

**Mennonite Bishop Henry Rhodes (1747-1827) of Rockingham County, VA**  
*A Biographical Sketch, including His Last Will and Testament, Dated March 8, 1826*

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*Signature of Heinrich Roth (Henry Rhodes), as it appeared on his will, dated 1826*

(Henry's surname is spelled variously as Rhoad, Roth, Rhode, Rode and Rhodes.)

Henry Rhodes (Heinrich Roth) was born on November 3, 1747 in York County, PA, the eldest son of Anthony and Magdalene Roth. Henry's name appears in tax records of York County Pennsylvania in 1782 (Pennsylvania Archives; 3rd ser. XXI, 499). Shortly afterward, Henry moved south to Rockingham County, Virginia and settled on a farm located some two and one-half miles south of Broadway. In 1784, Henry Rhodes' name appears on a petition to the General Assembly of Virginia signed by Mennonites and Dunkards of Rockingham County. Various other records indicate that Henry's mother, Modlene (by then a widow), along with his siblings Anthony Jr., Frederick, Elizabeth, Magdalene Culp, and, perhaps, Frainey Priniman (Brenneman), also settled in Rockingham County, Virginia. Henry Rhodes became a bishop in the Virginia Mennonite Conference, along with Henry Shank. They were the first Mennonite



Rockingham County countryside as viewed from the Singers Glen Cemetery  
(Photo by SAM 2010)

bishops in Rockingham and Augusta counties. It is not known whether Henry was ordained bishop before or after the move to Rockingham County. Grace Showalter observes that Henry Rhodes, his brother Frederick (an ordained Mennonite minister), and Henry Shank were involved in a schism of the Virginia Mennonite Church which centered on the issue of whether to replace worship in homes with worship in meeting houses constructed for that purpose. Henry associated himself with the Trissels Mennonite Church. Showalter's information on

the schism is based on the history provided by Margaret Burkholder Blosser (1804-1895), daughter of Peter Burkholder, who followed Henry Shank (Heinrick Schenck) and Henry Rhodes

into the bishopric of Rockingham County. (Source: Showalter, Grace I. "The Virginia Mennonite Rhodes Families." *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage*. Volume III, Number 2. April, 1980.)

Henry Rhodes and his siblings were not the first Rhodes families to settle in Virginia. There was a Mennonite preacher living in Page County, Virginia by the name of John Rhodes (Roads). He was massacred by Indians in 1764, along with his wife Eve and six of their thirteen children. To date, there is no established connection between the children of Anthony Rhodes and other Rhodes who settled in Virginia. (Source: Showalter, Grace I. "The Virginia Mennonite Rhodes Families". *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage*. Volume III, Number 2. April, 1980.)

In his "History of Rockingham County", John Wayland also notes that Henry Rhodes, along with Henry Shank and Henry Funk (the father-in-law of Henry Rhodes' daughter Elizabeth), were the first ministers of the Trissels Mennonite Church. The first house of worship for this congregation was built in 1822 and was located four miles west of Broadway. It was the first Mennonite Church built in Rockingham County. Prior to this date, Mennonites met in private homes. (Source: Wayland, John W. PhD. *A History of Rockingham County*. Published 1912. Available online through the Rockingham County, Virginia: VAGenWeb Project)

Henry Rode must also have been a fairly prosperous landowner in Rockingham County, VA in the early years of the 19th century. In 1809, Henry Rode sold 112 acres of land to his son-in-law, Joseph Funk. This land included a spring near which Joseph built his home and printing business. (Source: MacAllister, Dale E. *Donovan Memorial Church in the Singers Glen Community: An Historical Sketch 1875-1975* Coffman Printing and Photography. p. 53)

Henry died on March 18, 1827 and was buried in the Rhodes Family Cemetery near Broadway in Rockingham County. (Source: Swank, J. Robert. *Record of Burial Places Rockingham County, Western section Volume 2*. Singers Glen. 1967)


In the will of Henry Rhoad, dated March 8, 1826, Henry listed his wife Elizabeth and his children, "namely Henry Rhoad, Anna Showalter, Anthony Rhoad, Jacob Rhoad and Samuel Rhoad." His son Christian is listed as deceased. His daughter Elizabeth Rhodes Funk had also died by this time. Henry lists his grandchildren Jonathan, Elizabeth, and Barbara Funk (children of Elizabeth) and Elizabeth and Frany Road (children of Christian). The grandchildren were each to receive \$400 from their grandfather.

