

# MARTHA

1808—1815

The complete  
Martha Furnace Diary  
and  
Journal

*'A day by day account of a  
vanished town  
and its people.'*

by

HENRY H. BISBEE

and

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illustrated by  
George C. Vail

with invaluable assistance  
by  
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*"The past is as open to development as the future."*

## MARTHA FURNACE

### The site today

Martha Furnace is on the East Branch of Wading River, several miles above its junction with the West branch. The macadam road from Chatsworth to New Gretna crosses the river just below the Harrisville Mill pond. From this road, a sand trail along the east side of the pond leads to Martha.

Martha was a charcoal burning, cold-air, blast furnace. Surrounding it were half a dozen structures associated with the making of iron. Nearby stood the ironmaster's house. The village, housing the workers, was strung along the roads leading to the furnace. Several miles away, but well off company property, were the "jug taverns" so necessary to the well being of iron workers. The furnace was in operation from 1793 until about 1844. In the years since the state acquired the Wharton Tract the public has been attracted to the site and to some disappointment. Nothing remains of the furnace today but an earth-covered mound of rubble enclosed by a high wire fence. Budd Wilson, state archeologist, who made an archeological dig at the furnace site in 1968, fenced in the ruins to discourage pot-holers. But even with little to see the public continues to visit Martha. What causes this curiosity? A renewed interest in the past is perhaps one reason. However, Martha would not be the mecca for sightseers that it is if several books had not been written about it.

John McPhee's **The Pine Barrens**, seems to have caught the public's imagination. In the 1930's Arthur Pierce often visited the site, then returned to his desk to produce his first book, **Iron in the Pines**. On the other hand it is surprising that Cornelius Weygant never mentions Martha in his **Down Jersey Tales**, and Charles Heston, a prolific writer of Jersey lore, refers to the old furnace only once. When main roads were hardly more than gravel trails, the inimitable Henry Carleton Beck crashed the scene to produce numerous articles and books about the Pines. His **Jersey Genesis** and other tales are most popular. Henry visited Martha many times.

In the 1930's a group of "explorers," Harvey Moore of Riverton; Bob Downer of Runnemedede; John Morgan of the Camden County Historical Society; Charles Evans of Haddonfield; Russel Stockton of Tabernacle; Watson Buck of Rancocas, with his home-made iron detector; and Nathaniel Evan of the Masonic Home, Burlington, with his camera, scoured the Pines. They visited Martha often and, by their own admission, carried away artifacts of iron, wood and stone.

Twenty years ago the past of Martha Furnace was more visible than today so one can envy this part of a letter from Harvey Moore to Bob Downer dated February 10, 1953:

"I went to Martha during Christmas Week. My Vermont friend came down, and we drove into Martha. We walked around the dam head; found the site of the stamping mill — plainly evident by an enormous pile of slag; and walked over to that old pile of saw dust I've been talking about: that I saw five or six years ago. Most of it had been hauled away, but the site of the sawmill is plainly discernable. It's about one half mile west of the bridge over the spillway right at the furnace. If you view that spillway from the west side, when the sun is setting, you can see down in the water. The remains of the wooden sluiceway that carried the water from the damhead to an overshot wheel abreast the furnace, is plainly visible the whole way. They locate the wheel in spite of the fact that I found a part of that wheel beside that old platform built in the spillway."

This letter gives us some information about the furnace area of 25 years ago. For one thing it tells that an overshot wheel powered the bellows. Wilson, who conducted the 1968 dig for the state, is of the opinion that the wheel was breast type. See his drawings in this book.

Charles Boyer apparently was the earliest of the 20th Century writers to visit Martha. Certainly he was the most serious one in researching records. His book **Early Forges and Furnaces** is a factual account of the furnace at Martha. When he visited the site, a well-sweep was still intact. Unfortunately he fails to give us a description of the place.

With this current dearth of physical evidence there is little upon which to build the story of Martha. Something more is needed. How do we know, for instance, that there was even a place called Martha? Surely these writers did not concoct tales from whole cloth. Where did they get their inspiration?

From the Martha Furnace Diary or Journal which still exists today. This journal, written by two or more unnamed clerks, between 1808 and 1815, was the source of the writers' tales.

In 1917 the original diary belonged to John W. Harris, Esq., of Mount Holly. D. G. Baird of Beverly was responsible for transcribing the typewritten copy that eventually became the property of Boyer. This copy is now owned by the Camden County Historical Society. The late Mr. Ewan also possessed a typewritten copy. In 1955 these editors made a copy of the Ewan transcript. We did not know the whereabouts of the original journal. We had been told that it had been lost in the Harrisville fire of 1913, but we had heard a rumor that the book had been sold to a library somewhere in Delaware. The lead proved fruitful. We located it in The Eleutherian Mills Historical Library at Greenville, Delaware, where we inspected the journal and acquired a microfilm copy.

The people at the library were able to shed further light on the book. Miss Grace Ottey, head of acquisitions, reported that the library purchased the diary in 1962 from a New York dealer, through the book shop of James J. Kane. Later they learned that the book had been purchased from an antique dealer named Albert Collier of Bordentown. He said that it had belonged to his family for many years.

