

Protectionism, Wages and Strikes in the Anthracite Iron Industry of Lancaster County: 1840-1900

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During much of the nineteenth century the iron industry of Lancaster County represented the area's largest single employer of capital; and second only to flour, the county's major manufacturing entity in terms of value of production.

The old cold blast charcoal furnaces, with their enormous demands for charcoal, deforested much of northern and eastern Lancaster County. Moreover, the technology was obsolete, and the plants were wholly inadequate for the growing market for pig iron. Introduction of the newer technology of using anthracite coal instead of charcoal made new requirements of the local economy. Transportation was important, for coal does not occur in Lancaster County. Anthracite coal was brought to Lancaster County by canal boat, as was steam coal from southwestern Pennsylvania. The newer furnaces had to be located on or near canals, and along railroads for delivery of pig and wrought iron to the markets. Accordingly, between 1840 and 1900 the newer technology resulted in the erection and operation

of fifteen pig iron blast furnaces and eight iron rolling mills in a triangle located within points at Lancaster, Safe Harbor and Marietta. Six furnaces were adjacent to Marietta, and two more lay between Marietta and Columbia.

This article deals with the iron masters' efforts to seek legislation, and their labor relations with employees.

Economic and Political Relationships of the Iron Works to Lancaster County

I. Politics and Protectionism

With reference to the 1800-1840 era, Sullivan asserts, "The most zealous partisans of the protective tariff were the iron masters from Pennsylvania."¹ Thus, when Samuel J. Reeves and Edward Bates Grubb joined their colleagues of the iron-making fraternity at Philadelphia on 20 December 1849 to discuss the state of that industry, it was not surprising for their attention to center on tariffs. Lancaster County iron-masters were well-represented at the "Convention of Iron Masters;" the all-important committee on "the operation of the Ad Valorem Principle as a Revenue Measure" was headed by Samuel Reeves, an owner of the Safe Harbor Iron Works.²

Imposition of duties on iron imports to protect domestic industry appeared plausible to many Pennsylvanians; the "protectionist gospel" was accepted even by the agricultural interests of the Commonwealth from the depression following the War of 1812 until the reorganization of industry created a new but despised image of special interest, greed, and impersonality.³ Eiselen suggests the strident voice of iron and coal interests worked up an emotional demand for protection among the laboring and farming citizenry.⁴

Lancaster Countians traditionally voted for conservative candidates or for persons opposed to the Democratic Party with the exception of the presidential elections of 1824 and 1828, and even then, Klein claims:

The voters completely failed to understand protection as a national policy or to evaluate it in its larger sense. For that reason they were unable to distinguish between what parties or men would be most likely to promote their desires. That political propagandists were able to convince Pennsylvania's voters that Jackson was as devoted to protection as John Q. Adams and Henry Clay was very definite evidence that Pennsylvania's voters did not know what they wanted when they shouted for a "protective system."⁵

Without explaining the origin of their concern, W. H. Brock asserts:

The protective tariff was a political necessity not because of large pressure groups but because in New England and Pennsylvania a great many small men and voters were concerned. Though the manufacturers were learning to use the language of Jeffersonian agrarianism they could not hope to rival the influence of rural leaders.⁶

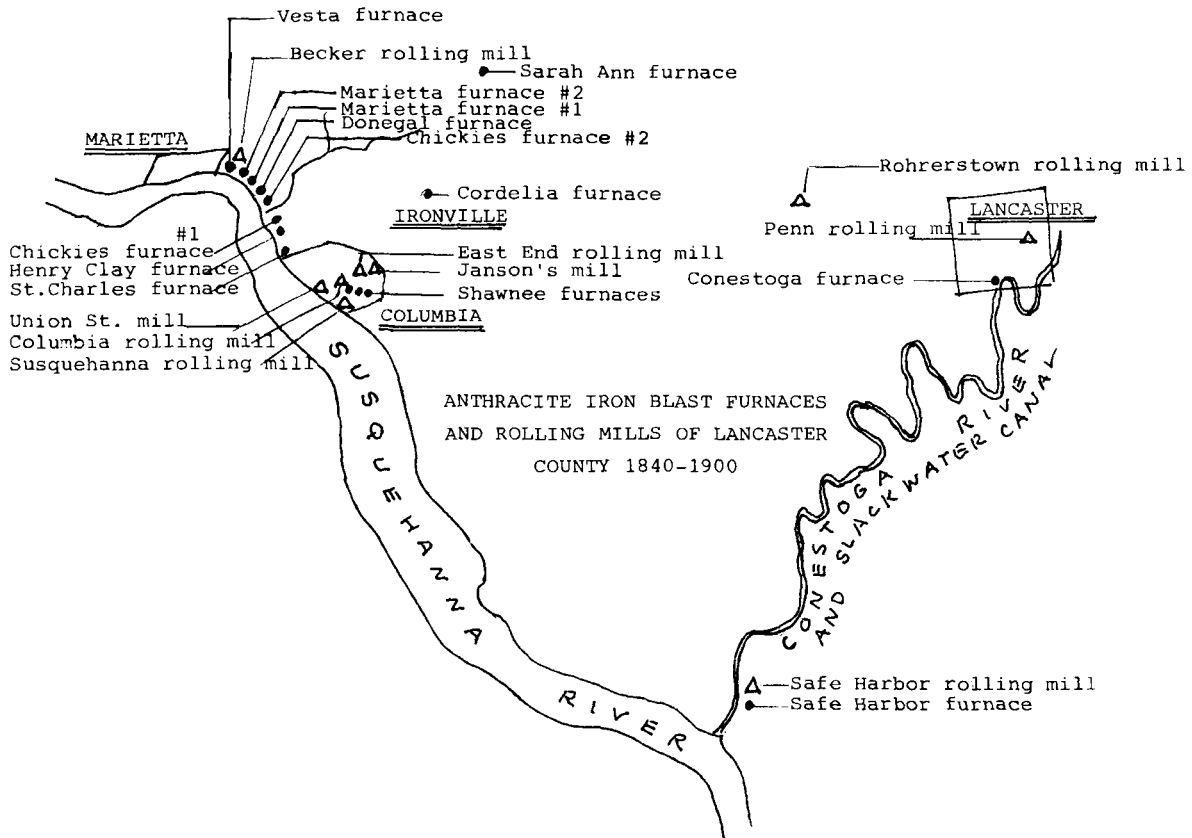
A history of the political leadership of Lancaster County during the nineteenth century is yet to be written; nevertheless, rural domination of the local political scene may be documented fairly well by examination of election returns. The persistence of Federalism,⁷ the flowering of Anti-masonic political leadership,⁸ the strength of Whiggery and the Native American Party,⁹ and the rise and domination of the Republican Party¹⁰ constitute a synoptic history of Lancaster County political tradition.

