryland Gazette*, 22 May 1767.

⁷⁵Robbins, *Maryland's Iron Industry During the Rev War Era*, 9. Iron manufacturing in Western Maryland, with its rich natural resources, offered real advantages over eastern production. Eastern furnaces, for instance, often used oyster shells from Chesapeake Bay to create lime to serve as furnace flux. At the Catocin site, however, lime and iron ore could be mined directly from the mountain.

⁷⁶Ibid, 49.

Maryland. Johnson's grandfather had come from Yarmouth, England in 1660 to settle in Calvert County. The family, already aristocracy, further prospered in Calvert County. Grandson Thomas was one of twelve children born to Thomas and Dorcas Johnson. Quickly proving himself adroit in both politics and business, Johnson moved to the forefront of colonial leadership. Among his close friends he counted George Washington.⁷⁷

Seeking economic opportunity on the Maryland frontier, Johnson formed a partnership with Launcelot Jacques, a fifth-generation descendent of French Huguenot refugees. In 1768, taking advantage of the Maryland Assembly offer of *ad quod damnum*, Johnson and Jacques purchased a 9,860-acre tract known as Green Springs, roughly two miles south of Fort Frederick, on the Potomac River, in what is present-day Washington County. Accounts from the time referred to the furnace constructed on the site as the "Fort Frederick Iron Mill."⁷⁸ Their investment proved not particularly successful, and the two began to look for a better furnace location somewhat to the east.

A tract south of the Hampton Furnace--land which may well have provided some of the iron ore for the Hampton furnace--caught the attention of Thomas Johnson. Situated near a an iron ore bank, a ready supply of lime, and a plentiful water source (Hunting Creek), the tract known as "John's Mountain" owned by John Valentine Verdries and his wife Elizabeth appeared ideal for iron exaction and manufacture. The Verdries, like most in the area, were refugees from Germany and had been among the early members of the Lutheran Monacacy Log Church

⁷⁷Williams, 101; Thompson, 61.

⁷⁸Thompson, 67-68. The deed from Lord Baltimore conveying Green Springs to Jacques and Johnson is reprinted in Scharf, 106-107.

Congregation.⁷⁹

Although *ad quod damnum* would have certainly been at Johnson's disposal, he and his partners do not appear to have used condemnation to obtain Verdries' land. In 1770, the Verdries sold the land, now called "Mountain Tract," to Thomas Johnson and his partner Benedict Calvert, also a partner in the Hampton enterprise to the north.⁸⁰ Johnson then set about to acquire other land in the area with the help of his brothers, Roger, Baker, and James, all of whom had already moved to Frederick County. Among their acquisitions was a tract known as "Good Will" and a tract originally granted to Charles Carroll known as "Stoney Park."⁸¹

The Johnson brothers, having secured several thousand acres in the area for mining and timber harvesting, then moved to construct their furnace. The Johnson family owned a sizable number of slaves and it is most probable that unfree labor constructed the original furnace. The exact site of the original furnace remains a point of some controversy. Archeological surveys have failed to yield any definite conclusions, although it appears that the first furnace was built within a mile of the current ruin.⁸² An 1842 letter from the son of James Johnson identified the location of the first furnace as where "the Auburn house now stands" (see Map 1)⁸³ The original

⁷⁹Schildknecht, vol. 1, 149.

⁸⁰Patent BC & GS 42:3-8. A third partner in the purchase was John Davidson.

⁸¹National Heritage Corporation, "Catoctin Iron Furnace, Cunningham Falls, State Park, Thurmont, Maryland: A Report on an historical Survey," (December 1975), 4.

⁸²John Milner Associates, "Archeological Excavations at Site 18 FR 320, Catoctin, Maryland," (July 1980), 3. John Means, *Maryland's Catoctin Mountain Parks, An Interpretive Guide to Catoctin Mountain Park and Cunningham Falls State Park* (Blacksburg, VA, 1995), 100. Means estimates the original furnace site as 3/4 of a mile from the ruins.

⁸³James Johnson letter, 1 September 1842, Johnson Family Papers, Frederick Historical

furnace stack stood 32 feet high and 8.5 feet in diameter. Although small compared to stacks later constructed at Catoctin, nothing like it had ever been seen in the Catoctin area before.

The Road to Revolution

While the Johnson brothers were introducing the Catoctin Mountain area to industry, tensions between Great Britain and her North American colonies were heating up. The friction grew out of an attempt by Great Britain to tighten colonial control after years of loose administration. Although essentially a frontier only a decade before, Frederick was the third largest county in Maryland by the 1770s, and western Maryland, along with new resident Thomas Johnson, were active players as the colonies edged toward independence.

Western Marylanders had little reason to feel any great affection for the mother country. General Braddock during the French and Indian War had proven callous and contemptuous of Americans trying to aid his cause. English incompetence was a bitter memory for many in Frederick County. In addition, roughly half the population was German and had little affinity for the imperial British and their authoritarian ways. Maryland authorities still forbade Germans from voting. There also existed fears that the British eventually would seek to impose their Church of England on the sectarian Germans.⁸⁴

The local population was ripe then to support the growing resistance to the new imperial edicts. When colonial authorities attempted to impose the Stamp Act, requiring all printed materials to carry a stamp for which a payment was required, Frederick County joined in the

Society, Frederick, Maryland.

⁸⁴Bernard Steiner, *Western Maryland in the Revolution*, (Baltimore, 1902), 7; Brugger, 97.

upheavals that shot across the colonies. Protestors burned a tax collector in effigy during a mass demonstration in Fredericktown.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, despite the prosperity of some, others, especially commercial farmers were going into debt. They blamed imperial authorities and petitioned the General Assembly to protest a shortage of currency. Some Marylanders even resorted to using Pennsylvania currency.⁸⁶

Meanwhile in 1767, the long-standing Pennsylvania-Maryland dispute came to an end with the establishment of the Mason-Dixon Line. This resolution paved the way for greater cooperation between the two colonies, as each faced the growing crisis with Great Britain.

Reacting to the growing tensions, the Governor of Maryland blamed Thomas Cresap for stirring up the people. In fact, Cresap, now rather elderly, again threatened to march on Annapolis when the colonial government appeared hesitant to recompense members of the western militia.⁸⁷ When tensions heated up again around the time of the Boston Massacre in 1770, a group of angry western Marylanders, primarily concerned with threats to religious liberty, met at Tom's Creek near Emmitsburg and issued the following statement:

Resolved by the Inhabitants of Tom's Creek Frederick County, in the Province of Maryland, loyal to their king and country that we reaffirm the Great Magna Carter of Civic and Religious Rights, as granted by Charles of England to Lord Baltimore and the Inhabitants of this colony, as reaffirmed on the first landing of the Pilgrim Fathers of Maryland. That there shall be a perfect freedom of conscience and every person be allowed to enjoy his religious

⁸⁵Maryland Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, *Patriots All: Being a History and Report on Seventy-five Years of Leadership in Frederick County*, (Frederick, MD, 1895), 33.

⁸⁶Walsh, 59; Brugger, 103.

⁸⁷Brugger, 112.

political privileges and immunities unmolested.⁸⁸

By 1774, a dysfunctional relationship between the colonies and motherland had disintegrated into open hostilities when the British forcibly closed Boston Harbor in retaliation for the Boston Tea Party. Although far way, Marylanders, especially in the west, identified with the struggles of the Bostonians. In July of 1774, 800 gathered in Elizabethtown (Hagerstown) to protest the blockade of Boston Harbor.⁸⁹ Similar protests were held in every district of the county. Proclamations of sympathy for Boston poured out of the meetings.⁹⁰

Jonathan Hager, a German immigrant and founder of the future Hagerstown, was a great supporter of the colonial cause, as were the Johnson brothers.⁹¹ When open hostilities developed in early 1775, Frederick County immediately organized two companies of volunteers, one under Michael Cresap, son of Thomas. With their faces painted like Indians, armed with tomahawks and rifles, and dressed in deerskins and moccasins, the volunteers headed north to aid the battling minutemen in the summer of 1775.⁹² The war began just as construction completed on the Johnson Furnace at Catoctin. Both events signaled a new era for the mountain.

⁸⁸Maryland Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, 34.

⁸⁹Gordon, 38.

⁹⁰Historical Society of Frederick County, "Three Historical Sketches of Frederick County: From its Foundation to the End of the Revolutionary Period," (Frederick, 1974), 18.

⁹¹Brugger, 114.

⁹²Ibid, 127.

Chapter Two

War and Industry on the Mountain

Introduction

In 1841, *The Baltimore Phoenix and Budget* carried a long article reflecting on a half-century of change having occurred in the shadow of the Catoctin mountains. The piece began by recalling the idyllic state of the mountain and environs in the late eighteenth century: “At that period . . . almost uninterrupted forest; and game of various descriptions. . . the frightful shrieks of the howling wolf were heard at night.” But “a few years brought the woodman's axe in fearful conflict with the mighty oak that had withstood the blasts of many winter, and the majestic trees whose towering height almost pierced the clouds all were laid low.” By the early nineteenth century, explained the author: “Now how changed the scene! The p'ough is seen gliding o'er the horizontal plain, attached to furious steeds, and the husbandman is heard merrily whistling, as the chargers fling the foam--now the clank of busy mechanic, and the rattling of chariot-wheels, and the hum of business are always heard.” The once peaceable mountains, according to the writer, had changed forever. ¹

This chapter covers the evolution of the area, later to become Catoctin Mountain Park. It carries the story through a time of tumultuous change--from the time of the American Revolution through to the 1830s. While the region remained primarily agricultural, industry, in the form of the iron works, increasingly changed the face of the area both environmentally and socially. To the already diverse Catoctin population was added a new group--African slaves who worked in

¹*Baltimore Phoenix and Budget*, May 1841.

the furnace. Their work was often brutally hard. But industrial slavery at Catoctin appears to have been a fundamentally different experience from the plantation slavery also practiced at the time.

Forging a Revolution

In 1775, a band of western Marylanders, led by Michael Cresap, marched off to join their colonial brothers under siege in Boston. This was not unexpected. Most residents of the upper Monocacy and Catoctin region were strong supporters of the movement for American independence. The English-descended elites in the region had plenty of reason to resent their colonial overlords. Many were in debt. Others were angered by high taxes. Still others were beset by the mercantile regulations imposed by the British Parliament that circumscribed their businesses. Nor did the Germans in the area have any great allegiance to Great Britain. Many had come to America to escape religious persecution, and efforts to tighten imperial control did not sit well with a population that prized religious and political freedom. Rumors freely circulated that the British planned to impose Church of England practices on all dissenters. Likewise, the Germans--barred by colonial law from voting--felt alienated from the civic life of the region.²

Many in the Catoctin area contributed both materially and with their lives to the American cause.³ Unlike the previous French and Indian War and the future Civil War, there was to be no fighting in the immediate Catoctin vicinity. Nevertheless, western Marylanders

²Brugger, 7.

³William Hinks, *Centennial Celebration in Frederick County, on June 28, 1876* (Frederick, 1879), 26-27.

volunteered in large numbers to aid the new nation's cause. With an estimated 130,000 colonists of German origin, the continental army organized special German regiments. Most members of the special force came from Maryland and Pennsylvania. German regiment officers were bilingual, but German was the spoken language among the ranks. These special regiments saw action in both the Trenton and Princeton campaigns and spent time at Valley Forge.⁴

Germans from Frederick County and newly-formed Washington County (created out of the Western portion of Frederick County in 1776) served in the German regiments.⁵ A survey of the German regiment muster rolls, however, turns up none of the prominent family names from the Catoctin area. However, members of the Frederick County--Middle District regiment did include a few familiar family names including Valentine Creager, Ludwick Moser, and Michael Fox. Members of the Frederick Company Third District organized out of Emmitsburg included Philip and John Weller, Lawrence Freagers, and Peter Shover (who owned a small farm on what would later become parkland). First Lieutenant Frederick Nicodemus (ancestor of a Nicodemus who owned the furnace property in the twentieth century), headed up the Flying Camp in Washington County.⁶

The paucity of Catoctin-area names among the ranks of Maryland's soldiers may have

⁴Henry Retzer, *The German Regiment of Maryland and Pennsylvania in the Colonial Army, 1776-1781* (Westminster, MD 1991), 1-2.

⁵That same year Montgomery County was created out of the lower portion.

⁶Archives of Maryland, *Muster Rolls and other Records of Service of Maryland Troops in the American Revolution, 1775-1783* (Baltimore, 1972), 72-73, 224, 266-267. Maryland Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, 4. A Martin Lantz does appear as a member of the German regiment in 1780, but the records provide no mention of individual soldiers specific homes.

been due to incomplete records, but also may have related to religious strictures against war. For instance, despite their sympathy for the American cause, Moravian beliefs forbade the taking up of arms. Nevertheless, the Graceham Church recorded that patriotism led some members of the congregation to join the Continental army despite their pacifistic convictions.⁷

American officials viewed those Marylanders who did fight, including those in the German regiments, as among the best soldiers in the continental army. After fighting with distinction in the northern campaigns, the Maryland soldiers were redeployed. They passed through their home state on their way south to the Carolinas. This would be the next theater of the war. In the Southern campaigns, General Nathaniel Greene exalted that, "nothing could exceed the gallantry of the Maryland line." Others recalled the Maryland forces as having "the hottest blood in the union."⁸

Frederick County was not the scene of much fighting, but it made invaluable contributions to the war effort. With its rich wheat fields, the county, claimed one historian, became the "breadbasket of the Revolution," supplying hungry troops and making up for crops destroyed in the many military campaigns of the war.⁹ The emerging industries of the region also provided for the military needs of the war. An important powder depository and gunlock factory was situated in Frederick City. There was also a prison camp in the city which held captured

⁷Oerter, 34.

⁸Brugger, 128-129.

⁹Maryland Agricultural Week Committee, "Breadbasket of the Revolution, Maryland Agriculture, 1776-1976" (Annapolis, 1976), 3.

Hessian soldiers.¹⁰ Other important powder mills could be found in Antietam and along the Monocacy River.¹¹

Revolution and the Furnace

Frederick County's important role in the war could be credited in part to Thomas Johnson's increasingly central role in the government of the new nation. Johnson, along with his brothers, had numerous business interests in Western Maryland--including the brand new Catoctin iron furnace. Earlier he had helped draft many of the early colonial protests to the King's imperial policies. As a wealthy, well-connected patriot, Johnson was elected to the Continental Congress where, in turn, he nominated his friend George Washington to be commander-in-chief of the continental army. Johnson proved to be a well-respected and important member of congress. Fellow congressman John Adams commented that although not a great orator, "Johnson of Maryland, has a clear and cool head . . . He is a deliberating man."¹²

In January 1776, Johnson's home colony tapped his talents when its Provincial Convention elected him Brigadier General of the Militia. In this position Johnson had the challenging duty of raising supplies and money to arm the new army. The job kept him so occupied that he missed the debate and signing of the Declaration of Independence. His work was demanding and allowed Johnson to utilize his immense network of business interests and contacts. On February 13, 1777, the Maryland legislature elected Johnson the first governor of

¹⁰Brugger, 125-127.

¹¹Williams, 87.

¹²Frank F. White, Jr. *The Governors of Maryland, 1777-1970* (Baltimore, 1970), 3-5.

the state. He was inaugurated amid a lavish ceremony in Annapolis on March 13, 1777.¹³

By the time of the American Declaration of Independence, Johnson's long-planned furnace at the foot of the Catoctin mountains was nearly completed--just in time to meet the demands of war. Continuing uncertainty exists as to the exact contribution made by Johnson's Catoctin Furnace during the Revolution. With few surviving records of the operations of the furnace (even for the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century), current research can do little beyond pointing to probabilities. In the case of the Revolutionary War, it does appear that some war materials were produced from iron manufactured at Catoctin. On July 17, 1776, the colonial Council of Safety contacted Thomas Johnson and his brother, James, a colonel in the Continental Army and proprietor of the furnace about the possibility of producing cannon balls and shot from the furnace. The Council of Safety was the revolutionary body in charge of virtually all elements of war preparation and life in the new nation, and it needed the Johnson's help:

"Sir. We are in want of about 20 4lb Cannon, 20 3lb and 20 2lb and 40 Swivels for the use of the Province and desire to know whether you will engage to furnish us with those quantities immediately--if you can, be pleased to favor us as soon as possible with your terms and the time by which you will have them made, the-it will be such more agreeable to us to see you upon the occasion. We shall likewise want 200 Iron Potts, some to contain 4 and other 2 Gallons, with Gales or Handles to supply the place of Camp Kettles, and should be glad you would advise us whether you could also cast them for us and by what time, likewise the price."¹⁴

On behalf of his brother, Thomas Johnson replied to the Council. He explained that "our furnace is not yet in blast," but there was on hand "a few potts of about the size you describe." Johnson

¹³Ibid, 5.

¹⁴William Hand Browne, ed. *Archives of Maryland, Journal and Correspondence of the Maryland Council of Safety, July 7-December 31, 1776* (Baltimore, 1893), 55.

promised an effort to meet the Council's needs. Meanwhile, he assured the council that his "brother is getting his furnace into Blast with all Diligence and hopes to effect it within a fortnight. You may then have any number of potts and kettles that you please within a short time." Johnson also promised "to cast such guns as are wanted but cannot contract for them in all Events because the metal may not suit, although we have every Reason to expect it will."¹⁵

Most interested in the guns, the council quickly replied: "If your Brother's Iron is suitable for casting Guns we could contract with you for fifty three pounders, fifty four-pounders, and seventy five Swivels to Carry one point Ball."¹⁶ With the Council's offer to purchase guns, the paper trail ends. By September 1777, the Johnson furnace was fully functioning and the partners were advertising for the sale of "[s]alt pans, ten feet square and fifteen inches deep with crews ready to join an fit them up made at Catoctin Furnace about 10 miles from Frederick Town at 551 per ton."¹⁷ Presumably the Johnson's Bush Creek Forge, built in the mid-1770s near the mouth of Bush Creek, three to five miles from Frederick City, forged the iron produced at Catoctin. The Johnson Forge included a rolling and slitting mill, although these might have been added later.¹⁸

Several years later, in 1780 James Johnson and his partners contracted with the Board of War to "prepare for casting ten inch shells . . . for the use of the United States." Johnson was to

¹⁵Ibid, 92.

¹⁶Ibid, 114.

¹⁷*Maryland Gazette*, 2 September 1777.

¹⁸Board of World's Fair Managers, *Maryland: Its Resources, Industries and Institutions* (Baltimore, 1893),106. Thompson, 64.

ship the shells to Baltimore and be paid in continental dollars. The Board of War, however, seemed to have had reservations about Johnson's abilities to produce the shells. The contract required that the partners "use their best Endeavors" and instructed that "if they can succeed in Casting them" to follow specific instructions for the delivery of the shells.¹⁹ The writers of the contract apparently had some doubt that the Johnson furnace could produce the shells. On the other hand, it was wartime and uncertainties abounded.

No specific evidence could be found that Catoctin Furnace contributed to the production of Revolutionary War munitions. There is ample evidence, however, of discussion relating to munitions manufacturing and the Johnson Furnace. One could surmise that given the Johnson family connections and the length of the war, which lasted seven years following the first blast of the furnace, the Catoctin Furnace did produce iron--either for shot, cannon balls, guns or swivels. At the very least, it appears almost certain that Catoctin iron produced "potts" and other products for the war effort. The Johnson works was a new, centrally-located furnace owned by a well-connected patriotic family. It would be difficult to believe that the Johnson enterprise did not contribute to the war effort.

The announcement of American victory brought tremendous celebration to Frederick County. Fireworks accented festivities in Frederick City, while residents of upper Frederick County enjoyed a victory celebration on Israel Creek.²⁰ The legacies of the Revolution were many, including the introduction and elevation of industry in the former frontier region. One of

¹⁹"It is agreed between Capt Daniel Joy. . ." RG 93, #29632, Roll 103, Frames 227-228, National Archives.

²⁰Gordon, 49.

the most immediate impacts was the introduction of a new group of German immigrants to the area--Hessian soldiers, many of them former prisoners of war, who decided to stay in the New World.²¹ Some apparently found employment in the furnace, eventually becoming key operators.²²

Rumsey's Steamboat

One of the most interesting events in which the newly built Catoctin Iron Furnace played a role was the launching of James Rumsey's steam ship on the Potomac in 1787. The event grew out of the friendship and common interests of Governor Johnson and George Washington. Both owned land along the Potomac, and both eagerly sought to improve upon their investments. Along with other prominent figures, the two formed the Potomac Company to promote development along the river. Washington served as president of the organization, and Johnson was an active member of the board of directors.²³

The company hired James Rumsey, an enterprising inventor from Cecil County, Maryland, as its superintendent. Rumsey used his position to generate interest in his plans to construct a steam-powered boat. When he submitted a preliminary proposal to the company, General Washington immediately saw the potential. The founding father declared "that the

²¹Reich, 294.

²²Louise McPherson, "Recollections of Catoctin Parish, Protestant Episcopal Church," nd. McPherson identified two men, Blackford and Thronburgh, as Hessian soldiers who settled at Catoctin Furnace and eventually ran the operations for Baker Johnson in the early nineteenth century.

²³Ella May Turner, *James Rumsey: Pioneer in Steam Navigation* (Scottsdale, PA, 1930), 27.

discovery is of vast importance . . . and if it succeeds (of which I have no doubt) that the value of it is greatly enhanced by the simplicity of the works which, when seen and explained, may be executed by the most common mechanic."²⁴

In 1785, Rumsey and Washington visited Thomas Johnson in his Fredericktown home to discuss the manufacturing of needed parts at the Johnson iron works.²⁵ Over the next couple of months, Johnson's brother, James, attempted to forge and cast the necessary parts. The Catocin Furnace, however, proved inadequate to the task. Thomas Johnson then arranged to have the cylinders made from copper in Frederick City.²⁶

Two years later, Rumsey's ship was ready. On December 3, 1787, a large crowd gathered in Shepardstown, Virginia on the Potomac to witness the first run of Rumsey's engine-powered ship. A vertical pump, seated in the middle of the vessel, driven by a steam engine powered the inventor's eighty-foot long boat. As the crowd looked on, Rumsey's boat struggled up to about four-miles per hour before dying out.²⁷

Rumsey was not alone in experimenting with steam engines in the 1780s. Others, including John Fitch of Connecticut were developing similar engines. A bitter debate broke out

²⁴Turner, 12-13.

²⁵Turner, 32; James Rumsey, "A Short Treatise on the Application of Steam" May 7, 1788, 27th Congress, 2nd, sess, House. Docs, v.4, public document 189, 23-24.

²⁶Rumsey, 23-24. In a short pamphlet describing the development of his steam engine, Rumsey reprinted a letter sent to him from Thomas Johnson on December 18, 1787. In the letter Johnson explained his efforts to cast the cylinders "at my brother's and my works; the attempt did not succeed."

²⁷Scharf, 994; Turner, 81.

as to whose engine was actually the first.²⁸ Seeking to promote his case, Rumsey cited the experiments at Catoctin Furnace--which must have taken place in 1785 or 1786--to bolster his claim to have been first in inventing the steam technology.²⁹

While Rumsey's engine was hardly ready for immediate commercial utilization and may not have been unique, his invention suggested a real future in steam travel. Robert Fulton's steam ship in 1807 and the rapid spread of the railroad, of course, later realized this. The Johnson enterprise did not produce any of the parts used in Rumsey's engine. But having played a role in the important experiments leading to the steam engine, the Catoctin area can claim a small part in the work of a man whom Thomas Jefferson called "the most original and greatest mechanical genius I have ever seen."³⁰

Early Industry

Others in the Catoctin region soon followed the Johnson brothers in exploring the potential of industry. By the early nineteenth century, numerous small industries had sprung up east of the mountains, especially in the town soon incorporated as Mechanicstown. One of the first was a 1793 tannery constructed by Daniel Rouzer, a German immigrant who had first passed through New Jersey before coming to the Catoctin area (see Map 2). The tannery, set on Owens Creek, made use of the tanning agent found in the bark of abundant oak tree bark found in the area. Heavy stones crushed the bark and water from nearby creeks allowed for the soaking of

²⁸Robert D. Arbuckle, "John Nicolson and the Great Steamboat Rivalry," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 71 (Spring 1976), 60.

²⁹Rumsey, 23-24.

³⁰Arbuckle, 60.

animal hides. The business prospered and remained in family hand when Daniel Rouzer's son John took over the tannery in 1815.³¹

Other tanneries followed. The Wampler Tannery opened for business in 1810. Ten years later, Captain W.L. Jones of Baltimore built a two-story, stone-faced tannery, containing 200 vats for soaking, located on Hunting Creek.³² The creek's flowing water propelled a large "grinding apparatus," and the tannery yearly consumed some 2,000 cords of bark, employed fifteen men, and produced 25,000 hides of leather per year.³³

Other industries developed east of the mountains in the early national period including a snuff factory in Graceham, an extensive edge-tool manufactory erected in 1811, and a matchmaking factory begun by the Weller family.³⁴ Meanwhile, into the early nineteenth century, the Johnsons continued to expand their business enterprises. Alongside his furnace, James Johnson also owned a flour mill on Fishing Creek.³⁵

Each of these early industries made ample use of one of the region's most abundant natural resources--timber. In fact, logging was a major mountain area industry. Sawmills,

³¹*Catoctin Enterprise*, 21 November 1947; George Wireman, *Gateway to the Mountains*, (1969), 25-27.

³²*Baltimore Phoenix and Budget*, May 1841; Oeter, 58; Wireman, 28.

³³*Baltimore Phoenix and Budget*, May 1841.

³⁴Wireman, 35; Paula Strain, *The Blue Hills of Maryland: History Along the Appalachian Trail on South Mountain and the Catoctins*, (Vienna, VA, 1993), 269; Gordon, 189; *Baltimore Sun*, 22 July 1951. The Weller match factory was the first in America to produce friction matches, known as "lucifers."

³⁵*Frederick Town Herald*, 12 December 1802. In 1802, James Johnson attempted to sell the mill, located "nine miles from Frederick-Town no the road leading to Herman's Gap."

which were features of the mountain since the arrival of white settlers, continued to operate and expand. When Catoctin Furnace owner James Johnson sold 715 acres of mountain land roughly a half mile from his business, "abounding with chesnut, locust, poplar, and oaks of all kinds," he made sure to mention the additional presence of "a saw mill that would work four or six months in the year."³⁶ Ten years later Johnson put on the market "325 acres of heavily timbered Mountain land." Again the land was within a mile of his furnace. Johnson suggested that the land might be divided into four to six lots, and among the enticements, he trumpeted a "saw mill set and a seat for a distillery or tanyard."³⁷ No doubt dozens of other sawmills dotted the Catoctin area.

Small industry also proliferated along Hunting Creek as it flowed through the valley at the foot of the mountain. Soon locals began calling the area Mechanicstown for the large number of mechanics operating in the area. In 1882, Andrew Sefton, longtime resident of Mechanicstown, recalled his arrival: "I came to this town, April 1st 1831. It then numbered about three hundred inhabitants and was a very business place for its size." Sefton married one of the daughters of Jacob Weller and settled down. In the 1830s, he recalled:

"seven tanners in town and vicinity, two blacksmith shops, a tilt hammer, grand stone, polishing wheel and turning lathe, all propelled by water power, one wool and cloth factory, two shoemaker shops three tailors, three weavers, one gunsmith, one silversmith, two wagon and coach shops, two mill-wrights, three cabinet maker and house carpenter shops, one saddler, one hatter, one doctor, three stone and brick masons, three hotels and a match factory."³⁸ In 1832, the thriving

³⁶*Frederick Town Herald*, 12 December 1802. Johnson's advertisement continued to run into 1803.

³⁷*Frederick Town Herald*, 20 February 1813.

³⁸*Catoctin Enterprise*, 5 December 1947, reprint of article from a 1882 edition of the

settlement was incorporated as the town of Mechanicstown.

Growing industry, of course, required transportation, a perennial problem in the mountainous Catoctin area. What roads existed as the new century began often were barely passable. Many were essentially dirt trails through dense forest, with tree stumps cut at 16 inches so axles could clear them. Frenchman Ferdinand M. Bayard, traveling through Frederick County in the early nineteenth century, found himself "confronted with abominable roads . . . where one runs the risk of being upset at any moment on sharp stones or of being thrown into mudholes."³⁹ Travel by stagecoach from Baltimore to Hagerstown in 1803 required one to board the coach in Baltimore at three in the morning, arriving in Frederick by evening. A second coach in Frederick, again departing at three in the morning, arrived in Hagerstown by early afternoon. Fare for the two-day journey was three dollars and an extra dollar and a half for additional luggage.⁴⁰ There does not appear to have been a coach that traveled north from Frederick during this period.

With Baltimore the largest growing city in the country by the 1790 pressure grew to create a network of useful, passable roads radiating out from the city. Turnpike companies were incorporated to build the necessary links. One of the first construction endeavors was a turnpike from Baltimore to Frederick, which, by 1807, was extended to Boonsborough, and later to Williamsport, where it could link up with routes along the Potomac River.⁴¹ Construction of the

Catoctin Clarion.

³⁹Rice, 60.

⁴⁰*Frederick Town Herald*, 26 March 1803.

⁴¹Brugger, 132, 153.

famed National Road then followed. The road linked existing roads to a major turnpike that ran from Cumberland, Maryland, on the Potomac River to Wheeling, Virginia on the Ohio River.

In the Catoctin area, the first phase of the transportation revolution involved the Westminister-Hagerstown Turnpike completed in 1816, which connected to the National Road in Hagerstown (see Map 2). The Turnpike ran through Mechanicstown and Harmon's Gap (a portion of the pike that appeared to have been called Harmon's Gap Road) and what became Mechanicstown.⁴² Within a few years, the Frederick-Emmitsburg Turnpike, passing through Creagerstown to the east of Mechanicstown was also completed.⁴³

Wheat and Whisky

If an early industrial revolution was taking hold east of the mountains, a simpler agricultural economy centered around hunting, the harvesting of wheat, and raising a small number of livestock, persisted on the west side of the mountain. With no agricultural census until mid-century, records relating to the local agricultural economy are sparse for this period. Nevertheless, what evidence we have suggests a subsistence economy where barter more than cash was the basis for most transactions. Of key importance was the exchange of whiskey, brandy, and hides.

⁴²*Frederick Town Herald*, 25 October 1817; State Road Commission of Maryland, *A History of Road Building in Maryland*, (Baltimore, 1958), 40. A land advertisement from the 12 November 1831 edition of the *Frederick Town Herald* refers to 120 acres of land "lying near Miller's tavern, on the top of Catoctin Mountain. The turnpike road also runs through the property, and considerably enhances its value."

⁴³Anthony Finley, "Maryland [map]," 1824, in Papenfuse, 58; David H. Burn, "Delaware and Maryland [map]," 1838, in Papenfuse, 68. Both maps show the Westminister-Hagerstown Turnpike as well as the north-south, Frederick-Emmitsburg pike.

The center of the mountain economy was a tavern—which still stands--on the southeast side of Manahan Road in present-day Foxville (see Map 2). Labeled Wolfe’s Tavern on an 1873 map of Frederick County, the two-story, log and frame building sheathed in German siding dates from around 1800.⁴⁴ Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the Hauver family operated the tavern. The Hauvers --following the much-traveled route of German migrants to America--first settled in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, then, by the 1760s, moved to Frederick County, settling on the west side of Catoctin Mountain. The family briefly changed its name to Oates in the late eighteenth century, apparently feeling that Hauver sounded too German. In 1779, the Oates\Hauver family purchased a tract of land known as “Good Luck” on which they built their tavern. Situated on the road to Hagerstown, the tavern could take advantage of business from both the local community and travelers.

The tavern served multiple functions. The ever-increasing number of migrants moving west found a night’s sleep and something to eat at the tavern. With politics an increasingly important part of the new nation, the tavern served as a polling place and local court house.⁴⁵ For nearby farmers, it served as a general store at which to buy needed supplies such as salt, butter, cornmeal, and coffee. It provided needed services such as shovel sharpening. Most importantly, the tavern offered farmers and trappers a trading post through which to exchange goods. Farmers, for instance, could exchange cow hides for whiskey. The Hauvers often would sell the

⁴⁴Survey F-6-57, Maryland Historic Site Inventory Form, Frederick County Planning Commission.

⁴⁵Donald Wolf, “The Oates/Hauver/Wolf Tavern,” description attached to Survey F-6-57, Maryland Historic Site Inventory Form, Frederick County Planning Commission.

hides they obtained to Daniel Rouzer for use in his tannery. Lumber was an important commodity and farmers could make staves from wood processed at the many sawmills in the region. The Hauvers bought staves by the thousands and resold them to businesses in Mechanicstown.⁴⁶

Operating on a system of credit and counter credit, the primary product sold by the tavern was whiskey, and secondarily brandy. A product of the abundant wheat grown in the area, whiskey offered obvious advantages. In an area like the Catoctin mountains--with no nearby source of water transportation, and railroads still many years off--whiskey could be shipped at a significantly lower cost than wheat. The nation, in the early nineteenth century, had an insatiable thirst for alcohol, leading one historian to dub the new country the "alcoholic republic."⁴⁷ While it is impossible to determine the amount of alcohol consumed by local farmers, they did purchase a great deal of whiskey and brandy from the local tavern. Some of the whiskey, no doubt, was resold. Some may even have been used in place of hard-to-come-by currency.⁴⁸ Whatever the case, Wolfe's Tavern sold close to one hundred gallons of whiskey on a monthly basis. In the month of November 1820, for instance, local farmer John Wiant purchased six gallons of whiskey, one gallon of brandy, and a half bushel of salt from the tavern. In return, he appears to

⁴⁶Ledger of George Hauver Jr., Journal of his Ordinary (later Wolfe's tavern), Frederick County Historical Society.

⁴⁷William J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York, 1979). According to the census of 1810, the young nation supported 14,000 distilleries that produced 25 million gallons of spirits per year. Soon the country's intense abuse of alcohol was gaining the attention of reformers which led to the temperance movement.

⁴⁸John Marsh, *The Land of the Living: The Story of Maryland's Green Ridge Forest* (Cumberland, MD, 1996), 636.

have sold the tavern one twenty-three pound hide.

Two farmers who owned mountain tracts, later incorporated into the park, appear with some regularity in the records of the tavern. Yost Wiant, whose name or whose son's name appears on early maps of the region as owner of a significant plot of mountain-top land, was a colorful character, who, according to local legend, kept wild hogs on a portion of his holdings. It was that area that became known as "Hog's Rock."⁴⁹ Wiant mainly purchased alcohol from the tavern, occasionally selling a hide or calfskin in return. His purchases for the first several months of 1821 appear in the Wolfe's Tavern ledger as follows:

January 15, 1821

one gallon of wiskey [whiskey]
 one quart of brandy
 one quart of brandy

January 20, 1821

two quarts of cider
 two gallons of brandy
 Carage for butter
 two gallons of wiskey

March 3, 1821

two gallons of wiskey
 tow gallon is wiskey
 one gallon of wiskey

March 10, 1821

two gallons of wiskey

March 17, 1821

two gall of wiskey
 fish
 one quart of wiskey
 one quart of cidrile[?]
 one pint two gall of wiskey
 two gallons of wiskey
 two gallons of brandy

⁴⁹"How Hog Rock Got its Name," History/YCC Anecdotes, Catoctin Mountain Park, Thurmont, MD (subsequently to be referred to as CMP).

April 10, 1821

one shovel plow at bars
one quart cidrila [?]

Another prominent farmer whose family played a major role in the development of the area and later acquisition of the park was Archibald McAfee. Settling on a large tract surrounding Cunningham Falls, McAfee's descendants retained ownership of the land until they sold it to the government in the 1930s. Like Wiant, McAfee (whose name is spelled Archibald Mackffe in the tavern ledger) used the local tavern primarily to purchase and trade for whiskey.

For instance in March 1819 he purchased the following:

one quart of whiskey
one half pint of wine one sling
three half points of whiskey
two gallons of wine
two gallons of whiskey
three gallons of wine

In return for the alcohol, McAfee appears to have paid cash and traded horse shoes.

Compared to the rapid development of industry in western Maryland and throughout the country, agriculture saw few advances and the beginnings of some setbacks. Observers noted the first signs of soil exhaustion and lower yields. The Hessian fly, a costly remnant of the Revolutionary War, also ravaged crops. Although roads improved and new efforts to build canals and railroads generated excitement, transportation networks generally remained primitive in the area.⁵⁰ It was thus industry rather than agriculture that generated the great changes of the times.

⁵⁰James Van Ness, "Economic Development, Social and Cultural Changes: 1800-1850," in *Maryland: A History*, Walsh and Fox, eds., 188-190; Robert Mitchell and Edward K. Muller,

Catoctin Furnace From the Top Down

During the late eighteenth century, the iron furnace at Catoctin prospered as one of the many business interests under the ownership of the Johnson family. In 1787, the brothers rebuilt the furnace entirely, moving it roughly three quarters of a mile up Little Hunting Creek to its present site (See Appendix 1). The new furnace continued to operate with one stack, producing an estimated 900 tons of iron per annum.⁵¹ That same year the Johnsons also added another furnace located at the mouth of the Monocacy to their growing domain.⁵²

By the early 1790s, the diverse interests of the Johnson family were proving too extensive to be jointly managed by the four brothers. In 1793, the Johnsons, therefore, divided up their jointly-held enterprises.⁵³ The Catoctin furnace, which previously had been under the supervision of James Johnson, now shifted to the former governor, Thomas, and his younger brother Baker (1749-1811). It was Baker who took the greatest interest in Catoctin. The younger Johnson acquired his brother's half share in 1802, becoming sole owner of the furnace.

Around 1805, Baker constructed for himself a handsome home, slightly west of the furnace, which he called "Auburn."⁵⁴ Apparently not an iron master himself, Johnson leased the

Geographical Perspectives on Maryland's Past (College Park, Maryland, 1979), 24-26. Future research might focus on the impact of the Hessian Fly in Western Maryland.

⁵¹Neumann, 20; Singewald, 146; Thompson, 63.

⁵²*Frederick Town Herald*, 20 September 1817.

⁵³*Frederick Town Herald*, 19 March 1803.

⁵⁴Anderson, 7.

land to Benjamin Blackford of New Jersey, who operated the furnace for almost a decade.⁵⁵

During the Blackford period, Baker Johnson continued to improve upon his industrial holding.

