



## HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

30 North Market Street, Third Floor Frederick, Maryland 21701 (301) 600-1147



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**CASE NO. CR 23-04**

**NOMINATION TO COUNTY REGISTER**

**STAFF REPORT**

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### SUMMARY

**Property:**        **Anderson House**  
                      **12614 Catoctin Furnace Road, Thurmont**

**Applicant:**      **Jerome W. and Nancy E. Anderson**

Public Hearing for consideration of placing the property located at 12614 Catoctin Furnace Road, Anderson House, on the Frederick County Register of Historic Places. Submitted by the Jerome and Nancy Anderson, property owner of record.

The public hearing for designation to the Frederick County Register of Historic Places will be held at 7:00 p.m., or thereafter, on March 1, 2023.



*Figure 1: Subject Property*

## **DESIGNATION STATUS**

The property is a contributing resource within the Catoctin Furnace National Register Historic District. The district is listed on the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties (F-6-45). The property contains the historic house. The nominated property encompasses approximately 0.39 acres of land.

## **SUPPORTING MATERIALS**

The applicant submitted a completed County Register nomination form, written historical and architectural narratives for the house, a summary of property ownership, and digital photographs.

## **SITE VISITS**

Staff worked with the owner and resident of the property and scheduled site visits on February 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Commissioners were notified of the pending nomination and encouraged to visit the site on these dates.

## **REVIEW CONSIDERATIONS**

### **1) Analysis**

The documentation submitted by the applicant regarding the history and significance of the property clearly establishes the architectural and historical significance of the Anderson House, indicating that the property is eligible for listing under Criteria 6B(1A), 6B(1D), and 6B(2A). The period of significance for the property is circa 1820 to 1903, the time the house was constructed through the last year the Catoctin Furnace was in operation.

### **2) History Summary**

The Anderson House was erected ca. 1820 as worker housing and is associated with the expansion of Catoctin Furnace, a colonial-era ironworks that operated for nearly 130 years before shuttering in 1903. Thomas Johnson, the first governor of Maryland, initially developed the industrial site on the eastern slope of the Catoctin Mountains in 1774, erecting a blast furnace along Little Hunting Creek.

Over the next three decades, Johnson's brothers (first James and later Baker) expanded the operation, which produced cast products such as hollowware. As part of the expansion, James Johnson and Co. created worker housing — both log and stone dwellings — south of the furnace.

On July 13, 1811, a public sale notice published in the Frederick Town Record listed the Catoctin Furnace complex and described it as containing 15 to 20 houses for the accommodation of workmen, all in good order. The Frederick County Tax Assessment Book for 1876 (No. 15, p. 80)

described the furnace complex and included a count of 50 tenant houses. Today, ten of the original furnace worker houses (four stone houses and six log houses) stand adjacent to Old U.S. Route 15 (Catoctin Furnace Road) beginning approximately 600 feet south of the furnace.

The exact construction date of the Anderson house is unknown, but it is assumed that it was constructed ca. 1820 when the new owner, John Brien, built many dwellings for workers. Planned dendrochronology research may provide a more accurate date of construction. The large number of enslaved workers owned by Brien (at least 22 in 1820) is strong evidence that this structure was constructed utilizing the skills of enslaved Africans. By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the number of enslaved workers declined, replaced by European immigrants.

The Blue Mountain Iron Company shut down in 1892 due to the low price of iron. In 1899, the Blue Mountain Iron and Steel Company bought the property, beginning operations the following year. In 1903, the furnace shut down permanently and declared bankruptcy.

In 1923, the Anders family purchased the house. This was a typical pattern for the former furnace employees: they purchased furnace houses when the opportunity finally arose and stayed in the village. The Anders family owned the dwelling until 1962. This dwelling was purchased by G. Eugene and Elizabeth Y. Anderson on May 3, 1972 and was the first dwelling restored in the village. The Andersons were founders of the Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc. in 1973. The Andersons sold the home to their son and his wife, the current owners.

Beginning in the 1960s, the construction of the new U.S. Route 15 through the Catoctin Furnace area threatened the homes and industrial heritage of the village. Local residents searched for ways to preserve the village and the ruins of the iron furnace.

