

*Your only devoted and  
affectionate Companion and  
friend til death*

# Shenandoah Mennonite Historian

*Martin Burkholder*

Martin Burkholder's signing of his May 13, 1853 letter to his wife

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## Celebrating the New and the Old!

The weekend of April 9-11 experienced both new and old. The weekend was kicked off Friday evening by a reception and dedication of the new archival space on the first floor of the EMU Library, just around the corner from where we had been jammed in space. Now in a new and more spacious area we have pulled together the several pieces of the Virginia Mennonite Conference Archives boxes and office space.

For the event the long hall outside the new archival space was crowded all the way down to the receiving room. Various VA Conference representatives and friends of the archives came to the 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. reception and dedication. Remarks by several people and a bit of detail by Beryl Brubaker concerning artist Warren Rohrer's portrait sketch of Menno Simons done some years ago were featured. A print of Menno hangs near the archives entrance. We learned about EMC alumnus Rohrer, known in the art world for other works of art. Conference officials helped dedicate the new space and we enjoyed refreshments provided by several people. We await your coming to visit us in our new quarters.

*Jim Lehman*

On Saturday April 10, VA Conference delegates gathered at Weavers Mennonite Church on the same date to celebrate 175 years earlier "the first recorded meeting of a VMC gathering held April 10, 1835." This date in 2010, marks the beginning of a 16-month-long celebration of VMC history. We heard original 1835 minutes read in German by Heinz Plato and an English version by Conference secretary Lois Shank. Richard Good led two songs from the Harmonia Sacra songbook. Ervin Stutzman, the new executive director of MC-USA, led in a meditation recalling various acts of the God of history in the lives of His people throughout the Biblical record.

Released and featured was Gloria Diener's new 50-page booklet titled *People of Peace: Connecting Threads of Faith and Experience*, commissioned by Conference and available for \$10 from Virginia Mennonite Conference Center. Now we have a good coffee table booklet encapsulating 175 years of Virginia Mennonite Conference! Also featured was a small quilt of pieces from twelve congregations by Bonnie Stutzman

*Jim Good / Jim Lehman*

W J N D O W S . . .

## *Into Martin Burkholder's Life from His Papers in the Virginia Mennonite Conference Archives*

*By now the name Martin Burkholder is familiar. He's the young and energetic bishop who traveled and preached extensively for other Mennonite churches in Canada, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and points westward as far as Illinois. We have a considerable collection of correspondence from friends and fellow ministers, some in English, some in German. Martin handled both languages, usually proficiently. We are indebted to Amos B. Hoover, Ephrata, PA for transcribing the old and very difficult handwriting and to Ervie Glick, former professor of German at EMU for translating them.*

*In this first column we feature two letters Martin wrote to his wife, the one on May 12, 1853, from Mahoning County, Ohio (eastern OH), the other June 30, 1853, from the small Mennonite community in Franklin County, Ohio, south of Columbus. His English is generally good, but occasionally we need to make improvements in sentence structure and spelling. In one letter he asks her to write to him at Berlin, Canada, the early name for Kitchener. (Ed.)*

### **Mahoning Co., Ohio May 12, 1853**

My dear and beloved Companion and all my friends and relatives I wish unto you the grace and the Blessing of Almighty God who is the upholder and the Sustainer of our lives and also the influence and the operation of the Holy Spirit to lead you and us to our ends in Christ Jesus, Amen.

I have this morning taken my seat to inform you that we are all blest with good health and have been ever since we left home, for which I feel thankful to God that he hath preserved our unprofitable lives and I hope and sincerely, wish that this silent messenger may find you enjoying good health and all necessary comforts of life.

I will now give you a short description of our Journey. From Nicolas Johnsons we went to Brownsville on Tuesday and at 6 o'clock we went on board of a steam boat and at a little past two o'clock in the night we landed at Pittsburgh from whence we took the cars on Wednesday morning at 8 o'clock and landed at Columbiana [OH] at 15 minutes past 11 o'clock.