When Baker died in 1811, Catoctin Furnace went up for public sale, as instructed in his will. Newspapers from around the country carried lengthy announcements, advertising the merits of the furnace. Promising a public auction if the property failed to generate a private buyer, the site was advertised as "consisting of a large blast furnace-the stack, wheel and bellows, and all the buildings of the furnace are built in the best manner are in complete order." A considerable amount of land, about 4,611 acres, accompanied the furnace. Between 600 and 700 acres consisted of "arable land, and about 60 acres sat as meadow, a great part is well set with timothy." The land, the newspaper ads explained, "is well covered with wood and young timber, and is deemed sufficient to furnish coal wood for the furnace for many years." Iron ore found near the furnace "is easily raised and the Bank apparently inexhaustible." Likewise a "limestone quarry is also very convenient not more than 200 yards from the furnace bank." Other attractions included the master's house, a large two-story stone building, with "necessary out-houses," fountain pump at the kitchen door, and two store houses. Also included was a chopping mill, a stone blacksmith shop, barns, stables, and corn houses. The Catoctin Furnace apparently had taken on something of a company-town look, and a successful buyer would also acquire "from 15 to 20 houses for the accommodation of workmen, all in good order" (see Appendix 2 and 3)⁵⁶

⁵⁵Louise McPherson, "Recollections of Catoctin Parish, Protestant Episcopal Church," (nd), 6. According to Louise McPherson, Benjamin Blackford, Hessian mercenary during the Revolutionary War, decided to remain in America, after the war and ended up working at the furnace.

⁵⁶*Frederick Town Herald*, 13 July 1811. *Frederick Post*, 5 August 1987. In the late

The executors of Johnson's will eventually sold the furnace to Thomas and Wiloughby Mayberry of Philadelphia.⁵⁷ The Johnson family, however, remained an active presence in the area. Baker Johnson, Jr., continued to live at Auburn House, for several decades.⁵⁸

The Mayberry brothers enjoyed initial success with their new investment. With the United States desperately trying to avoid involvement in a war between France and Britain, President Thomas Jefferson declared a trade embargo against both belligerents. Spurred by the cut-off of foreign competition, American industry thrived. The subsequent War of 1812, although disruptive, especially in Washington and Baltimore, led to an economic boom in areas less affected by the war. But with the cessation of hostilities in 1815, British iron again flowed into the country. The Panic of 1819--the most severe economic downturn in the history of the young country--then virtually decimated the iron production business, and the Mayberrys went bankrupt.⁵⁹

At a sheriff's auction on May 2, 1820, Colonel John McPherson, Jr., and his business partner and brother-in-law John Brien, who together already owned an iron furnace in Antietam, purchased Catoctin.⁶⁰ By the 1820 sale the Catoctin Furnace land holdings had expanded

1980s, supported by a grant from the Maryland Historic Trust, the Catoctin Furnace Historical Association restored one of the original log worker's houses, dating from circa 1800.

⁵⁷Ibid; Thompson, 66. The Catoctin buyers paid for property in pounds, the primary currency used in Maryland during this period of competing and confusing currencies.

⁵⁸*Frederick Town Herald*, 13 July 1811.

⁵⁹Thompson, 80.

⁶⁰Census Bureau, *Census of Manufactures*, 1820. Antietam Iron works was a larger operation than Catoctin, employing 150 men, and with roughly \$200,000 invested.

somewhat to include 5,000 acres on which sat "a blast furnace with a commodious casting-house and pot-houses, sufficiently large for sixteen moulders, built of stone, office and store houses, coal house, two blacksmith's shops, a large ware house, and stables for four teams; chopping, stamping and saw-mills, all in complete order." Twenty-two houses "for workmen" now adorned the property, as did the two-story, stone master's house, a large stone smoke house, a milk house, and an ice house. The sale also included two mountain tracts, "considered the most valuable on the Catoctin mt [sic] being covered with fine second growth chestnut." On one of the mountain tracts sat a two-story stone house, and the other a "log dwelling."⁶¹ But the thirty-three-year-old site had aged and had been closed for at least for several months. After the purchase, Brien reported to the Census of Manufactures that Catoctin was an "Old Establishment in need of repairs. Now repairing it."⁶²

The sale represented something of a homecoming for the furnace, since John McPherson Jr.'s wife was the granddaughter of Governor Thomas Johnson. Likewise McPherson was no stranger to the iron manufacturing business. His father, John, Sr., was an "iron master," and his sons, explained a family friend in 1809, "wished to adventure the same way."⁶³ John Brien also had a background intimately linked to iron production. Born in County Tyrone, Ireland, Brien, along with his two brothers, followed an uncle to America and into the iron business. The Brien brothers worked in iron furnaces in Pennsylvania, gradually accumulating enough money to

⁶¹*Frederick Town Herald*, 1 April 1820.

⁶²Census Bureau, *Census of Manufactures*, 1820.

⁶³Denton Jacques to Col John McPherson, 26 December 1809, McPherson Family Papers, Frederick County Historical Society.

purchase a furnace named Spring Grove. In 1804, John Brien married, Harriet, the daughter of "iron master" John McPherson, Sr.⁶⁴

Brien and McPherson were dedicated to their investment. They added some 3,000 acres to the furnace holdings, built a grist mill, enlarged the furnace stack, and increased capacity.⁶⁵ The furnace began to cast ten-plate stoves, capable of burning full-length cord wood, which carried the inscription "McPherson and Brien, Catoctin Furnace."⁶⁶ Meanwhile, as the railroad revolution began to take hold, the demand for iron rose.⁶⁷

The mid-1820s also brought something of an educational turn to the furnace area. In 1825, Baker Johnson, Jr., son of the former furnace owner, "at the solicitation of several of the citizens of Frederick and the vicinity . . . consented to open his large and commodious house at Auburn for the receivership of boys to be instructed in all those branches of education necessary to prepare them for the higher classes of college." The boarding school, called Auburn Academy, consisted of 20 students, instructed by a Mr. Peers, "a gentlemen in every respect." Advertisements for the school, stressed the mountain atmosphere (rather than the nearby burning iron furnace operated by slaves): "a high and healthy situation, commending all the advantages of pure air and fine water."⁶⁸

⁶⁴Anderson, 10-11.

⁶⁵Neumann, 21; Anderson, 12; Thompson, 84.

⁶⁶McPherson, 6.

⁶⁷Maryland State Planning Commission, "The Iron and Steel Industry: Blast Furnaces, Steel Works and Rolling Mills," (Baltimore, 1938), 8.

⁶⁸*Frederick Town Herald*, 21 May 1825.

The school does not appear to have operated for more than two years. In 1827, John Brien purchased and moved into Auburn house.⁶⁹ Two years later his business partner, John McPherson, Jr., died. In 1834, Brien himself died while recovering from an illness at a health resort in Bedford Springs, Pennsylvania.⁷⁰ Within a couple of years, Brien's son, John McPherson Brien, managed to purchase the furnace from his father's estate, but, with the panic of 1837, the economy again collapsed, and the furnace operated only sporadically for the next couple of years.

Catoctin Furnace from the Bottom Up: Slavery

While we know the names and much about the lives of those who owned the furnace at Catoctin, we know little of the workers who toiled in the iron-making plant--many of whom were African slaves. Later, as shall be shown in Chapter 3, slave labor declined at the furnace, replaced largely by immigrant workers. Until the mid-1830s, however, slaves provided at least half of the labor at the furnace. While the subject of slavery inevitably conjures up images of large cotton plantations, there existed a sizable number of slaves working in industry. Although industrial slavery has not received the attention given to plantation slavery, those historians who have studied the phenomenon sharply disagree about the conditions under which slaves worked. Some argue that the unique circumstances surrounding slavery in industrial settings allowed slaves slightly more freedom and encouraged between master and slave "mutual accommodation

⁶⁹Anderson, 12-13.

⁷⁰Ibid, 16.

rather than outright repression.”⁷¹ Other conclude that “[f]or laborers--slave and free--engaged in southern industries, working conditions were usually worse than those for laborers engaged in southern farming, since industrial development often demanded longer and harder working days than did plantation agriculture.”⁷² With only the most limited of sources on slavery at Catoctin, there is little that can be added to this debate. Nevertheless, the few scraps of information we do possess are tantalizing--such as evidence of an 1838 riot between furnace workers and residents of Mechanicstown. In the brawl black and white furnace workers fought side-by-side, suggesting a very different type of slavery than existed on plantations. Likewise, preliminary evidence--although still too sketchy to allow for any conclusions--suggests that ironmasters may have chosen African slaves because of their backgrounds in iron manufacturing. One again this suggests that the topic of industrial slavery at Catoctin and elsewhere deserves much deeper inquiry.

Before discussing slavery at Catoctin Furnace, we might briefly consider the nature of the “peculiar institution” in western Maryland. There was, in fact, much slavery in Frederick and Washington Counties. In 1790, around 3,900 (roughly 13%) of Frederick County’s total population of 30,000 was of African lineage. Of the total African population, only 213 were free.⁷³ Most slaves worked in agricultural settings. Although many of the German religious sects held slavery in low regard, Germans in western Maryland eagerly sought to become slave-

⁷¹Charles B. Dew, “Disciplining Slave Ironworkers in the Antebellum South: Coercion, Conciliation, and Accommodation,” *American Historical Review*, (April 1974), 417.

⁷²Robert Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South* (New York, 1970), 36.

⁷³Rice, 54.

holders. Despite the German reputation for frugality, reports historian Elizabeth Kessel, the "one major exception to this rule was slave holding. A slave was a status symbol, and only the wealthiest members of this generation could afford such luxury."⁷⁴ Advertisements for escaped slaves in Frederick County often noted that a particular runaway spoke German as well as English.⁷⁵ A twenty-five-year-old slave named Jack, employed as a joiner by John Brien at the Antietam Iron Works, ran away in 1807. Frantically advertising for the slave, Brien described him as of "dark complexion, speaks German, blue coat, black Pantallons, white Jacket, and a fur hat much worn, 5'9, plays violin well."⁷⁶

Slaves labored on many of the larger farms surrounding the Catoctin mountains. A particularly large farm that was advertised for rent, situated "one mile from the Catoctin furnace," boasted 700 acres of land "about 400 acres of which are cleared and under good fencing," with a "comfortable log dwelling, two barns, and several stables, granaries, and negro quarters."⁷⁷ Records of the Moravian Church of Graceham, likewise, contain numerous references to slave baptisms and marriages. For instance, in 1828, the church recorded the marriage of Jeremiah Sims to Mary Tuckman, a couple belonging to George Zollinger, listed as "a farmer in mountains."⁷⁸ In 1832, Jacob Hoover, a prominent store keeper in Wolfsville,

⁷⁴Kessel, "Germans on the Maryland Frontier," 172-178, 184.

⁷⁵Rice, 55.

⁷⁶*Frederick Town Herald*, 11 July 1807. Census records reveal that virtually no slaves were held in the mountain area east of the furnace.

⁷⁷*Frederick Town Herald*, 8 February 1817.

⁷⁸James Young Henry, ed. *Moravian Families of Graceham, Maryland, 1759-1871*

advertised: “[c]ash for Negroes, Eighteen or Twenty men, women, and children wanted, for which the highest price will be given in cash, apply to Jacob Hoover.”⁷⁹

Alongside African slaves, a smaller population of unfree whites also worked in Frederick County well into the nineteenth century.⁸⁰ Some of these white “servants” were German, paying off their passages to America with several years of indentured work. Advertisements for escaped white servants ran alongside announcements of runaway African slaves.⁸¹ No evidence, however, exists that unfree white labor ever toiled at the iron works in Catoclin.

The majority of unfree labor in western Maryland worked in the dominant agricultural sector. But as wealthy eastern Maryland planters, fully versed in the workings of slavery, launched industries in the west, it followed that slavery would be the preferred system of labor. Before the Civil War, throughout the South, increasing numbers of slaves worked industrial jobs in textile factories, sugar refining, grist milling, or coal mining. By the early-nineteenth century, roughly 5% of slaves (between 150,000 to 200,000) worked in industry.⁸² It was the iron industry in the South, however, that became the most dependent on slave labor. Throughout the south, some 10,000 slaves worked in iron production, making up the majority of workers at Maryland’s Antietam and Hampton Furnaces and Richmond’s infamous Tredegar Iron Company,

(Silver Spring, Maryland, 1942), 121-123.

⁷⁹*Hagerstown Mail*, 31 August 1832.

⁸⁰George Anthony Douglas, “An Economic History of Frederick County, Maryland, to 1860,” (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1938), 13.

⁸¹*Frederick Town Herald*, 26 March 1803

⁸²Starobin, 5, 17-21.

which employed roughly 100 slaves.⁸³

Given the paucity of information about slavery at the Catoctin Furnace, generalizations do not come easily. We do know that Catoctin was a large operation, requiring generally around 80 workers.⁸⁴ Most were unskilled, but a handful possessed valuable skills necessary to keep the furnace functioning. Among the occupations necessary to the industry were founders, colliers, miners, teamsters, wood choppers, and, most likely, a group of general furnace workers assigned to labor wherever needed. Furnace blasts often lasted between four and five months. The rest of year was taken up by logging, coaling, and mining. Only when a proper supply of ore, charcoal and limestone--materials jointly called "stock"-- was ready would the furnace be put into operation.⁸⁵ During lulls in furnace operations, it may have been that a portion of the slave workforce shifted to agricultural work. Wheat production, in turn, had its slack seasons which would allow workers to return to the furnace. Slaves could be hired for these purposes. While it is clear that some of the slaves working at the Catoctin Furnace were the legal property of the furnace owners, it is unclear whether the furnace hired additional bondsmen in busy seasons, or hired-out slaves when the furnace sat idle.⁸⁶

⁸³Ibid, 14-15.

⁸⁴Census Bureau, *Census of Manufacturing*, 1820.

⁸⁵Dew, 396.

⁸⁶*Frederick Town Herald*, 20 October 1804. In 1804, James Johnson announced: "I have for sale several valuable negroes, confiting of men, men, boys and girls brought up to farming." The fact that Johnson would point to the farming background of these slaves, suggests the possibly that a differentiation, at least for Johnson, existed between industrial and agricultural slaves.

Nor does information exist regarding living quarters for slaves. Since listings of furnace property however, contained no separate designation for slave quarters, it might be fair to assume that slaves lived in the workmen's houses. Were houses segregated, with some designated for white workers and others for slaves? Did slaves live with their families or dormitory style? Did skilled and unskilled workers live separately? Barring any new unearthing of information, these questions will remain unanswered. That life for slaves working in the furnace was difficult is beyond question. One of the few references to slavery at the Catoctin Furnace comes from a traveling Moravian minister, Brother John Frederick Schlegel, who came to the furnace in 1799 as part of his ministry to the area. At Catoctin, he met James Johnson, then owner of the furnace, and Johnson's family. He then met with the furnace slaves. "[A] little group of them gathered around me at the top of the furnace opening," he noted in his journal, and "they wept very much because they were bound to work so hard during the week as well as on Sunday in the iron smelter and thus were seldom able to hear the Word of God." The missionary recorded his concern for the slaves "whose inward and outward conditions are troubled."⁸⁷ What the Moravian witnessed suggested the worst aspects of slavery. Almost everywhere, owners gave slaves Sundays off. But at Catoctin the Sabbath appeared to be just another working day.

Not only were hours long and the work hard, but conditions also could prove dangerous. By the late-nineteenth century, the weekly Mechanicstown newspaper, which began printing in 1871, contained much information regarding the dangerous work conditions at Catoctin. For the antebellum period there is little similar information, but we can assume that accidents happened

⁸⁷As quoted in Anderson, 6.

frequently. The Graceham Moravian Church does record an April 1826 fire, fanned by high winds, “in the wood on the mountain started by a pile of coals.” Large numbers of people labored to contain the conflagration, but they had little luck “until the greater of the wood that had been cut and corded, about 3,000 cords belonging to the Furnace, and many thousands of fence-rails and a lot of bark for the tanners, had been consumed.” Losses from the fire were estimated at between four and five thousand dollars.⁸⁸

With few historical sources available with which to recreate the lives of the slaves working at Catoctin Furnace, archeological evidence can help fill in some of the gaps. Locals long had known of a slave burial site marked by roughly a dozen fieldstones, within a half mile of the furnace site (see Map 2). In 1979 and 1980, with a planned expansion of Route 15 through the area, archeologists excavated some 31 burial sites--roughly one third of the interred bodies.⁸⁹ The decision to disrupt the bodies, which later were reburied, was made reluctantly and only with the intention of gaining an understanding of the lives of those overlooked in traditional historical accounts.

Of the thirty-one bodies unearthed, six were newborns, five children (ages 2 to 12), two teenagers, and fifteen adults (consisting of eight females and seven males, between the ages of

⁸⁸Oerter, 95. *The Republican Citizen*, 7 September 1838. A decade later, in September 1838, another fire broke out near “Brien’s iron works.” The home, barn, and entire crop of farmer James Hawkins, burned as did large portions of the mountain. The fire, according to a newspaper, “originated from the negro children’s playing with fire during the absence of family residing on the place.”

⁸⁹Ahron Ann Brunston, “The Cemetery at Catoctin Furnace, Maryland: The Invisible People,” *Maryland Archeology: Journal of the Archeological Society of Maryland* 17 (March 1981), 19.

nineteen and sixty-five). There appeared no obvious causes of death as might be found in an industrial accident. Nor did there appear to have been any nutritional deficiencies. From body weight and analysis of teeth, the archeologists concluded that diets consisted of “relatively coarse food, probably unmilled cornmeal” and little sugar. Nails found at the graveyard dated between 1790 and 1840, and the bodies appeared to have been buried in a manner consistent with Christian customs⁹⁰

Archeologists identified all of the thirty-one bodies as of African heritage, with “no visible admixture of white.” This led to the somewhat surprising conclusion that those buried were first or second generation Americans.⁹¹ According to Jean Libby, in her study of slave ironworkers in western Maryland, ironmaking was a well-developed craft in many West African societies. Comparing African iron production with that practiced in America, Libby found many similarities “in furnace technology and cultural practices.”⁹² There is some evidence that slave traders valued Africans with skills or at least those from iron-producing regions who might possess skills.⁹³ There also exists limited evidence that some slaves practiced their native skills in America. A 1760 newspaper advertisement, for instance, calls attention to a runaway slave

⁹⁰Jennifer Olsen Kelley and J. Lawrence Angel" The Workers of Catoctin Furnace" *Maryland Archeology: Journal of the Archeological Society of Maryland* 19 (March 1983), 1-3.

⁹¹Brunston, 26.

⁹²Jean Libby, “African Ironworking Culture Among African American Ironworkers in Western Maryland, 1760-1850,” (San Francisco State University, M.A. Thesis, 1991), 1.

⁹³Michael Craton, “The African Background,” in *Dictionary of Afro-American Slavery*, Miller and Smith, eds., (New York, 1988), 15.

“imported in 1760, so that he scarcely speaks any English, but can work at the Smith’s Trade, having been employed in his own Country in that way.”⁹⁴ Citing the recent arrival status of those buried at the Catoctin slave cemetery, Libby offers the hypothesis that Catoctin slave furnace workers may have had backgrounds as African iron workers and brought elements of African ironworking skills with them.⁹⁵ While provocative and fascinating, the Catoctin Furnace does not offer the sort of evidence needed to support such a claim. Nevertheless, if first generation African slaves did work at the furnace, they would have brought elements of West African culture with them to the Catoctins.

The 1838 Riot

Aside from Brother Schlegel’s brief comments in 1799, only one other source offers a glimpse into the lives of antebellum blacks employed at Catoctin. In September of 1838, a Baltimore newspaper carried the story of a riot between the citizens of Mechanicstown and iron workers, including slaves, enjoying a day off. The story is so strange that it seems to challenge much of our cumulative understanding of the nature of race relations at the time. The following account of the riot appeared in a newspaper called the *Baltimore Gazette and Daily Advertiser* on September 17, 1838, under the headline, “Late Disturbances in Mechanicstown.” The author was a resident of Mechanicstown who witnessed the riot:

"Dear Sir-As much as has been said about an unfortunate disturbance in Mecanics"Town on Friday evening last, and as there can be no doubt that various misrepresentations have gone abroad

⁹⁴Libby, 31.

⁹⁵Ibid, 31.

upon the subject, I have thought proper to give you a statement of the whole affair as witnessed by myself.

The facts are simply these. A little before sun-down some ten or a dozen furnace hands, having indulged too freely in their libation on the race course, came into town, accompanied by two stout Negroes, for the purpose, as one of them afterwards expressed himself, of "using up the people." They very soon made known their intentions by an unprovoked attack upon two of our citizens. The people, anxious to persevere the peace, and apprehending the consequence of their remaining in town used every means to persuade them from the place. They, however, refused to go and became more violent, until at length one of the citizens, after in vain urging a Negro fellow to throw away some stones with which he had armed himself attempted to take them from him by force; this the Negro resented, with violence, and the citizen knocked him down.

The civil authorities now interfered to arrest the slaves, and they were actually committed, when their white associates rescued them from the officer having them in charge. This act, though highly outrageous, the people were disposed to tolerate, as some of the rioters proposed to depart, and here it was thought the matter would end. We were, however, disappointed. Some one demanded more whiskey, and this the landlord refused to give, supposing no doubt, that they already had too much, and dreading the consequence of giving them more. Upon this, one of them left the crowd, but returned in a moment with an axe, swearing that the landlord who refused to sell liquor ought to have his sign post cut down, & accordingly commenced hewing at the post. Up to that this time we had used every effort to prevent a disturbance of peace-We, however knew very well that, once they were permitted to commence depredations of this kind there could be no telling to what their insolence might lead them. We therefore determined to protect ourselves.

One of the citizens in attempting to seize the axe received a severe blow; and now commenced a regular, or rather irregular, though desperate and bloody fight. Stones, brick bats and whatever could be picked up, were resorted to by both parties, until the rioters were completely driven from the town,--some of the them so severely beaten that they could not reach the furnace, though but three miles distant, without having their wounds dressed. It was a fortunate circumstance that the two Negroes left the town a few moments before the fight commenced, for, such was the

excitement that I have no doubt, had they remained they would have been killed on the spot. After the affray was over, the people assembled and a guard was appointed to patrol the streets, though I am glad to say that no further violence ensued and the night passed off quietly.

In conclusion I would remark that a full representation of the whole affair was made to Mr. Brien by the civil authorities of Mechanics'Town and there can be no doubt that the gentlemen will use his influence to prevent a repetition of the outrages. The people of our village are quiet, industrious and, as a community highly intelligent. They are unused to acts of violence and, in no event, but in case of actual necessity, as in the present instance, could they be urged into such extremes. They, however, will protect themselves, and any attempt to disturb the people hereafter, in a similar manner will be opposed by an *efficient force well prepared for the purpose.*

-One of the people

N.B. It may be proper to state that in their attack on one of the individuals mentioned in the first part of this article, several of them followed him with clubs and drawn knives invading and disturbing the peace and quiet of his family, compelling him to escape through a window to which fortunate circumstance probably he owed his life. There were three other persons of notorious bad character from the neighborhood of the furnace in company with the gang, who shared in those triumphs and fortunes of the same.⁹⁶

The Mechanicstown citizen's letter offers a brief window into the complex social relations of upper western Maryland in the early-nineteenth century. The riot clearly reveals tensions--probably longstanding--between the people of Mechanicstown and those of Catoclin Furnace, a few miles to the south. Residents of Mechanicstown tended to be small businessmen,

⁹⁶*Baltimore Gazette and Advertiser*, 17 September 1835. The Brien referred to in the piece was John McPherson Brien, son of John Brien. What may have been the same riot is mentioned in an article on Mechanicstown, published in *The Baltimore Phoenix and Budget*, May 1841. The date given for the riot, however, is 1832. *The Catoclin Clarion*, on February 18, 1896 also mentioned a riot between locals and furnace workers, but gave the date as 1836. It may have been that there were several riots. My thanks to Dr. David Grimsted, who came across the reference to the furnace riot in the *Baltimore Gazette* while researching his book: David

operating often prosperous craft shops. The furnace workers who were not slaves worked for wages, rented houses in what was essentially a company town, and suffered periodic bouts of unemployment. By the early part of the nineteenth century, the emerging market economy had begun to transform the country. Former frontier areas such as the Catoctin region, where once a rough equality had existed, now experienced social stratification. In many ways, the riot, especially given the stress that the author puts on Mechanicstown as “quiet, industrious, and, as a community, highly intelligent,” represented a clash between emerging middle-class and an increasingly assertive working-class.

Another revealing element of the riot was the role played by alcohol. As previously mentioned, American alcohol consumption was at an all-time high in the early-nineteenth century. The uncertainties fostered by the market revolution only encouraged drinking-- especially among those who found themselves the victims of the changing economy. For many, the arrival of early industry brought with it uncertainty and a loss of control. Instead of keeping one's own hours, one worked according to another's schedule. A wage-earner's future depended upon a host of factors well out of his or her control--economic downturns, changing technology, the whims of a boss or foreman. These factors, no doubt, all contributed to the rise in alcohol abuse. Meanwhile the emerging middle class, made up of business managers and small business owners, grew concerned with alcoholism and the resulting problems posed by an inebriated work force. By the 1830s, a middle-class-driven temperance movement, with strong ties to evangelical Protestantism, began organizing a temperance movement. In the Mechanicstown riot, one can

see both the problems of alcohol abuse and the concern of the middle class for sobriety and order.

The Catoclin area was hardly alone in this period in suffering a riot with deep social implications. Indeed rioting long was an American tradition. To some, crowd action actually represented a democratic spirit at work. But by the 1830s, violence often was out of control. The construction of the Chesapeake and Ohio canal, which passed through the south end of the county, was continually plagued by riots between the largely Irish immigrant workforce, the local populations, and the project supervisors.⁹⁷ As riots became an increasing problem, the property-holding classes began to take action. Towns organized police forces. The reference to the “civil authorities” by the Mechanicstown letter writer may in fact have been an early police force.

The most perplexing aspect of the riot is the racial component. The two blacks involved are identified as slaves. Even if the writer is incorrect and the blacks were free, the episode was unique. Despite the all-powerful color bar of the time, the furnace workers--both black and white--stood together during the riot and apparently had celebrated together at the race track before the disturbance. White furnace workers even rescued one of the blacks, saving him from possible death. The skirmish, in a sense, represents a rare case in American history of class trumping race. The strong group identity among the furnace workers, apparently overcame the divisions of race. Perhaps the circumstances surrounding industrial slavery, in which blacks may have had the opportunity to earn overtime rewards and perhaps had obtained special skills, played a role in the apparent absence of racial divisions between workers. As currently is being explored by some historians, the designation of “white” in the nineteenth century tended to apply

⁹⁷Brugger, 229, 232.

more to middle and upper-class white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Members of the working class, especially immigrant workers, generally occupied a middle-ground in public perception—a position that was neither white nor black.⁹⁸ Viewed in these terms, the riot might be seen as whites against non-whites.

Still, with only one brief episode told from one point of view, few definite conclusions can be reached about social relations. Nor do there exist the sort of sources that would provide a complete picture of this complex and fascinating period of development in the area surrounding present-day Catoclin Mountain Park. From our presently available sources, we can only conclude that social relations were mired in unexpected complexities and defy any easy categorization.

The Furnace After Brien

As sectional tensions over slavery heated up, the number of slaves working at Catoclin declined. From studies of personal property records and census materials, Michael Thompson has hypothesized that roughly twenty slaves labored at Catoclin in the 1820s and early 1830s. With the death of John Brien and a national recession beginning in 1837, the iron furnace operated only sporadically, and the number of slaves working appears to have declined dramatically.⁹⁹ The 1860 census showed only 21 slaves living in the entire Mechanicstown

⁹⁸On the general topic of whiteness see Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York, 1995) and David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness, Race, and the Making of the American Working-Class* (Chapel Hill, 1991).

⁹⁹ Thompson, 86.

district, seven of whom were males over seventeen years of age.¹⁰⁰ No doubt the ever-rising price of slaves along with the soaring price of cotton made unfree labor increasingly cost prohibitive. While we have no evidence, the furnace owners may still have “hired out” slaves for the busy seasons at Catocin--although the price of leasing labor was also rising.

Following a potato famine in Ireland and political trouble in Germany, and as the cost of slaves rose, a new source of labor flooded into the country. Ever-increasing numbers of Irish and German workers began arriving in the America, especially after 1848. While census takers did not record the nation of origin of workers living in the area until later in the century, there is some evidence that the furnace employed immigrant labor.¹⁰¹ As early as 1828, a Moravian minister assigned to Harriet’s Chapel (named for John Brien’s recently deceased wife) recorded in his journal a burial service for an Irish immigrant furnace worker. Friends of the deceased--apparently also Irish Catholic furnace workers--stood apart from the service, wanting to pay their respects but not partake in the Protestant rites.¹⁰²

Relying primarily on wage labor, the furnace struggled on. In the late 1830s, John McPherson Brien, son of John Brien, managed to purchase the enterprise from his father’s estate. But McPherson’s tenure as owner proved brief and difficult. Near broke, in 1843, Brien sold the furnace to Peregrinn Fitzhugh. Again, the sale kept the furnace in the family, as Fitzhugh--descending from a wealthy planter family in Virginia--was connected by marriage to the Brien

¹⁰⁰Maryland Census, 1860, Slave Schedules.

¹⁰¹The 1870 Census, for instance, notes of number of Irish-born workers laboring at the Catocin Furnace, particularly in the iron mines.

¹⁰²Anderson, 14.

and McPherson families. By the early 1840s, the economy had emerged from the Panic of 1837, and Fitzhugh enjoyed several successful years at the helm of the furnace. The new owner made significant investments to revamp the operations. Within ten years, *The Frederick Examiner* could proclaim: “the works are in complete repair; and in regular blast, and are doing a better business than at any time for some years past.”¹⁰³ Fitzhugh’s investments do not appear to have included slaves. According to the 1850 census, he owned eight slaves, but only one was of working age.¹⁰⁴

The new owner’s success did not last long. In 1855, fire destroyed another enterprise owned by Fitzhugh, the Carroll Creek Foundry in Frederick City. The disaster began a period of financial collapse for Fitzhugh. A year later, increasingly in debt, Fitzhugh took on a partner, Jacob B. Kunkle (also frequently spelled Kunkel), in an effort to protect his Catoctin investment.

Kunkle was a politically active lawyer of German descent, whose family owned a prosperous tannery in Frederick City.

The partnership, however, came too late to save Fitzhugh. In 1859, he sold the entire furnace and property to Kunkle’s family for \$51,000. Under Kunkle, the transition away from slave labor appears to have continued. John B. Kunkle, brother of Jacob, who became iron master at the furnace, owned only four slaves, all of whom were under eight years old. In general, the Kunkle acquisition of Catoctin was a fortunate one for the furnace and its employees. The Kunkle family proved dedicated, hands-on owners, willing to continue investing in the

¹⁰³*Frederick Examiner*, 14 September 1853.

¹⁰⁴Mary Hitselberger, *Bridge in Time: The Complete 1850 Census of Frederick County* (Redwood City, CA, 1978), 461.

enterprise long after it held any promise of profitability. But difficult days lay immediately ahead for the mountain area.

Chapter Three

Civil War and Decline of Industry

Introduction

The Catoctin area had been fortunate not to have experienced fighting during the Revolutionary War. The region would not be so fortunate during the Civil War. Memories of the dislocations and fears wrought by the Civil War long lingered for generations in the mountain area. Following the war, the second half of the nineteenth century continued to bring change. A changing economy threatened and eventually subsumed the furnace. Meanwhile, the first signs emerged that the Catoctins might one day become a recreation and vacation area. For those farming in the mountains, however, such changes were hardly noticeable. And subsistence agriculture continued in many ways as it had since the arrival of the first settlers.

Catoctin's Civil War

“Maryland, by the mid-nineteenth century,” wrote historian Robert Brugger, “had become a sectional netherland, a mix of free and slave economy, Northern and Southern cultures.”¹ Throughout the 1840s and 1850s, tensions between North and South mounted. As a true border state in every sense of the term, Maryland (and more specifically Frederick and Washington Counties) sat geographically along an unenviable fault line. By the 1850s, there was little hope of delaying the inevitable conflict between North and South. Western Maryland suffered terribly during the war. While the upper areas of Frederick County were spared the worst of the

¹Brugger, 248.

fighting, the region still experienced the uncertainty, fear, dislocation, and occasional violence of the conflict.

In the fall of 1859, rumors swept across western Maryland of some sort of a riot or battle in Harper's Ferry. "Conspicuous among the rumors," reported the Frederick newspaper, "was the alarming statement, that the outbreak was a Negro insurrection."² The event was John Brown's raid on the Harper's Ferry arsenal, which the insurrectionist hoped would be the beginning of a revolution. When the local militia proved unable to handle the situation a company under Colonel Robert E. Lee, which included soldiers from Frederick County, quickly contributed a company to restore peace to Harper's Ferry.³

The next trauma came with the election of 1860. The newly formed Republican Party, and its nominee Abraham Lincoln, had its strength in the North and West. Meanwhile, the Democratic Party was badly split and nominated two candidates--Stephen Douglas, from the North and John Beckinridge, representing southern sentiments. A fourth candidate, John Bell of Tennessee, ran as a member of the Constitution Party, advocating some sort of eleventh-hour compromise. Beckinridge won Mechanicstown with 189 votes, followed closely by Bell with 182. Stephen Douglas, the Democratic candidate from the north, earned 7 votes and Lincoln only 6. Meanwhile in Hauvers District, west of Mechanicstown, Beckinridge won overwhelmingly with 154 votes, Bell won 46 votes, Douglas 27, and Lincoln only three. In the

²*Frederick Examiner*, 19 October 1859.

³Gordon, 77.

end, Lincoln won only 103 votes in all of Frederick County.⁴ But the Republican candidate, with the other parties deeply split, won enough votes nationwide to become the new president. The prospect of a Lincoln presidency sent chills through western Maryland. In mid-November, *The Frederick Herald* could offer only a prayer: “May God in his mercy avert the dangers so threateningly.”⁵

Clearly significant sympathy for the southern cause existed in western Maryland. In December 1860, a countywide convention met in Frederick City in an attempt to establish a common approach to the coming troubles. But the convention split roughly in half between unionists and secessionists and no progress could be made.⁶ Towns in southern Frederick County--such as Urbana, Buckeystown, and Petersville--all were particularly pro-South. In areas to the north, such as the upper-Catoctin region, opinions tended to be split. Bell’s strong showing certainly suggests that many in Mechanicstown/Hauvers District areas hoped that conflict could be put off. But there was much pro-southern sentiment to be found even in the northern portions of Frederick County. In the growing town of Mechanicstown, in 1861 Isaiah Wolfersberger began the first newspaper, *The Family Visitor*, a weekly with a decidedly pro-southern orientation.

Among the strongest secessionists in the county were a member of the family that owned

⁴*Frederick Examiner*, 14 November 1860; Bart Rhett Talbert, *Maryland: The South’s First Casualty*, (Berryville, VA, 1995), 15. Bell narrowly won the state of Maryland over Beckinridge. Statewide, Douglas received 5% of the vote--Lincoln, 1.9%.

⁵Brugger, 272.

⁶Gordon, *Textbook*, 82.

Catoctin furnace and a descendent of the family that had built the facility. Jacob Kunkle, the politically-savvy lawyer who had entered into a partnership with Fitzhugh and whose family later gained sole ownership of the furnace, actively promoted the southern cause. Fluent in German, Kunkle--often addressing audiences in German--campaigned aggressively for Beckinridge.⁷ In addition, Bradley Tyler Johnson, grandson of former furnace owner Baker Johnson, and grand-nephew of Governor Thomas Johnson, was perhaps Frederick County's most outspoken southern sympathizer. Like Kunkle, Johnson campaigned for Beckinridge, and when Lincoln moved to invade Baltimore in the spring of 1861, attempted to mobilize local secessionists to block Union troops.⁸

Lincoln's invasion of Baltimore was certainly symbolic of the divisiveness and incendiary sentiments present in Maryland by the beginning of the Civil War. Bordering Virginia, Frederick and Washington Counties braced for a war close to home. Colonel Bradley Johnson, C.S.A. quickly moved to organize Marylanders for the new Confederate army. He refused all suggestions that he meld his recruits into the Virginia regiments, insisting instead that Maryland organize a rebel regiment of its own.⁹ Johnson's recruits appear largely to have come from the southern portion of the state. A survey of names of those enlisted in the Maryland line of the Confederate army reveals none of the family names associated with the Catoctin area.¹⁰

⁷Paul and Rita Gordon, *Never the Like Again*, (Frederick, 1995), 13, 16.

⁸Ibid, 45.

⁹Ibid, 48.

¹⁰W.W. Goldsborough, *The Maryland Line in the Confederate Army, 1861-1865* (Gaithersburg, 1987, reprint of 1900 edition). The name Zollinger, perhaps a relation to the

Desperately needing to keep the state of Maryland in the Union camp--even if it would require force--Lincoln arrested secessionists and dispatched troops throughout Maryland. With Annapolis occupied by federal troops, the Maryland state legislature briefly moved operations to Frederick City. But in April 1861, Union soldiers surrounded the city, arrested key leaders of the legislature and forced members to take a loyalty oath. Those who refused quickly found themselves prisoners in Fort McHenry.¹¹ Eventually, Lincoln dispatched nearly 15,000 troops to Frederick County to insure that the pivotal region would remain within the union.

The Union army showed little concern with civil rights. They set up check points and led raids on the homes of suspected Confederate sympathizers. The army staged a surprise search of Jacob Kunkle's Frederick City home, but found only a Confederate flag and a picture of Jefferson Davis. To the north, pressure also grew on those with pro-northern sentiments. In Mechanicstown, "the union men of the town" forced the inflammatory *Family Visitor* out of business.¹²

Like those with southern leanings, unionists in western Maryland also mobilized for the war effort. In August 1862, Company D of the Sixth Maryland Regiment Maryland Volunteers formed under Captain Martin Rouzer. The company included fifty men from Mechanicstown and twenty-five from Hauvers' District. It would not be long before these soldiers would see action.

Despite the Union's advantages in numbers, equipment, and industrial power, the rebels

Zollingers living in Harbaugh's Valley, does however, show up.

¹¹Gordon, *Textbook*, 85.

¹²*Catoctin Clarion*, 13 February 1896.

scored several early victories. Frederick City became an enormous hospital, caring for the ever-increasing number of Union casualties. Following the Confederate victory at the second battle of Bull Run, in early September 1862, an estimated 80,000 southern troops poured across the Potomac into Frederick County, in hope of prying Maryland from the North and staging an invasion of Washington DC. As they forded the river, Lee's men broke into a rousing rendition of "Maryland, My Maryland." Badly outnumbered, the Union army hurried to evacuate the area. Soldiers burnt supplies and loaded patients on trains, headed for safety.