The original book is cloth-bound and measured 8 x 12 ½ inches. At one time it contained 127 blank pages or 254 sides. In a pleasant surprise we found that less than half of the journal had been published. The volume combines a ledger and diary. On the evened numbered pages which are opposite the diary pages, we found much useful information about the works. There are lists of workmen -- ore-lifters, colliers, guttermen, moulders, carpenters, carters and woodcutters. There are daily time sheets and records of the amount of horse feed, coal and ore brought to the furnace. Iron made at the furnace is listed singly and by weight so we are able to derive an approximation of the amount of products made and supplies used at Martha during the years covered by the diary. Unfortunately cash transactions and wages are not included. A day book and a memorandum book, mentioned in the diary, recorded these figures -- their whereabouts unknown to us.

These records of an early 19th Century blast furnace are of interest to historians. We have included several charts which cover most of this information. However, the diary, the day-to-day happenings in the lives of Americans 150 years ago is the material of general appeal. Its pages tell how post-Revolutionary War Americans lived during the Iron Age of the Pines - their lives not much different from those of residents elsewhere in Burlington County.

### **WHO WROTE THE DIARY?**

Three families were early associated with the Wading River area of the Pines: Newbold, Hough and Earl. They all lived in Springfield Township some 30 miles northwest of Martha, more than a day's journey through the deep forests. By 1750 William Newbold, Sr., and Daniel Hough had formed a partnership and were operating the Swago Saw Mill on the East Branch of Wading River. The name of Caleb Earl, a prosperous Juliustown merchant is found in numerous wills and legal papers associated with the Houghs and Newbold. The three names occasionally appear in the Martha Diary.

Boyer and Pierce, with overtones of caution, imply that Caleb Earl was the diary's author. Their conclusion hinges on the last entry of May 16, 1815, which states:

“Caleb Earl started home with his brother. Issac Hemmingway taking his place as Clerk for Mr. Evans.”

A convincing statement and one cannot fault the conclusion until he learns that two persons bore this same name. One was born in 1756 in Springfield Township. Call him Caleb Earl, Esq., to differentiate him from Caleb Earl, Jr., who was born in the same township in 1794 with a twin brother, Thomas. The brothers were sons of Thomas Earl, brother to Caleb Earl, Esq.

Caleb Earl, Esq., owned and operated a store in Juliustown, Springfield Township, for many years. He served on the Township Committee from 1793 through 1799. He served as tax collector for the township from 1787 to 1791 and again from 1802 to 1815. He was 52 years old when the diary begins. He was a wealthy man by standards of the day. His handwritten will, dated May 10, 1811, bears some calligraphic similarity to the early writings in the diary. But this is not conclusive. On July 9, 1814, he was made a director of the Farmer's Bank of Mount Holly. He is mentioned only once in the diary in an entry of July 20, 1814:

“Anthony & Jonathan Hough and C. Earl arrived here this morning on their way to Tuckerton. Mr. Evans went with them.”

We are confident that this C. Earl, who accompanied the two middleaged Hough brothers is indeed Caleb Earl, Esq.

The case for Caleb Earl, Esq., as clerk at Martha Furnace appears to be counter to evidence. His position as tax collector during the diary years should be sufficient. It is our opinion that this prominent Springfield merchant, who died before the diary ends, was not its author.

The first inkling of two Caleb Earls is in a diary entry of April 7, 1814: "Caleb Earl, Journ., wt 129 lbs." This Caleb Earl was then 19 years old. Because his name is not previously mentioned it can be assumed that he did not become clerk until 1814. In August we learn that Caleb Earl, Journ., has gained 9 pounds. The diary states: Caleb Earl, wt 136 lbs. JEN 217. Is JEN the diarist? Probably we will never know. No one at the furnace fits the initials. But entries substantiate that Caleb Earl, Journ. was at Martha in 1814.

Caleb Earl, Journ., was still at Martha on December 26th 1814, when the diary states: "Caleb Earl, Journ., and J. Conley started for the bay gunning." An entry of January 24, 1815 does not specify which Caleb Earl: "Caleb Earl started for the country." But we conclude this to be Caleb, Journ, who is leaving for his home in Springfield because he inherited his uncle's estate.

That Caleb Earl, Journ., was clerk during the last years of the diary's writing is irrefutable. Still we can exclude him as the diarist for several reasons. It is unlikely that a lad of 14 in 1808, would write such mature comments as are contained in the diary. Also Caleb, Journ., even as clerk, was absent from the works on several occasions; yet the diary continued in much the same handwriting each day during his absence.

It is our opinion that one writer wrote the early part of the diary from 1808 through 1810. We also feel that most of the wry and mature comments of the later years were penned by one writer. This diarist uses the pronoun 'I' rarely. He uses it on April 1, 1810, when he writes: "I believe drank no rum." He resorts to it on December 5, 1811, and again on April 6, 1814, in; the following entry: "I went to Speedwell." An interesting comment appears on April 28, 1813: "This eve began on 75 segars." Again, a month later on May 31: "Began on 100 segars." On January 17, 1815, he observed: "I call that a stormy day." Although he seems tolerant of the drinking problem at the works he may have been a teetotaler.

