

During the 18th century the natural resources of Maryland were still further explored and many important industries established, Maryland ranking among the very foremost of the colonies in the production of iron and copper.<sup>1</sup> The Assembly of 1719 passed an act for the encouragement of iron manufacture, in which it is stated "that there are very great conveniences for carrying on of iron works within this province, which have not hitherto been embraced for want of proper encouragement to some first-class undertakers." To encourage the erection of furnaces and forges the laborers employed therein were to be exempted from all levies and taxes.

One of the most important factors in the development of the iron industry was the organization in 1722 of the Principio Company, which in that year commenced the erection of a furnace in Cecil county near the mouth of Principio creek. This company was composed of English gentlemen of wealth who were familiar with iron manufacture in the old country. At an early date in the history of this enterprise, probably 1725, Augustine and Lawrence Washington, the father and half-brother of the future President of the United States, became interested in this company, which soon outranked all others in America in the manufacture of pig and bar iron, being the proprietor of three furnaces and two forges in Maryland and one furnace in Virginia.

Many other companies were organized for the working of the iron deposits prior to the Revolution. A Baltimore company, which was incorporated in 1723, built a furnace at the mouth of Gwynn's Falls. A blast furnace in Harford county was built about 1760. In 1761 the Governor and Council of Maryland reported to the Commissioners of the Board of Trade and Plantations in England that there were eighteen furnaces and ten forges in the state, which made 2,500 tons of pig iron per year.

Just prior to the beginning of the Revolution several furnaces were built in central Maryland, among them being the Catoctin furnace in Frederick county. Bishop says that during the Revolu-

<sup>1</sup> Description taken largely from chapters by W. and R. B. Keyser in "Maryland, its Resources," etc., 1893.