"We and the Negroes both alike did fare"

When considering the development of the mid-Atlantic region prior to the American Revolution, many historians focus upon agrarian pursuits as the central impetus for growth. This is especially true in the colony of Maryland where tobacco was dominant. However, the iron industry as it existed during the colonial period of British North American history was one of the most significant economic components of this burgeoning region. Iron was a necessary ingredient in modernizing the colonies, an effort crucial for the British goal of financial gain, as well as a replacement for a declining industry on the European continent. For the first three quarters of the eighteenth century, Maryland and Virginia dominated the colonial industry as the primary exporters of iron to the United Kingdom.[1] Maryland and Virginia also held the further distinction of utilizing both African and European laborers to process the valuable iron, prompting one indentured servant to lament in a poem, "We and the Negroes both alike did fare/Of work and food we had an equal share."[2]

The 18th century Chesapeake region was a pluralistic environment consisting of peoples from Europe, Africa, and the Americas. Until the American Revolution, seventy-five percent of all immigrants to Maryland arrived in some condition of unfreedom.[3] In 1664, the Maryland General Assembly passed a law entitled "An Act Concerning Negroes and Other Slaves" that initiated the legal practice of perpetual enslavement for Africans in the colony, and simultaneously mentions certain stipulations regarding the interaction of the enslaved and English servants.[4] Some consider the indentured servitude of Europeans a form of servitude rivaling the chattel enslavement of African descended peoples. No matter the argument, there is no dispute that the majority of individuals working within the Maryland iron industry during the 18th century were not free but rather coerced laborers.

The story of iron commerce in Maryland is regularly viewed through the lens of the ironmaster – in all cases a White elite male that made the financial investments and garnered the financial returns rather than the laborers that made the profits possible. Between 1700 and 1775, 585,800 immigrants arrived in the thirteen colonies, most of whom were not free and labored without pay. Of those individuals, 18% were indentured servants, 9% were convict laborers, and 47% were enslaved Africans – only 26% arrived free

and therefore not coerced to work for others.[5] This paper seeks to explore the coerced labor practices of the Dorsey family's iron plantations during the 18th century. While there were compensated employees, the bulk of the labor was provided by coerced individuals. For the purposes of this study, *coerced labor* is defined as work a person does for another under compulsion, receiving little or no recompense. This group of workers included *enslaved chattel*, *indentured servants* and *convict laborers*.

In the American context, *chattel* enslavement was a situation where a personage was considered personal property to be bought and sold and was owned for the entirety of the enslaved person's life. These individuals were almost entirely of African descent. The children and children's children of chattel slaves were automatically enslaved at birth. In this essay, the category of chattel enslavement includes those that were owned or leased by the Dorseys. *Indentured servitude* is any unfree laborer who is bound by a signed or forced contract to work without pay for the owner of the indenture for a finite period of time. In this study, I utilize the term *indentured servants* in reference to *freewillers*, individuals that migrated to the Americas voluntarily. On occasion, the contract allowed the employer to sell the labor of an indentured servant to a third party. These individuals were generally of European extraction. *Convict labor* included primarily British convicted prisoners sent to the colonies for punishment to serve their term with contracts similar to indentured servants. These individuals were always what we would today consider White. This form of coerced labor started in 1718 under the Transportation Act, which allowed for a seven-year sentence for lesser crimes and a fourteen-year sentence in lieu of execution for more serious offenses.[6]

This study makes no attempt to equalize the experiences of these three categories of laborers. While they were all coerced, only African-descended enslaved individuals and their offspring were considered personal property in perpetuity. Only persons deemed chattel possessed no hope or promise of eventual freedom, offered the ability to bring their grievances to court, or the possibility of compensation at the end of service.[7] The purpose of this study is to determine how these different types of coerced laborers interacted with the owners and each other; negotiated the terms of their service both with the ironmasters and amongst themselves; and determine the ways in which alternative forms of compensation were utilized in an effort to increase productivity. There will also be an exploration of the ways in which these three types of coerced

laborers interacted with each other in terms of social conditions outside of the work environment and in some cases attempted to escape their plight together. This essay encompasses the years roughly between 1755 and 1800.

"Conveniences for carrying on Iron Works"

In addition to an incredible amount of labor, there were three necessary components for a successful iron venture; an abundance of iron ore, a vast amount of timber, and extensive waterways, all of which made the Elkridge Landing location chosen by the Dorseys highly desirable. "Ore was found in the banks six to eight feet deep and relatively close to the surface and was dug by either surface mining or tunneling. Both methods seem to have been used at Elk Ridge"[8] Timber was fundamental for smelting iron ore due to the industry's dependence on charcoal for fuel. The most successful iron ventures were those that were self-sufficient and were able to create their own charcoal from trees on their own land.[9] Another important component of a successful 18th century iron business was the close proximity of waterways for power, for flux, as well as for transporting essential goods. The Patapsco River and its tributaries was utilized by the Dorsey's to power the bellows that kept the temperature appropriately high to smelt iron. Since the Patapsco River is a part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, the final product was not only shipped to other colonial ports, but it also linked Elkridge Landing to the Atlantic and thus the European market. During the mid-18th century, Elkridge Landing boasted wharves, warehouses, a custom house, and a tobacco inspection house. It rivaled Annapolis and surpassed Baltimore Town as an essential artery for trade with England.[10]

British demand for iron increased in the 17th and 18th centuries resulting from a tremendous deforestation problem. A decrease in available wood led many European countries to depend upon their colonies to procure iron for their ongoing needs. Exploiting the seemingly limitless amount of land, iron ore, and timber in the mid-Atlantic region, many English rushed to the Chesapeake territory to take part in the potential profit. Maryland and Virginia produced the bulk of colonial iron furnished to the mother country during the 18th century.[11]

In 1719, the Maryland Assembly passed an act that encouraged the creation of iron ventures. The act also ordered that a grant of 100 acres should be given to individuals erecting a forge or furnace in Maryland stating;

> …that if any person or persons shall desire to set up a forging mill or other conveniences for carrying on Iron Works on lands not before cultivated adjoining a stream, he may get a writ ad quod damnum…Grantee is to give bond to begin the mill within six months and to finish it in four years. Workmen at the mill, not exceeding eighty are to be levy free. If pig iron is not run in seven years, the grant is void.[12]

Many attempts were made along Maryland's interconnected waterways, the first successful endeavor being the Principio Company in Cecil County followed by the Baltimore Iron Works.[13]

British Parliament later passed the Iron Act of 1750 in an effort to increase the importation of iron from its American colonies duty free. The iron shipped to the United Kingdom was to be raw material, not manufactured products:

> An act to encourage the importation of pig and bar iron from his Majesty's colonies in America, and to prevent the erection of any mill or other engine for slitting or rolling of iron; or any plating forge to work with a tilt hammer; or any furnace for making steel in any of the said colonies… [14]

Although short of timber to refine the ore, England still had the infrastructure to generate finished products for British consumption. It was at this point in Maryland history that began a true iron boom along the region's many waterways.

"A man of great intellectual and moral force"

The first of the Dorsey clan arrived in the Maryland colony from Hockley, England in the mid-17th century. There were three brothers that migrated; John, Edward, and Joshua. Their father, John Dorsey, Sr., was a shipwright and a converted Quaker.[15] Each of these original Dorsey's acquired land in Anne Arundel and Baltimore Counties. When the Maryland colony came under control of the British crown in 1691, Edward Dorsey – whose occupation was listed as a planter - served in the House of Delegates and was a member of the Governor's Council.[16] This was an important connection that garnered the Dorsey family a great deal of power and control over their land and related business endeavors. Both John and Edward

Dorsey received land grants in the area then known as the Ridge of Elks, which was surveyed before 1700.[17] John Dorsey further owned a great deal of enslaved individuals valued at several hundreds of pounds that were passed on to his children along with the large amount of land.[18]

Initially, the Dorseys utilized land surrounding Elkridge Landing for tobacco cultivation. The Chesapeake region was deemed the "Tobacco Coast" by English merchants and cultivated a product that was in very high demand.[19] In 1696, the Maryland Assembly passed an act to create "4 Rolling Roads to be marked and cleared for the Rolling of Tobacco to the Ports of Anne Arundel County."[20] Currently known as Rolling Road, this road was situated between present-day Catonsville and Elkridge Landing and ran directly through the Dorsey property. At this time, Maryland tobacco growers, including the Dorseys, heavily relied upon enslaved labor, and to a lesser extent, indentured servants.[21] This labor was utilized not only for tobacco cultivation, but rolling the heavy hogsheads of tobacco from farm to port.[22]

John Dorsey patented the land that would ultimately house the family iron businesses. Since iron ore was abundant in the region, the Dorseys and many others established tobacco planters started to delve into the industry to supplement income. According to historian John Bezis-Selfa, tobacco planters mined iron due in part to the fact that "the rhythms of iron production closely resembled those of a plantation, allowing planter ironmasters to divert supplies and laborers necessary."[23] Furthermore, iron fit into their already existent commercial arrangements with British merchants. Ships that navigated the Patapsco region for tobacco would often simultaneously purchase iron from the same sellers.[24] The Dorsey family was included in that number but would eventually shift entirely over to iron production by the mid 18th century. Tobacco depleted much of the land and iron ultimately proved to be more profitable.[25]

