

## The Mystery of the Unburned Mansion

### The Loss of the Ege “Big House” and Other Fires at Pine Grove Furnace and Laurel Forge André Weltman

Lenore Embick Flower’s *History of Pine Grove Furnace* was first presented in 1933 and is now in a 4<sup>th</sup> edition printed by the Cumberland County Historical Society.<sup>1</sup> This seminal history of the local iron industry contains a curious error: Flower’s confusion about the destruction of the ironmaster’s mansion at Pine Grove Furnace.

In her text, Flower discussed the various sales of the Pine Grove Furnace business as fortunes in the iron industry waxed and waned. After describing an 1864 sale of the “ ‘Pine Grove Iron Works,’ buildings and improvements,” she commented that:

No mention is ever made specifically of the “Big House” which was the name always used at the iron works for the mansion house in which the owner or manager lived. Some years later the original Big House of Pine Grove Furnace was destroyed by fire caught from a spark from a mountain conflagration. It was rebuilt — the present structure.<sup>2</sup>

Note the context in which she mentions the mansion fire. By first describing an event in 1864 and then saying the fire occurred “some years later,” she must mean a fire in the years after the Civil War. Further, she specifies a *forest* fire as the proximate cause of the mansion’s destruction.

The Society’s current edition adds the following endnote:

The property was surveyed in the 1970s when state commissioners were considering abolishing the building. Ed LaFond, head of the Historic Site Survey, John Tyler and others determined that the building was erected between 1827-1829 and that there was no evidence that the building ever burned.<sup>3</sup>

Whence Flower’s error in reporting that the mansion at Pine Grove Furnace burned during a forest fire some time after the Civil War? I suggest Flower conflated two different fires: the loss of the Big House at Pine Grove Furnace in 1819, and a forest fire which burned the manager’s residence (also sometimes called a “Big House”) at nearby Laurel Forge in 1872.

### The 1819 Mansion Fire at Pine Grove Furnace

Prominent ironmaster Michael Ege died in August 1815. His children spent months disputing who would inherit the four local iron operations he owned (the Carlisle Ironworks in Boiling Springs, the Mount Holly Ironworks, the Cumberland Furnace, and Pine Grove Furnace). When the legal dust settled in 1816, Peter Ege emerged as sole owner of the operation at Pine Grove.<sup>4</sup>

At the time Peter Ege became owner of Pine Grove, the ironmaster’s residence was presumably the same one listed in a 1795 business ledger. As detailed by Nancy Van Dolsen, the ledger

describes a “two-story wood house either 32 feet by 24½ feet or 28 feet by 22 feet, not including the kitchen” which is “large by the period’s standards” and “very well furnished for the late eighteenth century.”<sup>5</sup> While we cannot say with certainty that the large wood house in the 1795 ledger was the same one occupied two decades later by Peter Ege, his wife Jane Arthur Ege, and their growing family, it seems the simplest explanation.

Van Dolsen does not note the ultimate fate of this wood building. The documentary evidence does not help us determine whether it was at the exact same location as the current brick mansion *versus* somewhere else along the hill above the furnace stack. (Ironmaster mansions were typically built atop a hill where the proprietor or manager could readily observe ironmaking operations, but not too close to the roaring combustion of the furnace stack.)

Less than three years after Peter became sole owner in 1816, disaster struck. From the *American Volunteer* in Carlisle, February 4, 1819:

FIRE! — We are informed, that the dwelling house of Mr. Peter Ege, at *Pine Grove*, was entirely consumed, by fire, on Friday night last; and that the greater part of his furniture was thereby lost. We have not heard any particulars.<sup>6</sup>

Other newspapers carried nearly identical statements. In the *Spirit of the Times and Carlisle Gazette* on February 9:

Distressing Accident, The dwelling house of Mr. Peter Ege, at *Pine Grove*, was entirely consumed, by fire, on the night of Friday the 29<sup>th</sup>, all the greater part of his furniture was thereby lost.<sup>7</sup>

And in *The Republican Compiler* in Gettysburg the next day:

*FIRE*. We are informed, (says the Carlisle Volunteer) that the dwelling house of Mr. Peter Ege, at *Pine Grove*, was entirely consumed by fire, on Friday night, the 29<sup>th</sup> ultimo, and that the greater part of his furniture was thereby lost.<sup>8</sup>

No further discussion of this January 29 fire, nor about plans for a replacement structure for the destroyed Big House, was carried by these newspapers in the following months.<sup>9</sup>

The cause of the nighttime disaster is not stated. It was likely an isolated structure fire, perhaps a domestic mishap arising from a hot stove, a chimney fire or a dropped candle. I offer several reasons for this speculation. First, the *Gazette* article is titled “Distressing *Accident*” which suggests but does not prove the fire did not arise from a forest fire or malicious act.

