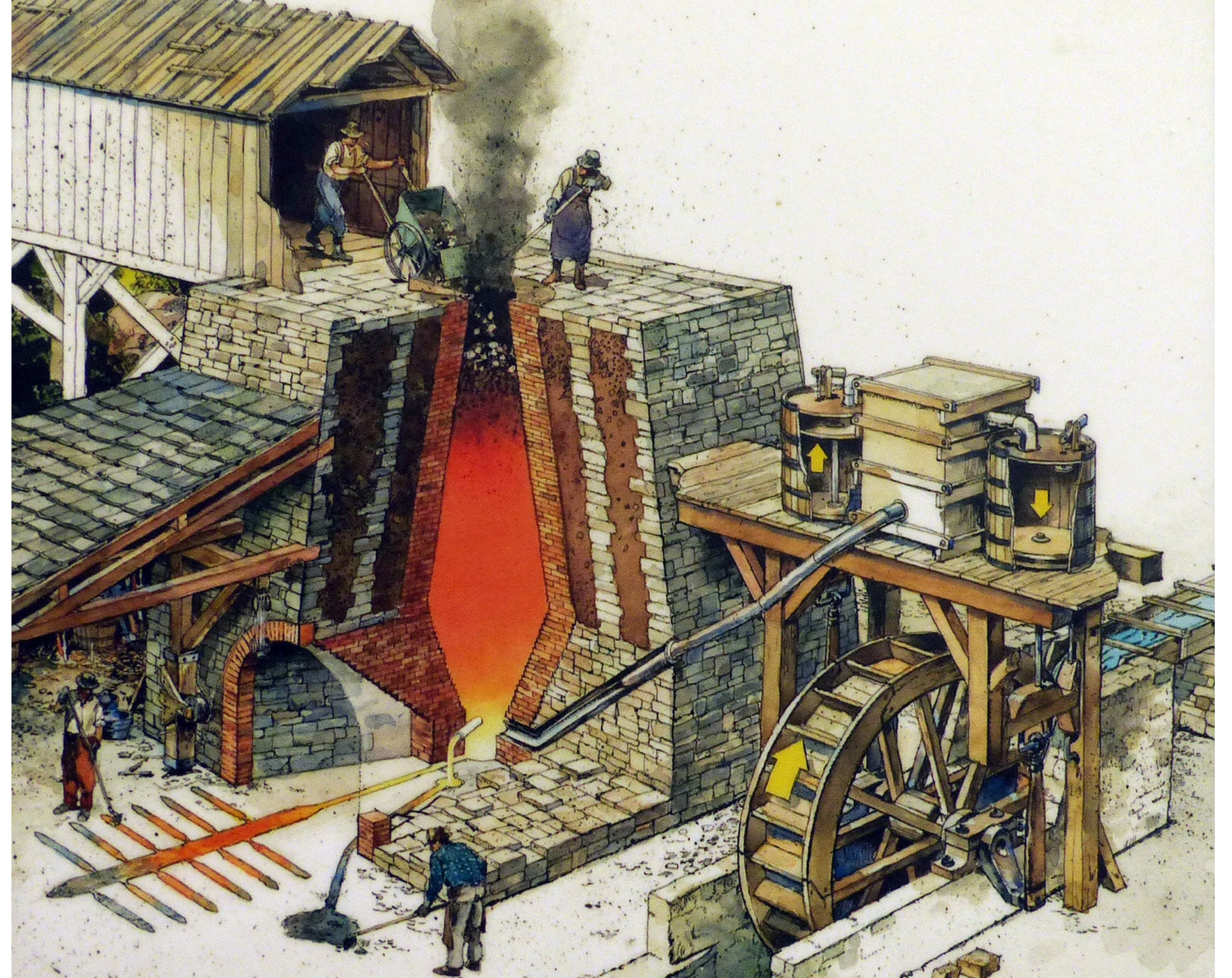


# The Elkridge Furnace

## A Network to Freedom Site

Historically, the Elkridge Furnace was one of Maryland's largest iron producers. Caleb Dorsey, a tobacco planter, established this furnace next to forests, rich deposits of iron-ore, and the Patapsco River, which leads to the Chesapeake Bay. Here, he used indentured, enslaved, and convict labor to cut wood for charcoal and manufacture iron. The furnace peaked in production during the American Revolution when embargoes limited imported goods and demand surged for locally made iron. After the War of 1812, it was rebuilt to produce pig iron. The furnace was destroyed in 1873 by flooding and never rebuilt.