Faithful as they were to the creed of protectionism, political leaders and legislators of Lancaster County needed to be reminded periodically by the local iron manufacturers. Successful politicians are pragmatic and practical; they generally frown on sudden changes and reversals in political dogma. Duties on pig iron had been raised from \$7 per ton to \$9 per ton in 1864 to ease the burden on iron makers who were required to pay \$2 per ton internal tax for war revenue. By its silence on the tariff problem, the National Union Republican Platform of 1868 ushered in an era of ambiguity which Pennsylvania economist Henry C. Carey thought was a sign of weakness.¹¹

Demand for tariff reform and tax reduction swept the nation by 1870, and their advocates were found in Republican ranks as well as in the Democratic Party. Congressman Garfield and Tariff Commissioner David Wells came to the conclusion that the theory of protection was unsound.¹² Local iron manufacturers demanded to know what the Republican administration intended to do about this economic heresy. Meeting in Columbia on 25 January 1870, Lancaster County ironmasters tore apart Commissioner David Wells' proposals, and resolved:

The public mind has been misled by Mr. Wells in regard to the profits on pig iron; that the present tariff although ample with gold at 150, is insufficient protection as the premium declines, and at the present prices of coal, railroad freights, and labor, we must look forward to being compelled to blow out our furnaces in case of any reduction of the present duties on pig iron, old rails, and scrap iron, or a further loss by the incidental protection afforded by the premium on gold. We request that the present duties be raised one dollar per ton on rails, scrap, boiler iron, and all other descriptions of manufactured iron, and that a direct tax be imposed of one dollar per ton on all pig, bars, rails, plates, and other descriptions of iron manufactured in this country, to compensate for the loss of revenue on the importation of foreign iron.¹³

Not all the iron manufacturers were Republican nor were all Democrats "Free Traders." The Haldemans of the Chickies furnaces and C.J. Nourse, superintendent of the Shawnee furnaces, wrote a letter in January, 1870, to Democratic congressmen which was not published in



the *Spy* until the tariff controversy erupted again in 1888:

As Democrats we are at a loss to understand the motives of the Democratic members of Congress, and the larger portion of the Democratic press, in joining the Free Trade party for low tariffs, especially on iron. As manufacturers of pig iron we do not ask for increased duties on pig, although from the decline in the premium on gold the present tariff, fixed at \$9 in gold, is \$2.70 per ton less Protection with gold at \$1.20 than at \$1.50, but we do ask that the present rate on pig shall not be lowered, and that an increase of \$3 per ton to the present rates be placed on rails, old rails, and scrap iron.¹⁴

Armed with H.C. Carey's criticisms of Commissioner Wells' report, the *Spy* editor took the tariff official to task for his "monster error," and suggested that he get his facts from men who have made iron, who know the actual costs of production and the profit to be made. As a parting fillip, Editor Yocum offered the services of Messrs. Haldeman, Nourse, Grubb, and Kauffman to set Walls' thinking aright.¹⁵

Congress passed the Tariff Act of 1870 despite objections of the iron manufacturers; pig iron duties were dropped to \$7 per ton where they remained until 1883.¹⁶ No convincing evidence appears in the columns of Lancaster County newspapers between 1870 and 1873 to indicate the number of anthracite furnaces "blown out" was abnormally high. Nationally the price and production of pig iron rose from 1870 to the Panic of 1873.¹⁷

A Liberal Republican-Democratic coalition in Pennsylvania was sniffing the air for signs of victory in 1872. Labor Reform and Temperance parties did little to clear the murky waters of Pennsylvania politics. Cameron's Republican organization decided to run General John F. Hartranft for governor. Charles Buckalew, the gubernatorial choice of the coalition, was attacked by the Republican press as having "voted uniformly against protection to American industry," while Democratic party organs claimed he was friendly to a well-regulated tariff.¹⁸ Buckalew was "an enemy of labor" in the eyes of the protectionist *Pottsville Miners' Journal*.¹⁹ The *Columbia Democrat* was pleased to report a Buckalew Club had been organized in Columbia with M.M. Strickler as president. Among the club's twenty vice presidents were C.J. Nourse, Robert Crane, William McDevitt, Paris Haldeman, and John Becker—all owners or officials of local iron works.²⁰ The County Democratic organization selected Hugh N. North, attorney and investor in iron enterprises in Columbia, as its congressional candidate.²¹ An interesting sidelight of the 1872 campaign was the role played by General William Patton, superintendent of the Susquehanna Iron Company, in establishing the Temperance Party.²²

Election results in 1872 were not pleasing to the Buckalew ironmasters; the Cameron organization swept to a decisive victory.²³ After the Panic

of 1873, Columbia iron manufacturers made another attempt to influence the course of politics, attacking on several fronts. Charles J. Nourse of the Shawnee furnaces called a meeting for 28 May 1874, of all pig iron manufacturers who were members of The American Pig Iron Manufacturers Association to discuss "the continued depression in the iron trade." Pig Iron Committee Chairman Nourse urged his associates to petition Congress to take decisive action at once, and to restore the ten per cent duties taken off by the Act of 6 June 1872.²⁴

Working men of Columbia attended a large rally—the *Spy* thought 800 to 1,000 persons—called on 10 June 1874 at the Odd Fellows' Hall to pass resolutions calling upon Congress to increase duties on iron. Brought by special train from the ore banks near Ironville, hundreds of miners, led by the Chestnut Hill Cornet Band and marshals, marched from the Reading and Columbia Railroad depot. Speeches were presented in English and German, and "stirring addresses were made by Messrs, William Patton, Col. Kauffman and A. J. Kauffman, Esq." The *Spy* summed up the sense of the meeting thus:

The upturned faces of the hard-fisted workingmen were eloquent with earnestness and determination to press their demand for relief. If they failed, they felt they had the power, all potential, to make Congressional incompetents take a back seat at the ballot next November.²⁵

Congress turned a deaf ear to the petition; no adjustments were to be made on pig iron duties for another decade.²⁶ The next move by the iron manufacturers was to have the Republican Party in Lancaster County send Colonel C.S. Kauffman to Congress, but the party leadership decided that A. Herr Smith, Esquire was more likely to accept party discipline and do the bidding of the Cameron organization. Kauffman was soundly defeated in the primary election of 1874.²⁷ General William Patton then was nominated by the Democrats as their candidate for Congress under the banner of "Protective Tariff-Free Banking." Although A. Herr Smith won the November election without any difficulty, Columbia Borough gave General Patton 552 votes to Smith's 424.²⁸

Several weeks after the election, the pig iron manufacturers of Pennsylvania met in Philadelphia to anathematize the scrap rolling mill operators, commiserate with each other over the tariff situation, and hear Colonel C. S. Kauffman propose possible action to be taken.²⁹ One outcome was the pig iron men decided to blow out their furnaces for four months.

