



## *History Along the Trail*

# Iron Processing Along the Susquehanna

By Ron Gray

**T**here are many signs of Iron Processing along the Mason-Dixon Trail. The York Furnace is located at Otter Creek just off of the trail. Due to safety concerns for the side trail that goes by the Furnace access to it is blocked. On the other side of Otter Creek just before Kline Rd the trail goes across a flat area that was one of the charcoal pits where they made charcoal for the York Furnace. They would make a pile of wood, cover it with dirt and cook the wood to reduce it to charcoal. The charcoal was much lighter than the wood for transportation to the furnace. A furnace would consume a lot of charcoal so a furnace required a very large wood lot with many charcoal pits.

The best example surviving charcoal burning iron furnaces is the Codorus Furnace. It stands today on the south side of the Codorus Creek near the Susquehanna River (Map 3, mile 6.4). The furnace was also known as Hellam Iron Works, Hellam Forge and later Codorus Forge.

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## **Mason-Dixon Quarterly Meeting and Hike**

### **Quarterly Meeting and Hike**

Sun, August 25, 2013

**Hike:**

9:30 am

**Meeting:**

1:30 pm

On August 25, hike part of the Susquehanna Super Hike including M-DTS beautiful reroutings along Otter Creek for about 5 miles. Park at the York Hiking Club Cabin at Otter Creek, 1145 Furnace Road, Airville. PA 17302 (map 4, at Stone farm house just upriver from the Otter Creek bridge at mile 17.6). Hike leaves at 9:30 am. M-DTS meeting after hike at about 1:30 pm. For more details contact Jim Hooper at [j.e.hooper@ieee.org](mailto:j.e.hooper@ieee.org).

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In 1765 William Bennet built the forge and furnace on a 150-acre tract that he obtained from the Penn family. The furnace is made of selected stone bound with iron hoops and lined with sandstone and fire-clay. The furnace was built against the side of a hill with a bridge from the hill to the top of the furnace. Over this bridge the workers carried baskets of ore, charcoal and limestone and poured the raw materials into layers at the top of the furnace. A water source was used to drive bellows to generate the air forced into the furnace and the resulting liquid was percolated to the bottom. This molted iron is called “pig iron” or just “pig”. It was poured into sand molds. Later the metal smiths or blacksmiths worked it into different shapes or forms to make the desired items.

Extending through the entire northern part of Hellam Township is a wooded ridge known as the “Hellam Hills”, parts of which furnished timber for charcoal used at the Codorus Furnace. Furnaces such as this could consume 840 bushels of charcoal every twenty-four hours.

At one time the furnace employed as many as 60 men. With two guttermen, two founders, two keepers, and three fillers to work it, the furnace was in blast nine months of the year.



Many of the cannons and cannon balls used by the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War were cast at this location as well as for the War of 1812. The furnace played an important part in re-arming Washington’s armies at Valley Forge.

In 1771 James Smith, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a member of the Continental Congress, bought the furnace. The furnace produced iron bars, pots, pans and cast iron until it ceased operation in 1850 after an existence of 85 years.

## OCTOBER 5: KTA CODE ORANGE, GIFFORD PINCHOT STATE PARK

MDTS along with the Friends of Pinchot State Park will perform trail improvements to the MDT in Pinchot Park. This worktrip is being coordinated by Skip Newcomer and Steve Stroman. Free camping is available Friday and Saturday nights at the Cherry Section, Group Camping Area. Friends of Pinchot State Park will host a cookout for participants on Saturday evening. For more information contact Skip Newcomer, [skipnewc@hotmail.com](mailto:skipnewc@hotmail.com), 717-841-4930

Meet at 8:30 am at the Quaker Race Day Use Area of Gifford Pinchot State Park.

**Directions:** From the intersection of Interstate-83 and US-30 north of York, PA, drive north on I-83 for 10.8 miles. At exit 32, drive west on PA-382 for 3.8 miles. Turn left onto PA-177 and drive south for 5.0 miles. Turn left into the Quaker Race Day Use Area of Gifford Pinchot State Park. The street address of the park entrance road is 2817 Rosstown Road, Lewisbury, PA.



