



JOHN MARTINEAU AND ELIZA MEARS

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John Martineau was of Huguenot descent, his ancestors fled from France to America in the Seventeenth Century in order to gain religious freedom. John went to England when he was nineteen to study medicine, but after returning to New York, took up the profession of civil engineer and became noted in that field. He was a successful engineer who accumulated a fortune in building bridges and waterworks, for large cities and railroads. He suffered significant financial losses in the Panic of 1837 losing over \$70,000. The first wife of John Martineau was from England. She was the grand daughter of the Earl of Stanhope. They had four children, his wife and two children died about 1822 in Baltimore, Maryland. In 1824 he married a girl seventeen years of age, Eliza Mears of Baltimore, Maryland. Four years later a son was born who was named James Henry.

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SUNDAY, JANUARY 25, 2009

History of John Martineau

History of John Martineau-written by his son James Henry Martineau

My ancestors on my father's side have been traced back to the year 1250 [1650], the Dutch ruling in Holland. Among the persecuted by the Catholic Church of the French Huguenot (Protestant), our ancestor fled to Holland and there married a Dutch woman (Protestant), Sarah Trauhant. Their son, Cornelius, came to the United States and settled on Staten Island, New York and his descendants have lived there ever since, all being farmers.

John Martineau my father, was born March 22, 1793 on Staten Island. When about 14 years old he was apprenticed to be a hatter but did not like it. He made his way on a ship (as a stowaway) going to England where he arrived without money or friends. How he lived, I do not know. He secured a place as helper to an instrument maker by the name of Varley who gave him an education and his daughter, Jane, as his wife. She soon died during an epidemic. He afterwards married Sarah Hawkins, the widow of Captain Hawkins of the Royal Navy with two children. She was the daughter of the Earl of Stanhope. He had by her two daughters, Julia and Lucretia.

Returning to the United States, he landed in Baltimore, Maryland, where the Yellow Fever was raging from which she died, leaving the four children. He next met my mother, Eliza Mears, age 17 years, and married her in Elbridge, New York, in 1804. My sister, Emily Henretta, was born in 1825. I was born at Amsterdam, New York March 13, 1828.

I should have said that my father graduated as a physician and surgeon. He also took lessons in drawing and made many sketches of ancient ruins, places and objects which I remember well as a boy at home. He also graduated in civil engineering. He was employed by President Andrew Jackson on the great Delaware Breakwater on the coast as a harbor. He also laid a ship canal around Fosset Shoals. He laid out and constructed the first railroad in the United States from Amboy to Camden, New Jersey. While in Alabama he bought three Negroes, man, wife and son, who he liberated when he returned North. The woman nursed me and my cousin, Napoleon Van Slyke.

He had a contract in building the Great Schuylkill Canal. He lost \$60,000 because of quicksand. He changed the whole system of water power by inventing the turbine water wheel. He also changed the system of farming by inventing the horse power threshing machine whereby grain was threshed by power instead of by hand with a flail. He secured both patents signed by President Andrew Jackson. His last work was the laying out and construction of the Croton Water Works. He died in 1838 in Elbridge, New York. A bronze tablet to his memory is on one of the walls of the Municipal building in New York City. He was six foot two inches tall, well proportioned, kind and gentle in disposition; His religion was Methodist. Before death he placed his property in the hands of a supposed friend who cheated the widow out of about all her property.

POSTED BY SHELLEY AT 9:29 AM

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