On September 6, led by Bradley T. Johnson, between 10,000 and 15,000 troops invaded Frederick City. News of the invasion rippled northward, causing great alarm. The Graceham Moravian Church recorded: "Yesterday morning we received the intelligence that the Confederates had invaded Maryland and were marching on to Frederick City. During the day the sick and the wounded quartered there were moved to Pennsylvania through Mechanicstown. All are in great excitement, fearing that they will impress union men into the service. We here at Graceham became very uneasy, and towards evening a party of eighteen men concluded to leave for Pennsylvania." The Graceham unionists mounted horses and buggies and dashed to Taneytown, where they stayed for three days. Then, when word came from the Confederates that no one would be impressed, the men finally felt confident enough to return home.¹³ As the caravan of "ambulances" moved through town, local residents scrambled to find food for the refugees. One resident remembered her mother baking short cakes on top of her ten-plate stove

¹³Oeter, 120. Since the Frederick-Emmitsburg Turnpike passed through Graceham, rather than Mechanicstown to the west, it is strange that the wounded would be taken through Mechanicstown. They may have feared being chased down by Confederates along the main road.

for the wounded. Fearing that the Confederates might move northward, some drove their horses to Pennsylvania, where they would be safe from theft. Some even packed so as to be ready to quickly flee into the mountains should the need arise.¹⁴

The Confederates, in fact, had hoped that the citizens of Frederick County would rally to the southern cause. But they were sorely disappointed. “We were received with neither cheers nor songs or other evidence of approbation,” wrote one soldier, “but instead they looked on us in self-evident pity.”¹⁵ The rebels, in fact, were a motley, impoverished crew. Many arrived hungry, without shoes, wearing dirty and torn uniforms. But the troops were polite and did not plunder, despite their need.

As the Confederates occupied Frederick, northern troops massed to the east and prepared to press the invaders out of the border state. On September 10, Union troops retook the city. Some rebels headed northward. The Graceham church recorded 300 Confederate Cavalry passing through town on September 1861. The next day more rebels came through, and seven soldiers stopped and enjoyed breakfast in the church’s parsonage. That evening 2,000 troops passed through Mechanicstown.¹⁶

Most Confederate troops, however, headed west from Frederick toward Hagerstown (along the National Road) and Antietam. On September 14, 1862, fleeing rebel troops attempted to make a stand outside Middletown, near Catoctin Creek on South Mountain. There,

¹⁴Mrs. Walter Rice, “Recollections of the Civil War,” Thurmont Historical Society.

¹⁵Gordon, *Never the Like Again*, 128-129.

¹⁶Oerter, 121.

they suffered a decisive defeat--leading to the first Union victory of the war. Following the Battle of South Mountain, the Confederates further retreated to Antietam, where Lee assembled his tired troops behind Antietam Creek. On September 17, 1862, the Battle of Antietam proved the single costliest day in American military history. The combined dead numbered 4,800 and wounded 18,500. Worse, the battle proved indecisive. Lee simply slipped back across the Potomac and the war went on.

Western Maryland had witnessed the full anxiety and tumult of a new kind of total warfare. In the aftermath of the battle, the Graceham Church recorded, "A Time of war, and all minds are filled with apprehension and alarm. Persons who have visited the battle field describe the scenes as heart-rending."¹⁷ The invasion and battles thoroughly disrupted life in the area. Rebels destroyed the Baltimore and Ohio railroad bridge over the Monocacy and tore up miles of train track. Thousands of acres of valuable farm land had also been ravished. Remaining was a profound sense of fear of what might still be to come.

Again, crisis was not far off. In the fall of 1862, J.E.B. Stuart crossed the Potomac at Williamsport intent on stirring up trouble in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Leading a cavalry unit of roughly 1,600 men, Stuart raided Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, then turned south to Emmitsburg. On October 12, 1862, Stuart entered Emmitsburg where he was "hailed by the inhabitants with the most enthusiastic demonstrations of joy." But Stuart's men wore blue overcoats covering their gray uniforms, and locals may have thought they were greeting union men. The real Union army soon got word of the raiding party and dispatched troops from

¹⁷Ibid, 121.

Hagerstown to oust the invaders. Union cavalry charged from Hagerstown along the Westminster-Hagerstown Pike (passing through Harman's Gap) and massed in Mechanicstown. But, by the time they arrived, they learned that Stuart had already slipped back to Virginia, probably via Libertytown.¹⁸

For several months an uneasy calm settled across the region. Then, in late June 1863, the calm broke. "Considerable excitement during the day," reported the Graceham Church. "The Confederates are reported massing themselves about Boonsboro, etc. A number of horses were taken." The county braced for another invasion. The free black population of western Maryland, fearing that invaders might ship them south, was the first to flee. General Robert E. Lee, in fact, had invaded Maryland apparently with the intent of bringing the war to the north, where he might win a determining battle. The bulk of the invaders moved northward from points west of the Catoctins, but fighting did break out near Frederick City, and the rebels briefly held Westminster before moving northward toward Pennsylvania.

First massing in Frederick City, Union troops took several routes in pursuit of the rebels. On June 29, 1863, the First Corps of the Army of the Potomac left Frederick and marched through the rain northward, along a series of roads paralleling today's Route 15 (see Map 3). The corps moved through Harmony Grove, Lewistown, Catoctin Furnace, Mechanicstown, Franklinville, and then onto Emmitsburg, where they spent the night. As they passed through Mechanicstown and Catoctin Furnace, the soldiers found a reception "overflowing with

¹⁸Gordon, *Textbook*, 106; Gordon, *Never the Like Again*, 203.

patriotism and hospitality.”¹⁹ In many cases food was freely passed out to the hungry soldiers. Elsewhere soldiers could buy pies, a loaf of bread for 50 cents, a canteen of milk for 25. Despite prohibitions, soldiers also bought whiskey along the way. In Catoctin Furnace, soldiers actually tried to stop and buy food at the local general store, but their superiors ordered them on.²⁰ At the end of the day, the soldiers passed through Emmitsburg, which only weeks earlier had suffered a calamitous fire, and set up camp just north of the burned-out town.²¹ Meanwhile the Eleventh Corps moved along one of the region’s major arteries, the Frederick-Emmitsburg Turnpike, passing through Creagerstown, to the east of Mechanicstown and Catoctin Furnace (see Map 3). The Eleventh Corps found the trip to be a smooth one, along a good stone road, and was able to travel thirty-seven miles in twenty-four hours.²²

On July 1, the soldiers who marched north along the eastern border of the Catoctins met the Confederates at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The next day, the Graceham Church reported: “The community kept in great suspense and anxiety.”²³ Both armies suffered casualties of well over 20,000. But for Lee, the cost was higher; he lost one third of his army. In the confusing aftermath of the battle, the Confederates managed to escape south, robbing the North of an opportunity to end the war.

¹⁹John Schildt, *Roads to Gettysburg*, (Parson, WV, 1978), 357-358; Oerter 122.

²⁰Maude Luken, “Catoctin Furnace--A Different Village,” *American Motorist*, September 1930.

²¹Schildt, 362.

²²*Ibid*, 365.

²³Oerter, 123.

With the defeated rebels retreating through the area, anxiety again rippled through northern Frederick and Washington Counties. On a rainy Sunday, July 5, the day after the battle, J.E.B. Stuart--seeking to protect the rebel retreat--moved his unit south along the Emmitsburg-Frederick Turnpike. He stopped in Graceham long enough to frighten locals, then moved to Creagerstown (which he called Cooperstown). From Creagerstown, Stuart and his men planned to move west, along the Westminster-Hagerstown road (today's Route 77), with the eventual aim of joining up with General Lee (see Map 3). But Stuart received intelligence that Union soldiers had blocked Harman's Gap. Instead of taking the established road, Stuart thus shuttled northwest to the small hamlet of Franklinville (just north of present-day Catoctin High School) where he may have encamped. From there Stuart continued to move westward, probably through Harbaugh Valley then onto the Deerfield area. At some point, probably in Washington County, he emerged back on the road to Hagerstown. Very quickly, probably at Harman's Gap, Stuart came under fire from Union troops. After a standoff, however, the northerners backed off, allowing Stuart to pass through.²⁴

Some Union troops also moved through the area on their return from Gettysburg. The First Corps, which had advanced up through Mechanicstown, retreated along the same road, as did the Sixth corps. According to one report, along the way, young girls serenaded the soldiers with "Battle Cry of the Republic."²⁵ After a few days the Graceham Church could finally give

²⁴John Schildt, *Roads from Gettysburg* (Shippenburg, PA, 1998), 17-18; Oeter, 123; also see M. Jacobs, *Notes on the Rebel Invasion of Maryland and Pennsylvania and the Battle of Gettysburg*, (Gettysburg, PA 1909).

²⁵Schildt, *Roads from Gettysburg*, 64-66.

“thanks for our deliverance from the calamity of Confederate invasion.”²⁶

The ongoing war was the cause of endless anxiety and tension in the area. Fifty years later, one Mechanicstown resident vividly recalled the trauma of being woken by a soldier loudly banging at her family’s front door. In the darkness, it was some time before the unionist family could determine that the soldier was not a rebel, and the family could direct the midnight visitor to Chimney Rock, from where he apparently sent signals to Sugar Loaf Mountain.²⁷

By 1863, the war had caused serious economic and social disruption throughout western Maryland. Fighting in the region had destroyed much valuable farmland. Likewise the draft caused serious labor shortages. *The Frederick Examiner*, in the fall of 1863, noted that “serious apprehensions are beginning to be expressed lest the agriculturists of Maryland shall experience loss and inconveniences for the want of labor to till the earth.”²⁸ Likewise the hard work, dislocation, and anxiety of the war, resulted in numerous social problems. A resident of Catoctin Furnace later recalled the war as a time of “a-working and a-scotching (working and drinking).”²⁹ It could also be a time of lawlessness. In “a deep vastness of the Catoctin Mountains” roughly eight to ten miles from Frederick City, “seven or more guerilla horse thieves” kept an encampment. Angry victims of the thieves finally raided the hide-away and captured four of the “guerillas,” whom they suspected to be “rebel recruits on their way to

²⁶Oeter, 123.

²⁷Rice, “Recollections of the Civil War.”

²⁸*Frederick Examiner*, 2 September 1863.

²⁹Luken. The quote comes from Catoctin Furnace resident Henry Fraley.

Dixie.”³⁰

While law enforcement could be loose in some places, elsewhere it remained tight. Travelers had to pass through check-points all over western Maryland. In 1863, when Jacob Kunkle told a union officer, inquiring after his destination, that it was “none of his business,” the secessionist found himself under arrest for disrespecting military authority.³¹

A year after the Battle of Gettysburg, in the summer of 1864, with the war entering its fourth miserable year, the Confederates--as they had the two previous years--again invaded western Maryland. “Rumors in town that the Confederates are again in Maryland” interrupted Independence Day around Catoctin Mountain. The reports turned out to be true. The rebels again took Frederick City, holding it for ransom. Meanwhile, Confederates led raids as far north as Lewistown and Creagerstown, where the rebels “robbed store-keepers and took horses.”³² The looting panicked locals. Soon, even Bradley Johnson was complaining about the plundering by rebel troops.³³ Finally, after the Battle of Monocacy, the Confederates again left Maryland--for the last time.

By early 1865, the Civil War--the most difficult time in the history of western Maryland--had come to an end. But there was one last casualty--President Lincoln. News of the president’s assassination reached the Catoctin area, “mournful intelligence,” according to the

³⁰*Frederick Examiner*, 2 September 1863.

³¹*Frederick Examiner*, 14 October 1863

³²Oeter, 124.

³³Paul and Rita Gordon, *Frederick County Maryland: A Playground for the Civil War* (Frederick, Maryland, 1994), 198-200.

Graceham Church, just in time for Easter prayers.³⁴

For generations, the Civil War, which had caused so much upheaval in the Catoctin area, remained a monumental event about which stories were told and retold. One longstanding claim about the area had the Catoctin Furnace playing a part in the manufacturing of the U.S.S. Monitor, a 172 foot long, turreted war ship. The vessel, designed by John Ericsson, a Swedish-American engineer and inventor, was first launched at Greenpoint, Long Island, on January 30, 1862. Because we have such limited records for the Catoctin Furnace, claims are difficult to substantiate or refute. But it does not appear that the furnace produced the sort of bar iron capable of being molded into the rolled plate that surrounded the ship.

As part of its maritime history initiative, the National Park Service and other organizations sponsored a study of the manufacturing firms contributing to the U.S.S. Monitor. Of the ironworks employed in the making of the ship, all but one was from New York. The sole non-New York contributor was Horace Abbott and Sons, a Baltimore firm very involved in producing iron for railroad construction. The large Abbott iron works does not appear to have made iron, but rather focused on rolling iron at its several rolling mills. Historian William N. Still deemed it “more than likely these [Abbot’s rolled iron] were the rolls used to make the plates for Monitor and other armored vessels during the Civil War.”³⁵ Tradition does have the Catoctin Furnace producing iron that became part of the armored plating on the ship.³⁶ There

³⁴Oeter, 124.

³⁵William N. Still, *Monitor Builders*, (Washington, 1987), 10-12.

³⁶The story about Catoctin iron used on the U.S.S. Monitor, for instance, can be found in

are, however, no surviving records for the Abbott firm, thus the names of the firm's iron suppliers are lost to us. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that the Catoctin Furnace, which was already using outdated technology by the 1860s, was capable of producing the sort of bar iron required by rolling mills. Throughout its existence, Catoctin produced pig iron, unsuitable for such rolling.³⁷ Nevertheless, the Monitor myth has persisted, and there is much we do not know about the workings of Catoctin Furnace.

Whatever its role in constructing the Monitor, the Civil War long remained a presence in the lives of area residents. The Jason Damuth Post, G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic veterans organization), made up of veterans of the Sixth Maryland Regiment, in particular, remained an important and influential local force.³⁸ Every Memorial Day in Mechanicstown, veterans marched behind the Graceham Cornet Band to the Town Hall where the Gettysburg Address was read.³⁹ The death of Henry Fleagle, the last surviving member of the Damuth Post at the age of 95 in 1937, received heavy coverage in the local media. Fleagle, who had met Lincoln and been present at Lee's surrender at Appomattox, lived well beyond those tumultuous

The *Frederick Daily News*, 10 August 1940, and in a report prepared for President Roosevelt on the construction of his Shangri-La retreat: "Summary of the Development of 'Shangri-La': The Presidential Lodge in Catoctin Mountain, Maryland," 1942, Album 461, Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, NY.

³⁷Malcolm Davies, "Iron Forging and Smelting in the Maryland: A Relict Industry After the Civil War," (Ed.D. diss., Columbia University, 1972), 10; Mark Howell, telephone interview by author, Frederick, Maryland, 18 May 1999. Mark Howell, a local historian interested in iron manufacturing has come to these conclusions about the iron manufactured at Catoctin.

³⁸Jason Damuth was a Mechanicstown local killed during the Wilderness campaign of 1864.

³⁹*Catoctin Clarion*, 7 June 1900.

days to see the founding of a park in an area once so threatened by war.⁴⁰

“The Sound of the Steam Whistle Twice a Day”

The railroad had been transforming western Maryland since the 1830s. The Baltimore and Ohio connected Frederick City and points west to Baltimore, creating tremendous economic opportunity. But the area north of Frederick City had to wait over forty years to connect with the railroad. Plans long had been in the works to build a railroad from Baltimore to the northern portions of Frederick and Washington Counties. In 1852, the Maryland General Assembly chartered the Baltimore, Carroll and Frederick County Railroad, which later evolved into the Western Maryland Railroad (see Map 3). Within a year of its chartering, construction began. But the challenges of building in mountainous areas slowed progress. On May 17, 1862 the builders of the Western Maryland Railroad caused “quite a stir” in Graceham by laying track near the outskirts of town.⁴¹ But then the war slowed all progress. It was not until later in the decade that the railroad pushed into Graceham. And not until March 1871 did the railroad finally arrive in Mechanicstown and press through the rest of Frederick County (see Appendix 5).

Its arrival brought monumental changes according to the local newspaper:

The sound of steam whistle twice a day in the suburbs of our hitherto quiet little town has awakened everything up to newness of life and a spirit of "go-aheadativeness" which is quite refreshing. We begin to put on city airs and learn city fashions; Baltimore is brought close to our doors, and oysters and cavs-back ducks and fresh fish can be produced and eaten daily as at one of the largest

⁴⁰*Catoctin Clarion*, 16 November 1934; *Catoctin Clarion*, 5 November 1937.

⁴¹Oeter, 128.

restaurants in the Monumental City.⁴²

After its expansion to Mechanicstown, railroad workers began laying tracks westward to Sabillasville. The brand new Mechanicstown newspaper, *The Catoctin Clarion*, predicted that the new railroad would “whistle the inhabitants of Sabillasville from the Rip Van Winkle sleep into a new and creative existence” (see Appendix 7).⁴³ Once completed, the railroad took a leisurely semi-circular route around Sabillasville, a ride that quickly became known as “horseshoe curve” (see Appendix 6).⁴⁴ A strike by workers demanding a \$1.75 per day and a ten-hour day temporarily halted plans to extend the railroad to Smithburg in the spring of 1871.⁴⁵ But soon labor and management settled the strike, and the new railroad was pressing onward toward Hagerstown.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, the rapid expansion of the railroad into the northern part of Western Maryland offered new excitement and pointed to a brighter future. Throughout the country--as was the case in the Catoctin--the railroad reached and transformed formerly remote areas. In northern Frederick and Washington counties, the railroad opened tourism to the mountain area and revived agriculture and industry in the region.

The Furnace: "A Relict Industry"

As the builders of the western Maryland railroads were determining the proper route

⁴²*Catoctin Clarion*, 4 March 1871.

⁴³*Catoctin Clarion*, 11 March 1871.

⁴⁴Scharf, 1007.

⁴⁵*Catoctin Clarion*, 11 March 1871.

through the mountainous area, the Kunkles saw an opportunity. Jacob Kunkle, arguing that the train would move along a more level grade, petitioned the directors to route the railroad through Catoctin Furnace. Such a path would obviously create opportunities for the family business. In the end, however, the designers chose to lay tracks six miles to the north of the furnace.⁴⁶

Bypassed by the railroad, using increasingly outdated technology as the era of steel approached, and operating in the thick of a competitive industry, somehow the Catoctin Furnace managed to survive into next century. To historian Malcolm Davies, the survival of the furnace offers a prime example of a "relict industry" able to endure the changing economic times of the late nineteenth century.⁴⁷ Key to the survival of the furnace was the dedicated, hands-on ownership of the Kunkles, the availability of local markets and abundant natural resources. The last years of the furnace, however, were anything but easy. The Kunkles struggled to keep the furnace technologically up-to-date and suffered perennial shutdowns. It was a difficult battle, doomed to ultimately failure, but for the families depending upon the furnace, including many farmers who periodically worked as choppers and colliers, the survival of the relict industry was a godsend.

⁴⁶Joseph Gitt, "Report of the Survey and Location for the Extension of the Western Maryland Railroad," 1865, 48-51. *Catoctin Clarion*, 4 March 1871. The arrival of the railroad was still of great benefit to the furnace. On February 18, 1871 the first load of pig iron from the furnace was hauled six miles north to the Western Maryland Railroad depot then shipped to Woodberry, near Baltimore. The local newspaper declared the shipment: "the beginning of a trade which will prove highly lucrative in the future." "Catoctin Furnace Historic Notes: Information from Mr. Edward Nunemaker, 1967," interview by Howard Damuth, Thurmont Historical Society. With the construction of the new Deborah coke-burning stack, coke was also shipped by rail to Mechanicstown then transported by wagon to the furnace.

⁴⁷Davies, 1-6.

At the end of the Civil War, the Kunkles had every reason to believe that their newly-purchased enterprise would continue to thrive. The Civil War had created great demand for iron, and, with the promise of greater industrialization following the war, the demand was expected to grow. Markets for pig iron to produce pipes, stoves, and machine parts promised profitable times.⁴⁸

With the death of John Kunkle, Sr., in 1866, the enterprise at Catoclin passed to his two sons. That same year, John B. bought out his attorney brother to become sole owner of the furnace and properties. Anticipating a great market for pig iron and rail iron in Europe, Kunkle actively campaigned for trade regulations that would help American manufacturers of iron. He also planned to expand his operations at Catoclin.⁴⁹ Kunkle hired additional workers and in 1873 built a new furnace stack, the Deborah, named for his wife. The Deborah utilized exciting new technology. It was a steam-powered, coke-burning furnace, 50 feet high and 12 feet in diameter.⁵⁰ Alongside the Deborah, the Isabella, burning charcoal, remained in use. At peak operations, the furnace may have employed as many as 500 men: roughly 100 manning the furnace, 300 chopping wood and making charcoal, and 100 men working in the open pits of the ore and limestone banks.⁵¹ During busy times, the furnace even imported carloads of Italian

⁴⁸Davies, 68.

⁴⁹*Catoclin Clarion*, 24 February 1872.

⁵⁰Thompson, 107; Davies, 85; Singlewald, 147. Kunkle also patented what he hoped would be a new technology that involved lining the furnace with magnesian limestone to help free iron from phosphorus. The experiment largely failed.

⁵¹Thompson, 107. Norman Waesche, "Economic History of Catoclin Furnace," Term Paper, Johns Hopkins University, 1936," Waesche, who used as a source his relative L.R. Waesche,

immigrants from Baltimore to help with the work load.⁵²

In no way were the Kunkles absentee owners. John B. Kunkle served as iron master at the furnace and lived in the large house adjoining the enterprise. The German-descended Kunkle family fit in well in the Catoctin area and quickly became a fixture of local life. Lillian Kunkle, daughter of John, became superintendent of the small church school associated with Harriet's Chapel at Catoctin Furnace.⁵³ Not only were family investments tied up in the furnace, but so were family lives.

Clearly, the abundant natural resources in the area continued to facilitate iron production. Magnetite ore unique to the area could be found in great abundance.⁵⁴ Enormous quantities of limestone and timber were also nearby. Charcoaling, by the second half of the nineteenth century, had been practiced and perfected on the mountain for nearly a hundred years. Farmers during their off-seasons could provide additional labor for chopping wood and charcoaling. Even children contributed by gathering leaves for the charcoal pits.⁵⁵

Another factor working in favor of the furnace was the presence of local markets, particularly in Baltimore. Pig iron produced at Catoctin was ideal for railroad car wheels. Into

former property manager of the Catoctin Furnace estimates roughly 350 workers at the furnace.

⁵²Waesche.

⁵³*Catoctin Clarion*, 1 January 1885.

⁵⁴Davies, 48-50. In the area around the furnace, Davies notes "10,000 acres was compromised of literally one vast ore bank."

⁵⁵"Information from Edward J. Nunemaker, Sr., Catoctin Furnace, 28 January 1958," interview by Howard Damuth, Thurmont Historical Society.

the twentieth century, railroad wheels made from charcoal iron had the reputation of being superior to steel.⁵⁶ The Catoctin Furnace appears to have had a long-standing relationship with Lobdell Railroad wheel manufacturing company of Wilmington, Delaware. Access to local markets such as Lobdell and others in Baltimore provided Catoctin Furnace with a much needed life-line during changing economic times.⁵⁷

Alongside the coke furnace, Kunkle introduced other technology to expedite work at Catoctin, including steam-powered shovels on tracks to facilitate open-pit mining.⁵⁸ In 1886, the railroad that the Kunkles had wanted twenty years earlier finally came to Catoctin. L.R. Waesche of Mechanicstown and Steiner Schley, of Frederick, together, financed a rail connection between the Western Maryland Railroad Depot in Mechanicstown to Catoctin Furnace four miles south. This replaced the old system of hauling pig iron and coke in wagons driven by teams of six or eight mules.⁵⁹ Conveniently the railroad used slag from the furnace as ballast (slag also was used on roads and for filling purposes).⁶⁰ The founders named their railroad, built primarily to serve the furnace, the Monocacy Valley Railroad (MVRR).

⁵⁶Davies, 93.

⁵⁷Strain, 49; Kenneth Orr, "The Catoctin Furnace Archeological Mitigation Project Final Report of the 1979 Excavation," February 1982, 29. The Cunningham Fall State Park superintendent managed to recover a mining cart from the pond now covering the former open-mining pit near the old furnace. The cart bore Lobdell wheels.

⁵⁸Davies, 60-64. A steam power to drive the blast and possibly other equipment at Catoctin was also introduced probably in the 1860 and 1870s.

⁵⁹"Monocacy Valley Railroad," verticle files, Thurmont Historical Society.

⁶⁰"Information Edward J. Nunemaker, Sr, Catoctin Furnace, 28 January 1958, Interview by Howard Damuth," verticle files, Thurmont Histoical Society.

J.B. Kunkle, proud owner of the furnace, never saw the railroad in operation; he died of pneumonia in 1885. Kunkle's obituary noted his early success with the furnace and willingness to invest in the operations. But Kunkle's 1873 decision to expand the operation by constructing a new stack, the obituary noted, was "probably a mistake." As the business declined and periodic shutdowns grew more frequent, Kunkle attempted to reorganize the business as a joint-stock company, with himself as a member. But few could be found who were willing to invest in the relict industry. Nevertheless, Kunkle's devotion to the furnace and its workers remained his overriding concern: "withal whenever the price of iron poised to make it possible to produce without a loss Mr. Kunkle started the furnace and gave employment to all he could. He then undoubtedly kept want from the door of many of the hands."⁶¹

For several years, Kunkle's family, operating under the name Catoctin Iron Works, struggled to keep the furnace afloat. The family attempted to diversify by adding a paint manufacturing plant utilizing waste ochre from the iron mining.⁶² But within two years, the newly-minted Catoctin Iron Works went into receivership. In 1888, at a public auction, Thomas Gorsuch of Westminster, Maryland purchased for \$75,000 the enterprise and 9,000 acres associated with the furnace. By 1892, Gorsuch's efforts to revive the furnace collapsed, and it sat vacant for several years. In 1899, a group calling itself the Blue Mountain Iron and Steel Company purchased the property.

As the new century opened, prospects for making profits from the production of pig iron

⁶¹*Catoctin Clarion*, 9 April 1885.

⁶²Davies, 89-90.

could not have been bleaker. The construction of an enormous integrated steel mill at Sparrows Point southeast of Baltimore signaled the final triumph of steel.⁶³ Nevertheless, the Blue Mountain Iron and Steel Company began a major rebuilding project at the relict furnace. The new ownership introduced steam engines to replace hand and horse power. Workers dug a second mine south of the furnace by steam shovel and built a new ore stock house.⁶⁴ By May of 1900, the furnace was back in blast, and, according to the local newspaper: “[t]he output of furnace is of a very high grade on which circumstances all concerned are to be congratulated.”⁶⁵ Predictably, within months the furnace was again in trouble, and the new owners were looking for a buyer.⁶⁶

When no investor could be found, the furnace, enduring more and more periodic shutdowns, struggled on. By 1903, the company was no longer paying its bills nor meeting its payroll, and the workers were growing fed up. According to Catoctin Furnace resident William Renner, reality finally hit the workers on a Sunday evening in 1903. Recognizing that time had passed by the century-and-quarter-old enterprise and that no revival was on the horizon, the furnace hands simply turned off the pumps that siphoned water out of the mine pits. The mine pits filled up, and iron was never again produced at Catoctin.⁶⁷

⁶³Davies, 105.

⁶⁴*Catoctin Clarion*, 1 February 1900.

⁶⁵*Catoctin Clarion*, 17 May 1900.

⁶⁶*Catoctin Clarion*, 29 November 1900.

⁶⁷Kenneth G. Orr, Ph.D., "The Catoctin Furnace Archaeological Mitigation Project Final Report of the 1979 Excavation," Feb 1982, 29.

Life and Labor at Catoctin

Working at the furnace was never easy, but in its final years with the frequent shutdowns the experience was, no doubt, particularly difficult. Under Kunkle, roughly 350 men worked in the furnace operations, including wood cutters and miners. Increasing numbers of Irish workers also worked in the furnace. Also, as previously mentioned, in busy times, supplementary workers in the form of immigrants, apparently Italians, would be brought in from Baltimore along the Western Maryland Railroad.⁶⁸

The Catoctin work day was long. Former employees recalled that the furnace operated around the clock, with workers assigned to ten to twelve hour shifts.⁶⁹ But the actual work day could be even longer. Former furnace worker Henry Fraley remembered: “there were no hours; it was all day long, as long as you could stand.” Pay scales ran between nine cents an hour for unskilled workers, and thirteen cents for skilled workers. Management paid wood cutters on a piecemeal basis--at roughly fifty cents a ton.

But work was anything but steady. It would have been a rare year when the furnace did not suffer at least one shutdown. In 1876, for instance, the furnace shut down in early January. “The stoppage of Catoctin Furnaces,” reported the *Catoctin Clarion*, “makes a visible impression on the money market of Mechanicstown.”⁷⁰ By mid-March, owner J.B. Kunkle restarted the operation to the relief of “all particularly those who have been out of employment for the past

⁶⁸Waesche, 9.

⁶⁹“Operations of Catoctin Furnaces, Edgar Miller, interview by Howard Damuth, Thurmont, Maryland, 25 March 1959; Lukens.

four months.”⁷¹ But within a few days, the furnaces again shut down, and the *Catoctin Clarion* reported “dear only knows when it will reopen.”⁷² 1876 was no doubt a particularly difficult year, but the periodic layoffs must have had a devastating impact on the furnace workers.

Throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, the village of Catoctin Furnace was essentially a company town. The furnace proprietor owned the town. The company rented out roughly sixty houses and operated a boarding house. Workers paid between \$2 and \$4 for their homes (average incomes in a good year would run roughly \$20-\$25 per month). Management required renters to whitewash homes each year by May 30.⁷³ The company also ran a general store, at its peak, employing four to five clerks. Management paid workers in script redeemable at the store. Workers also could buy on credit from the store and have bills deducted from paychecks.⁷⁴

Following the Civil War, all workers at the furnace were wage earners, but the work force remained ethnically and racially diverse. As was the case in many factories and mills at the time, work assignments at Catoctin appear to have been segregated. The 1870 Census, for instance, listed eight Irish-born laborers as working in the iron mines. In addition, the census

⁷⁰*Catoctin Clarion*, 14 January 1876.

⁷¹*Catoctin Clarion*, 12 May 1876.

⁷²*Catoctin Clarion*, 19 May 1876.

⁷³Elizabeth Y. Anderson, “Catoctin Furnace: portrait of An Iron-Making Furnace Community,” (Hood College, Honors Thesis, 1982), 67.

⁷⁴Lukens, Anderson, “Catoctin Furnace,” 69.

listed a mine worker of Bavarian origin and a furnace founder from Prussia.⁷⁵ Several African Americans held jobs at the furnace. One former worker recalled six African-American working in the open-face mines, filling cars, and taking them to a turntable for further transportation.⁷⁶ In February of 1874, the failure to supply a boiler with adequate water resulted in a major explosion that was heard for miles. The blast killed two African-American furnace workers, James Norris and Samuel Mitchell, and severely injured several other workers, and “cast a gloom over the whole neighborhood.”⁷⁷

Accidents were a major component of life at the furnace. One former employee remembered work in the casting house, where hot iron was channeled into pig iron molds then broken off by workers, as particularly dangerous. Casting house workers took precautions, including wearing heavy wood soles attached to their shoes by a strip of leather. Nevertheless, remembered a worker, “many burns” were suffered.⁷⁸ In another tragedy, in 1889, an ore mine car drawn by mules ran over and killed its thirteen-year-old driver who had attempted to stop and

⁷⁵1870 Census. The workers included sixty-year old John Fitzgerald, thirty-year old John Cramer, thirty-five year old Michael Brice and Thomas Craig, thirty-eight year old Patrick McGill, fifty-year old James Crosby, and forty-five year old James O’Connor. Many of the Irish workers had families. For instance, John Cramer had a wife, Mary, and three children.

⁷⁶“Information Edward J. Nunemaker, Sr, , nnterview by Howard Damuth, Catoctin Furnace, Maryland, 28 January 1958, Thurmont Historical Society.

⁷⁷*Democratic Advocate*, 21 February 1874. Neither Norris nor Mitchell appeared in the 1870 census. While no African-Americans lived in Hauer’s District, west of Catoctin mountain, in the Mechanicstown District that included Catoctin Furnace, twenty-six African Americans appear, but none appeared to have worked at the furnace. The census listed most as farm workers.

⁷⁸“Operations of Catoctin Furnaces,” Edgar Miller, interview by Howard Damuth, 25 March 1959, Thurmont Historical Society.

retrieve a cow bell under the car. Dr. William McPherson, owner of Auburn House, was summoned, but could do nothing for the teenager.⁷⁹ On another occasion, fireman Roger Weddle lost a leg in an accident.⁸⁰ Even on the mountain, danger accompanied furnace work. The job of charcoaling was particularly fraught with hazards. At one point a wagon filled with charcoal on its way to the furnace caught fire, searing the teamster and forcing him to climb aboard his team of horses to calm them.⁸¹

Life at the furnace, thus, offered few rewards and presented the constant challenge of low-pay, lay-offs, and accidents. With little to lose, the decision in 1903 to simply turn off the pumps is readily understandable.

The Rise of Tourism

From the time of the earliest settlers, the mountain had provided residents with recreation and leisure along with the valuable natural resources that drove local industry. Well before the Civil War, picnickers and hikers, believing in the benefits of fresh air and pure water, enjoyed the beauty of the mountain.⁸² In the years following the Civil War, many Americans enjoyed greater prosperity and more leisure time. For the first time, recreational sports, especially

⁷⁹*Catoctin Clarion*, 7 November 1889.

⁸⁰Evers G. Eylers, interview by Howard Damuth, 16 August 1965, Thurmont Historical Society.

⁸¹Donald Wolfe, interview by author, Frederick Maryland, 26 October 1998.

⁸²Asa P. Stotelmyer, "The Black Rock Hotel on Bagtown Jugtown Trail," *Baltimore Sun*, 15 November 1970. A popular pre-Civil War trail was the Bagtown trail running near the current Appalachian trail on South Mountain. Hikers to the peak would enjoy picnics and water from the two natural springs nearby. On the fourth of July, picnickers were known to enjoy toasts of rye whisky to each of the thirteen colonies.

baseball, gained popularity. By 1876, Mechanicstown had its own baseball club, actively playing teams from other towns.⁸³ Another example of the growth of leisure was the rise of ice cream. During the summer months, Catoctin residents began streaming to local establishments serving the frozen delight. “Call to see me often and I will make you cool,” promised one local ice cream parlor.⁸⁴

But it was with the arrival of the railroad that recreation increasingly became a business in the Catoctins (see Appendix 8). John Miffelen Hood, president of the Western Maryland Railroad, viewing such activities as integral to the success of his enterprise, was an aggressive promoter of tourism and recreation. In 1877, Hood constructed an amusement park/vacation resort at Pen Mar, near the Pennsylvania border. Easily accessible along the railroad route, the village quickly became “the most fashionable summer colony in the East.” Soon over one hundred hotels and boarding houses sprang up at Pen Mar, as did observation towers and dance pavilions.⁸⁵ Real estate prices soared in the area. By 1889, land that a few years previous would have sold for \$700 went for \$7,000.⁸⁶ At every stage in development, the Western Maryland Railroad was intimately involved, even helping with the mortgage in 1883 for the Blue Mountain House, one of the large hotels at Pen Mar.⁸⁷

⁸³*Catoctin Clarion*, 26 May 1876.

⁸⁴*Catoctin News* (Wolfsville), 10 August 1888.

⁸⁵Judith Schlotterbeck, *The Pen Mar Story*, (Funkstown, MD, 1978), 1.

⁸⁶*Catoctin Clarion*, 5 September 1889.

⁸⁷*Ibid*, 155.

Hood's railroad ran special excursion trains to Pen Mar throughout the warmer months. An express train from Baltimore ran to Pen Mar each day except Sunday. The trip took roughly two and a half hours.⁸⁸ Such special trains would sometimes include an oyster dinner.⁸⁹ Residents of the Mechanicstown area eagerly joined the swarms going to the resort. With the mountain areas now easily accessible by rail to city dwellers, other resort areas also opened their doors. One of the most successful was Braddock Heights, to the west of Frederick.

The Mechanicstown-Foxville area could not hope to compete with such well-funded initiatives. But with the arrival of the railroad, a nascent tourist industry emerged in the area. Boarding houses sprang up in Mechanicstown. Residents of Rocky Ridge and Graceham organized yearly festivals to attract vacationers. Graceham's mid-June festival attracted a "constant stream of buggies, jagers and hacks . . . along East Main Street."⁹⁰ In 1885, *The Catoctin Clarion* declared: "in no summer since we have known Mechanicstown has there been so large a number of visitors as during this season."⁹¹ Soon community leaders were lamenting the lack of "a first-class summer hotel" in town to further attract vacationers.⁹² Meanwhile there was also talk of establishing small cottage colonies for vacationers. In 1890, a group of Georgia businessmen arrived in the area with the intention of establishing such a development near Blue

⁸⁸*Breed Publishing Company's Directory of the Western Maryland Railroad for the year 1892 from Baltimore to Williamsport* (Newburgh, New York, 1893).

⁸⁹*Catoctin Clarion*, 22 September 1890.

⁹⁰*Catoctin Clarion*, 25 June 1885.

⁹¹*Catoctin Clarion*, 23 June 1885.

⁹²*Catoctin Clarion*, 24 July 1890.

Ridge Summit.⁹³

The small village of Foxville, on the west end of the mountain, also put its best foot forward to lure visitors. Foxville boarding houses like the Glynden House and the Spring Grove House, by the summer of 1885, were attracting visitors from Washington, Annapolis, and Baltimore. Sojourners in Foxville could enjoy evening promenades and entertainment by a “submarine band.”⁹⁴

That same summer, Foxville exploded in excitement with the news that President Grover Cleveland would visit the popular Gap Falls Mineral Springs Park near Foxville. The small town went into manic preparations. Hundreds lined the railroad station waiting for the president. But at the last minute, Cleveland apparently decided to vacation elsewhere. “The disappointment was great,” reported the local newspaper.⁹⁵

It would be nearly fifty years before the area finally would become a retreat for the nation’s highest officer. Nevertheless, the face of mountain in the second half of the nineteenth century was again changing. New attitudes about the benefits of the picturesque region emerged. The mountains remained an important source of raw materials for many years, but gradually they began to supply other needs as well.

Farming on the Mountain

For some farmers the arrival of the railroad also brought changes and new opportunities.

⁹³*Catoctin Clarion*, 28 August 1890.

⁹⁴*Catoctin Clarion*, 23 July 1885. The exact location of these homes now appear to have been lost.

In 1885, *The Catoctin Clarion* would declare that since the arrival of the Western Maryland Railroad fifteen years before, "farmers awoke from the lethargy, land improved, crops increased and produce found a ready market in our great commercial center."⁹⁶ For those with larger farms in Harbaugh Valley and the Mechanicstown District, the railroad did appear to open new markets. Wheat production in Maryland soared, hitting a record high in 1900, when the state produced 16.6 million bushels of wheat.⁹⁷ Throughout upper Frederick County, farmers grew much wheat, but Indian corn, not wheat, remained the largest crop. In the Mechanicstown area, many farmers enjoyed yields of several hundred bushels of wheat--some producing yields of nearly a thousand bushels. Larger farms, such as Leonard Harbaugh's 175-acre farm, in Harbaugh Valley, yearly producing 175 bushels of wheat easily thrived despite nationally falling prices throughout the late nineteenth century.⁹⁸

Farms in Hauver District, encompassing most of the mountain area west of Mechanicstown, tended to be smaller and less focused on cash crops such as wheat. While many of the farmers who owned land that later became park property held tracts of well over 100 acres, rarely did they possess more than forty acres of improved land. Yost Wiant--the mountain land owner who shows up most frequently in the census records--owned forty acres of improved land in 1850 on a plot of roughly 100 acres. Within thirty years he added more

⁹⁵*Catoctin Clarion*, 23 July 1885, 30 July 1885.

