When the Pennsylvania iron industry had its beginning with the opening in 1716 of Thomas Rutter’s bloomery on Manatawny Creek in Berks County, he and the ironmasters who followed him used the methods of production which then prevailed in Europe.\(^1\) Little change was made in the conventional process of using charcoal for fuel in producing cast iron in the first century and a quarter of Pennsylvania smelting.

While it was natural for ironmasters in the New World to use the methods with which they had become familiar in the Old World, quite different sets of conditions prevailed in the two areas. First, the British iron industry, and to a lesser extent much of that on the Continent, had already so denuded the forests that some English ironworks were experimenting with coal as fuel instead of charcoal a decade before the Pennsylvania industry was born. Before the eighteenth century came to a close, England was buying much of its pig iron from her American colonies, Sweden, and Russia in order to conserve her remaining forests for the less fuel-demanding forges and rolling mills. In addition, her ironmasters were converting their hearths to use coal and coke for fuel.

In most of eastern America forests were so extensive as to appear inexhaustible, and land was so cheap that large tracts could be dedicated to producing fuel for a single furnace or forge. The application of basic conservation practices made possible the harvesting of wood from the same plots for more than a century of operation for a number of Pennsylvania furnaces. Under these conditions Penn-

sylvanians were slow to change their methods, even though the English were proving the greater efficiency of mineral fuels.

The second major difference in circumstances between the industry in Europe and that in America was the large number of unemployed persons available to the labor market abroad as contrasted with a shortage of men willing to work for wages in America. Most of those who crossed the Atlantic for a new start in life preferred to secure a share of the free or inexpensive land and become independent farmers to working for another employer. It was particularly difficult to fill the low-paid positions of unskilled labor.

The ironmasters were especially vulnerable to the labor shortage because their dependence upon the forests for their fuel created small, relatively isolated, communities centered on the furnace and forge. They were remote from what labor markets existed along the coast and were unattractive to workers and their families, who preferred the greater social opportunities of urban areas. Ironmasters, therefore, turned to involuntary workers to fill much of their need for unskilled labor and sometimes for skilled as well. They used many indentured men, both white and black, and Negro slaves.

In the first half century of the Pennsylvania iron industry most of its Negro workers were slaves. The 1790 census report and public records for the charcoal iron producing counties of Berks, Chester, Montgomery, Lancaster, Dauphin and York show the ironmasters as the largest holders of slaves in most districts where ironworks were operated. Evidence of the early use of slave labor at Pennsylvania furnaces and forges is found in the account left by Israel Acrelius of his travels in America from 1749 to 1756. He observed that at the ironworks:

The skilled workmen are partly English and partly Irish with some few Germans, though the work is carried on after the English method... The unskilled laborers are generally composed partly of Negroes (slaves), partly of servants from Germany or Ireland bought for a term of years.


3 Israel Acrelius, A History of New Sweden; or, The Settlements on the River Delaware (Philadelphia, 1874), 168. This work was originally published in Stockholm in 1759.
Pastor Acrelius compared the cost of slaves and indentured service. A slave, he wrote, cost from thirty to forty pounds sterling, and his support per year was one and one half pounds for clothing and six and one half for food. His observation that “The Negroes are better treated in Pennsylvania than anywhere else in America” indicates that those costs for food and clothing were above average. For the white servants Acrelius reported costs of seven pounds for sea passage and six and a half for food.4

Wills, estate inventories, and tax records show that slaves were valuable assets to many ironmasters in the decades of the 1760’s and 1770’s. For example, William Bird of Birdsborough Forge listed as part of his property in his 1763 will:5

Negroes, etc.

Maria Wench 42 years old £ 40
Abagail Mulatto 22 years old £ 40
(child at Breast) Serve 14 years
Dick about 3½ years old £ 25
Nedd man 35 £ 45
Tom 19 £120
Casper 19 £120
Tony 26 £120
York 65 £120
Ebo subject to Fits 35 £ 30
Lembrick 40 £ 45

Servants

William Doughton to serve 2 years £ 20
Adam Wollbach ” ” about 2 years and 6 months £ 17
Jacob Feits ” ” 6 years £ 18

The last three were undoubtedly white indentured servants, but the others were slaves. No reason was given for the limitation on the service of Abagail.

The 1786 inventory of Peter Grubb’s estate included the names of five Negro slaves at Mount Hope Furnace in Lancaster County. They were appraised as follows: Nancy, one hundred pounds; Bill, eighty pounds; Terry, thirty-seven and one half pounds; Rachael, five pounds; and Negro York, sixty pounds.6

4 Ibid.
5 Will of William Bird filed for probate at Reading, Mar. 22, 1763.
6 Inventory of Peter Grubb estate, Papers of Shippen, Burd, Yeates, Grubb Families, typescript compiled by S.E. Dyke, property of Mr. and Mrs. Howard Windhorst, Mount Hope Furnace Mansion House, Manheim, Pa. Pennsylvania pounds were worth $2.67.
Tax records show that Mark Bird of Birdsborough Forge and Hopewell Furnace owned twelve slaves in 1779 and the same number in 1781; George Ege had ten slaves at Charming Forge in 1780, Robert Coleman listed seventeen slaves at Cornwall Furnace in 1786; and the list could be multiplied by adding the records of other ironmasters. Harker A. Long, the last manager of Hopewell Furnace in Berks County, wrote of the building of two headraces to bring water to the furnace:

The truth is that the most of all this pick and shovel labor was done by slaves. When they scrapped the old Court House in Reading a few years ago, they found an account of a sale of slaves in 1778 where Mr. Mark Bird bought 18 slaves to work at Birdsboro and Hopewell.