As for Kauffman, the action he took in 1867 was to seek the Republican nomination for Congress again. The *Spy* was active in his behalf once more, and injected an emotional appeal aimed at the working man:

Colonel Christian S. Kauffman has his money invested in industrial

pursuits where it furnishes labor to the mechanic, miner, and day laborer. A. Herr Smith, Esquire, has his money invested in bonds, mortgages and bank stocks. Not one dollar of the wealth of which he is possessed has ever been applied to an enterprise for the benefit of labor, but has been placed where only the capitalist is benefitted. Let us have live business men like Col. Kauffman in Congress, and soon our depressed manufacturing interests will partake of new life.³⁰

The 1876 primary election proved to be a close race between Smith and Major Ellwood Griest, with Kauffman coming in a low third.³¹

During the presidential campaign of 1876, the columns of the *Spy* overflowed with disgust occasioned by the working men of Columbia and Marietta parading under the "Free Trade" banners of the local Democracy:

Under these free trade banners there marched on Tuesday evening through the streets of Columbia: 155 men and boys from Marietta, right from the shadows of furnaces whose very fires must be rekindled, if at all, by the guiding and fostering hand of a protective tariff; 79 men and boys from the Chestnut Hill ore banks, many of whom left oppression and poverty on the other shores of the Atlantic, and have come here to enroll themselves with a party who have even been identified with oppression, slavery, the fugitive-slave law, rebellion and treason and free trade; 85 men and boys from Washington borough, a community whose only hope for prosperity lies in the completion of railroads and the location of manufactories within her limits—industries which thrive best under a protective tariff; and 214 men and boys from Columbia, some of whom were railroad and rolling mill employees, rolling mill officers, furnace-men, etc., who can hope for prosperity only under the protective tariff which the Republican Party guarantees.³²

After his defeats in 1874 and 1876, C. S. Kauffman devoted his energies to making speeches in opposition to free trade and a lower protective tariff. One such address was presented at the Lancaster Armory on 23 October 1884. Commenting on the speech, the Republican-oriented *New Era* said,

A fair-sized audience . . . gathered to hear Hon. C. S. Kauffman discuss the tariff question. His address was rather lengthy but so interesting that the entire audience remained until he closed. As was expected, his speech was an excellent one, and gave entire satisfaction to every person who heard it.³³

The Democratic *Lancaster Daily Intelligencer* thought differently: "Hon. C. S. Kauffman nearly put to sleep the boys and "coons" who heard him discuss the tariff last evening."³⁴

Under large black display lines, "MILLS' BILL CLOSES FURNACES," the *Philadelphia Press* on 2 August 1888, reported:

Owing to the uncertainties brought about by the tariff legislation, and to avoid the accumulation of stock on an uncertain market, the Cordelia Iron Company has blown out their furnace. Two of the Chestnut Hill blast furnaces at Columbia are also idle. The three furnaces have stacked in their yards at Columbia and Cordelia about 4,500 tons of iron. A large number of laboring men of Columbia are out of work as a consequence.³⁵

The report was "nothing but a fabrication," commented the *Columbia*

Herald, adding:

We are acquainted with the reporter of the *Philadelphia Press*, and if his reputation is no better than the double paid specials he sends to the organ about the Cordelia and Chestnut Hill furnaces, they are not worthy of consideration.³⁶

By this time the *Spy* had jumped into the fracas, and had published a rejoinder:

Every word contained therein (the *Press* article) is correct. It might have been put more forcibly than it was in its condensed statement, so far as it refers to the uncertainties and detriment caused by tariff legislation in Congress, and the agitation of the question by incompetent parties who do not know what they are talking about.

Instead of the Cordelia Iron Company and Chestnut Hill Iron Ore Company, together, having 4,500 tons of iron on hand, the C.H.I.O. Co. alone had 5,400 tons on hand when the furnaces stopped. The C.H.I.O. Co. stopped because booked orders for over 3,000 tons of foundry iron were countermanded by its best customers, owing to tariff agitation in Congress, and the injury caused by local Democratic papers, in certain places, publishing statements that railroads could soon be built for half their present cost, stoves bought for three cents a round, thereby helping to close up local industries.³⁷

Columbians were urged to flock to the Columbia Opera House on 19 October 1888, to hear Hon. Mahlon Chase, secretary of the Protective Tariff League; Hon. William McKinley, “young champion of Protection” in the House of Representatives (and future U.S. President); Hon. J. W. Lee, a former state senator; Stephen B. Gibson, “the great colored orator” of Philadelphia; and Colonel J. S. Bradford of Washington, D.C.³⁸

The presidential campaign of 1888 centered on the controversial Mills Bill, a tariff reduction and ad-valorem proposal. Cleveland advocated the measure, while the Republican candidate, Benjamin Harrison, opposed it. Protectionist Democrats were suspect in meetings and at rallies of the local Democracy, resulting in sheepish explanations in the press, as, for example the discomfiture of Horace L. Haldeman:

It isn't true that Captain Horace L. Haldeman, of Chickies, who presided at the Silver Spring Free-trade meeting on Monday evening, read the protest against tariff reduction, which was written at Chickies, and signed by Paris Haldeman, S. S. Haldeman, C. J. Nourse, and other Democratic pig iron manufacturers several years ago. It would have made a good impression on a Silver audience, but regard for ex-chairman Hensel's feelings, and the proprieties of the occasion interposed.³⁹

W. U. Hensel wound up the 1888 campaign with a “Free Trade” speech in Columbia's Opera House on November 5, 1888. According to the *Spy*, Mr. Hensel “heaped personal abuse on Hon. C. S. Kauffman and on the editor of the *Spy*, boisterously holding them up to ridicule before the big audience.”⁴⁰ The next day Columbians gave Harrison a 139-vote margin over Cleveland.⁴¹

II. *Effect of Business Cycles on Local Anthracite Iron Works*

The economic setting in which the first anthracite blast furnaces of Lancaster County were built was influenced strongly by the effects of the Panic of 1837. Land speculation was central to the crisis, but a weak and capricious banking system, a feverish activity in building canals and railroads, and a movement westward of farmers and frontiersmen contributed greatly to the Panic of 1837.⁴² Although the economy did not begin to recover to any significant extent until 1843, owing to the depressed condition of agricultural markets, the development of a railroad system and several basic manufacturing and mining industries had begun altering the face of the American economy.⁴³ Introduction of the hot blast, and use of mineral fuel in pig iron and wrought iron manufacture occurred during this era.⁴⁴

In Lancaster County capital investment in iron works, all of them associated with charcoal iron-making, in 1840 amounted to nearly a half-million dollars, or more than one-third of all capital investment in the county's manufacturing establishments.⁴⁵ Statistics on capital investment of Lancaster County anthracite furnaces from the Seventh Census (1850) are not available; we may, however, arrive at the fairly reliable approximation of the investment in anthracite furnaces by adding the individual assessments for the year 1850 and then multiplying by four inasmuch as assessments followed, in 1850, a pattern of twenty-five per cent of market value. This calculation suggests a capital investment of \$500,000 in anthracite furnaces and the Safe Harbor rolling mill.⁴⁶

Despite a mild depression which occurred in the United States in 1854,⁴⁷ Lancaster County anthracite furnaces operated at 70.2 per cent of capacity in 1854, 64.8 per cent in 1855, and 79.7 per cent in 1856. The aggregate number of weeks in operation were 434 in 1854, 414 in 1855, and 472 in 1856. Technical problems and shortness of operating capital, rather than scarcity of orders, may have caused the decline of weeks in blast and exploitation of capacity.⁴⁸

