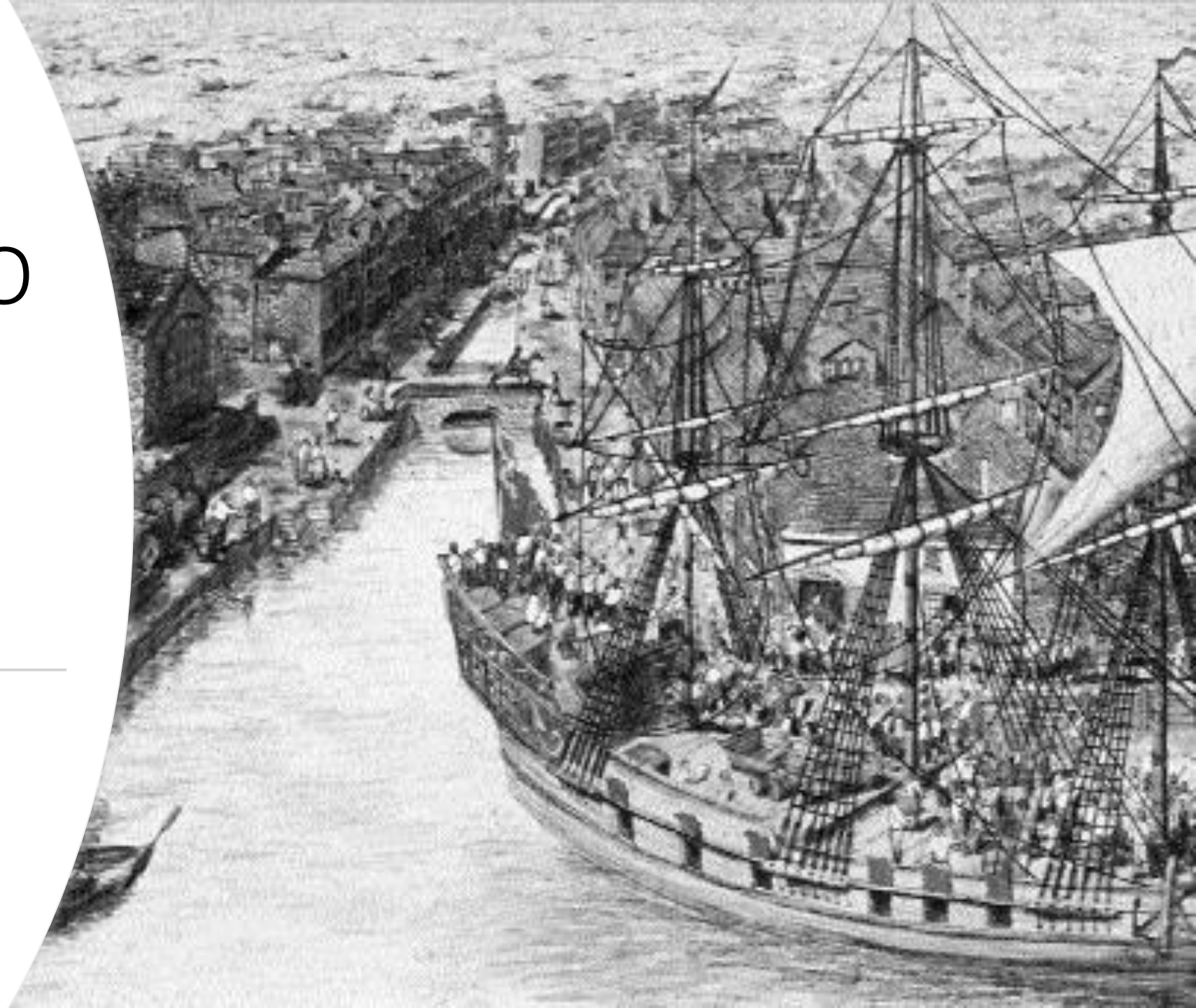




MIGRATION TO AMERICA, AND LETTERS HOME

The Mathias family of
Hendre and their
descendants



Sources for this story?