A fertile source of information about slaves in Pennsylvania is found in the numerous advertisements which appeared in newspapers offering rewards for the recovery of fugitives. It is not unreasonable to assume that the slave who planned and executed an escape was endowed with intelligence and ingenuity above the average; consequently, the subjects of these advertisements may not have been typical of all slaves. Nevertheless, it is of interest to discover that the slaves at the ironworks included men of skill and accomplishment, and that their scale of living was well above subsistence levels. John Patton informed the public on July 4, 1765, that Jack, a slave at Berkshire Furnace, had escaped and had taken with him a wardrobe which consisted of:

an half worn Castor Hat, a green rapt cloth coat, a Pompadour coloured cloth coat, lined with white Ratinet, Olive coloured cotton Velvet Jacket, two Pair of Buckskin Breeches, one new, the other half worn, several Linen and Ozenbrigs Shirts, Check Cotton, the other worsted, and new shoes...

Ten years later Mark Bird declared that his slave Chester had departed from Birdsborough Forge wearing "a good beaver hat, a light coloured Wilton coatee, ozenbrigs shirt and trowsers, and good

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7 Tax returns of Union Township, Berks County, Berks County Historical Society.
8 Certificate of record of slaves on Nov. 1, 1780, Prothonotary’s Office, Reading; Cornwall Furnace Time Book, 1786-1794, passim, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
10 Pennsylvania Gazette, July 4, 1765.
shoes. . . .” According to Bird, Chester “speaks good English.” Another escapee from Birdsborough Forge was described as “a smart well set fellow . . . speaks good English, has a little stoppage in his speech.”

Of another Mark Bird owned slave it was said: “he plays on the violin and other instruments of music, speaks the English and French languages . . . he is a cunning designing fellow, and it is likely he may forge a pass, and travel the country as a freeman.” This man clearly had an education, cultural attainments and intelligence.

Restraints were used to prevent escapes, perhaps in the case of those with a record of attempted flights. One slave had, when he left, an “iron collar round his neck,” which “it is likely he will soon get . . . off.” Another report noted “there is an iron ring in one of his ears.”

In all of the advertisements for runaway slaves an offer was made to compensate any person or persons who aided in their capture and return. For example, John Patton promised in 1765 that:

Whoever takes up said Negroe, and brings him to his Master, or secures him in any Gaol, so that he may be had again, shall have Forty Shillings Reward; and if taken out of the Province, Three Pounds Reward, and reasonable Expenses. . . .

In 1774 Mark Bird offered five pounds reward, but the next year changed the compensation to forty shillings and “six pence per mile for travelling charges and expenses.” Probably Revolutionary War inflation was responsible for the increase in rewards by 1779 to two hundred dollars “and all reasonable charges.”

11 Ibid., Oct. 11, 1775.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., June 7, 1775.
14 Ibid., Nov. 24, 1779.
15 Ibid., June 7, 1775.
16 Ibid., Oct. 16, 1776.
17 Ibid., July 4, 1765.
18 Ibid., Dec. 7, 1774.
19 Ibid., June 7, 1775.
20 Ibid., Nov. 24, 1779.
Cuff Dix of Birdsborough Forge was one of the most persistent escapees. He was the subject of a search in November, 1774. After having been caught and returned to the forge, he escaped again the following spring. He was still missing in September of that year. Later, on October 11, 1776, a highly embarrassed official of New Castle County, Delaware, offered a reward for the recovery of Dix who had taken an unannounced departure from the jail. Jailer Thomas Clark declared: "he is an artful fellow, the person apprehending him is desired to take particular care of him..."

Dix was described in the advertisements as a "hammerman," a highly skilled worker at the forge and hence of great value to his master. His experience at this work would also make it possible for this Negro to make a good wage if he could establish himself as a free man in some iron community. At Cornwall Furnace the slave Sampson was a keeper, second most highly skilled position in the operation of a furnace. Dix and Sampson refute the claim that slaves could be trusted only with the unskilled tasks in the iron industry, as both Acrelius and Long had implied in earlier references, but it is probable that most slaves did work at the jobs which required little training and entailed minor responsibility.