Alternatively, the article’s title may simply be an editor’s assumption in the absence of details. Second, the iron furnace would typically be “out of blast” in the depths of winter and therefore an accident at the furnace that extended to the Big House, while not impossible, is less likely (anyhow, as noted above, the ironmaster’s residence was typically near but not immediately next to the stack). And finally, no local newspaper mentions a forest fire at that time, and late January would be an unusual time of year for a forest fire.

This brings us to another mystery. Where did the Ege family live after the loss of their residence? It is tempting to think they found temporary quarters at Pine Grove for the winter and as soon as

possible rebuilt the Big House. There was another large house at Pine Grove, according to a “1798 Direct Tax” list for Dickinson Township described by Van Dolsen: “...there were two houses (with kitchen and spring house) worth \$380 and \$500...” included separately in the tax list, unlike workers’ houses “valued at less than \$100.”<sup>10</sup> In 1798 the larger of these houses was occupied by John Arthur, the smaller house by Benjamin Blackford.<sup>11</sup> By 1819 under Peter Ege’s ownership, it is unclear who was using the smaller house described in 1798 (assuming it was still present). It seems plausible that the smaller house is where the Ege family would have moved in the immediate aftermath of the fire, but evidence is lacking.

Van Dolsen proposed that the current brick mansion could date to around 1815-1820 on the basis of architectural comparisons with other buildings in Cumberland County.<sup>12</sup> It is intriguing to note that construction of a new mansion around 1820 would dovetail with the loss in 1819, in other words that the Ege family made temporary living arrangements while a new larger structure was constructed as soon as possible.

However, there is specific evidence that the currently existing brick mansion was built years later, from 1827 to 1829. A survey nominating Pine Grove Furnace for the National Register of Historic Places in 1976 summarized the steps in building the brick mansion:

The Pine Grove Papers indicate the following sequence of work:

April 1827 – Brickmakers arrived and manufactured brick into July.

June 1827 – Masons began work, presumably laying brick into October.

June 1827 – Carpenters began work and were finished by July 1828.

September 1827 – Painters began work through March 1829.

June 1828 – Plastering began and continued through August 1828.<sup>13</sup>

The mystery of an almost decade-long gap between the loss of the old wood mansion and construction of a new brick mansion is unsolved. My speculative explanation is that either the Eges stayed in the second house described in the 1798 tax list, or the wood structure lost to fire was simply rebuilt, which could be accomplished relatively quickly and cheaply compared to building a large brick house.

I further suggest this intermediate Big House, where the Ege family lived from circa 1819 until the completion of the fancy new brick mansion in 1829, was probably not on the same foundation as the subsequent brick mansion. If the intermediate residence had been on the same site as the prolonged construction beginning in 1827, we are again left with the problem of where they lived during the three years until the new house was ready. Moreover, the house that burned was perhaps not on the same foundation as the current brick mansion: this would explain why an investigation in the 1970s did not find evidence of loss by fire at the site of the brick mansion.<sup>3</sup>

With a pressing need for a place to live, why would Peter Ege wait many years to build the magnificent brick building that still stands today? The answer might be financial. The fire in January 1819 happened at a particularly unfortunate moment: not only was it winter, but the economy was entering a cyclical downturn. The economic pressure resulting in the “Panic of 1819” was felt nationally by the summer of 1818, if not earlier, culminating when the “Bank of the United States began a painful contraction... a series of deflationary moves.”<sup>14</sup> In Cumberland

County, according to a series of questions and answers heard by a Pennsylvania State Senate committee in 1820, the monetary contraction hit business owners especially hard:

17. Has a scarcity of money been felt by men who are rich in property, as well as by the labouring classes?

*Ans.* By those who hold property especially.<sup>15</sup>

The economic stress almost certainly included local ironmaking operations. “Manufacturers suffered from the general decline in prices as well as from the contraction in credit, and the panic served to intensify their generally depressed condition since the end of the war [of 1812],” and in parts of the mid-Atlantic “[v]ery drastic declines in employment took place in the cotton, woolen, and iron industries.”<sup>16</sup>

Thus, in 1819 and over the following few years, Peter Ege may not have been in a financial position to spend money on a fancy new house. The impact of the national economic crisis on Peter Ege in particular needs further scholarship.

Continuing this line of reasoning, by the later years of the 1820s perhaps Peter Ege’s fortune was improving along with the nation’s. He was able to make two considerable investments: not only did he start construction of the brick mansion in 1827, but soon afterwards in 1830 he built Laurel Forge.