# President's Message

Due to vacations it has been quiet since the last newsletter. However, it looks like August is going to heat up.

## CONOWINGO DAM RELICENSING

The meetings are on hold for now. Various organizations have been filling Memorandum of Intent, which enables them to appear in court cases if there are any protests with the settlement terms. We do not have a lawyer so the board does not know if we should file.

## GRACE PLATEAU

Grace Plateau is up for sale. The trail goes across one edge of the property. It has a lodge and six cottages on 152 acres. It is listed for \$2.6 million. There is an effort to preserve it and convert the building to a museum. They started by looking for one big contributor but now are expanding the search for funds. I will keep the club informed on what happens.

## CONEWAGO MOUNTAIN REGION STAKEHOLDERS

There is a group meeting to consider measures to protect the Conewago Mountains. These are the hills around Pinchot State Park and Ski Roundtop. This is the first meeting we have been invited to so I do not know what they are planning.

## SUSQUEHANNA RIVERLANDS CONSERVATION LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE

In August, there is a meeting scheduled in August to form a committee of the trails organizations along the lower Susquehanna River. The M-DTS has been invited to join this committee.

## SUSQUEHANNA SUPER HIKE

The Susquehanna Super Hike is September 7. Tim Schmidt is recruiting volunteers for the first water stop at the Otter Creek Campground. Please contact him at [wanderfool@comcast.net](mailto:wanderfool@comcast.net) if you are interested.

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Vacant

### Eastern Section

Vacant

## WE NEED YOUR E-MAIL

We have email addresses for about 2/3 of our membership, but this means we still need to send snail-mail to over 100 of our members when we have news to disseminate. This is most often our Quarterly Newsletter, but also could include election ballots, etc.

Sending the Newsletter by mail is getting quite costly, and we'd like to be able to send it electronically to as many members as possible.

Those with email addresses also get an early "Save the Date" notice about when our next meeting and hike will be held. We do respect your privacy and your email will only be used for M-DTS business.

Will you please send your email information to Kathy Dempsey, our Membership Chair, at [kdemps@yahoo.com](mailto:kdemps@yahoo.com). It will make it easier for us to communicate with you, and save the M-DTS some money, too.

## MASON-DIXON TRAIL SYSTEM

Rob Campbell, *Secretary*  
811 Marvell Drive  
York, Pennsylvania 17402

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### *Trail Maintainer*

## Charley Albin

We've lost another of our old timers on April 10, 2013. Charley was a maintainer from the very beginning in the Oakland Run section. He had an A Frame cabin just upriver from the mouth of Oakland Run and could easily access the trail to do maintenance. He was very active as a maintainer, but he did not like going to meetings (I wonder why?) Several years ago we had several large blowdowns on the south side of the climb from Cuff's run. These were not in a location that cutting was an option. I asked Charley to help build a short relocation around

them. He was set up to have shoulder surgery and said what the Heck, I can't hurt the shoulder any more so Yes I'll help. I got a phone call from him about a week later thanking me for getting him to help. It seems that the digging loosened his shoulder and he cancelled the surgery. He thanked me several times after that. He has not maintained for several years, but will be missed by those of us who knew him.

Thank you Charley.  
*Ron Gray*

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The M-DTS Newsletter is published about four weeks in advance of each of the four M-DTS board meetings held annually. Submissions are welcomed.

The Mason-Dixon Trail System, Inc. is a non-profit all-volunteer, service-oriented association of trail clubs and individual hikers that has as its purpose the use and conservation of the backcountry through the development of new trails in the mid-Atlantic states. The nucleus of M-DTS is the 193-mile Mason-Dixon Trail which passes through historic and scenic areas of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware.

New members are welcome. To join, send \$25 (which covers cost of M-DT maps and patch) to:

**Mason-Dixon Trail System**

**Rick Maerker**

**13 Denise Drive**

**Thornton, PA 19373**

Thereafter, the annual fee is \$7. Life membership is available for \$250.

**Visit the Mason-Dixon Trail web site at: [www.masondixontrail.org](http://www.masondixontrail.org)**

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