

## Early Life on the Wading River: Part Two The Slitting Mill to McCarthyville

by W. J. Hawthorne

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In the last issue of "South Jersey Magazine", I wrote that John Bodine moved early in his life from Cranbury to Wading River. It has since been brought to my attention that John Bodine was residing in the Wading River area at least as early as August 25, 1777 when he helped Lewis Darnell take inventory of John Leek's estate in Little Egg Harbor, Burlington County, New Jersey<sup>1</sup>.

It was during 1794 that John and Francis Bodine sold a considerable amount of land that was located near the Wading River to Isaac Potts who had founded Martha Furnace several miles above the Bodine Tavern in 1793. Isaac Potts also is credited with the construction of the "Wading River Forge and Slitting Mill" in the summer of 1795. He sold the Slitting Mill property to George and William Ashbridge and Joseph Walker on April 24, 1797.



In this photo, Harrisville Lake is seen on the left. We are looking down Bridge Road (across dam). On the right are the ruins of McCarty's first paper mill (machine shop). Photo from Atlantic County Historical Society files. [See note at end of article.]

Pig iron which would have come from Martha Furnace or Speedwell Furnace was converted at the forge into bar iron, rolled into sheets, reheated and run through the slitting mill where it would have been cut into standard sized strips by rotary shears<sup>3</sup>. A common product of the slitting mill was the nail. I have found cut nails that would have been produced by a slitting mill in the sections of the tin roof from the kitchen of the mansion house at Harrisville.



Original paper mill or slitting mill and Harrisville Lake to the left. Other photos at Atlantic County Historical Society definitely identified by Harold Feyl. Horses and wagon hauled him from Wading River to Harrisville campsite. Photo is 1914 circa. [See note at end of article.]

The following information is from Charles Boyers "New Jersey Forges and Furnaces" . . . but in that for 1809, "John Youle of Wading River Forge," is assessed for one sawmill, two gristmills, four forge fires, and one slitting mill, the taxes for which were .28.5, the third largest assessment in the township. At the same time he also operated the Speedwell Furnace, from which doubtless the Wading River Works drew its pig iron."<sup>4</sup>

George and William Ashbridge had sold their shares in the Wading River Forge to Joseph Walker in 1805. Walker then sold a half interest to John Youle. Around this same time Youle and Walker seem to have also purchased control of Evi Belangee's saw mill and most likely the skitmill as well. In addition to the Wading River properties,

Youle and Walker also purchased a forge on the West Creek which later became known as Stafford Forge.<sup>5</sup>

There was quite a bit of business between Martha Furnace and the Slitting Mill. The following information is from the Martha Furnace Diary:

- August 22, 1809 - Willm. Fielding putting up ore 1/2 day. H. McGahen putting up ore. Saml. Stewart moved Taggart to long Slow & carted a load of plates to the landing then brought a load of Corn from the Slitting Mill. teams hauling ore from Cranberry Run.
- Sep. 15, 1809 - Flour all gone. Mr. Evans went to the Slitting Mill & borrowed 10 B. Rye.
- Sep. 22, 1809 - Mr. Evans went to the stage & retd by Slitting Mill & borrowed some rye. Michael Bennett gone to the shore. Nash working for Howard abt. house.
- Oct 24, 1809 - Stewart hauled a load of corn from Ye Slitting Mill. Sol. Reeve frolicking. G. lungins began to board in Kitchen. First Frost.
- May 8, 1809 - Mark Reeve sent a load of potatoes by the Bridg's breaking down at the slitting, they were all lost but 8 1/2 bushels. Finished the new barn & the Carters look each their stables. R. Allen sawing.
- June 25, 1810 - Micks team hauling ore. Everenham began to drive. Walner quit. Cuning stamping ore and doing the Banksmans work. Cross having stuff hauled for his house. Walner went in the boat for Cross. Williamson gone to the Slitting Mill.
- July 6, 1810 - Sold Forge & Slitting Mill 2 Ton Scraps. JI. Evans went to Sooy's to meet the committee. [Author's note: Unknown to many people New Jersey has its own special rattlesnake. It is known as the Timber Rattler.]
- July 29, 1810 - Muarice & Michael retd this evening. Mick Jr. killed a rattlesnake with 11 rattles.
- July 12, 1811 - Rain in afternoon. Grist mill broke, got the feed ground at the Slitting Mill.
- Sept 4, 1811 - Owen Hedger brot. 50 Bushels Corn from Slitting Mill.
- November 4, 1812 - J. Jonston building a chimney for J. Howard. Wm. Hamilton moved to the Slitting Mill. E. Rutter took his house.
- November 6, 1812 - Camp brot. a Ld of corn from the slitting mill. Rain last night.
- April 18, 1808 - Luker hauled Rye to the slitting mill to grind for horsefeed. Jacob Ventling hunting in forenoon.
- October 28, 1808 - John Luker hauled Clay in afternoon. Isaac Cramer team hauled grain to the Slitting Mill in afternoon. Mr. Evans & Sharp surveying.
- October 29, 1808 - Mr. Evans & Sharp finished for the present surveying. Hedger lost a child, Mick junr gained one. got 10 bushels Wheat ground at the Slitting Mill.
- November 18, 1808 - Isaac Cramer's team hauled one load corn from the Slitting Mill in aftn. John Bodine's team hauled 1 ld. shells and 1/2 ton iron. John Lynch dangerously ill. Mr. Evans & Mr. Sharp surveying.
- July 30, 1809 - Molders returned from the Beach. J. Ventling drunk & eating eggs at the Slitting Mill. Josh Townsend wantiing to fight J. Williamson. Furnace boiled & the metal Consolidated in the gutter. Michl. Bennett returned from Tuckerton this eveing.
- Aug. 12, 1809 - J Luker carted 50 Bush. Corn from Slitting mill. J. Moore went home.