These entries are the only clues we have to this particular writer. A man with a sense of humor, a good reporter, a tolerant man interested in his fellows. He was a man who took time to weigh a young lad on the company scales. He was addicted to strong cigars. The diary reveals no other clues. Nowhere do we find the diarist's signature.

Harvey Moore in his booklet on Martha Furnace further complicates the mystery when he states; "One Caleb West, a self-effacing humorist," was the author. The records mention no one by that name.

Sample pages from the diary and samples of the handwriting of the two Caleb Earls' were submitted to handwriting experts of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The findings follow:

"As a result of what limited examination that could be conducted from the photocopies designated Qc1 through Qc8, (1808-1815), it appears that at least three, and very possibly more, writers were responsible for the writings on these specimens. Examination suggest that the majority of Qc1 through Qc4 writings, for the years 1808 through 1811, were probably prepared by one writer. However, indications are present that a writer or writers, other than the primary writer of Qc1 through Qc4 exhibits, may have made limited entries on these specimens.

"The two Caleb Earl signatures on Kc 1 are not sufficiently comparable and are too limited to determine if any of the questioned writing on QC1 through Qc8 was or was not written by Earl."

The report is self-explanatory. One writer, with some exceptions, made entries in the diary from 1808 through 1811. Thereafter, three and perhaps more persons made entries. No expert is needed to conclude that the writer who began the diary did not finish it.

To ask an expert whether the signature on the will of Caleb Earl, Esq., of 1811, and the will of Caleb Earl, Jr., of some 60 years later, in 1873, bore any similarity with the diary text was naive. We cheerfully admit our mistake.

### **PROPRIETARY RECORDS**

When Martha Furnace was founded in 1793 most pine land had been taken up under proprietary survey. Under this

unique English institution New Jersey land titles stem from the 17th Century King, Charles II. In 1664 he made a proprietary grant of conquered New Netherlands to his brother James, Duke of York. The work “proprietary” implies that “government follows the soil,” meaning that those who owned the land also controlled government. Soon after James made a similar grant of all of New Jersey to two friends, Lord John Berkeley and Sir George Carteret. These two nobles formed the first Province of New Jersey. This proprietary government lasted about 10 years. In 1674 Berkeley, needing money, sold his share to a Quaker, Edward Byllinge. This share soon came under control of Quaker trustees — one of whom was William Penn when Byllinge became bankrupt.

Penn wanted to found a Quaker colony in New Jersey. So he persuaded Carteret to divide the province. The Quakers received the land along the Delaware and Carteret the seacoast down to Little Egg Harbor. The division line ran from the lower end of Long Beach Island north and west to a point on the Delaware River above the Delaware Water Gap. All to the east of this line was controlled by Carteret and was called East Jersey. All to the west was owned by the Quakers and was named West Jersey. The East-West Province line marks the boundary line between Burlington County and Monmouth and Ocean Counties. In 1688 a Council of Proprietors was established for West Jersey. A similar board was set up for East Jersey. These boards controlled all “hitherto unappropriated” land in the two provinces.

In the late 17th Century and well into the 18th, there were vast amounts of “hitherto unappropriated” land. The procedure in West Jersey, with which the editors are more familiar, is as follows: Stockholders (Proprietors) were issued “warrant rights,” equivalent to the amount of proprietary shares owned. When a person other than a proprietor wished to acquire land he first negotiated for warrant rights. With these rights secured he requested the Council of Proprietors for a survey. The Surveyor General then caused a survey of the tract desired and returned a sketch or description. The description was then laid before the Council which inspected the survey. If approved, the survey was ordered recorded. With this document the person had the original basis of title. This, now archaic institution, the West Jersey Proprietors, still exists and functions in much the same way in the 20th Century as it did in the late 17th.

### **ALL HANDS AT WORK**

[ Martha Furnace Diary - Nov. 7, 1810 ]

#### **The site 1741 – 1976**

In the early years the volume of water and relatively high banks of the East Branch of Wading River made the location of Martha Furnace an ideal site for a water wheel. The stream was first named SWAGO branch. By the end of the 18th Century the name had become corrupted to OSWEGO. No one knows the name of the first European to visit the spot. George Keith, Surveyor General for East Jersey passed about 8 miles to the east when he ran the Province Line in 1687/88. The site undoubtedly was noted by roving woodsmen in search of choice stands of timber during the late 17th Century.

The earliest date for the name Wading River is found in proprietary records for 1713, when T. Ridgeway took up 22½ acres “near Wading River.” Proprietary surveys in the neck between the two branches begin in 1737 when Gervis Pharo acquired 95 acres. In 1741 he took up 50 additional acres in Swago Swamp. This is the first mention of the name ‘Swago’. In this same year the Swago Saw Mill was built on the site that would eventually become the location of Martha Furnace. By 1765 and all through the American Revolution the saw mill was owned and operated by the Springfield Township Quakers, Hough and Newbold. The site was controlled by Quaker owners for the next century.