On August 28, 1972, G. Eugene Anderson, Clement E. Gardiner, J. Franklin Mentzer, and Earl M. Shankle filed articles of incorporation for the Catoctin Furnace Historical Society, Inc., stating that the purpose of the organization was to foster and promote the restoration of the Catoctin Furnace Historic District for educational and scientific purposes. A second stated purpose was to “acquire and maintain the old country store and dwellings in the community of Catoctin Furnace so as to exhibit to coming generations our heritage of the past.”

### **3) Historic, Archaeological, and Cultural Significance Criteria**

The property is eligible for listing under this category for meeting criteria 6B(1A) and 6B(1D), as outlined in Chapter 1-23-6B(1) of the Frederick County Code:

- 6B(1A): *The property has significant character, interest, or value as part of development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the county, state, or nation.*
- 6B(1D): *The property exemplifies cultural, economic, social, political, or historic heritage of county and its communities.*

The property has significant character, interest, and value in the development and heritage of the County and exemplifies cultural, economic, social, and historic heritage of the county and its communities. The Anderson House is a contributor to the Catoctin Furnace Historic District (F-6-45). The National Register district is significant, as stated in the nomination, for its association with “American industrial history and industrial archaeology, and its related living quarters, (which) illustrates the growth and development of the iron industry between 1774 and 1904.”

The Johnson brothers began operation of the furnace in 1774. By 1803, Baker Johnson obtained sole ownership and expanded the furnace’s operation. Per the National Register nomination, following Baker’s death in 1811 Catoctin Furnace consisted of several thousand acres of land, the furnace and one stack, the Catoctin Manor house, two warehouses, a chopping mill, a stonemith’s shop, barns, stables, a corn house, a charcoal house, a casting house, a forge, and 15 – 20 workers’ houses. The Furnace was sold and in 1820 John Brien became the owner. It was during his ownership that the Anderson House was most likely built. He expanded the operation by adding a carriage house, an icehouse, two mills, and a large garden.

The Furnace produced ammunition for the Continental Army, the Catoctin stove, and other household items. According to the Catoctin Furnace Historical Society Inc.’s website, enslaved labor provided a large part of the work force at the Furnace. Enslaved people worked as blacksmiths, colliers, founders, and forge men. By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the number of enslaved workers declined, replaced by European immigrants. The furnace went through many subsequent changes of ownership, finally closing in 1903.

The house was rented as company housing for nearly 100 years and transferred into private ownership for the first time in 1923 by the Anders family. The Anderson family has lived in this dwelling since 1972, although the family have lived in the village for generations.

#### **4) Architectural and Design Significance Criteria**

The property is also eligible under this category for meeting criterion 6B(2A) as outlined in Chapter 1-23-6B(2) of Frederick County Code:

- 6B(2A): *The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or architecture.*

The Anderson House is an example of tenement worker housing that is characterized by its stone construction and two-story side gabled plan. This is similar to the design of other surviving furnace worker housing along Catoctin Furnace Road and is one of 4 remaining stone structures in the village. The stone dwelling has a modern addition to the west that serves as a kitchen and family room on the ground floor and a second bedroom on the upper floor. There is an exterior door on the west addition elevation and a “front” exterior door on the east elevation. The chimney of an historic summer kitchen is extant and incorporated into the rear wall of an

attached closet at the rear of the modern addition. Despite these additions, the historic core of the house is evident and intact.

Little is known about worker housing at iron plantations in the United States. Many of the surviving or reconstructed furnaces have long lost their company housing, particularly those constructed of log. What usually remains is an archaeological site. This is one of six remaining log structures in Catoctin village. Several restored stone worker houses at the Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site in Elverson, Pennsylvania come closest to the cottages at Catoctin. Reportedly diminished to only 12 remaining houses, the worker tenements in Catoctin Furnace village are a rare property type in the State and within the region.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the Anderson House for designation to the Frederick County Register of Historic Places pursuant to Criteria 6B(1A), 6B(1D), and 6B(2A) as described in Section 1-23-6B of the County Code.

If the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) recommends the property for local designation, the HPC will submit a letter of recommendation to the County Council for final action.