The grandchildren's inheritance is also noted in the 1861 will of Joseph Funk (Henry Rhode's son-in-law). In Joseph's will, it is stated that that Jonathan, Elizabeth and Barbara Funk had each inherited four hundred dollars from their grandfather Road. (Source: 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)

On the next page is a transcription of Henry Rhodes' will. The source of the transcription is unknown. This is followed by a photocopy of the will as it appears in Will Book 1, Pages 101 and 102 of the Rockingham County Will Books in the Harrisonburg County Courthouse, Harrisonburg Virginia. It is likely not the original, but a handwritten transcription of the will. Many of the Rockingham County court records were burned during the Civil War. As other

copies of the documents were received, they were transcribed into the Will Books. This appears to be the case with the will of Bishop Henry Rhodes. According to an article written in 1980 by Grace Showalter, Henry's will was thought to have been destroyed. She states that indeed the recorded copy was burned; however, "in recent years the original copy was found stored away in a cupboard in the courthouse at Harrisonburg." A photocopy of the handwritten original was inserted in Will Book A-2 at p. 281. (Source: Showalter, Grace I. "The Virginia Mennonite Rhodes Families". Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage. Volume III, Number 2. April, 1980.)

In the Name of God Amen I Henry Rhoad Senr of the County of Rockingham & State of Virginia being in perfect health and of sound mind and memory yet calling to mind the mortality of my body well Knowing it is appointed for all men once to die do make this as my last will and testament in the following Manner & form First I recommend my soul to the Hands of Almighty God who gave it and my body to the earth from whence it Came and as touching my worldly Goods I dispose of the same as follows And first I give & bequeath to my beloved Wife Elizabeth all the moveable estate I now possess during her natural life and it is my will that my Executors pay to her Three Hundred Dollars immediately after my decease which money & property shall be subject to her disposal during her natural life and after her death all the property she leaves shall be sold and the money arising from such sale together with money she may not have disposed of shall be equally divided among all my Children Namely Henry Rhoad Ann Showalter Anthony Rhoad Jacob Rhoad and Samuel Rhoad Item I give and bequeath all my lands to two of my Sons to wit Anthony and Jacob to them their heirs and assigns forever Provided they their heirs Executors or administrators pay the sum of Five Thousand Three hundred and Thirty Three Dollars and Thirty three Cents as I shall direct that is to say any part of the sum above mentioned which may yet remain unpaid as part of the value of the said Land shall be paid as follows as it becomes due for which I have taken obligations from them the yearly payments shall be equally divided among all the five above mentioned towit Henry Ann Anthony Jacob & Samuel as it is my intention to (?) my whole estate Real and personal except Two Thousand Dollars to be paid as I shall direct Twelve hundred Dollars shall be divided equally among Jonathon Elizabeth & Barbara Funk my Grandchildren and the balance being eight Hundred Dollars shall be equally divided between Elizabeth & Frany (?) Road Children of Christian Decd the above sums are to be paid by my executors whenever the above named children shall become of age without interest if one or more of the Grand Children above named should die before they become to the age of maturity the surviving Grand Children shall be heirs of the deceased. Item it is my will that my sons Anthony and Jacob are authorized to pay any part of the value of the land or the ---sum to myself during my life and in that case any Receipts given from under my hand corresponding with the Contents it shall be good to them as so much paid and if it shall appear the receipts which they may have at my decease that they have --- up the whole sum of Five Thousand Three hundred and Thirty three Dollars and Thirty three Cents they shall stand exonerated from any charge respecting the land Item I order and direct my two sons Anthony and Samuel to be the sole Executors of this my last will and Testament and further I do utterly revoke and annul all other wills and testaments by me heretofore made and establish this and no other to be my last will and Testament this Eighth day of March in the year of our lord one thousand Eight hundred Twenty Six  
Signed sealed pronounced and declared by the said Henry Rhoad Senr to be his last will in the presence of David Bowman Joseph Yount George Rader