The business and financial community of Lancaster County was rocked on 18 November, 1856, when the Lancaster Bank closed its doors, owing to the failure of the bank's Board of Directors to control the discounting of paper by the bank president and cashier. Large amounts of business done outside of the county contributed to the bank's failure. Among the worthless "assets" of the Lancaster Bank was Conestoga Steam Cotton Mill stock for which the bank paid \$74,000, and now was valueless.⁴⁹

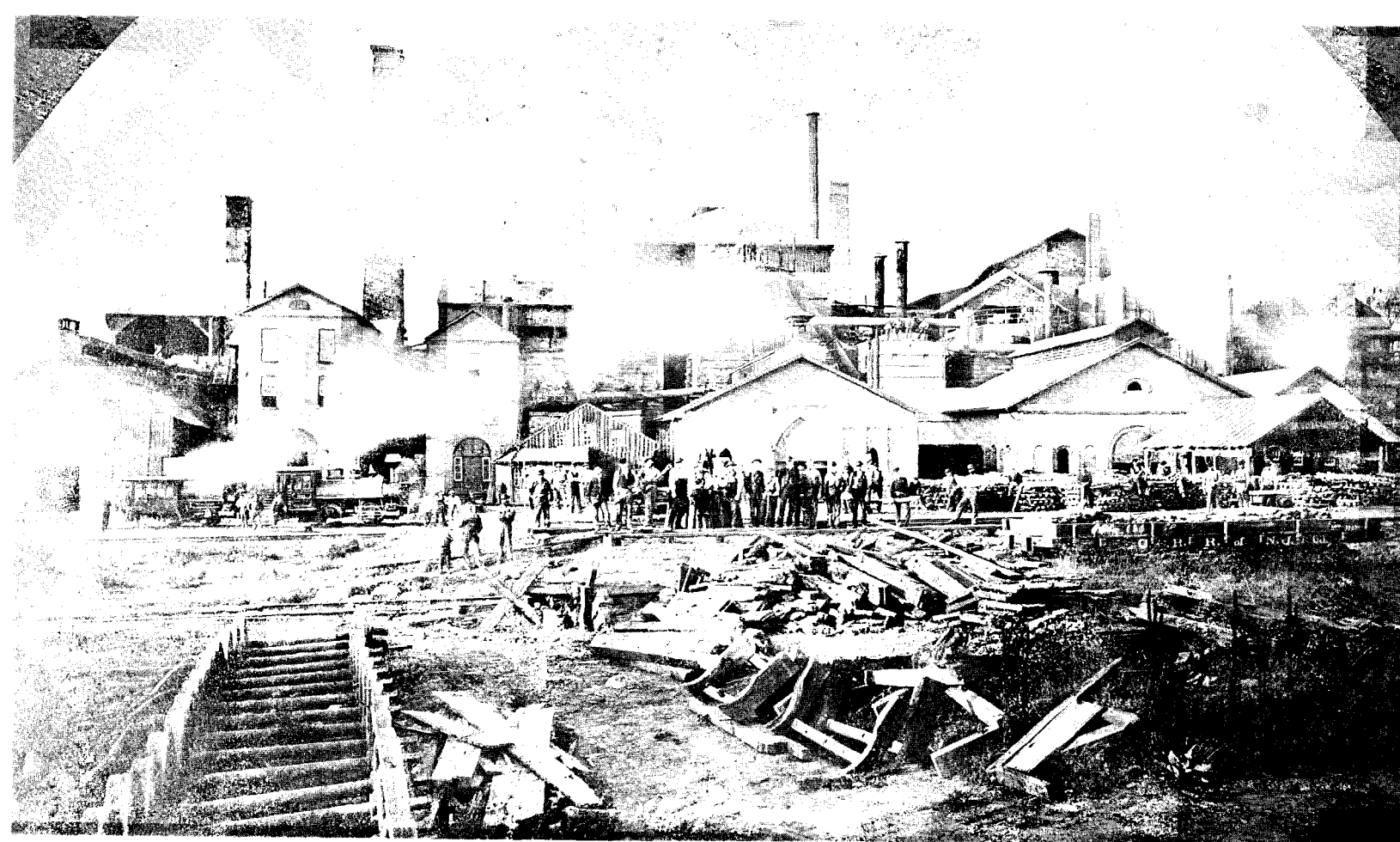
On the heels of the bank failure came the collapse of the Lancaster

Savings Institution, plagued for several years by irregularities and assignments.⁵⁰ In rapid succession, the Conestoga Cotton Mills and the Lancaster Locomotive Works closed, throwing many hundreds of employees out of work.⁵¹ In November, 1857, the *Lancaster Daily Express* estimated 2,000 persons were unemployed in Lancaster city.⁵² The Dorcas Society, Howard Society, and the Mayor's Committee for Relief of the Poor held numerous benefits for the distressed citizens.⁵³ Among the iron industries, Safe Harbor, Shawnee, Conestoga, and Henry Clay furnaces; and the Safe Harbor and Columbia rolling mills were closed.⁵⁴

In capital investment and total wages paid, the iron industry ranked first in Lancaster County in 1860, and in second place for value of raw materials and production.⁵⁵ During the Civil War many of the local iron works were kept quite busy.⁵⁶ Following the end of hostilities, a period of readjustment of the economy occurred during which pig iron production dropped from 1,136,000 tons in 1864 to 932,000 in 1865. Moreover, the economy had to provide jobs for the men released from the armed forces and for an increasing stream of immigrants.⁵⁷ County ironmakers managed to keep their works operating during this period, even bringing back into blast the Henry Clay Furnace which was idle during much of the Civil War.⁵⁸ A spurt of railroad construction during 1869-1870 failed to stimulate resumption of operations at the Safe Harbor Rolling Mill or bring new activity to the Columbia Rolling Mill.⁵⁹

The Lancaster County iron industry retained its premier rank in capital investment, value of production, raw materials, and wages in the census of 1870.⁶⁰ The Panic of 1873 affected the production of pig iron and wrought iron significantly, resulting in the temporary suspension of virtually all county furnaces and rolling mills.⁶¹ Pig iron was sold for \$48.88 per ton in 1872; then it dropped to \$42.75 in 1873, suggesting to Fels a possible key to causes of the longest depression in the history of American business cycles. The business peak was not reached until late summer of 1873, a year after the decline in pig iron prices. Normally, pig iron — an important material for investment goods — would have increased in price up to the point of crisis.⁶²

The Tenth Census found the local iron business in 1880 continuing to maintain its rank among other industries.⁶³ In the nation, pig iron production resumed near the end of the depression cycle, and doubled between 1878 and 1882, much of it resulting from construction of new furnaces rather than from idle obsolete furnaces being put back into blast.⁶⁴ Expansion and enlargement of local furnaces and rolling mills did occur in Lancaster County, however, during this period; no new furnaces had been erected since 1867 when Vesta Furnace was built.⁶⁵



