

Barbara Funk (1812-1850) of Singers Glen, VA and her Funk Family Ancestry

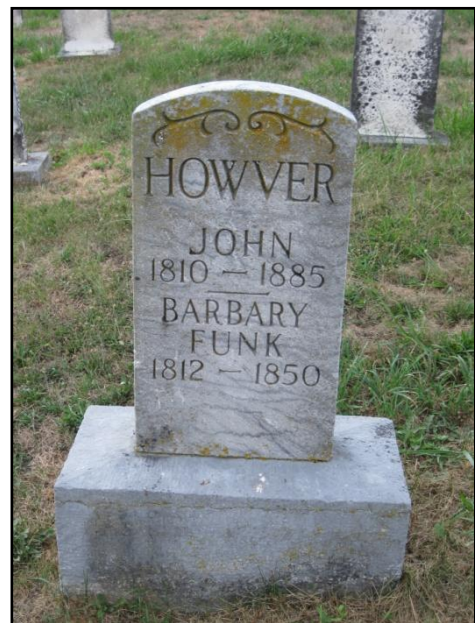
© Susan McNelley

Barbara Funk was born in Singers Glen, Virginia in 1812. She was the last in a long line of our ancestors who adhered to the Mennonite faith. These ancestors had surnames of Funk, Showalter, Meyer, Brenneman, Rhodes, and Good. In each family, the original pioneer immigrant had arrived on American soil in the first half of the eighteenth century. They were descendents of German and Swiss Anabaptists (Mennonites), who fled from two hundred years of war and persecution in Switzerland and in the German Palatinate to religious freedom in Pennsylvania. These Mennonites were part of a larger group of German immigrants known as the Pennsylvania Dutch. When it became too crowded in Pennsylvania, our Mennonite forebears, along with others of their religion, drifted into the sparsely-settled Virginia frontier. Our Funk family ancestors are among the most prominent of Mennonites who settled in Pennsylvania and later in Virginia.

Short biographical sketches of Barbara, Joseph (her father), Henry, Jr.(her grandfather), and Bishop Henry Funck (her great-grandfather) are given here.

Barbara Funk (1812-1850)

Barbara was born on October 8, 1812 in Singers Glen to Joseph and Elizabeth (Rhodes) Funk. She was just two years old when her mother died, leaving five children. Barbara was the youngest. Her father quickly remarried and Barbara grew up in a large farm family. Joseph and his second wife would have nine children. Barbara was just shy of twenty-one when she married John Howver (Houwer) of Greenbrier County on September 5, 1833. About 1835, John purchased a farm from Christian Eversole. The property was located on Taflinger Road in Singers Glen. John and Barbara had five children before Barbara died on January 6, 1850 at the age of thirty-eight. The children were Joanna, Abraham, Joseph, George, and Benjamin, who was 18 months old when his mother died. Barbara's husband re-married, although the date of marriage is unknown. His second wife was Mary (1821-1892), daughter of Daniel Good. It appears from census data that John and Mary had no children together. Family connections are documented in the will of Joseph Funk, Barbara's father. (Barbara died some 12 years before her father.) In Joseph Funk's will, written in 1861, he names his children and notes that Barbara, deceased, was married to John Houwer. He states that Barbara, along with her older siblings Jonathan and Elizabeth, inherited



Singers Glen Cemetery (Photo by SAM 2010)
Date of John Howver's death on tombstone is an error; he died in 1865.

the sum of five hundred dollars from their grandfather Road's estate; in an effort to equalize distribution of property Joseph specifies that his younger children are to receive an extra three hundred dollars from his holdings. Later in the will, Joseph states that the amount bequeathed to his daughter Barbara shall be divided among her four children, Abraham Houver, Joanna (who is married to George Shelton), Joseph Houver, and George Houver. (The spelling of Road and Houver are as written in the will.) The will is recorded in Rockingham County, Virginia, Will Book No. 1A, Page 303A et seq. (Funk, Frances). Note that Barbara and John Houver's son Benjamin is not mentioned in grandfather's will, suggesting that he also died prior to 1861.

John Howver died in November of 1865. Both he and Barbara are buried in the cemetery of Singers Glen, on a hill overlooking the town. On John's tombstone, his date of death is listed as 1885. This is an error; in a remarks section of the online data for the Rockingham Co. Cemetery Project, downloaded summer 2007, is the comment, "Swank correction in 1967: born November 26, 1802 and died Nov 1865 -- Civil War." Swank's dates agree with notes made in Sibyl Hoover Middleton's handwriting in the margins of a copy of pages from the Funk Family History. Sibyl was a great-granddaughter of John Howver.