The loss of time and service because of the escape of slaves was not the only kind of limitation upon the profit to be derived from their ownership by ironmasters. One of these was the incarceration or execution of slaves convicted of crimes. However, the colonial government of Pennsylvania had a law to compensate a slaveowner for the value of a slave executed by the province. In 1768 ironmaster James Burd requested payment from Governor John Penn as a consequence of the execution of his slave James Dery, who had been convicted of the murder of Henry Corson. Another source of loss to the slaveowner was idleness of his slave through work stoppage or as a result of illness, real or feigned. On January 21, 1786, Judge

26 See also Note 5. Details of this murder trial and application for compensation are to be found in the "Jasper Yeates Letter Book: Commencing November 1st 1767 and ending February 12th 1769," Lancaster County Historical Society.
Jasper Yeates issued orders that work was to continue at Mount Hope Furnace and Hopewell Forge during the period of mourning after the suicide of his brother-in-law, Peter Grubb II, "otherwise . . . the horses, [and] negroes . . . would be dead expense. . . ." Two months later, Judge Yeates wrote to another brother-in-law, Edward Burd of Philadelphia, concerning one of the Grubb slaves:

With respect to the negro York, I think he would by no means answer your purpose at present. He has been with me about a fort night and all he has done during that period would not amount to 4 hour's work. He has cleaned the knives and a few pair of end irons [sic] and whenever he has done it, he has complained that his back has been so weak that he could not sleep. He spits much and appears to be rheumatic. My regard for the children could only induce him to be continued in my family. He is very lousy and Gen. Hand thinks lazy. He spends 13½ hours out of the 14 in the chimney corner with his great coat and hat on. This is an exact report on him. You and Betsy will judge for yourselves.

I think the warm weather will be a great service to him. He was once a most excellent, lively boy, with the best disposition, but I fear he has been greatly injured of late both in health and in industry. If the former mends, he will still be a good slave. Gen. Hand thinks he is not a consumptive. . . .

Despite the considerable number of slaves used in the charcoal iron industry, as household servants, and on the farms, slavery was not a very important source of labor in Pennsylvania. The total number in all occupations in 1750 was about six thousand and probably reached a peak of seven to eight thousand by 1770. An early import tax placed upon slaves may have discouraged the proliferation of their numbers in the province. But it is probable that the unfavorable social climate and the type of economy were greater curbs. Little opposition was generated against the gradual emancipation bill passed by the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1780. This act provided that no person born in the state after March 1, 1780, was

27 Mount Hope Mansion House Manuscripts, typescript.
28 Gen. Edward Hand had been a distinguished officer in the Revolutionary War; in 1787 he was practicing medicine in Lancaster. His home in that city has been restored and is open to visitors.
29 Betsy Burd was the wife of Edward.
30 Mount Hope Mansion House Manuscripts, typescript.
32 "Jasper Yeates Letter Book: Commencing November 1st 1767 and ending February 12th 1769."
to be "deemed and considered as servants for life, or slaves. . . ."
A child born to a slave mother would be the servant of the owner
of the mother "or his or her assigns" until the child reached the
age of twenty-eight.\(^{33}\) In other provisions, the act required that an
enrollment of slaves be made as of November 1, 1780, and the
record of this enrollment was to be maintained in the office of the
prothonotary of each county. The same conditions were to apply
to persons imported from other states as to those born in Penn-
sylvania.

Thus, there were two provisions to slow the extinction of slavery
—all slaves born before March 1, 1780, would continue to be slaves,
and all children of slave mothers could be held to involuntary serv-
tude until they reached the age of twenty-eight years. Both of these
provisions, included to ease the financial burden of emancipation,
helped maintain slavery in the ironworks. Robert Coleman owned
slaves as late as 1821, when he listed one at Elizabeth Furnace and
one at Hopewell Forge.\(^{34}\) At the bankruptcy sale of the assets of
Mark Bird of Birdsborough Forges in 1787, William Hays, man-
ger of Hopewell Furnace, purchased "A certain female negro Slave
named Matty. Aged nine years, or thereabouts."\(^{35}\) Hays wrote into
his will a provision that Matty was to be free when she reached the
age of twenty-two. However, she was only sixteen when Hays died;
James Biddle of Philadelphia paid twenty-two and one half pounds
for the remaining six years of her service.\(^{36}\)

Some evidences of slave conditions remained in the business
records of the iron industry after most Negroes were free. One ex-
ample was the absence of family names in recording the wages or
store transactions of free workers. At Hopewell Furnace the com-
pany clerk carried ledger accounts for wages and purchases at the
company store for: Negro Robin, Negro Cruse, Negro Moriah,
Black Majer, Peter Negroe and Negro Samuel.\(^{37}\) Likewise, at Mary
Ann Forge in Berks County the company records included the

\(^{33}\) Samuel Hazard, Register of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1833), X, 330.
\(^{34}\) Tax Records for Elizabeth Township, Lancaster County, Lancaster County Historical
Society.
\(^{35}\) Richards Manuscript Collection, Berks County Historical Society.
\(^{36}\) Ibid.
names: Black Samuel, Black Moyer, Black Isaac William, Black Peter, Black York, Black John, Thrasher, Black Jim.\(^\text{38}\)

Despite the survival of slavery under the terms of the emancipation act of 1780, the decline in the number of slaves would appear to have been more rapid than the attrition provided by natural causes. In Berks County the 1780 enrollment of slaves showed a total of 119,\(^\text{39}\) but the United States Census of 1790 listed only 65 slaves in that county.\(^\text{40}\) For the state as a whole the 6,000 slaves enrolled in 1780 had declined to 3,737 in 1790. Of that number more than 1,400 were owned by residents of the six charcoal iron producing counties. Among the slave owners in these counties were ironmasters David Rutter, Daniel Udree, Daniel Hiester, Sr., and his son Daniel, Jr., George Ege, Thomas Bull, David and James Old, James and Joshua Evans, George Ross, John Haldeman, Daniel Buckley, David Jenkins, John Pawling, and Robert Coleman. The largest number owned by these men was nine held by James Old.\(^\text{41}\) The decline in the number of slaves listed continued in each subsequent census.