John Dorsey's son, Caleb received by deed of gift from his father 442 acres of the home plantation, Hockley in the Hole in 1702. Additional land was purchased over the years with Caleb Dorsey (known as *Caleb the Elder*) eventually owning over 5,000 acres on both sides of the Patapsco River across Baltimore, Anne Arundel and present-day Howard Counties.[26] He and his business partner Alexander Lawson also received one hundred acres from the colony through an *ad quod damnum* for the encouragement of iron manufacturers in Maryland.[27] Caleb the Elder continued the family's regional influence by becoming a

commission merchant, a person responsible for marketing the products of area businesses in England. He was responsible for all facets of business exchange with the mother country and he took responsibility for the transporting and disposing of goods themselves. One of his duties also included providing credit to his customers, thereby making a great deal of profit in areas outside of the tobacco and iron industries.[28]

In the early 1730s, the Dorsey's built the *Rockburn* home that would eventually become the offices for the iron businesses.[29] In 1738, Caleb Dorsey built a much larger estate that he labeled *Belmont* where the family would live for generations. The grand home had all the luxuries of the day and symbolized the manner in which the Dorsey family saw themselves within the greater community. It was reported as "…the home of a man of great intellectual and moral force, who stamped upon the chronicles of his bailiwick the mark of his distinguished talents, his indomitable energy and his reckless courage."[30] Many of the enslaved owned by Caleb Dorsey might have toiled both at Belmont as well as part of the iron business due to Maryland's extensive use of the *quarter system*. This form of property distribution divided enslaved individuals between the owner's home plantation and outlying businesses for tax purposes.[31]

Upon his death in 1742, Caleb the Elder willed his land and other chattel – including several enslaved Africans – to his 13 children. His son Caleb the Younger inherited the land surrounding Elkridge Landing. While the tobacco endeavors continued to a limited extent, Caleb the Younger established Elkridge Furnace in 1755. The land was further utilized for cattle (beef and pork), a tannery, and a distillery.[32] It is also documented that Caleb Dorsey cultivated various grains in addition to the tobacco on this land, all of which furnished cash for the estate. All aspects of the estate were populated with various forms of unfree laborers. Curtis Creek Furnace was created as a partnership with four other men in 1759, and Dorsey's Forge was started in 1762.[33] Not only was the family mining ore and smelting it, but eventually casting and shaping it.[34] Additional land called *Taylor's Forest*, above the Patapsco River was purchased in 1761 enabling more extensive cutting of timber for creating charcoal to power the furnace and forge.[35] By controlling all aspects of the venture, the Dorsey family was better able to control the very high costs of running an iron business.[36] Caleb Dorsey died in 1772 and passed all of his property to his heirs. The valuable land and the remainder

of the enslaved persons that were part of Caleb Dorsey's estate were passed to his sons Samuel and Edward. The inherited land totaled 2,045 acres.[37]

As was the case with many iron families at the time, many of the Dorsey clan intermarried with family members of other iron businesses in the region. Caleb's eldest daughter Rebecca married Charles Ridgely of Hampton Estate, owners of Northampton Furnace.[38] After the marriage, the Ridgely family gained an interest in the Dorsey's Curtis Creek and Elkridge Furnaces. Caleb's youngest daughter Pricilla married Charles Carnan (Ridgely), governor of Maryland from 1816-1819, and she in turn became the mistress of Hampton Estate.[39] This would become a connection that influenced labor as many of Baltimore's iron businesses shared their enslaved and indentured workers. Owners leased skilled artisans between iron endeavors and many workers would travel from one venture to another in an effort to garner better wages or work conditions.[40]

Initially, the iron businesses produced primarily crowbars and ballast for British ships.[41] During the American Revolution, however, the forge manufactured various items for the Patriot effort. This proved to be lucrative as some Maryland iron ventures remained loyal to the British crown and subsequently lost their businesses due to betrayal to the revolutionary cause.[42] William Whetcroft, a silversmith from Annapolis received a grant from the state for a slitting mill and rented land from the Dorsey's for that venture. Advertised in the *Maryland Journal* on May 6, 1777 as the Patapsco Slitting Mill, the venture was Maryland's first works for making rail material. Whetcroft purchased his bar iron from the Dorsey brothers and even utilized Dorsey labor to produce the nails.[43] By the end of the war, the slitting mill ended up in the hands of Edward Dorsey after a public auction due to Whetcroft's mismanagement. The Dorsey iron ventures were subsequently transformed into a large business complex providing a variety of iron products and utilizing all variations of coerced labor. During much of the war, the site was also casting iron for guns and cannons, primarily for home defense.[44]

Edward Dorsey was regarded as an obstinate individual earning the moniker "Ironhead Ned."[45] The Dorsey iron business related structures and residences, now known as "Dorsey's Manor," contained several buildings. In addition to the real property owned by "Ironhead Ned," he also owned a minimum of 67

enslaved Africans that were valued at $14,000, bringing to light the fact that enslaved human laborers possessed a tremendous monetary value.[46] The Dorsey's managed to maintain lucrative iron plantations for several decades, however by the end of the 18th century, there was a decline in the profit that necessitated a sale of much of the property. By 1807, Dorsey's Manor was operating primarily as a dairy farm utilizing the labor of 33 enslaved individuals.[47] The family also maintained stock including horses, mules, sheep, and hogs selling not only milk and butter, but wool, mutton, and other products.[48] Edward Dorsey divided up his land in 1815 leaving most of it to his children. The Curtis Creek Furnace was sold in 1773 with the proceeds divided by its many owners. In 1822, Dorsey's Forge and Elkridge Furnace as well as the peripheral buildings and the surrounding land was sold to the Ellicott brothers, who in turn created the Avalon Iron Works.[49] The land is presently the Avalon area of the Patapsco Valley State Park boasting an interpretive sign commemorating the Dorsey iron ventures.[50]

"Raising oar & making charcoal"

In addition to the actual smelting and finishing, the iron industry demanded year-round labor consisting of "…raising oar [sic] & making charcoal in the cource [sic] of the summer, & at wood cutting in the winter."[51] It should be noted that all categories of laborers, the enslaved, indentured and convicts performed all tasks, both skilled and unskilled. In many cases, Whites would train Blacks in certain skills and vice versa. Most tasks performed within the iron industry were exceedingly dangerous, thus coerced drudgery became essential as free laborers would often refuse to do such work and most free workers within the iron industry performed skilled tasks. All three categories of unfree laborers faced debilitating work conditions for no pay apart from an incentive system created intentionally for coerced workers.[52]

All iron work commenced with mining the ore. During the colonial era in Maryland, *miners* could generally locate bog iron by spotting reddish-brown soil close to waterways. Top layers of the soil needed to be removed in these locations in order to access the most abundant deposits. On rare occasions, the more arduous tunnel or underground mining was necessary, but this was uncommon on the Dorsey property. While *miners* were responsible for extracting the ore, *carters* or *waggoners* were responsible for

transporting it from the bogs to the furnace. Iron was most often transported via horse drawn carts, but there were no established roads, and this was an arduous task requiring increased human brawn.

Another important preliminary step for the refinement of iron was the creation of the fuel to drive the furnaces. The creation of charcoal was the responsibility of two important laboring groups, the *wood cutters* and the *colliers*. *Wood cutters* were tasked with locating and felling appropriate trees in order to create charcoal. Since the Dorsey's owned so much land, they were able to utilize trees on their own property. The land north of the Patapsco River in an area previously known as Taylor's Forest was the primary location for Dorsey lumber. It was also where most of the coerced workers resided. This land is the current location of the Community College of Baltimore County, Catonsville High School, a country club and various other institutions.

Once the lumber was felled, *colliers* were responsible for creating the charcoal that would fuel the furnace. *Colliers* were considered to be one of the most highly skilled laborers in the iron industry due to the fact that building a charcoal mound and recognizing the various stages of the burn was exceedingly difficult as well as dangerous. To successfully smelt iron the furnace blast had to constantly burn extremely hot, and since charcoal burns hotter than wood and at a more consistent temperature it was the fuel of choice. Building a charcoal chimney entailed building a circle of wood approximately 50 feet in diameter and stacking the cut wood very tightly about 10-15 feet high. The chimney would burn for two weeks with constant attention to deal with overly hot spots. Colliers were required to climb the mound every day for inspection, which would often result in injury or death.[53] After the wood reached the appropriate point, the burn was halted. Once the coal making process was complete, *waggoners* transported the fuel to the furnace.

The operations of all iron plantations were controlled by the *chief founder*. The *chief founder* was always a free White man that earned a considerable salary, but often did not own land of his own upon which to earn a living. It was mandatory that the founder be well-versed in every aspect of the iron business and able to run the operation as the primary supervisor for all unfree workers. The chief founder at the Elkridge Furnace between 1755 and 1768 was William Williams. He was an English immigrant that had previously been employed at the Baltimore Iron Works. Following Williams' departure in 1768, the chief

founder was George Teall, who remained at Elkridge at least until the close of the Revolutionary War, but it is unclear when he left the company.[54]

Within the furnace, *forgemen* were generalized laborers that worked all aspects of the forge. These laborers had many different names, but all were skilled workers that performed a variety of difficult and dangerous tasks. The *keeper* was the individual in control of the furnace and charged with maintaining the temperature of the furnace. A *founder* was a worker engaged in the melting, molding and casting process. A *founder* also determined the proportion of charcoal, ore, and limestone flux that made up the batch in order to create the strongest finished iron. A *furnace filler* remained at the top of the furnace and emptied the barrows loaded with mined iron ore sent up from the bottom. *Casters* smelted iron ore or melts pig iron and mixed it with scrap metals and other alloys to be placed into molds. *Molders* were laborers that fabricated molds for use in casting iron products. *Finery men* were skilled workers that produced wrought iron from pig iron. They liquefied cast iron in a fining hearth and removed carbon from the molten cast iron through oxidation.[55] All in all, a typical operation would necessitate well over twenty workers conducting interdependent tasks.

