

THE FAMILY OF DAVID AND ELIZABETH MARTS:

The parents and siblings of Samuel Marts of Erie County Pennsylvania

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In 1988, Merle Marts of Ohio published his family history ¹ beginning with his and my common ancestor Samuel Marts, born 1810. In the introduction, he recorded as an oral tradition in the family that Samuel Marts was from Sparta, in present-day Livingston County, New York. He speculated about possible earlier generations based on census listings, but his research was restricted by limited access to records at that time, and choosing to focus on a single variant spelling of the surname.

Mr. Marts received contributions of information from my mother, Marilyn Martz Chapman, about the California branch of the descendants. I inherited her papers and notes and began in 2006 to do more research into this family history. In early 2007 I discovered a Livingston County property deed that appeared to identify Samuel Marts as the son and heir of David Marts of York Township, and to establish a timeframe for David's death that led me to find his will indexed in Genesee County. I sent that document reference to Noelle Marts Hood, daughter of Merle Marts, who then obtained and transcribed the will, enabling us to share in the discovery of the next generation back in time.

Since then, my research has focused on learning more about the David Marts family and their origins. The following white paper represents a summary of this research, using several newly found documents to flesh out the New York period in the Martz/Marts story. I have relied almost exclusively on primary documents, with my own analysis and speculations clearly identified as such. This narrative is organized chronologically, although the pieces of evidence were by no means found in this orderly way. I have used the expression "the Martz extended family" to take in other individuals who were closely associated, by marriage or as neighbors and friends, with the Martzes. In many cases, only by following up records of other people has more evidence of identity for names in the records been found. This summary includes only a minimum of historical context, as needed to explain the documentary evidence. I hope to provide a fuller account in the future, to include details of property records, census listings, wills, and other references.

For the linkage to the Northumberland and Berks county Martz/Mertz forebears, I have benefitted from the very helpful information about other branches of this family provided by Oakey Mertz of North Carolina. His research into the Longswamp Mertzes of Berks County and the Northumberland County Mertz line has produced valuable insights and clues to the earlier generations.

The reader will note that the surname spellings vary throughout the document. The original German name, Märtz, pronounced "mayrts", appears in US records as Märtz, Maertz, Martz, Mertz, Marts, Merts and Metz, and anglicized as Marks, Martin and March. Some of these variants are attempts at a phonetic rendering, or a translation, a misreading of the Germanic alphabet, or simple misspelling. Sometimes the record keepers were English-speaking colonials dealing with German speaking immigrants, or German-speaking local officials trying to keep records in English, or semi-literate census takers doing their best with a polyglot and largely illiterate

population. Some individuals chose a spelling based on one of those renderings, and stuck to it, while others “spelled” their names differently over time. The “standard” spellings of many words, as well as names, did not solidify until the spread of literacy and a document-based society in the late nineteenth century, and well into the twentieth in some cases. I have chosen to use the spelling which appears in each document under discussion, and apologize in advance if this causes inconvenience. The most common variants still used by present-day descendants are Martz, Marts, and Mertz.

The earliest published “history” of the settlement of New York’s Genesee area was the “Miniature of Dansville” printed in 1844. Primarily a promotion of settlement and investment in the Dansville area, it sketched the very earliest arrivals before the road from Pennsylvania was completed in 1796. They included “Captain” Daniel Faulkner, for whom the township was named. The Mertz migration is not mentioned, but the booklet notes that Mr. Conrad Welch was a local property owner on Main Street in Dansville, and a backer of the planned canal.

In 1851, Orsamus Turner published the first of his several New York local histories.² This extensive work drew from the “Miniature” for the section on Dansville, but covered a much larger geographic area, and longer time period. Turner interviewed many residents and included their anecdotes and reminiscences along with his published sources. His work was the basis for later histories of the several counties (Steuben, Genesee, Ontario, Livingston and others) which were established in this large area, but the 1851 book is the first and fullest account of how the Mertz extended family came to New York State.