During President Washington’s second term (1793-97) Congress passed a National Conscription Act. In compliance with this act the New Jersey Legislature provided for a reorganization of the state militia. A census of all eligible males between the ages of 18 and 45 was taken in 1793. Veterans of the American Revolution or those then in the state militia were exempt. Exemption also was obtained by payment of an annual fee of \$3. A compilation of the census lists of 1793, recently published by James S. Norton, has been of great help in tracing some of the people of Martha.

In the Spring of 1793 Isaac Potts, a Pennsylvania Quaker, purchased the Swago Saw Mill tract from Hough and Newbold. Potts and his wife Martha, were then 45 years old. Several of Isaac’s brothers were in the iron business in Pennsylvania. Isaac had operated the grist mill at Valley Forge prior to 1776. Potts immediately erected a small blast furnace at the Swago Saw mill site. In a privately printed booklet (1875), Mrs. Thomas Potts James wrote that Isaac named the furnace for his wife: “In the first page of a book in my possession containing the records of Martha Furnace, the first entry is as follows: “9 mo. 29, 10 o’clock A.M. Martha Furnace went in blast. Made the first

Casting 30th at 3 o'clock in the morning 1794. Then followed different blasts until 1797."

The location of these records, which would add to the knowledge of the early years of Martha Furnace is not known.

According to the Little Egg Harbor tax duplicate, 1795 through 1797, Isaac Potts was assessed for one furnace, 30 acres of improved and 2,000 acres of unimproved land. Edward Potts, clerk, and Joseph Potts, both single men are also listed. Edward was Isaac's son. He was 17 years old in 1795. The relationship of Joseph to the ironmaster has not been determined. He may have been a nephew. Isaac's son, Joseph, was born in 1778 died of yellow fever in 1790.

On February 11, 1796, three years after building the furnace, Potts made his first attempt to dispose of it according to an advertisement in the 'American Weekly Advertiser', a Philadelphia newspaper. Some mystery surrounds Pott's desire to unload so soon after building the furnace. Some suspect he needed money. The reason may have been otherwise. The naming of the furnace and the reason for selling probably were personal. The cold statement made by Boyer that, "In 1798 Isaac Potts and his wife conveyed the furnace and sawmill," hardly reveals the true story. Martha Potts died in April 1798. Her death probably provided the reason for the sale.

Pierce states that Potts was unable to unload the furnace until November, 1800, when he conveyed it to four men, John Paul, Charles Shoemaker, Morris Robeson and George Ashbridge. These men formed the Martha Furnace Company which was run by a resident manager. His name may have been Jesse Evans. We are sure however, that Evans was manager when the furnace was offered for sale in 1805. It was finally sold on April 6, 1808 when it was conveyed to Samuel Richards and his cousin Joseph Ball. Ashbridge retained a quarter interest.

**MARTHA FURNACE,**  
*For sale at Public Auction.*

—  
**WILL BE SOLD,**  
*At the Merchants' Coffee-house, in Philadelphia,*  
*on Saturday the 16th November next, at 7*  
*o'clock, P. M.*

**A**LL that very valuable Estate situate on Wading river, a branch of Little Egg harbour river, in the County of Burlington, State of New-Jersey, within two miles of the post road from Philadelphia to Tuckerton, containing about 15000 acres of Land where on is erected a Blast Furnace as large and substantial as any in the State, in good repair and noted for the soft and good quality of the Iron and abundant yield,—a Grist mill Saw mill, Stamping mill, a good Mansion house, with a number of tenements, sufficient to accommodate all the workmen, a two story house for the Clerk or Founder, a Store house, Barn, and Stabling sufficient for all the teams; a good large Cowshed, Coal house, Hay-house, Carriage and Spring-house, a thriving Apple and Peach Orchard. A large part of the Land remains in Timber, and what has been cut off is growing up again. There are a number of Ore Beds containing Ore sufficient to consume all the Wood, and to those best acquainted with that kind of property, it is well known to increase or grow as fast as the wood. The stream of water is good, and sufficient to supply a Forge (in addition to the present works) which may be erected at the present dam.

The situation is equal to any in the State, as the Iron can be sent from the Furnace to Philadelphia or New York market, at the small expense of two dollars fifty cents per ton. There is on the same stream, one mile below, a Forge and Slitting-mill, which will also afford a Market for Pig Iron—and there is another new Forge within twelve miles, to which this Furnace is the nearest.

The purchaser if he chooses can have the personal property at a valuation and on easy terms.

Any person wishing further information or inclining to view the premises, will please apply to ROBESON and PAULS, No. 53 North Water-Street Philadelphia, or to JESSE EVANS, on the premises. The conditions, which will be easy, will be made known at the time of sale.

October 17, 1805. 47 5W.