The reduced number of slaves after 1780 did not lessen the contribution of Negroes to the charcoal iron industry. On the contrary, the colored workers became a more important element in the total work force as charcoal iron moved into the most productive half century of its history. Children were held to service or indentured to others under the twenty-eight-year clause of the emancipation act; some were apprenticed to learn the skills of the trade; but most Negroes joined the work force as free, wage-earning workers. The following forge report is an example of an apprenticeship agreement: "On Sept. 23, 1798 John Jones took Negro Jack into the forge to learn him the trade of half-bloomer. To work nine months without pay and then three years at 10/ per ton."\(^\text{42}\)

Such apprenticeships were informal agreements between the employer and the would-be learner, and, as a result, relatively few of

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\(^{38}\) Mary Ann Forge Ledger, 1810–1811, \textit{ibid.}

\(^{39}\) Paul N. Schaeffer, "Slavery in Berks County," \textit{The Historical Review of Berks County}, VI (1941), 110–115.

\(^{40}\) \textit{United States Census of 1790, Pennsylvania} (Berks County), 26–45.

\(^{41}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 12–168.

them have survived. Indentures for the transfer of the services of a child from one master to another, however, were controlled by legal requirements and were usually drawn by a notary public or justice of the peace. More of them have been preserved.

Negro children were taken from their mothers early and sometimes were assigned to a succession of owners before they reached the age when they were free to make their own decisions. It is possible to trace some of these changes of residence and occupation through documents which have survived.

The files of a justice of the peace in Lancaster County in 1789 show that a Negro girl, aged two and a half years, named Sall, or Sarah, was listed among the assets of James Old of Poole Forge. Six years later Elizabeth Old sold this girl's remaining time to Benjamin Morris, owner of Hopewell Furnace, for the sum of fifty pounds. Sarah made at least one other change of residence and master before she gained her freedom, for in 1801 she was assigned to Matthew Brooke of Birdsborough Forge for "a valuable Consideration."

A Negro boy named Davy was even more of a wanderer among masters than Sarah. In 1796, at the age of four, he left his residence in Berks County to join the household of John Morgan Pawling of Montgomery County in exchange for one hundred dollars. At twelve years of age he became the servant of Eleanor Conman, residence not given, for an unspecified payment. Within three months he moved from the Conman residence to Charming Forge and the employment of ironmaster George Ege, and later, at the age of eighteen, he became the property of the firm of Buckley and

43 James Old built Poole Forge and at various times was owner, partner, or manager of Hopewell Furnace, Birdsborough Forges, Mount Hope Furnace, Hopewell Forge, Quittapahilla Forge, Speedwell Forge and Reading Furnace. He was the father-in-law of Robert Coleman of Elizabeth Furnace and Cornwall Furnace. Franklin K. Bergman, "Robert Coleman" (unpublished master's thesis, Millersville State College, 1967.)

44 Files dated Mar. 3, 1789, and an indenture from Elizabeth Old to Benjamin Morris, Sept. 30, 1795. Brooke Family Papers, Berks County Historical Society. Microfilm copy at Hopewell Village National Historic Site.

45 An indenture from Benjamin Morris to Matthew Brooke, Feb. 25, 1801, ibid.

46 Robert Adolph Farmar to John Morgan Pawling, May 22, 1796, ibid.

47 John Morgan Pawling to Eleanor Conman, Feb. 21, 1804, ibid.

48 Eleanor Conman to George Ege, May 28, 1804, ibid.
Brooke at Birdsborough Forge. No parent or guardian was mentioned in any of the documents of transfer for either of these children. Nor did any of the indenture papers specify any restrictions on labor or guarantee any payment during or at the conclusion of the period of servitude.

A quite different kind of document was used for the indenture of "John Peters, negroe boy aged seven years Born free. . . ." Young John was bound to the service of Reuben Moore, "Chimney Sweeper" of Philadelphia, for a period of fourteen years in a document which in 1805 he signed with "his mark" and which was also signed in the same manner by "Marian Dick (negress) his next friend." As a free orphan child John Peters had some rights. In return for his labor he was to receive "sufficient Meat, Drink; Cloathing Washing and Lodging." And during the period of his service he was guaranteed "Eighteen months whole days schooling" and "four Quarters Evening Schooling." When his service came to an end, he was to have "one Compleat Suit of Apparell entirely new in addition to his other cloathing." But there was a reciprocal guarantee, for "the said servant John Peters his said master . . . faithfully shall serve, and that honestly and obediently in all Things, as a good and dutiful [sic] servant ought to do." John Peters continued in the occupation of chimney sweep for less than half of his period of indenture. He became an ironworker at Birdsborough Forge in 1812 when the remaining seven years of his apprenticeship was purchased by Matthew Brooke.