#### Change in ownership of the Slitting Mill Properties:

- Joseph Walker to John Youle - July 21, 1809
- John Youle (½ only) to Bartholomew Ward - Feb 16, 1814
- John Youle (½ only) to Justin Layman - June 6, 1815
- Bartholomew Ward to N.Y. Machine Fac. Co. - Sept 29, 1815
- Justin Layman (½ only) to John Youle Sr. - Dec 21, 1815
- John Youle Sr. (½ only) to John Youle Jr. - June 10, 1816
- NY Mach. Fac. Co. ½ to Wm. P Rathbone - June 10, 1816
- Wm P Rathbone (½ only) to Philo Andrews - May 13, 1823
- John Youle Jr. (½ only) to John Hallock - Aug 14, 1823

[Author's note: The Burlington Co. Deed Book records that as of August 14, 1823, the forge, slitting mill, and the rollin mill had been destroyed by fire and that John Hallock had then erected an oil mill on the same site hoping to manufacture castor oil.<sup>6</sup>]

- John Hallock (¼ only) to Samuel J. Read - Feb 4, 1824
- John Hallock (¼ only) to Timothy Pharo - Oct 5, 1825
- Timothy Pharo (¼ only) to Samuel J. Read - Oct 5, 1825
- Public Sale Samuel Richards - Sept 15, 1828. All of the Slitting Mill Properties were purchased by Samuel Richards at public sale in September 1828, for a sum of ,895.00 The deed stated that the Slitting Mill Estate contained 3,000 acres.
- Samuel Richards to Samuel Read - Sept 1, 1829
- Samuel Read to William McCarty, Thomas Davis, Isaac Ashmead - 1832
- Isaac Ashmead (1/3 only) to William McCarty, Thomas Davis - Jan 16, 1834
- William McCarty, Thomas Davis (1/3 only) to Henry Carey - Jan 21, 1834
- Thomas Davis (1/3 only) to William McCarty, Henry Carey - Nov.6, 1834

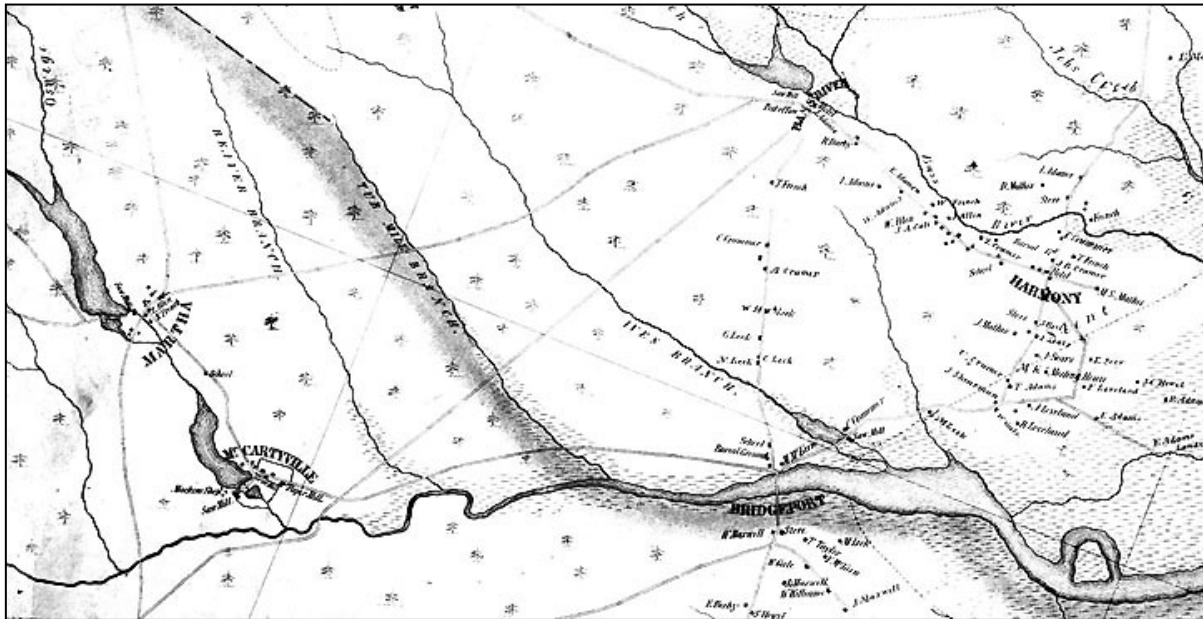
- William McCarty, Henry Carey to Wading River Manufacturing and Canal Company - Oct. 20, 1835

