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MARTIN BURKHOLDER

[February 7, 1817 – December 18, 1860]

“Whose heart was aglow with the message of salvation”

A tribute by Peter S. Hartman [1846-1934] written in 1922

Martin Burkholder, who was born in Rockingham County, Va. Feb. 17, 1817, became a strong robust man. He was of a cheerful and friendly disposition. He accepted Christ as his personal Savior and united with the Mennonite Church in early life.

On October 26th, 1839 he was ordained to the ministry. He soon became an able speaker and grew in favor with God and man. People from far and near, irrespective of creed, rank, or station in life, came to hear him speak.

They came to hear the Gospel fresh from the lips of one whose heart was aglow with the message of salvation—a plain, zealous, God-fearing man who spoke distinctly and touchingly of the things that reconcile sinners to God.

They loved the man and heard him gladly because his preaching was substantiated by the Word of God. He was specially fitted for his

calling in his day, the church being in a crisis regarding language. Some desired English preaching, others insisted to continue the German. He was ready and able for both.

The writer frequently heard him preach from the English language and also preach from the same text in German before taking his seat.

He was one of the most influential ministers that ever labored in the Mennonite Church in Va. He also had the missionary spirit in him and would frequently travel on horseback to the mountains of what is now West Va. to preach the Word and was often called long distances to preach a funeral.

He was ordained to the office of bishop in or about the year 1847, succeeding his father, Peter Burkholder. He loved the church, the

church loved him and we feel sure the church is still reaping the reward of his labors. "His works do follow him."

He passed away sixty-two years ago, apparently a young man not having quite reached forty-four years. The last sermon he preached was a funeral sermon for people who were not members of his own church.

He was sick at the time . . . [then] went home, took his bed and in a few weeks, while the dark and threatening clouds of war [Civil War] were hanging over our country he passed peacefully away, as we believe to his great reward, on the 18th day of December 1860.

He was the van of the host.

He fell like a soldier, he died at his post.¹

P. S. H.

There are other tributes to Martin Burkholder.

One, an unknown author [probably a minister] wrote in December 1860, that he "was well acquainted" with Martin for "thirty years and had dealings with him every year." He never knew him to falter "from his word or contract."

Nor had a "harsh word" passed between them. If any "errors" occurred, Martin "always found himself willing to connect them in peace, love and harmony."

The writer had spent "days, weeks and months" in church business with Martin. He was always found to be "honest and upright, always giving his enemies" and friends "their due."

"The traits of his character were such as to endear . . . the cords of the hearts of all those around him. His benevolence reached to all."

He performed his duties as bishop "with talented ability, dignity and strength. He was an able counselor." His wife and four children "mourn the heavy and irreparable loss of a kind, devoted and affectionate husband and father."

Not only the family and church, but the community has "been thrown into mourning. Yes—the stranger's eye wept that in life's brightest bloom one gifted so highly should sink to the tomb."

We have "no reason to doubt that his precious Soul is now basking in the realms of a blissful eternity."

"Oh, can we the words of his exit forget,
Oh no, they are fresh in our memory yet.
An example so brilliant shall never be lost."

Another anonymous person said of Martin: "In his day he was the most eloquent orator in Rockingham Co., Va."²

Emanuel Suter –

Martin had "won unto himself many warm friends." As a faithful minister he "preached the word fervently and with power." Not only did his church appreciate him, but "members of other churches and many non-professors seemed to esteem and respect him."

We must acknowledge God's mysterious ways that one so useful was taken away "in the prime of life, when his great intellect had been fully developed."³

Bishop L. J. Heatwole –

"A very progressive man and did much to build up and unify the church in the faith . . . greatly beloved in all the Virginia congregations.

Preacher Daniel Heatwole –

"Torn away from the church in a time when to our judgement he is greatly needed." Would write more "but tears prohibit."⁴

¹"Genealogical-Family Records," I-MS-10, Samuel M. Burkholder Collection, Virginia Mennonite Conference Archives, in EMU Archives.

²*Ibid.*

³I-MS-21, Significant Individual Collections. VMC Archives.

⁴Both Heatwole quotes from Harry A. Brunk, *History of Mennonites in Virginia*, Vol. 1, Pub. by author, 1959, 103.