### **The 1872 Forest Fire at Laurel Forge**

Flower states that Peter Ege founded Laurel Forge in 1830 with “six fires, a runout, and a trip hammer.”<sup>17</sup> Turning out much more remunerative bar iron, a forge was a logical investment to add to the pig-iron operation 2 miles to the west. The forge community included workers’ houses and a “mansion” serving as the residence of the forge manager. These structures were lost to a wildfire in 1872.

May 1872 was a time of high fire danger. The *Carlisle Herald* did not mention a South Mountain fire in particular, but briefly observed in late May that mountain fires throughout the state were “without parallel.”<sup>18</sup> Other local newspapers that month also noted various large fires elsewhere in Pennsylvania and in the Midwest.

A Shippensburg newspaper on May 11 specifically stated that “disastrous fires are raging on South Mountain.”<sup>19</sup> A follow-up report one week later noted the fires “raged with intense fury and immense destruction of young timber is reported.”<sup>20</sup>

The relevant details about a burning mansion were in a Carlisle newspaper on May 16:

FIRE IN THE MOUNTAIN. — For the last four or five days a most destructive fire has been raging in the South Mountain, West of Mount Holly. The fire commenced near Bendersville, Adams County, and spread rapidly for miles in every direction, reaching the Cumberland side in a few hours. An immense amount of live timber has been destroyed, together with some twenty-five or

thirty thousand cords of dry wood. The mansion house at Laurel Forge, occupied by Mr. Woodward, with all its contents, we learn, was consumed on Saturday, together with scores of cabins, fences, &c. The fire at this writing extends ten or twelve miles, running east and west, and should it reach Mount Holly, would prove very destructive.<sup>21</sup>

After a brief mention of a different fire at the “east end of North Mountain” the editor lamented “Oh, for a good soaking rain.”

A more terse description came from Newville:

Further news from the fires on the South Mountain states, that the old Mansion House of Peter Ege was destroyed, together with other houses. Our informant also states the citizens of Mt. Holly were fearful of the fire reaching that place before it can be checked.<sup>22</sup>

Note this last newspaper’s statement about “the old Mansion House of Peter Ege.” In the context of accounts in other newspapers, this must refer to the Laurel Forge manager’s house and not to the brick mansion at Pine Grove. It seems likely that Flower confused the two “mansions” — both built by Peter Ege — when writing some six decades after the 1872 fire.

No additional information about the final extent of the May 1872 fire was recorded in area newspapers, although it is apparent that it did not reach Mount Holly Springs. One editor simply wrote on June 6 that “Thursday of last week witnessed the anxiously awaited, long looked for showers.”<sup>23</sup> We may infer that the wildfire was ultimately extinguished by Mother Nature.

In comparison to Pine Grove Furnace, relatively scarce information survives about the structures at Laurel Forge, all of which are gone today. Photographs of the original “old Mansion House of Peter Ege” at Laurel Forge are lacking. The only information I can glean about the original Laurel Forge manager’s house is that it perhaps was made of brick, just like the Big House at Pine Grove Furnace, based on a description of “brick mansion houses” (note plural) included in an 1838 sale of the entire property including both the furnace and forge.<sup>24</sup> A two-story wood structure that must be the *rebuilt* Laurel Forge mansion house can be glimpsed at the rear of a photograph circa 1890, in the current edition of Flower.<sup>25</sup> It is likely but unproven that the manager’s house seen in that photograph sits on the same site as the previous manager’s residence lost in 1872.

### Other Fires at Laurel Forge

Fires on the mountain were (and are!) a recurrent danger. In his memoir about a period just a few years later, Horace Andrew Keefer described taking over the Superintendency of “The South Mountain Mining and Iron Company's properties at Pine Grove” in 1879:

Water, pestilence and famine are dreadful scourges, but nothing at Pine Grove filled us with such terror as an alarm of fire in the mountains. The year before I

came there over 2,000 cords of wood had been burned and many acres of growing timber.

He went on to describe the system of firefighting he devised:

...after the first fire I saw that the failure lay in having too many bosses with cross purposes. There should be one director whom all must obey. Dan Leeper the wood boss mapped out the various wood and coal jobs. The bosses of the different jobs were instructed that at the given signal from the furnace whistle all hands were to report to me. The six carpenters were furnished with brush hooks, who, under Leeper, were to cut away brush for a fire line following them with torches and forks, backfiring was begun and patrols followed for keeping the fire line clear. I never lost a cord of wood, though we had many stubborn fires. Meals were conveyed to the fire fighters who were kept on the line until all danger was past.<sup>24</sup>

Although this organizational improvement was instituted several years after the fire of May 1872, it is not apparent that any technique of the time could have stopped such a large fire extending “ten or twelve miles.” Even today, fighting mountain fires is very difficult despite the advantage of the internal combustion engine to run pumps, fire trucks and airplanes.

