

## Lonely Grave of Lucy Evans Recalls Days At Martha Furnace

by Elizabeth Perinchief  
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Anyone who has read Leah Blackman's HISTORY OF LITTLE EGG HARBOR is familiar with the name of Lucy Ann Evans, stalwart Quaker minister. Mrs. Evans was the wife of Jesse Evans, manager of Martha Furnace from 1806-1848. In this capacity alone she would have been a well known figure for her husband was one of old Washington Township's prominent citizens. on y did he handle the affairs at the furnace but he was a county freeholder, justice of the peace, township committeeman, assessor and surveyor.

Mr. and Mrs. Evans were members of the Society of Friends and attended meetings at Little Egg (Tuckerton). This meeting was established in 1704 by Edward Andrews who gave 2 acres of land for the meeting house and graveyard. The house of worship stood for 154 years. So strong were the Quaker tenets in this section of the county that for over 70 years, there was no church of any other denomination.

Monthly, quarterly and yearly meetings were held in Tuckerton and Friends from Pennsylvania as well as the upper part of the county journeyed through the pines. In the Martha Furnace Diary notation is made of "great preparations for Tuckerton Quarterly Meeting." The diary also notes visitations made by Mr. and Mrs. Evans "to the Bank to hear a divine oration" or to Friends Meeting at Bass River Neck.

According to Mrs. Blackman, Lucy Ann Evans taught Friends how to walk "in the straight and narrow." The drunkenness and haranguing at Martha must have been quite a cross to her. One of the major problems at furnaces was liquor and in 1811, Evans made a resolution that "any person bringing liquor to the works, enough to make drunk, should be liable to a fine." From the diary accounts there must have been many fines levied.

The diary reveals that Mrs. Evans was a busy hostess as mistress at Martha. Visits from furnace owner, Samuel Richards, were frequent. Other furnace and forge operators from Weymouth, Batsto and Hampton came to discuss business and labor problems - "dined and returned."

Food shortages, fires and pestilence plagued the settlement periodically and we can be sure that Mrs. Evans did her part administering to the physical and spiritual needs.

The Diary of Martha Furnace 1808-1815 was kept by Caleb Earl (presumably) who was clerk to Evans. It is a splendid source for research on furnace operation and life in the sequestered village surrounding the works. Mr. Evans as iron-monger was responsible for the general welfare of his laborers as well as for supervision of the plant facilities. He went off in the country to find fresh pork or to the stage to bring updry goods, or to the slitting mill at Bridgeport to borrow rye, to Lumberton for flour, to Pleasant Mills for wool In addition he helped build the chimney and made a desk for the school house. Evans was a working manager, not just an overseer. He put in ½ charge of brick in the furnace, "let off" the pond laid out lots for woodchoppers, explored the eastern part of the country to find a landing for iron at head of the Bay, and went off searching for ore for several days at a time.

His forty years at Martha saw both prosperity and decline. According to Gordon's Gazetteer (1834) Martha and Batsto were comparable. Both hired about 60 hands and had settlements of 400 people. Martha produced 750 tons annually and had an estate of 30 000 acres, while Batsto produced 850 tons with 50,000 to 60,000 acres appurtenant. The furnace fires died out at Martha in the mid-1840's. Charcoal was manufactured on a large scale for a while, but all operation ceased around 1848.

While Mr. Evans busied himself with the vexations and frustrations at the furnace, his wife found tune to minister in the Society of Friends. She was a speaker of renown and held in esteem by Quakers from all over the state and in Pennsylvania. We are told of one incident at Tuckerton Meeting when Mrs. Evans rose saying something "rests on my mind to communicate to someone present 'Set thine house in order for thou shalt die ... and ... some are under the preparing hand of the Lord for deep trials await them, but there will be joy in the end.'" Before that meeting closed, Thomas Osborn had dropped dead. Later during the conventional graveside silence at his funeral, his daughter Rhoda, stepped forward and preached her first sermon. So Lucy Ann's "prophecies" were fulfilled and Rhoda Osborn Lamb became a prominent Quaker speaker.

At the time of the separation of the Friends (1828) into Hicksite and Orthodox groups, Mrs. Evans sided with the Hicksite followers. Nearly all Little Egg members continued to adhere to Orthodox concepts, but

many of the resident ministers subscribed to the newly formed creed. Sometime before 1828 the Friends had built a meeting house at Bridgeport (Wading River) and this was assigned to the Hicksites. Soon many of this congregation moved away and eventually no members were left but Mrs. Evans who continued to go alone to the meeting house on first Day and was "both minister and audience."

Lucy Ann Evans died at 65 in 1834, and Mrs. Blackman says was buried in a lonely graveyard at Bridgeport. Locating the last resting place of this resolute, religious woman was not easy. The two old cemeteries near Wading River are the Leek-McKeen Burying Ground on the hill just beyond the river, and the French Cemetery on the road from there to New Gretna. In Inquiry locally failed to find anyone who knew of Lucy Ann's gravesite. Then one winter day on a recheck of the Leak grounds, I looked over the enclosure and saw a gravestone a couple of hundred yards away. Overrun with brambles and underbrush, the Lucy Ann Evans marker would not be visible except during the winter season. Nearby are a few other stones; one for J. Halleck\* who it is recorded came to Egg Harbor about 1815 to preach at Tuckerton, but joined the Hicksite group at the time of the separation.

One can therefore assume that this neglected plot contains the graves of members of the separatists from old Tuckerton meeting. Jesse Evans outlived his wife by 15 years, but there is no evidence he is interred here. Ironically the gravestone of Lucy Ann Evans is the only marker, visible from a distance, to indicate the existence of a burying ground, just as this staunch Quaker lady was the only visible Hicksite member as she sat quietly worshipping alone in the Bridgeport meeting house.

\* Editor's note: The gravestone is actually for Lydia Hallock, John Hallock's wife.