From there we went to Rev. John Blossers and now we are at Michael Shanks and expect to abide in this section until sometime next week. We intend to go to Conference in "Vaine" [Wayne] County, about 60 or 70 miles west from here, from whence we intend starting to Canada which will be perhaps the last of next week.

I will now come to a close with my letter as my hand is in a very bad order for writing this morning but I will yet end this let[ter].

**[Let] us endeavor by the help of God to remember one another in our prayers as we are separated about 3 hundred miles apart and yet the affections and the prayers go to you in a moment of time and the cords of love are not, neither will be severed and cut asunder till the fatal stroke of death will accomplish its work**

And I hope that the separation of our bodies has not separated your love and affections to me. Therefore let us be watchful and persevere in the path of duty and choose the good part, that if it cannot be that we can meet on earth any more that we may meet in heaven where parting is no more.

I will now come to a close by giving you my love and friendly salutation.

Your only devoted and affection[ate]  
Companion and friend till death.  
Martin Burkholder

Please write a letter to Canada and direct to  
Waterloo Township, Halton County, Berlin P.  
O. Canada

**Franklin Co., Ohio, June 30<sup>th</sup> 1833**

Dear and beloved Companion. I have this morning embraced the opportunity to write a few lines to you to inform that our Journey has still been safe and prosperous. And we are still well and in good spirit. Thanks be to God for his care and fatherly protection extended to us in our journey.

I hope and sincerely wish that this silent messenger will find you and all dear friends alive in good health and spirit. You rather accused me for not stating the time of our return. I ask pardon because it was impossible to give a correct statement of the time but I will now inform of the time. If the Lord will[s] and makes our journey prosperous we expect to return until about the 10<sup>th</sup> or eleventh of July. But sometimes we are detained by not getting conveyances, so that it may be quite probable that it will go a day or two longer.

I will now close by giving you and all my dear brothers and sisters my love and friendly salutation.

I wrote a letter to you in Indiana and expected to get one here and received none yet.

