

Smithsonian Channel Premiere and Fundraiser for AARCH

Tuesday, June 6

Weinberg Center for the Arts

Free Premiere followed by ticketed Fundraiser for AARCH

Frederick, MD

Who were the enslaved ironworkers of Catoctin Furnace? What happened to their community? The Smithsonian Channel's America's Hidden Stories: Forged in Slavery reveals a startling new picture of slavery and the role that skilled African Americans played in America's Industrial Revolution.

The Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc., in conjunction with the Smithsonian Channel and AARCH will present the documentary about Catoctin Furnace's ironworkers entitled *Forged in Slavery* on Tuesday, June 6 at 7pm at the Weinberg Center for the Arts, 20 West Patrick Street, Frederick, Maryland. Following the premiere, a ticketed reception with the documentary crew, Smithsonian Institution staff and scholars, and cast members will be held at New Spire Arts, located directly across the street at 15 West Patrick Street, to benefit the AARCH Heritage Center scheduled to open in 2024. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity, not to be missed.

Tickets for the premiere are available by calling 301-600-2828 or at <https://weinbergcenter.org/shows/americas-hidden-stories-forged-in-slavery/>

Tickets for the fundraiser are available by calling 301-600-2828 or at <https://weinbergcenter.org/shows/forged-in-slavery-reception/>

Catoctin Furnace was built by workers owned or employed by the four Johnson brothers in order to produce iron from the rich deposits of iron ore found in the nearby mountains. At least 271 enslaved people of African ancestry made up the bulk of Catoctin Furnace's skilled earliest workers. In the decade before the Civil War, European immigrants began replacing the enslaved and freed African American workers as it was more economical to hire cheap labor than support an enslaved workforce. Descendants of the immigrants still live in the village.

The iron furnace at Catoctin played a pivotal role during the industrial revolution in the young United States. The furnace industry supported a thriving community, and company houses were established alongside the furnace stack. Throughout the nineteenth century, the furnace produced iron for household and industrial products. After more than one hundred years of operation, the Catoctin Furnace ceased production in 1903.

In 1973, the Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc., was formed by G. Eugene Anderson, Clement E. Gardiner, J. Franklin Mentzer, and Earl M. Shankle to "foster and promote the

restoration of the Catoctin Furnace Historic District...and to maintain the same exclusively for educational and scientific purposes...to exhibit to coming generations our heritage of the past.”

Today, the Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc. is undertaking groundbreaking research, including bioarchaeological research of the African American cemetery in Catoctin Furnace. In partnership with the Smithsonian Institution and the Reich Laboratory for Medical and Population Genetics at Harvard University, this project is analyzing ancient DNA and the human genome of revolutionary-era enslaved African American workers at Catoctin Furnace. Such research, in conjunction with other technologies such as stable isotope analysis, could tell us where these workers were born, where they lived throughout their lives, and what constituted their diet. We believe that every life mattered, and every past matters now. By studying and disseminating the results of this research, we hope that people everywhere will get to meet some of these early workers and understand the critical roles they played in the development of our young nation, as well as appreciate the varied trajectories of their lives.

Special thank you to event sponsors: Weinberg Center for the Arts and Smithsonian Channel.

The premiere is free. The reception following is \$75.00 per person with all proceeds going directly to AARCH, a critical need. For more information contact info@catoctinfurnace.org or 240-288-7396.