While there were several general laborers peppered throughout the operation, much of the work of iron production required great skill. Much of this skill was acquired on the job and the lack of knowledge could and did result in severe injury and death. While iron work was dangerous, it also came with a great deal more prestige than agricultural work for both White and Black laborers. It also provided a modicum of freedom of movement for indentured, convict and enslaved laborers as much of the work was done in rural areas without constant supervision. Industrial labor during the 18th century was therefore, fraught with danger but offered even greater benefits for those skilled enough to engage.

In addition to the laborers that contributed directly to the fabrication of iron products, there was also a cadre of support staff that labored for peripheral maintenance of the plantation. Over and above those that cultivated tobacco, there was a large number of individuals that grew the food for the entire iron complex. While wives and children would often maintain family gardens, there were greater needs for the workers meals. There were also people tasked with the responsibility of maintaining cattle for meat, dairy, and

leather. A tannery existed on the Dorsey plantation that produced leather clothing and shoes for the workers. A distillery was present as alcohol was a necessary evil on all iron plantations. The Dorsey ventures were almost entirely self-contained, and each aspect required workers to keep the business running.

Coerced workers needed incentives in order to be more practical investments. A common tactic employed by the Dorseys and other Chesapeake ironmasters was that of *overwork*. The system of *overwork* was utilized for all three categories of coerced workers whereby laboring beyond one's normal quota was rewarded. This modified task system motivated unfree laborers to amplify production in an effort to receive increased ration items for improved personal living. These rewards might include clothing, household items, food, credit in the Dorsey company store, and on rare occasions, cash.

This arrangement was a mutually beneficial system as ironmasters were provided greater productivity as well as a reduction in the need for physical coercion. If workers chose to utilize their extra time at work rather than at leisure, the rewards offered increased status and a modicum of comfort to their meager physical living conditions. Overwork also offered unfree iron workers the luxury of choice and agency to determine how their time was consumed. This was hugely important for indentured and convict servants as any additional liberty or income helped them to plan for a future of possible freedom. For the chattel worker, this level of choice was unheard of in other areas of enslavement – especially agricultural – and therefore working on an industrial plantation such as the Dorsey iron ventures became a coveted position for enslaved Blacks.

The Dorseys ran a company store that was open to the laborers as well as the general public. Credit was extended to its customers, a practice that often caused binding debt for many of the plantation's laborers. Items stocked in the company store included groceries, textiles, tools, clothing, reading material and other necessary items. By far, the most significant product was alcohol. The Dorsey company store stocked rum, wine, grog, and ale all of which was considered to be essential. The alcohol consumption of furnace workers was much higher than in the general population, perhaps caused by the dangerous and strenuous nature of the labor performed. Imbibing by unfree workers was a major concern for ironmasters that lamented "…to much strong Liquid dayly [sic] disordered more or less of the workmen and is the occasion of bad language

and quarrel."[56] Despite the trouble caused, alcohol was a mandatory expectation by both free and unfree workers in the iron industry.

As far as living conditions, the coerced laborers on the Dorsey iron plantations lived away not only from the owner's residence, but the central iron complex as well. When the family purchased Taylor's Forest in 1861, many of the coerced laborers were housed in this location on the opposite side of the Patapsco River. The rationale for these living arrangements lies in the fact that this portion of the complex was not only dedicated to felling wood for the creation of charcoal, but for the many auxiliary components of the business. The land consisted of structures utilized to support the iron industry such as the production of food, clothing, and alcohol.

The housing consisted of a number of small frame houses often referred to as "Negro Houses," where not only free and enslaved Blacks resided, but coerced White workers as well. White workers lived separate from Black workers, but in the same general vicinity. A visitor to the Taylor's Forest area recorded that "…the country was sparsely settled, rough and uncultivated; still inhabited by many Indians, thickly covered with forest except where broken here and there by … its numerous slaves and dependents."[57] Many of the wives and children of the iron workers were integral components of the iron business by producing clothes, food, and other necessities for the workers, again saving the Dorseys essential overhead. Ultimately, the idea of living separate from the owners that controlled every other aspect of their lives was welcome for their time off from their difficult tasks. The structures themselves were generally frame and considered to be somewhat temporary in their construction.

"Reduced to the most abject slavery"

Oftentimes in historical accounts indentured servitude is described in such benign verbiage that the brutal nature of the practice is diminished. Indentured servitude, even those deemed *freewillers*, was by all accounts a ruthless system of coerced labor that rivaled chattel enslavement on all fronts. It has been stated that "They who have no property, can have no freedom, but are indeed reduced to the most abject slavery…"[58] It is important to note that indentured servitude utilizing White labor was the precursor to the

chattel enslavement of Africans. Not only did indentured servitude predate the practice of enslavement in the Chesapeake region, but set the foundation upon which the laws and practices utilized to control enslaved chattel were created, especially in Maryland.

For most of the 17th century, Maryland's labor force was comprised substantially of indentured servants. In 1666, the Assembly of Maryland dictated that the term for bound servants for "…those arriving without indentures from four to five years."[59] Ironically, the document that legislated the rights and duties of indentured servants was the precursor to Maryland's slave codes. The Council of Trade and Plantations reported in 1697 that "…both negroes and servants are much wanted here, which…is one of the causes of the decay of trade in Maryland." While Maryland's earliest laborers were indentured servants, by the first decade of the 18th century, enslaved Africans comprised the larger proportion of the coerced workforce in the colony.[60] This divide widened as the century progressed and was exemplified by Dorsey labor practices.

White servitude and African chattel enslavement coexisted in Baltimore County, particularly in iron production. In fact, Baltimore and Anne Arundel Counties possessed the largest number of indentured servants by percentage for the entire state, driven largely by the dominant iron and tobacco industries in those regions.[61] During the 18th century, most coerced workers in the Chesapeake region were enslaved, although there was a mixture of various types of laborers that depended upon economics and cyclical needs. John Bezís-Selfa observes "Ironworks, like crucibles, functioned as melting pots of a sort in which capital, people, and ideas from Europe, Africa and North America met, collided, and melded to form something new and uniquely American."[62]

By the time that Dorsey ironworks commenced in 1755, there was a definite hierarchy that placed indentured servants at the top of the coerced labor pecking order. When the first indentured servants were *spirited* to Maryland in the early decades of the 17th century as part of the *headright system*, the treatment was horrific and many did not live to see their freedom.[63] The Maryland Assembly stipulated in 1666 that the duration of the average indentured servant would be five years; however, in practice that time was habitually extended when laborers were punished for often petty offenses.[64] The use of indentured servants by tobacco growers in Maryland was much more prolific than that of the iron industry; however, since

many ironmasters grew tobacco simultaneously, there were many servants that were utilized for cross purposes. In many cases, ships from England collecting Maryland tobacco would bring servants on the voyage for trade. It has been documented that many of these early laborers were also working in the iron industry. The majority of indentured servants in the Chesapeake region completed their contract and achieved a relatively secure position in society.[65] Ultimately, indentured servants did not completely fulfill the needs of ironmasters as they moved away from the industry once their terms expired.

While the racial demographic of indentured servants was what we would today label White, there were some variances in the ethnicities. On occasion, iron masters were given the opportunity to advertise or request freewillers that possessed specific skill sets. Many ironmasters started advertising for men from Germany, as they were renowned for their ironmaking skills and many were willing to come to the colonies to work in the iron industry with the hopes of land ownership in their future. Most of these German workers entered British North America as part of the *redemptioner system* whereby immigrants signed contracts indicating that there were individuals in the colonies that were willing to pay their passage after disembarking. If their passage was not payed, they were handled as indentured servants.[66] There are no extant records indicating that the Dorseys took part in this form of recruitment, but several other iron businesses in the area including Principio and Baltimore Ironworks took part in the practice, and often in labor customs, many other iron ventures followed common practices in the region.[67]

Much of what we know about the *freewillers* that worked within the Dorsey iron business is derived from the runaway advertisements published during the time.[68] Because indentured servants were bound by a contract, owners of their labor attempted to retrieve their workers in much the same way that enslaved Africans were pursued. The Dorseys were quite ardent in seeking their escaped indentured servants offering substantial rewards for their return. Most of the runaway ads placed by the Dorsey iron business ran in the *Maryland Gazette* published in Annapolis.