The Laurel Forge area experienced many other devastating fires. As noted by Keefer above, much timber was lost in 1878. In April 1900, a forest fire destroyed the John S. Low Ice Company’s insulated storage barns on the south side of Laurel Forge Pond (now called Laurel Lake), as well as fourteen dwellings and two other barns. The damage to the ice company alone was estimated at \$40,000.<sup>26, 27</sup> Although a fire at an ice storage facility seems paradoxical, such structures were well known to be at risk because flammable sawdust was used as insulation.<sup>28</sup>

A large wildfire in 1903 again threatened the “large ice houses located at Laurel Dam and belonging to the United Ice Company.” Though this fire did not destroy the ice storage facilities, “several buildings were also consumed” presumably near Laurel Lake but not at Pine Grove Furnace two miles to the west.<sup>29</sup>

In April 1915 a forest fire again destroyed the ice industry’s rebuilt ice storage facilities. The *Star and Sentinel* described the size of this particularly severe event with the headline “Big Forest Fire Covers 10,000 acres; Kills Deer Camps.” The fire was believed to have started at the farm of Asbury Heller north of Bendersville in Menallen Township, Adams County, but most of the burned land was in Cumberland County. “Back fires” were built to protect the village of Pine Grove “so that the main fire would not reach the settlement. The entire population participated in this effort to stave off the on-coming blaze and late Wednesday night it was learned no damage had been done to any property” at the village of Pine Grove.<sup>30</sup>

That fire also destroyed the rebuilt mansion at Laurel Forge, according to Keefer:

A terrific forest fire occurred April 20, 1915, on these lands, and destroyed many acres of fine young timber, and burned the Forge Farm house, barn and all out buildings, burned the Forge Mansion then occupied by Joseph Fuller, and several summer cabins, and also burned the immense ice house that stood at the edge of

Laurel Lake filled with hundreds of tons of pure ice that had been harvested from Laurel Lake for use in Carlisle and Harrisburg by the United Ice and Coal Company of Harrisburg. It was a wonderfully destructive sight to watch the glistening ice while the wooden house around it burned fiercely.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, there were two “mansions” lost to fires at Laurel Forge, in 1872 and 1915, plus the Big House fire two miles away at Pine Grove Furnace in 1819. The potential for confusion by historians about these multiple losses is obvious.

### Other Fires at Pine Grove Furnace

In contrast to the repeated effect of forest fires on Laurel Forge, I can find no record of a forest fire destroying major structures at Pine Grove Furnace during the iron-making era (through 1895, when the furnace went out of blast for the last time; the machinery was dismantled in 1902).<sup>31, 32</sup>

However, in addition to the 1819 fire, there was another significant structure fire during the iron-making era. On February 10, 1847, during the ownership of William Watts, the casting house and associated machinery burned. From a Gettysburg newspaper five days after the event:

Fire at Pine Grove. We learn that the casting-house and some other buildings, at Pine Grove Furnace, were destroyed by fire on Wednesday night last -- loss between \$2000 and \$3000.<sup>33</sup>

But two days later, a lower damage estimate was given in a Carlisle newspaper:

Fire. — A fire broke out in the Pine Grove Iron Works, in Dickinson Township, in this county, on Wednesday night last, which destroyed the Furnace buildings and a portion of the machinery, causing a loss, we regret to learn, of about \$1500.<sup>34</sup>

As with the 1819 fire, newspapers at that time do not mention a forest fire and it would be an unusual time of year for such a fire. Hence I speculate this event may have been an isolated accident, though there is no information to support this.<sup>35</sup>

Fortunately, in contrast to Laurel Forge, it does not seem that the entirety of the operation was ever lost to fire at Pine Grove Furnace. Fires was a regular threat to iron operations, whether arising from forest fires or from industrial accidents — including the inherently dangerous process of smelting iron at temperatures approaching 3000° F, the storage of newly made charcoal which could catch on fire, or in later years the sparks from steam locomotives.

All-consuming fires or explosions were not unknown at other sites. For example, just in the South Mountain region in the waning years of the industry, there were two very large fires. On May 21, 1880, the newly renovated iron works at Big Pond in Southampton Township were completely destroyed when a fire broke out in the just-filled charcoal house. Ironmaking was never restarted at Big Pond Furnace (the furnace stack today lies in ruins, with no buildings around it).<sup>36, 37</sup> At the Mont Alto Iron Works, “[i]n 1889 the furnace, foundry, engine rooms with all the machinery, boiler house and all the old patterns were destroyed by fire” but were

“immediately rebuilt.”<sup>38, 39</sup> The cause of the Mont Alto fire is not stated but does not seem to have been a forest fire.