- Family trees (Simon Carter)
- Loose papers (from Tony Bowen)
- Bill Griffith Jones
- The Phillips papers (NLW)
- Miscellaneous
- Connections to the Albion story
- Hendre
- Trenowydd
- Various historical articles and newspaper archives

30/1789 [81] 141

In the Name of God Amen— I James Mathias of Hendre in the Parish of St. Degmole in the County of Pembroke farmer, being sick and weak of Body but of Perfect mind and Memory thank be given unto the Lord of life. Therefore calling unto mind the mortality of my Body. do make and Ordain this my last Will and testament, in manner following, That is to say, Principally and first of all I humbly recommend my immortal Soul unto the hands of Almighty God through the merits of Jesus Christ the Righteous, and my body to be decently buried in a Christian like manner at the discretion of my Executors hereafter named. As to my worldly Estate and Effects as it hath pleased Providence to bless me with in this life, I give remise and bequeath the same in the following manner.

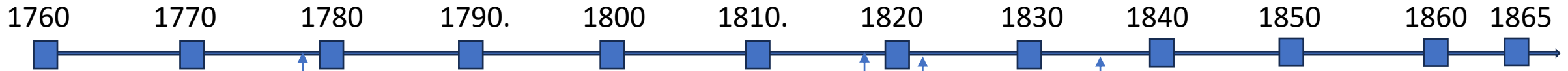
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Extract from the will
of James Mathias
1789



US privateer
bombards
Fishguard

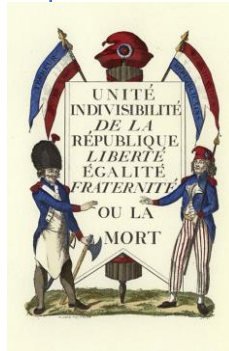
American War of
Independence



David Mathias
emigrates to North
America with his
young family in
this period



Napoleonic
Wars; end
1815



The French
Revolution
,
1789 ..