An advertisement offering £15 reward was printed in the *Maryland Gazette* on September 25, 1774 by Samuel Dorsey listing three servants that escaped Dorsey's Forge. (Image 4) All three men were listed as being born in England. The physical descriptions of each man are quite detailed including their stolen

clothes. It appears that these three men had run previously because all three donned iron collars. The most important fact gleaned from this ad is that the three men escaped together, a common occurrence amongst servants at the time, although three with iron collars at the same time was rare.[69] Many freewillers fled their contracts as a result of brutal physical punishments or poor work or living conditions. While there was the opportunity to pursue legal recourse for such treatment, most indentured servants did not receive satisfaction.[70]

Iron collars were utilized on all three categories of coerced workers after one escape attempt. These iron collars were made at the forge and would have either had spikes or bells on them to alert the authorities. Upon capture, a heavy iron collar was placed on escapees to inflict punishment and to deter them from fleeing again. Collars were often used to punish other crimes such as theft or extreme drunkenness. Spiked ends were present to prevent the wearer from moving into any areas with trees or bushes. Four spikes sticking out would have made it impossible for a person wearing it to lie down or to lean up against any surface. Other punishment devices included muzzles or iron masks, used to restrict an unfree person's ability to talk and eat.[71]

Clothes were an important feature in the runaway ads of all types of coerced workers. Clothing was generally provided by the Dorseys and, therefore, did not belong to the workers. Running off with the owner's clothes was considered stealing and was an offense that could lengthen an indentured worker's contract. Producing garments was expensive and the clothes worn within the iron industry had to be durable to withstand high temperatures and brutal labor conditions. Garments revealed a great deal about the nature of the work in which the laborer was engaged. Osnaburg shirts and trousers were worn by most workers on the Dorsey plantations because it was a course heavy fabric that was inexpensive and could withstand extensive wear. The leather pants worn by escapee William George would have been protective gear in any form of manual labor, especially ironwork. As the Atlantic world was transforming into a consumerist environment, clothing also became an important status symbol amongst the workers themselves as they might try to emulate those of a higher class.

The advertisement also seems to suggest that these three men were agricultural workers rather than ironworkers; however, all aspects of the Dorsey iron plantations were dedicated to the same end, profit for the owners. Quite often, agricultural workers associated with iron business were growing crops necessary to keep the operation running. All crops important to feed the workers as well as run the distillery that provided alcohol. It was important that the Dorsey's retrieved this valuable "property" as the investment in indentured servants was more expensive than convict servants or enslaved Africans. There was more money to be lost on these servants than the other coerced laborers. There is not information regarding the ultimate return or imprisonment of these three men in any of the Dorsey records, but it is also difficult to discern whether they were able to remain undetected upon escape.

Other advertisements were placed during the same time period in the *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser* and further reveals that many freewillers escaped in groups. The ad for the exodus of four servants in May 1774 did not indicate that the men were wearing collars, thereby this could have been their first attempt at evading their contract. What is also interesting to note is that Patrick Redman and Mulatto Thomas Duglass were listed in more than one newspaper. An advertisement for the two was also listed in the *Maryland Gazette* a few days prior. What is different from the previous ad listing is the amount of the reward, and the fact that one of the runaways is listed as a mulatto. It is unclear whether Thomas Duglass was enslaved chattel, but what is notable is that they seemed to have run together and that both took clothes that the Dorseys considered stolen. A higher reward is offered for Duglass which suggests that he might have been chattel, however this brings up the issue of the social relationship between Black and White laborers. Did Duglass and Redman have a close relationship or was their mutual escape a matter of convenience? It is impossible to answer this question utilizing extant records; however, it is fair to surmise that some connection existed.

Another notable point concerning these advertisements is the time period. The years listed were at the very beginning of the American Revolution. Laborers escaped their indenture in order to join the military on both sides, but most ardently with the Loyalists. Lord Dunmore's Proclamation released in 1775 stated "I do hereby farther declare all indented servants, Negroes, or others (appertaining to rebels) free, that are

able and willing to bear arms, they joining his Majesty's troops."[72] Upon learning about the possibility of receiving freedom before the end of their contract, many coerced workers took advantage of this opportunity.

Interaction between White and Black laborers was constant. White servants were often required to train enslaved laborers in the special skills needed for ironwork. Ronald Lewis notes that "…by pairing blacks and skilled white ironworkers, a crew of slaves could be trained for the most skilled and high-paying positions at the works…it also had the advantage of providing a means of control over white workers."[73] This potentially was the case with Redman and Duglass. The tactic offered benefit to the Dorseys as more enslaved workers were trained with skills, White workers could be phased out of the business altogether, which offered a greater profit margin to the owners. The reaction by White indentured servants was mixed. While it offered more control over their daily work life, many considered the obligation beneath them and did not want to mix with enslaved workers.

Enslaved workers were less costly and ultimately a sounder business investment, so by the time that the Dorseys entered the iron industry, the norm dictated almost the exclusive usage of African chattel at all of their iron plantations. Maryland iron producers utilized enslaved chattel fairly exclusively during the 18th century and virtually pushed European servants out of the industry as laborers.[74] As a result, the numbers of freewiller servants entering not only Maryland, but all of the colonies was in decline in the decades prior to the Revolutionary War. Fewer indentured servants were heading to the colonies by the 1755 founding of Dorsey's Forge, and by that time a different European laborer was making their way to the iron industry in Maryland – the convict laborer.

"Very great numbers of said convicts in this County"

During the early 18th centuries, England was experiencing unprecedented levels of crime. Jails were bursting at the seams and there was no real cohesive criminal justice system in the country. This changed with the passage of the Transportation Act in 1718, making the passage of convicts to the North American colonies the only major governmental policy that dealt with the crime problem.[75] Between 1718 and 1744,

7,010 convicts were transported to the colonies, and of those, 97% were sent to Maryland or Virginia. At the time that the Dorseys started their iron plantations, convicts comprised 12% of all laborers in Baltimore and Anne Arundel counties. A large percentage of these convicts were engaged in industrial labor.[76] Maryland was the first colony to which England sent their convicts and often the governmental liaison that handled the convict scheme on the colonial side was located in Baltimore Towne.

Convict laborers were a better investment than were freewiller servants, although they were legally handled in much the same manner. While a general contract for indentured servants was 4-5 years, it was seven and fourteen years for convict servants, providing extended and more experienced labor for a lower price. Most ironmasters wanted to see their workers before committing to a contract, and many indentured servants signed their contracts before leaving Europe. Convict laborers were generally placed on a boat and transported to the colonies, and their contracts were purchased by employers upon arrival. This was a better deal for the employer as he could see what he was getting rather than being forced to accept whatever was sent. Furthermore, many of the contracts for convict laborers were purchased with tobacco rather than sterling. The largest British company functioning in the business of convict laborers was Stevenson, Randolph & Cheston, with offices located in Baltimore Towne. Cheston resided in Baltimore and was in charge of "…gathering tobacco, wheat, corn and pig iron for the trip back to Bristol after the convicts were unloaded."[77]

Most of the convicts sent to Maryland were utilized for tobacco cultivation, and the Dorsey family initially conformed to that practice. Those that did not work in agriculture, however, almost always ended up in an ironworks. Because the Dorseys sought to diversify their economic activities, they desired laborers that could work both in the tobacco fields as well as the furnaces. After 1750, England sent out hundreds of Scottish war prisoners that were often sent to ironworks in Maryland and Virginia. Scotts were utilized primarily as colliers, but many were also used to dig ore and fell trees in gangs along with enslaved Africans.[78]

The relationship between the convicts and the enslaved was complicated. Considered a lower class than the freewillers, convicts still enjoyed a higher status than chattel. On some occasions, convicts and enslaved

Africans saw their similar predicament as a common cause and decided to escape together. Because enslaved Africans were more economically valuable, they often received less harsh treatment than convicts and freewillers. Both indentured and convict laborers were temporary workers and chattel was perpetual, so greater care was given to their living circumstances. Convicts were also an undesired necessity for the Dorseys. Many convicts continued their criminal behavior in the colonies forcing one Baltimore County observer to lament "…the great number of convicts of late imported into this Province have not only committed divers, murders, burglaries and other felonies, but debauched several of its formerly innocent and honest inhabitants" and that the "very great numbers of said convicts in the County encourages them to be more frequent in the perpetration of their villanies."[79]

Just as was the case with freewillers, much can be gleaned from the runaway advertisements that were placed by the Dorsey family. Three advertisements dated between 1761 and 1770 and all appeared in the *Maryland Gazette*. There is a concerted effort to distinguish these runaways as convicts rather than freewillers. By the 1760s, there were very few freewillers utilized on the Dorsey iron plantations and the neighbors were well-aware of this labor transformation. These ads were placed to enlist the greater community to return property to their rightful owner. Area residents had many misgivings about the presence of convicts in their environs. While freewillers were not exactly revered, convicts were held in greater disdain, and by defining such in the newspaper, there would have been enormous desire to return said criminal to their rightful place in society.

These particular convict servants were a bit older than average servant. The average age of most convict servants was between 18 and 24. The men in these ads are all over the age of 25 with two being 40-years-old. It is likely that these men were skilled and not utilized within the Dorsey agricultural endeavors but part of the iron work force. Their surnames indicate that they were likely British or Irish, conforming to the norms at that time. There is also considerable attention given to their physical appearance, especially that of Thomas Phillips and James Callis. There is even meticulous attention given to the dialect of the runaways. It was doubtful that Caleb Dorsey had such intimate knowledge of the appearance or speech patterns of these workers, more likely that the founder, George Teall at the time, kept meticulous

descriptions of servants on file. Convict laborers were more likely to attempt escape than freewillers. It is also interesting to note the extreme detail given to the clothes stolen by Phillips and Callis. Because of a growing consumer culture, the itemization of these luxury garments serves to further expose the depravity of the runaways and emphasize the monetary loss of the Dorseys. The frill depicted illustrates the material difference between servant and master and reveals that these two men have options to erase that differentiation.