⁹⁶*Catoctin Clarion*, 30 July 1885.

⁹⁷Maryland Agricultural Week Committee, 10.

⁹⁸Figures based on 1860 Agricultural Census; 1873 Bond Map.

unimproved land, but kept his farm at roughly 40 acres. Wiant grew Indian corn and kept chickens, swine, and cows, from whose milk he produced butter. In 1880, he produced 160 bushels of apples and 200 cords of wood.⁹⁹

Wiant's land appears to have been among the least productive in the area. Other farms did somewhat better. In 1870, Levi Brown (park tract 103) owned a 160-acre plot of which 95 acres were improved. Brown produced 150 bushels of Indian corn, 100 bushels of oats, and 160 bushels of wheat. He appears to have been one of the few in the area to have grown wheat.¹⁰⁰ Brown's farm was listed as worth \$7,000 compared to Wiant's \$4,000 holdings. Wealthier yet was Peter Hauver (tract 153), whose farm was valued at \$2,150. Encompassing only 20 acres of improved land, one must assume that Hauver's livestock holdings, including 3 horses, 3 cows, 10 sheep, and 7 swine, significantly added to the value of his holdings. In addition to his twenty-acre farm, Hauver also owned almost 200 acres of forest land from which he produced \$350 a year in "forest products." Like Brown, Hauver also grew wheat--roughly 20 bushels per year.¹⁰¹

Most of the other farmers on what is now park land owned between 40 to 70 acres of improved land. The most frequently grown grain crop was Indian corn. Many farmers also grew potatoes, several producing over 100 bushels. Orchard crops such as apples and peaches added to the produce yielded by the mountain. Farmers kept a variety of livestock, but most

⁹⁹1880 Agricultural Census; Hitzelberger, 154. In 1850, Wiant identified himself as a laborer. Subsequent census entries have him as a farmer. In the 1870 census, Wiant is listed as the owner of 5 cows and a horse.

¹⁰⁰1870 Agricultural census.

¹⁰¹1870 Agricultural Census.

owned 2 or 3 cows, and between 3 and 6 swine. Without question, the farms of Catoctin Mountain were small subsistence-based agricultural holdings. It was a rare farm in Hauvers District in the second half of the nineteenth century that was worth over \$5,000. Given the nature of most of the farms, slavery was rare outside the immediate furnace area. Only two slaves appear as living in Hauver's District in the 1850 census. Farms in the Mechanicstown District tended to be significantly larger--some up to 12,000 acres. Many also exceeded \$10,000 in value.

Few people living in the valley afforded much attention to the mountain areas (although many owned small, wooded tracts). The one exception was the occasional excitement related to a snake killing. In June of 1876, for instance, a party of boys near Chimney Rock killed "a monster black snake," measuring six feet in length.¹⁰² The mountain was home to many snakes--most of which were harmless. But rattlesnakes upset the public. Later in the summer of 1876, a man killed a 44-inch rattlesnake near Wolf Rock, earning him heroic mention in the local newspaper.¹⁰³

The presence of rattlesnakes threatened one of the popular activities enjoyed in the mountains--huckleberry and blackberry gathering. In 1889, the local newspaper noted that the blackberry "demand is exhausting supply." But the paper also acknowledged the threat to harvesting posed by rattlesnakes.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰²*Catoctin Clarion*, 15 June 1876.

¹⁰³*Catoctin Clarion*, 10 August 1876.

¹⁰⁴*Catoctin Clarion*, 4 August 1889.

That same summer brought an event that no doubt long remained in the memories of both valley and mountain dwellers. In June, several days of rain drove water over the banks of Owens and Hunting Creeks. Headlines proclaimed: "Owens Creek Becomes a Mad River." The eldest inhabitants could not remember a flood with such ferocity. Engineers for the Monocacy Valley Railroad placed several cars on a railroad bridge, hoping to use the weight to prevent a washout. Elsewhere, flood waters washed out several miles of the Western Maryland Railroad and destroyed crops and fields along Hunting Creek. Despite the destruction of the flood, western Marylanders could feel lucky that they were spared the worst. The same flood waters that sent the local creeks over their banks burst a dam in Pennsylvania and destroyed the entire town of Johnstown, killing over 2,000 people.¹⁰⁵

Despite the 1889 flood, census data and the few other records we have for mountain life in the nineteenth century suggest a slow existence in which farming and supplemental work such as charcoaling and timbering provided locals with a steady subsistence but little beyond.¹⁰⁶ While the railroad transformed industrial and agricultural life in the valleys below, for mountaineers, the nineteenth century brought few drastic changes.

Conclusion

The second half of the nineteenth century, then, was a period in which the signs of change

¹⁰⁵*Catoctin Clarion*, 6 June 1889; Louise McPherson, "Recollections of Catoctin Parish, Protestant Episcopal Church," nd.

¹⁰⁶Charles S. Martin and Tom Rose, *The History of Wolfsville and the Catoctin District* (Frederick 1972), 13. A study of nineteenth-century Wolfsville concludes that "trade, barter and cooperation" held the local together. Any supplemental income was earned by practices such as "coaling" for Catoctin furnace.

could be seen--if one looked carefully. The furnace persisted, and even expanded at times. But an informed observer would see the enterprise more as a relict industry than a harbinger of new industrial potential. Meanwhile, signs of an emerging recreational economy were popping up in the form of boarding houses and tourists transported to the region by trains. The arrival of the Western Maryland Railroad offered a new and convenient source of transportation tying the Catoctin area closer to larger cities and towns. As the century came to an end, mountain residents continued to work simple subsistence farms, bartering for needed goods, and charcoaling or logging to earn extra money--much as they had toward the beginning of the century. But such lifestyles would not survive long into the next century.

Chapter Four

The Eve of Acquisition

Introduction

In the Catoctin Mountain area, the first three decades of the twentieth century witnessed a continuing shift away from an emphasis on industry and farming toward recreation and tourism. The village of Catoctin Furnace, for instance, once a bustling center of industry, increasingly became a quaint tourist stop. By the 1920s, thanks in part to frequent visits to the area by President Herbert Hoover, the Catoctins were gaining a national reputation as a desirable vacation site. The number of local boarding houses steadily grew. Outdoor enthusiasts purchased land, especially along Hunting Creek, for recreational use. On the eve of acquisition, mountain landowners were a diverse lot. But traditional subsistence farms continued to operate, even as pressure gathered for change.

The End of Industry on the Mountain

Following the worker-initiated shutdown in 1903, the formerly bustling village of Catoctin Furnace sat vacant for two years. Many residents of the village, without steady income, descended into poverty. Some turned to looting the roughly 10,677 acres associated with the furnace. In the absence of real furnace ownership, locals viewed the area as a “no-man’s land.”¹ Looters destroyed fences, took timber for firewood, even stripped the brass from an idle steam shovel.²

On February 19, 1906, at noon, a small crowd gathered in Catoctin Furnace to witness the U.S. District Court-ordered auction of the holdings of Blue Mountain Iron and Steel Company. The auction included over 10,000 acres of land, the furnace, office buildings, the company store, the manor house, and the roughly sixty tenement houses in

¹Charles Anders, interview by author, Thurmont, MD, 6 February 1999.

²*Catoctin Clarion*, 22 February 1905.

Catoctin Furnace. That day, Joseph E. Thropp, a former congressman and owner of an iron works in Everett, Pennsylvania, stepped forth and purchased the enterprise for \$51,135. Following the bidding, Thropp briefly addressed the gathering. First, he threatened any looters, proclaiming that he “would prosecute to the full extent of the law anyone taking or destroying any property even if its value be but 15 cents.” Then he promised to rebuild the enterprise, and vowed “to pay 100 cents on the dollar for every dollar I contract.” The small crowd applauded in appreciation.³

Whether Thropp ever intended to act on his promise to reopen the furnace is unclear; but iron was never again produced at the site. Thropp, however, did reopen the iron ore mines, located to the south of furnace, along present-day Route 15. He shipped ore mined from the Catoctin grounds to his still-operating iron furnace in western Pennsylvania. Local residents were disappointed as it slowly became clear that the iron industry would not be revived. *The Catoctin Clarion* lamented, “Mr. Thropp . . . does not seem to be going to do anything toward engaging in active work.”⁴ In 1912, Thropp shut down his operations entirely. Those living in the former company houses continued to pay rents of two dollars a month to Thropp and continued to view the furnace land as a “no-man’s land” from which firewood and booty could freely be extracted. Most of the former employees either went to work in the quarries or in the timber industry. For many in the town of Catoctin Furnace, life was hard, and survival required ingenuity. Residents made handkerchiefs from the large sugar bags sold at Henry Farley’s Catoctin Furnace General Store. And many families sold chestnuts to pay for winter cloths.⁵ Some relief

³*Catoctin Clarion*, 22 February 1905.

⁴*Catoctin Clarion*, 6 July 1906. Interview with Evers G. Eyler, 16 August 1965, by Howard Damuth. At some point, Thropp did build a washer (gig) below the furnace to wash the iron ore.

⁵Charles Anders interview.

came in 1915 when a Pennsylvania company started a stave mill near the Catoctin Furnace trolley station, which made use of local timber reserves.⁶

“Pleasure Seekers”: Growth of Tourism

While the large-scale iron furnace was no longer a presence on the mountain, tourism continued to expand. Hundreds of “pleasure seekers” flocked each summer and fall to the Catoctin Mountains. By the early twentieth century the popularity of larger resort hotels, often owned by railroad companies began to wane. In a movement one historian called “private pastoralism,” an increasingly urbanized population began to look for more remote, less expensive lodging.⁷ Positioned along a major railroad line, with good scenery, and flowing creeks of fresh water, the Catoctin area was well situated to appeal to the ever-growing herds of excursionists and vacationers.

To make ends meet, a farm wife, on a well-situated plot of land, might open up her house to summer boarders. Attractions would include healthy water and air, trails for hiking, and good cooking. Often a wife and children from Baltimore or Washington DC would arrive for several weeks during the summer and be joined by the husband and father on weekends. The boarding houses assumed fancy names, such as “The Milburn,” “The Catoctin,” “Idlewhile,” and “Aurora Cottage.” At one point in the summer of 1906, Aurora Cottage, operate by Miss Florence Geesey, entertained 18 boarders, including one from Brooklyn, New York. That same summer, the boarding house operated by Mrs. W.W. Zimmerman lodged a visitor from Indianapolis.⁸ According to a 1913 account,

⁶McPherson, 11.

⁷Warren James Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945* (Cambridge, MA, 1979), 63.

⁸*Catoctin Clarion*, 6 July 1906.

“the favorite point in the mountains for excursionists is Hunting Creek Falls (Cunningham Falls)” as well as Chimney Rock and neighboring Table Rock.⁹

Transportation remained a concern in the mountain area. Tourists, of course, could arrive via the Western Maryland Railroad, which published a yearly guide entitled “Summering on the Western Maryland Railroad,” listing boarding house locations and prices. In hopes of helping out farmers and “developing excursion resorts and summer boarding businesses,” local politicians and businessmen began exploring the possibility of an electric railroad or trolley to run from Frederick north to Thurmont.¹⁰ No doubt the success of a similar trolley line from Frederick to Braddock Heights built in 1898 encouraged the Catoctin version.¹¹ Over the years, the Monocacy Valley Railroad, connecting Catoctin Furnace to Thurmont’s Western Maryland Railroad Depot, had expanded to connect with the Northern Railroad Company’s line between Frederick and Lewistown (built in 1898). This created a direct line between Thurmont and Frederick. After a few years of negotiations, the Potomac Edison Company purchased and electrified the line, and in 1909, the Potomac Edison Railroad enjoyed its maiden voyage.¹² The new electric railroad handled both people and freight, making it, according to some sources, the first railroad line in the country to handle freight.¹³

Facilitated by the new trolley system, ten boarding houses operated in Thurmont by 1913 and eleven took boarders in Sabillasville. Among the houses was the Crow’s

⁹Oeter, 6. “Neighboring Table Rock,” a popular turn-of-the-century location for picnicking, was located in Garrett County near Backbone mountain.

¹⁰*Catoctin Clarion*, 2 November 1905.

¹¹Gordon, *Textbook*, 127.

¹²Frederick News, 19 February 1954; Herbert H. Harwood, Jr. *Blue Ridge Trolley: The Hagerstown and Frederick Railway* (Frederick, 1979).

¹³Planning Commission of Thurmont MD, “Suggested Master Plan” 1964.

Nest, located just to the east of the present-day park and operated by Joseph Gernand. The Crow's Nest took on weekly boarders at a weekly rate of six to eight dollars.¹⁴

These such boarding houses offered the women of the area a rare opportunity to operate businesses. One such women was Bessie Darling, a Baltimore resident who owned and ran a summer boarding house and who later became the area's most famous murder victim. Darling had served as a personal secretary to a well-known professor at the prestigious Peabody Institute in Baltimore. In 1917, following a failed marriage that produced a son, Darling purchased from Mary E. Lent a tract of steep land on the north side of the mountain near Deerfield. A large house, built in 1907, sat on the land. There, Darling set up a summer hotel called the Valley View Manor (see Map 4). She generally managed the hotel in the summer and returned to Baltimore in winter, where she used her considerable social contacts to drum up summer business for her hotel. Her skill at cooking and baking, as well as the scenic site helped build her a solid clientele.¹⁵

World War I, no doubt, interrupted the development of the tourist trade in the Catoctins. The 1920s, however, brought yet another form of tourism to the mountains, based on a new form of transportation--the automobile. In 1910, there existed roughly 500,000 cars in America, but by 1920, eight million automobiles packed American roads. The proliferation gave rise to a new form of tourism--autotouring. Independent of the railroads, with their set timetables and routes, millions of Americans, camping out as they traveled, took to the roads. Of the new "motor gypsies," one journalist waxed: "A tourist automobile is like a little yacht on wheels. You have your provisions and equipment, your

¹⁴Western Maryland Railroad, "Summering on the Western Maryland Railroad," (Baltimore, 1913), 32.

¹⁵*The Frederick News*, 1 November 1933; Spencer Watson, "The Halloween Murder of Bessie Darling," *The Banner*, November 1998.

maps and compass, your eager consultation with other mariners, your dangerous Cape Horns, your snug, cozy harbors."¹⁶

Often seeking out “picturesque villages” and, when not camping, staying at quaint inns and boarding houses, autotourists sought areas off the beaten track. Catoctin Furnace, now largely idle, became a favorite destination of the autotouring crowd. *The Baltimore Sun* in 1925 reported that motorists in “increasing numbers are visiting the old Catoctin Iron Works.” Many, according to the story, then went on to visit Chimney Rock.¹⁷ Reports in 1927, spread by a booster of local tourism, of a silver mine shaft high in the mountains, supposedly dug by Jonathan Hager in the eighteenth century, added to interest in the area. In 1930, *American Motorist* ran a piece on Catoctin Furnace extolling its historical past and picturesque present. Spurred, no doubt, by locals ready to tell a good story, the article described at length the apocryphal stories of Jonathan Hager’s silver mine, the furnace’s contributions to Rumsey’s steam ship, and to the U.S.S. Monitor.¹⁸

Not every auto excursion proved enjoyable, however. On July 20, 1920, a group of “pleasure seekers” arrived in the mountains to enjoy a Sunday afternoon. The “auto party” consisting of three women and two men, drove a “big Buick.” West of Thurmont, along Hunting Creek, the car got stuck in a dip in the creek called “Little Sandy Hole.” Unable to extract the car, the group sought the aid of farmer George Bussard, who chained the car to his team of horses. Still unable to pull the Buick out, Bussard sought

¹⁶Belasco, 8.

¹⁷Emily Emerson Lantz, “Catoctin Furnace has Rich Past,” *Baltimore Sun Magazine*, 4 October 1925,

¹⁸Maude Luken, “Catoctin Furnace--A Different Village,” *American Motorist*, September 1930.

out another team from postmaster and boarding house keeper Joseph Gernand.

Eventually, the group turned to a tractor, and finally, after midnight, the car was freed.¹⁹

As autotourists began to tire of camping in open fields, a new sort of lodging establishment emerged aimed at motorists--the motel. In 1929, Wilbur Freeze erected three simple cabins and opened the Cozy Inn in Thurmont (see Map 4.5). Advertising a “home for night for a tourist,” within two years, the camp grew to fifteen cabins and a store to serve lodgers. An aggressive promoter, Freeze painted his cabins bright colors and made sure that flowers were always in bloom in the gardens. He also built sea-saws, and other playground equipment for children. The largest cabin, named “Betty Lou,” featured two bedrooms and a kitchen.²⁰

Alongside the autouring phenomenon, some Americans sought more vigorous recreation. Inspired by Theodore Roosevelt and other advocates of a return to the “rugged life” enjoyed by American pioneers, recreational hiking clubs sprang up around the country. In 1910, Maryland hikers formed the Wanderluster Hiking Club. Later a group of Washington outdoors fanatics organized the Red Triangle Club. A key member of the early outdoor movement was Benton Mackaye, a forester, regional planner, and philosopher, who joined the U.S. Forest Service in 1905. Envisioning a mammoth trail running north to south through the eastern United States, Mackaye devised a plan for the Appalachian Trail in 1921 (see Map 4). Construction began in 1923 on the first stretch of the trail, which ran through New York state. In the Middle Atlantic states, the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, founded by Myron Avery in 1927, raised money and chartered the course of the trail. While Mackayne provided the grand vision, Avery did much of the grass roots work for the trail. Endlessly committed, Avery raised both money and publicity for the trail project. During the New Deal period, Avery arranged to obtain

¹⁹*Catoctin Clarion*, 15 July 1920.

²⁰*Catoctin Clarion*, 7 November 1931.

some public sponsorship for trail construction and improvement.²¹ The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) for instance, constructed two road shelters on the Appalachian Trail near the park.²²

A major component of the “rugged life” movement aimed to rescue children from unhealthy city living, even if it was for only a few weeks during the summer. In 1924, a Jewish youth organization purchased land at the foothills of Catoctin mountain and established Camp Airy, still in existence today. The camp represented the beginning of organized youth recreational use of the area. A few years later in 1931, the Boy Scouts established a camp north of Catoctin Manor on Hunting Creek. The scout camp, set on 258 acres, featured a number of halls, and a 2000 square feet dammed-up swimming area on the creek, featuring a 35-foot waterfall.²³ The camp operated for roughly two years, then closed due to low enrollment and the washing out of the pool’s dam.²⁴

In the 1923, Lancelot Jacques, whose ancestor had been among the original investors in the Catoctin Furnace, purchased the furnace manor house and a large amount of surrounding land.²⁵ Jacques apparently planned to develop the land as a deer park, complete with a scenic pond constructed from the former iron ore pits. Apparently inspired by the Florida land boom at the time, Jacques hoped to attract hunters to his

²¹Sandra Koker, *Appalachian Trail*, (Portland, OR, 1979), 7-11.

²²“Camp Inspection Report,” 3 February 1941, RG 35, Records of the CCC, Division of Investigations Camp Inspection Reports, box 94, National Archives, Washington, DC. W.S. Bahlman, “Memorandum for the Director, 6 September 1939, RG 79, RDA Program Files, box 57, National Archives, College Park.

²³*Catoctin Clarion*, 8 May 1931; *Catoctin Clarion*, 26 June 1931.

²⁴#704 Public Camp and Picnic Development, 3-25-35, RG 79, Records Concerning Recreational Demonstration Areas, Project Records of the Project Planning and Control Section, Land Utilization Division, Resettlement Administration, 1935-6, box 3, NA.

²⁵McPherson, 12.

preserve and hired local resident William Renner as custodian.²⁶ The extent to which Jacques actually developed the full “deer park” he envisioned is unclear. In 1929, Jacques set up the “Potomac Development Corporation” with himself as president. His apparent aim was to develop the area between Catoctin Furnace and Hunting Creek into a vacation resort. The same year he formed his corporation, however, the stock market crashed, setting in motion the Great Depression.

In 1927, Jacques sold roughly 1,800 acres of his holdings to a wealthy Washingtonian named Lawrence Richey. Richey hoped to establish fishing camp on Hunting Creek for his and the use of his guests (see Map 4.5).²⁷ Among his friends was Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover. When, two years later, Hoover became president, he appointed Richey as his secretary. A fishing enthusiast, whose ancestors had been among the settlers of the area, Hoover became a frequent guest at the Richey Camp. At first, the president and his entourage would stay in tents, but eventually the proprietor constructed cabins for his guests. Richey hired Charles Anders, a Catoctin Furnace local, to prepare fishing equipment and food for the guests. In contrast to the president’s aloof public image, Anders found a relaxed man of good humor. He called the president “chief,” and Hoover nicknamed Anders “Jack.” Mrs. Hoover occasionally accompanied her husband and was also warmly remembered by Anders.²⁸

After several visits to the Richey camp, Hoover, by 1930, began frequenting another camp on the Rapidan River near Madison, Virginia. The large crowds and media that frequently joined him in the Catoctins may have bothered the president. Whatever the reason for the Hoover move, his visits to the area helped bring notice to the region as an

²⁶Kenneth G. Orr, “The Catoctin Furnace Archaeological Mitigation Project Final Report of the 1979 Excavation,” February 1982.

²⁷Strain, 267.

²⁸Anders interview.

outdoor recreational oasis, and established the area in some minds as a presidential retreat.

By the early 1930s, the upper Catoctin region was known throughout the middle Atlantic states and beyond as a desirable vacation and leisure spot, featuring boarding houses, fishing camps, and mountain scenery fit for a president.

The Wreck of the Blue Mountain Express

On June 25, 1915, the Western Maryland Railroad's Blue Mountain Express, Number 15, heading west, arrived late for its scheduled 5:10 PM stop in Thurmont. The express consisted of a Pullman Parlor Car, three coaches, and a baggage car.²⁹ In Thurmont, the train stopped briefly to take on water and drop off Baltimore's afternoon newspapers for delivery. The express then pulled out from Thurmont toward Sabillasville, where it entered onto the roughly 2.2 miles of the line which became one track--the portion of the railroad that conductors considered to be the most dangerous. With roughly twenty passenger trains passing through the area each day, local residents could keep time by the train whistles. At roughly 5:30 PM, the Blue Mountain Express let out the expected whistle, but then--to the alarm of all within earshot--the whistling continued. Locals knew something was wrong.³⁰

As the express crossed over the scenic high bridge above Owens Creek, it had crashed head-on with engine number 203, an eastbound mail train (see Appendix 9 and Map 4.5). The impact of the crash tossed the westbound wooden baggage car a hundred feet to the creek below. A handicapped woman on a stretcher and her son, both of whom were riding in the baggage car, died in the plunge. Remarkably, the two engines involved in the head-on crash locked together, appearing as almost one engine to the

²⁹William Graffam, "Reliving the 1915 Train Wreck on Bridge at Thurmont," *Frederick News-Post*, 20 February 1975.

³⁰Charles W. Eyer, "I Remember the Wreck of the Blue Mountain Express," *Baltimore Sun*, 20 March 1960.

horrified rescuers who quickly gathered on the scene. Had the engines ricocheted off of one another, there undoubtedly would have been more casualties. Roughly one hundred people convened on the scene to aid frightened survivors, care for the injured, and insure that no further disasters occurred. Among the first to arrive was Dr. Morris Birely, who worked into the night with the aid of gas lanterns. The Western Maryland Railroad sent two special trains, one from each direction to aid in the calamity.

In the end, six died in the crash of the Blue Mountain Express and twelve suffered serious injuries. An investigation revealed that a mix-up in the all-important right-of-way orders issued from Hagerstown had caused the crash. No doubt, troubles keeping scheduling that day contributed to the tragedy.³¹

Fire and Fire Control

The train wreck was certainly the greatest tragedy that ever beset the mountain area, but the threat of forest fires remained a perennial concern. In the summer of 1914, fire destroyed half the town of Creagerstown.³² In April 1920, efforts to clear land for huckleberry growth resulted in a forest fire that destroyed ten mountain acres near the old saw mill once owned by John Rouzer.³³ The next month, a much worse fire began in the Phillips Delight area, west of Catoctin Furnace (see Map 4.5). According to the local paper, the initial destruction was confined to an area that “has been burned over many times and at this time contains very little timber of any value.”³⁴ This area, known as Salamander Hill, had belonged to the furnace and locals apparently had cut most of its

³¹Graffam; *Frederick Post* 24 May 1971.

³²*Frederick News-Post*, 3 June 1914.

³³*Catoctin Clarion*, 14 April 1920; “Youth Conservation Corp Interviews with Howard Damuth, 27 July 1972,” CMP. Huckleberries which needed bare earth to grow were a popular mountain product. Often in the spring, small mountain fires were started to clear land for huckleberry growth. Such fires occasionally got out of control.

³⁴*Catoctin Clarion*, 13 May 1920.

best timber. High winds fanned the fire that quickly spread and threatened more valuable land to the north. Under the direction of fire wardens, between 75 and 100 men set up a thirteen-mile fire line to control the burning. Finally after two days, fire fighters had the blaze under control.³⁵

The presence of the fire wardens on the scene at the Salamander Hill fire was symptomatic of the increasing organization and effort devoted to controlling the forest fire threat. By the early-twentieth century, the state of Maryland had organized a state Board of Forestry, under State Forester F.W. Besley.³⁶ Besley began a statewide program of fire prevention and forest conservation. The advent of the chestnut blight, beginning roughly in 1910, complicated his work. The blight, which attacked and destroyed the bark of the chestnut, began on Long Island and quickly spread. The once-abundant chestnut trees of western Maryland quickly fell victim. By the early 1920s, nearly all the chestnut trees in Frederick County were gone.³⁷ The chestnuts blight represented a major loss for the mountain area. The trees had provided valuable timber, and nuts from the trees were an important food for hogs and wildlife.³⁸ To rebuild the forests, Besley distributed seedlings and ran programs encouraging reforestation.³⁹

Alongside the chestnut blight, Besley identified and attempted to address other forest-related problems. He saw his mission as reversing “destructive agencies, which for 150 years have been operating in the forests. Chief among them are forests fires, destructive cutting practices, excessive grazing, and the ravages of insects and fungus

³⁵*Catoctin Clarion*, 18 May 1920.

³⁶The state Board of Forestry was founded in 1906. It evolved into the Board of Natural Resources’ Department of Forests and Parks in 1941.

³⁷*Frederick News*, 28 November 1930; F.W. Besley, *The Forests of Frederick County* (Baltimore, 1922), 31.

³⁸Mastran and Lowerre, xx.

³⁹Frank Mentzer, *Administrative History*, Vol. I.

diseases.” Successful conservation meant changing longstanding attitudes and practices. Of particular concern in Frederick County was the custom of “repeated cutting.” For “generations,” complained Besley, mountaineers “cut over their woodlands at frequent intervals, taking out the best and most saleable products, with little or no thought to succeeding growth and future productiveness.” “Repeated cutting,” he warned, inevitably led to an “inferior species.”⁴⁰

Besley issued pamphlets and gave frequent talks promoting new conservation measures. When it came to forest fires, advances in technology allowed for real progress. Phone lines, airplanes, and watchtowers allowed for early detection. In Foxville, Karl Brown (tract 156) and H.L. Hauver served as fire wardens for the district, while G.A. Willard served in Catoctin Furnace (see Appendix 10 and Map 4.5).⁴¹ The advent of the automobile allowed for improved response time. Soon the local Thurmont newspaper could report that, with the arrival of new initiatives, forest fires henceforth would “lose much of their horror.”⁴²

Moonshining and Blue Blazes

By the early twentieth century, Americans were increasingly aware of the unique culture and society that existed in the Appalachian chain of mountains. In 1921, John Campbell published his classic *The Southern Highlander and his Homeland*, detailing the distinct folk culture of the isolated mountain areas. Campbell did include the western reaches of Maryland (although not the Catoctin area) in his study. Yet few others since have included Maryland in any definition of Appalachia as a region. More recently, some

⁴⁰Besley, 21.

⁴¹Besley, 22.

⁴²*Catoctin Clarion*, 25 November 1920.

scholars, concluding that the area was simply “too culturally diverse to be regarded as a unit,” even have questioned the usefulness of viewing Appalachia as distinctive region.⁴³

Attempting to salvage some understanding of Appalachia as a region, Ronald Eller, suggested that Appalachia might be approached as a “cluster of scattered, self-sufficient island communities” with commercial settlements often at their gaps. The upper Catoctins do appear to share some of the characteristics highlighted in Eller’s definition. But from the earliest settlements, mountain residents of the Catoctin region had contact with the outside world through trading and the turnpike that passed through the mountain area. While certainly not a dynamic force, mountain farmers, to some extent, were integrated into the local economy and society. Town residents considered mountain dwellers to be somewhat distinct and odd, but a Mechanicstown resident also might hold someone from Catoctin Furnace or any outlying farm area as different.⁴⁴

The issue of moonshining--particularly the tragic affair surrounding the Blue Blazes raid--reveals both the secluded and distinct aspects to Catoctin mountain life and yet how the area also remained very much tied to ongoings in western Maryland and the rest of the state. As evident in the Wolf Tavern Ledger, distilling alcohol long had been a part of mountain life. Efforts on the part of the state and federal government to tax whiskey, dating back to Alexander Hamilton’s levy against whisky in the late eighteenth century, encouraged illegal distilling. During the Civil War, the federal government licensed distilleries and taxed liquor at increasingly higher rates. Stills safely located in the mountains, beyond the reach of tax collectors, proliferated. Opposition to drinking also spread. In 1866, prohibition advocates circulated a petition to prohibit the sale of alcohol

⁴³Bruce Ergood, “Toward a Definition of Appalachia” in *Appalachia: Social Context Past and Present*, Ergood and Kuhre, eds., (Athens, OH, 1976), 31-41.

⁴⁴Ernest Tresselt, interview by author, Thurmont, MD, 9 February 1999. Henry Shapiro, *Appalachia on Our Mind* (Chapel Hill, 1978). Shapiro stressed the sense of “otherness” with which Appalachian dwellers were regarded by the outside world.

in Mechanicstown district.⁴⁵ The Women’s Christian Temperance Union also thrived in the region during the late nineteenth century.

With high liquor taxes and an active temperance movement, illegal alcohol production, no doubt, was a facet of mountain life well before Prohibition. However, the beginning of national prohibition in 1919 brought new incentives and profits to the old business of moonshining. Overnight the price of “backwoods grog” soared from \$2 a gallon to \$22.⁴⁶ Without question, moonshining was profitable, and distilling alcohol became big business in the Catoctin mountains. The mountain provided a secluded protected area with ready sources of water. Meanwhile, using nearby roads, moonshiners could ship their product to Baltimore or Washington within two hours.⁴⁷ Very quickly, local moonshine gained a national reputation. Thurmont native Howard Damuth, while working as a salesman, traveled to New York City where he was stunned to learn that the high quality of Catoctin moonshine was common knowledge in the Big Apple.⁴⁸

The authorities, of course, took a dim view of moonshining. The Frederick County sheriff’s department mounted a series of raids on stills nestled in the mountains between Thurmont and Foxville. Police launched several raids on a site known as Blue Blazes, set on the small bubbling Harman’s Creek, five miles west of Thurmont (see Map 4).⁴⁹ In the summer of 1929, the sheriff’s department began planning yet another assault on the site, setting in motion events that would lead to a tangled tragedy.

According to police testimony, Charles Lewis, a Foxville resident, contacted the sheriff’s office with information about a still at Blue Blazes where he was employed.

⁴⁵Oeter, 126.

⁴⁶Esther Kellner, *Moonshine: Its History and Folklore* (New York, 1971),104.

⁴⁷Donald Lewis, 13 July 1999.

⁴⁸Youth Conservation Corps Interviews, 1972, Howard Damuth,” 27 July 1972, CMP.

⁴⁹*Frederick Post*, 3 August 1929.

Lewis, already having been convicted of larceny and shooting a man, was no stranger to trouble. He apparently met with Deputy Sheriff Vernon Redmond at a Frederick restaurant. The two established July 31, 1929 as the date on which police would raid the still.⁵⁰

On the given date, at roughly six in the evening, Redmond and four other deputies from the county's sheriff office, including Deputy Sheriff Clyde L. Hauver, drove a caravan of cars up the "unfrequented road" that led to the hamlet of Blue Blazes.⁵¹ Leaving their cars, they proceeded up a narrow path through the thick undergrowth leading to the still. As they moved, they may have tripped a wire or set off a warning to those working the still above the raiding party. Whatever the case, the moonshiners were ready for the raiders. Gun shots suddenly rained down upon the police officers. They fell back and returned fire. Appearing to trip on a root, Deputy Hauver fell to the ground. It was only when the moonshiners retreated that police discovered Hauver had suffered a gun shot wound to the head. His fellow officers rushed him down the mountain to a Frederick City hospital where he died.⁵²

Catoctin Furnace resident Charles Anders had spent the summer in charge of Lawrence Richey's fishing camp, at which President Herbert Hoover was a frequent visitor. Upon hearing of the botched raid, he borrowed one of the cars that the president kept at the camp and rushed to Blue Blazes. By the time he arrived in his White House car, dozens of others already had gathered at the site. What they saw was startling. Blue Blazes was no small operation. Twenty large vats filled with 500 gallons of mash alongside coils, cooling boxes, and hoses made up what was the largest and best equipped

⁵⁰*Frederick Post*, 30 December 1929; *Hagerstown Herald*, 19 December 1929, Charles Lewis admitted that Deputy Redmond had approached him for help in raiding the still. But Lewis insisted he turned down the request.

⁵¹*Frederick Post*, 6 August 1929.

⁵²*Frederick Post*, 1 August 1929.

still ever found in Frederick County.⁵³ Anders watched as the mayor of Thurmont struck a match and tossed it onto some spilled alcohol. When the puddle immediately lit up, the mayor pronounced it “good alcohol.” Suspicious of his out-of-state car, police stopped Anders on his way back from the mountain. Managing to explain with some difficulty why he was driving the president’s car, Anders was allowed to pass on.⁵⁴

As the police continued their intense manhunt for the moonshiners, word of the tragedy spread to the family of the deceased officer. Thirty-five-year-old, Clyde Hauver, in fact, was a direct descendent of Peter Hauver, one of the eighteenth-century settlers of the town. He had attended Thurmont High School and played amateur baseball before joining the sheriff’s department. He was the father of three young children. His killing shocked the large, closely-knit Hauver family.⁵⁵

Within a few hours police rounded up those responsible for the ambush. Paul Williams of Hagerstown surrendered along one of the roads leading from the still. He was shirtless and had several days growth of beard. Another moonshiner, Lloyd Lewis stumbled into a doctor’s office in Smithsburg, seeking treatment for a gun shot wound to the head. The doctor quickly notified authorities. Police found yet another suspect, Lester Clark, drunk and hiding in the woods.⁵⁶ In addition to Williams and Clark, police arrested Osby McAfee, William “Monk” Miller, Norris Clark, Charles Lewis, and Floyd Williams, the brother of Paul.⁵⁷ McAfee owned a home on the Thurmont-Foxville Road, where the gang apparently stayed and took meals while working the still. Several of the moonshiners were locals. Charles Lewis was the son of prominent fruit grower

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Anders interview.

⁵⁵*Frederick Post*, 1 August 1929; *Hagerstown Herald*, 1 August 1929.

⁵⁶*Hagerstown Herald*, 3 August 1929.

⁵⁷*Frederick Post*, 1 August 1929.

Hooker Lewis from Thurmont.⁵⁸ But the Williams brothers were from Hagerstown and hailed originally from North Carolina. Lester Clark was a Virginian.⁵⁹

Authorities then had the difficult job of unraveling the events leading up to the botched raid. Police initially insisted that they had been double-crossed. Charles Lewis, they claimed, lured them into an ambush.⁶⁰ But the day following the ambush, the sheriff's office released Lewis from custody. Frederick County Sheriff William C. Roderick, who strangely had been in Pittsburgh during the raid, returned and insisted that his officers had not been double-crossed. Likewise, not all local authorities seemed concerned with illegal moonshining in the mountains. Thurmont Constable Charles W. Smith, who had participated in several still raids, insisted that the "moonshiners appear to want to be let alone. They won't disturb anyone unless they are interfered with. To the man they are opposed to the prohibition law."⁶¹ Seeking to contain the confusion and suspicion surrounding the case, the Frederick Sheriff's Department arranged to have Special Detective Joseph F. Daugherty, from the Baltimore Police department, act as a special investigator in the case.⁶²

Eventually State's Attorney William Strom sorted through the evidence and rearrested Charles Lewis. He then charged Lewis, McAfee, and Clark with the murder. The other moonshiners faced charges of manufacturing liquor for sale.⁶³ A Grand Jury that convened on September 9, 1929 subsequently indicted Lewis and Clark for murder.

⁵⁸Donald Lewis, interview by author, Thurmont, MD, 13 July 1999.

⁵⁹*Hagerstown Herald*, 21 December 1929.

⁶⁰*Frederick Post*, 1 August 1929.

⁶¹*Frederick Post*, 3 August 1929.

⁶²*Hagerstown Herald*, 18 December 1929.

⁶³*Hagerstown Herald*, 5 August 1929.

An overflow crowd gathered for the trial, held in December in Hagerstown. A surprise witness from Baltimore, W.L. Poole testified that Lewis had threatened “to get [Deputy] Redmond by fair means or foul.” Osby McAfee testified that Lewis wanted to use the McAfee house for a meeting at which to set up the police. McAfee insisted that he had refused.⁶⁴ A few days after his testimony, McAfee’s home burned to the ground. Authorities suspected arson. As the newspaper explained “firing property is a mode of revenge that has been practiced in some mountain sections.” Attorneys for Lewis and Clark insisted that, while both men had fired shots, Hauver had been shot from the rear. Therefore, the killing was an accident.⁶⁵ Facing the Christmas holiday, the presiding judge held night sessions to speed up the trial. After several days of confusing and conflicting testimony, the case went to the jury, who convicted both men. Three Maryland circuit judges then sentenced Clark to 15 years and Lewis to life.⁶⁶

Both Lewis and Clark denied having fired the shots that killed Deputy Hauver. Given the confusion at the scene and the unresolved issue of who double-crossed whom, many in the local area long have wondered whether justice was served in the Blue Blazes case. Naturally, hearsay and rumors--all unsubstantiated--developed around the story. In 1972, the Youth Conservation Corps, a federal project to employ young people, sent forty youths into the community surrounding Catoctin Mountain Park to gather local folklore. When it came to the Blue Blazes story, some locals claimed that out-of-town “tar heels” had operated the still and that the tip-off to police came from local moonshiners upset about competition. The story has some validity since the Williams brothers were from

⁶⁴*Frederick Post*, 17 December 1929.

⁶⁵*Hagerstown Herald*, 17 December 1929; *Hagerstown Herald*, 18 December 1929. No evidence appears to have been present to challenge testimony that Hauver had been shot from the rear. However, experts did testify that the shot had not come from Redmond’s gun.

⁶⁶*Frederick Post*, 20 December 1929.