Such indentures of orphan children, whether they were black or white, served a dual purpose in the early nineteenth century of providing noninstitutionalized care during the growing years and an education for an occupation to follow in adulthood. The indenture agreements were legal documents enforceable by the county authorities, but in practice they provided for no regular inspection to guarantee that conditions were met.

49 George Ege to Buckley and Brooke, Jan. 11, 1810, ibid. George Ege erected Charming Forge and Slitting Mill, Reading Furnace and Schuylkill Forge. A partnership of Daniel Buckley, Thomas Brooke, and Matthew Brooke, Jr., was formed in 1800 to purchase Hopewell Furnace and Birdsborough Forges.

50 Number 8050126, Hopewell Village Documents, Hopewell Village National Park Site.

51 Ibid.

52 Number 8120609, ibid.
A third kind of indenture used for Negro children in the charcoal iron communities became operable when parents placed their child with an ironmaster to learn a trade. An example of the elaboration of conditions which had become common by 1830 is a long indenture agreement between Sarah Johnston and Clement Brooke for David Johnston to learn the "art trade and mystery" of husbandry at Hopewell Furnace. This document bears David's mark and the witnessing signatures of John Benson, clerk, and John Care, moulder at the furnace. David promised that for the next sixteen years, he "his said master faithfully shall serve, his secrets keep; his lawful commands every where gladly obey." The boy further promised to "do no damage to his master nor see it done by others . . . waste his masters goods . . . neither buy nor sell" without the permission of his master. He was also restrained from absenting himself without permission "day or night"; and he was to refrain from "haunting ale-houses, Taverns; or Play houses." In return Brooke promised "to teach, or cause to be taught or instructed; the said apprentice in the trade or mystery of husbandry . . . and give him . . . one years schooling." There were also the usual provisions for food and apparel.

The business papers of Hopewell Furnace contain several entries which show that Clement Brooke fulfilled his obligations under his contract with David's mother. For example:

February 8, 1834: To Henry McKinty, Taylor for Making Suit for Black Boy, $4.50.

April 23, 1834: Furnace debtor to Andrew Collins $4.62 Tuition for A. Church, Benj. Hill and D. Johnston.

February I, 1836: Furnace debtor to Samuel Whitman for Shoemaking . . . for D. Johnston .60

When a young man was nearing the end of his indenture, his remaining time was a valuable commodity which could be used by his master or leased or sold to another. Newspaper advertisements in the nineteenth century offered such unexpired time for sale. In 1816 Matthew Brooke used this means to sell seven years of the

53 Number 8300212, ibid. Clement Brooke was partner and manager at Hopewell Furnace.
54 Number 8350407A, ibid.
55 SM 21, p. 135 L, ibid. This tuition school preceded the 1837 public school.
56 SM 21, p. 163 L, ibid.
service of a Negro man, of whom he promised "he has been brought up to farming business, is a good carter and is a servicable hand at all sort of labor." Clement Brooke had a Negro apprentice work at Hopewell Furnace, of which Brooke was a partner, and collected the wages. In this manner Brooke's account was credited in 1816 with $58.50 earned "by his Black Boy James."

The apprentice system served as a beneficial program in the education and vocational training of Negro children who would eventually be free to live their own lives. But it was apparently profitable to the ironmasters who used the services of boys and girls during the instructional years. Parents, too, took advantage of this system to insure training in a trade for a child, and at the same time they were relieved of the expense of rearing children.

In addition to slaves and apprentices, free Negro labor was an important part of the work force at the charcoal furnaces and forges from an early period until these industries ceased operation in the late nineteenth century. In the earliest extant records of Hopewell Furnace, dating from 1784, "Negro Robin," "Negro Cruse," and "Negro Moriah" appear as free workers receiving wages, making purchases at the company store and having their own ledger accounts.

Incentives were sometimes offered to induce Negro workers to accept employment. For example the clerk at Birdsborough Forge made this entry on February 10, 1810:

James Carmicle, Negro
Lent him 1 bed 2 blankets 1 rug 1 iron pot
2 tins 2 spoons 1 pewter plate 1 earthen dish
2 knives Ironbale Bucket 1 bred Basket.

Some Negro workers filled responsible positions of skill and trust and remained to work in the furnaces and forges for long periods of time. Joab Lee worked at Hopewell Furnace from 1807 to 1809, during which time he held several jobs. His chief occupation, however, was as a critically skilled filler at the respectable wage of 135 shillings per month. This was the same wage paid to fillers of the

57 Berks and Schuylkill Journal (Reading), Dec. 21, 1816. The same advertisement was repeated in three subsequent issues.
59 Day Book, 1784-1792, 3, 12, 123, 125, ibid.
60 Birdsborough Forge Store Journal, 1810, 8, ibid.
white race. When Hopewell closed in 1809 because of litigation over ownership of woodland, Joab Lee borrowed $50 on two notes for $25 each from Clement Brooke and moved his base of operations to Joanna Furnace, where he was still employed many years later.61 Joseph Till was employed at Hopewell Furnace for thirteen years62 and Wilkinson (or Wilkison) Hill for about twenty years.63 The best known of the Hopewell Furnace Negro employees was William Jacobs, of whom the last manager at the furnace has said:

In 1875 a certain William Jacobs, a negro, died at Hopewell. He did not know his age but it was estimated that he was over 100 years old. He had spent his whole life at Hopewell . . . it was commonly thought that the negro had been born of a slave mother on the Hopewell estate about the time of the Revolution.64

And from the same source:

A negro laborer, William Jacobs, apparently came to Brooke and Buckley with the Hopewell property [1800]. In his later years he was unable to work and was cared for by the company. Another elderly man was assigned “to wait on him” . . . . He died in 1875 and was buried at Lloyd’s Baptist Church.65

There is no doubt of a long tenure for William Jacobs at Hopewell, but it appears that there was some unintentional exaggeration in the statements quoted above. The name of William Jacobs does not appear in the Hopewell Furnace books before the closing of the furnace in 1809. There had been a Henry Jacobs, identified as a Negro, in the 1807–1809 period; and in that same era Richard Jacobs, James Jacobs, and Cyrus Jacobs worked at Hopewell with no recorded reference to their race.66 The documentary evidence indicates that William Jacobs began work when Hopewell Furnace was reopened in 1816. It is possible that he was indentured to Clement Brooke at that time because in the next several years he may have been the man the clerk referred to as “Black Bill,” “Bil,” “Black William” and “Clement Brooke’s black boy.”67 As William

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61 SM 4, SM 5, and SM 44, passim; Joanna Furnace Journals and Ledgers, passim, ibid.


63 SM 19, SM 38, SM 22, passim, beginning in 1831, ibid.

64 Interview with Harker A. Long, typescript at Hopewell Village National Historic Site.

65 Harker A. Long, A Short History of the Hopewell Furnace Estate in Union Township, Berks County (Reading, n.d.), 11.

66 SM 3 and SM 5, passim, Hopewell Village Documents.

67 SM 6, p. 433, SM 46, p. 25c; SM 7, SM 9, no pages given, ibid.
Jacobs he was a free worker by 1823, when he was listed in the labor records as a teamster. Later he became the coachman and gardener for the Brooke family.\(^{68}\)

Three receipts in the Hopewell papers prove that Negro teamsters were trusted to carry large sums of money to creditors. They read:

**Cornwall Furnace**

Robert Coleman acknowledges receipt of $497.75 from Matthew Brooke per Negro Peter. May 1, 1818.\(^{69}\)

**Cornwall Furnace**

Robert Coleman acknowledges receipt of $500.00 delivered by Negro Sampson. December 8, 1818.\(^{70}\)

Ephraim Baily, Parkersville, to Clement Brooke

Hопewell Furnace

April 8, 1826

I received by the hand of your black boy one hundred and fifteen dollars for Mr. Parkers grey horse . . .\(^{71}\)

The charcoal iron industry of southeastern Pennsylvania was relatively free of strong racist feelings and prejudice. Colored workmen ate their meals with their white colleagues in the basement dining room of the Hopewell mansion house.\(^{72}\) Hopewell Furnace paid "Andrew Collins for Schooling as per [his account for] A. Church & Benj. Hill & D. Johnston" in 1834 and 1836.\(^{73}\) Ann Church was Mrs. Clement Brooke's niece who lived with her Aunt, and Benjamin Hill and David Johnston were Negro apprentice boys; but all of them had their elementary education together under the Rev. Collins. Housing was integrated at Hopewell Village as demonstrated by a surviving 1832 lease of a house by John Care, a white molder, to Wilkison Hill, a Negro laborer. The building, formerly occupied by a white laborer, was in need of repairs. The two men agreed that Care would provide the materials and Hill would do the work for building a chimney and a rail fence and for installing "a new six Light window sash and glass." The rent was one dollar per month.\(^{74}\)

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\(^{68}\) SM 46, SM 20, *passim*, *ibid.*

\(^{69}\) Number 8180501, *ibid.*

\(^{70}\) Number 8181208, *ibid.*

\(^{71}\) Number 8260408, *ibid.*

\(^{72}\) SM 44, Dec. 17, 1806; SM 21, pp. 31, 32, 33, *ibid.*

\(^{73}\) SM 21, pp. 101, 163, *ibid.*

\(^{74}\) Number 8320103C, *ibid.*
Wilkison Hill raised a family of children who attended the village school, were treated in illness by Doctor Wiman who called on the sick of both races, and buried his mother in a coffin built by the local cabinetmaker at the same price paid by the ironmaster for two of his relatives. Hill owned a cow which he bought for twenty dollars as evidence of a prosperous status in the village. He corresponded with a brother who lived elsewhere, but he must have had someone write for him because he signed the house lease with "his mark."

Other Negroes who resided in Hopewell Village in a manner largely indistinguishable from their white neighbors were William Jacobs, Moses Morton, Sam England and George Toogood. It is true that England and Toogood scandalized the neighborhood by trading wives, but similar deviations from accepted conduct could be found among the white residents as well.

Moses Morton owned a cow and paid eighteen cents per week to pasture her in the meadow of a white neighbor. He hired a white seamstress to do sewing for the family, shopped at the company store, and was paid the same wages for his work as those paid to white men performing the same skilled tasks. The tragedy which ended his residence at Hopewell had nothing to do with his race.