Page one of Henry Rhodes' will:

Copy of the Will of Henry Rhodes, Rockingham Co. Courthouse BOOK 1 PAGE 101

In the Name of God Amen I Henry Rhodes Senr of the County of Rockingham State of Virginia being in perfect health and of sound mind and memory yet calling to mind the mortality of my body well knowing that is appointed for all men once to die do make this as my last Will and Testament in the following Manner To wit First I recommend my soul into the Hands of Almighty God who gave it and my body to the earth from whence it came And as touching my worldly Goods I dispose of the same as follows And first I give bequeath to my beloved Wife Elizabeth all the marable estate I now possess during her natural life and it is my will that my Executors pay to her Three hundred Dollars immediately after my decease which money & property shall be subject to her disposal during her natural life and after her death all the property she leaves shall be sold and the money arising from such sale together with the money she may not have disposed of shall be equally divided among all my Children Namely Henry Rhodes And Shoualter Anthony Rhodes Jacob Rhodes and Samuel Rhodes I give and bequeath all my lands to Two of my Sons to wit Anthony and Jacob to them their heirs and assigns forever Provided they their heirs Executors or administrators pay the sum of Five Thousand Three hundred and Thirty Three Dollars and Thirty three Cents as I shall direct that is to say any part of the sum above mentioned which may yet remain unpaid as part of the value of the said Lands shall be paid as follows as it becomes due for which I have to two obligations from them the yearly pay

## Our Family History

The bottom of the first page of the will is inserted below. (The will was on legal size paper.)

ments shall be equally divided among all the first above mentioned  
son of Henry Ann. Anthony, Isaac & Samuel as it is my intention to  
make my whole estate Real and personal except Two Thousand  
Dollars to be paid as I shall direct. Two hundred Dollars shall be  
paid equally among Jonathan Elizabeth & Barbara being my Grand  
children & the balance being eight hundred Dollars shall be equally  
divided between Elizabeth & Mary Ross children of Christian dead  
the above sums are to be paid by my executors whenever the above named  
children shall become of age without interest if one or more of the  
said Grand children above named should die before they become



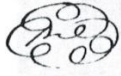
Rockingham County, Virginia was created in 1778 out of a portion of Augusta County. The photo at left shows the Rockingham County Courthouse, located in Harrisonburg, VA. (Photo by SAM, 2010)

The second (and last) page of the will appears on the following page.

Page two of Henry Rhodes' will:

BOOK 1 PAGE 102

to the age of maturity the surviving Grandchildren shall be the heirs  
of the deceased. I leave it to my sons Anthony and Samuel  
to be authorized to pay any part of the value of the land or the whole  
sum to myself during my life and in that case any Receipts given  
from under my hand corresponding with the contents of this will  
shall be good to them as so much paid and if it should appear by  
the receipts which they may have at my decease that they have paid  
for the whole sum of Five Thousand Three hundred and Thirty  
two Dollars and Thirty three Cents they shall stand exonerated  
from any charge respecting this land Hereto. I order and direct that  
my two Sons Anthony and Samuel be the sole Executors of this my  
last will and Testament and further I do utterly revoke and disan-  
null all former Wills and Testaments by me heretofore made or done  
now establish this and no other to be my last will and Testament  
this Eighth day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand  
eight hundred & Twenty Six  
Signed sealed pronounced and  
declared by the said Henry Rhodes  
to be his last will in the presence of

Lynnauf Kottf. 

Daniel Bouman  
Joseph Goumt  
George Rader

Rockingham County May Court 1828 This last Will and Testament of  
Henry Rhodes Deceased was presented in Court & proved by the oaths of Joseph  
Goumt & George Rader Two Witnesses thereto & ordered to be recorded and  
on the motion of Anthony & Samuel Rhodes the Executors therein named  
who entered into bonds with Security in the penalty of \$5000 and made  
a Certificate is granted therefor to obtain