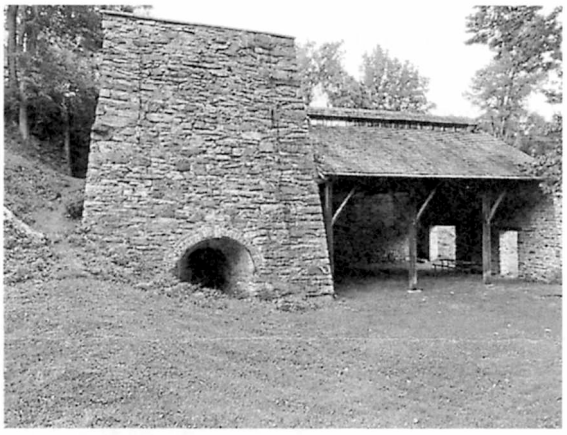
Catoctin Mountain: From Industrialization to Recreation



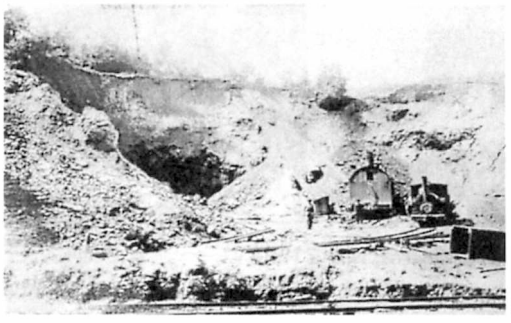
Isabella Furnace, built in 1857 (NPS Photo/M. Slinghoff)

Catoctin Mountain once resounded with the sounds of falling trees, the hoofbeat of horses transporting charcoal and lumber, and the striking of rock as new veins of iron ore and limestone were sought for. The ironworks at the south-eastern base of the mountain required constant extraction to regularly feed the blast furnace's consumption of charcoal, iron ore, and limestone to produce pig iron. However, as the Second Industrial Revolution slowly took hold over the country, the ironworks at Catoctin Mountain became increasingly relegated to the past.

The Iron of Catoctin

The primary deposits of iron ore in Catoctin were limonite—about 40% iron in content—with small traces of magnetite, together making the Catoctin Furnace lands the most abundant source of iron ore in Frederick County, Maryland. This allowed everything from cannonballs to train car wheels to be made throughout its history.

By the beginning of the 1880s, the discovery of greater veins of iron in the Great Lakes region, and the appearance of vast urban blast furnaces in such places as Sparrows Point, Maryland, greatly lowered the value of Catoctin Mountain's iron. Despite this, Catoctin Furnace otherwise modernized through creating steam-powered and coal-run furnaces in order to remain profitable.

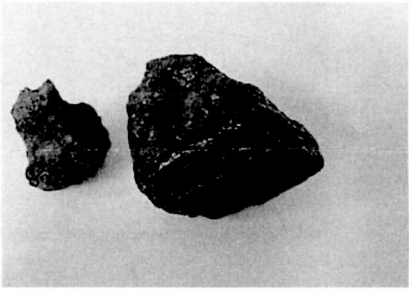


Catoctin Ore Bank mined with steam shovels (*Catoctin Furnace Historical Society)*

The Charcoal of Catoctin

Charcoal derived from harvested lumber used up to 300 colliers for a single operation and was the only way to fuel the blast furnaces. With the establishment of the most advanced blast furnace in western Maryland at the end of the 19th century—the steam powered "Deborah Furnace" situated at Catoctin Furnace—and the shuttering of one of two charcoal furnaces, reduced the need for charcoal.

With higher efficiency, the extensive forest lands along Catoctin Mountain that provided Catoctin Ironworks with charcoal were obsolete. Meanwhile, the coke, and especially anthracite coal, that they were importing became more expensive in the 20th century. Due to this, and other factors, Catoctin Furnace, which had been producing iron since 1776, made its final blast in 1903.



Charge coke (left) and anthracite coal (right) (NPS Photo/M. Slinghoff)

Lumber and Tourism in Catoctin

Despite the end of its largest industry, Catoctin Mountain still retained its forests which, both for their lumber and draw as nature tourism, provided the surrounding community a new source of income after the furnace ceased operating. Both people from outside of Catoctin Mountain, such as Bessie Darling, and local farmers set up new hostels around the mountain. Aided by cars, the region attracted people far and wide to visit the mountains, including President Herbert Hoover. Meanwhile, up to five mills were built around the mountain to harvest marketable lumber, thoroughly stripping the mountain and increasing its environmental degradation. Both the denuding of Catoctin Mountain, and its reputation for tourism, led to the controversial process of buying up and condemning the property of many locals during the Great Depression in order to create the Catoctin Recreational Demonstration Area.



A codominant stemmed tree (below)--an indirect result of clear cutting (NPS Photo/M. Slinghoff)