Finally, the revelation that the runaways possessed forged passes illuminates the fact that the Dorseys viewed convict servants on their iron plantation in a childlike fashion with the Dorseys as authoritarian parental figures doling out permission for free movement. Surveillance was a major concern within the realm of coerced labor. None of the three categories of workers would have remained or been productive if there wasn't some a level of scrutiny regarding their whereabouts. While there is no mention of iron collars utilized on these runaways, the Dorseys were very careful with constricting the movement of these essential laborers. Overall, convict laborers were treated in much the same manner as enslaved Africans, with obvious exception that there was an expectation of eventual freedom.

"Caleb Dorsey got and obtained the Negroe Slaves aforesaid"

By far, the most abundant category of coerced labor on the Dorsey iron plantations were enslaved Africans. An 18th century traveler to Maryland noted "…the forges and furnaces are all worked by negroes, who seem to be particularly suited to such an occupation."[80] The first iron plantation in the Chesapeake region was Alexander Spotswood's business endeavors in Virginia in 1714. While he commenced with unfree White workers, he eventually became the initiator of enslaved labor in both Virginia and Maryland ironworks.[81] Dr. Charles Carroll, one of the owners of the Baltimore Ironworks advised "…get Young Negro lads to put under the Smiths, Carpenters, Founders, Finers and Filers as also to get a certain number of able Slaves to fill the Furnace, Stock the Bridge, Raise Ore, and Cart and burn the same."[82] The solution to labor needs in all Baltimore area iron plantations became African enslavement.

By the opening of Elkridge Furnace, most Chesapeake ironmasters depended upon enslaved Blacks as the primary labor in their businesses. Freewillers and convict servants were viewed as less malleable and

the rising cost of White unfree labor forced most ironmasters to use them only for skilled labor and utilize the enslaved for unskilled labor. It is important to note that enslaved Africans were also performing skilled tasks on the Dorsey iron plantations. The typical 18th century Maryland furnace required a labor force of about 70-100 workers, and on the Dorsey plantation the largest percentage were enslaved Africans.

Enslaved Africans preferred industrial work over agricultural work, therefore being on an iron plantation rather than a tobacco field held a great deal of status within the enslaved community. Iron plantations were always rural endeavors in heavily wooded locations. This meant that much of the work was done independent of direct surveillance. Such tasks as felling trees and mining ore was accomplished without an overseer to scrutinize speed or quality of work. While there was likely a White laborer present to ensure some level of productivity, there was a likelihood that they too were unfree and less likely to be physically brutal. Industrial laborers also tended to work on the task system rather than the gang system.[83] This meant that workers could regulate their production, which led to more freedom with regards to their work, but more importantly, more freedom of movement overall.

Another benefit of the isolation of the Dorsey's iron plantations was the ability of the enslaved to maintain cultural values and traditions. Cultural genocide was a very important tactic utilized by enslavers to control chattel within every aspect of life. Those unfree Blacks that worked on iron plantations were more likely to retain language, religious beliefs, foodways, and other forms of cultural expression than enslaved individuals working in more traditional circumstances. Furthermore, the overwork system was an option for industrial workers. Overwork meant that enslaved iron workers had options for time off or the ability to acquire personal property. For most enslaved Blacks, personal property was not a possibility because they themselves were property. The enslaved could decide for themselves what to purchase. According to John Bezis-Selfa, personal property was so important that enslaved men "Cato and Coffy at Elkridge Furnace purchased padlocks to safeguard their possessions." [84] The fact that this level of property ownership among the enslaved was permitted by the Dorseys is unique. The fact that personal property was respected by the Dorseys is a great example of why enslaved iron workers received a higher level of status.

The isolated nature of iron plantations also had an important impact on the families of the enslaved workers. In an effort to control behavior and production, ironmasters encouraged romantic relationships amongst their chattel. While legal marriage was not possible, many enslaved men maintained a household that included a partner and their offspring. The European concept of a nuclear family was not similar to African notions; enslaved Blacks adapted to that construct and worked hard to maintain those connections. The difficulty in most instances, notions of masculinity, manhood and what it meant to be a husband and father was something unattainable by enslaved men due to the fact that their status as property precluded them from not only controlling themselves, but their children as well. On many iron plantations, enslaved children remained with their parents and the male children were often taught the craft of their fathers in an effort to increase their value in the eyes of the ironmaster. If a male child had a skill that was valuable to the ironmaster, he was more likely to remain on that plantation and therefore the family could remain intact.[85] Stable family relationships were also thought by ironmasters to help maintain discipline and reduce the risk of escape.

Being head of the household was out of the question for the average enslaved man. Enslaved ironworkers, however, had a different experience in that their level of freedom and autonomy allowed for them to adhere to traditional notions of masculinity. In addition to freedom of movement, the overwork system provided enslaved men the opportunity to play the role of family provider. Many improved their family's standard of living by purchasing extra articles of clothes, larger food provisions, and items of luxury for the household. This opportunity was increased if the enslaved worker was a skilled artisan.

There is no evidence that enslaved women were active on the Dorsey plantations as ironworkers but were incredibly important to the overall profit of the business by providing other important services. Women were responsible for providing food and other support for their families with provisions from the company but were also able to create items for the family's usage as well as the community. The Dorseys purchased both food and handicrafts produced by enslaved women on the plantation. According to the record books in 1762, "Phoebe and 'Old Kate' earned eight and seventeen shilling respectively by selling their peas to the Elk Ridge Furnace company."[86] This type of activity linked the value of these women to

their productivity and allowed the women to help sustain the family in ways that the typical enslaved woman was not able to accomplish.

Retaining culture was vital for *saltwater* chattel, those arriving directly from Africa rather than being born in the colonies. While iron masters were more comfortable with American-born chattel, there was an understanding that both West Africans possessed metalworking skills that were revered by all ethnicities. Saltwater chattel had a difficult time acculturating to European ironmaking traditions. In West Africa, ironmaking was spiritual in nature and often related to the warrior class. Not just any citizen could engage in iron work, it was either a birthright or one was chosen by the community. European notions of ironmaking were rooted in commercial desires for profit and wealth. West African ironmakers were not only honored artisans, but also healers and in some cultures considered magicians.[87] Furthermore, iron production in African culture was very gendered in nature. Women were involved in mining and creating the charcoal, but men smelted iron and were in charge of the furnaces. The iron furnace was considered female and fashioned to mimic the female body. In many West African cultures making iron therefore had sexual connotations.[88]

It is believed that the Dorseys had saltwater slaves on their iron plantations; however, it does not appear that they were recruited. There was a "Gola Jack" owned at the Elkridge Furnace between the years 1761-1764.[89] Generally, saltwater slaves from the Angola region often included the moniker "Gola" in their names. In addition, many Baltimore area furnaces listed names such as "Mandingo Sam," "Negro Capt. Ibo," and other such names indicating specific ethnicities of their chattel.[90] Since area ironmasters shared labor practices as well as actual unfree Black laborers, it is possible that the Dorseys possessed additional saltwater chattel on their plantations, although not specifically designated as such. Most ironworkers preferred to purchase American-born individuals. There was a belief that "country-born" Blacks were already acculturated to European norms and therefore less dangerous and apt to attempt escape. They already spoke English and had already acquired immunity to European diseases. By the time that the Dorseys opened their iron plantations, enslaved ironworkers born in the colonies outnumbered those that were born in Africa.[91]

An important differentiation amongst enslaved ironworkers depended upon skill level. While unskilled work was crucial to the entirety of the Dorsey ironworks, skilled laborers were consequential. The most valuable workers were the forge men. The term forge man was an umbrella term that was inclusive of a keeper, caster, molder, finery man, or even a blacksmith. Becoming a skilled forge man entailed a long time to master the trade, and by the time that the Dorseys started their businesses, there were a number of skilled enslaved ironmen in the region. Many had been trained by White servants, but many gleaned the skills just by being on the iron plantation from childhood. A skilled enslaved worker was much more financially valuable to its owner than an unskilled worker. In 1768, the average enslaved forge man would have cost £230 while an unskilled enslaved worker of the same age would have an asking price of £75.[92]

As early as 1759, the account book of Elk Ridge Furnace listed enslaved skilled men "Negro Jacob" as a blacksmith, "Great Jack" as a founder and caster, "Coffee," a forgeman, and one unnamed man was listed as a wheelwright. In the ledger book the following year for Elk Ridge Furnace, there was no mention of individual men, however an entry "Negroes at Coaling," likely not the head collier yet an important component of plantation. In 1772, Caleb Dorsey willed to Edward Dorsey "my Negro Founder called Boy Jack." It is believed that "Boy Jack" was the son of "Great Jack," from whom he likely learned the trade.[93]

In addition to skilled chattel that labored directly for the furnaces, there is also information related to an enslaved man that made shoes for laborers on all of the Dorsey properties. In 1742, Caleb the Elder willed to his son "one mulatto man named Jack by trade a shoemaker."[94] It appears that shoemaking on the Dorsey properties was maintained by enslaved individuals at least until the turn of the century. Part of Edward Dorsey's 1799 inventory indicated that there was a "leather loft" that contained fifty-three pairs of "negro dble soled shoes worth £20."[95] While not created by the original Jack willed by Caleb the Elder, someone was trained in the art of shoemaking through the decades to ensure that the Dorsey property continued to be self-sufficient.