North Carolina. Others insisted that the raid was the product of a revenge plot relating to a love triangle. According to the romance-gone-wrong story, Deputy Hauver was the innocent victim of a bullet meant for someone else.⁶⁷ The fact that Charles Lewis was a locally-known figure, considered to be “a nice guy,” and a member of a well-regarded family added to a sense that justice had not quite been served.⁶⁸ Ultimately in 1950, Governor Theodore McKeldin commuted Lewis’s life sentence. And the now-elderly inmate, suffering from tuberculosis was released from prison. 94Clark had been paroled in 1946.⁶⁹

The exact circumstances surrounding the Blue Blazes raid and the murder of Clyde Hauver most likely will remain a mystery and a testament to the confusing times and effects of a law with little popular support. Beyond the window opened to the Prohibition era, the event also suggests the dual nature of mountain life at the time. On one hand the secluded whiskey still, the secrecy, the role of revenge all are suggestive of stereotypes of Appalachian mountain peoples. Yet several of the persons involved were from the large towns of Thurmont and Hagerstown. And the still itself was a large, sophisticated operation--in a sense, industrial moonshining. Unlike some areas in Appalachia, which were more culturally and economically isolated, even the more secluded areas of the Catocins had links to the world beyond.

The Mountain on the Eve of Acquisition

Having suggested that Catocin Mountain life both was both secluded and yet still tied to the world beyond, we might take a closer look at some of the people who made their lives on the mountain in the years before the area became parkland. While the

⁶⁷“Blue Blazes,” Youth Conservation Corps Anecdotes, 1972, CMP, “Still Information Binder, “Still Talk,” CMP.

⁶⁸Donald Lewis, 13 July 1999; Charles Anders, 7 July 1999.

⁶⁹Clipping, nd, “Still Information Binder,” CMP.

government officials who arrived to purchase land in the 1930s often depicted residents as dirt-poor farmers barely eking a living from the substandard soil on the mountain, in truth the local population was much more diverse. Wealthy local businessmen, vacationers, well-to-do fruit growers, and others owned mountain tracts alongside subsistence farmers. Likewise, while some poorer farmers lived on the mountain, the majority managed to provide, usually with the help of a second line of work, a healthy existence for their often large families.

In the area that is now Catoctin Mountain Park, several farms sat on the west side of the mountain in the Foxville-Deerfield area. Two main roads, still in existence today, ran north from the Thurmont-Foxville Road (Route 77) connecting the small farms. The current Foxville-Deerfield Road, then known simply as Foxville Road was the major artery. A secondary road then known as “the backroad,” today Manahan Road, ran parallel.⁷⁰ Life on the westside of the mountain continued to revolve around the Foxville store, the former Wolf’s Tavern, well into its second century of use by the 1930s. The store offered the community both groceries and necessary farming implements and accessories.⁷¹

Corn, potatoes, and berries were the primary crops grown in the area.⁷² One farmer recalled that one could “grow the best kind of potatoes” on the mountain.⁷³ Area growers found a ready market for such farm produce at the canning factory located in

⁷⁰Irene Flaugher and Louise Bittner, 13 July 1999.

⁷¹Donald Lewis, 13 July 1999.

⁷²“Catoctin Recreational Area, MD R-1, New Symbol number LP-MD 4,” 2 October 1935, CMP.

⁷³Albert Zentz, interview by author, Thurmont, MD, February 6, 1999.

Thurmont.⁷⁴ Farmer Roy Lewis, for instance, owned a 98-acre tract (tract 18), along Foxville Road in the area that is today Round Meadow (see Map 4). Roy and Lillie, his wife, shared a two-room house and managed enough income to afford a farm truck, one of the few in the area.⁷⁵ Across from Lewis, on Foxville Road, lived the family of Victor and Berta Brown (tract 154, see Map 4). The Browns raised four daughters in an eight-bedroom log house. As was the case everywhere on the mountain, the Browns had no electricity and hence “lived by oil,” lighting their homes with oil lamps.⁷⁶ The family grew raspberries, potatoes, green beans, wheat and other produce. Livestock included hogs, chickens, sheep. To make ends meet, Victor Brown sheared sheep for farmers in the general area. The family also harvested crops on neighboring farms. On one particular day, the daughters and Berta made \$10 “pulling beans” on a Sabillasville farm. The Brown daughters particularly looked forward to Saturday nights when, on the back of Roy Lewis’ truck, they would travel to Thurmont to enjoy ice cream or a movie.⁷⁷ Closer to home, mountain-area social events included cooperative butcherings, where neighbors would gather to slaughter hogs and socialize. Butcherings continued in the mountain area until 1993.⁷⁸

⁷⁴*Catoctin Enterprise*, 5 September 1941. In 1941, the filtration system used for the Thurmont canning factory failed. As a result, pollution flowed into Hunting Creek, where it killed hundreds of fish.

⁷⁵E.R. Henson to H.L. Russell, 9 September 1935, RDA Program Files, box 61, NA; Irene Flaughner and Louise Bittner, interview by author, 13 July 1999, Sabillasville, MD; “Abstract, Tract 98,” RG 79, Land Acquisition Case Files Pertaining to the Catoctin RDA, box 6, NA. Lewis purchased his land in 1920. Christian Harman, one of the earliest settlers in the area first purchased the land in 1793, and the property remained in the hands of the Harman family through the first half of the nineteenth-century.

⁷⁶Lewis interview.

⁷⁷Flaughner and Bittner interview.

⁷⁸Zentz interview.

Even larger families lived alongside the Browns. Ike and Della Smith (tract 93) raised nine children on their 213-acre tract (see Map 4). The strawberries produced on their large farm enjoyed a particularly good reputation. With nine children, Smith supplemented his income by working as a butcher in the colder months, then returned to farming when the weather turned warmer. Walter Shatzer (tract 109) owned a farm just to the north of Victor Brown and Roy Lewis (see Map 4). He and his family moved onto the farm in 1920. They lived in a frame house built in 1873.⁷⁹ Shatzer, like Smith, supplemented his income by hauling goods, including fish, from Baltimore, in his truck.⁸⁰ He also bought and sold dogs.⁸¹ For virtually everyone on the mountain, sales of timber--in some cases hauled down the mountain in an old, barely-running truck--provided much needed supplementary income. But such practices carried with them dangers, and, by the 1930s, National Park Service officials warned that "the [Catoctin] forests are rapidly being denuded" and such cutting practices could not continue forever.⁸²

Not all farms in the mountainous area offered a solid living. For instance, the 212 acres (tract 94) owned by R.A. Fox, a 73-year-old lifelong bachelor, who appeared "quite feeble" to appraisers, offered him little more than a subsistence living (see Map 4).⁸³ During the Depression, Catoctin Recreational Demonstration Area project manager, Garland Williams, reported that of the roughly 50 families residing on the mountain, only eight managed a living solely from the land and had "adequately stocked and equipped" farms. Another twenty six supplemented their farm incomes with other jobs, and some

⁷⁹ Mentzer, vol. I.

⁸⁰ Flaughter and Bittner interview.

⁸¹ Lloyd Manahan, interview by author, Sabillasville, MD, 13 July 1999.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Appraisal Report, RG 79 , National Capital Region, Land Acquisition Case Files Pertaining to the Catoctin RDA, Box 11, NA.

sixteen families were on the relief rolls.⁸⁴ Yet statistically, family farms generally (to this day) rely on income generated outside the farm to supplement earnings. This would have been particularly the case in the period after World War I, when falling prices for farm goods made life difficult in rural areas.

Not all residents of the area east of the mountain were involved in farming. Addison, Elmer, Hampton, and Jackson Wolf were brothers who owned separate tracts of land that they later sold to the government. Yet none of them ever farmed. Instead they worked a variety of different jobs. Elmer Wolf (tract 105), for instance, owned a saw mill for a time and later worked as a gunsmith.⁸⁵

East of Foxville, the mountain areas of highest elevation remained largely uninhabited, enjoyed largely by tourists and children who might hike up to Chimney or Hog Rock.⁸⁶ On the east side of the mountain there were fewer farms and no real roads, other than the Thurmont-Foxville Road and a series of long-forgotten logging trails. A diverse group of land owners held most of the wooded acres on the mountain's east side. Some used their property for recreational purposes. Dr. Morris Birely (tract 84), a respected physician and town leader in Thurmont, owned 42 mountain acres, which he held with an eye "toward possible summer home development." Another owner, Guy Lanzilotti (tract 313), a resident of Washington, D.C., owned a two-acre tract along Hunting Creek apparently as a fishing camp (see Map 4).⁸⁷ Joseph Gernand (tract 104)

⁸⁴"Catocin Recreational Area, MD R-1, New Symbol Number LP-MD 4," 2 October 1935, CMP.

⁸⁵1920 census; Flaughner and Bittner interview.

⁸⁶Lewis interview.

⁸⁷James Trough to C.F. Clayton, 12 December 1935, RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs, Project Records of the Project Planning and Control Section, Land Utilization Division, Resettlement Administration, 1935-1936, box 3, NA; "Deed," 15 December 1937, RG 79, National Capital Region, Land Acquisition Case Files, Pertaining to Catocin RDA, box 7, NA. Lanzilotti resisted selling, insisting that he be paid for all improvements on the two acres. He eventually sold for \$1000.

kept sixty acres, as an extension of his Crow's Nest boarding house (see Map 4.5).

William and Lillie Willhide also ran a boarding house in a still-standing purple house (480 West Main) on the Thurmont-Foxville Road. They owned mountain land (tract 101), later purchased by the government, for the use of their summer guests.⁸⁸

Some larger-scale agriculture did exist east of Foxville. Thurmont fruit grower Hooker Lewis owned over 260 acres on what has become Camp David. The mountain land was only a small part of Lewis' much larger holdings throughout the area, especially in the area south of Thurmont where he lived near Camp Cozy. Lewis, who employed a large crew to work his orchards, grew peaches, apples, raspberries, potatoes, and tomatoes, often supplying the local canning company in Thurmont (see Map 4).⁸⁹ Smaller-scale orchard owners included Emory Moser (tract 118), who made his home in Thurmont, and Daniel Himes (tract 276), of Foxville.⁹⁰ Edgar Nicodemus, a well-to-do fruit grower from Zulinger, PA also owned an extremely large (3360 acre) tract near the furnace (tract 16).⁹¹ It is unclear whether Nicodemus intended to establish fruit fields on the site or if he sought to develop vacation land.

By the early 1930s, mountain residents had been harvesting timber in the area for almost two hundred years. As long had been the case, large sawmill operations were responsible for much of the lumber cut on the mountain. Ralph Miller owned a small mountain tract (115a) that supplied lumber for his Thurmont sawmill. But he hardly restricted his cutting to his own property. He had a reputation for logging anywhere--whether he owned the land or not.⁹² Indeed, locals viewed much of mountain region,

⁸⁸Lewis interview.

⁸⁹Lewis interview.

⁹⁰1920 Census; Anders interview; laugher and Bittner, interview.

⁹¹*Baltimore Sun*, 9 May 1937.

⁹²Lewis interview.

especially on the land formerly belonging to the furnace, south of Hunting Creek, as a "no-man's land," open to anyone who wished to take a few trees.⁹³ Another Thurmont sawmill owner was J. Howard Creeger, who employed one to two men at his mill and would periodically hire cutters to harvest timber. Creeger owned various mountain tracts (including tract 147) which he used to supply his mill with timber and satisfy his love for hunting.⁹⁴ In addition to Creeger and Miller, Catoctin Furnace sawmill operator James Stevens, who made his home in Creagerstown, also had land on the mountain (tract 148).⁹⁵

Alongside these larger operations, farmers, generally from the immediate surrounding area but some as far away as Creagerstown, owned mountain tracts that they generally used as a source of firewood. Some local residents can still remember farmers driving their wagons up old Catoctin Hollow Road--which, since the days of the furnace, was essentially a logging road--into the mountain to retrieve firewood. In the mountain areas, farmers marked their property with piles of stones and notches on trees.⁹⁶ Albert Zentz remembered his father's periodic treks to his plot (tract 190) for firewood. Zentz would drive his wagon, led by four horses up the mountain, cut his wood, then chain large logs to the front part of his wagon (the back portion of the wagon having been removed) to drag them back to town. One could transport between two and three big logs on such a "log wagon."⁹⁷ Other farmers, including Charles Weller (tract 177) and Ivie Brooks (tract

⁹³Anders interview.

⁹⁴Albert Zentz, interview by author, Thurmont, MD, 26 March 1999; "Statistical Report, Catoctin RDA," November 1941, RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs, RDA Program file, box 61, NA. An outdoor enthusiast, Creeger later served as a park ranger at Catoctin in the early 1940s.

⁹⁵Anders interview.

⁹⁶Zentz, 26 March 1999 interview.

⁹⁷Ibid.

88) kept similar small mountain plots. For many of these farmers, Catoctin Hollow Road was the main route to and from their mountain holdings.

Reuben McAfee and his wife Rosa (tracts 26, 26a) lived south of Hunting Creek on a plot that included McAfee Falls (later Cunningham Falls). In his seventies by the 1930s, McAfee continued to do some farming but also took in boarders at his home conveniently located on the Thurmont-Foxville Road (Rt. 77). He also sold the rights to cut timber on his substantial holdings, thus providing himself with another source of income.⁹⁸

A number of other Thurmont residents kept mountain tracts for what were probably a variety of reasons. Harry Finneyfrock (tract 219) was a junk man, living in Thurmont, who, in particular, sold scrap iron in Frederick. For whatever reason Finneyfrock kept a twelve-acre plot in the mountains. Samuel Weybright and his wife Lillie (tract 149) owned a hardware store in Thurmont and a 35-acre plot in the mountains. Edwin Creeger (tract 252), brother of J. Howard Creeger, owned a Chevrolet dealership in Thurmont. And Frank Anders (tract 91), who operated a motel on West Main Street in Thurmont, owned a 264-acre parcel of land, along the south side of Hunting Creek, along the eastern border of the McAfee plot.⁹⁹

The mountain area that later became Catoctin Mountain Park, then, meant different things to different peoples on the eve of acquisition. On the west side of the mountain, families owning farms found that survival required cooperation and much hard work. But the farms generally provided a subsistence living for the families, many of whom were quite large. As one former mountain resident recalled, "no one ever went hungry."¹⁰⁰ On the east side of the mountain, toward Thurmont, there were fewer farms.

⁹⁸1920 Census; Charles Anders, interview by author, Thurmont, MD, 7 July 1999.

⁹⁹Anders, 7 July 1999 interview.

¹⁰⁰Flaughter and Bittner interview.

Land instead offered important resources in the form of timber or recreational outlets. In fact, it would be this recreational use of the mountain that would define the next stage of development in the Catoctins.

Chapter Five

A New Deal for the Mountain

Introduction

A debate among historians continues to rage as to whether Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal (1933-1940) represented revolutionary change or simply evolutionary reform. While the debate will go on, from the standpoint of the Catoctin Mountain area, the changes brought during the New Deal were revolutionary. The government--once playing only a distant role--became a central player in the lives of the people in the region. Older conceptions of self reliance and independence died along the way. The process of change, however, was hardly smooth. Indeed, the confusing and frequently chaotic nature of the New Deal often poisoned the transition and created problems where none need have existed. This is particularly evident in the case of relations between the government and land holders in the area under development. Chapter 5 traces these revolutionary changes, from the economic collapse beginning in 1930, through to the planning and early development of Catoctin Recreational Demonstration Area.

The Depression in Washington and Frederick Counties

While the nation experienced great prosperity during the 1920s, farming areas, such as those in Frederick and Washington counties, lagged behind the rest of the county. But the flourishing industries of the 1920s were the first to feel the sting of the economic collapse that began with the stock market crash. Western Marylanders initially hoped that, by virtue of having few industries (except in Hagerstown), they might escape the

worst ravages of the Depression. Such hopes, however, failed to survive even the first year of the Depression.¹

The first signs of trouble came with an unusually hot and dry spring in 1930. On May 4, 1930, a fire broke out near Fishing Creek and quickly spread northward. Stoked by dry conditions and shift winds, the blaze quickly spiraled out of control and threatened the school and homes at Phillips Delight as well as the Richey fishing camp near Catoctin Furnace. Some 125 volunteers labored for more than three days to control the fire. The *Frederick News* declared the blaze “the most disastrous in the history of Frederick County.” Within four days, fire fighters had conquered the flames, but they destroyed several thousand acres, along with 15,000 young trees recently planted by the Isaak Walton League.²

Natural disaster, however, did not stop there. The dry heat only worsened with the coming of summer. Soon a terrible drought overtook the region. Day after day followed of one hundred degree temperatures and no rain. By late summer, few could deny that the drought was the worst in recent memory. In August, the *Frederick News* recalled that only a few months before there was “every indication that we would go through the slump with very little trouble. But along comes the drought, which cripples our major industry, agriculture.” Describing the “short term outlook” as “depressing,” the newspaper forecasted “visions of hard times . . . with winter approaching.”³ Weeks later,

¹Brugger, 495.

²*Frederick News*, 6 May 1930; *Frederick News*, 7 May 1930. Frank W. Fraley, owner of Catoctin Furnace’s General Store, recalled the 1914 fire, which took a week to control, as a worse than the 1930 blaze.

³*Frederick News*, 8 August 1930.

Professor T.B. Symons, of the University of Maryland Agricultural Extension Service, a state agency mandated by the federal government to “assist the farmer and his family . . . in every phase of agricultural and rural home life,” declared that Maryland farmers were suffering their worst setback in history. Meanwhile, losses continued to mount.⁴ Into September, temperatures continued to peak in the hundred-degree range. In October, Smithburg High School in Washington County temporarily shut its doors as the reservoir on South Mountain, upon which the school depended for drinking water, went dry.⁵ Ultimately, state officials estimated Frederick County drought losses at more than four million dollars.⁶

Coming as it did, on the heels of the industrial and banking collapse, the drought had far reaching consequences. Farmers--in desperate need of credit to make up for drought losses--had nowhere to turn. The chair of a state committee on drought relief regretted that “there seems no legal way of getting money to aid the farm laborers and some farmers who have no credit.”⁷ Without access to the meager dollars that supported the local farm economy, a downward spiral began. Many farmers both hired and worked as temporary farm laborers, usually at a scale of roughly a dollar a day for a ten-hour day.⁸ But with few spare dollars, this fragile system collapsed.⁹

⁴Secretary of State, *Maryland Manual*, (Annapolis, MD, 1936) 36; *Frederick News*, 14 August 1930.

⁵*Frederick News*, 6 October 1931.

⁶*Frederick News*, 11 March 1931. Brugger, 496. Total statewide losses from the drought were estimated at \$38 million.

⁷Dorothy Brown, “Maryland Between Wars,” in Richard Walsh, *Maryland: A History, 1632-1974* (Baltimore, 1974), 736.

⁸Zentz, 2 February 1999 interview.

Farmers could only cling to the hope that the drought and declining productivity eventually would give food prices a much needed boost. Yet with farmers elsewhere in the country continuing to increase their production, the price of wheat and other farm products continued to decline. The drought in fact meant that Catoctin-area farmers had less to sell at lower prices.¹⁰

Fears grew as colder weather approached. The condition of the poor, warned the *Frederick News*, “will be very difficult this winter.” The paper called upon local charities to gear up for a daunting task.¹¹ Even before the worst of winter arrived, appeals for food and clothing from those in need overwhelmed the Frederick County Children’s Aid Association.¹² County officials--seeking to coordinate relief efforts--created the Frederick County Drought Emergency Association in November, 1930.

Neither Washington County nor Frederick County could look much beyond private charities to deal with the growing need for relief. There was little tradition of using government--certainly not the federal government--to address such problems. As the Depression set in, recalled the Maryland Board of State Aid and Charities in 1935,

⁹Theodore Saloutos, *The American Farmer and the New Deal* (Ames, Iowa, 1982), 151. By 1934, throughout America, an estimated 1.7 million rural families, amounting to between 6.5 and 7 million people, relied on some form of emergency relief.

¹⁰*Frederick News*, 21 June 1930. In the midst of the drought, wheat prices fell to their lowest levels since World War I.

¹¹*Frederick News*, 29 August 1930.

¹²*Frederick News*, 28 November 1930.

“the opinion was held generally that the way to meet relief needs was through private agencies and voluntary relief.”¹³

In Frederick County, for instance, the only real program for the poor remained the old almshouse--a decidedly nineteenth-century (or even eighteenth-century) institution. Located outside Frederick City, the Montevue almshouse, a “rather pretentious looking five story building,” on a 96-acre farm, housed roughly 150 “inmates,” many of whom were elderly or “suffering some chronic physical or mental disability.” But Montevue also housed persons simply down on their luck, including “inmates” as young as three.¹⁴ The onset of the Depression quickly overwhelmed the almshouse. By February of 1931, the number of “transients” seeking help at Montevue was “breaking all records.” And those seeking relief were hardly the traditional poor. These new poor were “well dressed,” most claiming that they never before asked for charity.¹⁵ Most of the county’s poor, however, never saw the inside of Montevue. Instead, they continued to rely on a loose network of local charities. But these such organizations also quickly found themselves stretched to their limits.

Pressed by the growing need, the Frederick County Drought Emergency Association struggled to provide whatever relief possible. The association coordinated the efforts of local charitable organizations, such as the Red Cross and Salvation Army.

¹³Board State Aid and Charities, *Maryland’s Emergency Relief Program, From April 1933 through December 1935* (Baltimore, 1935); 1. Saloutos, 151. “Preparations for a major depression at the local, county, and state levels were even less advanced in the rural areas than in the urban,” noted agricultural historian Theodore Saloutos.

¹⁴J.F. Kendrick, *A Survey of Frederick County, Maryland With Special Reference to Public Health, Medical Care, and Social Welfare*, (Baltimore, 1935), 32-34.

¹⁵*Frederick News*, 5 February 1931.

Over the difficult winter of 1930-1931, the association managed to distribute 7,000 loaves of bread, 1,200 loads of wood, and 3,000 quarts of milk.¹⁶ Recognizing the continuing need, county officials, in 1931, reorganized the Drought Emergency Association as the permanent County Emergency Relief Association.¹⁷

Meanwhile local communities strove to coordinate and streamline their own charitable efforts. In Thurmont, representatives of relief associations gathered at the local high school, and, under the direction of Rev. J.S. Weybright, chairman of the Ministerial Association, planned relief efforts for the upcoming winter of 1931-1932.¹⁸ The collapse of the Citizen's Trust Company of Frederick, along with its branches in Smithburg, Thurmont, and Emmitsburg, in which investors saw their savings suddenly disappear, lent urgency to Weybright's work.¹⁹

Amid growing despair, there was some sense that "the government should take more active measures to keep people at work."²⁰ The county, in fact, did initiate a series of road building projects in an effort to put people back to work. The public road crews

¹⁶*Frederick News*, 13 March 1931.

¹⁷*Frederick News*, 11 March 1932. No records of either organization appear to have survived. Nor does there exist surviving records for the subsequent Frederick County Welfare Board, nor even records of the County Commissioners for the 1930s. The local newspapers offer the only record of life in Central Western Maryland during these pivotal years.

¹⁸*Catoctin Clarion*, 16 October 1931.

¹⁹*Catoctin Clarion*, 4 September 1931; C. Roy Weddle, *Life in a Small Town*, (Frederick, 1996), 3. Thurmont resident Roy Weddle also remembered the collapse of the Citizen's Saving Bank of Thurmont as traumatic. Investors eventually received ten cents on the dollar for their investments. Brown. 736, Fourteen smaller banks in Western Maryland later failed.

²⁰*Frederick News*, 30 April 1930.

for the Catoctin and Thurmont districts included such familiar local names as Bussard, Harbaugh, Hauver, Eyer, and Wilhide.²¹

But for most in western Maryland, especially in the early days of the Depression, there remained an intense suspicion of such government aid--as well as an insistence that traditional values of self-reliance could see the area through the crisis. As the *Catoctin Clarion* newspaper declared: "Let us cease to whine about depression and devote ourselves to the diligent performance of our daily duties."²²

A reliance on optimism and private charity, however, could not have provided much solace as county relief cases grew in number. Private charities simply could not keep up with the growing need. Facing another depression winter, the Frederick County Emergency Relief Association in 1932, called upon all employed workers to donate one day's pay a month to relief efforts.²³

With little in the way of public or private relief, the individual often was left to cope any way possible. For most this meant tightening belts, raising a few more chickens, and perhaps cutting more timber from mountain lots to supplement coal furnaces over the winter.²⁴ Likewise, the cooperative traditions of mountain life took on renewed importance. Annual "butcherings," in which several families would gather to butcher

²¹*Twentieth Annual Report of the Auditors of Frederick County, Maryland, From July 1, 1932 to July 1, 1933*, (Frederick, 1933), 27-29.

²²*Catoctin Clarion*, 1 August 1932.

²³*Frederick Post*, 11 November 1932.

²⁴Weddle, 4.

livestock, continued, as did other cooperative practices.²⁵ Talk increased of the need to establish more formal farmer cooperatives to ease the increasing burden on the individual farmer.²⁶

Faced with fewer and fewer opportunities to make money, moonshining remained a fixture of mountain life, especially before the repeal of Prohibition. Despite the recent tragedy at Blue Blazes, moonshiners continued to man their stills. In 1930, authorities raided a 1,000 gallon still west of Thurmont and seized 13,000 gallons of mash. One of those arrested had been a witness at the Hauver (Blue Blazes) murder trial. Two years later, police staged a similar raid on a 75-gallon still near Wolfsville.²⁷

Those not engaged in illegal activity often sought escape in any form from the relentlessly troubled times. While children continued to find diversion at the popular swimming hole at Owen's Creek, adults might enjoy a twenty-five cent double feature at the State Theater on Water Street in Thurmont or visit the increasingly splashy spectacles put on by Wilbur Freeze at his Cozy Inn. On weekends, Freeze would fly hot air balloons or bury a man alive in a wooden box. Freeze's tireless efforts gave the Cozy an increasingly central role in Catoctin area social life.²⁸ One also could go dancing every evening at the Mountainside Inn in Sabillasville.²⁹ Later, perhaps to compete, Freeze

²⁵*Catoctin Clarion*, 15 December 1935. The local newspaper would often report butcherings, mentioning the event and the parties "assisting."

²⁶*Catoctin Clarion*, 4 August 1933.

²⁷*Frederick News*, 11 December 1930; *Frederick News*, 9 July 1932. Because Frederick County does not make a practice of preserving police records (over twelve-years-old), the exact location of the still cannot be pinpointed.

²⁸Weddle, 3.

²⁹*Catoctin Clarion*, 22 November 1935.

opened his own Camp Cozy Nite Club, urging patrons to “Meet Your Friends at Camp Cozy.”³⁰

Faced with a struggling town, the enterprising leaders of Thurmont were eager to strike a blow against the collapsing economy.³¹ In meetings and discussions among themselves, they pondered ways to bring economic recovery to their town. As increasingly is the case today when regions face economic difficulty, Thurmont’s town leaders concluded that the answer lay in tourism. As an editorial in the local newspaper explained: “In a nutshell, the idea is to make a drive for the summer tourist trade in an effort to bring more people to Thurmont who in turn would put more dollars in the cash registers of every business in town.” But despite the presence of “good hotels, excellent drinking water, cool summer days, good roads, fine transportation facilities and a variety of stores,” Thurmont, the city leaders declared, needed more--in particular a swimming pool and tennis courts.³² No doubt the city fathers recalled that swimming pools at Braddock Heights had attracted more than 11,000 paying swimmers the previous summer of 1932.³³ “Make Thurmont Attractive to Folks, and Folks will be Attracted to Thurmont,” declared the proponents of tourism, who then initiated a poll of town citizens on the question of a municipal swimming pool and tennis courts.³⁴ Despite the eagerness

³⁰*Catoctin Clarion*, 26 March 1935.

³¹Tresselt interview. Among the important local leaders of the time were Dr. Morris Birely, Edgar Palmer, Ross Smith, D.S. Weybright, W.R. Freeze, and foremost the enterprising mayor of Thurmont, William Stoner.

³²*Catoctin Clarion*, 22 January 1932.

³³*Frederick News*, 6 August 1932.

³⁴*Catoctin Clarion*, 22 January 1932; *Catoctin Clarion*, 12 February 1932.

of the town fathers, little support for sacrifice could be mustered in the midst of hard economic times. Undaunted and still eager to lighten the depression mood and attract visitors, town businessmen initiated a series of summer band concerts in the corner square of town in 1932.³⁵

Yet it was a less harmonious event that summer that lingered in the minds of local citizens. In Washington, DC, veterans of World War I had gathered from around the country to press Congress for early payment of bonuses promised to every veteran. When Congress failed to pass the bonus bill, and the veterans, or Bonus Marchers, failed to leave the city, President Herbert Hoover--a frequent guest at Lawrence Richey's Catoctin Furnace fishing camp--ordered General Douglas MacArthur to corral the remaining marchers out of the city. The violent spectacle that followed upset the nation and did much to dash Hoover's hopes for reelection. Once out of the city, authorities hustled 2,000-3,000 marchers, including some women and African-Americans, north through Frederick County. Many spent the night at the Frederick County Fair Grounds, where the Maryland National Guard fed them 1,500 loaves of bread and 150 gallons of coffee.³⁶ Residents of the Catoctin area also remember seeing Bonus marchers camping in one of Hooker Lewis's fruit fields just south of Thurmont (current site of Bogley's Chevrolet).³⁷

The horrific spectacle of the Bonus Marchers and continuing economic difficulties no doubt contributed to a growing sense of depression in the area. Soon the local newspaper in Thurmont was worrying that the "amazing decline in property values"

³⁵*Catoctin Clarion*, 24 June 1932.

³⁶*Frederick News*, 29 July 1932; *Frederick News*, 30 July 1932.

³⁷Weddle, 3; Brugger, 498-499.

have caused “many owners to allow home and places of business to fall into extremely poor condition.”³⁸ Despite the traditional Republican conservatism of the area, residents were ready for change. On November 8, 1932, area voters overwhelmingly supported New York Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt for president.³⁹

The New Deal in Western Maryland

Maryland’s Governor Albert Ritchie, an ardent believer in small government and private welfare, long had resisted turning to the federal government for aid. But with other states lined up for funds flowing out of Washington in the early days of the New Deal, Ritchie, in April 1933, reluctantly added his request for federal aid. It was, as the Maryland Emergency Relief Administration, noted two years later, a major turning point:

“When Governor Ritchie, in April 1933, made his first request to the Federal Government for help in meeting the State’s relief needs, it marked the end of an important chapter in the history of social welfare in Maryland. The machinery that proved ample in previous years of normalcy or prosperity was not equal to the load thrust upon it by the depression and the resources available for such an emergency had been exhausted. It was a situation Maryland had never found before--almost incredible to state authorities.”⁴⁰

The infusion of federal funds made an immediate difference to relief efforts in western Maryland and in the state in general. A statewide agency, the previously mentioned Maryland Emergency Relief Administration, took charge of state relief efforts. In Frederick County, the Emergency Relief Association morphed into the Frederick

³⁸*Catoctin Clarion*, 28 July 1933.

³⁹*Frederick News*, 9 November 1932.

⁴⁰Maryland Emergency Relief Administration, *Relief--A Challenge to the State of Maryland, A Report of the First 21 Months of Maryland’s Relief Administration, April 1933-December 1934* (Baltimore, 1935),7. On Maryland’s embrace of the New Deal, see Charles V. Kimberly, “The Depression in Maryland: The Failure of Voluntarism,” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 79 (1975), 189-202.

County Welfare Board, now coordinating both public and private relief efforts. From its headquarters in the Federated Charities Building on South Market Street in Frederick, the County Welfare Board screened Civilian Conservation Corps applicants, kept personnel files for public works projects, and distributed food and supplies. In the fall of 1933, the board distributed 3,000 pounds of federal government-supplied, surplus pork dispersed to 1,035 needy families in the county.⁴¹ With Civil Works Administration money, the county also built an emergency hospital on the grounds of the Montevue farm, and, with Federal Emergency Relief Act funds, the Welfare Board began a rehabilitation project at Gambrill Park, which eventually employed 100 men.⁴² The citizens of Western Maryland were grateful for the help. The mayor of Hagerstown soon was noting the “salubrious effect” of the New Deal on “morale of community.”⁴³

Despite the infusion of funds, needs continued to go unmet. Roughly three times as many young men applied for positions in the CCC as were available.⁴⁴ Likewise, money came in spurts and was subject to political pressures (as remained the case once the Catoctin project got underway). In mid-1935, with Congress holding up relief legislation, the County Welfare Board suspended a project employing ten Thurmont men at the Graceham reservoir, and it sharply curtailed relief payments while it awaited a new infusion of funds. Confronted with the cutbacks, many continued to have no option other

⁴¹*Frederick News*, 2 November 1933.

⁴²*Frederick News*, 6 December 1935.

⁴³Brown, 753.

⁴⁴*Frederick News*, 2 November 1933.

than to turn to the kindness of others. In Sabillasville, the parents of a chronically ill young girl made a public appeal for the four quarts of milk that she needed daily.⁴⁵

Bessie Darling

A few short months after the inauguration of Franklin D. Roosevelt--while the Catoctin area remained very much mired in the Depression--a violent and gruesome murder occurred on Catoctin Mountain. The victim was Bessie Darling, a figure mentioned in the previous chapter as an example of a woman carving out a niche for herself in the emerging tourist trade in the Catoctin area. The grisly murder--an outgrowth of an unfortunate love triangle--immediately captivated the attention of people in western Maryland and beyond. Even today, the murder stirs an unusual amount of residual interest. Why the fascination? The answer seems tied to the hard times of the Depression. Seeking escape, everywhere people clambered for diversions. The newspapers of the time were packed with sensational stories of poisoned toasts, love affairs gone tragically wrong, and dramatic bank robberies. When Darling was murdered, she shared the headlines with Bonnie and Clyde and the Lindbergh baby kidnapping. In the midst of hard times, the salacious events surrounding her killing provided a shocking and voyeuristic spectacle, but also a compelling break from the daily grind of depression living.

Darling, of course, was a well-known figure in the Catoctin area. Most of the women who ran boarding houses were the wives of local farmers. But Darling was from Baltimore and thus appeared somewhat exotic and sophisticated to local residents.⁴⁶

⁴⁵*Frederick News*, 23 May 1935; *Frederick News*, 20 June 1935.

⁴⁶*Frederick News*, 1 November 1933; Spencer Watson, "The Halloween Murder of Bessie Darling," *The Banner*, November 1998.

Around 1929, Darling met and quickly became involved with George Schultz, a volatile official at the State Health Office in Baltimore. Her active social life clearly caught the attention of Catoctin locals. Likewise, Schultz's bad temper also drew notice. One Thurmont resident remembered that Schultz frequently drank, and, on one occasion, assaulted Darling during an argument in front of the Lantz post office. Other similar confrontations also apparently occurred.⁴⁷

In 1933, tiring of Schultz's abuse, Darling evidently broke off the relationship and established a friendship with Charles A. Wolfe, a widower from Foxville. Instead of returning to Baltimore that winter, Darling decided to stay in Deerfield, perhaps to avoid Schultz. But her former beau appeared unable to recover from the end of the relationship, and the tragedy was set in motion.

On October 31, 1933, Schultz, carrying a .38 caliber pistol, took the Western Maryland Railroad mail route from Baltimore to Thurmont. Since the mail train made no stop in Deerfield, Shultz deboarded at Thurmont and hired Clarence Lide to drive him to the Valley View Manor. Lide noticed and inquired after the pistol. Shultz laughed and remarked that "he didn't know what he might run into."⁴⁸ Years later Lide continued to regret that he had not been more suspicious.⁴⁹

That day, Darling was at the house with her employee, Mazie Willard, an 18-year-old hired by Darling to work at the hotel at the going rate of a dollar-a-day and board.

⁴⁷YCC Interview with Albert Wilhide, 1972, Catoctin Mountain Park Library (hereafter CMP); George Wireman, "Bessie Darling Murder Still Brings Vivid Memories," *Catoctin Enterprise*, 6 January 1978.

⁴⁸*Catoctin Clarion*, 3 November 1933; *Frederick News*, 1 November 1933.

⁴⁹Interview with Charles Anders, 6 February 1999, Thurmont, Maryland.

Willard later recalled that, "The leaves were beautiful that fall, the petunias were blooming in the yard, and we had gathered bunches of leaves to put all through the house."⁵⁰

Leaving Lide's taxi, Schultz slipped through the rear entrance of the hotel and demanded that Mazie take him to Darling (see Map 5). She led him up the stairs. Shultz entered Darling's door, locking it behind him. Darling, who, perhaps aware of the potential for trouble, had her own pistol nearby, made a mad grab for her gun. But before she could secure it, Shultz shot her dead. In a strange calm, the murderer emerged from the room and ordered the petrified teenage Mazie, to make him coffee. In one version of the story, he threw Mazie the ring that Darling apparently had returned to him, telling her "You can have that to remember her."⁵¹ Shultz then sent Mazie to notify the authorities, and he began to disrobe. "When you come back," Shultz coldly informed Mazie, "you'll find the two of us dead."⁵²

Mazie ran down the mountain and telephoned Sheriff Charles Crum, who immediately drove to the hotel, which he entered through the basement, since Shultz had locked all the doors. Inside, Crum found Darling dead in her nightgown and Shultz near death as a result of a self-inflicted wound. Dr. Morris Birely treated Shultz then sent him to the hospital in Frederick for further care. He then performed the required autopsy on Darling. News of the murder, complete with Shultz's cold conversation with Mazie, quickly spread. *The Catoctin Clarion* noted that the murder has "furnished ample

⁵⁰George Wireman, "Bessie Darling Murder Still Brings Vivid Memories," *Catoctin Enterprise*, 6 January 1978.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

⁵²*Catoctin Clarion*, 3 November 1933.

conversational material for the residents of this and other sections of the state and country ever since it occurred early Tuesday morning."⁵³ The grisly killing on Halloween, the innocent victims, including Mazie, and the sordid details of the affair fit perfectly into the sensational style of the news of the day. However tragic, the sensation fascinated people and provided needed drama and diversion.

When Shultz had recovered enough to stand trial, throngs packed the courtroom. Sixty-six years later, Catoctin native Charles Anders, who managed to get into the trial, still vividly recalled the spectacle of Shultz sobbing on the stand before receiving an 18-year sentence.⁵⁴ For many in the local area--even those born years after the event--the Bessie Darling murder continues to be a subject of fascination, in part due to the efforts of local author George Wireman. Coming, as it did, in the dark hours of the depression, before the New Deal could be felt fully, the Darling murder and the sensation surrounding it, should be remembered not only for its lurid details, but also in the context of the difficult times.

Birth of the Park

While the community was reading and talking about the Darling murder, the New Deal's initial relief efforts were easing the Depression for many in central western Maryland. But relief was only one part of Roosevelt's broad plans. He also hoped to bring about economic recovery and initiate fundamental reform. The National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) aimed to replace business confusion with cooperation. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA), sought to address the problem of

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Anders Interview.

agricultural overproduction and falling prices by subsidizing farmers to produce less. Deeper problems of persistent poverty--especially in rural areas--were also on the New Deal agenda. Catoctin Mountain Park grew out of these efforts, in particular the aim of removing poor farmers from submarginal land.