Yours till in Death  
Martin Burkholder

\* \* \* \* \*

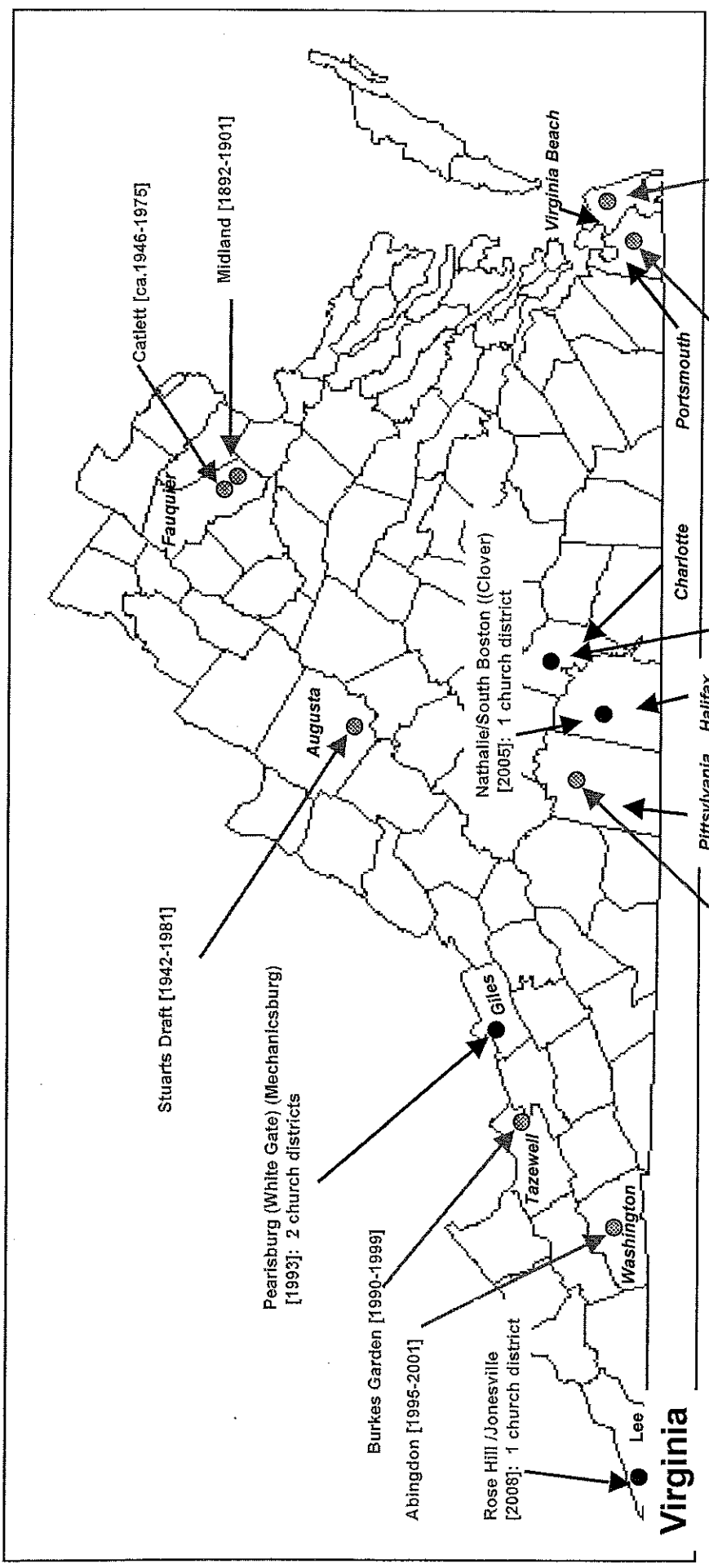
## **Martin Burkholder Original**

*Martin preached in English or German, but sometimes his documents had a mixture. This prayer in the collection needs help in spelling, capitalization and takes a little imagination! Usually his written English is better than this.*

O Lord Almighty god and hevenly father we undertake to com before the to call on thy grade name for thou art a grade and Powerfull god a greader of heaven and erth with all wissable and inwissable things and has greadet (us) after your own emage and likeness for the porpus of thy (illegible) and oner thad they should keep thy Commendments and to be holy without plame before the in Love bud they did nod Remain in this plessed state bud became Trensgressers and disobaid thy Commentment and became children of Rath by nature and was seberadet from the union of god by transgretion and sin endert in the wort by one men and Deth by sin and sin passet over all men for they have all sinnet therefore must we be renewt in our mints and changet in our harts and truly regenerated and born again not of coruptable bud of incoruptable seed the living word of god wich abiteth for ever to be changed from sin unto righteousness and from Deth unto life and from Disobetience unto obetience and from Disgrace into grace and from servents of sin unto servents of righteousness bud O Lord we are not (able) to pre (illegible) ourselves again into this plesset state for . . . (illegible) . . . retchit and poor and are in (text incomplete).

*Transcribed by Ervie Glick*

# Virginia: Existing & Extinct Amish Settlements



Map by Joe Donnermeyer, Rural Sociology Program, Chair Executive Council, Ohio State University Academy of Teaching, Columbus, Ohio. Used by permission of Prof. Donnermeyer.  
 Note dates of *Current Amish Communities at Pearisburg, Nathalie/South Boston, Charlotte Court House & Rose Hill*, and observe the ones with extinct dates that are no longer Amish. (Ed. JOL)

**Extinct**

# MUDDY CREEK MEETING – HOUSE DEED, 1851

*Among many gems in the archives is the deed from the trustees of what is called the “Muddy Creek Meeting – House,” the early name for what became known as the Bank Mennonite Church. It came to us by Homer Kauffman on May 8, 1973, within a frame and under glass, which frame was “made from wood of first building.” It has the statement on the frame, “Given with the understanding that it can never be taken from the Archives.”*

*jol*

This deed made the 4<sup>th</sup> day of January 1851 between Gabriel Heatwole of the County of Rockingham and State of Virginia, of the one part, and David Rodes, Frederick Rodes, John Heatwole and Joseph Heatwole, trustees of the Mennonite or Mennonist Society or Congregation in Rockingham County, Known as the Muddy-Creek Meeting—House Congregation.