Joseph Funk (1778-1862), father of Barbara Funk

Joseph Funk is considered the founder of Singers Glen and its most famous citizen. He was born in Berks County, Pennsylvania on April 6, 1778, the eleventh child of Mennonites Henry Funk and Barbara Showalter. (Some sources give his date of birth as March 9, 1777.) Joseph moved with his family to Rockingham County, Virginia in 1786 and lived there until his death.

On Christmas day of 1804, Joseph married Elizabeth Rhodes, the daughter of the Mennonite Bishop Henry Rhodes. About 1805, he purchased a tract of land from his father-in-law and established his home near a spring in Little Mountain Valley in the area which was to become Singers Glen. Elizabeth died at the age of thirty, on February 7, 1814, leaving five children: Jonathan, Henry, Elizabeth, Susan, and Barbara. Joseph married his second wife, Rachel Britton, seven months later, on the 6th of September, 1814. With her, he had nine more children: Mary, Joseph, David, Samuel, Hannah, John, Timothy, Solomon and Benjamin. (Fretz; Funk, Frances)



In addition to building his home, farming, and providing for a large family, Joseph pursued a love of music.

The home of Joseph Funk in Singers Glen, VA was erected about 1810. It was constructed of logs and sheathed with weatherboard. In November of 1974, the home was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. (Photo by SAM 2010)

Mennonites have always emphasized the importance of sacred music. Joseph became an authority in sacred song and became known as the “Father of Song in Northern Virginia.” Around 1816, he published his first book of music, titled “Choral Music,” which later became famous as the “*Harmonia Sacra*.” The book is a collection of Anabaptist (Mennonite) hymns written in the shaped-note system. Joseph founded a singing school and began teaching singing, using the shaped-note method of instruction, in his home as early as 1825. His sons Timothy and Solomon, along with grandson Aldine S. Kieffer and John A. Showalter, another relative, were some of his more successful students. These men became well-known singers in their own right. According to a July, 1859 advertisement in Joseph Funk’s music journal “*Southern Musical Advocate and Singer’s Friend*,” the Funk family at that time was offering music tuition and board for \$9.00 per month. With grammar and elocution included, the price was \$10.00 per month. Joseph Funk was also a well-known itinerant singing school teacher, traveling hundreds of miles from home on horseback and reaching thousands of students. In 1847, at the age of seventy, he established a printing business in Singers Glen. This was the first Mennonite printing office in America. The “*Harmonia Sacra*,” his popular book of sacred melodies, was printed there for many years. The outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 brought a temporary end to publishing activities. (Fretz; Funk, Frances)

Aside from his work as a teacher of vocal music and a compiler, Joseph also translated the “Mennonite Confession of Faith” from the German language into English. He published this work in 1837. When, how, or where Joseph Funk received his educational training is a matter of conjecture. He had a wide knowledge of books. Joseph was brought up to speak German, or Pennsylvania German, yet his translations and writings are in excellent English.

The author Frances Funk observed that "In general, the Funks were persons of excellent education and literary skill, men who made a habit of publishing. One of the very first buildings they and their associates erected in America was a schoolhouse where, immediately after the arrival of their families, daily curricular instruction began. They were instrumental in founding other schools in Philadelphia and in Virginia, so that their influence upon education became one of their strongest traditions" (Funk, Frances, 20).

It is notable that much of Joseph Funk’s work as a music teacher and as a printer was done in the later period of his life, in his sixties and seventies, after he had reared his family. Above all, Joseph was a man of deep piety, strict integrity and an influential factor in the moral fiber of his community.

Mr. Funk died on December 24, 1862, at the age of 85. He is buried in the village cemetery overlooking the town that he helped to establish. After the war, his sons and grandsons carried on the publishing business for a number of years. It has been noted that at least some of Joseph Funk’s children left the Mennonite Church and joined the Baptist Church around the time of the Civil War. (Fretz; Funk, Frances)

In her book, Frances Funk wants to make it clear that Joseph Funk of Singers Glen is the grandson of Bishop Henry Funck of Franconia Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. She notes that there was living at the same time as the Bishop another Henry Funk who lived in Lancaster County, PA who also had a son named Henry. Both Henry Funks immigrated to

Pennsylvania about the same time: between 1710 and 1719. Frances points out that these two families are often confused by genealogists or else thought to be one and the same. However, the Henry Funk who settled in Lancaster County died in 1735 and his son Henry died the following year (leaving a minor son also named Henry). The Henry Funk who immigrated to Pennsylvania and settled in Montgomery County (originally Philadelphia County) was the one who married Anne Meyer. He became a Bishop and lived until 1760 and is the immigrant ancestor who fathered the line of Funks that extended through Joseph Funk of Singers Glen, Virginia (Funk, Frances, 16-19).