Part of the remaining record of Edward Dorsey for 1787 contains a partial list of enslaved workers at Dorsey's Forge. The record includes "Prince," who was listed as a forgeman' "Sam," a striker at the blacksmith shop, "Guy," a waggoneer, "Long Charles" listed as a finery man, "Old Charles," categorized

a miller, "Joe", a blacksmith, "Boy Jim," a forgeman; "Dick," listed as a forge carpenter; and "Yellow Will," a forgeman.[96] It is evident that with the exception of the waggoneer, all of these men were skilled workers, and thus very valuable to the Dorsey family. All of the names listed are European names, so it becomes difficult to determine whether these men were African or country born individuals. As a part of cultural genocide, any name that saltwater chattel arrived at the colonies with were stripped away and a name easier for their owners to pronounce and remember was replaced. Also, note the modifiers listed with the names of the workers. This was a method to distinguish between enslaved individuals with the same first name. Physical characteristics such as skin color and age would become part of the worker's names such as "Long Charles" and "Old Charles," or "Yellow Will."

Enslaved Africans were obtained by the Dorsey family utilizing two different methods – outright purchase or leasing. While many of the enslaved individuals were passed down through wills and there was the offspring of already present chattel, those that would work on the iron plantations were most often purchased. Early bills of sale exist as part of the Elk Ridge Furnace papers for 1753 and 1757 for negroes, with no indication as to where they would eventually labor. Offered as evidence in a later legal case, a 1785 bill of sale stating "to Edward Dorsey of Caleb, amongst others, negroes James and Harry" also lists land and other items to be sold at the time.[97]

In addition to purchasing a good number of chattel for their iron plantations, the Dorseys experienced financial profit from the sale of enslaved Africans as well. In the year following the close of the Revolutionary War Edward Dorsey placed in *The Maryland Gazette* an advertisement not only for land, but "At the same time, will be sold, on three years credit, a number of valuable negroes." It would appear that these men were likely iron workers because the ad appears to be an attempt for the family to move out of the iron business due to the mention of land "on which stands the Elk-Ridge furnace, with sundry other improvements." An advertisement dated 1798 in the *Federal Gazette & Baltimore Daily Advertiser* placed by Edward Dorsey on behalf of Dorsey's Forge boasts "A NUMBER of likely NEGRO MEN, GIRLS and BOYS, on 12 months credit, the purchasers giving bond, with good security." What becomes apparent from both advertisements is the sale of chattel on terms of credit. Mortgaging slaves was an immensely popular

practice at the time. It was beneficial for buyers for they did not have to possess the entire price before making acquisitions, but it was also advantageous for the Dorseys because credit sales expanded the pool of potential buyers, thereby increasing the probability of sale. Slave mortgages were the genesis of the American credit system that we know today.[98]

Another method of procuring enslaved laborers for the Dorsey iron plantations was the practice of hiring or leasing. Leasing was a common practice whereby chattel was transferred temporarily between persons, firms, or institutions for specific reasons. This was a customary practice amongst iron plantations throughout Maryland, and the Dorsey family utilized this labor tactic extensively. This system was beneficial to all parties involved. Owners with surplus enslaved individuals could reap a profit on the superfluous workers, and those hiring could secure labor for certain tasks without the burden and cost of actually owning the individuals outright. If ironmasters found individuals that worked extremely well within their plantation, the same workers were often leased year after year. This gave the enslaved workers a great deal of power over their leasing arrangements. Records throughout the Chesapeake region reveal that workers would either request or refuse being hired to certain ironmasters due to the treatment that was experienced on a previous visit.[99]

Contracts were drawn up between owner and renter that spelled out the details of the arrangement from dates of service and level of insurance, to amount of food provided and the clothing of each person.[100] Skilled workers demanded a higher rental price than unskilled. The hiring of enslaved workers across various iron plantations created interesting kinship ties throughout the Chesapeake region. Often, entire families were leased in an effort to maintain ties, but more often families were broken for the period of the lease. Also, children were hired away from their families in the name of acquiring a skill on iron plantations. Furthermore, leased chattel would form new family ties on distant iron plantations that would be disrupted when the lease ended. If offspring occurred due to new ties during a lease, the contracts would need to be amended to determine which White man would become the owner of that new chattel.[101]

Leasing chattel within the iron industry followed stringent seasonal schedules. Generally, ironmasters started recruiting in the autumn for the following year, usually beginning in January after the holidays and

when trees were felled for the creation of charcoal. One location Elk Ridge Furnace sought to lease chattel was Frederick, Maryland, a city a distance of fifty miles from Elkridge. Fielder Gaunt built the Fieldera Furnace in the mid 18th century and engaged in slave leasing with the Dorseys. In 1766, Caleb Dorsey leased 25 slaves from Gaunt with a distinction made between those that would be part of the ironworks and those that were listed as "other." There were twelve men that appear to have been leased for the furnace named Scipio, Syphax, Cesar, Rufus, Pompey, Fuller, Sandy, Ben, Michael, Austino, Charles and Anthony along with three women; Clarimento, Kate and Clarissa, and one boy named Lincoln. It appears that some of these same individuals were leased again in 1774 as part of a tripartite indenture[102] between Dorsey and Gaunt. The names Scipio, Syphax, Rufus, Pompey, Fuller, Sandy, Ben, Michael, Austin (not Austino, but likely the same man), Charles and Anthony along with Clementie (rather than Carlimento), Kate, and Clarison (rather than Clarissa), and Lincoln are present again eight years later. This contract also mentions at length land to be utilized by Caleb Dorsey for felling wood for his furnace but ends with the phrase "Caleb Dorsey got and obtained the Negroe Slaves aforesaid."

Just as was the case with White servants, runaway advertisements relay a great deal about enslaved workers on the Dorsey iron plantations. Again, great attention is given to the appearance of the escapees in all of the announcements. Such physical characteristics as age, height and size are to be expected, but there is also mention of scars and accent. There is also the detail of clothing. "Tom" was also able to speak English and French quite well, an uncommon fact in the Maryland colony at that time. What is added in the examples of the enslaved individuals is information regarding former owners. For "Tom," there is detail regarding former owners "Mr. Thomas Ringgold, in New-Town upon Chester River, to Capt. Michael Earle, near Frederick Town upon Sassafras River, but last of all to Mr. Henry Pearce, at Herring-Run in Cecil County. The inclusion of past ownership provides a clue to the reader where "Tom" might be running. Kinship relationships at any of those three previous owners could be inspiration for his escape. The ad also includes the fact that "Tom" is accustomed to traveling on the waterways as another clue to where he may be located.

Another point made about "Tom" is the fact that his mood is "sullen." The usage of this and similar terms (somber, gloomy, dull) is ubiquitous in runaway slave ads. The indication that the enslaved individual was in some degree "bad-tempered" shows Caleb Dorsey's level of frustration with "Tom," but also serves as a warning to those searching. In hindsight, it would seem puzzling that any enslaved person at this time would not be sullen, wishing to escape their plight for either a better life or in an effort to locate their loved ones who they were so brutally separated. "Tom" was a typical enslaved runaway in many aspects; he was male, he ran alone during the late summer or early fall, spoke English fluently, possessed some type of recognizable marks, and was notably unhappy with his situation.[103]

While "Jem" was not listed as sullen, his physical characteristics are the central component of this man that ran from the Curtis Creek furnace. Just as was "Tom," "Jem" was a "squat well made Fellow," but he also "turns out his Toes very much." His previous owner, "Samuel Waters in Prince George's County" is mentioned as a means to determine his direction of travel. The discussion of his clothing is brief and there is no indication of his language skills. What is notable about both of these advertisements is that neither man was wearing an iron collar. This suggests that neither man had attempted to run from the Dorsey plantations previously. Since the Dorseys had shown a propensity towards utilizing iron collars on coerced workers that attempted escape previously, it is notable that iron collars were not placed on either "Tom" or "Jem." However, since these two men ran from two different iron plantations owned by the same family reveals the likelihood of the similarity of brutal treatment by the Dorseys.

A different runaway slave advertisement announces the flight of "Toby" and "Will." First, all of the previous announcements were placed in newspapers published in Maryland, and this particular ad was placed in a Philadelphia periodical calculating that these two men might have run that far. (Image 16) Furthermore, "Toby" and Will" ran together, and both men were wearing iron collars. These two gentlemen attempted escape previously and perhaps together. They were the same age, and both men were described as having "a yellow complexion," an indication that they were likely of mixed race. We don't know if "Toby" and "Will" were related or if they were the product of rape by a Dorsey or other White man in authority, however history teaches that being products of mixed ancestry did not offer the privilege that

many assume. Their experiences working at Elk Ridge Furnace were brutal enough to prompt escape. As the enslaved fled, ironmasters exerted more controls and increased violent punishments, which fueled the ongoing cycle or repeated escape attempts.