Trenton Federalist, Trenton, N.J., Mon, Nov. 4, 1805: 1-3, Rutgers University Library

In 1808 an event occurred that is an historian's delight. An unknown clerk at Martha Furnace was given a new ledger. On the 30th of January the clerk opened the book and ruled the second page with 10 vertical lines. He allowed sufficient space for entry of date on the left margin, then ruled two lines at the top. In bold hand he wrote, "Wood taken for blast for 1808." Below this he wrote "Names," then the words, "Total, Dockage and Payable." He then listed the following names: William Penn, Sr., total 61. The second name, Sol Reeve, 50; Jacob Cox, 125; John Lanning, 32 and last Jeremiah Monangham, 50. The numbers represented the cords of wood each man cut during the winter. He later fills in March 12 and March 19, leaving the rest of the page blank.

On Wednesday March 30th, the clerk opens his book and turns over 14 blank pages. On the 17th page, on the right hand page, the clerk draws four horizontal lines, marking them off with the notation, "Days of the month." Following are 11 names plus two other entries, "Coals from Trusty," and 4 horse lds of ore." This will be the "Furnace Day Book" and will record the time for each workman, the amount of charcoal produced and the amount of ore. Three-quarters of a blank page remains. Perhaps as an afterthought, or not wishing to waste the page, the clerk writes, "Wednesday 30th Inst. Rained in the forenoon. Teams hauled three loads of ore each." The next and last entry reads:

"Thursday 31st. Finished taking inventory of the personal property at Martha Furnace, when Mr. Evans accompanied Charles Shoemaker, George Ashbridge and Samuel Richards to Weymouth in order to take an Inventory and appraisement of the property there."

So the Martha Furnace Diary and Journal begins. This is the only time that the Day Book appears on the right-hand page. Hereafter, it is on the left even numbered pages. The right-hand page is reserved for the clerk's jottings, what we now call the diary.

The Martha Furnace Diary tears a hole in the veil of history, giving modern readers brief glimpses of a furnace community of 175 years ago. The happenings reported by the diarist are personal; his comments fascinating. The occasional visit of the rich owner is reported. More frequently mentioned are the manager of the works, Jesse Evans, and straw boss Michael Mick, Jr., and men who served in the American Revolution and worked at Martha.

Persons of long dimmed fame visited the works. Who would dream that the son of the founder of the 'State of Franklin', that short lived state which later became Tennessee, would be found here? Governor John Sevier's career is more interesting than that of John Sevier, Esq., the son. His only claim to fame is that he married Rebecca, daughter of William Richards of Batsto. He went by the name of Esquire Sevier.

A black man arrives with a "clock for Mr. Evans." thus adding a bit of unknown information about Peter Hill, a black Quaker clockmaker in Burlington County.

Most of the names in the diary are listed in the biography, no matter how sparse the information. Not the prominent raise our interest but the common man, his name, however ignored by history. He did nothing spectacular and literally slaved for less than \$3 a month to wrest iron from the Pines.

## PEOPLE OF MARTHA

In 1809, 28 householders lived in the village. Near the furnace stood the ironmaster's house. Beyond, along the several roads leading to the works were the homes of Martha's people. Nearby is the hamlet of Calico where many of the workers live. It is surprising that the name of this place is mentioned only once in the diary. The diary gives an occasional glimpse of the way the village looked. All buildings were of wood with cedar shake roofs. Several were painted and many had cellars. The tax duplicates for that year show the inhabitants assessed for 12 horses and 18 cattle. So we know there were sheds and outbuildings. Many kept pigs. Most had a garden. A particularly vivid moment is this report of a marriage: "Had a great time.. ended of kissing the bride and others taking gates off the hinges and throwing them in the woods..." Now we know the houses had fences and gates.

The village contained a schoolhouse and a hospital. "Mr. Evans made a school desk ... McEntire confined to the hospital ... the Lanning children were expelled from school for fighting." It is saddening to read that the child, Rudolph Mick drowns in the creek. The quaint expression, "Mila Townsend made a general muster," announced a birth. We chuckle as the diarist condenses nine months into a single sentence, "Jane Hamilton conceived and brought forth a son." Martha is owned and run by Quakers who attend meetings at the schoolhouse or at the Bank, a village on the Mullica. The simple sentence, "Mr. and Mrs. Evans gone to Mr. Maps," means nothing until we search the records to find that David Maps is a black man and a Quaker. Yet all religions are represented at Martha.

The Hamiltons are Presbyterian, John Henry Schultz, Methodist. Many have Irish names and because no priest is mentioned we assume most to be northern Irish. The Black Shepherd comes to take care of his flock," so we know the black people have a minister. The name of a marching society or choral group "The Sons and Daughters of Thunder," is a rare delight. They perform at functions religious or secular.

The entire community attends a house-raising. The ladies hold a quilting bee. A scandal is the topic of conversation. The diarist puts it rather inelegantly if not downright crudely, "William Mick's widow in pursuit of J. Mick, who, she said, had knocked her up." Men go to Bodines and return home drunk. But Bodines was more than a tavern where ironworkers could slake their thirst. It was the last stop on the Philadelphia stage to Tuckerton. On the compound before the tavern the militia trained, within court often was held and township meetings conducted. It was situated at the "head of tide" two and a half miles down river from Martha. Boats unloaded goods at Leek's Wharf on the opposite bank where carters from the works brought iron and returned with goods.