The disaster which visited the Morton family in 1832 was described in a local newspaper as "a most distressing accident . . . which adds another to the many warnings to mothers. . . ." The reporter related:

A house occupied by a colored man in the service of Mr. Brooks [sic], of Hopewell, was destroyed by fire, together with three of his children. It appears that the mother, having occasion to visit some neighbor, locked up the children in the house, and when she returned the house was a pile of ruins, and her children victims of the devouring elements. The cries of the children were heard soon after the mother had left home, but nothing unusual was to be seen about the house, the flames having not yet burnt out, their cries were unheeded.
The humanitarian response of the neighbors resulted in a "subscription paper" upon which almost everyone in the village pledged a cash gift from wages to be given to the Mortons. Ironmaster Clement Brooke headed the list with a two dollar donation, and next was Housemaid Polly Kid with a present of fifty cents, which was two-thirds of her weekly wage. Of the twenty-five donors most of the skilled workers gave one dollar and the unskilled one-fourth to one-half of that. To many of these men the aid they offered a black neighbor was the wage for a day's work. The loss of his family apparently was more than Morton could endure, even with the sympathy of his fellow-workers. About a month later he sold his cow, drew his wages, paid his debts and left Hopewell.

One more evidence of integration in the charcoal iron communities is to be found in the religious life of the churches near the furnaces and forges. A Negro community, which Colonel Wayne Homan wrote was founded by escaped slaves, grew up in the wooded and secluded valley of the Six Penny Creek about equally distant from Hopewell Furnace, Joanna Furnace, and Birdsborough Forges. Many of the residents there were employed at these iron centers. Included in the predominantly Negro settlement were a few white families. They built a church and set into its south wall a stone with this inscription:

THE
AME
MOUNT FRISBY
CHURCH
FOUNDED IN
AD 1856

82 SM 21, p. 33, Hopewell Village Documents.
83 SM 21, pp. 31, 32, 33; SM 19, p. 245, ibid.
84 Wayne Homan, "The Underground Railroad," The Historical Review of Berks County, XXIII (1958), 112-118.
86 Dr. Henry Glassie, Pennsylvania State Folklorist, has investigated several of these mixed communities surviving from the charcoal iron era into the 1960's. They retain people whom he calls Pennsylvania German Negroes. They speak with a Pennsylvania German accent and live by the customs of the Pennsylvania German counties. Dr. Glassie said they do not think of themselves as being different from their white neighbors unless someone calls attention to their color. Henry Glassie, Millersville State College History Convocation, Dec. 10, 1968.
86 From a pencil rubbing made in 1962.
In the cemetery to the rear of the church are the graves of two Negroes who fought in the Union Army. The markers are inscribed "James Jackson Co. C 5th PCV" and "Isaac Cole Co. H 22nd Regt PV." 87

Other colored residents of the charcoal iron area were participants in the rituals of the local churches whose congregations were largely white. At Warwick the Rev. Levi Bull kept meticulous records of the activities in the St. Mary’s Episcopal Church. He noted between 1801 and 1822 baptism of "Hester, a black woman"; "Quash, Kuba, Benjamin and John (adults) Black people"; "Draper, a black man"; "Dorethea, a black woman"; "Hannah, wife of Quash (colored)"; "Andrew (colored) born . . . son of Phyllis." From 1812 to 1816, Mr. Bull solemnized the marriages of Stephen Brown and Hester Charms "(black people)," Quash and Catherine "(black people)," and Joseph Cagers and Susan Robeson "(colored)." Quash and Catherine were listed as "communicants" in 1814. 88

The rector of St. Gabriel’s Episcopal Church at Douglassville, near the Potts’ Furnaces, reported on October 8, 1830, the baptism of three children of George and Henretta Ford and two daughters of Daniel and Catherine Dunlap. Both families were identified as Negro. The cemetery records of the same church show that four "colored" men were buried there from 1818 to 1850. 89

At the Bethesda Baptist Church, three-quarters of a mile from Hopewell Furnace, the members on September 30, 1888, "heard the christian Experience" of five "colored Brethren" and moved to consider them "suitable Subject for Baptism and to be Received as members after baptism." Two months later these men "were dismissed to form the Baptist Church of Sancanoc, Chester County." 90

With considerable numbers of Negroes in the employment of the ironworks and the close association between white and black families in the iron communities, it was inevitable that the antislavery movement would have advocates in the area. A thesis that slaves escaping from the South found friends and employment in the charcoal iron industry of southeastern Pennsylvania is perhaps based more upon a feeling one gets from what the records say, and do not say,

87 From gravestones in Mount Frisby AME Church Cemetery.
88 St. Mary’s Episcopal Church Records, 1806–1846, Berks County Historical Society.
89 St. Gabriel’s Episcopal Church Records, 1753–1901, ibid.
90 Bethesda Baptist Church Minute Book, Hopewell Village National Historic Site.
than documentable historical facts. The fugitive slave laws would have made inadvisable any written record in the business books of the furnaces and forges which would show that the clerk was aware that a new employee was a traveler from a slave plantation. Colonel Wayne Homan was more positive. He referred to a letter written by George Washington on November 20, 1786, stating that it was extremely difficult to recover slaves who reached southeastern Pennsylvania because there were so many people there who would "facilitate the escape."91 John E. Eshelman also pointed to the Christiana Riot, caused by the attempt of slaveowners to recover escapees, and the activity of two generations of the Scarlett family in aiding escaped slaves as evidences of a strong abolitionist sentiment in the ironmaking communities.92 Christiana was near the forges of the Octorora Valley and the west branch of the Brandywine. The Scarlett family lived at Scarlett's Mill in the midst of the charcoal iron industry of Berks County.93