In his section on Dansville, Turner mentions the early settler Jacob Welch, who died in 1844, his children and prominence in the community. He then quotes directly from an interview with Conrad Welch, son of Jacob, summarized here.

Jacob Mertz, grandfather of Conrad Welch, who lived near Sunbury, Augusta Twp, Northumberland County PA, had heard land agent Charles Williams' publicity about the Genesee Country. He took a trip to view it, and on returning organized a party of emigrants including himself, "his son Conrad, George Shirey, Frederick Barnhart, and Jacob Welch and their families". They came up the new road via Bath and then up the Cohocton. From Blood's Corners, they had to clear their own road, as "a winding road had been underbrushed" but no streams had been bridged and fallen trees blocked the way. They were three days traveling from Bath, camping out two nights. When they reached the site of Dansville, the new settlers there, including the Faulkners, turned out to welcome them. "Occupying an old deserted hut, and quartering ourselves upon the settlers in their log cabins, we got through the winter and in the spring erected log cabins for ourselves."³ Conrad Welch, Jacob's grandson, gave this account c. 1850 to the writer. His mother, Catharine Mertz Welch, was still living in 1850, aged 88. Conrad would have been 6 years old at the time of the migration, making this a firsthand account, if accurately reported. This information opens up a number of lines of inquiry.

The 1790 census listing for Northumberland County PA includes Jacob Mertz Sen. and Conrad Mertz, as well as Jacob Welch and George Shirey. Four more Mertz men are listed, David, Jacob, Peter and Nicholas, who have been identified by Oakey Mertz as probable first cousins of Jacob, brothers who migrated from Berks County.

They and their descendants remained in Northumberland and successor counties. Both Jacob Mertz and Jacob Welsh were property taxpayers in Augusta Township, in the vicinity of Sunbury, from at least 1785 until 1797, after which they disappear from the tax rolls there. All five of the men named by Conrad Welch appeared in the 1800 census in New York in the same area.

In 1800, the "Genesee Country" was still very sparsely settled. Jacob Martz was one of 86 heads of household in Sparta Township, then one of 19 townships in Ontario County, which took in western New York. His household consisted of one male over 45, two males between 16 and 26, one male 10 to 16, one female between 16 and 26 and one female over 45. In 1790, it had contained one male over 16, two under 16, and 3 females. I believe the two younger males were sons David and Jacob, aged appropriately by 1800. Jacob Senior does not appear again as head of household in later census listings. Conrad Martz, George Shirey, Frederick Barnhart and Jacob Welch were counted in Canisteo Township in Steuben County (established 1796 from part of Ontario County).⁴

David Marts appears in the census records only in 1810, but he is documented the previous year in the records of the Holland Land Company. This firm owned a vast area of western New York State after the American Revolution, and their meticulous records detail its sale and settlement into the 1820s. Part of this area was known as the "40,000 acre tract", purchased by Jan and Willem Willinck separately from the Company lands. The Willincks, Amsterdam bankers, were major shareholders in the HLC, and sales of the "40K acre tract" were handled by the company's land agent, Joseph Ellicott, ensuring preservation of these records with the larger group. This tract comprised most of present day Livingston County.

On 26 August, 1809, "David and Jacob Martz" signed Articles of Agreement to purchase 398 acres of land, surveyed as Lot 59 of the 40K acre tract.⁵ On 26 August 1811, Articles of Partition were recorded, renewing the contracts and dividing the land as follows: David Martz, 180.5 acres, Jacob Martz, 100 acres, Christian Fritts, 100 acres, and Archibald Gillis, 11.5 acres.⁶ Gillis also had purchased land in the adjoining Lot 58. All these men made payments of principal or interest at varying intervals over the next eight years. The Articles of Agreement were similar to today's land sale contracts. Title did not pass to the purchaser until the final payment; the Articles could be renewed or transferred and terms revised after the set period for payment had elapsed. It is possible that it was Jacob Martz Senior who made the initial purchase with David, and that the Jacob named in the Articles of Partition is Jacob Junior, following the death of the father and the marriage of the younger Jacob.

