

Coll. 8
Dover Forge Records
1821-1850
39 items



Monmouth
County
Historical
Association

Monmouth County Historical Association
Library & Archives
70 Court Street Freehold, NJ 07728

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INTRODUCTION

Dover Forge was built by William L. Smith, William Scott, and Daniel Hillman, and opened in 1809. It was not until July 1810, however, that the land was deeded to them. It was located on Dover Forge Pond at the headwaters of the middle branch of Cedar Creek, about four miles from Ferrago Forge (later known as Bamber or Cedar Crest), in Berkley Township, Ocean County, New Jersey. According to Charles S. Boyer, this was one of the largest of the Ocean County forges, and in the 1830's was one of the prominent places of the region.

William L. Smith married Eliza Lacey who was the daughter of General John Lacey (1775-1814). General Lacey built and was the original owner of Ferrago Forge, which was also established in 1809. The Lacey interests also included a furnace between Ferrago and New Mills, known as Hanover Furnace.

In 1816, Daniel Hillman sold his one-quarter interest in Dover Forge to William Brown and Isaac Barnes. In the same year, Smith, Brown, and Barnes experienced financial troubles at the forge, and it was purchased at a sheriff's auction by Thomas Butcher and Samuel J. Read.

In 1818, Thomas Butcher sold his interest to Read who continued operation of the Forge until his death in 1837. Joseph Austin, Sr. managed the Forge for the Read heirs until he purchased it

in 1853, although the original notice for sale was issued in 1850. However, when Joseph, Sr. moved to Ohio, he turned Dover Forge over to his son.

The original Dover Forge was destroyed by fire, so Joseph Austin, Jr. moved to another furnace at Hampton in Burlington County. Austin remained there until shortly before 1828, when he moved back to Dover.

Joseph, Jr. continued operation of the Forge until his death in 1868. The property was sold again at a sheriff's auction and was purchased by Rubin Potter, who operated the now defunct Forge as a sawmill. In 1873, he sold it to Nathan Austin who continued sawmill operations.

As of 1931, only the remains of the old blacksmith shop were still visible. All other traces of buildings were destroyed by a forest fire in 1912. As of 1980, the blacksmith shop was also no longer visible.

According to John Austin, a son of Charles W. Austin, Sr. and grandson of Joseph, Jr., the Forge contained two hammers, four fires, and a stamping mill to reduce the ore and cinder mass to such a size that it could be readily melted by forge fire.

The principle product of Dover Forge was bar iron, which was hauled to Philadelphia over a road through the woods known as "Mule Road", of which no trace remains today. It was laid in a straight line to Buddtown and crossed numerous swamps en route over log causeways.

At some point after Nathan Austin's ownership, the sawmill was converted into a barrel factory. As of 1931, the mill was empty. In the 1930's, Harry Halloway owned the property and used it as a cranberry bog.

DESCRIPTION OF COLLECTION

The Dover Forge Records pertain to the early bog industry in New Jersey. The collection contains account statements, receipts, correspondence, bills, orders, a narrative survey, a broadside, and an account book. The items date from 1821 to 1850.

The account statements describe purchases made and balances due. The receipts describe transactions between Dover Forge and its customers. The correspondence consists primarily of letters to Samuel J. Read from various individuals. A letter sent by Read to Mark Richards, whose family was prominent in the bog iron industry is of special note. Other correspondence includes letters to Thomas Butcher and Joseph S. Read. The correspondence describes daily business activity of the Forge including orders, sales, deliveries, supplies, and legal litigation's.

The bills and orders describe transactions for Forge products delivered to customers, including Mark Richards. The narrative survey describes land east of Dover Tract, East Jersey. The broadside describes a notice of public auction for Dover Forge by the executors of the Thomas Butcher estate. The account book contains statements of accounts of purchases from the

Company general store and wages paid to workmen. (Please see Appendix A for an inventory of collection.)

No items have been removed from the collection. The Dover Forge Records will be of interest to researchers of the history of the bog iron industry in Ocean County, and in New Jersey. Other manuscript materials housed in the Library of the Monmouth County Historical Association pertaining to the history of the New Jersey bog iron industry include the Tinton Falls Iron Works Records and Papers, and the Allaire Family Papers, which contains the records of Howell Iron Works.

The manuscript materials of the Dover Forge Records are filed chronologically by date. The broadside and account book are filed separately following the manuscripts.

PROVENANCE

Acquired between 1941 and 1942, a gift of Mrs. J. Amory Haskell, in memory of her husband J. Amory Haskell.

RESTRICTIONS: None.

CONTAINER LIST

FOLDER # / CONTENTS

- 1 / Financial Records & Correspondence, 1821 - 1850. 37 items
- 2 / Broadside, 1828 May 5. 1 item
- 3 / Account Book, 1826 - 1828. 32 cm. 1 item