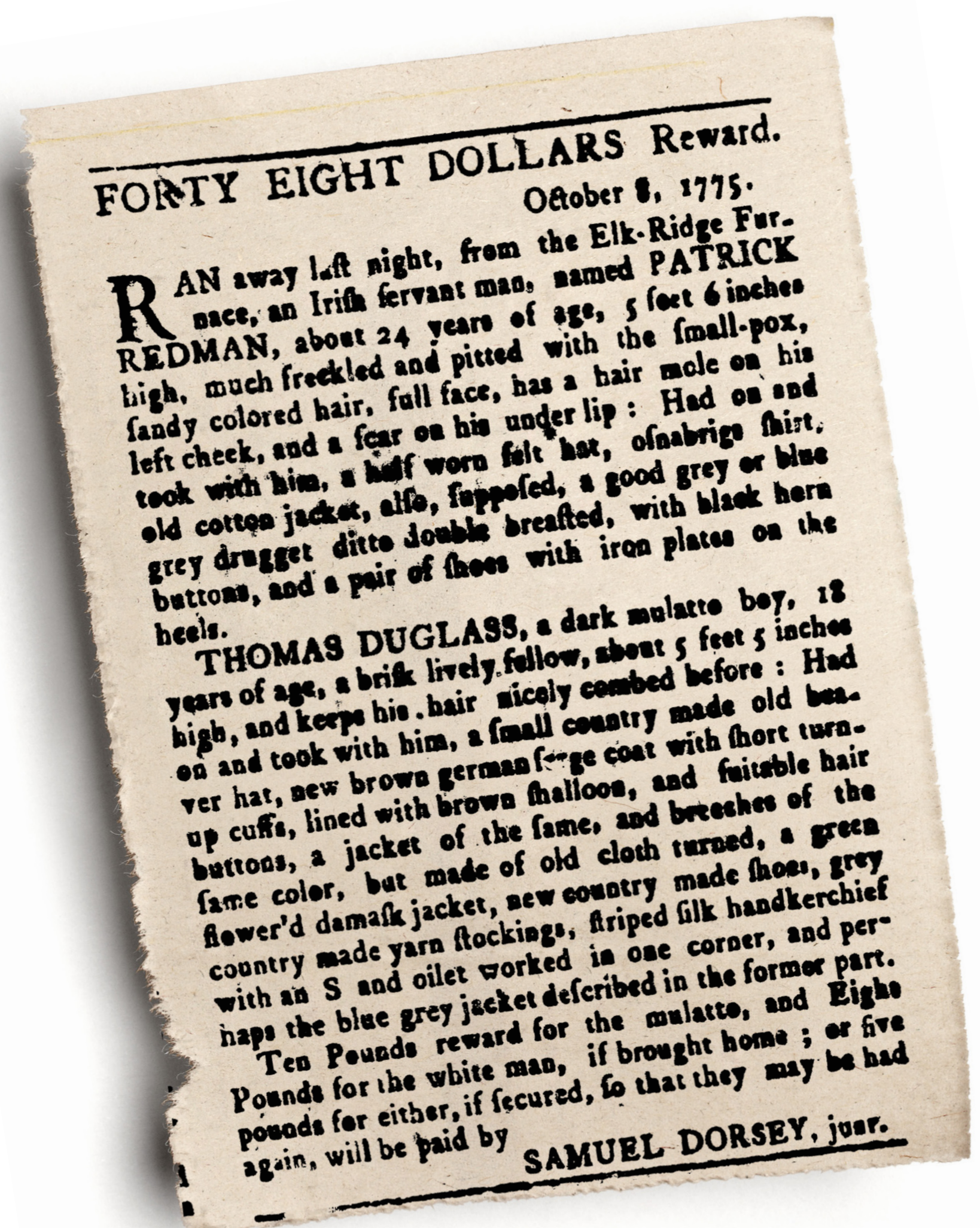
19th century blast furnace in operation - Illustration by Richard Schlecht, National Park Service