In the waning years of old Pine Grove, forest fires in 1902 and 1903 did heavy damage to the public park established by Jackson Fuller along Mountain Creek east of the industrial area:

Pine Grove Park no More. The vast mountain fires of the past summer and that before have wrought considerable damage to the once beautiful and popular Pine Grove Park and now it is in a deplorable state. It has not been in use for several years and before many months more the woodmen will have felled all the trees about the place. Much wood in that vicinity is being cleared for lumber.<sup>40</sup>

The extensive facilities at Fuller’s 30-acre park (including a 60-foot-long pavilion, a children’s carousel turned by water power, and two bowling alleys)<sup>41</sup> were not rebuilt, though the area continued to be used for scouting and camping activities with much simpler pavilions and other amenities.

After iron-making ended at Pine Grove Furnace, a few other structure fires damaged or destroyed individual buildings. Not including cabins, a notable loss was “a wood-frame building containing the Pine Grove village store and proprietor’s residence, plus a garage” destroyed by a “blaze of mysterious origin” in October 1915.<sup>42</sup> The owner, Charles H. Cobean, was awakened at 3:30 in the morning by barking dogs he had left in the retail area to deter thieves. The store was located adjacent to the brick mansion, and can be seen in a photograph in the current edition of *Flower*.<sup>43</sup> It was apparently not rebuilt. Cobean had been a retailer in Gettysburg several years earlier and sold his store there to run the business at Pine Grove. He was also village Postmaster, a job which he continued despite the fire until being replaced at the start of 1916.<sup>44</sup>

The former grist mill was damaged by a structure fire circa 1923.<sup>45</sup> [[[This fire was not mentioned in most area papers.]]] **INFORMATION PENDING via various hoped-for “personal communications” so that I can more fully describe this incident and perhaps narrow down my newspaper search.**

### **The Persistent Risk of Forest Fires**

Large forest fires seem to have been particularly frequent in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>46</sup> There were many reasons for this, including the lack of a systematic way to detect fires when they were small, and limitations in getting to them quickly despite the best efforts of the iron companies to organize their workers for this purpose. Fires were often attributed in newspapers of the time to arson by huckleberry pickers (whether for personal use or as a commercial enterprise). Though the wildfires devastated timber, the newly opened areas grew profuse berry bushes.<sup>47</sup> Commissioner of Forestry, and then Governor, Pinchot eventually turned this situation around beginning in the 1920s with “new detection systems, better fire fighting technology, telephone communications, and improved staffing” especially including a system of fire watch-towers.<sup>48</sup>

Both before and after Pinchot, unfortunately, large forest fires remained a major problem in Penn's Woods. It should be noted that then, as now, newspaper accounts often refer to "Pine Grove Furnace" or the "Pine Grove area" without specifying exact locations. From the viewpoint of a reporter or editor based in the valley, the distance of several miles -- such as between Pine Grove Furnace and Laurel Forge -- may seem small. Hence, it is hard to be sure from most of the contemporary newspaper accounts what area was actually burning or threatened by flames.

Additional large forest fires in the South Mountains in May 1909 destroyed 1000 acres from Hunter's Run west and north into the Cameron estate, but did not reach Laurel Lake nor Pine Grove.<sup>49</sup> Yet another two fires in August 1909 (one near Mount Holly, the other southeast from Shippensburg) similarly destroyed vast amounts of timber but did not directly threaten Pine Grove.<sup>50</sup> More forest fires occurred the following Spring "in the vicinity of Pine Grove Furnace" as well as other mountain areas to the north and west, but apparently did not threaten the village nor industrial areas.<sup>51</sup> A forest fire in 1911 south of Pine Grove on Piney Mountain Ridge covered six miles of timberland, started by a burning rubbish pile.<sup>52</sup>

Other notable forest fires in 1917, 1924 and 1926 similarly threatened but did not destroy the village of Pine Grove Furnace.<sup>53-55</sup> Yet another fire in 1930 was particularly large, so much so it was reported in a national newspaper under the headline "FIRE MENACES RESORT; Pennsylvania National Guard Aids Fight on Flames."<sup>56</sup> The fire came "within inches" of buildings at Camp Rothrock, a boy scout facility near Laurel Lake, and at least one cabin in the area was lost.<sup>57</sup> Another notable series of blazes in 1942 ranged over 8 miles of the South Mountains and destroyed more than 2000 acres, apparently due to arson.<sup>58</sup> It is possible some of these forest fires destroyed individual remote cabins or other structures that were not mentioned in newspaper accounts.