[Author's note: The Wading River Manufacturing and Canal Co. was comprised of the following members: William McCarty, Henry Carey, Thomas Davis, Isaac Lea, and Laurence Johnson. Eventually the Wading River Manufacturing Company was pledged under a mortgage to a John Bouvier. Bouvier in turn signed the mortgage over to the Burlington County National Bank to settle his accounts with the bank. The property was eventually sold to one Daniel Hutchinson.]

- Daniel Hutchinson (¼ only) to Burlington Co. National Bank - April 1, 1845
- Daniel Hutchinson (½ only) to Mahlon Hutchinson - April 1, 1845
- Daniel Hutchinson (¼ only) to William McCarty - April 1, 1845
- William McCarty (¼ only) to Thomas Albert Havens - Oct 26, 1845

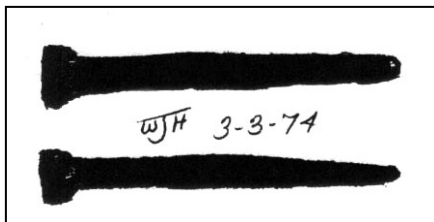
According to an article in the November 1846, issue of the Woodbury Constitution, "The extensive paper mill at McCartyville, Burlington County was destroyed by fire. It had eight engines"<sup>8</sup> The Burlington County National Bank soon acquired Thomas Havens' share of the McCartyville Property due to his sudden death.

- Burlington Co. Bank (½ only) to John H. Simon - June 1, 1854
- Mahlon Hutchinson (½ only) to John H. Simon - June 1, 1854
- John H. Simon, partial sale to William and Richard Harris - 1856



This map of the Wading River area in 1849 is from J.W. Otley and R. Whiteford's map of Burlington County.

We have now seen how this Wading River area has undergone several changes. First there was the skitmill and Evi Belangee's sawmill. Cut timber and ground staples were the first products. Next there was



Nails, even and tapered on two sides, believed to have been manufactured at Harrisville. Found by author in the cellar pit of what is reputed to have been the mansion houses.

the iron industry which was to last until Pennsylvania developed its own processes and natural resources. After the iron industry died off, there was still the charcoal industry which lasted until around 1848 when places like New York city decided it was cheaper and better to substitute coal for the charcoal. Last but not least, there was the paper industry where commercial type paper similar to the butcher's wrapping paper was made by places such as McCartyville and still later in the same location when it became known as Harrisville. Weymouth also shifted from producing iron to making paper. One of the questions I still have is: what ever happened to William McCarty? It is suggested that his daughter married one of the Harris Brothers which would indicate that the family possibly remained in the area

Footnotes:

1. *New Jersey Colonial Documents*, p 305
2. Charles S Boyer, *Early Forges and Furnaces in New Jersey*, Phila, 1963, p 114
3. Arthur Pierce, *Iron in the Pines* p 72
4. Boyer, p 264
5. Pierce, p 73
6. Richard E Moeller, *A History of Harrisville, NJ* p 4
7. *Ibid* p 9
8. Arthur D Pierce notes, property of the Atlantic County Historical Society.

**Web Editor's Note:** Hawthorne's first two photos of the Slitting Mill and Harrisville Lake are believed, by John Pearce, to be reversed. Their orientation has been kept the same as presented by Hawthorne. See John Pearce's discussion on this matter on page 348 & 349 of his book, Heart of the Pines. It is a "must have" for both the serious historian and anyone interested in our area of the history of the New Jersey Pine Barrens. A special thank you to John for providing two better quality photos that were used in this presentation.