

Forney, Peter ^[1]

Forney, Peter

by Laura Page Frech, 1986

21 Apr. 1756–1 Feb. 1834

Estate Sale.

On Tuesday, the 17th day of June next,
I WILL SELL,
At the late residence of Gen. Peter Forney, dec'd.,
All the Personal Property,
NOT OTHERWISE DISPOSED OF,
—CONSISTING OF—
A variety of FARMING and Mechanical Tools ;



A number of HORSES, MULES, CATTLE,
and OXEN ;
A quantity of Cast HOLLOW-WARE—toge-
ther with Pig-Iron Banding, and a varie-
ty of OLD IRON and METAL.

— A L S O —
About Fifty Negroes,
Men, Women, and Children—among which are
first-rate Hammerers, Refiners, Bloomers,
Forge-carpenters, Blacksmiths, &c.

The sale will continue from day to day until the
whole is disposed of.
Conditions: Twelve months' credit—bond and
approved security required.

J. FORNEY, Executor.

07 The Subscriber having qualified as Execu-
tor of the last will and testament of Peter Forney,
deceased, gives notice to all persons having de-
mands against the Estate to present them, legally
authenticated, within the time prescribed by law,
or this notice will be plead in bar of recovery ;—
and all persons indebted are requested to make im-
mediate settlement. For the purpose of closing
the accounts, I will attend at the Forge every Fri-
day and Saturday, and every Tuesday and Wed-
nesday at the Furnace, until the sale.

J. FORNEY, Executor.
Lincoln County, May 10, 1834. 4t

"Estate Sale." (advertisement). Western Carolinian. May 10, 1834. 3.

^[2]Peter Forney, planter, Revolutionary War officer, iron manufacturer, legislator, and congressman, was born in [Anson](#) ^[3] (now [Lincoln](#) ^[4]) County. His father, Jacob Forney, was a French [Huguenot](#) ^[5] from Alsace and his mother, Maria Bergner Forney, was Swiss. About 1754, shortly after their arrival and marriage at Philadelphia, the Forneys moved to North Carolina where Jacob became known as an intrepid Indian fighter. As a member of the Tryon County [Committee of Safety](#) ^[6], he signed the resolutions adopted there in August 1775. In January 1781 British General Charles Cornwallis used Forney's house for headquarters. British troops also stripped the plantations of Peter Forney and his frugal, industrious father of food and valuables.

Peter Forney and his brothers, Jacob and Abram, all saw military service during the [American Revolution](#) ^[7]. Peter volunteered for many expeditions against the [Cherokee](#) ^[8], against Tories, and against British troops in the Carolinas and elsewhere on the frontier. In 1780, he was promoted to the rank of captain in the North Carolina Rangers and attached himself to General [Griffith Rutherford](#) ^[9]'s army of North Carolina troops. They arrived at [Ramsour's Mill](#) ^[10] (20 June 1780) after the battle was over, although Abram Forney distinguished himself there and at the [Battle of Kings Mountain](#) ^[11] (7 Oct. 1780).

When Cornwallis left his father's plantation, Peter Forney commanded a company of militia under General [William Lee Davidson](#) ^[12] that attempted unsuccessfully to prevent the British from crossing the [Catawba River](#) ^[13]. After Davidson was killed at [Cowan's Ford](#) ^[14] on 1 Feb. 1781, Forney and many of the militia fled to [Adam Torrence's tavern](#) ^[15] where they engaged in a brief skirmish with Colonel Banastre Tarleton. Forney then retreated east of the Yadkin River, where he

remained about six weeks cooperating with patriot troops in the area. Later that year he commanded a company of dragoons that marched to Wilmington, and, it is said, helped persuade the British to evacuate the town. The British thought Forney's force was larger than it was. After the war, he was commissioned a general in the North Carolina militia.

In 1783, Forney married Nancy Abernathy. In 1787, he and Abram Forney began building an ironworks ^[16] in eastern Lincoln County ^[4], where they produced wrought iron the following year. In 1789, the legislature granted the iron deposit east of Lincoln known as the Big Ore Bank ^[17] to the Forneys and two others, whose interest Peter Forney later purchased. In 1791, Forney sold interests to Alexander Brevard ^[18], Joseph Graham ^[19], and John Davidson ^[20]. This company built Vesuvius Furnace. Forney also built a large forge near his home, Mount Welcome. After a few years he sold his interest in the partnership to the others and in 1809 built Madison Furnace on Leepers Creek, which produced cast iron. Both Vesuvius Furnace and Madison Furnace manufactured cannonballs used in the War of 1812 ^[21]. Forney's son-in-law, Dr. William Johnston, and Johnston's sons operated the Mount Welcome forge until 1860.

Forney served in the lower house of the North Carolina legislature, (1794–96), in the state senate (1801–2), and on the Council of State (1811). He was named a presidential elector five times. In 1804, he supported Thomas Jefferson and George Clinton, in 1808 Clinton and James Madison, in 1816 James Monroe and Daniel Tompkins, and in 1824 and 1828 Andrew Jackson ^[22] and John C. Calhoun. In 1813, Forney was elected to the United States Congress. In the House he usually voted with the Republicans against measures the Federalists ^[23] favored. He supported Madison's administration on questions relating to the conduct of the war and on the embargo on exports, and he voted to levy taxes to pay for the war. Existing records indicate that, although he almost always attended, he rarely spoke on the floor of the House and served on few committees. His Federalist colleague from North Carolina, Joseph Pearson ^[24], sarcastically commented that Forney "does not often favor the House with his remarks, although he sometimes addresses circulars to his constituents." Pearson was unhappy because Forney supported Felix Grundy of Tennessee in his attempt to expand the constitutional definition of treason to include refusing to support the government or trying to dissuade others from supporting it. Pearson charged that it was Forney who had interpreted the ideas of the Presbyterian minister and Revolutionary leader, John Witherspoon, so as to support this concept of "moral treason."