The list of major forest fires could continue, but by the middle to late 20<sup>th</sup> century the size of the fires in this region of Pennsylvania tended to be much smaller than in earlier times, and rarely destroyed buildings. Pinchot's investment in fire prevention and control was finally paying off. By the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, a relatively large fire for this area of Pennsylvania covered 200 acres.<sup>59</sup> Compared to the massive forest fires of yesteryear, conflagrations extending for miles across the mountains, the fires of today are tiny. Appreciation and support should be extended to the firefighters who help keep it that way.

### **Acknowledgements**

I am grateful for the assistance and encouragement of the staff of the Hamilton Library of the Cumberland County Historical Society, especially Rob Schwartz.

### Endnotes

1. Flower, Lenore Embick. *History of Pine Grove Furnace*, 1933. Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle. Fourth edition, 2003. Preface by Sandy Mader.
2. Flower, *op. cit.*, page 12.
3. Flower, *op. cit.*, end note 4 on page 31.
4. Ege, Thompson. *History and Genealogy of the Ege Family in the United States 1738-1911*. Star Printing Co., Harrisburg, PA, 1911, page 94.
5. Van Dolsen, Nancy. *Cumberland County: An Architectural Survey*. Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, PA, 1990, pages 89-90.
6. *American Volunteer* [Carlisle], February 4, 1819. All newspapers cited were accessed via microfilm at the Hamilton Library in 2005-2012, or online via *Heritage Archives* and *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers* in 2012.
7. *Spirit of the Times and Carlisle Gazette*, February 9, 1819.
8. *The Republican Compiler* [Gettysburg], February 10, 1819.
9. There is no direct mention of the 1819 fire in the Pine Grove Furnace business records stored at the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg (Manuscript Group 175: Day Book, Ledger, Journal and Cash Book for intervals that include the year 1819). Nor can I find any *indirect* indication of the fire, *i.e.*, no obvious change in purchases and charges recorded in those documents in the ensuing months.
10. Van Dolsen, *op. cit.*, page 90.
11. Tyler, Lyon Gardiner. *Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography, Volume 5*. Lewis Historical Publishing Co., New York, NY, 1915, page 845. John Arthur was an early co-owner of Pine Grove. Benjamin Blackford's role in 1798 is unclear, but in 1792 he had married one of Arthur's daughters (Peter Ege married another of Arthur's daughters, Jane). By 1816 when Peter Ege became owner, it appears that John Arthur and Benjamin Blackford had left Pine Grove and were operating iron works in Maryland and Virginia.
12. Van Dolsen, *op. cit.*, page 92.
13. Berman, David. *National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form*, 1976. Typewritten document prepared by the Office of Historic Preservation, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission on a National Park Service generic form. Available in a three-ring binder at the Hamilton Library main reading room. The document states that the mansion trim was “fashioned after patterns in” *The American builder's companion: or, A system of architecture, particularly adapted to the present style of building* by Asher Benjamin (R. P. & C. Williams, 1816). If an 1816 stylebook

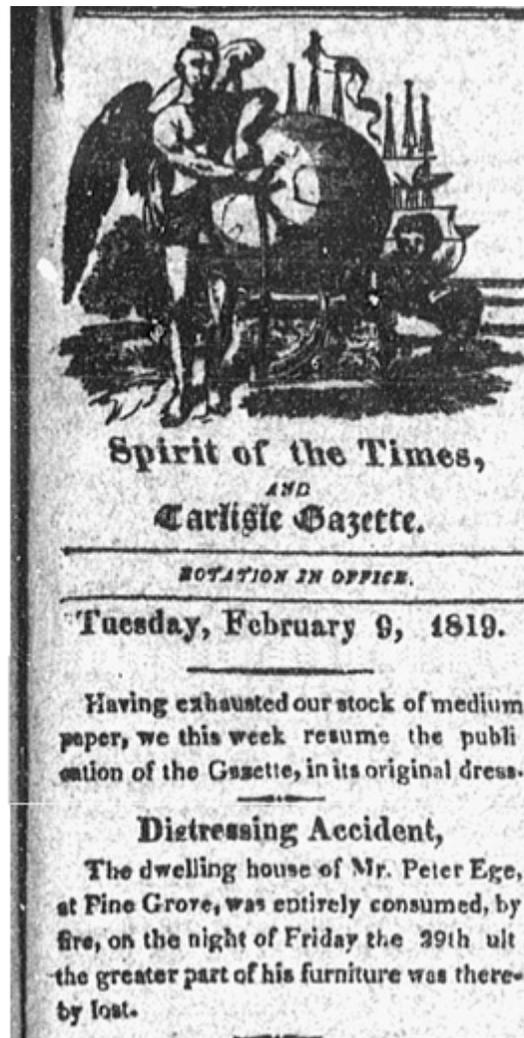
were used, this might contribute to Van Dolsen's observation that the building completed in 1829 closely resembled others in Cumberland County built a decade earlier.