People were more patriotic than we seem to be today. One entry expresses this sentiment: "July 4, Independence. May the name of Washington be Immortal and the Federal Constitution may it never fail."

Some 360 persons are mentioned in the diary. For some, a single comment: "Terrence Tool made a clandestine retreat from chopping." Another entry on September 19, 1808, reveals the low wage scale: "Jacob Williamson quit work this morning & on the 20th cleared out. His A/c exactly balanced without a cent coming." We never hear about either man again. There are dozen of entries of James McEntire, the works carpenter. McEntire, with his wife, Hannah, a daughter and at least one son, also named James, lived north of the furnace on the road to Bucks Tavern. (Little is known about 'The Bucks' except its location on the east bank of the river at the junction of 'Bucks Run'.)

Whether James McEntire was the interesting man he appears to be or whether the diarist, with his comments made him so, is not for us to judge. "McEntire at home," begins the brief saga of this colorful Irishman. Although James sometimes worked at the sawmill, helped repair the "Waden River Bridge," or built for the company a new coalbox, most of the entries pertain to his personal activities. He is reported digging his potatoes, building a new cellar, an oven and even a new washing machine for himself. He is not selfish with his energies. He helps "Cross raise his house." The diarist then reports, "Abner Cross and McEntire drunk."

Drink was James McEntire's weakness and he could not hold his liquor as many entries reveal, "Off drinking," "Sick after drunk." "Drunk and lay up in the garret." But drunk or sober James McEntire was considerate of his family. In one instance he walked clear across the township to a tavern in Evesham. "James McEntire brought home his daughter from the 'Half Moon' for fear her morals would be corrupted." His wife had relatives up country. On several occasions she takes the stage for Burlington. One time James lost nearly a day waiting for The stage at Bodines. It is not evident that Hannah disapproved of her husband's drinking. The diarist once reports that Hannah returned with a cargo of rum.

The diarist has a sense of humor. In a straightforward manner he writes on March 13, 1814, "James McEntire made a knife box for A. Scott." The following day he reports, "James McEntire drinking knife-box made for Scott." Two days later our Irishman is laid up in the hospital.

McEntire, the early 19th Century common workman, is but one of many who lived, slaved and sweated in the Pines of Burlington County. His whole world centered around the furnace, his home and friends. He undoubtedly was illiterate. Who can blame him if he occasionally indulged in too much rum?

### **JESSE EVANS, IRONMASTER**

Jesse Evans, manager of Martha Furnace was born in Old Evesham Township in 1770, probably in the Lumberton area. He was not in the state to register for the 1793 militia. In 1795, at the age of 25 he married Lucy Ann, daughter of Samuel and Lucy Kellum of Beverly, Mass. Lucy Ann was born in 1769. The couple were probably married in Philadelphia where Lucy lived after her parents died. We are certain they were not married in Friends Meeting.

The first public mention of Evans appears in an ad placed in the New Jersey Mirror for 1799 offering for sale at Lumberton the new iron plow recently developed by Charles Newbold. From this date Evans' activities are traceable through newspapers, tax duplicates, census records and, for the years 1808 to 1815, the pages of the Martha diary.

**Patent Ploughs,**

**T**o be sold for cash by Joseph Salter at Atfson Richard Wells, Cooper's Ferry—Jonathan Harker, Woodbury—and Jesse Evans, Lumber-ton. Those who have used them give them the preference to any other kind, as they require less team, break the ground better. are kept in order at less expence and are sold at a cheaper rate—the plan is much simplified and consists of but one piece of cast iron, with the handles and beam of wood; they may be fixed with wrought lays and coulter to be put on with screws and taken off at pleasure

Patent rights for vending with instructions for making them may be had by applying to John Newbold, or the subscriber No. 212 North Front-street.

*Who has for Sale;  
Or to Lease for a term of Years,*

A number of valuable tracts of Land, well situated for Mills, Iron Works or Farms, mostly improved, lying chiefly in the county of Huntingdon state of Pennsylvania. Those who may incline to view them will please to apply to John Canan esq. near Huntingdon.

*Charles Newbold.*

july 17 2awtf

In 1802 the Evanses moved to Little Egg Harbor Township where Jesse is listed as householder and merchant. That fall, the new Township of Washington was formed from parts of Little Egg Harbor, North-hampton and Evesham. The organization meeting was held on the second Tuesday in March, 1803, at Bodines Tavern. Evans undoubtedly attended that meeting for he was elected to the Township Committee and to the Board of Freeholders.