As mentioned, the 1810 census found David Marts in Caledonia Township, next door to Conrad Marts and Christian Fritts, his brother and brother-in-law.⁷ David's household contained a male and female between 26 and 44, a male under 10 and one 10 to 16, 3 females under 10, and another male and female over 45. I believe the older couple to be his father Jacob and wife. The male under 10 may be Samuel, born 1810, but the older boy is not found in later documents, although three daughters are. The Fritts household includes one son under ten, which matches later data for this family. Conrad Marts' household shows one male over 45, 1 male and female 26 to 44, 1 male and 2 females 16 to 26, 2 males 10 to 16, and 2 males and 1 female under 10. It is possible that Jacob, his brother, and wife are the younger adult couple, as

their first son was born in 1810, and they may have lived with the widowed Conrad. His family had grown from one daughter in 1790 to 3 sons and 3 daughters by 1800; if his household does include his brother's family of three, one more son was born before 1810. No further records in New York for Conrad Marts have been found to date, and the date of death for Jacob Marts Senior is not certain either. I have postulated that he and his wife were still living in 1810 in the household of son David Marts, but were dead by 1820.

The year 1816 brought disastrous weather and very poor harvests across much of the Northern Hemisphere. Many properties changed hands or were abandoned in western New York. For the extended Martz family, the death of David Marts in late 1817 seems to have triggered relocation for all of them.

David Marts may have been aware that he was not long for this world. His undated will notes that he owes the HLC for his land, and directs his executors to sell his personal property to pay off that debt and secure the land for his minor heirs.⁸ However, the HLC records the final payment, annotated "Deed", on 26 August 1817.⁹ His will, showing residence in York, was proved 21 November, 1817 in Genesee County. The deed, dated 13 May 1818, granting title to the heirs and acknowledging payment by David "in his lifetime", was recorded in Genesee County 6 June 1818, and again in the Livingston County deed records on 4 January 1823.¹⁰ The deed is for 81.5 acres, bounded by land of James White, Archibald Gillis, and the Leicester road. It is possible that David conveyed part of his acreage to a neighbor to raise cash to pay off the debt, but more investigation of land records is needed to resolve the discrepancy in size of his land.

Jacob Martz and Christian Fritts both conveyed their 100-acre holdings to Donald McColl and James White, respectively, within a year of David's death. In 1820, Jacob Mertz and family were listed in the census in Sparta, Livingston County, and the Fritts family were in Dansville, then in Steuben County. Elizabeth, the widow of David Marts, had re-married, to David Bowen of Cohocton, Steuben County, and his household seems to include the Marts children, as well as one infant son. George Karcher was a neighbor there, probably a brother of Sophia, the wife of Jacob Mertz.

In 1823, Jacob Martz/Mertz bought 55 acres in Sparta.¹¹ Lacking property records, a will or other documentation for Jacob Martz Senior, it is uncertain if this property was originally his. The 1830 census showed Jacob and family still in Sparta, and the ages of children listed match later census records.¹² In 1833, Jacob and wife Sophia, nee Karcher, sold the Sparta property¹³ and moved to Wayne Township, Erie County PA, where they appear in the 1840 census.¹⁴

Christian Fritts had purchased property in Dansville in 1801, and may have returned to it. He resided in Dansville in 1820, and in Sparta in 1830, according to census records. Shifting boundaries for the towns and counties probably indicate he did not move, but the jurisdictional lines changed around him. The Fritts family seems to have been the first of the extended Martz family to leave New York for Erie County PA. He purchased property in Venango Township in 1831, and the 1840 and 1850 census listings show him as a neighbor of Samuel Martz. He and his wife Eva died there at advanced ages.