Why the Special Attention to Martin Burkholder?

1. He was a remarkable Virginia Mennonite bishop who died in the prime of life and narrowly missed the stresses of the Civil War.
2. There has been a lot of discussion in recent months about locating the new 40 million dollar Harrisonburg High School on this historic farm. The house would have to go.
3. The developing Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center has been offered the historic 1854 house built by Burkholder. They plan to locate their campus nearby and the house may be rescued from oblivion. See below

VALLEY BRETHREN-MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTER PROJECT

The VBMHC has a new name "**CrossRoads.**" The tag line is "Journeys of Faith and Conscience." All of this has been merged into a logo with four diamond-shaped squares, each with the face of a Brethren or Mennonite person whose life story captures something of the essence of our faith traditions.

The CrossRoads project has been popping with new activity. The gift of Turner's Mill has been a wonderful boon for us as well as a challenge, as we decide how to restore it to operating condition.

It becomes an important part of the proposed Field Museum which will identify, locate, and document significant Brethren-Mennonite places and artifacts in the central Shenandoah Valley, and offer visitors map routes to visit the sites.

The new video highlighting the Brethren and Mennonites in the Valley has just appeared and

will be available for use by various groups. Plans have just been completed to produce, at the Court Square Theater, the new play written by Liz Beachy. Entitled "For Which of You," the play highlights the drama and heartache thrust upon the Brethren and Mennonites during the Civil War here in the Valley. The dates are August 9, 10, 11 and 16, 17, 18.

A Heritage Center booth will soon be opening at the Dayton Farmers' Market where tourists and others can obtain information about Mennonites and Brethren, and talk to docents who will be at the booth.

Perhaps the most exciting news is that negotiations are going forward to purchase land on Garbers Church Road for the new Heritage Center. As early as July we hope to move a new gift, the 1854 Martin Burkholder house, donated to the Center by the Daniel Myers family, to the Heritage Center campus where it will serve as the reception center. The VBMHC hopes to restore the house to its original state.

Needless to say, we will be looking for volunteer help to work on both the Burkholder house and Turner's Mill. Please stay posted for further information. Oh, and by the way, we also need money, which can be forwarded to Elroy Kauffman, VBMHC, 1675-D, Virginia Ave., Harrisonburg, 22802.

Al Keim, Interim Director

A PROGRESSIVE MENNONITE BISHOP

Martin Burkholder followed his father, Peter, in providing progressive leadership. Harry Brunk says he was a man of "high intelligence with a commanding knowledge of both German and English." Where did he get his education, wondered Brunk? Probably at the school house at Weavers Church. That would have been near his home, was Brunk's answer.

Virginia Mennonites, earlier than Mennonites elsewhere in America, turned from German to English. And, says Brunk, it was Martin Burkholder more than any other one man, who helped make that transition in worship services.

Already on the first two pages of this issue we have glowing reports of the ability and stature of this bishop who died before he was 44. Apparently he was a man of unusual ability and it is fitting that the house he built in 1854, as noted on page 3, may become an integral part of the new heritage center being planned.

Martin was ordained to the ministry in 1839, and after his bishop father died in late 1846, Martin was ordained to the position of bishop. He and his fellow minister Samuel Coffman were among the first to ride horseback over the mountains to West Virginia to preach. He helped establish new congregations.

Martin, along with several other ministers, called for a General Conference of Mennonites in Pennsylvania, Canada, Ohio and Virginia in the 1850's,¹ but that was almost 50 years before Mennonite General Conference was formed.

The 1847 to 1860 era must have been an interesting time. Jacob Hildebrand, the bishop in the so-called "Lower District" of that time (now Southern District), was the same age as Martin Burkholder. That means that two of the three Virginia bishops were in their low thirties in the late 1840s. Both were progressive in their

reaching out to preach to small struggling congregations like the one in Greenbrier County and to sometimes preach at union churches or in the pulpits of other denominations. The story of Jacob Hildebrand awaits fuller development in another issue. He had close relationships with the Dunkards (Brethren) and was a community-minded man like Burkholder.

Samuel Coffman, successor to Burkholder, was also a strong progressive leader. He allowed his children to attend local non-Mennonite Sunday schools, when numerous Virginia Mennonites opposed Sunday school.