Henry Funk (Born abt. 1729), father of Joseph Funk

Henry Funk was born about 1729 in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania and was the son of Bishop Henry Funck and Anne Meyer. Henry married Barbara Showalter around 1760. Barbara was probably born about 1740 in Switzerland or Germany. In the earlier part of his adulthood, Henry was a preacher in the Mennonite Church. George Tice notes in *Fields of Peace: A Pennsylvania German Album* that “the leadership of the church is not necessarily separate from a man’s other work, usually farm work... that Mennonite deacons, ministers and bishops are plain working men.” Henry was one of many Germans in Pennsylvania for whom the Revolutionary War brought conflicting feelings and divided loyalties: loyalty to the tenets of the Mennonite faith which did not condone war, loyalty to a country which promised religious freedom, and deep resentment of what was seen as English oppression. In the records of the Daughters of the American Revolution, it states that Henry Funk served in the Revolutionary War effort in the capacity of private-patriot, that he took the Oath of Allegiance and that he furnished supplies to assist in the establishment of American Independence. After the close of the Revolutionary War, Henry disposed of his property in Bucks County, Pennsylvania and, about 1786, moved to the new county of Rockingham, Virginia and settled some nine or ten miles north of Harrisonburg. Henry and Barbara were the parents of at least thirteen children. The children of Henry and Barbara, as listed in the DAR records, are: Jacob, Christian, Abraham, Elizabeth, Barbara, Henry, Esther, Susanna, John, Samuel, Joseph, Frances, and Daniel. Apparently, Henry and Barbara both died in Rockingham County. The date of their deaths is unknown. (Fretz)

Mennonite Bishop Henry Funck (Death abt. 1759), father of Henry Funk

Henry was born in either Holland or Germany and married Anne Meyer, the daughter of the Mennonite Christian Myre, Sr. who had also immigrated to Pennsylvania. Henry’s date of birth and the date of his marriage to Anne are unknown. The couple had at least 10 children: John, Henry, Christian, Abraham, Esther, Barbara, Anne, Mary, Fronicka, & Elizabeth. (These are listed in his will.)

The Funck name is originally a Swiss Mennonite family name, native to the Canton of Zurich in Switzerland. However, some family researchers believe that Bishop Henry Funck himself was born in Holland because he was well educated. Dutch Mennonites had suffered less economic hardship and were more likely to have had an education than their Swiss and German counterparts.

Our ancestor Henry Funck, along with other brethren, emigrated from Europe in 1719, according

to his son Christian, in his "Mirror to all Mankind." Henry purchased three tracts of land, totaling 201 acres, lying along the Indian Creek in Franconia Township in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. Later he purchased a couple of other large tracks of land (Fretz, 11-12). In a document recorded on March 1, 1748 in the rolls office in Philadelphia in Book H Vol. 3, page 11, it is noted that Henry Funck purchased from the Honorable Richard Penn, Esq. a tract of 166 acres. This land was located on the "upper part of a branch of Perkeomyn," in Hilltown Township in Bucks County. This is the tract of land that Bishop Henry Funck later bequeathed to his son Henry. Richard was the son of William Penn and the land that Henry purchased adjoined the land of both Thomas and Richard Penn. In addition to farming, Bishop Funck was the first miller on Indian Creek. The deed for the mill was signed by Thomas Penn, son of William Penn. (Funk, Frances, 60-62)

In 1738, the Mennonites living in the Salford area built a meeting house for Mennonite worship on a parcel of land that Henry Funk, along with Christian Myre, Jr. and Abraham Reiff of Franconia Township and Dielman Kolb of Salford Township purchased from Henry Ruth. They in turn executed a deed of trust to seventeen members of the congregation, including Christian Myre, Sr. (Henry Funk's father-in-law). Source: Montgomery County Deed Book 36, 91: 21 Jan 1738. Henry Funk et al to Nicholas Haldeman, "Genealogies of Pennsylvania Families," 710.)