Shawnee Furnaces of the Chestnut Hill Iron Ore Company about 1885. Union Street (Columbia) is on the ridge in rear of the blast furnaces

Between 1883 and 1885 another depression slowed economic activity in the nation. What happened to the iron industry generally was reflected locally. "Blast furnaces were blown out; rail mills were shut down; wages were reduced; hands were discharged . . . there was quite a general movement towards curtailing production and reducing all possible expenses, including the wages of operatives," reported the *Bankers' Magazine*.⁶⁶ In Columbia, the *Spy* hoped "there will be a general resumption of the iron business, and that the blast furnaces now idle, and rusting, will soon be in operation. Workingmen in large numbers are idle, and they are ready and willing to go to work at once."⁶⁷ After 1885, the furnaces and mills of Lancaster County became active once more, and expansion or remodeling occurred at many of the establishments.⁶⁸

Competition from Bessemer pig iron and obsolescence of anthracite furnaces, combined with the crisis of 1893, distressed local iron manufacturers throughout the last decade of the nineteenth century. As of March 1, 1894, only seven anthracite furnaces and four rolling mills remained in operation in the county.⁶⁹ Fels remarks that "between 1885 and 1890 obsolescent firms could enjoy a tolerable existence because demand (for pig iron) was rising rapidly, but after the latter year their position became increasingly more difficult."⁷⁰ In 1880, Lancaster County ranked fifteenth in the United States as a pig iron producer; by 1890, the county had dropped to twenty-fifth in the nation.⁷¹ According to the Secretary of Internal Affairs, Lancaster County in 1897 produced thirty-six hundredths of one per cent of the pig iron and seventy-eight hundredths of one per cent of the wrought iron manufactured in Pennsylvania.⁷² By 1900, the county's production of pig iron amounted to forty-seven hundredths of one per cent of that made in this state; its wrought iron production dipped to sixty-nine hundredths of one per cent of the total manufactured in Pennsylvania.⁷³ A victim of technological change and economic feasibility, Lancaster County's anthracite iron industry passed from the scene with the dawn of the twentieth century, and with it, the county's first and last heavy industry.⁷⁴

III. *Wages and Employee Relations*

Working around the blast furnaces and rolling mills was hot, hard work, and in the summer most of the men were stripped to the waist. A work day ranged from ten to fourteen hours, depending upon the kind of work done and shift.⁷⁵

Wages generally were established by geographical region; those paid in western Pennsylvania were higher than wages received in eastern Pennsyl-

vania.⁷⁶ Eastern Pennsylvania was divided into "rate areas," with the Columbia Rolling Mill in 1872 being governed by the Danville rate established by William Case, formerly from that Montour County community.⁷⁷ Under different ownership in 1888, the Columbia Rolling Mill then used the Harrisburg or Lower Susquehanna rate already being applied at the Susquehanna, Chickies, and Penn Iron Works rolling mills.⁷⁸ The Safe Harbor Rolling Mill came under the Philadelphia rate jurisdiction because Reeves, Abbott and Company had their offices in Philadelphia and Phoenixville.⁷⁹

A thorough examination of local newspapers and Department of Internal Affairs reports failed to indicate any union activity at Lancaster County blast furnaces.⁸⁰ Rolling mill puddlers, however, were represented by their own unions which were affiliated later with the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers. Employees of the Penn Iron Works organized the Thomas Dietl Lodge No. 101 in 1892; it was named for its first president.⁸¹ Iron Workers Union No. 9261 was formed in 1901, and when the M.F. Tighe Lodge No. 22 of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers was organized in 1905 both groups had the same officers.⁸² Organizational difficulties were common in the iron workers' union because skilled employees such as puddlers and foundry moulders had their own unions; not until 1935 were the iron workers able to perfect an industry-wide union, at which time the Amalgamated Association was taken into the Committee for Industrial Organization.⁸³

Earliest evidence found in this study relative to a strike in the local iron industry occurred in August, 1872, when the *Spy* reported:

The puddlers in the Columbia Rolling Mill struck for a modification of wages on Friday last. They demanded 3 cents per heat extra for the payment of a certain class of assistants, or helpers, known as buggymen. The result of this strike is that the puddling furnaces have been idle all week. The rail mill has been running as usual. Iron being very high it would be ruinous for mill operators to make concessions of this kind to fill pending contracts.⁸⁴

Reprinting the article in its columns, *The Columbia Democrat* suggested:

If the laboring men can see any comfort in the above squib, their vision must be good. Near election day the *Spy* will be rampant in behalf of the laborers, but at present it pays better to strike them.⁸⁵

The following week, the *Democrat* urged the mill owners to make an additional concession:

The strike at the Columbia Rolling Mill was settled by paying the 3 cents demanded; but now a new strike has begun by the demand of 50 cents per ton, making \$6.50 per ton, exclusive of the 3 cents for buggy-running. The demand is in accordance with Danville prices by which the mill has been governed. This demand should be met.⁸⁶

On 4 September 1872, the *Democrat* gloated that the management of the

mill gave in to the strikers' demands, and the whole affair would have been settled earlier had the *Spy* kept its opinions to itself.⁸⁷

On 15 March 1873, the Susquehanna Rolling Mill discharged a puddler for incompetence, and charged him for wasted fuel. His fellow puddlers took exception to this punishment, and walked off their jobs for fifteen days, after which they "saw the justice of their employer's action," and returned to work.⁸⁸ Later that year, employees of the Columbia Rolling Mill struck, and were discharged for trying to make their own rules. Of the strike, the *Spy* thought "it is probably one of the most foolish on record, when the circumstances and depressed condition of the money market are considered." The puddlers were accused of doing only two or three heats as a full day's work, and then leaving hours before the next "turn" of puddlers arrived, thereby wasting fuel and reducing production. Five heats were required as a full day of work. All the strikers were replaced at once.⁸⁹

Puddlers' helpers at the Lancaster Manufacturing Company's rolling mill in Lancaster walked off their jobs on 28 October 1873, when the management proposed to end a ten-cent per ton payment. The puddlers received \$6.25 for each ton worked, and one-third of that was paid to the helpers in addition to the ten-cent stipend. In fact, the helpers worked for the puddlers, and the only control held over them by the management was the stipend. After arguing all day, the thirty strikers decided to return but the company discharged them.⁹⁰ That was not the end of the management's problems, however, because when the Panic of 1873 left the company without operating cash, employees were paid in script which the company promised to redeem in six months plus six per centum interest. The workers' families could not live for a half-year without cash for necessities; accordingly, local stores began accepting the script at a discount. After the company postponed redeeming the script, merchants imposed discounts of twelve to fifteen per cent, and finally, they refused the paper entirely. Machinists and blacksmiths quit work, although the puddlers continued at their jobs, providing they would be paid in cash thereafter.⁹¹

