Pierre-Emile Martin Biography

Pierre-Emile Martin

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Biography

Pierre-Emile Martin was one of the developers of the *open-hearth steelmaking*process, also known as the *Siemens-Martin* process. The open hearth, a variety of blast furnace, uses regenerated heat for more efficient production of steel. It was invented by Charles William and Friedrich Siemens in 1856. Martin improved the process shortly thereafter by using strategically placed heat-capturing chambers on either side of the furnace and by introducing a gas producing element.

Born on August 18, 1824 in Bourges, France, Martin was introduced to iron and steel production by his father, Emile, who owned a foundry in Sireuil. The increased demand for iron and steel during the 19th century inspired a strong competition among inventors to develop new materials and new processes. Using the Siemens heat-regeneration process, with his own modifications, Martin purified steel by dilution, using large quantities of scrap steel. After a protracted dispute with Siemens over rights to the process, a compromise was reached in 1864, recognizing both Siemens and Martin as contributors to the development of what came to be called the Siemens-Martin process.

Martin spent the remainder of his life in virtual poverty, having been drained financially by patent litigation. While he suffered, others benefited from his innovation. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Siemens-Martin process had surpassed the earlier Bessemer conversion process as the primary method of steel production, and it remained so until the late 1960s. Martin died on May 23, 1915, in Fourchambault, France.