There are no primary sources describing the type of overseers the Dorseys might have been on their iron plantations. It appears from those records that do exist that their treatment complied with what was typical in the region during that era. Research indicates that systems of control, surveillance, and punishment in the Middle Colonies was "unbearable for both servants and slaves" that led to "increasing violence and increasing flight from violence."[104] The iron industry was exceedingly dangerous, and the coerced laborers charged with this work would not have been compliant with the controls exerted. While the experiences of each category of unfree workers were dissimilar, there was a commonality with the brutality of the work and the treatment. Upon reading the advertisement for the partial sale of the Dorsey iron plantations, the ultimate purpose of the business was the economic advancement of the family with little regard to the abuses of the land or the people who labored upon it. "This furnace, held in company with Mr. Caleb Dorsey, is noted for producing iron of the best quality, and has many peculiar advantages…for the use of this furnace"[105]

Redefined Notions

The Dorsey iron businesses provide excellent opportunities for enhanced recognition of the nuanced nature of 18th century labor practices in both the industrial and artisan realms. The division of labor employed by the Dorsey family was indicative of the era and region. By the end of the Revolutionary War, the simultaneous tripartite utilization of coerced labor for iron production shifted to the almost exclusive employment of enslaved Africans in Maryland. It reflects the growing appreciation of the economic benefits of owning one's labor outright. The transformation also serves as an insightful commentary on the racial and ethnic hierarchy in the overall social landscape of the region before, during, and after the National Era.

Prior to the Dorsey iron ventures, 17th century events in Virginia solidified the desire for a social hierarchy based upon skin color was privileged over condition of unfreedom. Historians such as Ira Berlin contend that "Bacon's Rebellion was an event that began to redefine notions of race on the North American

continent, or at least in the Chesapeake region."[106] Although held in disdain by the propertied class, there was a concerted effort to encourage an affiliation with laborers having phenotypically White features to avoid any solidarity with African descended peoples of any classification. Dorseys, along with other elites, advanced this distinction following the Revolutionary War as Enlightenment notions of equality were sparked in the minds of Blacks.

Because the Dorseys were in competition with other ironmasters for trained workhands in Maryland, owning the labor outright became a way to ensure that the intensive perennial work at the furnace, forge, and supportive areas were able to maintain production. While the Revolutionary War temporarily halted the transatlantic trade of enslaved Africans, the transportation of convict labor was terminated entirely in the aftermath of the conflict.[107] Simultaneously, the remaining indentured servants that were brought into Maryland were increasingly utilized by ironmasters to be overseers and intermediaries between owners and enslaved.[108] Therefore, rather than Black and White ironworkers laboring side by side in the most brutal work, the hierarchical gap between indentured Whites and enslaved Africans widened. Enslaved Blacks performed the most dangerous and menial work while Whites supervised. This coincided with the solidification of the growing racial stratification in American society.

The Dorsey iron ventures, therefore, become a significant example of the transformation of both the nature of coerced labor in the 18th century and the social construction of race in the American context. The Dorsey's businesses were sold to the Ellicott family in 1815 and became the Avalon Iron Works.[109] By this time, the bulk of the workforce were enslaved Africans and this trend continued until the abolition of enslavement in Maryland in December 1864.[110] The utilization of enslaved Africans dominated the unskilled labor force in Maryland while propertyless Whites maintained positions as overseers, continuing the trend towards race loyalty over class loyalty in the U.S. social structure. This becomes the foundation for racial animosity abundant in the late 19th century labor movement, therefore, the study of the early coerced labor on the Dorsey iron plantation can facilitate a better appreciation of race and labor practices in subsequent American history.

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[3] Fogleman, Aaron S. "From Slaves, Convicts, and Servants to Free Passengers: The Transformation of Immigration in the Era of the American Revolution." *The Journal of American History* 85, no. 1 (1998): 43-76. Accessed August 30, 2020. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2568431, 43.

[4] Much of this law was concerned with romantic entanglements between Africans and English and the avoidance of offspring between these two parties. The document reads in part: "…any priest, minister, magistrate or other person whatsoever, within this Province, that shall…join in marriage any negro or other slave, to any English or other white woman servant, free-born as aforesaid, shall forfeit any pay the sum of ten thousand pounds of tobacco…"

from Maryland, General Assembly of. 1664. "An Act Concerning Negroes and Other Slaves" *Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly of Maryland.* September, 1664.

[5] Varver, Anthony. *Bound with an Iron Chain: The Untold Story of How the British Transported 50,000 Convicts to Colonial America*. Westborough, MA: Pickpocket Publishing, 2011, 7.

[6] Ekrich, Roger. *Bound for America: The Transportation of British Convicts to the Colonies, 1718-1775*. New York: Clarendon/Oxford University Press, 1987; 7.

[7] I am well aware of the argument made in such works as *White Cargo* by Jordan and Walsh that contend that "It has been argued that white servants could not have be truly enslaved because there was generally a time limit to their enforced labour, whereas black slavery was for life. However, slavery is not defined by time but by the experience of its subject." (page 15) While I have no argument with referring to indentured Whites as enslaved, there must be a distinction between the enslaved African and the indentured White. Both were coerced laborers but being personal property for life is an important distinction, especially when that status is passed on to one's offspring. While not always fulfilled, there was always a promise of not only freedom, but possibly land or other compensation. Except for the few indentured Africans in certain regions, that was never of African servitude. White indentured servants had a greater opportunity to blend in due to phenotypical similarities to free White citizens. Furthermore, the time frame for the usage of indentured was decades where enslaved chattel was centuries. Therefore, while the experiences of White indentured servants were horrific and inhumane, I do not consider the two forms of coerced labor to equal.

[8] Fuchs, Ronald W. "At Elk Ridge Furneis As You See, William Williams He Made Me." *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*. Winter 1996, Vol XXII, No. 2; 45.

[9] McGrain, John W. n.d. *From Pig Iron to Cotton Duck: A History of Manufacturing Villages in Baltimore County.* Vol. I. Towson, MD: Baltimore County Public Library. The preferred varieties of trees at this time were hardwoods including hickory, chestnut, and oak as they made the best charcoal for iron manufacturing purposes.

[10] Warfield, J.D. *Founders of Anne Arundel and Howard Counties, Maryland*. Baltimore, MD: Kohn & Pollock Publishers, 1905; 339.

[11] Lewis, Ronald L. *Coal, Iron and Slaves: Industrial Slavery in Maryland and Virginia, 1715-1865*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1979, 11.

[12] Dorsey, Clement. *The General Public Statutory Law and Public Local Law of the State of Maryland: From the Year 1692 to 1839 Inclusive with Annotations Thereto, and a Copious Index*. Baltimore, MD: John D. Toy Publishers, 1840; 1074.

[13] Singewald, Joseph T. *Report on the Iron Ores of Maryland with an Account of the Iron Industry.* Baltimore, MD; The Johns Hopkins Press, 1911, 131-2. "As has already been stated, or was first discovered on the Patapsco River, and this section was one of the earliest sources of ore, and also the most important source during this period. In 1724, the Principio Company acquired rights to the ore on Gorsuch Point, and in 1727 to that on Whetstone Point. These ores were the carbonates of the Arundel formation, and they were the mainstay of the early furnaces. The first ten furnaces in the province, erected in the period from 1722 to 1760, were located in the area in which the Arundel ores occur."

[14] Bining, A. C. *British Regulation of the Colonial Iron Trade*. Philadelphia: Univ. of Philadelphia Press, 1933; 178.

[15] Whitely, Henry. 1878. *Iron-Making in the Colony of Maryland: 1720-1780.* Elkton, MD: The Cecil Whig.

[16] Ibid

[17] Diggs, Robert Schnepfe. 1937. "The Early History of Elkridge Landing." Baltimore: Tau Beta Pi, November 26, 1.

[18] *The Dorsey family: Descendants of Edward Darcy-Dorsey of Virginia and Maryland for Five Generations, and Allied Families* by Maxwell J. Dorsey, Jean Muir Dorsey and Nannie Ball Nimmo.

[19] Brugger, Robert J. *Maryland – A Middle Temperament, 1634-1980.* Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988, 42.

[20] Ibid, 2

[21] Dorsey, Clement. *The General Public Statutory Law and Public Local Law of the State of Maryland: From the Year 1692 to 1839 Inclusive with Annotations Thereto, and a Copious Index*. Baltimore, MD: John D. Toy Publishers, 1840; 127.

[22] Clemens, Paul G.E. "The Operation of an Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Tobacco Plantation." *Agricultural History* 49, no. 3 (1975): 517-31.

[23] Bezis-Selfa, John. 1993. "Planter Industrialists and Iron Oligarchs: A Comparative Prosopography of Early Anglo-American Ironmasters." *Business and Economic History*, 65.

[24] Ibid, 66

[25] Lewis, Ronald L. 1979. *Coal, Iron, and Slaves: Industrial Slavery in Maryland and Virginia, 1715-1865.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

[26] Maryland Chancery Records, Liber 91, Folio 419, Hall of Records, State of Maryland Archive.

[27] *Ad quod damnum* or *ad damnum* is a Latin phrase meaning "according to the harm" or "appropriate to the harm." It was used in tort law as a measure of damage inflicted, and implying a remedy, if one exists, ought to correspond specifically and only to the damage suffered. It was used in in colonial Maryland in this instance as a legal means for the government to provide land for the purpose of improving the trade with certain industries within the colony.