Predicting a "long, hard winter," "CINAP" (Panic spelled backwards) wrote to the *Intelligencer* that the assistant puddlers at the Lancaster Manufacturing Company should be condemned publicly for losing their jobs and making their families suffer needlessly.⁹² Foolish or not, depression or not, the urge to strike was in the air, and sixty employees of the Rohrerstown Rolling Mill quit work on 31 October over a ten per centum reduction of wages.⁹³

The labor situation calmed in face of the cold winter, the continuing financial restriction, and the stubbornness of the employers. By December

of 1874, Susquehanna Rolling Mill's puddlers were ready to reject a "proposal" by the company that wages should be reduced ten percent. Officers of the company explained to the men:

The company, like other iron manufacturers, had come to the conclusion, that at the present prices of iron, they could not continue the mill in operation during the winter, and paying ante-crisis wages, without an actual loss of money, and were about to arrange for an early shutting down. But the necessities of the employees, and the pressing wants of winter upon many families dependent upon the operation of the mill for support, induced the management to submit the proposition that if the employees would accept a reduction on their wages, that the mill would continue to operate on full time during the winter.⁹⁴

After a day at home the workers agreed to return to work, and accept the reduction.⁹⁵

Chickies Rolling Mill puddlers were notified they must work at the Harrisburg scale of wages, or leave, in March, 1883. Several meetings were held before the employees decided they would continue working at the lower rate, rather than holding out for the Pottsville or Philadelphia rate.⁹⁶

Employees of the Susquehanna Rolling Mill were outraged on 9 March 1884, when they learned through the columns of the Harrisburg *Patriot* that the mill intended to pay a large dividend to its stockholders at the same time wages of the workers were to be decreased. "Pat. Herald" issued a quick denial in the *Spy*, claiming the *Patriot* story was an invention:

The Susquehanna Iron Company has always paid its employees the highest wages paid in the district for the same kind of labor . . . Two rolling mills within eight miles of Columbia pay ten per cent less wages than the Susquehanna Iron Company does. The Susquehanna mill employees are paid on a sliding scale of wages, and, upon the advance in the price of the article they manufacture, their wages are advanced. On September 2, 1887, the price paid for puddling at these works was \$3.60 per ton. As the price for finished iron advanced, the wages were increased at the rate of the following percentages: 7, 10, 12, 15, 18, 21, 28, 35, 42, 50, 58, 67, and 75. At the present time the price of iron is low, and consequently the wages are low. Stockholders gained only when the mill began to sell its cinder to furnaces, and when pig iron inventories were increased when the price was low.⁹⁷

Eight months later, the Susquehanna Iron Company announced a reduction of twenty cents per ton for puddlers, and from one dollar down to ninety-five cents per day for laborers. Commented the *Spy*, "We think a corporation paying as large dividends as this one, ought not to pay its labor less than \$1.00 per day, even if the day is cut to nine and one-half hours."⁹⁸

Wages for puddlers were reduced in February, 1888, as follows: Columbia Rolling Mill, down to \$3.75 per ton; Penn Iron Works, down to \$3.85 per ton; and Safe Harbor Iron Works \$3.25.⁹⁹

Columbia planned to celebrate its centennial in 1888 with parades, appearances of nationally-famous personalities at the Opera House, and numerous civic projects. A committee of prominent men tried to raise funds and failed. The *Spy* reflected sadly,

With two furnaces out of blast, one rolling mill crippled by a strike, and the others running on uncomfortably short orders; with starvation wages or idleness in the stone quarries; with the families of many ironworkers dependent on the chance wheel or the festival for their support; with the coal shutes idle; and with the retail trade crippled by unseasonable weather, and by reduced or suspended pay rolls, the outlook is not very encouraging.¹⁰⁰

Following the reduction of wages at the Columbia Rolling Mill and the strike resulting therefrom, the management declared the strikers "discharged," and replaced them. All this led to considerable outbursts of acrimony, with the public being encouraged to take sides. On 15 May 1888, John Q. Denney, president of the company, issued a statement which asserted, *inter alia*, the former employees "are not necessary for continued operations, that they will not be taken back again in a body, and that any of them who desire employment must make personal application to the superintendent on the company's terms."¹⁰¹

The replaced workers replied to Denney through the *Spy*:

On Monday, February 13, you posted a notice announcing a reduction of puddling from \$4 to \$3.75 per ton, and all other wages in proportion. The Susquehanna and Columbia Iron Company's mills were paying \$3.85 and are still paying that figure. Your men met and sent a committee to Supt. Denney requesting an arbitration of the differences. Mr. Denney refused to hear the committee. We deemed our labor worth as much as our fellow-workmen in the other mills, and felt it would be dishonorable to go below them, so we gave you notice, and on Saturday evening we went out—twelve weeks ago. Until you will meet with us to arbitrate all questions at difference . . . we will be ready to work for you, but until then the men will stand firm and united.¹⁰²

Superintendent DeWitt C. Denney, son of the company president, did not yield, nor did the former employees. Fights broke out in saloons and public places between the discharged workers and their replacements, one such fracas resulting in one German puddler being attacked by three Welsh ex-workers.¹⁰³

Workmen at the Susquehanna and Penn Iron Works rolling mills termed the trouble at the Columbia Rolling Mill a "lock-out," and pledged their support and financial aid.¹⁰⁴ Through the autumn months and into December, the dispute boiled in the columns of the *Spy*, with the mill management explaining the different wage scales and the disgruntled workers condemning what they thought was the inconsistency of the company's policies. By 1888, the rolling mills of the Susquehanna, Columbia and Penn iron companies were operating under the Philadelphia scale of \$3.85 per ton. The Columbia Rolling Mill, however, elected to

come under the Harrisburg rate of \$3.75 inasmuch as officers of the company had interests in York where the lower rate prevailed. The Columbia Rolling Mill management pointed to Safe Harbor Mill, now apparently under no wage scale, where some of the striking employees found jobs paying \$3.50 per ton, while others went to Lancaster to replace members of the Knights of Labor who had been discharged by the Penn Iron Works. The strikers retorted by having the Columbia Rolling Mill "Blacklisted," which seemed to have little effect on its ability to obtain workers.¹⁰⁵

All rolling mills in Lancaster County were closed by strikers in January 1889, and within a week they were back in operation with employees willing to work "at the going rate."¹⁰⁶

The Democratic ticket for Borough Council in 1889 included Frank H. Wilson, an active member of the Knights of Labor. Correspondents flooded the *Spy* office with dire predictions of the calamity to befall Columbia's industries if the Democrats should be victorious, and then name Mr. Wilson as president of Council.¹⁰⁷ Although the Democracy in Columbia won control of the Council, Frank Wilson was defeated, which brought forth an editorial benediction of the efforts of labor to enter the political arena.¹⁰⁸

Workers in Lancaster County rolling mills were distressed to learn on 23 March 1889, that puddlers' wages would be reduced by thirty-five cents per ton, effective April 8. The rate in Columbia had been \$3.85, and that, according to the *Spy* was the highest rate in Pennsylvania outside of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Penn Iron Company employees promptly informed their management the reduction would not be acceptable to them unless the Philadelphia scale was lowered.¹⁰⁹