David Mathias.
1791 letter



Voyage
of the
Albion

War
of
1812

Mary Evans letter 1821



Britton Evans
Letter 1830, 1837



US war with
Mexico.
The Alamo



Crimean War
1853-56

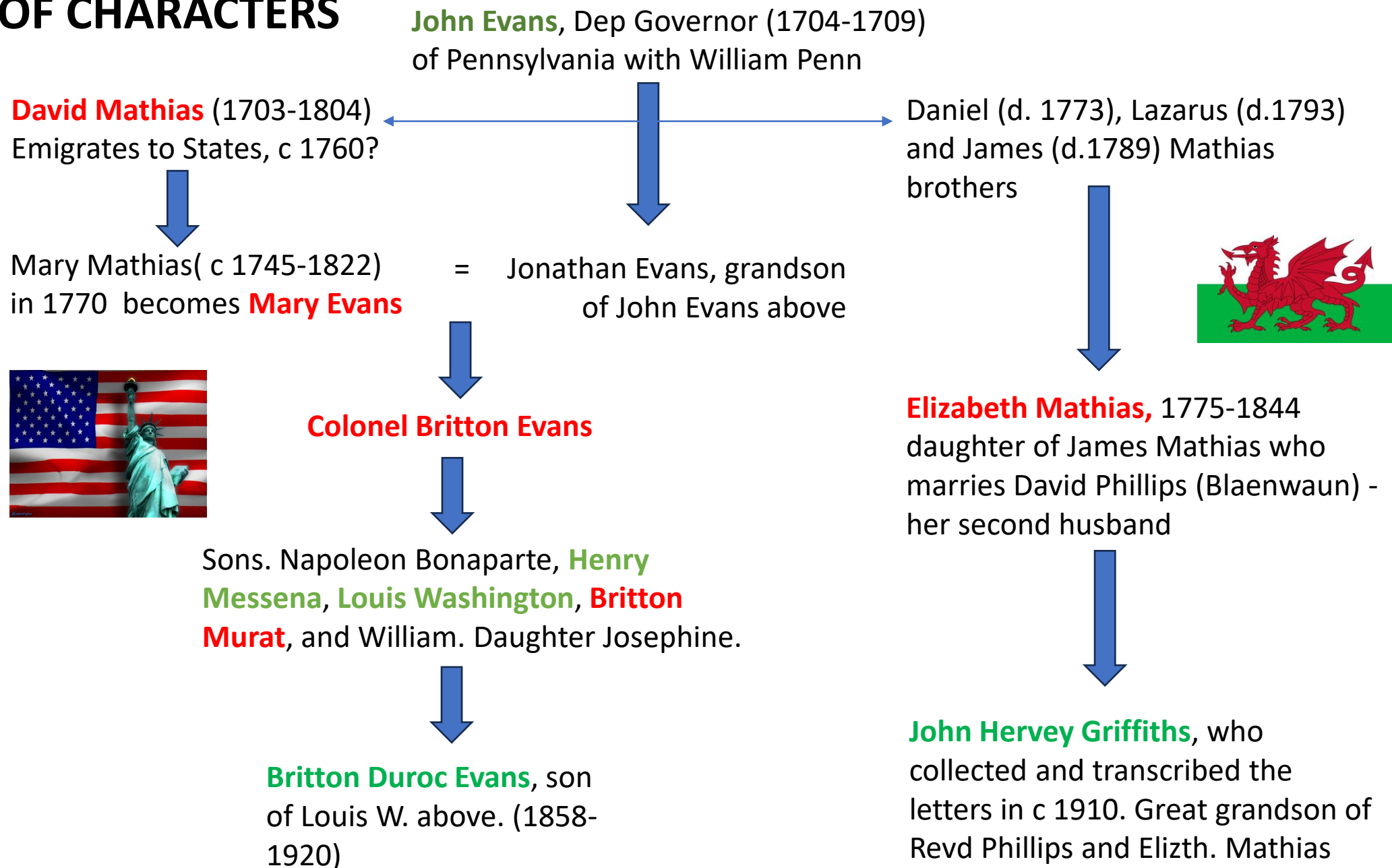


US Civil War



Britton Murat Evans.
Son. Letters 1847-50

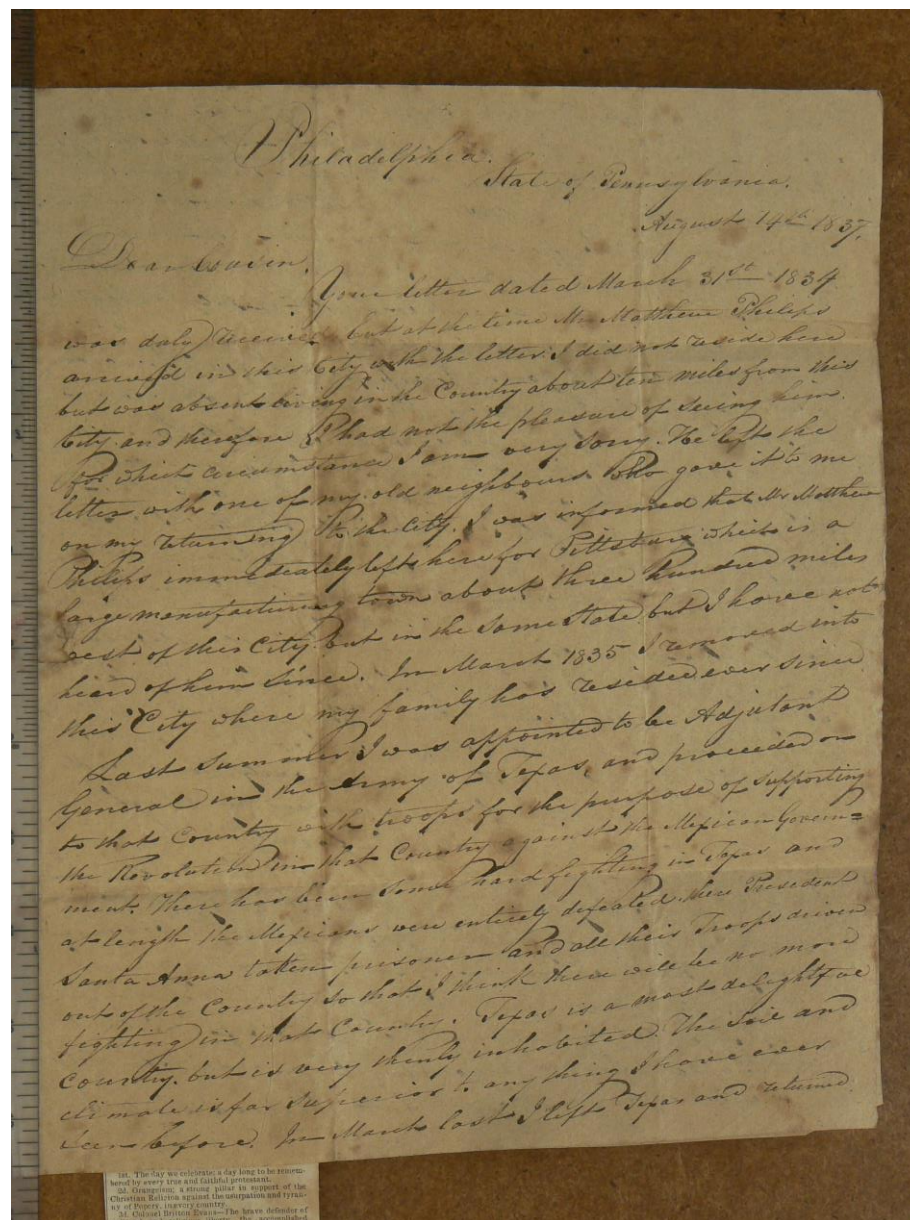
CAST OF CHARACTERS



LETTERS FROM AMERICA

- James Hervey GRIFFITHS collected together letters from PHILLIPS descendants, transcribed and printed them privately between about 1900 and 1910.
- James was a great-grandson of David Phillips (Blaenwaun). ... the Albion
- Some of the letters have been translated from the original Welsh

<https://archives.library.wales/index.php/phillips-family-of-st-dogmaels-papers> (contains a few of the letters)



Original letter from Col. Britton Evans

Connections great and small

- Mathias family of Hendre: David, Daniel, James, Lazarus
- Elizabeth Mathias married Rev David Phillips of Blaenwaun; did letters home encourage the Albion project in the 1820s?
- Britton Evans links us to revolutionary France, the War of 1812, the Alamo and more (and you thought things were bad now!)
- Letters reveal feelings about Wales ...
- ... and also attractions of the New World
- ... and some very personal things

LETTERS HOME

- Chronologically we begin with David Mathias in 1791. Now an old man.
- His daughter Mary Evans in 1820 gives family news, and extols the advantages of life in America.
- Britton Evans himself. War of 1812. After the Alamo. Indian campaigns. Supports Greeks vs Ottoman Empire. (Some possibly less creditable episodes too.)