[28] Marks, Bayly Ellen. 1972. *Hilton Heritage.* Catonsville, MD: Catonsville Community College Press, 3.

[29] McGrain, John W. 1977. "The Development and Decline of Dorseys Forge." *Maryland Historical Magazine* .Vol 72, No. 3, Fall 1977; pp 346-352; 346.

[30] Warfield, J.D. *Founders of Anne Arundel and Howard Counties, Maryland*. Baltimore, MD: Kohn & Pollock Publishers, 1905, 340.

[31] Steffen, Charles G. *From Gentlemen to Townsmen: The Gentry of Baltimore County Maryland, 1600-1776*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1993, 52.

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[33] Singewald, Joseph T. *Report on the Iron Ores of Maryland with an Account of the Iron Industry.* Baltimore, MD; The Johns Hopkins Press, 1911, page 168.

[34] Ibid

[35] Marks, page 15

[36] Merrill, Philip J. and Aiono, Uluaipou-O-Malo. 1999. *Baltimore - Black America Series.* Charlston, SC: Arcadia Publishing; 1.

[37] Baltimore City Wills, Liber NH 26, Folio 376, Hall of Records, State of Maryland Archives

[38] Ridgely-Dorsey Papers, 1733-1885, MS 717, Maryland Historical Society.

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[41] McGrain, John W. 1977. "The Development and Decline of Dorseys Forge." *Maryland Historical Magazine*. Vol 72, No. 3, Fall 1977; pp 346-352; 349.

[42] Ibid

[43] Peirce, James Walter. *A Guide to Patapsco Valley Mill Sites: Our Valley's Contribution to Maryland's Industrial Revolution*. Clarksville, MD: AuthorHouse, 2004, 47.

[44] Warfield, J.D. *Founders of Anne Arundel and Howard Counties, Maryland*. Baltimore, MD: Kohn & Pollock Publishers, 1905, 310.

[45] McGrain, John W. 1977. "The Development and Decline of Dorseys Forge." *Maryland Historical Magazine*. Vol 72, No. 3, Fall 1977; pp 346-352; 349.

[46] Ibid

[47] Ibid

[48] 1807 Inventory, Anne Arundel County Testamentary Papers, Box 83, folder 70, Hall of Records.

[49] McGrain, John W. 1977. "The Development and Decline of Dorseys Forge." *Maryland Historical Magazine* .Vol 72, No. 3, Fall 1977; pp 346-352; 349.

[50] The historical signage is entitled "Iron Builds America" and reads "The area in which you are standing was the heart of an early 1800s iron-milling town. During the colonial period, raw pig iron was shipped from Elkridge to England in exchange for British-made products. As the American Revolution neared, America's infant industries began to make products to be used in America. On this site Caleb Dorsey's iron forge made musket parts for the American militia, and the Ellicott's Avalon Iron & Nail Works made rails for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. These industries helped win America's independence and ignite Maryland's industrialization."

[51] Bezis-Selfa, 39.

[52] Ibid

[53] Hillstrom, Kevin and Laurie Collier Hillstrom (eds.) *The Industrial Revolution in America: Iron and Steel, Railroads, Steam Shipping*. Santa Barbara, CA, ABC-CLIO, Inc.; 2005, 165.

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[60] Kellow, Margaret M.R. "Indentured Servitude in Eighteenth-Century Maryland," Social History, 17 (November 1984); 230.

[61] Ibid, 232.

[62] Bezis-Selfa, 6.

[63] *Spirits* were recruiting agents in the British Isles that in many cases would kidnap unwilling individuals to be coerced into indentured servitude. A *headright* was a legal grant of land to those making the journey to settle in North America. The *headrights system* was corrupted when individuals who could afford to do so, payed for indentured servants (and eventually enslaved Africans) to travel to the colonies, thereby receiving more land per person that settled. Technically, the *headrights system* lasted from 1618 until cancelled by the General Assembly in 1779.

[64] *Proceedings and Acts of the Assembly of Maryland*, April-May 1666, Archives of Maryland, 147.

[65] Fogleman, 47.

[66] Ibid, 51.

[67] Bezis-Selfa, 77-78 and 101-102.

[68] *Freewillers* are those indentured servants that signed their contracts willingly, contrasted by those that were convicts and sent to the colonies as punishment.

[69] Bezis-Selfa, 118.

[70] Jordan, Don and Michael Walsh. *White Cargo: The Forgotten History of Britain's White Slaves in America*. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2007, 122-124.

[71] Scott, B. G. "Iron 'Slave-Collars' from Lagore Crannog, Co. Meath." *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature* 78, 1978, page 222.

[72] Virginia. By his Execellency the Right Honourable John Earl of Dunmore, his Majesty's Lieutenant and Governour-General of the Colony and Dominion of Virginia, and Vice-admiral of the same. A proclamation Declaring martial law and to cause the same to be. Norfolk, 1775. Pdf. https://www.loc.gov/item/rbpe.1780180b/.

[73] Lewis, 31.

[74] Ibid, 51.

[75] According to Anthony Vaver in *Bound with an Iron Chain*, The full title of the act was "An Act (4 Geo.I, Cap. XI) For the Further Preventing of Robbery, Burglary and Other Felonies and For the More Effectual Transportation of Felons, and Unlawful Exporters of Wool; and for the Declaring the Law upon Some Points Relating to Pirates," 54.

[76] Ibid, 73.

[77] Ibid, 82.

[78] Bezis-Selfa, 87.

[79] Varver, Anthony. *Bound with an Iron Chain: The Untold Story of How the British Transported 50,000 Convicts to Colonial America*. Westborough, MA: Pickpocket Publishing, 2011, 189-190.

[80] Weld, Jr., Isaac, *Travels through the States of North America and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada During the Years 1795, 1796, 1797* (London, 1800), 178.

[81] Lewis, 391.

[82] "Account and Letter Books of Dr. Charles Carroll," *Maryland Historical Magazine* (September 1930), 299.

[83] The gang system is a system of division of labor within slavery on a plantation. It is the more brutal of two main types of labor systems. The other form, known as the task system, was less harsh and allowed the slaves more self-governance than did the gang system. The gang bang system was also much more efficient because it allowed continuous work at the same pace throughout the day, never letting up or slowing down. The difference between the task labor system and the gang labor system was characterized by the amount of work time required by the slave and also the amount of freedom given to the slave. Some plantation owners allowed their slaves to produce goods for sale in task systems. The gang systems forced the slaves to work until the owner said they were finished and allowed them almost no freedom.

[84] Bezis-Selfa, 94.
[85] Lewis, Ronald L. "Slave Families at Early Chesapeake Ironworks" *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, April 1978, Vol. 86, No. 2; pages 169-179; 177.
[86] Caleb Dorsey & Co., Elk Ridge Furnace Ledger AA, 1761-1762, #1497
[87] Ringquist, John. 2008. "Kongo Iron: Symbolic Power, Superior Tehnology and Slave Wisdom." *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter* (3): 1-20; 7-8.
[88] Schmidt, Peter (ed.) *The Culture and Technology of African Iron Production*. (Gainsville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1996), 153.
[89] Caleb Dorsey & Co., Elk Ridge Furnace Ledger AA, 1761-1762, #1497 and Elk Ridge Furnace Ledger BB, 1762-1764, #1498, Chancery, MSA.
[90] Bezis-Selfa, 81.
[91] Ibid
[92] Ibid, 83.
[93] Journal for Ledger C, 1758-61, Journal for Ledger AA, 1761-1762, Journal for Ledger BB 1762-64, Journal for Ledger CC, 1764-72, Caleb Dorsey & Company, Elk Ridge Furnace.
[94] Caleb Dorsey, the Elder, Will, 1742.
[95] McGrain, 349
[96] Ibid
[97] Maryland Provincial Court. *Maryland Reports, Being a Series of the Most Important Law Cases Argued and Determined in the General Court and Court of Appeals*, (Annapolis, MD: Jonas Green, Printer to the State, 1818), 405.
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[100] Ibid, 24-26.
[101] Ibid, 54.
[102] A tripartite indenture was a legal contract that was written in duplicate on the same piece of paper, with the copies separated by cutting along a jagged line so that the teeth of the two parts could later be refitted to confirm authenticity. Each party to the contract would then retain a part. The agreement was made before a court of law with the third piece kept at the court.
[103] Wada, Mitsuhiro. "Running from Bondage: An Analysis of the Newspaper Advertisements of Runaway Slaves in Colonial Maryland and Georgia," *Journal of the School of Letters*, Volume 2 (2006), 11-21; 21.
[104] Kennedy, Michael V. "The Consequences of Cruelty: The Escalation of Servant and Slave Abuse, 1750-1780," *The Journal of Economic and Business History*, vol. 22, edition 1, 129.
[105] *The Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) 17 Oct 1771, Thu, 4.
[106] Berlin, Ira. *Generations of Captivity : A History of African-American Slaves*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003, page 47.
[107] Bezis-Selfa, page 143.
[108] Ibid
[109] McGrain, 352
[110] Brackett, Jeffrey Richardson. *The Negro in Maryland: A Study of the Institution of Slavery*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1889, page 118.