The Susquehanna Iron Company announced there would be work for all men who wished to return; by 11 May 1889, sixty-five men had the mill back in operation.¹¹⁰ That Saturday night, however, proved painful to some of the strike-breaking" employees, for seventeen strikers, encouraged by approximately 200 other ex-employees, prevented them from entering the mill. The offenders were charged by the management with "falsely and maliciously conspiring to prevent the workers from returning to work."¹¹¹ Hon. H. N. North, Hon. A. J. Kauffman, and the officers of the rolling mill appeared for the prosecution at the hearing. The accused men were bound over for court.¹¹² Judge David W. Patterson, a former iron master himself, charged the Grand Jury, telling them the strikers "had every right not to work, but these men have no right to prevent others who are willing to labor from taking their places."¹¹³ The Grand Jury returned indictments, but the defendants pleaded guilty, and were released after paying a total of \$1,500 in fines and costs.¹¹⁴ *The Lancaster*

Examiner thought the working men should be made to understand there "is no use in striking for anything, because you cannot make artificial prices; labor and capital both follow the law of supply and demand, the law of the market."¹¹⁵

On 29 June 1889, the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers voted the sum of \$10,000 to be used to help strikers at local rolling mills. Married men were to receive \$2 per week; single men were to have \$1 weekly.¹¹⁶

July, 1889, was a particularly bitter month for fighting in Columbia between strikers and persons they regarded as having taken their jobs. Once more, Frank Wilson, the iron workers' union boss, was attacked fiercely in the *Spy*.¹¹⁷ Some recovery was noted in the iron trade in August, and wages were raised twenty-five cents per ton in the local rolling mills.¹¹⁸ Columbia Rolling Mill's ex-employees asked to be taken back, pleading with the company to discharge the men who replaced them. The company replied it will make its decisions without the interference of former workers who walked off their jobs.¹¹⁹ By the end of September, the strikers at the Columbia Rolling Mill despaired of success, and individual former workers began drifting back toward Superintendent Denney's office.¹²⁰

Puddlers at the Columbia and Susquehanna mills were in another brawl over maintenance of wage rates in 1891, with the result that three puddlers were sentenced to five months in prison.¹²¹ The generally depressed conditions of the 1890s and the union discipline of the Thomas Dietl Lodge of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers in 1892 may have been influential in calming local disputes, because such activity did not find its way into the newspapers and state reports of that decade.¹²²

The foregoing data suggests puddlers rather than other workers caused most of the labor difficulties in local rolling mills. According to Clark:

Puddlers were among the highest paid and most intractable workers in the iron trade, and their frequent strikes caused constant interruptions in the business. That was the principal motive for devising a mechanical method to perform the service they rendered.¹²³

None of the Lancaster County iron works installed puddling machines, despite their introduction in the industry about 1870. One obstacle to the general employment of mechanical puddlers was the high initial cost at a time when the Bessemer process was replacing the market for rolled iron.¹²⁴

Notes

1. William A. Sullivan, *The Industrial Worker in Pennsylvania: 1800-1840* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1955), p. 9.
2. Convention of Iron Masters, *Documents Relating to the Manufacture of Iron in Pennsylvania, Published on Behalf of the Convention of Iron Masters which Met in Philadelphia on the 30th of December, 1849* (Philadelphia, Pa.: The General Committee, 1850), pp. 1-8.
3. Louis Hartz, *Economic Policy and Democratic Thought: Pennsylvania, 1776-1860* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948), p. 15; Victor S. Clark, *History of Manufactures in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1929), I, 281.
4. Malcolm R. Eiselen, *The Rise of Pennsylvania Protectionism* (Philadelphia, Pa.: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1932), p. 25.
5. Philip S. Klein, *Pennsylvania Politics: 1817-1832, A Game Without Rules* (Philadelphia, Pa.: The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1940), pp. 356, 406-411.
6. W. R. Brock, *The Character of American History* (New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1960), pp. 106-107.
7. Alan Kreider, "Lancaster County Politics: 1799-1810," *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, LXVII (Winter, 1963), 1-22, 33-39; Philip S. Klein, "Early Lancaster County Politics (1814-1829)," *Pennsylvania History*, III (April, 1936), 98-114.
8. John Edward McNeal, "The Antimasonic Party in Lancaster County: 1828-1843," *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, LXIX (Easter, 1965), 57-117.
9. W. U. Hensel, "A Withered Twig," *Papers of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, XIX (June, 1915), 174-181.
10. Daryl Fair, "Turnout for Presidential Elections in Lancaster and York Counties: 1876-1960," *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, LXVII (Winter, 1963), 48-54.
11. Erwin S. Bradley, *The Triumph of Militant Republicanism, A Study of Pennsylvania Politics: 1860-1872* (Philadelphia, Pa.: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), p. 206.
12. Frank W. Taussig, *The Tariff History of the United States* (New York, N.Y.: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1914), pp. 178-179.
13. *The Columbia Spy*, 29 January, 1870.
14. *Ibid.*, 4 August, 1888.
15. *Ibid.*, 5 February, 1870.
16. Taussig, *op. cit.*, p. 179. Eastern rolling mills, which controlled the American Iron and Steel Association, sought low duties on scrap iron, which would permit the mills to import cheap European used rails and re-roll them instead of using domestic pig iron. The pig iron producers withdrew from the AISA, and formed The American Pig Iron Manufacturing Association in 1873. See *The American Pig Iron Manufacturing Association, Meeting Held in New York City*, February 19, 1873 (Philadelphia, PA.: APIMA, 1873), pp. 32, 64.
17. Temin, *op. cit.*, pp. 266, 284.
18. Bradley, *op. cit.*, pp. 410-411.
19. *Pottsville Miners' Journal*, 28 September, 1872.
20. *The Columbia Democrat*, 17 September, 1872.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Bradley, *op. cit.*, p. 369.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 432, 434; *Lancaster Daily Express*, 12 October, 1872. Columbians gave Hartranft 820 votes to Buckalew's 634; North received 636 ballots in his home town while Smith swept to victory with 822 votes.
24. *The Columbia Spy*, 23 May, 1874; Taussig, *op. cit.*, P. 184.
25. *Ibid.*, 13 June, 1874.
26. Taussig, *op. cit.*, p. 244.
27. *The Columbia Spy*, 18 July, 1874; 15 August, 1874.
28. *Ibid.*, 15 August, 1874; 7 November, 1874.