## Timeline

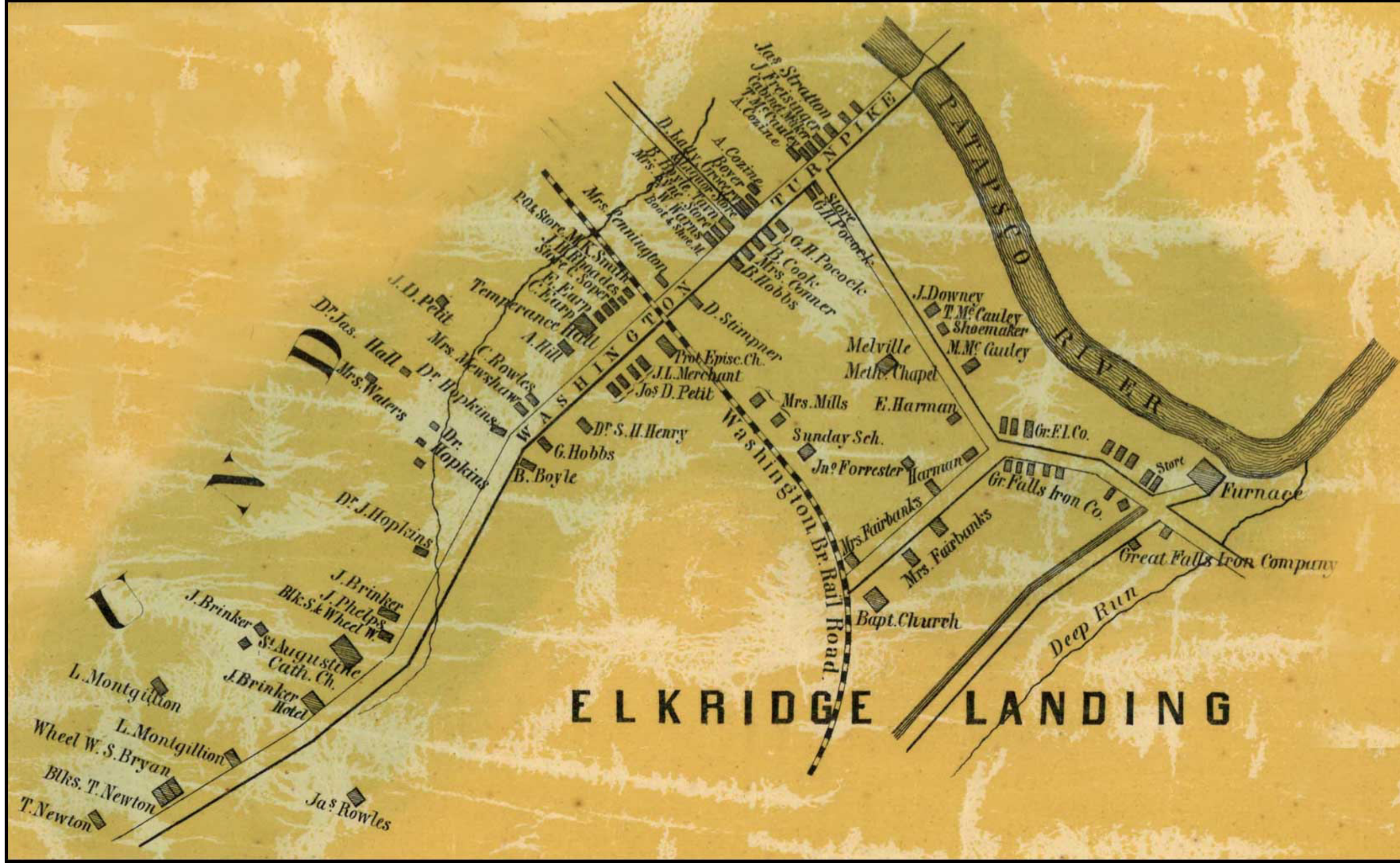
- 1742 -1743 ○ Caleb and Edward Dorsey patented 4,500 acres of land along Patapsco River.
- 1744 ○ James McCubbin built a tavern on the property.
- 1755 ○ Elkridge Furnace owned and operated by Caleb Dorsey.
- 1772 ○ Caleb Dorsey dies with 24 enslaved laborers at furnace. Furnace goes to heirs.
- 1810 ○ Tavern sold to Ellicotts who used it as a private home.
- 1822 ○ Furnace sold by Edward and Samuel Dorsey to James and Andrew Ellicott.
- 1820s -1850 ○ James and Andrew Ellicott operated the Elkridge furnace and enlarged it, enabling them to produce 16,000 tons of pig iron by 1826. The extant buildings of the Elkridge Furnace Complex likely built during this time.
- 1854 ○ Robert Howard bought furnace.
- 1858 ○ Great Falls Iron Company bought property, including horses, mules, oxen, furnace tools, engine, and boilers, etc.
- 1868 ○ Patapsco flooded and damaged the furnace, but it was rebuilt.
- 1873 ○ Flooding and fire destroyed the iron operation, and it was never rebuilt.

## Slave Labor at Elkridge

These early industrial sites used enslaved and indentured labor to cut trees for charcoal and operate the furnace. Runaway ads published in newspapers document repeated attempts by the workers to liberate themselves from the brutality of industrial slavery. Stories like Patrick Redman and Thomas Duglass humanize the hundreds of people forced into slavery and servitude at the Elkridge Furnace.



# Archaeology at Elkridge Furnace



Archaeologists from the Maryland Department of Transportation are excavating two historic buildings within the Elkridge Furnace Complex. In collaboration with the Department of Natural Resources, they want to know when the buildings were constructed, what they were used for, and who may have lived here.

## What are they finding?



By excavating in and around the buildings, archaeologists hope to find old fragments of broken dishes, bottles, and other personal artifacts that tell them about the lives of the people who lived here. If they find a lot of animal bones and artifacts like thimbles, buttons, and personal items, it may suggest these cabins were homes rather than just a store house. When the project is complete, artifacts from the excavation will be identified and cataloged before being curated at Maryland's repository for artifact collections at the Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum. Other museums will also have access to the collection and may have the artifacts loaned to them to exhibit locally.