Forney declined to run for reelection in 1815 or to accept public office thereafter. His son Daniel Munroe ^[25], succeeded him in Congress but resigned his seat in 1818. In the 1830s David Forney and his brother Jacob moved to Alabama, where Jacob's son, William Henry ^[26], was a congressman from 1875 to 1893.

Peter Forney has been described as hospitable, generous, charitable, honest, candid, and unaffected. According to the epitaph on his tombstone in a private burial ground in Lincoln County, he always acted on "Republican principles." He and his wife were the parents of Daniel Munroe ^[25], Jacob, Moses (died young), James M., Joseph (died young), Mary or Polly (Mrs. Christian Reinhardt, Jr.), Eliza (first Mrs. Henry Y. Webb and then Mrs. John Meek), Susan (Mrs. Bartlett Shipp ^[27]), Lavinia (Mrs. John Fulenwider), Caroline (Mrs. Ransom G. Hunley), Sophia (Mrs. Cyrus L. Hunter), and Nancy (Mrs. William Johnston).

References:

Biog. Dir. Am. Cong., (1961).

L. F. Crawford, *Forney Forever*, and *William Webb Crawford, Dean of Birmingham Bankers* (1967).

C. W. Griffin, *History of Old Tryon and Rutherford Counties* (1937).

C. L. Hunter, *Sketches of Western North Carolina* (1877).

Raleigh Register, 18 Nov. 1800, 19 Sept., 17 Nov. 1801, 15 Nov. 1802, 21 May 1813, 25 Aug. 1815.

W. L. Sherrill, *Annals of Lincoln County* (1937).

Thirteenth U.S. Congress, *Annals of Congress* (1813).

J. H. Wheeler, *Historical Sketches of North Carolina* (1851).

Additional Resources:

"Forney, Peter, (1756 - 1834)." *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*. Washington, D.C.: The Congress. <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=F000279> ^[28] (accessed March 5, 2014).

"Peter Forney 1756-1834." N.C. Highway Historical Marker O-61, N.C. Office of Archives & History. <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?sp=Markers&k=Markers&sv=O-61> ^[29] (accessed March 5, 2014).

Cappon, Lester J. "Iron Making: A Forgotten Industry of North Carolina." *North Carolina Historical Review* 9, no. 4 (October 1932). 331-. <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/north-carolina-historical-review-1932-october/3705517> ^[30] (accessed March 5, 2014).

Image Credits:

"Estate Sale." (advertisement). Western Carolinian. May 10, 1834. 3.
<https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/search/pages/results/?lccn=sn84026486&sequence=1&date1=1834-05-10&date2=1834-05-10&dateFilterType=range&sort=date> ^[31] (accessed March 5, 2014).

Subjects:

[Biographies](#) ^[32]

Authors:

[Frech, Laura Page](#) ^[33]

Origin - location:

[Lincoln County](#) ^[34]

From:

[Dictionary of North Carolina Biography, University of North Carolina Press](#),^[35]

1 January 1986 | Frech, Laura Page

Source URL:<https://ncpedia.org/biography/forney-peter>

Links

[1] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/forney-peter> [2] <https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/lccn=sn84026486/1834-05-10/ed-1/seq-3/> [3] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/anson> [4] <https://ncpedia.org/geography/lincoln> [5] <https://ncpedia.org/huguenots> [6] <https://ncpedia.org/committees-safety> [7] <https://ncpedia.org/american-revolution> [8] <https://ncpedia.org/chokecherry-overview> [9] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/rutherford-griffith> [10] <https://ncpedia.org/ramsours-mill-battle> [11] <https://ncpedia.org/kings-mountain-battle> [12] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/davidson-william-lee> [13] <https://ncpedia.org/rivers/catawba> [14] <https://ncpedia.org/cowans-ford-battle> [15] <https://ncpedia.org/torrences-tavern> [16] <https://ncpedia.org/iron-and-steel-industry> [17] <https://ncpedia.org/big-ore-bank> [18] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/brevard-alexander> [19] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/graham-joseph> [20] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/davidson-john> [21] <https://ncpedia.org/war-1812> [22] <https://ncpedia.org/jackson-andrew-unc-press-dncb> [23] <https://ncpedia.org/federalist-party> [24] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/pearson-joseph> [25] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/forney-daniel-munroe> [26] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/forney-william-henry> [27] <https://ncpedia.org/biography/shipp-bartlett> [28] <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=F000279> [29] <https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program/Markers.aspx?sp=Markers&k=Markers&sv=O-61> [30] <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/north-carolina-historical-review-1932-october/3705517> [31] <https://newspapers.digitalnc.org/search/pages/results/?lccn=sn84026486&sequence=1&date1=1834-05-10&date2=1834-05-10&dateFilterType=range&sort=date> [32] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/biography-term> [33] <https://ncpedia.org/category/authors/frech-laura-page> [34] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/piedmon-17> [35] <https://ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/dictionary-no>