29. *Ibid.*, 28 November, 1874.
30. *Ibid.*, 20 May, 1876.
31. *Ibid.*, 3 June, 1876. Congressman A. Herr Smith received 3,763 votes while Major Ellwood Griest claimed 3,706 votes. Kauffman and a "nuisance" candidate divided 3,243 votes, with Kauffman receiving a majority, although the *Spy* declined to mention the number.
32. *Ibid.*, 21 October, 1876.
33. *Lancaster New Era*, 24 October, 1884.
34. *Lancaster Daily Intelligencer*, 24 October, 1884.
35. *Philadelphia Press*, 2 August, 1888.
36. *Columbia Herald*, 11 August, 1888.
37. *The Columbia Spy*, 18 August, 1888.
38. *Ibid.*, 13 October, 1888.
39. *Ibid.*, 20 October, 1888.
40. *Ibid.*, 10 November, 1888.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Reginald C. McGrane, *The Panic of 1837* (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1924), pp. 7-13, 43-48, 91-93.
43. Douglas F. Dowd, *Modern Economic Problems in Historical Perspective* (Boston, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1965), p. 145; Walter B. Smith and Arthur H. Cole, *Fluctuations in American Business: 1790-1860* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935), pp. 37-43.
44. Berkinbine, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21.
45. United States, *Compendium of the Enumeration of the Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States, As Obtained at the Department of State, from the Returns of the Sixth Census* (Washington, D.C., 1841), p. 130.
46. *Tax Assessment Records, East Donegal Township, 1850; West Hempfield Township, 1850; Conestoga Township, 1850; Columbia Borough, 1850; and Lancaster City, Southwest Ward, 1850.*
47. Smith and Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 137.
48. *Lancaster Daily Express*, 2 April, 1858; refer to Appendix B.
49. Paul R. Peel, "History of the Lancaster Bank: 1814-1856," *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society*, LXVI (Spring, 1962), 76-81.
50. Ellis and Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 513.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 519.
52. *Lancaster Daily Express*, 30 November, 1857.
53. *Ibid.*, 9 December, 1857.
54. *Supra*, pp. 28, 39, 52, 62.
55. United States, *Eighth Census, "Manufactures of the United States in 1860"* (Washington, D.C., 1865) III, 512-513.
56. *Supra*, pp. 28, 43, 56, 62.
57. Rendigs Fels, *American Business Cycles: 1865-1897* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959), p. 92.
58. *Lancaster Daily Express*, 14 October, 1865.
59. Schuleen, *op. cit.*, p. 89; Fels, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-98; *supra*, pp. 85-90.
60. United States, *Ninth Census, "Wealth and Industry"* (Washington, D.C., 1872) III, 725-726.
61. *The Columbia Spy*, 23 May, 1874.
62. Fels, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
63. United States, *Tenth Census, "Manufactures"* (Washington, D.C., 1883) II, 570.
64. Fels, *op. cit.*, p. 122.
65. *Annual Report of the Secretary of Internal Affairs, 1879-1880, op. cit.*, p. 44.
66. Fels, *op. cit.*, p. 129, citing *Bankers' Magazine*. XXXVII (December, 1882), 405.
67. *The Columbia Spy*, 8 March 1884.
68. *Ibid.*, 21 April 1888; *supra*, pp. 32, 48, 75.
69. *Directory of Iron and Steel Works, 1894, op. cit.*, pp. 17-19, 104-112.
70. Fels, *op. cit.*, p. 182.
71. United States, *Eleventh Census, "Manufacturing Industries"* (Washington, D.C.,

1895) VI, 372-373.

72. *Annual Report of the Secretary of Internal Affairs, 1897*, (Harrisburg, Pa.; William S. Ray, 1898), XXV, 549-551.

73. *Annual Report of the Secretary of Internal Affairs, 1900* (Harrisburg, Pa.; William S. Ray, 1901) XXVIII, 503, 511.

74. Temin, *op. cit.*, p. 256; *Lancaster Sunday News*, 14 October 1928.

75. American Iron and Steel Institute, *Steel Facts* (Bulletin No. 84. New York, N.Y.: American Iron and Steel Institute, 1947), p. 6.

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77. *The Columbia Democrat*, 29 August 1872.

78. *Lancaster Daily Intelligencer*, 17 March 1883.

79. *The Columbia Spy*, 18 February 1888.

80. *The Columbia Spy*, 1857 to 1892; *Annual Reports of the Secretary of Internal Affairs, 1874 to 1900*, were examined.

81. J. E. Williams, *Lancaster City Directory for 1892* (Lancaster, Pa.: The New Era Book and Job Printing Company, 1892), p. 35.

82. *Lancaster City Directory for 1901* (Detroit, Mich.: R. L. Polk and Company, 1901), p. 33; *Lancaster City Directory for 1905* (Detroit, Mich.: R. L. Polk and Company, 1905), p. 31.

83. United States Department of Labor, *Brief History of the American Labor Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1950), p. 26; Norman J. Ware, *The Labor Movement in the United States: 1860-1895* (New York, N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf and Random House, Inc., 1964), p. 53.

84. *The Columbia Spy*, 17 August 1872.

85. *The Columbia Democrat*, 22 August 1872.

86. *Ibid.*, 29 August 1872.

87. *Ibid.*, 4 September 1872.

88. *The Columbia Spy*, 15 March 1873.

89. *Ibid.*, 27 September 1873.

90. *The Lancaster Intelligencer*, 30 October 1873.

91. *Annual Report of the Secretary of Internal Affairs, 1880-1881*, *op. cit.*, pp. 310-311.

92. *The Lancaster Intelligencer*, 3 November 1873.

93. *Ibid.*, 1 November 1873.

94. *The Columbia Spy*, 5 December 1874.

95. *Ibid.*

96. *The Lancaster Intelligencer* 17, March 1883.

97. *The Columbia Spy*, 15 March 1884.

98. *Ibid.*, 29 November 1884.

99. *Ibid.*, 18 February 1888.

100. *Ibid.*, 12 May 1888.

101. *Ibid.*, 19 May 1888.

102. *Ibid.*

103. *Ibid.*, 30 June 1888.

104. *Ibid.*, 11 August 1888.

105. *Ibid.*, 8 December 1888. Strikers made much of the term "blacklisting" because Negroes had been employed as replacements in the Columbia Rolling Mill.

106. *Ibid.*, 22 January 1889.

107. *Ibid.*, 16 February 1889.

108. *Ibid.*, 23 February 1889.

109. *Ibid.*, 30 March 1889.

110. *Ibid.*, 11 May 1889.

111. *Ibid.*, 18 May 1889.

112. *Ibid.*

113. *Ibid.*, 24 August 1889.

114. *Ibid.*, 12 October 1889.

115. *The Lancaster Examiner*, 30 August 1889.

116. *The Columbia Spy*, 29 June 1889.

117. *Ibid.*, 6 July 1889; 13 July 1889.
118. *Ibid.*, 3 August 1889; 10 August 1889.
119. *Ibid.*, 17 August 1889.
120. *Ibid.*, 20 September 1889.
121. *Lancaster Morning News*, 31 October 1891.

122. *Supra*, p. 125.

123. Clark, *on. cit.*, II, 79. Many of the puddlers learned their trade in England and Wales where the labor movement was more highly developed and aggressive than in the United States. They brought their spirit of independence and inclination for labor organization to the United States. In Lancaster County, thirty puddlers working in Columbia's rolling mill were born in Wales, as reported in the Census of 1860.

124. *Ibid.*, p. 260