But the birth and early life of the park resembled anything but tranquil and smooth reform. Indeed, the development of Catoctin Recreational Development Area might best be described as a chaotic battle between competing interests: competition between federal and state authorities, competition between and within federal agencies, and competition between government officials and the entrenched population who called the mountain home.

The idea of removing farmers from unproductive farms surfaced during the “farm crisis” of the 1920s.⁵⁵ As governor of New York, Franklin D. Roosevelt created a reforestation program involving the purchasing and transformation of abandon farms, a program that inspired the later creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps.⁵⁶ The state of Michigan had a similar initiative to purchase submarginal land for conversion into state forests.⁵⁷

⁵⁵David E. Hamilton, *From New Day to New Deal, American Farm Policy from Hoover to Roosevelt, 1928-1933* (Chapel Hill, 1991), 184. In the 1920s, the Bureau of Agricultural Economic and economist L.C. Gray pressed concerns about “economically obsolete” farms. Under the New Deal, Gray worked for the National Resources Board and later the Resettlement Administration, where he was involved in the Catoctin project.

⁵⁶Gertrude Slichter, “Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Farm Policies Governor of New York State, 1928-1932,” *Agricultural History*, 23, (October 1959), 173-174. Paradoxically, as New York governor, FDR also promote a “back-to-the-land” program, which encouraged the unemployed to take up subsistence farming.

⁵⁷Conrad Wirth, *Parks, Politics and the People* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1980), 176.

With the advent of the New Deal with its mandate finding solutions to the ever-worsening farm crisis, plans for rural resettlement and rehabilitation found a ready venue. Roosevelt appointed an interdepartmental Land Planning Committee to oversee resettlement of farmers from poor land. The committee included Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) chief Harry Hopkins and Conrad Wirth of the National Park Service (NPS).⁵⁸ Initial efforts took place in conjunction with FERA which had \$500 million available for direct relief. The Land Planning Committee set overall policy, then, under a confusing and overlapping arrangement, the Land Policy Section of the Division of Program Planning of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (part of the Department of Agriculture) managed the selection and purchasing of land (with Surplus Relief Corporation money). Once chosen and acquired, the redevelopment activities fell under the purview of FERA's Division of Rural Rehabilitation and Stranded Populations.⁵⁹ In practice these activities were even more decentralized, as much of the planning and rehabilitation often fell to the various states involved. Many states eventually formed State Rural Rehabilitation Corporations to carry out the work.⁶⁰

It was in this confusing morass that Catoctin Mountain Park was conceived. Viewing the FERA's program as a unique opportunity to acquire land that would

⁵⁸Ibid, 177; Harold Ickes, *The Secret Diary of Harold Ickes, The First Thousand Days, 1933-1936* (New York, 1954), 105, 171.

⁵⁹Land Planning Committee of the National Resources Board, *Maladjustments in Land Use in the U.S.* (Washington, 1938), 48. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. *The Coming of the New Deal* (Boston, 1959), 280-281.

⁶⁰Resettlement Administration, *First Annual Report Resettlement Administration*, (Washington, 1936), 9.

“provide a much needed recreation facility for large numbers of people,” the Park Service threw itself into the land purchasing program in hopes of acquiring land for parks near urban areas.⁶¹ Eventually, the NPS participated in the purchase and development of forty-six parks, known as Recreational Demonstration Areas, in twenty-four states. Once purchased and developed by the federal government, the lands, in most cases, were to be turned over to state governments. Conrad Wirth, then assistant director of the NPS Branch of Planning and Matt Huppuch, supervisor of the NPS Recreation Division clearly served as the spearheads for the Park Service’s drive to harness resettlement land.⁶² Other departments and agencies, including the Agricultural Department, which set up Agricultural Demonstration Projects, also established programs to develop acquired submarginal land.

As part of the NPS’s search for recreational land, in April 1934, NPS Regional Officer H.E. Weatherwax conducted a preliminary survey of suitable sites in Maryland and recommended the purchase and development a number of areas, including South Mountain and land near Fort Frederick. He, however, did not mention the Catocin Mountain area.⁶³

⁶¹Wirth, 177; Land Planning Committee of the National Resources Board, “Recreational Use of Land in the U.S.,” (Washington, DC, 1938). In 1934, the NPS prepared an extensive study for the National Resources Board of the need for recreational parks near growing urban population. The NPS declared, “more spent for recreation means less for insanity, crime, disease. . . .”

⁶²NPS, State Park Division, “Press Release,” 17 October 1935; Wirth, 176-190. Also see Bonj Szczygiel, “The Recreational Demonstration Area Program of the New Deal,” (M.A. thesis, Pennsylvania State University, 1971).

⁶³Weatherwax to State Park, Emergency Conservation Work Office, 6 April 1934. RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs, RDA Program Files, box 47, NA.

The actual land selection decision for Maryland, however, fell to the State Cooperative Extension Service, under University of Maryland Professor T. B. Symons. Since 1914, the federal government had charged the extension services of each state with providing support services for the agricultural sector in conjunction with the federal Department of Agriculture and the state agricultural college. On May 15, 1934, A.W. Manchester, the regional director of the Cooperative Extension Service, wrote Symons: “I would consider it a great favor if you would take the responsibility in Maryland” for developing “a general plan” for the purchase and development of submarginal land, adding that “federal funds may be made available for the purchase of land.”⁶⁴ The issue, in fact, had long concerned the professor, who in a January 1934 speech declared there to be “no sadder spectacle than an honest industrious man and his family endeavoring to make a living on poor land. . . . We have observed this for many years, but little has been done.” Symons defined submarginal land as “steep shallow soil, lacking in drainage,” and set about to locate such areas in Maryland ripe for rehabilitation.⁶⁵

The University of Maryland professor, in his report that summer, identified the land on and around Catoctin Mountain as his top candidate for redevelopment. At Catoctin, he found “good roads,” proximity to the nearby Appalachian trail, and Hunting Creek, which might be dammed up in portions to create swimming pools (as had already been done at the boy scout camp). He also found farmers in economic distress, many on

⁶⁴A.W. Manchester, to T.B. Symons, 15 May 1934, RG 79, Records of RDAs, RDA Program Files, box 61, NA.

⁶⁵T.B. Symons, “Problems at Our Doorstep,” 10 January 1934, Cooperative Extension Service Collection, Services II, box 1, McKeldin Library Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park.

relief, and farm land “not yielding enough for families.”⁶⁶ No doubt, the eagerness of Thurmont’s town leaders to develop the tourist industry also lent interest.

Also of concern to Symons and others was the condition of area forests. The 10,000-acre park finally purchased by the government consisted, according to a NPS official, of an estimated 90% cut over forest tracts, and 10% “tillable land and pasture.” Only a few inaccessible tracts still contained marketable timber. Between the tree harvesting and recent chestnut blight, the wooded areas on the mountain, without question, were in poor condition.⁶⁷ Observing the environmental situation, a *Baltimore Sun* reporter visiting the site in the fall of 1935 wrote: “Today whole groves of gray, ghostly trunks, stripped of bark and leaves, testify to the completeness of the destruction.”⁶⁸

At roughly the same time as Symons conducted his study, the National Resources Board--founded as part of the Executive Branch in early 1934 to study the nation’s resources with an eye toward development and public works projects--launched its own extensive study of land use. The Resources Board assigned an inspector to study each state.⁶⁹ Mark Shoemaker, land consultant for the board, prepared the Maryland survey. As with Symons, the Catoctin area greatly appealed to Shoemaker. But unlike Symons, Shoemaker appeared contemptuous of the local population, whom he described as “of a

⁶⁶Maryland State Planning Commission, “Preliminary Statement on the Problem of Land Use in Maryland,” (Baltimore, July 1935), 65, 107. Symons’ second choice for redevelopment was the Elk neck area.

⁶⁷G.B. Williams to Conrad Wirth, 12 December 1942, CMP.

⁶⁸*Baltimore Sun*, 3 November 1935.

⁶⁹Land Planning Committee of the National Resources Board, 1.

very low grade.”⁷⁰ Shoemaker’s reaction to the Catoctin Mountain population mirrored contemporary myths about Appalachian mountain people. The extent to which other government officials shared his views is unclear, but such attitudes may have been responsible for some of the mistrust and tensions that later surfaced between the population and the government authorities.

The favorable reports coming from the mountain area north of Frederick City impressed the NPS Regional Office in Richmond, eager to steer resettlement projects toward recreational use. Tell Nicolet, an NPS district inspector, went north to monitor developments. But there, Nicolet clashed with state officials, especially Symons, whom the NPS suspected sought “complete control over all sub-marginal land activities.” Nicolet and Symons openly quarreled at a meeting of the State Planning Commission, where the NPS official pressed members on the need for “a responsible state park agency” to maintain any area developed by the NPS. He also vigorously stressed the need for greater cooperation between state agencies. State officials seemed put off and complained of a “battle of personalities.” An NPS official likened the spectacle of federal and state officials clashing over the resettlement issue to “five people [who] were fighting over one piece of pie.”⁷¹

The tensions between state and federal officials, however, did not dull the park service’s interest in Catoctin. Visiting the Catoctins in the fall of 1934, Nicolet saw both

⁷⁰Maryland State Planning Commission, 12.

⁷¹Matt Huppuch to Conrad Wirth, 12 July 1934, RG 79, Records of the National Park Service, Records Concerning Recreational Demonstration Areas, Recreation Demonstration Area Program Files, box 57, NA. Coming out of a more southern tradition and led by conservative leaders such as Governor Albert Ritchie, the Maryland state government was underdeveloped compared to states like New York. Maryland, in 1934 had no state parks agency and only a small Forestry Department.

the mountain's poverty and the potential, offering "almost unlimited possibilities." He envisioned a Civilian Conservation Corps camp remaking the area into a park with handsome camp sites.⁷² Meanwhile, the state of Maryland moved to placate federal officials by having State Forester F.W. Besley promise that his department would maintain all recreation areas developed by the federal government from submarginal land purchases.⁷³ This appeared enough to gain NPS support, and Symons sent a park service-endorsed proposal for the development of the Catoctin area to FERA's Land Planning Committee, which, approving the project, passed it onto the Agricultural Adjustment Administration's Land Program. On January 7, 1935, the AAA lent its approval to the project.⁷⁴

But only a week later, A.W. Manchester, the regional director of the Department of Agriculture's state extension service, was having second thoughts--at least about the recreational aspect of the Catoctin project. He told a key official at the AAA that he regretted not setting up Catoctin as an "agricultural project," which he added would have been "more appropriate." Manchester may have recognized what many farmers in the Catoctin area still passionately insist: that there was agricultural potential on the mountain, given proper use and expert guidance. But with so many park officials already

⁷²Tell Nicolet to H.E. Weatherwax, 19 November 1935, RDA Program Files, box 61, NA.

⁷³"Summary of Correspondence Relative to Interest of the State of Maryland in Catoctin Recreational Demonstration Area," RDA Program Files, box 60, NA.

⁷⁴John S. Lansill to Wirth, 7 January 1935, CMP.

deeply involved in the project, Manchester commented that he “could not see how we could work that out without incurring their [the NPS] ill will.”⁷⁵

Regardless of Manchester’s last minute regrets, the project quickly moved to the next stage. The NPS assigned as project manager Garland B. (Mike) Williams, a Petersburg, Virginia native and former land appraiser of the C&O Canal, who more recently served as Civil Works Administrator for the city of Petersburg. Meanwhile, the FERA assigned W.W. Simonds the job of managing land acquisition.⁷⁶

The Ordeal of Acquisition, Part I

Simonds faced a daunting task. Supported by only a limited staff, his job was to appraise and acquire more than one hundred tracts of land initially covering over 20,000 acres (for maps of the park with its originally planned borders see Appendix 11). The sellers had a reputation for being conservative and traditionally suspicious of outsiders. Meanwhile, funding for the acquisitions was to come through a complex allocation process that involved several shifting government agencies. And the task was to be performed through persuasion rather than coercive means such as condemnation. As A.W. Manchester explained, "It would be contrary to the entire spirit and purpose of the program, to resort to general condemnation, as a mean to acquire land."⁷⁷ Despite the best

⁷⁵"Telephone conversation Between A.W. Manchester and C.F. Clayton," 14 January 1935, RDA Program Files, box 61, NA.

⁷⁶Barbara Kirkconnell, "Catoctin Mountain: An Administrative History," (M.A. thesis, University of Maryland at College Park, 1988), 35-36.

⁷⁷A.W. Manchester to Harry T. Schoemaker, 9 May 1935, RDA Program Files, box 61, NA. Manchester, however, did conceded that there "may be times when titles to property will be so involved and muddled that the federal Government can acquire a free and clear title only by having recourse to the courts. Although suits of this nature will be in the form of 'condemnation proceedings' they will be entered into only by and with the consent of the present owner of the lands."

hopes of those launching the acquisition effort, the process, in fact, did not go smoothly and in some cases resulted in lasting resentment.

In early 1934, a group of government acquisition officers arrived in Western Maryland to begin their difficult job. Hampered by over twelve inches of snow, the acquisitions team moved slowly at first, setting up initial operations in Frederick City and later, when conditions permitted, moving to the Cozy Inn in Thurmont. The first step involved interviewing twelve of the largest owners in the proposed area. While indicating a general willingness to sell at a fair price, the group demurred and "wanted time to talk over offers with families etc."⁷⁸ By March the snow began to clear but the caution of the land owners had not. Williams reported to his superiors a "reticence of the natives in these areas toward signing 'offers to sell' or 'options.'" The acquisition team, therefore, began moving ahead with appraisals after only a "verbal indication of willingness to sell."⁷⁹

But the process of appraising land then asking for options also caused problems and resulted in delays. On April 21, NPS Regional Officer H.E. Weatherwax journeyed to Catoctin "to ascertain the reason why the project is not progressing as it should." Weatherwax noted that "regardless of how good an appraiser might be, it is very difficult in appraising cheap land, that is from \$1 to \$5 an acre, to make an absolutely perfect appraisal." Appraisers, according to Weatherwax, first should have ascertained the price at which owners were willing to sell. All the land then should have been evaluated, and

⁷⁸Mentzer Administrative History, 4-6, CMP; "Tri-Monthly Report, 15 February 1935, RDA Program Files, 1934-1947, box 57, NA.

⁷⁹"Tri-Monthly Report," 15 March 1935, RDA Program Files, 1934-1947, box 57, NA.

the appraisals should have been verified by the regional appraiser. But at that point, the regional appraisal was actually two weeks late in getting to Catoctin, and Weatherwax appealed to Washington to do something "in order to speed up this project."⁸⁰

By April, Mike Williams and the NPS, eager to get the project moving, had another--this time local--problem with which to contend. In charge of public relations, Williams devoted much of his initial work to lining up endorsements for the Catoctin project from the local community. He received enthusiastic endorsements from the YMCA, the Izaak Walton League, the Rotary Club of Hagerstown, the mayor of Frederick, and others.⁸¹ But in the spring, word surfaced of grass-roots opposition to the project. The local community apparently was awash in "idle rumors, initiated by jokers in the local country stores." One rumor had the government planning to use the purchased land as target practice for the "big guns" at Fort Ritchie. Another involved a tunnel to be built under the mountain for traffic to Hagerstown.

The general secrecy surrounding the project might have contributed to the rumors. No public announcement yet had been made regarding the government's plans for the mountain, perhaps fueling the gossip. Williams quickly traced the problem to a Lantz mail carrier named Herman Hauver, who had spread some of the rumors and influenced his father, Albert Hauver, an 81-year-old local leader, against the project. The younger Hauver apparently feared that he would lose his mail delivery route and hence his job

⁸⁰H.E. Weatherwax to State Park ECW, 24 April 1935, RDA Program Files, box 61, NA.

⁸¹"Catoctin Recreational Area, MD R-1, New symbol number LP-MD-4" 2 October 1935, CMP.

should the project go forth. Park officials spoke with the elder Hauver and felt that they had cleared up any misunderstandings.⁸²

But problems quickly resurfaced with the Hauvers, whom project planners learned had contacted the Frederick County Commissioners “and expressed their intention of blocking the Government’s program.” Williams and his staff were particularly concerned that a mail carrier--a government official, presumably privy to inside information--was spreading the rumors. On April 15, Williams called an “emergency meeting” with the County Commissioners, the mayor of Frederick, and the head of the County Welfare Board. “It could readily be seen,” Williams reported, “that the County Commissioners were opposed to the present administration,” feared losing taxes if the area became a park, and worried that the government would condemn property. Williams explained the condemnation policy, and pressed the commissioners to tally up taxes collected from those on the mountain and weigh them against welfare costs, maintenance of roads, and other expenses.⁸³

William’s hardball tactics seemed enough to placate the county commissioners.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, the park service moved to neutralize the Hauvers. Informed of the problem, NPS Assistant Director Conrad Wirth, instructed Williams to “submit the address of the post office out of which Mr. Hauver works and we shall take the necessary action.”⁸⁵

⁸²Kenneth Sigworth to C.R. Clayton, 28 March 1935, CMP.

⁸³Williams to Weatherwax, 15 April 1935, RDA Program Files, box 61, NA.

⁸⁴*Catoctin Clarion*, 18 October 1935. By October, a local newspaper could write “County Commissioners from both Washington and Frederick counties have hailed the land purchase as an asset to the nearby local communities.”

⁸⁵Wirth to H.E. Weatherwax, 8 April 1935, RDA Program Files, box 57, NA.

Still the Hauvers continued to cause trouble and in the fall, Albert Hauver's name showed up on a petition of those objecting "to the acquisition of land by the Government" (see Appendix 12).⁸⁶

Meanwhile, bureaucratic turbulence continued to mount for the nascent Catoctin project. On April 30, 1935, under the Emergency Relief Act and Executive Order 7027, President Roosevelt transferred authority for the resettlement projects from the FERA and the Agriculture Department to a new independent agency called the Resettlement Administration, under Rexford Tugwell.⁸⁷ While the NPS was to remain intimately involved with the Recreational Demonstration Areas, ultimate responsibility now lay with the Resettlement Administration (See Appendix 13). Problems quickly developed. Tugwell later recounted "countless difficulties in operation" at his new agency. Not having been recognized by Congress, the Resettlement Administration remained dependent on funds allotted to other agencies, in particular the WPA. Tugwell's reputation as an extreme liberal may have also hurt him politically and cast a certain pall over all the resettlement initiatives.⁸⁸ Questions of precisely who would be in charge of RDA administration also quickly divided Tugwell and Ickes.⁸⁹ For the Catoctin project,

⁸⁶"To the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Division of Program Planning," nd, CMP.

⁸⁷Resettlement Administration, "First Annual Report," (Washington, 1936), 21.

⁸⁸Rexford Tugwell, "The Resettlement Idea," *Agricultural History*, 23 (October, 1959), 159; Saloutos, 151-152; Ickes, 474-475. Wirth, 189. After roughly a year and a half, it was clear to all parties that the RDAs would be better administered directed by the NPS. By executive order on November 14, 1936, Roosevelt transferred control of the RDAs to the NPS, although the NPS still had to submit requests for funds to the Resettlement Administration.

⁸⁹Bernard Sternsher, *Rexford Tugwell and the New Deal* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1964), 277-278.

the organizational changes meant adjustment to a new chain of command, although the NPS remained intimately involved.

Nor did problems with the local population ease. By the summer, acquisition officers were hitting real road blocks. The troubles threatened to derail the entire project. *The Washington Post*, getting wind of the problems, ran a front page story headlined, “Catoctin Park Plans Menaced as Owners Refuse to Sell Land.” The article pointed to planned restrictions on hunting as the source of much of the resistance.⁹⁰ Without the option of condemning massive amounts of land, and with increasing numbers of landholders resisting, park service officials decided to sharply curtail the quantity of land to be purchased from circa 20,000 to 10,000 acres. Likewise, with acquisition proving a slow, complex process, requiring extensive research, Williams arranged to lease land from owners who signed “Temporary Special Use Permits.” This allowed for the hiring of men (one of the principle purposes of the project) and the beginning of construction.

Construction and Labor at Catoctin, Part I

While land acquisition remained an entangled mess, Williams pressed ahead with his plans to begin construction of the park. Having secured enough land through lease agreements, Williams began interviewing prospective workers for the project. Since the primary goal of the project, along with providing urban dwellers with recreation, and addressing the problem of submarginal farms, was to furnish locals with work, most workers were to be taken from relief rolls. The newly inaugurated Works Progress

⁹⁰*Washington Post*, 24 June 1935.

Administration (WPA), part of the Emergency Relief Act of 1935, was to finance the Catoctin jobs.⁹¹

While offering those on relief the dignity of a job rather than just a handout, the WPA had its problems--in particular, bureaucratic confusion. Roosevelt chose Harry Hopkins over the more exacting Interior Secretary Harold Ickes to head the WPA. Hopkins' willingness to spend and belief in getting money to the needy as quickly as possible clearly appealed to the President. As Hopkins explained the worker "must be the first and last digit in all government accounting."⁹² But the WPA's efforts immediately to employ millions--even before an organized structure or bureaucracy could be developed--caused problems. Critics complained of idle workers assigned to useless projects. Hopkins' insistence that the bulk of all WPA grants be spent on labor also ruffled feathers. Maryland WPA chief John Mackall, complaining that projects were not of "lasting value," actually resigned his post in 1935.⁹³ By the summer of 1935, an Associated Press reporter wrote of the WPA, this "summer finds the whole program lagging with key men at loggerheads and officials out in the states plainly bewildered."⁹⁴

Williams had arrived in the Catoctin area confident that he easily could raise the needed labor from the "approximately 300 families on relief in and immediately adjacent

⁹¹Harry L. Hopkins, *Spending to Save: The Complete Story of Relief* (Seattle, 1962). 166.

⁹²Ibid, 178; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Politics of Upheaval* (Boston, 1960), 34-3-345.

⁹³Mackall to Hopkins, 29 May 1935, RG 69, Records of the Works Progress Administration, Central Files: States, box 1467, National Archives, Washington, DC; Jo Ann E. Argersinger, *Toward a New Deal in Baltimore* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1988), 65-66.

⁹⁴*Frederick News*, 27 June 1935.

to the area."⁹⁵ But, perhaps because of a mild recovery in the region, by November, 1935, Williams reported that there were "less than 100 men on federal relief within a radius of 15 miles of the project."⁹⁶ In need of several hundred laborers, the NPS turned to the idea of establishing a worker camp on the project grounds for transients to be employed on site. Plans went ahead for the construction of a camp on tract 91 capable of housing up to 200 men (see Map 5).⁹⁷ The camp was to be administered by the WPA Transient Bureau.⁹⁸ The preliminary project proposal for the Catoctin RDA included mention of the "work camp," and the Resettlement Administration established work hours and pay scales for both Catoctin's resident and nonresident workers. In order to "work off part of the cost of maintaining them," workers housed in camps would labor a 35-hour week, while nonresident workers were to work 30 hours. The cost of housing transients also was to be covered by an \$8 to \$12 dollar monthly deduction.⁹⁹

For whatever reason, perhaps concerns about already-strained relations with locals, the transient camp never was built. Instead, project supervisors hired local workers off relief rolls and transported--sometimes at great distance--supplemental workers. This

⁹⁵Tri-monthly Report," 15 February 1935, RDA Program Files, box 57, NA.

⁹⁶Weatherwax to Peter DeGelleke, 5 November 1935, RDA Program Files, box 61, NA; *Catoctin Clarion*, 6 November 1936. Business were returning to the area. In November 1936, a Pennsylvania man opened a factory on the corner of Carroll and Main streets in Thurmont. Hiring 100 women, the factory made "ladies cotton dresses."

⁹⁷Weatherwax to Huppuch, 3 October 1935, RDA Program Files, box 61, NA.

⁹⁸A.B. Thatcher to Rex Williard, box 61, RDA Program Files, box 61, NA.

⁹⁹"Resettlement Administration Analysis Report Prepared by Analysis and Section Unit Project Planning and Control Section Land Utilization Division," 19 February 1936, RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs, Project Records of the Project Planning and Control Section, Land Utilization Division, Resettlement Administration, box 3, NA.

also caused some headaches when workers from Woodsboro, Maryland, complained that their transportation consisted of riding in the rear of subfreezing unheated trucks back and forth forty miles (see Appendix 14).¹⁰⁰ Also helping to ease the labor problem, the NPS managed to obtain "percentage exemptions" allowances that permitted the hiring of some non-relief roll workers, often workers with necessary special skills.¹⁰¹

Resettlement Administration officials, in fact, critiqued Williams' original development plan for its over reliance on unskilled labor.¹⁰²

On January 2, 1936, work began with fifty-five men cleaning up the general area in preparation for fire prevention work. Within a week, the WPA transferred twenty men from its fish hatchery project in Lewistown to join in work at Catoclin.¹⁰³ By spring, over 300 men were hard at work.¹⁰⁴ Alongside construction, destruction was central to development. Miles of old roads and fences (made of stones wrapped in wire) had to be obliterated.¹⁰⁵ Likewise thousands of blighted chestnuts required removal. Also there

¹⁰⁰Joel Berrall to Matt Huppuch, "Subject: Complaint of Excessive Transportation, MD-4," 23 December 1935, RDA Program Files, box 57, NA.

¹⁰¹L.C. Gray to Conrad Wirth, 19 December 1935, RDA Program Files, box 7, NA. Gray noted a "problem in all parts of the US in securing relief labor from the WPA." James Trouth, Memo, 29 January 1936, RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs, Records of the Project Planning and Control Section, Land Utilization Division, Resettlement Administration, box 3, NA.

¹⁰²L.C. Gray to Wirth, 23 April 1936, RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs, Project Records of the Project Planning and Control Section, Land Utilization Division, Resettlement Administration, box 3, NA.

¹⁰³*Catoclin Clarion*, 3 January 1936.

¹⁰⁴*Catoclin Clarion*, 10 April 1936.

¹⁰⁵"#114 Obliterating Fences," 7 March 1937, RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs, Project Records of the Project Planning and Control Section, Land Utilization Division, Resettlement Administration, box 3, NA.

was the destruction of the farm buildings that dotted the area (although some, due to acquisition delays, had to be left standing temporarily). Salvageable items such as hinges, ironware, doors, and glassware went to the blacksmith or craft shops (once workers constructed these shops) for rehabilitation and use in construction. On-site saw mills also created needed lumber from the many trees felled to make way for construction (see Appendix 15).¹⁰⁶ WPA workers--some of whom were descendants of the original furnace workers--began a cleanup and excavation of the furnace site. The regional historian, however, fearing damage to the site, insisted that work be halted.¹⁰⁷

With areas cleared, construction could begin. In the first year, attention focused on building support structures such as a central garage unit, a blacksmith shop, and a temporary administration building, containing office space for the project manager, clerical personnel, engineers, and draftsmen. Workers also graded land and built truck trails to allow vehicles access to construction sites. Most important, construction began on picnic areas and the first public camp, to be known as Misty Mount (see Map 5). Along with everything else, immense bureaucratic challenges persisted for Williams. Each individual project had to be numbered and described along with estimates of material costs and labor. Then the project manager had to submit the proposals to the NPS for approval. Individual Job Plan No. 203-A, for instance, involved the construction of a "vehicular bridge" over Hunting Creek. Williams set bridge labor costs at \$79, and

¹⁰⁶*Baltimore Sun*, 10 December 1939. Workers sawed off an estimated 2,500,000 feet of blighted chestnut in the forest.

¹⁰⁷Huppuch to the Third Regional Officer, 6 February 1936, RDA Program Files, box 61, NA. The work, in fact, was halted.

materials at \$48.50. He also included a justification, noting it necessity to "provide access to the parking area."¹⁰⁸

Delays in obtaining approval for projects and allocation of money also provided headaches for Williams. Eight months into construction, holdups in procuring approval for construction of a park road forced the project manager to lay off around 200 men. By the end of the month, the necessary permissions arrived, and Williams could hire the workers back.¹⁰⁹ Still, the lack of security kept life difficult for those working at Catoctin.

The Ordeal of Acquisition, Part II

Despite problems and layoffs, those in need both on Catoctin Mountain and in the surrounding environs clearly benefited from WPA employment.¹¹⁰ But deep resentment of the projected lingered among some locals. At seven o'clock on Saturday morning, May 2, 1936, a fire of suspicious origins broke out on tract 307 of the project grounds. Shortly after, a second fire ignited on tract 116. Sometime later, the Foxville fire tower reported a third fire on tract 328. Although WPA workers had the day off, as word of the fires spread, they rushed to the project site to join in fighting the blazes--no doubt fearing the destruction could imperil their livelihoods. When high winds from the west threatened to

¹⁰⁸See file "703-01, General Correspondence, RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs, Project Records of the Project Planning and Control Section, Land Utilization Division, Resettlement Administration, box 3, NA, for reports of work sent to NPS Assistant Director Conrad Wirth.

¹⁰⁹"Tell Nicolet, Associate Landscape Architect, First Region, August 1936 Report," RG 79, Records of the Branch of Plans and Design, Monthly Narrative Reports, box 1, NA.

¹¹⁰Fred Johnson to David Lewis, 24 October 1936, RDA Program Files, box 60, NA. In October of 1937, of the 254 workers employed at Catoctin, 31 were landowners, having optioned their land to the government for the project.

fan flames, Mike Williams called for help from the CCC camps at Boonsboro and the Frederick City watershed. By three-thirty that afternoon, a combined force of 250 men finally tamed the conflagration. But questions smoldered. It appeared that someone purposely had set the fires, and officials suspected "disgruntled mountaineers." A \$25 reward was offered for information leading to arrests.¹¹¹

The State Forestry Department also hired the private investigation firm of Lancaster and Daugherty to look into the matter. Information gathered pointed to a group of mountain-area teenagers. Frederick county police aggressively questioned each implicated young man in succession at police headquarters. Despite sharp interrogation, each defiantly denied any role in setting the fires. Then police questioned the father of one of the youths, who actually had worked for the State Forestry Department. Like the boys, the man denied any knowledge of the origins of the fires. But he made his sympathies clear:

"the Government--if you call it that--I don't; I call it Russia--they came along here and wanted to get all of our land and they fooled some people and some people signed a waiver to let them have it and they have not paid them one cent; but, they took it and they have cut it up as soon as they got it. Now, they aren't going to pay for it; they have it under lease for five years. They came after and wanted me to agree to sell my farms and they suggested if we could not agree that they would appoint two men and I appoint one, and what they would say would be final in reference to the price and I told them no. I have been raised on this mountain and I am one of the first Fire Wardens and I am still one of them. . . . There will always be hungry people in these mountains, but there never were any hungry ones there before relief, and who is going to pay for it I don't know."¹¹²

¹¹¹*Catoctin Clarion*, 8 May 1936; G.B. Williams, "Fire in Area," 5 May 1936, RDA Program Files, box 61, NA.

¹¹²Lancaster and Daugherty Detective Bureau to F.W. Besley, "Regarding: Fires on Catoctin Mountain," nd, RDA Program Files, box 61, NA.

Despite his harsh tone, the “mountaineer” had some valid points. Planners had not always been diplomatic or respectful of the residents of the mountain. For instance, in a widely quoted public statement the previous fall, L.C. Gray, a key administrator in the Resettlement Administration, said of the Catoctin land: "Today the land is of almost no value to anyone, most of it lying idle and unproductive."¹¹³ Such comments could not have sat well with those who had struggled to make a living from the mountain. Likewise the mountaineer, quite correctly, asserted that most owners remained uncompensated--and yet construction was underway. In addition, circumstances had forced the government to resort to condemnation in a number of cases in which titles were too convoluted to allow for normal transfer. Even when every effort was made to put the condemnations in proper context, they inevitably caused suspicions in an era in which one’s life earnings suddenly could disappear. To many Americans, especially during the Depression, bigness--whether big banks, big business, or big government—was suspect.

While the May 1936 fires were the last such open manifestation of resistance, the entire process of acquisition remained--as one local recalled--"a mess for a while."¹¹⁴ The acquisition quagmire even became a political issue. In an attack on the New Deal-friendly Western Maryland congressman, David Lewis, *The Cumberland Daily News*, assailed the "excuse" issued by "the New Dealers" that trouble clearing up land titles was preventing the exercising of options. "The New Dealers," claimed the editorial, "are fooling the

¹¹³*Baltimore Sun*, 3 November 1935.

¹¹⁴Anders Interview.

owners of the land."¹¹⁵ In fact, procedural obstacles were slowing down the process and frustrating everyone. But some problems lay beyond the control of the project supervisors. For instance, at one point in the summer of 1936, the project's title abstracter, hired to research land deeds, disappeared for a month, supposedly sick. Infuriated officials later found him doing outside work in Allentown, Pennsylvania.¹¹⁶

By late 1937, the laborious acquisition process was slowing down construction. Williams postponed the planned construction of a water system for a new camp because contracts had yet to be closed on five important tracts of land. Having only managed to pay for only 65 of the 123 properties optioned, park officials complained that the office of the special attorney was holding up checks, and "meanwhile, of course, a tremendous amount of ill will has been created around the Project Area by these dilatory tactics."¹¹⁷

Perhaps also of concern to the local population, the Thurmont Bank, which held several mortgages on land in the project area, was eager to get the loans liquidated and worked with park acquisition officers to secure land. Because option prices were often higher than original amounts owed, mortgaged land owners still could end up making money, but the specter of the bank working with the government could not help but make locals uneasy.¹¹⁸ When project planners briefly toyed with the idea of attempting again to acquire land south of Foxville, they were "confidentially informed . . . that foreclosure

¹¹⁵*Cumberland Daily News*, 16 October 1935.

¹¹⁶A.P. Bursley to D.J. Chaney, 25 January 1937, RDA Program Files, box 61.

¹¹⁷S.M. Woodward, Jr. to Regional Director, 20 October 1937, RDA Program Files, box 58, NA.

¹¹⁸L.S. Birely, President, Thurmont Bank to U.S. Department of Interior, 16 October 1936, RDA Program Files, box 60, NA.

proceedings by the [resistant] lien holders would be instituted and title taken by persons more friendly toward the program.”¹¹⁹

The ordeal of acquisition lasted well into 1939, when the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland heard the case of the U.S. versus 810.3 acres of land situate in Frederick County, the State of Maryland, and Reuben A. McAfee, et al. Ultimately, the court ruled in favor of the condemnation of over forty tracts of land with titles too convoluted to sort out any other way.¹²⁰ The entire elongated process resulted in much lasting bad feeling. Even today, in the area around the park, popular opinion holds that the government, sometimes with the cooperation of banks, pressed people off their land.¹²¹ But there is no evidence that the government acted with anything other than good--although occasionally sloppy executed--intentions. Cultural misunderstandings probably were inevitable. The general confusion and haste of New Deal programs only added to the potential for problems. In the end, it also must be remembered that acquisition officers, under the best of circumstances, have a very difficult job--that of persuading people to give up their homes. Nor was the Catoctin project unusual in experiencing problems. Other parks had even greater problems. Even in urban settings, such as Baltimore, planners of the Edgar Allan Poe housing project in the late 1930s

¹¹⁹"Formation of Future Work Program, Tentative," 19 January 1937, CMP.

¹²⁰C. Ross McKenrick to R. Baldwin, 4 October 1939, RDA Program Files, box 58, NA.

¹²¹Anders interview, Zentz interview; History/YCC Anecdotes, "The Catoctin Project," CMP. The author's interviews confirm this conclusion as did interviews conducted by the Youth Conservation Corps in the early 1970. The YCC concluded that there were "two different versions" of the acquisition story. The local version involved forced condemnation and banks that "pressured on them [landowners] to sell and pay of the mortgages."

found residents clinging to their dilapidated houses, and complaining of authorities who "ask us to sell at a quarter their value the homes we cherish."¹²²

Construction and Labor at Catoctin, Part II

Despite the continuing acquisition problems, construction moved ahead. By early 1937, workers completed the first camp. An inspector declared the buildings to be "of the better class in RDP work. The materials, (chestnut logs and native stone) were particularly well chosen and the designs, following the local precedent, have been well executed." On June 25, 1937, ready to show off their new camp, project officials held an open house, dubbed "Thurmont Day," a sunup to sundown affair, in which visitors could walk through the newly completed Misty Mount grounds.¹²³

Planning next shifted to the second camp, to be known as Greentop, a special needs site for disabled children (see Map 5).¹²⁴ The impetus for the camp came from the Baltimore-based Maryland League for Crippled Children (MLCC), an organization founded in 1927, as an outgrowth of the Council of Jewish Women. Aggressive fund-raisers, the organization managed to forge a personal relationship with President Roosevelt, who, of course, had every reason to be sympathetic to the group's cause.¹²⁵

¹²²Argersinger, 103-104.

¹²³*Catoctin Clarion*, 25 June 1937. A handicapped children's camp, under the auspices of the Maryland's League for Crippled Children, used Misty Mount in 1937 then moved to the more specialized accommodations at Greentop in 1938.

¹²⁴"Monthly Narrative Report to Chief Architect by Fred P. Parris, District Architect District C, Branch of Plans and Designs, February 20 to March 20, 1938, RG 79, Records of the Branch of Plans and Design, Monthly Narrative Reports, box 1, NA.

¹²⁵Allan Sauerwien to President Roosevelt, 15 May 1933, Sauerwien to Stephen Early, 5 June 1933, President's Personal Files, folder 505, FDR Library. Kirkconnell, 53-61, covers the MLCC's lobbying campaign and the role played by the league in the construction of the camp Greentop.

The league also established an effective working relationship with the park service and contributed financially to the special equipment needed at the camp.¹²⁶ Construction began in 1937 and continued into the winter, during which work moved inside the cabins to avoid freezing weather."¹²⁷

In the summer of 1938, 120 handicapped children enjoyed the new camp's specialized facilities. Meanwhile, nearly 300 workers began construction of the third camp, to be known as Hi-Catoctin (see Map 5).¹²⁸ As in every other phase of the project, bureaucratic entanglements often retarded progress. Federal dictates passed in 1937 required that an increased percentage of WPA laborers come from the relief rolls, hampering the hiring of much needed skilled workers.¹²⁹ The next year, as construction on the third camp moved ahead, Williams, in order to prevent "a number of men being thrown out of work," used a "nonowner operated" 2.5 ton truck to complete a job for which his supervisors had mandated a 1.5 ton truck at a lower cost. In what he later admitted was an "irregular payroll practice," Williams papered over the detail in his records. When discovered, the project supervisor was reprimanded, but investigators also noted that his "record of accomplishment on the project is excellent," and that his efforts

¹²⁶Stanley Hawkins, "Memorandum to Mr. Lisle," 13 October 1936, RG 79, RDA Program Files, box 24, NA.

¹²⁷"Monthly Narrative Report to Chief Architect by Tell Nicolet, August 21 to September 20, 1937," RG 79, Records of the Branch of Plans and Design, Monthly Narrative Reports, box 11, NA.

