



# CRANBERRY IRON MINE



## *Iron for the Confederacy*



During the Civil War, natural resources such as salt, lead, and iron were highly prized commodities in the Confederacy. The government relied especially on small rural ironworks for the metals needed to manufacture cannons, swords, and firearms. Ruben White first mined iron ore in this area in the

1780s. By 1860, the Cranberry Iron Corporation operated a bloomery forge on Cranberry Creek. Jordan C. Hardin ran the mine, and his father, John Hardin, was the local postmaster. In a bloomery, burning charcoal melted the iron from the ore. Workers used an iron bar to stir and gather the resulting mass, which was carried to the forge and hammered to drive out impurities, and then further hammered into flat bars of iron.

Forty to sixty men were employed at Cranberry during the war, mining ore and forging iron for the Confederacy. Once a month, the bar iron was loaded in a wagon, and Peter Hardin, a local slave, drove the wagon down the mountain to Camp Vance, near Morganton. There, the iron was loaded on a train and transported to foundries



**Gen. Robert F. Hoke**  
*Courtesy Library of Congress*



**Jordan C. Hardin**  
*Courtesy Mike Hardin*

throughout the South that produced munitions for the war effort.

Following the war, the Cranberry mine property changed hands several times. Former Confederate Gen. Robert F. Hoke owned the

operation for several years, and he and his associates incorporated the Cranberry Iron and Coal Company in 1873. The mine was worked sporadically through the first half of the twentieth century.