Others wanted to retain a progressive outlook--persons such as Emanuel Suter, a local potter and dedicated churchman whose circle of friends included N. B. Grubb, a General Conference Mennonite pastor. Suter served a long time as a local school director and in other community developments. He was prevented from becoming a minister because of the lot.

Suter was a contemporary of John S. Coffman, the famous pioneer Mennonite evangelist who began to hold "protracted meetings" (revival meetings) all over the Mennonite Church. Though both Suter and Coffman were boys when Martin Burkholder died, **we now understand a bit more clearly the background--the soil out of which a pioneer like John S. Coffman, son of Samuel Coffman, emerged!**

Yes, there were strong conservative voices that arose in the latter decades of the nineteenth century that tried to put the brakes on such progressive developments, but eventually Sunday school, revival meetings and such activity won out, even though it was a number of decades after the demise of Burkholder.

Burkholder and others for a long time went on preaching missions in West Virginia and elsewhere. Only, they didn't call it mission work! Much later, Burkholder's son Samuel M., became one of the first presidents of the Virginia Mennonite Mission Board.

¹Brunk, *Virginia Mennonites*, 101, 180.

WINDOWS . . .

Into Martin Burkholder's Life and Witness Through His Papers in the Virginia Mennonite Conference Archives

The young and energetic bishop did a considerable amount of traveling and preaching for other Mennonite churches in Canada, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana and was known as far west as Illinois. He carried on a good bit of correspondence with friends and fellow ministers. Here, arranged alphabetically by author, is a list of letters that are in the Martin Burkholder Collection. **They provide interesting windows and glimpses into Burkholder's activities.** German letters are indicated by (G). Thanks to Lois Bowman for assistance with German.

Jost Bally, Woodford Co., Illinois to Martin Burkholder, 1858 (G)

Johannes Bar, David Scherg, Jorg Schmitt, Joseph Schneider, Abraham S. Clemmer, Waterloo, Canada West, April 18, 1854, to Martin Burkholder. ". . . to the brothers and sisters in Christ in Virginia." (G)

Jacob C. Bauman (Bowman), Berlin, P.O., Waterloo County, Canada West, Oct. 10, 1853 to "Rev. Martin Burkholder." Two letters.

Johannes M. Brenneman, Canal Winchester, Franklin Co., Ohio, Jan. 6, 1854, to Martin Burkholder, "much respected and beloved brother and fellow laborer in the Gospel." First page in English, one-and-a half pages (G). The German portion contains a lengthy discourse about the godless.

Johannes Brubacher [Canada ?] to Martin Burkholder, Oct. 27, 1857 (G)

Abraham Burckhalter, North Lima, Mahoning Co. Ohio to Martin Burkholder, March 7, 1852 (G)

Martin Burkholder, Mahoning Co., Ohio, May 12, 1853, to "My Dear and beloved Companion," Rebecca. Talks about travel experiences. Would she please write a letter to him in Canada?

Martin Burkholder, Waterloo Co., Canada, to wife, May 16, 1857. "Let us pray for one another that our faith fail not . . . Your devoted companion till Death." Another letter from Franklin Co., Ohio to his wife, June 30, 1853.

Martin Burkholder, Waterloo Co., Canada, June 4, 1853, to Samuel Coffman. From "your humble brother."

Martin Burkholder, Rockingham Co., Va., April 16, 1848 to David Burkholder (G).

Peter Burkholder, Nov. 18, 1842, to Ellsworth Allen (G). Talks about communion dates and spiritual things.

Christian and Ann Coffman, Greenbrier County, Va. [six letters] April 29, 1848, "have often thought about you since you was here;" Sept. 28, 1849; Oct. 28, 1849; Sept. 29, 1850, "hope you can come and preach to Gospel to us;" Aug. 23, 1851; July 9, 1849, to Martin Burkholder, Pleased that Brother Shenk [probably Samuel] had been along in recent visit. ". . . we are separated a great distance . . . it is our duty to write to one another and incurage [encourage] each other on in our pilgrimage here below so that we may go on in a Christian Course and count all things else but loss for the sake of Christ . . ."