The diary mentions Mr. Evans frequently. He rides to Tuckerton, he goes to Burlington and Mount Holly. Several times he is reported "going into the country," Today, with no habitation within miles of Martha the statement seems amusing. He occasionally attends Friends Meeting with his wife. The two go to the beach. When alone, we assume, he rides horse-back but nowhere in the diary is a saddle horse mentioned. From tax records we know he owns a "riding chair," probably a two wheeled affair. When he takes his mother to Pottsgrove, Penna., he undoubtedly used a four-wheeled vehicle. Most trips are on business, some to court at Bodines or French's Bass River, where court was sometimes held. A law suit before Caleb Cramer, Esq., occupies his day on June 15, 1812.

But Evans' activities are not confined to travel. He seems to let the actual supervision of the furnace to his second-in-command, the Irishman, Mick, Jr. Evans supervised a new road from the works to a place called Iron Landing. He goes on surveying trips with his surveyor, William Sharp. He helps to build the school house and later is reported making a school desk. In January, 1809, he salts down pork for the house.

Evans spends considerable time hunting for new sources of ore. Usually Samuel Taggart accompanies him. Yet with all his reported activities we fail to learn what sort of a man he is. Dare we question his ethics? The thought occurs in an item of November 24, 1813: "Thomas Taylor and Mr. Evans had a high time respecting some ore that Tommy says was raised on his land." There is an implication that someone from Martha took ore from Taylor's property. "High time" implies heated words between the two men. As no later reference is made to the incident, we assume the matter was amicably settled.

The diary tells us much, yet not enough to satisfy us. The diarist is mute about personal happenings at the ironmaster's house. We must search other records. For instance; why no mention is made of the death of John King, a friend of Evans, is a mystery. King was a carter at Martha and owner and operator of the Half Moon Tavern at Flyatt. King died on March 25, 1813. He left eight children under 14 and three over that age. Evans and Joseph Doron were court-appointed guardians. Jesse and Lucy Ann took into their home the four youngest children, John, less than a year old, Lucy about 2, Margaret 4, and Mary 5. One of these children would figure prominently in the later years of Jesse Evans.

The diary mentions no children of Jesse and Lucy Ann. There is a strong possibility that one Jesse Evans, Jr., who married Ann Camp in 1818, may have been their son. The Camden Mail, Camden, N. J., published the following under date October 7, 1835:

“Evans, Jesse, Jr., late of Mount Holly. Died on the 2nd inst., at Joseph Burr’s Ferry, aged 25 years. Another notice in the same newspaper dated October 28, simply states that he died in Philadelphia.

### LUCY ANN EVANS, nee KELLUM.

Charles S. Boyer and Arthur D. Pierce stress that the Evanses were members of the Society of Friends. Both quote Leah Blackman’s account that when the separation took place that Lucy Ann affiliated herself with the Hicksite Meeting at Bridgeport. So faithful was she that when the members moved away she continued to attend as the only member of the meeting. It makes a romantic and probably true story. Few know the story of Lucy Ann’s earlier life and how, she wrestled with her conscience for years before she finally “saw the light” and became a Quaker.

Lucy Ann had a problem. She was a nicotine addict. We learn this from a “Memorial Concerning Lucy Ann Evans, deceased,” read and approved by Mount Holly Monthly Meeting of Friends, held at Mount Holly, New Jersey, Third month 10th, 1881. The memorial is signed by Benjamin R. Lamb and Priscilla H. Clothier, Clerks.

Lucy Ann was not a member of the Society when she and her husband moved to Martha. We quote from the memorial: “Prior to becoming a Friend, she was on the gay walks of life. She had long indulged in the habit of using snuff, but about the forty-fifth year of her age, she felt it a duty required of her to abandon the practice.” The lady must have been strong-willed for she was able to kick the habit. In modern vernacular she applied the cold turkey method to her problem. She confined herself to her room for some weeks and was able to overcome “the pernicious habit.” Only after being completely cured did she feel “that it would be right to join in membership with the Religious Society of Friends.” Lucy Ann joined the society about the year, 1814.

Whether Jesse was a member of the Friends has not been determined. We think it unlikely. During the diary years he often attended meeting with his wife. But the oft told story of his wife seated alone in the Bridgeport Meeting leads us to believe that Jesse was not a regular member. Later evidence bears this out. In the fall of 1834, Lucy Ann Evans, nee Kellum, died at the age of 66. Her gravestone may be found on a hill near the Wading River at Bridgeport.



Gravestone of first Lucy Ann Evans  
**THE SECOND LUCY ANN**

In December, 1836, two years after his wife died, Evans married for the second time. The fact that he was married at the age of 66 is not the point. That his second wife bore the same first name as his first baffled the editors. As a coincidence it seemed improbable but could not be ignored. For weeks we questioned a known will of one Jesse Evans, Gent, of Medford. This will, dated 1849, mentioned "his beloved wife 'Lucy Ann Evans' and five children! Not until we found the following announcement in a Trenton newspaper, '**Emporium and True American,**' under date January 7, 1837, did we conclude that Jesse Evans of Martha and Medford, were one and the same:

"On the 26 ult., at Martha Furnace by the Rev. B. Twilford, Jesse Evans, Esq., to Lucy Ann King, both of the above place."