I have not followed George Shirey after 1817 when he sold his property adjoining David Marts. Frederick Barnhart remained in Dansville, and is mentioned in local histories there. I believe both men were related in some manner to the Martz family, and there were both Barnhart and Sheirer families in close proximity to the Berks County Martzes. Jonathan Barnhart, probably the son of Frederick, was named in the will of Jacob Welch in 1831. A Martin Karcher lived in Longswamp and was closely associated with the Mertzes there; Sophia, wife of Jacob Mertz of Sparta and Wayne Township, is said to be nee Karcher, and one of their sons was named Martin K. Mertz. Her brother William married one of Jacob Welch's daughters.¹⁵ George Karcher owned property next to David Bowen in 1809, and was a neighbor of Elizabeth Bowen in 1830, according to the census.

David Marts' survivors, as noted, remained in New York. His will named only his widow, Elizabeth, and his eldest son Samuel (age 7 at the time), but the deed recorded in 1818 named the other children as Polly, Sally, Magdalen, Betsey, and Daniel. David's will specified that his land, once paid for, was to be leased or otherwise maintained and go to son Samuel when he came of age, to farm or sell as he chose. In 1833, the property was sold and the proceeds divided between the surviving heirs. The widow is named as Elizabeth Bowen, "late the widow of David Marts of York" indicating that she had remarried and again been widowed, as she conveys property in her own right and as heir to the minor Magdalena, who had died.¹⁶ The other heirs were Samuel, now of age, Polly (Mary), the oldest daughter now married to Jonathan Carlisle, Sally (Sarah?) married to James Lindon, and Betsey (Elizabeth) married to Wilson Teasdale, but still a minor, as was Daniel at age 17.¹⁷ Later accounts indicate that Samuel, wife Paulina, and two children moved in 1834 to Erie County PA near the Fritts family.¹⁸ In 1842, Samuel purchased property there.¹⁹

Elizabeth Bowen was widowed a second time before the 1830 census, when she is listed as "Elizabeth Bone", head of household with 8 children and one woman between 70 and 80 in Cohocton. Her second husband's name, David Bowen, is found in the deed for property in Cohocton which she paid off in 1833, leaving her a life tenure and passing title to the Bowen children after her death. She also bought adjoining property in Dansville, jointly titled with the three Bowen children. Deeds for both properties were recorded in March 1841, probably when the oldest Bowen son, David, came of age.²⁰ By 1855, Elizabeth was dead, since when the Dansville property (now within the boundaries of Wayland Township) was sold, all the Marts children, presumably as her heirs, along with the three Bowen children, the tenants in common as well as heirs, had to consent to the sale and the deed recorded then lists them all, with their spouses and places of residence at that date.²¹

This is the evidence that Elizabeth Marts Bowen was in fact the mother of all the Marts children, because if she had been stepmother to the older ones, they would have had no share in her intestate estate. Her age in the 1820 (26-44) and 1830 (40-50) census records is consistent with her being the female aged 26 to 44 in the 1810 David Marts household. I was unable to find a census listing for Elizabeth in 1840 until this month (October 2008). I found a listing for Daniel Marts and several known members of his family in a posting on the Steuben County USGenweb site²² of names in the Wayland Village Cemetery. A visit to the Cemetery²³ cleared up several errors in the posted headstone readings, and let me find a grave for "Elizabeth, wife of John G. Underwood" in the Marts family plot. She had remarried, and appears in the husband's

household in the 1840 census, age 50–60, and also in 1850, age 66, with her daughter Betsey and a grandchild, living next door to son David Bowen Jr. Her headstone is inscribed “Died 1 November 1852, aged 69 years, 9 months and 28 days”.