T. Eby, "Canadian" & "Telegraph Office," Berlin, June 30, 1853, to Martin Burkholder, announcement of the death of his father, Benjamin Eby.

John Evers, Williamson Creek, June 14, 1852, to Martin Burkholder. Succeeded in getting consent of the union church. Come and preach, but don't criticize any other denominations "which I do not know that you ever do." Brother Hildebrand preached for us last sabbath and will again soon.

Daniel Funk, Logan County, Ohio, June 29 1851, and second letter from Funk from Clay County, Indiana, Jan. 4, 1852, to Martin Burkholder. [both in poor English] From Logan County--about 80 of the 100 books have been sold; some were left in Allen, Putnam and Clark counties, Ohio. Preaching duties have been laid upon "our week shoulders ." Have been preaching to three small churches in Indiana; the one in Owen County is growing the fastest. From Indiana--sold my land in Ohio moved to Indiana. Will send the money by a "dungerd" [Dunkard] man to Virginia. Part of my land lies in "oan" [Owen] County and some in "gla" [Clay] County, near "bolengreen" 14 miles south of "manhaten a litel town on the national rod [road] about 55 miles west of indenopeles [Indianapolis.] Give my respect to Christian and Joseph Funk.

George Funk [son of preacher Daniel] Clay County, Indiana, April 14, 1854, Oct. 21, 1854, March 7, 1859, to Martin Burkholder. [three letters] Church here is "tolerable prosperous." Eleven baptisms since we moved here. Father preaches nearly all the time in English. Someone should reprint my great-grandfather's large German volume [Heinrich Funck, *Ein Spiegel der Taufe*, 1744] because too many are "preaching the universal redemption from hell;" [that was the year Joseph Funk, uncle of George, had it translated and published *A Mirror of Baptism*, 1851] Church here (1859) between 50 and 60 members and contemplating building a meeting house.

Michael Gochenauer, Columbiana County, Ohio, May 21, 1858, to Martin Burkholder (G).

Abraham Harshbarger, Grundy County, Illinois to Martin Burkholder, Feb. 17, 1856. Well satisfied in this healthy country; good many Mennonites moving here. Be sure to come for a visit.

David Hartman, Harrisonburg, Va. May 18, 1857, to Martin Burkholder. I understand you have that you withstood that "Hippocrit Herst" to the face," for which you were abused." It would be a benefit if you "stayed longer among the scattered sheep of the West," but your presence here is "very much longed for both by ministers and members." [Martin apparently was gone quite long to Indiana, Illinois and Waterloo County, Canada.]

Amos Herr, West Lampeter, Lancaster Co., Pa., March 28, 1853, to Martin Burkholder, after Martin had visited Lancaster. A second undated letter addressed to "Dear and much beloved Brother and fellow laborer" after Amos had visited Virginia. Conference recently discussed having "the gospel preached in the english tongue." It has now been decided to have English spoken "at the Black horse church, probably every four weeks."

Squire A. Hayden, Jan. 27, 1853, [3 pages German, one English], Very much pleased with your preaching.

Jacob Hildebrand, Jr., Augusta County, Va., [seven letters or notes];, Nov. 22, 1848; Feb. 27, 1853; Nov. 5, 1853; June 13, 1854; Aug. 21, 1854; Dec. 7, 1854, agrees to come and preach at Brenneman's Church; [mostly preaching appointments and finding a maid for his wife]; August 28, 1860, to Martin Burkholder. Has been requested "to show scripture for the doctrine held forth and Beleaved by nearly all men, Namely that man poseses a Never Dieing Soul that will or never can be Dissstroyed, whether in Christ or out of Christ." Please give scriptural grounds "if there is eny." [Interesting question from a fellow bishop!]

David Hively, Franklin Mills, July 7, 1851, to Martin Burkholder. Will come and get the wagon you made for me.

Johannes Kauffman, Franklin County, Pennsylvania, February 14, 1856, to Martin Burkholder (G)

Tobias Kauffman, Manor Township, Lancaster Co. Penna, July 20, 1853, and second letter July 20, 1853, to Mr. Burkholder, inquiring about a school teaching position by a teacher "versed in both languages." [a sample paragraph in German]

Jacob and Katherina Kolb, Waterloo County, Canada, October 10, 1853, and March 24, 1854, to Martin Burkholder (G), and fragment of a letter from Jacob and Magdalene Kolb (G).