Witnesseth that in consideration of the sum of one Dollar by the trustees aforesaid in hand paid to said Gabriel Heatwole the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, the said Gabriel Heatwole doth grant unto said Trustees, and their successors in office for the use and benefit of the Society or Congregation aforesaid, for a place of Worship and burying – place a certain lot or parcel of land lying in Rockingham County on which a Meeting – House has been built, it being a part of a tract of land sold and conveyed by Henry Gilmer to said Gabriel Heatwole & lying in the Southern Corner of said tract adjoining and lands of Jacob Koogler and George Airy, running an equal distance with the lines of each of said Koogler and Airy, and then

running at right angles with their lines, a distance sufficient to make a square of an acre and a half, the four sides of said square to have equal length.

And the grantor doth covenant with the grantees that he will warrant generally the property hereby conveyed.

Witness the following signature and seal.

Gabriel Heatwole Seal

County of Rockingham to wit:

I Saml Shacklett a Justice of the Peace for the County aforesaid in the state of Virginia, do certify that Gabriel Heatwole, whose name is signed to the writing above, bearing date on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of January 1851, has acknowledged the same before me in my County aforesaid. Given under my hand this 4<sup>th</sup> day of January 1851.



*On the other side of the document:*

In the Clerks Office of the Court of Rockingham County May 12<sup>th</sup>, 1851 This deed from Gabriel Heatwole to David Rhodes & others (Trustees) was this day presented to me Clerk of said County and being certified as to said Gabriel Heatwole is admitted to record.

Attest

E. Coffman CRC

Also on this side of the document J. S. Messerley, Clerk, says the deed is recorded in Deed Book 65, page 18 in the Clerk’s Office of Rockingham Co.

## A Few Reflections

Are we emphasizing Martin Burkholder too much in our issues? Let us know what you think. Much of what we know about Martin comes to us “through a glass darkly.” He wrote so little. But we have reflections—the testimonies of others who heard from him by letter or listened to one or more sermons. If only he had written more! But he was so busy preaching. Imagine how his wife felt with her husband being gone for weeks at a time, and getting occasional letters such as we have published. We have a few more letters to his wife.

Did you catch a bit of the spirit of Burkholder? How he gently longs to be with her in the Mahoning County letter where he hopes that “the separation of our bodies has not separated your love and affections to me?” Or the resignation in the thought that if they never again meet on earth, that they meet in heaven. That kind of thinking is so foreign to us who are usually not separated long from our spouses, if we are married.

Did you catch how he emphasizes being in good spirits himself and hoping that Rebecca and others around her are in good spirits? How he quickly apologizes for not keeping her posted when he would return, how that was dependent so much upon his traveling evangelism work and the transportation by steam boat and the “cars” (railroad), long before anyone thought of an automobile? And how he thanked the Lord for the “fatherly protection” from God that he experienced in his “journeys?”

If you return to the Spring 2002 issue of SMH, it emphasizes Martin and lists letters he received. We also recorded the testimony of Peter S. Hartman (1846-1934). He says he often heard Martin preach. People came from far and near, “irrespective of creed, rank, or station in life” to hear the Gospel “fresh from the lips of one whose heart was aglow with the message of salvation?” Hartman is likely right with his tribute that Martin “was one of the most influential ministers that ever labored in the Mennonite Church in VA” and noting his “missionary” spirit, in the era before Mennonites talked about missions.

Don’t overlook page 4, with the map of existing and extinct Amish settlements in VA. Happily we got in contact with Prof. Donnermeyer, sociology professor at Ohio State who teaches a course on the Amish. See the April 2010 *MQR* for his statistical study.

*Editor*

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