Daniel Marts, the youngest living child of David, had married by 1840 and lived in Dansville, in a part later transferred into Wayland Township. He and wife Martha had 8 children, of whom 3 died in infancy, and he remarried twice after Martha’s death in 1859 or 1860. There is a family plot in the Wayland Village Cemetery, with the graves of Daniel, Martha, 6 of their children, Sarah, Daniel’s second wife Sarah, two of their children, Matty (Magdalena) Marts, and the mother of Samuel and Daniel, Elizabeth C. Marts Bowen Underwood. Only two of their children lived to marry, George W. and Mary Elizabeth.

In November 1855, all the heirs of Elizabeth Marts Bowen Underwood sold the property that she owned in Wayland jointly with her Bowen children. Prior to recording, signatures and affidavits were collected from the heirs living in several states, reflecting the migration of these families. Daughter Elizabeth (Betsey), now apparently divorced by Wilson Teasdale and the widow of a man named Hayward, lived in Livingston County. Daniel Marts and wife Martha still resided in Steuben County. Jonathan Bowen and his wife Marilla were in Allegany County in the 1850 census, although the deed says they are of Albany County. Mary (Polly) Marts Carlisle and husband Jonathan were living in Miami County, Indiana, David Bowen and wife Catherine had moved to Jefferson County, Pennsylvania, and Sally Marts Lindon and husband James were in Washtenaw County, Michigan. And on 27 November 1855, Samuel and Pauline Marts appeared before the Justice of the Peace in Erie County Pennsylvania to sign and seal the deed.

¹ Merle Marts, “The Descendants of Samuel and Paulina Marts, Pioneer Settlers of Erie County Pennsylvania”, privately printed, 1988

² Orsamus Turner, “The History of the Pioneer Settlement Phelps and Gorham’s Purchase and Morris’ Reserve” Rochester NY, 1851; reprinted Geneseo NY 1976

³ Turner, *ibid.*, p. 358-9

⁴ Conrad Martz is listed as “Cunrod Martin” reflecting the German pronunciation of the first name. Another common spelling is “Coonrod” both as first name and surname.

⁵ Holland Land Company, Land Tables, Ref. 488-127 on LDS microfilm #14149

⁶ Holland Land Company, Land Tables, Ref. 489–102,106 on LDS microfilm #1414984

⁷ Gerard Karcher, email to Genesee County Historical Society, 2004

⁸ Genesee County Wills Vol. 1 page 138, LDS film 810480

⁹ Holland Land Company, Land Tables, Ref. 495–0064 on LDS microfilm #1414984

¹⁰ Livingston County NY Deeds, Book 20, page 260 on LDS microfilm #510044. Livingston County was established in 1821, and York was included in it.

¹¹ Livingston County NY Deeds, Vol. 2, p. 114 on LDS microfilm #510035

¹² Erie County PA Deeds, Book R, page 281. After Jacob Mertz' death, a deed of partition for his property listed sons Jacob H., Martin K., Conrad H., Joseph S., and daughters Mary, Julia, and Susan in addition to the widow Sophia. Their ages are based on the 1850 census.

¹³ Livingston County NY Deeds, Book 20, page 260

¹⁴ The 1840 Wayne Twp census lists Jacob Marks and Jacob H. Marks next door to each other.

¹⁵ Turner, *ibid*, page 358

¹⁶ A headstone in the Wayland Village Cemetery reads "Matty Marts, daughter of D. & E. C. Marts, died 21 Jan 1831, aged 13 years". Photographed 12 Oct 2008 by M.L. Kueker

¹⁷ Livingston County NY Deeds, Book 11, page 461 on LDS microfilm 510039

¹⁸ The Erie County PA 1850 census gives place of birth for Jane and Nelson Martz, ages 19 and 17, as New York, and as Penna for their brother Wilson, age 16.

¹⁹ Erie County PA Deeds, Book M, page 760

²⁰ Steuben County Deeds, Book 35, pages 96 and 98 on LDS microfilm #512484

²¹ Steuben County Deeds, Book 78, page 253, LDS microfilm 513708

²² www.usgenweb/ny/steuben

²³ I visited the site 12 October 2008 and photographed the headstones.