- His son, Britton Murat Evans, has hopes of visiting Wales, and would like a Welsh wife (“famed for their beauty and industry”)
- Another son Henry is a restless spirit.
- Finally Louis, a physician, and his son, Britton Duroc Evans, who is a great pioneer in the treatment of mental health (and we shall start with him)

Britton Duroc Evans (1858-1920)

Excuse this brief flip forward 50 years

*"Dr. Evans is one of the most conspicuous and honored representatives of the medical profession in New Jersey, and yet has not attained the prime of life. He was born in Caroline county, Maryland, in 1858, and is a son of Dr. Louis W. Evans, who was born in Ohio, during a temporary residence of his parents in that state. **His** father [ie Louis's father], **Colonel Britton Evans**, had been sent there on a government commission.*

*He [Col. Britton Evans] was a direct descendant of **Christmas Evans, the eminent Welsh divine**. A gentleman of fine military attainments, he was commissioned lieutenant of artillery in the war of 1812 and served under General Harrison, taking an active part in the battle in which Colonel Johnson, afterward vice-president of the United States, is said to have killed the chief Tecumseh, and also in the battle of River Raisin, where he distinguished himself for bravery.*

He took part in the war with Mexico, the Florida war, and at the time of his death was organizing a company to go to Greece to help her in her struggle for independence, against Turkey. His original commission, signed by Presidents Monroe and Madison, and also the original credentials which enabled him to organize a company in aid of the Greeks, are in possession of his grandson. Dr. Evans, of Morris Plains."