Johannes Kratz, Skippack, Montgomery County, Pa, March 7, 1853, to Martin Burkholder (G)

Johannes and Elisabeth Landes, Upper Providence, Schonnonville [?] Pa, April 20, 1853 (G)

Johannes (John) Lapp, Harris Hill, Erie County, New York, January 22, 1858, and February 7, 1860, to Martin Burkholder (G) Two letters

Jacob Lehman, Feb. 22, 1856, to Martin Burkholder (G)

Abraham Martin, Bareville, West Earl Township, Lancaster County, Pa., Jan. 11, 1852, to Martin Burkholder and Jacob Hildebrand (G)

Dilman Meyer, Clinton Township, Upper Canada – nine letters, many involving church trouble in Canada (G)

Dilman Meyer, Clinton, Nov. 21, 1853, to Martin Burkholder and Samuel Schenk

Dilman Meyer, Clinton, [no date], to Martin Burkholder and Samuel Schenk

Dilman Meyer, [no place given], March 27, 1854, to Martin Burkholder and Samuel Schenk

Dilman Meyer, [no date, no place given], to Martin Burkholder. Conversations on making peace. Names included are Daniel Hoch, Jacob Krebiel, Johannes Lapp

Dilman Meyer, Clinton Township, Upper Canada, April 11, 1855, to Martin Burkholder and Samuel Schenk

Dilman Meyer, Clinton, June 9 1855, to Martin Burkholder

Dilman Meyer, Clinton, Aug. 1855, to Martin Burkholder. On the other side of letter, addressed to Christian Witmor, Suspension Bridge (?) P.O. Niagara County

Dilman Meyer, Clinton, Nov. 20, 1855, to Martin Burkholder

Dilman Meyer, Clinton Township, Canada, March 25, 1856, to Martin Burkholder

John P. Pence, Oakland, Rockingham, Va, May 21, 1859, to Mr. Burkholder. Cannot send more than 4-5 calfskins.

Henry and Maria Rexrode, five letters, four from Goshen, Elkhart Co., Indiana, one from Lancaster, Franklin Co., Ohio, to Martin Burkholder. Three are in German – March 22 [no year available], Aug. 16, 1853, Nov. 21, 1853. English letters – May 28, 1852, and April 8, 1855. In the latter one, Henry apologizes for the “unritions” [unrighteous] letter he wrote Martin and Jonas Blosser when he was in a distressed state of mind “which I have since sorely repented of and felt ashamed . . . I ask your forgiveness.”

John W. and Sarah E. Rhodes, [three letters, two from Botetourt County, Va., one from Toms Brook, Shenandoah Co., Va. to Martin Burkholder]. March 11, 1852, So glad for your letter. Would like for you or brother Hildebrand to come. I was raised in the Mennonite doctrine. It has been eight or nine years “since I have felt an anxiety to become a member of Your Church.” Sorely troubled spiritually. Finally went to a Methodist meeting and joined their church but I “never could enjoy myself.” My wife “is Sincerely anxious to become a member of Your Church.” April 11, 1854. Please come with brother Hildebrand and preach to us this spring.” German preaching “is not much use here.” Aug. 25, 1860. My neighbors and friends and I desire that you come and preach for us again. The Campbellites built a house, so you can preach any Sabbath except the third Sunday, their regular time. Also, the fourth Sunday of September the Dunkers will have their communion meeting.

John Schenk, Woodland, Fulton Co., Illinois, Aug. 13, 1852, to “Dear Friend.” Henry Rolanden preaches some here. I asked him whether he belongs to the Dunkard church of the Mennonites. He didn’t know. He went to a big Dunkard meeting, but he could not agree with them. Interested in Mennonite Confession of Faith book.

David Sherik or Sherk, Waterloo, Canada West, Preston, P.O., Sept. 16, 1853, and March 20, 1855, to Martin Burkholder (G)

Georg R. Schmitt, Wilmot Township, April 24, 1854, to Martin Burkholder (G)

Jacob Schneyder (Snyder), Huntingdon County, Alexandria [Pennsylvania]. [Four letters] Aug. 20, 1855 and Sept. 25, 1855 in English, Dec. 15, 1857 and March 23, 1859 (G), to Martin Burkholder. Gave Martin several routes on how to find them. If we come to your conference, will you come to ours in Westmoreland Co.?