¹²⁸*Catoctin Clarion*, 15 July 1938. According to the local newspaper, all workers lived "within a radius of 12 miles of the Recreational Demonstration Project."

¹²⁹Williams to Regional Director, 19 March 1937, CMP.

to fabricate on site many of the materials needed in construction had eliminated the "necessity of many outside purchases."¹³⁰

With the completion of Camp Hi-Catoctin later that year, planners turned to other projects (see Appendix 16). Envisioning a Lake Placid in the Catoctins, a Baltimore-based advisory committee for the Catoctin project recommended the development for winter sports of an area of the mountain known as "cold valley." But several "blue-bird" winters discouraged such plans.¹³¹ Thoughts of refurbishing the Mt. Lent house, site of the Bessie Darling tragedy, as an overnight shelter for hikers, surfaced but were later shelved.¹³² Planners also foresaw a "Wayside Day Use Area" at Catoctin Manor, which, unlike Mount Lent and "cold valley," later was completed with CCC labor.¹³³

Use and Segregation

Maryland League for Crippled Children had been the first organized group to use Catoctin's facilities in 1937. The next year it moved into its own custom-designed camp at Greentop. The league's staff and administration immensely impressed park service

¹³⁰Arno Cammerer, "Memorandum to Mrs. Maulding," 4 November 1938, RG 79, RDA Program Files, box 57, NA.

¹³¹Baltimore Sun, 8 January 1937; *Baltimore Sun*, 10 December 1939. The advisory group was titled the Executive Committee for Catoctin Center, and included ten members, all from Baltimore, including Frank L. Bentz, chief clerk of the Maryland State Conservation Department; E.M. Lisle, "Memo for Director," 26 February 1941, RG 79, RDA Program Files, box 23, NA. By early 1941, the Catoctin advisory committee had been "inactive" for some time, despite interest in its revival.

¹³²Orveill W. Crowder, to Emil C. Heinrich, 14 April 1941, RG 79, RDA Program Files, box 61, NA. In the early years of the project, hikers and groups did actually use Mt. Lent, but later the park service deemed the costs of refurbishing the collapsing house as too high.

¹³³"Memorandum to Mr. V.R. Ludgate," 6 August 1938, RG 79, RDA Program Files, box 7, NA. On the construction of the Day Use area see Kirkconnell, 71-75.

inspectors, who complimented the "exceptionally cordial, cooperative spirit and interest evident by campers, staff, and help. An excellent job is being done by this organization."¹³⁴ Meanwhile, other groups took over Camp Misty Mount, including the girl and boy scouts, and such short-term users as the Recreational Association of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, who paid \$5.25 for use of the camp, May 14-15, 1937 (see Appendix 17).¹³⁵

While the project was finding enthusiastic users, one group appeared shut out-- African Americans. While President Roosevelt was not a great supporter of civil rights, others in his administration, in particular his wife and Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, were eager to open New Deal programs and benefits to all.¹³⁶ Ickes appointed W.J. Trent as his "advisor on Negro affairs." From his office, Trent pressed the Park Service to consider African-American needs. With the New Deal-funded construction of over forty RDAs, Trent and others argued that some, perhaps including the Catoctin project, should include camps for African-Americans. A memorandum prepared by the Park Service on September 20, 1936 identified recreational and wayside projects "with the possibility for the development of Negro camping facilities." Surveyors designated most as either "all white" or "all colored." Catoctin, however, earned the designation as "possible for both white and colored" camping (See Appendix 18).¹³⁷

¹³⁴J.I Neasmith, "NPS Camp Appraisal Report," 21 July 1938, RG 79, RDA Program Files, box 58, NA.

¹³⁵Matt C. Huppuch to Director NPS, 8 June 1938, RG 79, RDA Program Files, box 31, NA.

¹³⁶Schlesinger, 430-436.

¹³⁷Associate Director, "Memorandum for the Secretary," 30 September 1936, RG 79, RDA Program Files, box 17. W.J. Trent to A.E. Demaray, 10 June 1939, RG 79,

In 1939, several prominent African-Americans from Baltimore began a campaign aimed at the construction of a crippled children's camp for African-Americans to be situated "adjacent to the camp now used . . . for white children." Officials from the Henry Watson Children's Aid Society, the Rose Ward Circle, and Willard W. Allen, a prominent African-American businessman from Baltimore, all joined the campaign.¹³⁸ But Park Service officials politely put off the lobbyists. They cited a lack of public works money for such an endeavor and suggested that "needs could be furnished in some area nearer to this population group, probably along the Bay or Potomac Shore in Southern Maryland."¹³⁹

The "possibility" of African-American use again resurfaced in the 1940 master plan for the Catoctin RDA, which included a recommendation for "a comprehensive development outline for Negro use."¹⁴⁰ In the end, despite the efforts of an increasingly organized African-American community, both the labor force constructing the project and the early groups using the Catoctin park remained exclusively white.

RDA Program Files, box 60, NA. On June 10, 1939, Trent asked Assistant NPS Director A.E. Demaray for information as "to the recent developments concerning a proposed Negro Recreational Demonstration Project at Catoctin." Demaray's reply could not be found.

¹³⁸Paul Beisser to Senator George Radcliffe, 5 May 1939; Williard W. Allen to Conrad Wirth, 5 May 1939; Fred T. Johnson to Ethel J. Day, 17 May 1939, RG 79, RDA Program Files, box 60, NA.

¹³⁹J.B. McGovern, "Memorandum for Regional Director, 23 May 1939; Fred T. Johnson to Ethel J. Day, 17 May 1939, RG 79, RDA Program Files, box 60, NA.

¹⁴⁰"Memorandum for Inspector Henrich," 28 June 1940, CMP.

The CCC in the Catoctins

From the earliest planning stages, National Park Service officials, such as Tell Nicolet, pictured a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp at Catoctin. The CCC, a brainchild of President Roosevelt himself, was one of the most memorable and popular of the New Deal programs. Congress passed the program--originally called Emergency Conservation Work--during FDR's whirlwind first 100 days in office. By the summer of 1933, the CCC had enrolled 270,000 young single men, between the age of 18 and 25, to work in 1330 camps around the country. Enrollees signed up for a renewable six-month stint, which began with a three-week conditioning program, usually on a military base. Pay was a monthly thirty dollars, twenty-two of which enrollees had to send home. Peak enrollment came in 1935, when 500,000 filled the ranks of the organization, jointly administered by the Army, Labor, Agriculture, Interior Departments.¹⁴¹

In early 1936, CCC officials gave approval for a future CCC "expansion camp" at Catoctin.¹⁴² But, with a mandate to provide work for the local community and the CCC undergoing cutbacks, the Park Service deferred plans for the Catoctin camp and began development with WPA labor.¹⁴³ Nevertheless, the CCC was an active part of life around Catoctin Mountain. The Department of Agriculture administered a camp focusing

¹⁴¹Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *The Coming of the New Deal* (Boston, 1959), 336-340.

¹⁴²Assistant Director to Mr. Demaray, 18 September 1936, RG 79, Records of the Project Application Section, Memoranda and Correspondence Concerning CCC Camps, box 3, NA. The NPS deferred establishment of the Catoctin camp "due to restrictions on new ECW camp construction."

¹⁴³John C. Paige, *The CCC and the NPS, 1933-1942, An Administrative History* (Washington, 1985), 21-22, 26. In 1936, as the construction at Catoctin began, FDR ordered the CCC downsized as an economy measure, cutting the number of camps from 446 to 340.

on fire prevention just to the south of Catoctin on Fishing Creek. On at least two occasions, Fishing Creek corps members helped fight fires on project grounds.¹⁴⁴

Despite the deferment, the NPS still hoped to establish a Catoctin CCC camp and planned WPA construction according. As one NPS official explained in 1937, “most of our straight labor projects have been put aside on the supposition that eventually a CCC camp would be attained.” With much of the heavier construction completed, park officials began searching for a suitable site on project grounds for a camp. By late 1937, the supervisors selected a locale near the project office, north of the central garage unit, and adjacent to a 75,000-storage tank capable of providing an unlimited supply of water (See Appendix 19).¹⁴⁵ It would be, however, almost two years before a CCC camp could be assigned to Catoctin.

By 1939, the depression in Central Western Maryland had eased thus thinning the ranks of relief workers. Meanwhile, Congress merged the CCC into the Federal Security Agency, and, in the process, also allotted funds for 245 new camps. Catoctin quickly moved to the top of the priority list, and, early in 1939, along with Otter Creek, Kentucky, selection officers assigned to the western Maryland RDA a CCC camp.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴*Catoctin Clarion*, 20 November 1936; *Catoctin Clarion*, 11 November 1939. Game wardens in the Catoctin area frequently warned local hunters to be especially careful around CCC sites.

¹⁴⁵S.M. Woodward Jr. to Regional Director, 1 November 1937, “Subject: New Camp Areas,” RG 79, Records of the Project Application Section, Memoranda and Correspondence Concerning CCC Camps, box 3, NA. This area was later known as Round Meadow.

¹⁴⁶“Memorandum for Regional Director, Region 1,” 28 February 1939, RG 79, Records of the Project Application Section, Memoranda and Correspondence Concerning CCC Camps, box 3, NA.

In late April, an advanced detachment of 35 men and one officer arrived in Thurmont to scout the site and work to be done. The men were from CCC Company 1374, situated for the past four years (or, in CCC parlance, eight terms) at Quantico, VA, where they constructed cabins for the Washington Recreational Demonstration Area. Before their work at Quantico, the company worked at Clifton Forge and Douthat State Park both in Virginia. Although some members of the company hailed from Maryland and Virginia, most actually came from Pennsylvania--some from Philadelphia, but most from the coal-mining regions of Central Pennsylvania.¹⁴⁷

Within a few days, the rest of company arrived, numbering nearly 200 young men, most between ages 17 and 29. The men lived in tents while they constructed a company camp. Living roughly four men to a tent, the corps members dug a latrine and setup portable toilets, awaiting the construction of a water system. Within weeks, the young men had finished their new camp, complete with utilities and a water system.¹⁴⁸ Hardly fancy, the major buildings were prefabricated, portable barracks. The standard CCC camp in 1939 consisted of twenty-four structures, including several dormitories, a recreation hall, a garage for CCC vehicles, a mess hall, an administrative center, and a separate residence for the camp superintendent.¹⁴⁹ The recreation hall included a small

¹⁴⁷*Catoctin Clarion*, 28 April 1939, Howard Rothmel, telephone interview by author, Stuart, Florida, 30 July 1999.

¹⁴⁸"Camp Inspection Report," 30 August 1939, RG 35, Records of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Division of Investigations, Camp Inspection Reports, box 94, National Archives, Washington, DC.

¹⁴⁹Paige, 71-72. "Camp Inspection Report, 3 February 1941, RG 35, Division of Investigations, Camp Inspection Reports, box 94, National Archives, Washington, DC. An inspector visiting the camp in 1941 found the "building and camp areas are in good condition," with a water-drilled well. He noted the portable buildings had been moved at

canteen, where corps members could buy candy and soda.¹⁵⁰ Red brick walkways connected the structures.¹⁵¹

Company staff consisted of a company commander, a camp superintendent, a medical doctor, two senior foremen, a junior foreman, two foremen, a toolkeeper and sharpener, a mechanic, an educational advisor, seven assistant camps leaders, and nine assistant project leaders.¹⁵²

Although the CCC--by taking young men off the streets and giving them jobs--clearly served the cause of relief, park service officials, such as Conrad Wirth, insisted that it was “primarily a conservation program.”¹⁵³ As such, much of the CCC’s initial work at Catoctin focused on blazing trails, reforestation, and improving Hunting and Owen’s Creeks. Work on the creeks generally involved clearing the creek of obstructions and building small dams for fish.¹⁵⁴ Corps members also prepared chestnut rails for use at Gettysburg Memorial Battlefield, where an African-American CCC company was stationed.¹⁵⁵

least once. Rothmel interview. The Catoctin Recreational Hall included a pool table and a juke box. The hall was the site of occasional dances, attended by local women.

¹⁵⁰Joseph Negrello, interview by author, Pottsville, PA, 14 July 1999.

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵² "Inspection Report, 3 February 1941, NP-3, CCC, MD," RG 35, Division of Investigations, Camp Inspection Reports, box 94, NA.

¹⁵³Conrad Wirth, “Civilian Conservation Corps Program of the U.S. Department of Interior, March 1933 to June 1943,” (Washington, 1944), 2.

¹⁵⁴Negrello interview.

¹⁵⁵Camp Inspection Report, 30 August 1939, RG 35, Records of the CCC, Division of Investigations Camp Inspection Reports, box 94, National Archives, Washington, DC.

In addition, road construction was also a priority for Camp 1374 at Catoctin. Members frequently worked “road crew” detail, which involved laying stones and clearing brush from the road side.¹⁵⁶ Other work centered on the construction of a home for the project supervisor, a lone ranger station, and on digging water for the Blue Blazes contact station and camp Hi-Catoctin. In 1939, members also left the park to help construct a recreation center in Thurmont.¹⁵⁷

The arrival of Company 1374 did not bring an end to WPA work at Catoctin, although the number of relief workers did steadily decline from 291 in the summer of 1939.¹⁵⁸ Often WPA and CCC workers would labor side by side as was the case in the spring of 1940, when 75 locals joined 200 corps members to resurface the central road from Thurmont to the park.¹⁵⁹

Through 1940 into 1941, CCC work continued at Catoctin. By the summer of 1941, a camp inspector could report that corps members had built 12.5 miles of power lines, a water supply system, the custodian’s residence, two sewage systems, 4.5 miles of foot trails, one retaining wall (built along old route 15), a bath house, four drinking fountains, .3 miles of roads, a filter system, two trail-side shelters (on the Appalachian Trail), and a forest fire danger station. In addition, the young workers planted 1500 trees and shrubs, seeded five acres, developed 400 acres and 25 miles of fire hazard reduction,

¹⁵⁶Rothmel interview.

¹⁵⁷Rothmel interview.

¹⁵⁸*Catoctin Clarion*, 28 April 1939.

¹⁵⁹*Catoctin Enterprise*, 18 March 1940.

committed 500 man days in emergency work, 1500 man-days in preparation and transportation of materials, and 180 man-days to fighting forest fires.¹⁶⁰

Of their various duties, fighting forest fires, no doubt, presented the gravest challenges. In 1939, CCC members battled a blaze near Mount Lent all night. The young men used shovels, hoses, and water tanks that some members carried on their backs.¹⁶¹ The most threatening fire occurred within the camp itself. On a Sunday morning in November 1941 (just as the corps was winding up its overall work at Catoctin), the equipment garages holding several large trucks burnt to the ground. The fire destroyed the enclosed trucks, and for the rest of their stay, the corps depended on trucks borrowed from other camps. Investigators never discovered the true cause of the fire, but corps members suspected that a stray cigarette following the weekly Saturday night outing to Hagerstown may have been the culprit.¹⁶²

Heavily structured, the CCC work week consisted of 40 hours. As a member of Company 1374 recalled, a bugler "called us to meal time, sounded retreat, and woke us up in the morning."¹⁶³ Catoctin enrollees rose at six in the morning, and, by eight, after a hearty breakfast, were at work until noon. After an hour for lunch, they returned and worked until 4pm. Under the command of the army, regulations required enrollees to

¹⁶⁰"Camp Inspection Report," 3 February 1941, RG 35, Records of the CCC, Division of Investigations Camp Inspection Reports, box 94, National Archives, Washington, DC. W.S. Bahlman, "Memorandum for the Director, 6 September 1939, RG 79 RDA Program Files, box 57, NA.

¹⁶¹Rothmel interview; Negrello interview.

¹⁶²Negrello interview.

¹⁶³Caption to photograph in "CCC Buildings and Activities, CPP-030" folder, CMP.

appear at daily roll calls wearing ties in summer and full suits in cooler weather.¹⁶⁴ Each enrollee had a bunk in the barracks and an individual trunk in which to keep personal articles. The bunk was to be kept up to military standards of cleanliness and order. Coal stoves heated the barracks, and one company member suffered the difficult job of keeping the stoves fired. Under the best of circumstances the barracks could get very cold.¹⁶⁵

Company chefs served plain but “plentiful” fare in the camp mess.¹⁶⁶ Former members remembered food as “wholesome.” Cooks, themselves CCC members, received special training in Pennsylvania. By 1941, with the camp firmly established, bakers prepared bread, rolls, cakes, and pastries right in camp. Camp truck drivers often delivered meals to men working in the fields.¹⁶⁷ Enrollees also enjoyed occasional extras such as when in January of 1941, chefs added sixteen gallons of oysters and four pounds of Italian cheese to spice up bland CCC diets. But overall food remained simple. For instance, the camp menu on Friday August 25, 1939 consisted of:

| Breakfast | Dinner | Supper |
|---------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Bread, V.S. Sausage | Sweet Potatoes | Buttered bread |
| Cereal, Eggs | V. S. Sausage | Sardines, potatoes |
| Canned Apples | Spaghetti Sauce | Canned corn |
| Milk, Cinnamon | Canned Tomatoes | Tunatidbits |
| Baking Powder | Apple Butter, Brown Sugar | Cocoa |
| | Sugar | Tomatoes |

On January 27, 1941:

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

¹⁶⁵Negrello interview.

¹⁶⁶Paige, 81.

¹⁶⁷Negrello interview.

| Breakfast | Dinner | Supper |
|------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Eggs | Bread | Boston Butts |
| Milk | Bologna | Peanut Butter |
| Coffee | Jam | Potatoes |
| Blackberries | Potatoes | Baked Beans |
| Oatmeal | | Tea |
| | | Tomato Juice |

The CCC--while clearly a conservation and employment program--also had a strong educational component. The camp had an education advisor, and each enrollee received at least six hours of training a week. After work, enrollees attended vocational and educational classes given in a number of subject areas. In the summer of 1939, the majority of the 191 members of Company 1374 learned at roughly a seventh grade level, and hence "instruction and material is developed accordingly." Course work included reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, history, carpentry, painting, electricity, surveying, transportation, and woodworking. Camp administrators looked forward to the completion of a company education building that would allow classes in photography, lathe work, bookkeeping, shorthand, business English, and geography. The company had at its disposal a 16 mm sound projector, a film strip projector, and a library with 1500 volumes. While at Catoctin, the company even had its own newspaper, "The Mountaineer."¹⁶⁸ Some enrollees also attended night school in Hagerstown. Howard Rothmel, a company member in 1939, for instance, attended a mechanics course in Hagerstown, a course he found "helped out later" during World War II.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸"CCC Camp Education Report, SP-7-MD" 30 August 1939, RG 35, Division of Investigations Camp Investigations Reports, box 94, National Archives, Washington, DC.

¹⁶⁹Rothmel interview.

Nearly two years later, with the education building completed, study areas had expanded greatly to include aviation, typewriting, first aid, photography, auto mechanics, and radio servicing among other subjects. The majority of company members now learned at high school level, allowing classes to delve into more advanced subjects. In addition, a new preoccupation took over the CCC--military preparedness. With the war in Europe raging, a long debate over military training in the CCC was won by those in favor of preparedness.¹⁷⁰ Military drilling took place at the camp, and 62 members of the company attended national defense classes at Hagerstown High School. An indication of changing times, sixteen company members trained in acetylene welding were recommended for jobs at the expanding Fairchild Aircraft Corporation in Hagerstown.¹⁷¹

When not working, sleeping, nor learning, enrollees enjoyed a number of other activities. There were occasional trips to the Gettysburg Battlefield.¹⁷² Camp supervisors showed two movies a week and broadcast sporting events over the public address system. In the winter season, the young men could enjoy darts, pool, and ping-pong in the recreation hall. The company partook in a local basketball league as well. With excellent recreational facilities at its disposal, baseball, softball, volleyball, swimming, and horseshoe pitching appear to have been camp Catocin's favorite warm weather pastimes.

¹⁷⁰*Happy Days*, 12 October 1940.

¹⁷¹"CCC Camp Education Report," 2 February 1941, RG 35, Division of Investigations Camp Investigations Reports, box 94, National Archives, Washington, DC.

¹⁷²Rothmel interview.

In baseball, the company found a taste of distinction.¹⁷³ Convenient for practices, a baseball diamond sat right next to the camp (southeast side of camp).¹⁷⁴ Within weeks of its arrival at the camp, Company 1374 began dominating the local baseball leagues. The Company 1374 team, calling themselves, the Catoctin Buccaneers, tore through its opposition, including Frederick County WPA teams and the Boonsboro, Maryland CCC camp. The Buccaneers soon won recognition in the national CCC newspaper *Happy Days*.¹⁷⁵ Alongside baseball, several members of the company also exhibited prowess in the boxing ring. One particular boxer, known as Smity, traveled successfully to several different camps for bouts.¹⁷⁶

Less taxing recreation might involve a hike around the mountain, or a visit to the Foxville General Store for a five cent soda.¹⁷⁷ Weekends offered the company the opportunity to get into town. Enrollees could go into Thurmont for Sunday observances, although a chaplain also offered services at the camp. Saturday night was the company's "recreation" night, involving a trip by truck to Hagerstown. The weekly trip to Hagerstown, however, brought the Catoctin camp its only real disaster. On the evening of February 1, 1941, near Cavetown, Maryland, a car struck the large truck transporting Company 1374 members back from their Hagerstown evening outing. The accident

¹⁷³"CCC Camp Education Report, SP-7-MD" 30 August 1939;"CCC Camp Education Report," 2 February 1941, RG 35, Division of Investigations Camp Investigations Reports, box 94, National Archives, Washington, DC.

¹⁷⁴Joseph Negrello, 15 July 1999.

¹⁷⁵*Happy Days*, 17 June 1939, 1 July 1939; *Happy Days* 23 September 1939.

¹⁷⁶Rothmel interview.

¹⁷⁷Rothmel interview.

killed the driver of the car and resulted in nineteen injuries to young corps members. At least two injuries were particularly serious, but all fully recovered.¹⁷⁸

The Catoctin camp--like most CCC camps--suffered from a chronic problem with desertion. In early 1941, for instance, the company had stood at 169 enrollees, but thirteen members were absent without leave. Indeed, while the numbers of deserters always remained high, after 1940, when young men more easily could find work elsewhere, AWOL cases grew.¹⁷⁹ No doubt the discipline, hard work, and loneliness of the corps also played a role. It was frequently less educated, out-of-state enrollees who defected, or “went over the hill,” as it was known in the CCC vernacular. One Company 1374 veteran recalled that it was frequently boys from Philadelphia, unaccustomed to isolated life in the country, who frequently deserted.¹⁸⁰ While the army oversaw the camp, it made little effort to find AWOLers. The CCC simply would send deserters an unsatisfactory discharge.¹⁸¹

As early as the fall of 1940, a *Happy Days* headline described the challenges faced by the corps: “Jobs and National Defense Thin Ranks of CCC.” With a peacetime draft instituted in 1940 and the world situation heating up, the corps looked more and more like a relic of a passing time. CCC administrators, meanwhile, became increasingly

¹⁷⁸Ross Abare to Charles H. Kenlen, 7 February 1941, RG 35, Division of Investigations Camp Investigations Reports, box 94, National Archives, Washington, DC; Negrello interview.

¹⁷⁹Paige, 28. “Camp Inspection Report,” 3 February 1941, RG 35, Division of Investigations Camp Investigations Reports, box 94, National Archives, Washington, DC.

¹⁸⁰Negrello interview.

¹⁸¹Joseph DeCenzo, telephone interview by author, Clinton, MD, 28 January 1999. DeCenzo, a Marylander, was stationed at the Silgo Park, Pennsylvania CCC camp.

concerned about the poor quality of corps applicants. In the fall of 1941, the Catoctin camp became a victim of cutbacks. Company 1374 closed shop on November 7, 1941-- exactly a month before the Pearl Harbor attack. A few members of the company remained to pack up supplies, most of which were sent to an army depot in Fleetwood, Pennsylvania.¹⁸² Congress ordered the complete liquidation of the CCC on July 2, 1942.

The coming of war was no surprise to the corps members. As one former member explained, “we knew ahead of time what was coming.” The military-style training proved a great help as the vast majority of Company 1374 entered the military to fight in World War II. “Once overseas,” recalled a Catoctin CCC veteran, “you had to take care of yourself.” Familiarity even with something as simple as making a proper bed gave CCC veterans a head-start, made them more effective soldiers, “helped out one hundred percent.”¹⁸³

The men who experienced the CCC camp at Catoctin look back on their work with pride and satisfaction. It was “an opening for me,” “a great experience.”¹⁸⁴ “Many a guy wishes there was still a CCC” commented a Catoctin CCC alumnus.¹⁸⁵

Conclusion

For more than fifty years the Catoctin mountain region underwent a slow transformation from an agricultural/industrial economy to one more reliant on recreation and tourism. The New Deal in the 1930s dramatically sped up the process and introduced a new player with enormous resources at its disposal--the federal government. Clearly the

¹⁸²Negrello interview.

¹⁸³Rothmel interview.

¹⁸⁴Ibid.

national economic emergency set the stage for the revolutionary changes. The old ways of self-reliance and independence disintegrated under the pressure of the hard times. In stepped the government to offer its own, desperately-needed, brand of relief and renewal. Its ambitions were huge, and not all residents were pleased with the new force on the mountain. But despite the enormity of the job, the bureaucratic changes, and the resistance of some locals, development of the park moved forward. Out of chaos came a beautiful park. In his reflections on the accomplishments of the NPS during the 1930s, Conrad Wirth might provide an epitaph for the Park Service's work at Catoctin:

“Looking back, I have often wondered how we ever accomplished it all.”¹⁸⁶

But the federal government was not yet done with the park. And soon another grave emergency would take precedent. World War II transformed the mountain yet again. This time taking it in new and very unexpected directions.

¹⁸⁵Negrello interview.

¹⁸⁶Wirth, 103.

Chapter Six

War and Politics Shape the Park**Introduction**

World War II forever changed the destiny of Catoctin Recreational Demonstration Area. The establishment of the presidential retreat known as Shangri-La turned the park into an area of international significance. Few having lived in the area before the war could have ever imagined the important developments that consumed the park during the war years. Not only was it a meeting place for Churchill and Roosevelt, but it was also a training ground for soldiers and secret agents. After the war, despite the protests of the state of Maryland, it was clear that Catoctin would never again be just another park. Still, local protests and lobbying shaped the destiny of the area as well—and resulted in the division of park in the early 1950s.

The Winds of War

By 1941, the growing international crisis was having an unmistakable impact on the nascent park. In the summer before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the army established a temporary training camp at the Catoctin RDA. Soldiers put up tents next to the CCC barracks and trained as part of America's response to the crisis in Europe.¹ Alongside their other work, Company 1374 of the CCC began practicing military drills. In September 1941 company members began attending a "national defense training program" in Hagerstown, which included courses in electric and acetylene welding.²

¹Negrello interview.

²*The Mountaineer*, September 1941.

As the war in Europe heated up and the United States developed a closer relationship with Great Britain, over 21,000 British sailors enjoyed brief respites in the U.S., many at the recently constructed Recreational Demonstration Areas, which offered “the play and active recreation” facilities desirable for exhausted crewmen.³ In the summer of 1941, the Catoctin RDA hosted 74 British sailors, who arrived in mid-June. At first, Superintendent Williams hoped to house the group at Mount Lent, Bessie Darling’s former boarding house now converted into a lodge. But when word arrived that the group could include over 100 sailors, Williams hastily arranged to shift the British to Greentop, where they would be near swimming and other sport facilities.⁴ In the end, seventy-four sailors arrived. The seamen, who stayed through August, appear to have enjoyed their brief stay on land, which included visits from CCC company members and a Fourth of July celebration.⁵

While the British sailors enjoyed a Catoctin summer, the National Park Service was discovering that the improving economy (the result of war mobilization) had dried up the once large labor pool that had constructed the park. Once scarce, good jobs now were readily available in the defense industry. Before it closed down in November 1941, several members of the Catoctin Company 1374 corps members left for jobs in the burgeoning airplane plants of Hagerstown. Apparently informed that the Catoctin CCC company would soon be disbanded,

³“National Park Service War Work,” December 7, 1941-June 30, 1944,” RG 79, Records of the National Park Service, Records of Newton B. Drury, 1940-1941, box 25, NA.

⁴Mathew Huppuch to Wirth, 14 June 1941, RG 79, Records of the NPS, Records Concerning RDAs, RDA Program File, 1934-1947, box 57, NA. In the fall, of that year with their numbers down somewhat the sailors did move to Mount Lent.

⁵Herbert Evison to Stephen Thompson, 26 February 1942, RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs, RDA Program Files, box 14, NA; Kirkconnell, 84-85; Negrello interview.

Williams searched for new sources of labor. In the summer of 1941, the NPS applied to the Maryland WPA requesting workers for projects yet to be complete. These projects probably included a long-planned fourth camp for the park (see Map 6). At one point, the NPS regional director considered seeking out military funding for several of the Catoctin projects.⁶ Despite the growing labor scarcity, WPA officials approved a new project at Catoctin “to continue work of the type previously carried on” by the CCC.⁷ When Company 1374 disbanded in November 1941, 30 WPA workers continued at the park. Whereas the new labor contingency was a far cry from the large numbers who had contributed to the early construction of the park, the new workers did allow Williams to continue work on park roads and some smaller construction projects.⁸

War

The attack on Pearl Harbor launched the already significant American military mobilization into hyper speed. The war took precedent over everything. In desperate need of training facilities, the branches of the armed forces turned to the National Park Service. The Recreation Demonstration Areas, constructed near large urban areas, generally featuring organized camp sites, and containing, “within them little that can be permanently damaged by

⁶A.P. Bursley, “Memorandum of the Director,” 20 June 1941, RG 79, Records of the National Park Service, Records of the Branch of Recreation, Land Planning and State Cooperation, Records Concerning WPA Projects, 1935-1943, box 4, NA.

⁷“Memorandum of the First Assistant Secretary,” 3 July 1941, RG 79 Records of Branch of Recreation Land Planning and State Cooperation, Records Concerning WPA Projects, 1935-1943, box 1, NA.

⁸“Memo for Mr. Wirth,” 31 December 1934, RG 79, Records of Branch of Recreation Land Planning and State Cooperation, Records Concerning WPA Projects, 1935-1943, box 1, NA.

heavy visitation and intensive use” clearly lent themselves to military use.⁹ In the spring of 1942, the NPS announced that henceforth the Catoctin Recreational Demonstration Area would be closed to civilian use and “taken over for use in the present war effort.” The NPS extended permits to the War Department, and in the spring of 1942, the military surveyed the park to plan their use of the grounds.¹⁰

With the military takeover, the NPS summarily informed groups that had enjoyed use of the organized camp sites that “the war program of the nation has rendered impossible the normal utilization of organized camp facilities.”¹¹ In order to facilitate the new park occupants, the NPS also asked the Maryland League for Crippled Children (MLCC) and the Salvation Army to remove all special equipment that had been stored at the camps.¹² The MLCC then moved its operations temporarily to the French Creek Recreational Demonstration Area at the Hopewell Village National Historic Site.¹³ For the next several years recreational use of the park area was limited to a few picnickers using what was known as the West Picnic Area and a few fishermen

⁹“National Park Service War Work, December 7,-June 30 1944,” RG 79, Records of New B. Drury, 1940-1951, box 25, NA.

¹⁰Kirkconnell, 94, 108.

¹¹Fred T. Johnson, Acting Regional Director to Robert Catee, Washington County Girl Scout Council, 6 May 1942, Records Concerning RDAs, RDA Program Files, box 31, NA.

¹²*Catoctin Enterprise*, 10 April 1942.

¹³Hillory A. Tollson, “Memorandum of the Secretary,” 22 January 1943, RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs, RDA Program Files, box 61, NA.

making use of Hunting Creek (see Appendix 20).¹⁴

By the summer of 1942, the army had established a temporary camp at the former CCC camp (Round Meadow). Meanwhile, a short distance away from the army campsite, a group of spies-in-training was learning the rudimentaries of espionage. President Roosevelt had authorized the formation of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in 1942 as an independent agency to coordinate overseas intelligence and espionage. In the fall of 1942, the OSS took over Camp Greentop, the former home of the camp for handicapped children (see Map 6). Recruits, both men and women, came from all over the country and all over the world (the largest non-American group was the French contingent) to be trained by the OSS. After preliminary training at Prince William Forest Park in Virginia, they shuttled between several sites including Greentop, which was known in OSS parlance as Area B. The Catoctin site specialized in hand-to-hand combat, infiltration training, marksmanship, and setting charges. At any given time, OSS instructors trained roughly one hundred recruits in groups of ten. Each recruiting class spent roughly two weeks in the Catoctin Mountains. During training, none of the recruits used their real names—even to those in their group. Instead alias allowed for a cloak of secrecy. Among the expert training staff was a colorful English colonel, formerly employed by the Shanghai police. The colonel was remembered as a particularly “notorious character in the OSS.”¹⁵

Impressed by German expertise in unconventional warfare, OSS Director William “Wild Bill” Donovan sought to train operatives capable of working behind enemy lines. One of the more unique features of the OSS training camp was the so-called “mystery” or “spook” house.

¹⁴“Narrative Report for Month of April, 1942,” RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs, RDA Program Files, box 61, NA.

Armed with a .45 caliber pistol with two clips of six rounds, agents would enter the darkened house, apparently built somewhere around the camp. Inside the house, Nazi cardboard cutouts would suddenly pop out, requiring the trainees to think fast.¹⁶ Wild Bill Donovan, himself, came to the camp on several occasions to oversee the training.¹⁷

The military presence at Catoctin required a host of changes to the park. The camp later known as Misty Mount was winterized to facilitate year-round training.¹⁸ And a number of new parcels of land (totaling nearly 275 acres) were added to the park. The family of Victor Brown on Foxville Road, who had long resisted selling to the government finally relented. By the spring of 1942, the War Department had acquired the Brown farm in addition to a number of other properties.¹⁹

While the military provided for much of the labor and materials needed to turn the park

¹⁵Reginald Spear, telephone interview by author, San Marino, CA, 3 March 2000.

¹⁶*Baltimore Evening Sun*, 26 July 1948.

¹⁷G.B. Williams to Conrad Wirth, 12 December 1942, CMP.

¹⁸Garland Williams, "Memorandum for the Director," 15 July 1945, RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs, RDA Program Files, box 61, NA.

¹⁹War Dept Corps of Engineers Real Estate Branch Map, "Showing Government Property Catoctin Area," Map, May 26, 1942," RG 79 Records of the National Park Service, Records of the Office of the Chief Counsel, Legislative Files, 1932-1950, box 76, NA. The properties (totaling 274.75 acres) included:

Tract 21 Church of the Brethren Inc, 15 acres (leased not purchased)

Tract 114 Eddie Dziura et ux, 2 acres

Tract 125 Aaron Strauss Inc, 20 acres

Tract 125a Aaron Strauss Inc, 28 acres

Tract 154 Victor Brown, 23.75 acres

Tract 149a Church of the Brethren, Inc 15 acres (leased not purchased)

Tract 279a Samuel T. Royer, 12 acres

Tract 284 Ralph W. Miller et ux, 9 acres

Tract 305 Horace D. Rouser et al, 37 acres

into a training ground, much work was still left for Williams and his skeleton crew who remained the official custodians of the park. For Williams, lack of labor hampered even routine maintenance efforts. Maryland State WPA Director Dryden, once awash in labor, now scrambled to find even a few workers for Catoctin. In the summer of 1942, the WPA could only assign twelve workers to Catoctin.²⁰ By the winter, the number had risen to thirty-five workers, but Williams worried that the WPA's "goodwill" would soon run out.²¹ Of particular concern to the Catoctin project supervisor was the condition of park roads--all of which remained stone surfaced and susceptible to serious problems in bad weather conditions. Williams hoped to pave over the main Thurmont-Foxville Road, but fears that it would damage Hunting Creek kept the project on hold.²² He hoped that the war emergency might create the pressure needed to encourage serious work on the park roads.²³

Shangri-La

The story of the founding and early years of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Shangri-La retreat in the Catoctin mountains has been told in depth by Kathie Hogan, Barbara Kirkconnell,

²⁰Drury to Harold D. Smith, 17 August 1942, RG 79, Records Concerning WPA Projects, 1935-1943, box 1, NA. The twelve workers apparently did not include those assigned to Roosevelt's Shangri-La construction project.

²¹"Telephone Conversation with Manager Williams, Catoctin RDA," 10 December 1942, RG 79, RDA Program Files, 1934-1947, box 58, NA.

²²"Report to Accompany Master Plan of Catoctin Demonstration Area," 24 February 1942, CMP.

²³Williams to Roger Willard, 26 June 1942, RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs, RDA Program Files, box 60, NA.

and most recently by W. Dale Nelson.²⁴ While little can be added their accounts, the story briefly can be recounted with some new information.

The mountains of central western Maryland had offered a retreat to government officials for over a half century by 1942. Diplomats from Washington DC's many foreign embassies vacationed at Pen Mar. Washington officials such as Lawrence Richey and attorney Kingman Brewster, later president of Yale University, kept vacation homes in the area.²⁵ President Hoover was a frequent guest at the Richey camp, and his visits continued even after his presidency. Hoover, Theodore Roosevelt Jr., and leaders of the Maryland Republican party, for instance, enjoyed the opening of the 1935 fishing season at the Richey camp in April 1935.²⁶ Franklin Roosevelt, himself, appreciated the area's recreational potential. As assistant secretary of the Navy, he had vacationed at Braddock Heights during World War I.²⁷

As president, Roosevelt had enjoyed escapes from the pressures of the White House at Warm Springs, Georgia and on the presidential yacht. In 1942 with the world war raging and U boats patrolling the Atlantic, the yacht was deemed too dangerous and Warm Springs deemed too far from Washington. Instead, White House officials sought a new retreat and assigned the National Park Service to find a suitable location near Washington, DC. The park service

²⁴Kathie Hogan, "A Secret in the Catoctin Mountains, A History of Camp David," (Honors Paper, Hood College, 1979); W. Dale Nelson, *The President is at Camp David*, (Syracuse, NY: 1995).

²⁵*Frederick News*, 11 May 1935. Washington dignitaries frequently joined Brewster at his fishing lodge near Catoctin Furnace. In 1935 visitors included Senators Willard E. Tydings and George Radcliffe as well as Vice President John Nance Gardner.

²⁶*Catoctin Clarion*, 19 April 1935.