Supposedly a piece in praise of the above, it focuses on his grandfather!

Britton Evans, Mental health pioneer, and Christmas Evans, preacher, no relation!!



Christmas Evans. 1766-1838



David Mathias. Letter of 1791 (at age 88)

- Permeated by strong religious conviction
- Laments his limited English... [my transcription clearly a translation]
- ... and laments his grandchildren's limited Welsh
- Tells us about his family links to St Dogmaels.
- Probably does not know which brothers are still alive (only Lazarus)
- Mentions his daughter Mary Evans, with whom he now lives.
- No mention of the recent War (of Independence)

Mary Evans

- Mary was born in Wales so would have been a native Welsh speaker; my guess is that this letter is also in translation
- Letter records the death of her father aged 101
- Tells us about her family, including youngest son Britton
- Quite a lot about the advantages of life in America

COLONEL BRITTON EVANS

C 1780 TO 1847



Britton Evans career

- War of 1812
- Texas and the Alamo
- Philadelphia Riots
- Indian campaigns
- Support for the Greeks against the Ottoman Empire



Colonel Britton Evans

War of 1812 against the British,

- who had allied with the indigenous peoples
- Raisin River
- His children: Napoleon Bonaparte, Josephine, Henry Messena, Louis Washington and Britton Murat.
- Reflects close connections, politically, with France and revolutionary ideals.

NB this was a war that the American colonists lost, with severe economic consequences

Tecumseh, Shawnee chief (right).

Contemporary cartoon showing their alliance with British. Note the rather portly British officer.



Family Revolutionary Sympathies. Boys named after Napoleon's generals.
Not to mention Napoleon Bonaparte and Josephine!



Duroc

(Britton Duroc Evans)



Massena

(Henry Massena Evans)



Murat

(Louis Murat Evans)

Henry Messena Evans. A restless soul.

According to his brother, he has been:

- a farmer in Texas
- a captain on one of his father's ships
- a lieutenant in the US Army
- an officer in the Peruvian Navy
- Several whaling expeditions
- The California Gold Rush – the 49 er's



TEXAS AND THE SLAVERY ISSUE

“The independence of Texas would result in a fine country being opened up to emigrants and an added desideratum would be the paving of the way for the abolition of slavery in the border slave states of Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri.”

SUSPICIOUS MOTIVES

“ the struggle going on in Texas was nothing but a grand scheme of iniquity concocted for the purpose of re-establishing slavery in the Texas country. In a succeeding article the writer essayed to "Trace the subject of the Texian revolt through the whole concatenation of its primary causes and objects," and to set forth the "motives of personal aggrandizement, avaricious adventure, and unlimited, enduring oppression" actuating the vast combination of interests that was behind the Texas revolt.

“... the revolt was not so much the deed of the actual settlers as of the land speculators and slaveholders in the United States.”

This did not reflect the sentiment of a majority of the citizens of Philadelphia, and in consequence the editor of the Gazette found him-self denounced as a "bloody papist”

MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT TEXAS

“Another reason why there was not a greater general sympathy in favor of the colonists, [according to this journal], was that enthusiasm was subdued by statements respecting the dubious character of the leaders, such as Houston, for instance. The character of the emigrants was in keeping with that of such unscrupulous men as Austin, Archer, Wharton, Burnett, and the rest; **for "all the murderers, swindlers, horse-thieves who have fled the Southern states for the last ten years" have gone to Texas. Those who did not find it safe to live at home had found an asylum in Texas.**”

SIMILAR AMBIVALENCE IN THE SLAVE STATES

"It is more surprising to find a voice from Mississippi protesting in a similar vein against the independence of Texas. In speculating upon the effect on the South of the independence of Texas this writer is of the opinion that the only thing that can render the independence of Texas desirable or its annexation to the United States worth while is the hope that she would become the slave market of the whole South. The acknowledgment of Texas independence will prove a dark day for the South, our territory being already of sufficient extent and our frontier enlarged enough."