Ephrata Cloister was a religious community established in 1732 at Ephrata, Lancaster County, PA. Bishop Henry Funk's German translation of Martyrs Mirror was printed at Ephrata in 1748. (Photo by SAM 2007)

There is no doubt that Henry was held in high esteem by the Mennonite community. He was elected the first minister of the Mennonite church at Franconia, Pennsylvania. Later he was ordained bishop, an office which he held for many years. He is considered to be one of the first Mennonite Bishops in America. Bishop Funck authored two religious works, "Spiegel der Taufe" (Mirror of Baptism) and "Eine Restitution, oder eine Erklaerung einiger Hauptpunkte des Gesetzes." The latter was published after his death in 1763 and was reprinted at Biel, Switzerland in 1844, and at Lancaster, PA in 1862. Along with a man named Dielman Kolb, Henry supervised the translation of Van Bracht's "Martyrs Mirror" from the Dutch to the German (another indication that

he may have been born in Holland). This was a 1514-page folio printed at Ephrata, Pennsylvania in 1748 and is considered one of the largest works published in this country during the Colonial period. (Fretz, 12)

Bishop Henry Funck died in Franconia Township about 1759, as his will, written in German in his own hand and dated June 13, 1759, was proved that year and entered, un-translated, into the Will Book (Pennsylvania Vital Records). His will lists his wife (then deceased) and 10 children and gives explicit information on the distribution of his considerable property holdings. The will has been translated and reproduced in the *Brief History of Bishop Henry Funck* (Fretz, 13-20).

Additional notes on the Funks who immigrated to Pennsylvania

As mentioned above, Funk is a Swiss Mennonite family name, native to the Canton of Zurich in Switzerland. There is a record of a preacher named Henry Funk who was scourged and expelled from the Canton of Bern, Switzerland in 1671. (Wenger)

The Funck surname is also fairly common among Mennonites who settled in the Palatinate (southern Germany) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1672, a man named Jacob Everling sent to the Netherlands a list of Swiss Mennonites currently living in the vicinity of the Palatinate. He noted that there were about one hundred Mennonites living in Alsace in 1672. Among them were twelve "teachers of the faith." One of these was a man named Henry Funk. (Perhaps this man was the same individual who was expelled from Switzerland.) About the year 1710, one Hendrick Funk led a colony of a dozen exiled Mennonite families out of Switzerland. (Eshleman, 120, 147, 192)

Funck or Funk is listed as one of the most common Mennonite names in Pennsylvania. As noted in Eshleman's book, a number of Funcks who may or may not have been related to our immigrant ancestor, Bishop Henry Funck, immigrated to America in the early eighteenth century. As early as 1710, a man named Henry Funk (no known relationship to our ancestor) had settled in the Pequea Valley of Lancaster Co. PA. In 1750, Martin and Hanns Funck came to Philadelphia, along with Jacob Showalter, on the ship *Brotherhood*. In Fretz's book, a Martin and Christian Funk are listed as brothers of Bishop Henry Funck. Fretz also lists a Jacob Funk as a nephew of Bishop Henry Funck. (Eshleman, Fretz, Smith)

Sources:

Eshleman, H. Frank. *Historic Background and Annals of the Swiss and German Pioneer Settlers of Southeastern Pennsylvania, and of Their Remote Ancestors, from the Middle of the Dark Ages, Down to the Time of the Revolutionary War*. Lancaster, PA, 1917. *Google Books*. Web. 2 Feb 2008.

Fretz, Rev. A. J. *A Brief History of Bishop Henry Funck and other Funk Pioneers including a Genealogical Family Register with Biographies of Their Descendants From the Earliest Available Records to the Present Time*. Elkhart, Indiana: Mennonite Publishing Co., 1899.

Funk, Frances. *Joseph Funk: A Biography, together with his lineage and all descendants of his youngest son, Benjamin*. Hollywood, MD: St. Mary's Press, 1984.

"Genealogies of Pennsylvania Families" *The Pennsylvania Genealogical Magazine*, Vol 1: Arnold-Hertzell. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1982.

MacAllister, Dale E. *Donovan Memorial Church in the Singers Glen Community: An Historical Sketch 1875-1975*, Timberville, VA: Coffman Printing and Photography, c 1976.

Smith, C. Henry. "Pennsylvania (State)." *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*. 1959. Web. 28 Jan 2007.

Wenger, John C. "Funk (Funck)." *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*. 1956. Web 28 Jan 2007.