²⁷Nelson, 6.

submitted potential locations, two of which were at the Catoctin RDA. One site was Camp Hi-Catoctin. The Federal Camp Council, which organized retreats for government employees, was among the prime users of the camp and had sponsored numerous outings to the scenic site (see Map 6). The Girl and Boy Scouts also made extensive use of Hi-Catoctin. The second site was the area slated for the construction of the fourth Catoctin Camp, a project which had been temporarily shelved. On April 15, 1942 Conrad Wirth of the NPS took White House officials on a tour of the Catoctin RDA. The group was particularly impressed by Hi-Catoctin and asked Williams to clear brush for automobiles should the president wish to visit.²⁸

A week later, FDR did visit. Reports had the president “very much pleased with the area.”²⁹ One story had him exclaiming upon seeing the site, “This is Shangri-La,” a reference to James Hilton’s famed novel *The Lost Horizon*.³⁰ The appeal of the site was clear. At an elevation of 1,800 feet, Hi-Catoctin offered seclusion and a spectacular view that included the Monocacy River. It offered cool breezes and temperatures five to ten degrees below steamy conditions in Washington DC. Best of all, the site already contained a number of cabins and other structures, including a swimming pool (see Appendix 21). The site could be reconstructed as a presidential retreat at a fraction of a brand new retreat. With Americans making enormous sacrifices for the war effort, the president could ill afford to appear extravagant. The revamping of existing buildings also could be done quickly, allowing the president use of his new retreat

²⁸Wirth to Ickes, 16 April 1942, RG 79, Records of Key Officials, Records of Newton B. Drury, box 4, NA.

²⁹Durary to Ickes, 23 April 1942, RG 79, Records of Key Officials, Records of Newton B. Drury, box 4, NA.

³⁰Nelson, 6.

that summer. The overall location offered the appeal of a two hour drive from Washington, DC “over first-class roads” (until one arrived at the park where there existed only dirt roads).³¹

From there the project moved quickly. President Roosevelt returned to Catoctin on April 30 to give final approval to “preliminary sketches of the expanded lodge buildings (see Appendix 22). Within days the building had begun. WPA labor at various local projects was diverted to Catoctin to aid in reconverting the camp. Construction proceeded very much along the lines of Roosevelt’s plan that the camp lodge, a structure roughly 17 by 28 feet, with a kitchen and open porch, be converted into the retreat’s main building, with four bedrooms, two baths, a living room/dinning room, a screened-in porch, and a paved terrace. Builders then combined two cabins on the camp grounds to serve as guest quarters, while the camp craft shop became the servant’s quarters. Crews also added a gate house, a communications building, three latrines, and an access drive, 1,060 feet in length.”³² In front of the lodge, workers built a cistern and fountain. Special features inside the lodge included French doors, crafted by a local Thurmont carpenter, that dropped down to allow Roosevelt’s wheel chair easy access.³³ As Winston Churchill described Shangri-La, it was “in principle a log cabin with all modern improvements.”³⁴

With the presidential yacht out-of-commission during the war, the navy dispatched to Shangri-La a team of twelve Filipino stewards formerly assigned to the yacht. The crew,

³¹“Maryland: Catoctin Mountain, Shangri-La, 1942,” FDR Library, Hyde Park, NY.

³²Album 461, FDR Library; Demaray, “Memorandum of the First Assistant Secretary, 9 July 1942, RG 79, Records of RDAs, RDA Program Files, box 60, NA.

³³Lewis interview.

³⁴Winston Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate* (Boston, 1950), 797.

overseen by Sotero Abida, who remained in the Thurmont area long after his service to FDR, worked to put final touches on the retreat.³⁵

By early July, Shangri-La was ready, and, on the weekend of July 18-20, Roosevelt and entourage arrived for their first weekend in the Catoctins (see Appendix 23 for listing of FDR visits to Shangri-La). The furnishings, courtesy of a naval warehouse, were austere: simple metal beds, a chair, and a dresser in each room. The floor covered by a worn rug.³⁶ Nevertheless, Roosevelt seemed to delight in the surroundings which offered him a needed respite from the pressures of the war. Among the president's favorite Catoctin diversions was tending to his stamp collection.³⁷

But war frequently intruded on Roosevelt's hide-away. On his second trip to Shangri-La, the president spent much of his time in deep conversations with his military advisors over the situation at the battle of Guadalcanal in the Pacific. Later, it was at Shangri-La where Roosevelt first heard of the successful invasion of North Africa on November 7, 1942. The next year, on June 25, 1943, Roosevelt was again at Shangri-La when he received word of Mussolini's resignation.³⁸ Over the next three years, the president made numerous trips to the retreat. Guests included Supreme Justice William O. Douglas, OSS Director William Donovan, and poet and Librarian of Congress Archibald MacLeish. Royal visitors, including Princess Martha of Norway

³⁵*Baltimore Sun*, 6 September 1978.

³⁶Samuel Rosenman, *Working with Roosevelt* (New York, 1952), 349.

³⁷Churchill, 797.

³⁸James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: the Soldier of Freedom* (New York 1970), 291, 283.

and Princess Juliana of the Netherlands, also made their way to the retreat.

The most famous visitor to Shangri-La (and the one still talked about in the local area) was Winston Churchill. The English prime minister had been a frequent visitor at the White House during the war years. One May 15, 1943 Churchill set out with the President, Mrs. Roosevelt, and Harry Hopkins bound for Shangri-La. Passing through the town of Frederick on their way to the retreat, Churchill impressed his guests by reciting John Greenleaf Whittier's famous poem "Barbara Fritchie." Roosevelt and Churchill later talked of the impact of the Civil War in the area. During their stay in the mountains, the president and prime minister took some time to tour the general area. According to Churchill, the two fished in Hunting Creek. Locals remember the entourage arriving at Catoctin Furnace to observe Fred Tresselt's gold fish ponds. Churchill, who kept a similar pond at his home in England, particularly admired the fish and talked at length with Tresselt. The Secret Service then swore Tresselt to secrecy about the meeting.³⁹ On their way home, while Roosevelt waited in the car, Churchill surprised Camp Cozy proprietor Wilbur Freeze by stopping into the Cozy Tavern for a beer and to play the jukebox. In fact, the prime minister had never seen a jukebox and Freeze had to explain its function.⁴⁰ On Monday, Churchill left the mountains, but left a lasting impression on all those who came into contact with him.

With such famed visitors, security was a major concern at Shangri-La. A barbed-wire fence surrounded the compound, and marines, stationed at Camp Misty Mount, patrolled the area (see Map 6). Likewise the very existence of the retreat was to be kept a secret. The most

³⁹Tresselt interview.

⁴⁰*Baltimore Sun*, 1 October 1945.

Roosevelt would say as he departed the White House was that he was on his way to “Shangri-La.” Of course, local residents knew fully well when the president was coming. As Camp Cozy owner Wilbur Freeze explained the president “was proceeded by about three or four hours by secret service men, who sent ahead inspecting bridges and roads.” On several occasions, Thurmont locals lined the streets to greet Roosevelt.⁴¹ When Churchill arrived with the president, a traffic light on Church and Main brought their entourage to a dead stop. Secret Service men jumped from the car and stood on the running boards. To the delight of onlookers Churchill and Roosevelt flashed victory signs from their car windows.⁴²

Although local residents certainly figured out the location of the secret retreat, the White House remained officially silent on the issue. Reporters likewise, even if they knew or suspected the location were expected to remain silent about the retreat. On October 15, 1943, the *Chicago Daily News* broke the silence on the presidential hide-away. The newspaper reported the location of Shangri-La in the Catoctin RDA and claimed that the National Park Service had “confirmed the fact that the President used Catoctin on several occasions in the past” (see Appendix 24). NPS officials quickly denied being the source of the leak.⁴³ The floodgates having been opened in Chicago, the local *Catoctin Enterprise* then reported the story of Churchill and the Cozy Tavern juke box. Other newspapers printed similar stories.⁴⁴ Louise McPherson, a descendent of

⁴¹*Baltimore Sun*, 1 October 1945.

⁴²*Baltimore Sun*, 16 September 1945.

⁴³*Chicago Daily News*, 22 October 1943; see annotated clipping, RG 79 Records concerning RDAs, RDA Program Files, box 59, NA.

⁴⁴*Catoctin Enterprise*, 22 October 1943.

the McPherson-furnace owning family then living in Auburn house, also wrote to Roosevelt to deny any local involvement in the disclosures. She also recounted some of the history of the area and welcomed the president to the area.⁴⁵

The most serious threat to the president, however, came from the most unlikely of places. In planning his retreat, Roosevelt had made a special request for “an old wheel with lights coming out of it for the dining room.” Wagon wheel chandeliers were fixtures of many rustic camps at the time. Conrad Wirth of the NPS Branch of Planning arranged to have such a chandelier made. To Wirth’s horror, later, when Roosevelt was not at the camp, the wheel fell onto the maghongany table below.⁴⁶ Wirth could only be grateful that neither Roosevelt nor Churchill had been present.

After making seventeen pilgrimages to Shangri-La in 1942 and 1943, Roosevelt found time for only four trips in 1944, a tough election year. There was also talk that with security broken the president might be safer elsewhere. His last trip to the Catoctin hideaway was on July 9, 1944 accompanied by his friend Lucy Mercer Rutherford.⁴⁷

With Roosevelt’s death in April 1945 and the end of the war that summer, the press began pushing for more information about the mountain retreat. In late September 1945, the White House finally decided to “take the lid off” Shangri-La. Reporters were allowed a tour of

⁴⁵ Louise McPherson to Roosevelt, 21 October 1943, Presidential Personal Files, PPF 8086, FDR Library.

⁴⁶ Barbara Kirkconnell interview with Conrad Wirth, Washington, DC, 3 March 1986, CMP.

⁴⁷ FDR: Day by Day- The Pare Lorentz Chronology, FDR Library.

the facilities that included a special doghouse for Fala, the first dog.⁴⁸ As FDR had feared, the unveiling of the retreat immediately became a political issue. The decidedly-Republican *Chicago Tribune*, asserted that the costs of Shangri-La early ran over \$100,000, with the lodge alone costing \$60,000. The article also complained about a “swimming pool, which was built especially for the late president . . . quite pretentious.”⁴⁹

A few weeks after the revelations about Roosevelt’s camp, on a Sunday morning, Catoctin superintendent, Mike Williams, rose and lit the fireplace in the Custodian’s house, built by the CCC several years earlier, where he and his family lived. As he prepared breakfast, he smelled smoke and ran to the second story of the house. There he found the “entire overhead ceiling in flames.” He immediately notified Camp One (Misty-Mount), where the Marines protecting Shangri-La remained stationed. They quickly arrived at the scene as did the Smithburg and Thurmont fire departments. The combined forces showered the residence with water and chemicals, but the house could not be saved. An official investigation revealed that structural timbers had been placed too close to the flue lining.⁵⁰

Wartime Road Construction

By the eve of World War II, Catoctin Project Superintendent Mike Williams long had been eager to improve the roads around the park. A gritty, dirt road, that suffered frequent wash-outs, greeted visitors, most of whom entered the park along the Thurmont-Foxville Road. But

⁴⁸*Times-Herald*, 1 October 1945.

⁴⁹*Chicago Tribune*, 21 September 1945.

⁵⁰“Individual Fire Report for Building on Government Property,” RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs, RDA Program Files, box 61, NA.

concerns over precisely who--the state or the federal government--would pave the road delayed plans. Likewise, officials worried about the impact of road improvements on Hunting Creek, “the most famous trout stream in Maryland.” Some talked of rerouting the road through Deerfield.⁵¹ Again these concerns delayed construction plans.

The advent of the war both delayed then ultimately spurred road improvements. Initially, with the military take-over of the park, other, more critical, construction projects took precedent over road construction. The WPA, upon which the park had depended for labor since its founding, announced that as of 1943 it could no longer supply assistance to federal agencies.⁵² But the national emergency and Catoctin’s increasingly important role in the war effort also generated momentum for road construction. With the president frequently visiting, the OSS training at Greentop, and the Marines and other branches of the services utilizing other facilities, good roads were a necessity.

Williams used the national emergency to press the state’s road commission to improve the Thurmont-Foxville state road. Anticipating a bright post-war future for Thurmont, town businessmen lobbied actively for road construction. Governor Herbert O’Connor promised that the Thurmont-Foxville road would be first on the list for post-war improvement.⁵³ Cooperation between state and federal authorities allowed construction on a stretch of highway connecting

⁵¹“Report to Accompany Master Plan of Catoctin Demonstration Area.” 24 February 1942, CMP; *Baltimore American*, 23 February 1941.

⁵²George H. Filed To Newton Drury, Director of NPS, 5 December 1942, RG 79 Records of Branch of Recreation of Land Planning and State Cooperation, Records Concerning WPA Projects, 1935-1943, box 1, NA.

⁵³*Catoctin Enterprise*, 28 January 1944.

Thurmont to Foxville to begin even earlier than planned in the spring of 1944 (see Appendix 25).⁵⁴ While the road was built, the tensions between state and federal officials over the construction foreshadowed post-war tensions over the fate of the park, itself.

The War Reshapes the Region

Not only did the Catoctin RDA contribute to the war effort, but the local community also gave generously. Area residents formed a “minute man unit” that practiced drills, wore uniforms, and trained 94 “spotters” to watch the skies over the mountains for enemy aircraft.⁵⁵ Numerous local residents served overseas. Hooker Lewis’ grandson Donald Lewis, making use of talents he developed as an avid hunter in the Catoctin mountain, served as a sharp-shooter guard to General Dwight D. Eisenhower.⁵⁶ Staff Sergeant Kieffer Lewis from Thurmont was among the soldiers to tour Buchenwald prison camp. Nineteen local residents gave their lives in the war.⁵⁷ Nor was service in the war limited to males. Catoctin-area native Mary C. Willhide served in the army nurse’s corps in France.⁵⁸

At home, a severe shortage of farm labor posed a grave challenge to the farmers of the Catoctin area. In an effort to help, the government developed programs that provided tractors at low cost. Professor T.B. Symons of the Maryland Agricultural Extension Service arranged for

⁵⁴*Catoctin Enterprise*, 2 June 1944.

⁵⁵*Catoctin Enterprise*, 2 October 1942; *Catoctin Enterprise*, 11 December 1942; George Calcott, *Maryland and America, 1940-1980* (Baltimore, 1985), 32.

⁵⁶Lewis interview.

⁵⁷*Catoctin Enterprise*, 20 July 1945.

⁵⁸*Catoctin Enterprise*, 14 July, 1944.

teenagers to help with some of the labor. With the cooperation of military authorities, he also developed a program of using German Prisoners of War in the region. Since Germans had founded the area in the eighteenth century, it seemed somehow fitting that German POWs return to the region. Symons recommended Catoctin RDA for a possible prison camp from where prisoners could be dispatched to work on local farms.⁵⁹ Concerns about security and the fact that Catoctin's camps all were occupied forced Symons to establish the Frederick County POW camp at a branch of Fort Meade located west of Frederick.⁶⁰ These POWs labored on farms throughout Frederick and Washington counties. And some of the prisoners developed lasting relationships with area farm families.⁶¹

The Fate of the Park

The federal government built the Catoctin RDA with the expressed intention of eventually returning the park to the state of Maryland. In the initial planning stages, in fact, the federal government had pressured Maryland for assurances that once turned over the land properly would be administered as a state park. And Maryland did give such assurances.⁶²

With the establishment of the Shangri-La presidential retreat, however, future plans for Catoctin changed. In the summer of 1942, President Roosevelt signed legislation turning over to

⁵⁹*Catoctin Enterprise*, 11 June 1943.

⁶⁰Helen Hammond, "The Year the Nazis Came to Frederick," *Frederick Magazine*, June 1996. 28-30.

⁶¹*Catoctin Enterprise*, 30 May 1947; *Frederick News*, 30 July 1980.

⁶²Summary of Correspondence Relative to Interests of the State of Maryland in Catoctin Recreational Demonstration Area," RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs RDA Program Files, box 60, NA.

the states, under certain considerations” the Recreational Demonstration Areas created during the New Deal period. But he explicitly forbade the Interior Department from transferring Catoctin because, he explained, the park “would undoubtedly be traversed by any expansion by the Skyline Drive.”⁶³ More than likely, the “Skyline Drive” justification was a front, and the real issue was the White House’s desire to protect the new presidential retreat. In early 1943, the NPS announced that all RDAs would be transferred to their respective states, with the exception of Catoctin and six other sites to be “further studied to determined whether or not they are qualified for permanent inclusion in the Federal park system.”⁶⁴

On August 28, 1943, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes reported to Roosevelt on his study of the remaining RDAs. While Catoctin, Ickes explained, would not be part of the Blue Ridge Parkway extension, there existed compelling reasons to add the site to the National Capital Park System. “This extra-ordinarily fine property,” explained the secretary, “reached by a short drive from the District of Columbia through charming country side, will always find its greatest usefulness in primarily in serving the needs of the people of the District even though the enjoyment of it will be shared by the people of Baltimore, Frederick, and other cites.”⁶⁵

But many Marylanders, especially hunters, felt otherwise. When word got out of the

⁶³FDR to Ickes, 8 June 1942, “Statement by Roosevelt on his veto of an Act Affecting Recreation Demonstration Projects,” 11 August 1939, in *Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Conservation, 1911-1945*, vol. II, Edgar B. Nixon, ed. , (New York, 1957), 376, 556. In 1939, FDR vetoed H.R. 3959 also designed to return the RDAs to the states. The president feared that it did not contain enough safeguards to protect land after the transfers.

⁶⁴Wirth to H.S. Fairbanks, 14 January 1943, Records Concerning RDAs, RDA Program Riles, box 15, NA.

⁶⁵Ickes to Roosevelt, 28 August 1943, RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs, RDA Program Files, box 60, NA.

intentions of the federal government, the League of Maryland Sportsmen unanimously adopted a stinging resolution complaining that “instead of administering this tract of land as a recreational demonstration area, the NPS has, in fact, closed a large part of it to public use.” Given “the pressing need for recreational areas where the people of the state and of adjoining states may find healthful outdoor enjoyment,” the league called upon the NPS to transfer the site to the Maryland Department of State Forests and Parks.⁶⁶

Clearly Maryland-area hunters and sportsmen were the prime proponents of returning the park area to the state. They obviously hoped that the no-hunting policy that had reigned for ten years at Catoctin would be lifted when the state assumed control of the park.⁶⁷ Catoctin-area hunters long had had an antagonistic relationship with Superintendent Mike Williams, whom they considered too committed to preservation rather than use.⁶⁸ Joseph F. Kaylor, F.W. Besley’s successor as state forester, took up the sportsmen’s cause. In the summer of 1945, he wrote a series of pointed letters to the National Park Service demanding to know when Catoctin would be transferred to Maryland. The NPS’s failure to acknowledge his letters only added to his sense of agrievement.⁶⁹ The best the NPS could respond was that because “of the continued

⁶⁶“A Resolution Calling upon the Federal Government to Return the Catoctin National Recreation Area to the State of Maryland,” transferred with M.E. Tyding to Drury, 1 July 1944, RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs, RDA Program Files, box 60, NA.

⁶⁷John Boley, “Review of the Catoctin Story,” 26 September 1987, CMP. Boley concluded that the “main political pressure for obtaining Catoctin, or parts thereof, by Maryland, came from Maryland hunters.”

⁶⁸Lewis interview.

⁶⁹Drury to Tyding, 5 June 1945; Kaylor to Hillory Tolson, 1 June 1945, RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs, RDA Program Files, box 60, NA.

military use of Catoctin, there appears no possibility of the transfer suggested.”⁷⁰

With the war over, the NPS came under increasing pressure to respond in some way to Kaylor’s demands. Finally in December of 1945, President Truman announced that the park would remain in the hands of the federal government: “I have decided because of the historical events of national and international interest now associated with the Catoctin Recreational Area that this property should be retained by the Federal Government and made a part of the National Park Service.” When he received Truman’s edict, Governor O’Connor of Maryland complained that the federal government intended to make the park a “shrine.”⁷¹ Kaylor echoed the governor’s sense of betrayal by threatening to end cooperation between the National Park Service and his Department of State Forestry: “We trust that you will no longer brother us with any requests.”⁷²

The NPS then moved to introduce legislation in Congress that would formally shift responsibility for the proposed park from the Region One office in Richmond to the National Capital Areas Parks. H.R. 3807, introduced in 1947 to the 80th Congress, added property acquired during the war to the park and transferred administrative responsibility to the National

⁷⁰“Summary of Correspondence Relative to Interests of the State of Maryland in Catoctin Recreational Demonstration Area,” RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs RDA Program Files, box 60, NA.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Kaylor to Thomas J. Allen, 5 March 1946, RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs, Program Files, box 60, NA. Kaylor began his letter: “We are still smarting under the sting of having the Park Service come in and purchase the Catoctin recreational area, which we were promised would be returned to the state.”

Capital Areas.⁷³ The bill, sponsored by Representative Glen Beall of Western Maryland, slowly meandered through committee and then passed a full vote in the House. Beall promised that the legislation would reopen the park, except for Shangri-La, to public use. In fact, the White House had taken an active interest in encouraging the reopening of Camp Greentop for use by handicapped children.⁷⁴ In 1947, the president's Marine guards moved out and the Maryland League for Crippled Children began their first Catoctin camp in five years. President Truman, who was developing a strong appreciation for his Catoctin hide-away, paid a surprise visit to the children at the camp in August 1947 (see Appendix 26).⁷⁵ The reopening of large portions of the park, no doubt, relieved the suspicions of some that the federal government intended to retain the area as a military installation.

But the slow pace of legislative progress, allowed Kaylor to mobilize against the bill. His office sponsored a survey showing that the overwhelming number of Frederick, Carroll, and Washington county "sportsmen, picnickers, and farmers are supporting the Maryland Board of Natural Resources."⁷⁶ H.C. Buckingham, director of Maryland's State Forests and Parks, added another dimension to Maryland's attack by complaining publicly that all revenue from the proposed national park would be deposited in the U.S. Treasury, whereas money generated from

⁷³*Fredrick News*, 9 January 1947. Although the formal legislation remained tied up in Congress, Mike Williams began officially reporting to the National Capital Areas Parks on January 1, 1947.

⁷⁴A.E. Demaray, "Confidential," 25 November 1946, RG 79, Records Concerning RDAs, Program Files, box 60, NA.

⁷⁵*Catoctin Enterprise*, 8 August 1947.

⁷⁶*Baltimore Sun*, 23 June 1948.

a state park would be pumped into the state, with 15% going directly to Frederick County. “I hardly think,” opined Buckingham, “that Representative Beall could have been aware of this when he introduced his bill.”⁷⁷

Caught in a war of words between the federal government and the state of Maryland, Representative Beall backed away from H.R. 3807. Like Kaylor and Buckingham, Beall insisted he also wanted to obtain the Catoctin land for Maryland but argued that with the presidential retreat, such hopes at present were not realistic.⁷⁸ With only lukewarm support from its sponsor and the anti-Truman Republican Party in the majority, the Senate defeated the Catoctin bill in 1948.

Undaunted, and with the Democrats having taken over Congress again in 1949, the NPS reintroduced the Catoctin legislation. This time around the bill’s sponsors stressed use, pointing to the endorsement of the bill by “all of the social service agencies in DC and adjoining states,” the “inadequacy of recreational facilities in the National Capital,” and promising swimming, boating, fishing and the “almost unlimited” potential of the park.⁷⁹ The new tactics paid off. The bill became law, and Catoctin joined the National Capital Areas Parks system (forerunner of the current National Capital Region of the NPS).

In some ways, passage of Catoctin legislation represented a victory for the federal

⁷⁷Buckingham, “Catoctin Area,” *The Old Line Acorn*, January-April 1948, 5. Buckingham claimed that Maryland was willing to allow Shangri-La to remain in federal hands, but wanted the rest of the park be turned over to the state.

⁷⁸*Catoctin Enterprise*, 25 June 1948.

⁷⁹*Catoctin Enterprise*, 27 May 1949; H.R. 4405, introduced into the 81st Congress on April 27, 1949 was essentially the same bill as its predecessor, H.R. 3807, although the public relations stress use and the park service found another sponsor.

government. But the popular pressure to transfer the park to the state of Maryland had forced park officials carefully to weigh the needs and desires of the public alongside concerns about conservation and facilities for the president. Indeed, the pressure to turn the park over to Maryland continued. Finally, Conrad Wirth, who became director of the NPS in 1951, moved to settle the ongoing tensions with Maryland. He arranged to have the southern portion of the park, south of route 77, transferred to Maryland.

Conclusion

The transfer of the park to the National Capital Area Parks in 1949 sealed the future of a large portion of the park. The federal government would remain a permanent player on the mountain. The Shangri-La presidential retreat, later Camp David, would continue to garner international attention. But the needs and desires of the public remained a priority in park decision-making. Although the park would never again see the sort of development and activity that it saw between 1935 and 1945, it continued to evolve all the while remaining cognizant of its complex, multi-layered past.

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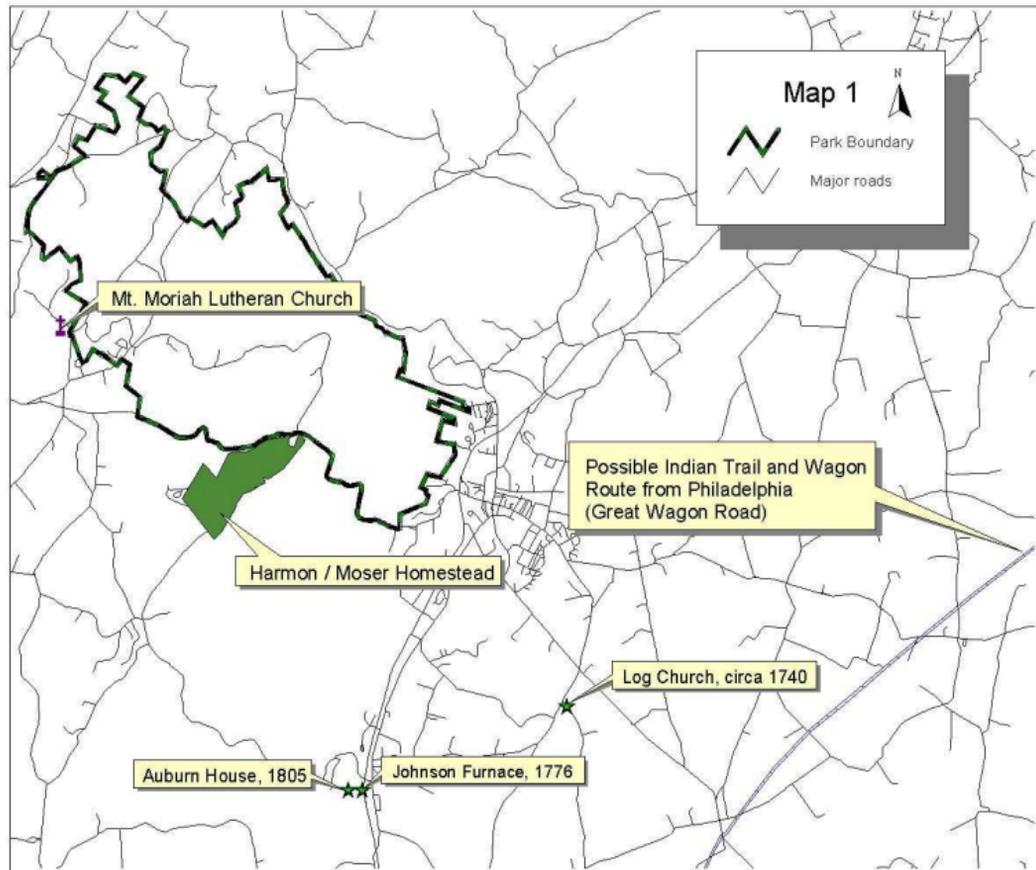
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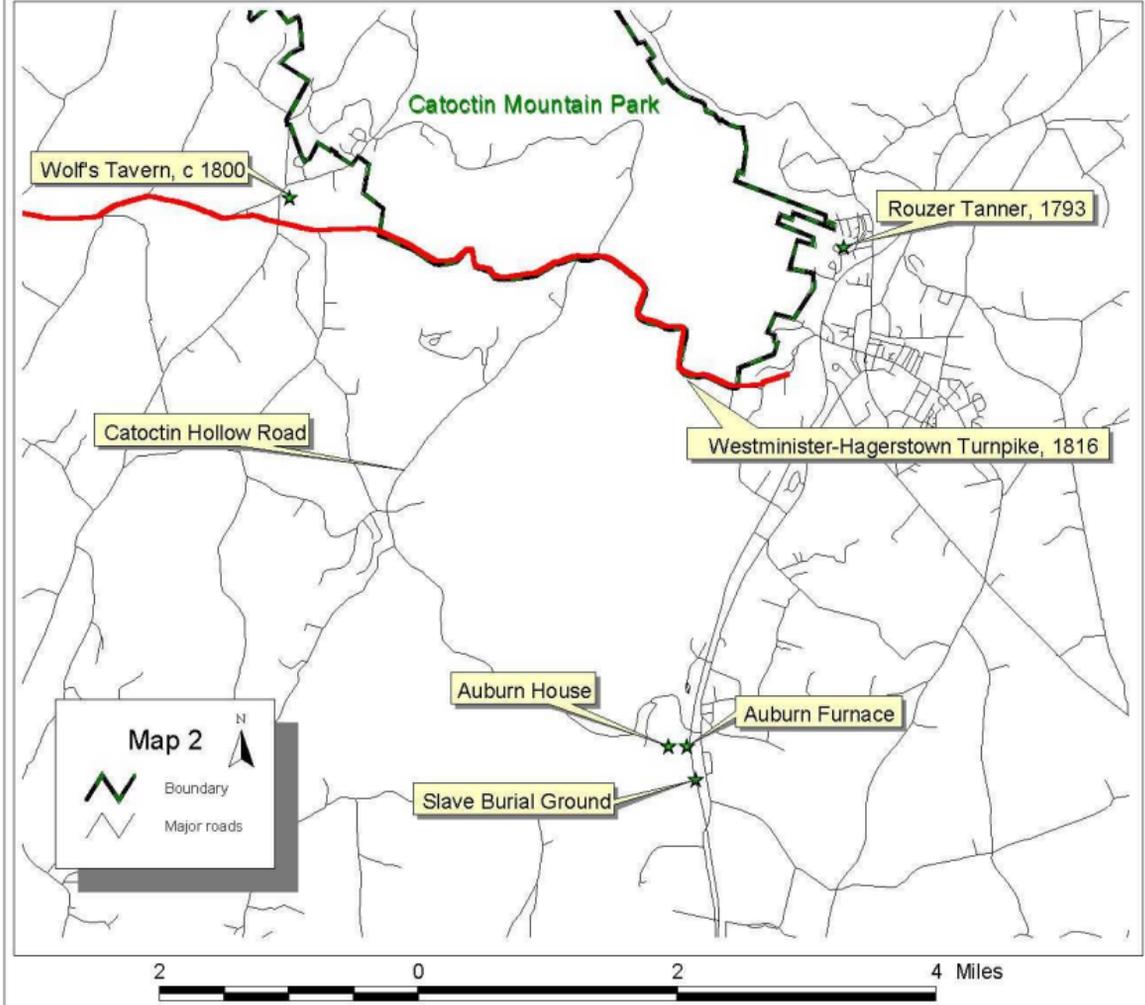
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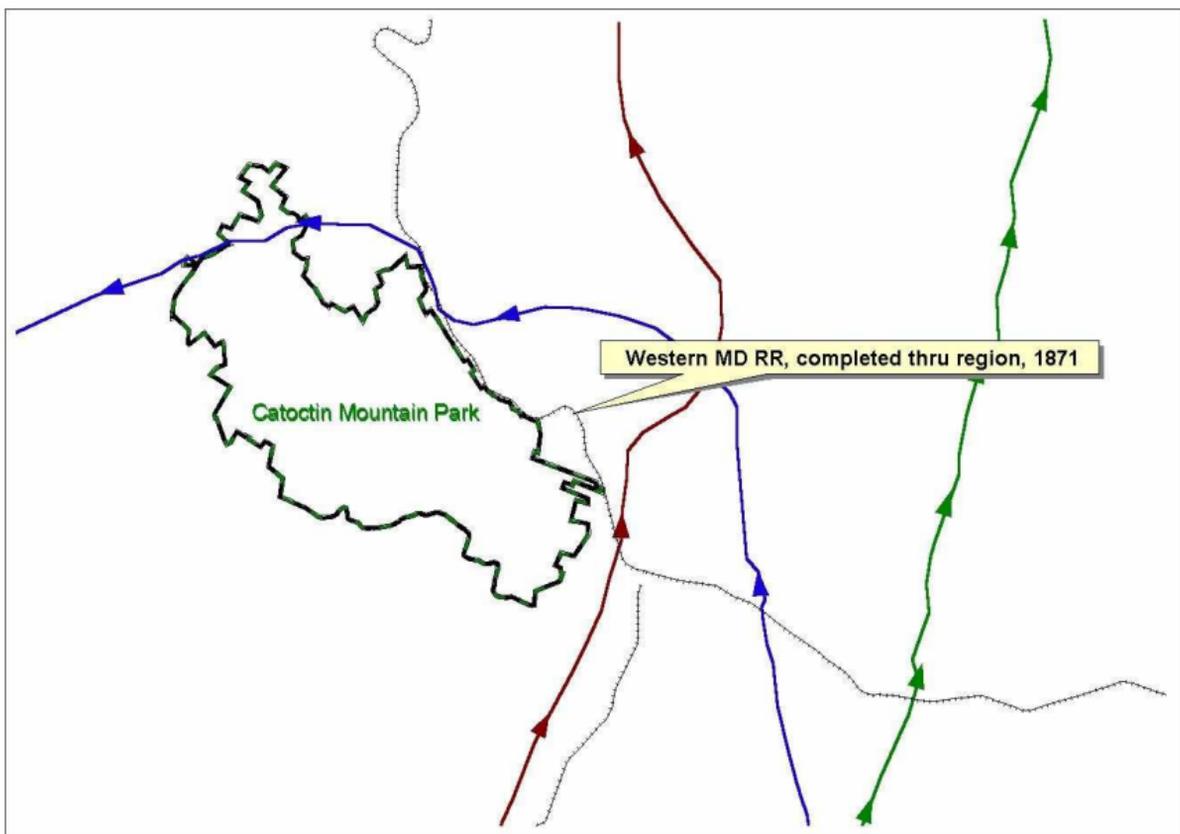
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Happy Days

The Mountaineer

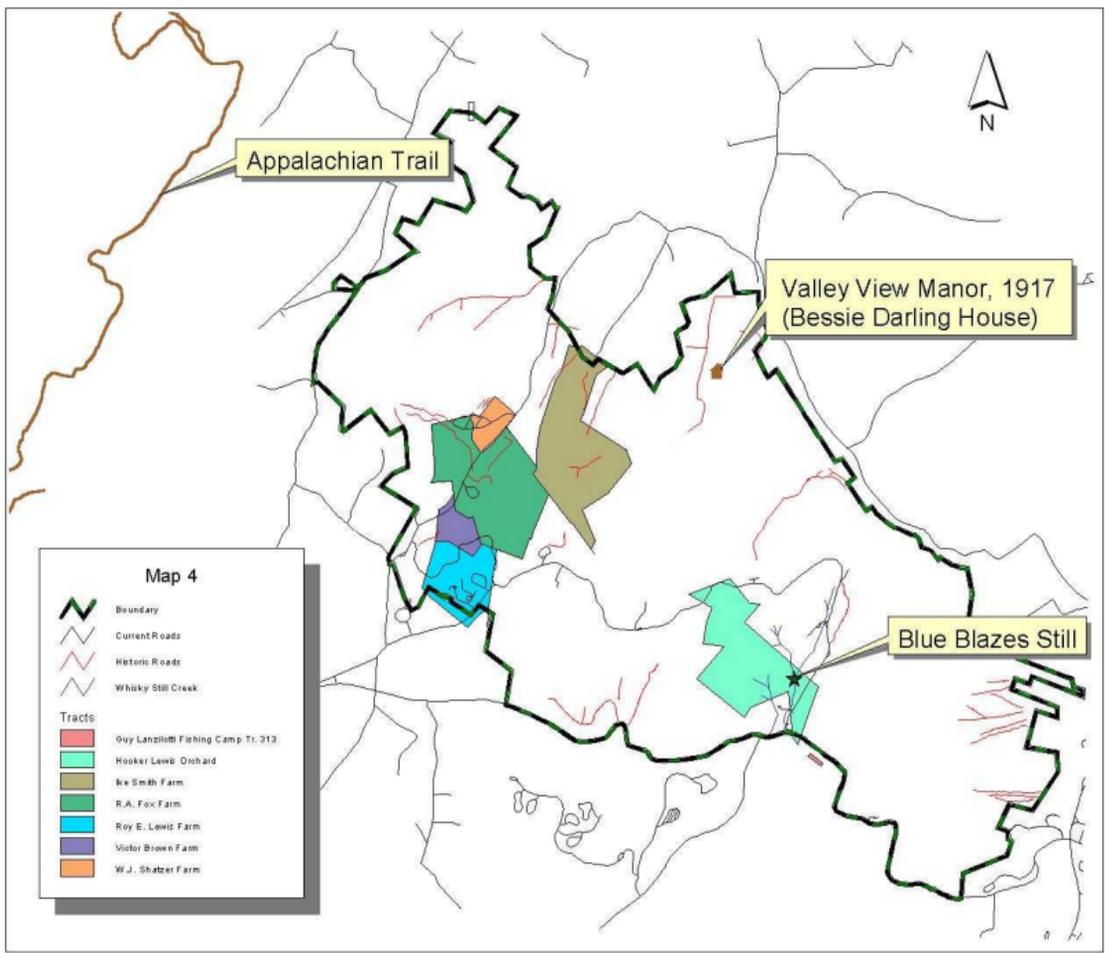






Map 3 
 Park Boundary

1. J.E.B. Stuart Route through Mountains, July 5, 1863 (Probable Route)
2. First Corps Route to Gettysburg, June 29, 1863
3. Eleventh Corps Route to Gettysburg, June 29, 1863



Appalachian Trail

Valley View Manor, 1917
(Bessie Darling House)

Blue Blazes Still

Map 4

Boundary

- Current Roads
- Historic Roads
- Whisky Still Creek

Tracts

- Guy Lanzilotti Fishing Camp Tr. 312
- Hooker Lewis Onchard
- K & S Smith Farm
- R.A. Fox Farm
- Roy E. Lewis Farm
- Victor Brown Farm
- W.J. Shatzler Farm



Map 4.5

-  Park Boundary
-  Major roads



Catoctin Mountain Park

High Bridge - Site of 1915 Train Wreck

Foxville Lookout Tower

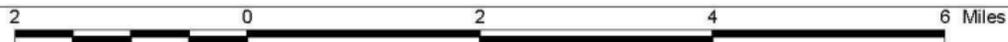
The Crow's Nest

The Cozy Inn, est. 1929

Richey Camp

Cunningham Falls State Park

Phillip's Delight School House



Map 5



-  Park Boundary
-  Camps
-  Existing Roads
-  Tract 91

Valley View Manor, est. 1917
(Bessie Darling House)

CCC Camp

Greentop (1938)

Hi-Catoctin (1939)

Misty Mount (1937)

Site of Planned Transient Camp

1 0 1 2 3 Miles



Map 6



-  Park Boundary
-  Camps
-  Current Roads
-  Streams
-  Trails

Proposed Camp 4

Shangri-la Presidential Retreat
built 1942

OSS Training Center
1942 - 1945

Marine Camp 1942 - 1945
(Misty Mount)