As the newspaper notice states, the marriage took place at Martha Furnace. Evans had been married to his former ward, Lucy Ann King. She was then 25 years old. The newly married couple continued to live in the ironmaster's house. In the late fall their first child, named Elizabeth, was born, followed by Lucy Ann in 1839, Jesse in 1841, Rebecca in 1842 and David in 1845. We get these dates from the census records of 1850.

Martha Furnace continued to operate at least until 1841. This was the year that Samuel Richards conveyed the furnace tract to Evans. Soon after, the competition from hard-coal furnaces in Pennsylvania closed the iron works forever. Evans then switched to making charcoal which was manufactured at Martha for a number of years.

The Evans' probably moved from Martha to Medford Township around 1847, as this was the last year his name appears as a Washington Township committeeman. The location of his new home is not known. In 1849 Medford Township included the village of Lumberton. We assume his house was near Lumberton where, as a youth, he may have lived. To date we have not found the graves of Evans or the second Lucy Ann.

### **HIS DEATH AND WILL**

The record of Jesse Evans' death, found in the New Jersey Bureau of Archives and History gives the following: Place of death, Medford, New Jersey, date 29 3 mo 1849. Sex male. Married. Age 79. Occ., Gentleman. Born Evesham.

Evans signed his will on March 13, 1849. His signature is legible and firm. It was the second item in the will that caused the editors' confusion. It reads as follows:

"Item, I give and bequeath unto my beloved wife Lucy Ann Evans in addition to her right of dower at common law, the rents issuing and profit of all my Dwelling House and lands in Medford to hold to her so long as she remains my widow and no longer." Following are listed the names of the five children who are provided for through the sale of his property. No mention is made in the will of Martha Furnace, his home for 40 years.

### **END OF THE DIARY**

On the inside back cover of the diary there's an interesting inscription never before published. Dated May 8, 1815, and in Evan's handwriting are two Latin phrases. Neither the calligraphy nor the Latin is easy to understand. Our good friend, the Rev. W. Edwin Collier (MA. Oxon, England; now of Philadelphia, Pa.) thinks the writer describes it as '**This rather beautiful day.**' The difficulty may lie with Evans' Latin or our inability to interpret his hand writing. Even if his Latin is incorrect, the great wonder is that a self-educated, early 19th Century man, living deep on the New Jersey Pines, knew any Latin at all.

The inscription is signed, "Jesse Evans, Manager at Martha Furnace Swago." We are gratified that Evans uses the word "Swago." The editors have long contended that this was the first name for the East Branch of Wading River, the Swago River, which became corrupted to Oswego.

### **THIS RATHER BEAUTIFUL DAY**

On that rather beautiful day in May, 1815, Evans was 45 years old. At that age many of his contemporaries were past their prime, not Jesse Evans. He had been manager for nine years and would continue to oversee the works for another 31 years. He was a political power in Washington Township and was well known throughout Burlington County. He would continue to serve as township assessor until 1840, serve occasionally as judge of election and as a member of the township committee from its inception in 1803 until 1847. He would increase the production at the furnace in the 1830's to 750 tons annually. He would employ about 60 hands who, with their families would make a population of nearly 400 persons at Martha.

Who can say but that the high point in Evans' life was not that "beautiful day" in the year 1815.



Watson Buck with iron kettle found in cellar of Iron Master's house

### **EPILOGUE**

Arthur D. Pierce says that the furnace lost one of its outlets when the Wading River Forge and Slitting Mill closed down. A paper mill was built on the site named McCartyville, later called Harrisville. In 1848 Evans sold the tract to William Allen and Francis French. They operated a sawmill until at least 1860 and finally sold out to Francis B. Chetwood.

Chetwood was a real estate speculator who offered to sell small lots of one acre at \$20 to 20 acres for \$200. Lots in a proposed town of Chetwood, just north of Martha, sold for \$10. Chetwood based his promotion on a proposed railroad which never materialized. In 1869 James Wharton purchased Harrisville and a large part of the Martha Tract. In 1954 most of the Wharton Tract, including Martha, was acquired by the State of New Jersey.

**Excerpts from minutes of Little Egg Harbor Monthly Meeting. (Tuckerton)**

**11th of 8th mo., 1814.** Lucy Evans applied for membership.

**11th of 11th mo., 1819.** Lucy Evans released. To accompany Elizabeth Collins (*a minister*) to Westbury, N.J. First public service of L.E.

**8th of 11th mo., 1821.** Lucy Ann Evans appointed Elder.

**10th day of 2nd mo., 1825.** Bridgeport meeting done. Cost \$385. \$280 raised by subscription. Note given and further subscriptions subscribed. Next mo. Nathan Bartlett and David Mapps reported account settled. Gave their note for \$114. to Jesse Evans.

**8th of 5th mo., 1828.** Lucy Ann Evans, Elizabeth Cox and Margaret Randolph responded for joining another (*Hicksite*) meeting.

**14th of 8th mo., 1828.** Disowned (*Lucy Ann Evans*).