At Hopewell Furnace, manager Clement Brooke and Clerk John Church were possessors of an abolition pamphlet which called upon the churches to take a firm stand against slavery. One short section gives the general trend of the appeal:

Let then every Christian minister, and every religious association, and each individual member of a religious society endeavor to eradicate the stain of slavery from our land, by the effectual operation of the lenient principles of Christianity ... let the fiat of universal emancipation be issued from every Conference, Synod, and General Assembly throughout the country...94

There is a somewhat distinctive way of referring in the Hopewell business books to certain Negro workers who appeared at the furnace

91 Homan. See also John C. Fitzpatrick, The Writings of George Washington (Washington, 1939), XXIX, 78-79.
93 Brinton Maps of the Iron Industry of Chester County and of Berks County, Eleutherian Mills Historical Library.
94 Evan Lewis, An Address to Christians ... Admitting Slaveholders to Communion and Church Membership (Philadelphia, 1831), 19.
to work for a few days or weeks and then disappeared. Several examples of such work records are these:

October 1, 1802 Black Frank began work at the furnace . . .
October 15, 1802 Furnace Dr. to Dan\textsuperscript{1} Strunk for a pair of shoes for Blak [sic] Frank . . .
November 2, 1802 Cash paid to Black Frank for 15 days work \textsuperscript{1}-12/2 Left Furnace.\textsuperscript{95}
June 22, 1803 This Day Black Dine Came . . .
June 27, 1803 Paid cash to Black Dine 7/6 . . .
July 14, 1803 This Day Black Dine went away . . .
July 29, 1803 Black Dine as made [sic] 3 weeks and 2 days @ 6/ per week.\textsuperscript{96}

In 1809 "Black Luce" worked for ten weeks as a maid, bought shoes and cloth, drew the remainder of her wages in cash and disappeared.\textsuperscript{97} "Peter Jones, Negro" worked for twenty-two days driving a team in 1818.\textsuperscript{98} And five years later "James Thomas, Negro," worked from August 22, 1823, to December 6, 1823. On the latter day he purchased a hat, drew the remainder of his wages in cash and left.\textsuperscript{99} There is no record for any of these workers of their place of origin or destination. It is possible that these unidentified and untraceable employees were travelers from the South who found in the isolation of the iron communities a convenient place to earn enough to travel farther north of the Mason and Dixon Line.

Not everyone in the iron producing area was antislavery, however. Some residents believed in supporting the laws which protected the property rights of slaveowners. One who held this opinion was James Morris, owner of a store in Morgantown which was patronized by workers from Hopewell's Jones Iron Minehole, Joanna Furnace, Windsor Forge, Poole Forge and Rebecca Furnace. In his diary for March 13, 1837, Morris wrote:

Rev. McKim, a Presbyterian minister spoke on Saturday 11th and Monday 13th at the Harmony Meeting House on abolition. A mission truly for the Rev'd gentleman—though not of peace and charity, I take it—or at least the abolition course pursued by J. Q. Adams in the H.R. at

\textsuperscript{95} SM 1, SM 2 for dates given, Hopewell Village Documents.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{97} SM 3, ibid.
\textsuperscript{98} SM 8, ibid.
\textsuperscript{99} SM 11, SM 46, ibid.
Washington did not appear to produce peace but its contrary and whatever charity abolition may bear for the blacks—which even admits of strong doubts—it is surely not charity to force them into measures repugnant to them and in their idea—of worse than evil tendency—or measures fraught with evil not only to the South, but to the whole union.\textsuperscript{100}

The next day Morris had a firsthand report on the activity of the abolitionist and may have found some cause for concern in the response from his own community. He wrote on that day:

This evening the McKim noticed above was delivered of an abolition lecture at the School House in this place [Morgantown]. The house was full. This is the first lecture delivered in this place on that subject—may it be the last.\textsuperscript{101}

Despite much pro-Negro and antislavery sentiment in the area, the people were not favorable to political action through the avowed abolitionist parties. Morris reported that James G. Birney, the Liberty Party candidate for president, had not received a single vote in the Morgantown polling in 1844.\textsuperscript{102}

Whether or not the charcoal iron industry of southeastern Pennsylvania served as a refuge for escaping slaves, the record is undeniable that for more than a century and a quarter the ironmasters of that area placed great value upon their Negro employees, whether they were slaves, apprentices, indentured servants or free workmen. Some were exploited, and some were treated on terms of equality with white workers of the day, but, all in all, they played their part in the development of a vital Pennsylvania industry.

\textit{Millersville State College}  

\textbf{JOSEPH E. WALKER}

\textsuperscript{100} Diary of James Morris, I, 9–10, Berks County Historical Society. The minister was James Miller McKim (1810–1874), noted antislavery leader.  
\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Ibid.}, 10.  
\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Ibid.}, II, 166.