14. Rothbard, Murray. *The Panic of 1819: Reactions and Policies*. Columbia University Press, NY, 1962 (reprinted 2007 by Ludwig von Mises Institute, Auburn, AL), page 17.
15. A Contributor. "Cumberland County in the Panic of 1819," *Cumberland County History*, Volume 13 Number 6, Summer 1996. The article describes a table in the Senate committee report showing a dramatic increase in "actions for debt" and "judgments confessed" in Cumberland County when the year 1809 was compared to 1819. Consistent with that tally, my own casual perusal of Carlisle and Gettysburg newspapers from the spring and summer of 1819 suggests an increased number of listed sheriff's sales and bankruptcies compared to those same newspapers in 1818.
16. Rothbard, *op.cit.*, pages 23-24.
17. Flower, *op.cit.*, page 11. However, there may have been an earlier forge at or near the same site. The 1911 Ege genealogy cited above suggests (page 91) that "An early forge was built in the vicinity, before any legal grant of land, thought to be on the site of the later forges built and rebuilt there and known as Laurel Forge, some distance below the furnace site on the Mountain Creek"; Ege goes on to propose that a forge owned by Robert Thornburgh with 1200 acres of land on a tax list in Carlisle was located near Pine Grove Furnace. Also, as early as 1787 the Furnace day books repeatedly mention bar iron in addition to pig iron and castware (Weltman, personal observation). "Bar iron" typically referred to wrought iron produced at a finery forge by heating and hammering pig iron. Furnaces made pig iron and castware such as stove plates; forges turned the pig iron into bar iron for resale for blacksmithing or other manufacturing. The implication is that a forge, perhaps small, existed in connection with Pine Grove Furnace long before 1830.
18. *Carlisle Herald*, May 23, 1872.
19. *Shippensburg News*, May 11, 1872.
20. *Shippensburg News*, May 18, 1872.
21. *American Volunteer* [Carlisle], May 16, 1872.
22. *Star of the Valley* [Newville], May 16, 1872.
23. *American Volunteer* [Carlisle], June 6, 1872. The lack of detailed coverage of this huge fire is curious, but seems typical of the newspapers of the day. The press was largely concerned with other matters such as the upcoming presidential election.
24. Keefer, Horace Andrew. "Recollections, Historical And Otherwise, Relating To Old Pine Grove Furnace" in the *Bulletin* of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, October 1934, n.p. Available at [www.patc.us/history/archive/pine\\_grv.html](http://www.patc.us/history/archive/pine_grv.html). Accessed March 20, 2012.
25. Flower, *op. cit.*, photograph on page 23.

26. *Lebanon Semi-weekly News*, April 20, 1900.
27. *Gettysburg Compiler*, May 1, 1900.
28. Spaulding, Ralph. "Experimental Tests of Fireproof and Non-fireproof Ice House Construction." *Refrigeration World*, vol. 49 no. 6, June 1915, page 43.
29. *Star and Sentinel* [Gettysburg], May 6, 1903. By the turn of the century there were apparently *two* ice storage barns at Laurel Lake, per various newspaper articles.
30. *Star and Sentinel* [Gettysburg], April 22, 1915.
31. Watts, Randy. *Railroads to Pine Grove Furnace. Book Two in a Series: Railroads of the Cumberland Valley*. Keystone Computer Services, Carlisle PA, 1991, page 27.
32. The American Iron and Steel Institute. "Long Inactive, Abandoned or Dismantled Iron and Steel Works" in *Directory of Iron and Steel Works of the United States and Canada*. Allen Lane and Scott, Philadelphia PA, 1904, page 362. This national review says Pine Grove Furnace was "dismantled" in 1902 but photographs circa 1915 show the stone stack still standing with a brick building directly adjoining; thus in 1902 the machinery was presumably sold to other furnaces or as scrap, but the stack was not razed. (The current stack at the State Park reflects cosmetic repairs made in subsequent decades.)
33. *Adams Sentinel and General Adviser* [Gettysburg], February 15, 1847.
34. *Herald & Expositor* [Carlisle], February 17, 1847.
35. As with the 1819 fire, Pine Grove Furnace business records (Manuscript Group 175) stored at the Pennsylvania State Archives in Harrisburg do not mention the 1847 fire. Unfortunately, the archives contain only a single ledger for the period 1845-1847; there is a multi-year gap in the available documents and no other types (such as Day Books) are preserved that cover 1847.
36. Goodyear, Benjamin. *Blast furnaces of Cumberland County*. Paper read before the Hamilton Library Association, Carlisle, October 23, 1903, page 19.
37. Moss, Isaac. *Report of the Receivers of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company and of the Philadelphia and Reading Coal & Iron Company of the Operations for the Year Ending November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1880*. J.B. Lippincott and Co., Philadelphia, 1881, page 36.
38. Wiestling, Edward. *Old Iron Works of the Cumberland Valley*. Paper read before the Kittochtinny Historical Society, Chambersburg, May 25, 1922, page 11. His statement about Mont Alto, describing in detail what was lost to fire (but not the cause), is no doubt correct as he was a manager. Separately, on page 7 he says of Pine Grove Furnace that "[t]he original 'big house' was burned about 35 years ago, having caught from a mountain fire" which corresponds roughly to 1887 and does not quite match with fires in 1872 and 1915. Whether Wiestling's account informed Flower's 11 years later is unclear.