SO WHERE DID BRITTON EVANS STAND ?

"... expressed the determination of 'those present to embark under Colonel Evans and offer their services to Houston; to wear the badge of mourning on their left arm for the Texan martyrs of liberty; to appeal for help for the general Texas committee; and finally as friends of religious and civil liberty the members declared their readiness to sacrifice all for the Texan cause. At the meeting it was resolved to form a company to emigrate to Texas under Colonel Britton Evans and join the army of Houston. ... On Saturday the 16th of July, a vessel left New Castle with between fifty and sixty volunteers bound for Texas. ... A dispatch from Bermuda, dated August 2, 1836, stated that the American schooner, General De Kalb, one Matthews, master, had put into port for food and water. The vessel had been out ten days from Philadelphia and was bound for New Orleans. She carried between forty and fifty volunteers comprising privates and officers These were described as being somewhat "pugnacious in disposition"."

AND THE VERDICT OF HISTORY ?

The sober verdict of history has recorded that the Texas revolution was "a legitimate measure of self-defense" against the despotism of Santa Anna. That the revolution succeeded was due in part to the moral and material assistance rendered the struggling Texans by the citizens of Pennsylvania.

REFERENCES

<https://archives.library.wales/index.php/phillips-family-of-st-dogmaels-papers>

Acknowledgement: South Western Historical
Quarterly

Britton Murat Evans

- Son of Colonel Evans
- Writes a number of letters in the 1850s
- Laments that his brother Henry is unlikely to marry as he is not of a “settled disposition”

Louis Washington Evans

- The second son, Dr. Louis Evans, father of our subject, was a graduate of two of the medical schools of Philadelphia and practiced for many years in that city. He was twice married, his first union being with Miss Patton, of Philadelphia. After her death he removed to Maryland, where he married Miss L. Boone, a direct descendant of Daniel Boone, the celebrated Kentucky pioneer.

Letter to David Phillips

4. Letter from Britton Evans to Revd David Phillips.

Addressed to the Reverend David Phillips. July 12th, 1830.

Dear Cousin.

Your letter of the 5th March 1828, was duly received in the Month of June of the same Year by the hand of Mr. John Phillips, who called at my house on his way to the City of Baltimore, but of whom I have not heard since. Mrs. Mary Evans, my Mother, to whom you directed your letter is long since deceased. She died on the 6th March 1822. And my Sister Anna, who was single and lived with my mother during her lifetime, died in a Year afterwards, I have but One Brother living, whose name is Owen. He resides about One hundred and twenty five miles westwardly from this City, and about five miles southwest from a village called Carlisle, Cumberland county, in this state. He has a wife and numerous family of children, and is the eldest of our family now living. I have but one sister now living whose name is Elizabeth. She is married *****

They reside about thirty five miles

***** my Brother Owen, On the great * * * *

***** about five miles west of a * * ***** in Chester County in this State ***** and has a large family of children. 'I am the Youngest, of my Mothers family. I have a wife and six children. The Children are named as follows: Elizabeth Pauline. Mary Josephine, Napoleon Bonaparte. Louis Washington. Henry Messena. Britton Murat. I was absent from this City about Nine Years, during which time I served as an officer in the United States Army, having been in Canada and along our Northern Frontier contending against the British Troops and Savages together during the late war,

I returned home to this City in the latter part of the Year 1821, in sufficient, time to settle my Mothers affairs and witness her departure into another, and, I trust, a better world.

After my return from the active service of the Army I was appointed a Justice of the Peace, arid Colonel of the State Troops, which offices I now hold. I reside on my own property, No. 276 South 4th Street, being a Three Storey Brick House. I have been thus minute in my details of the family in order that should you or any of my other relations ever visit this Country, yon will the more readily be enabled to find some part of our family. I should be much pleased to hear from you on the receipt of this letter, in which I should wish to be informed of the names, residence and circumstances of all my relatives in Wales, as it is a subject with which I am but partially acquainted.