39. *The Star And Sentinel* [Gettysburg] on May 7, 1889. As with Big Pond Furnace, the fire at Mont Alto occurred just after the ironworks had been extensively renovated.
40. *Star and Sentinel* [Gettysburg], December 10, 1903.
41. Watts, *op. cit.*, page 37.
42. *Star and Sentinel* [Gettysburg], October 5, 1915.
43. Flower, *op. cit.*, photograph on page 22. Also demonstrating the location, a building labeled “Store” is shown just to the northeast of the mansion on a site map dated April 1914 (one year before the fire) prepared by the Pennsylvania Department of Forestry, on display in a kiosk outside the Pine Grove Furnace paymaster’s building, March 2012.
44. *Star and Sentinel* [Gettysburg], January 1, 1916.
45. **Richard Tritt or X?X?X?X?**, I am grateful to David Heath, a Penn State student working with the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy at the Ironmaster’s Mansion, for first pointing out to me that the old mill building had suffered a significant structure fire.
46. DeCoster, Lester. *The Legacy of Penn’s Woods: A History of the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry*. PA Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg PA, 1995, pages 16-18.
47. Curren, Robert and Art Becker. *Pennsylvania Lumber Museum: Pennsylvania Trail Of History Guide*. Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg PA, 2005, page 37.
48. DeCoster, *op. cit.*, page 61.
49. *Gettysburg Times*, May 8, 1909.
50. *Gettysburg Times*, August 12, 1909.
51. *Gettysburg Times*, March 29, April 11, and April 16, 1910.
52. *Adams County News*, May 13, 1911.
53. *Gettysburg Times* and *Star and Sentinel* [Gettysburg], both of May 17, 1917.
54. *Gettysburg Times*, April 28, 1924.
55. *Gettysburg Times*, April 4 and April 20, 1926.
56. *New York Times*, May 4, 1930.
57. *Gettysburg Times*, May 5, 1930.
58. *Gettysburg Times*, April 17, 1942.
59. *The Sentinel* [Carlisle], May 2, 2011.

Figure 1.



Newspaper account of the 1819 Ege mansion fire at Pine Grove Furnace, from *Spirit of the Times and Carlisle Gazette*, February 9, 1819.

Figure 2.

**Fire at Pine Grove.**  
We learn that the casting-house, and some other buildings, at Pine Grove Furnace, were destroyed by fire on Wednesday night last—loss between \$2000 and \$3000.

Newspaper account of the 1847 casting house fire at Pine Grove Furnace, from *Adams Sentinel and General Adviser* [Gettysburg], February 15, 1847.

Figure 3.



**Pine Grove Furnace Ironmaster's Mansion, circa 1872. This is the currently standing structure, built by Peter Ege 1827-1829, and shows no evidence of fire. Photograph from Ellis Oberholtzer, *Jay Cooke: Financier of the Civil War* (vol. II), 1907.**

**Figure 4.**



**Teamsters unloading charcoal at the Laurel Forge coal house, circa 1890. Note the two-story building at the rear, the rebuilt Forge Mansion (replacing the one lost to a forest fire in 1872). The rebuilt Mansion was in turn destroyed by a forest fire in 1915. Photograph from Lenore Flower, *History of Pine Grove Furnace*, 1933 (4<sup>th</sup> ed., 2003).**