John Summer, Williamsport, Washington County, Maryland, Aug. 19, 1855 and Dec. 16, 1857, to Martin Burkholder. “Beloved brother and fellow laborer in the Gospel.” Send more Mennonite Confession of Faith books and two dozen English hymnbooks

John B. Tyson, Perkiomen, Montgomery County, Pa., Dec. 25, 1854, to Martin Burkholder.

Daniel Weaver, Davidsville, Conemaugh Township, Somerset County, Pa., March 4, 1856, to Martin Burkholder and Frederick Rhodes. “Send our freienly Greeting to our friend Frederick Rhodes.”

Johannes Weber, Canal Winchester, Franklin Co., Ohio, March 14, 1853 and Winfield, Tuscarawas Co., Ohio, April 19, 1857, to Martin Burkholder. (G)

Ann Wilson, Greenbrier Co., Va. [seven letters] to Martin Burkholder. Feb. 25, 1849, to Martin and Rebecca, "Dear cousins." In same letter, David Coffman and Christena Tuckwiller to "Dear cousins" David and Ann Burkholder; July 8, 1851, "your preaching was a great satisfaction to us;" July 25, 1852; Jan. 23, 1853; Sept. 21, 1854; Sept. 24, 1854; Feb. 18, 1855, "enjoyed your company and conversation."

Jacob Zimmerman and Tobias Wanner, Lancaster Co., March 25, 1853 and March 28, 1853, to Martin Burkholder, (G)

Also, there's a small group of English and German fragments of letters or unsigned letters. Several pages constitute letters or essays by Martin Burkholder, discussing body, soul and spirit at length as being likened to the triune God "three different and distinct Persons or Principles." An unsigned letter from Rockingham, dated June 25, 1857 refers to Burkholder discussing infant baptism with a Lutheran. The writer says "I must confess that I would much rather you had fought your battle and sent me your sword in token of your victory!"

1848 Mennonite Petition to the Virginia General Assembly

Also located in the Martin Burkholder Collections is a very interesting petition that is addressed to the Virginia General Assembly. However, no names are attached to the petition. Because it is found in this collection we may assume that the young 31-year-old bishop had his hand in its origin.

It appears that Mennonites wanted to be very careful about obeying the law. On March 13, 1848 the Virginia legislature passed an act that amended earlier laws on the books regarding marriages and the licensing of marriages. This time they put wording into the act forbidding marriage after the "publication of banns."

It is unclear what the lawmakers meant by their wording, and it is likely that Mennonites put a different meaning on the "banns" than was meant by the Assembly. Apparently, Virginia Mennonites thought it meant they could no longer announce an upcoming wedding as was the practice at that time. Mennonites thought the "publication of the banns" was important, apparently meaning that they would announce to the congregation three times the intent of a couple planning to get married.

First, we note the March 13 act and its predecessor, then on the next page we publish the petition that Mennonites drew up. [The Acts of the Virginia General Assembly volumes for 1848 and 1832 are available in the Massanutten Regional Public Library, Harrisonburg, VA.]

Apparently, the first act speaking to the regulation of the solemnization of marriages was passed in 1819 [which volume is not available locally]. That act prohibited incestuous, "forcible and stolen marriages" and bigamy. On March 13, 1832, an act was passed that when a license was sought for a person under the age of 21, and there was no father or guardian available, the "mother of such infant" may authorize the local clerk to issue the license for the marriage.

If, after reading the petition, someone can explain farther what is meant by the "publication of the banns," please contact the editor.

The 1848 petition, verbatim line by line, and as spelled and capitalized in the longhand original copy

To the General Assembly of Virginia

The undersigned members of the religious Society known by the name of Menonites represent that they humbly conceive that an Act passed by your honorable body on the 18 day of march 1848 and by the fourth section thereof which prohibits the Solomnization of marrage after the publication of banns Does infringe upon their rights as a religious society guaranteed to them by the bill of rights It has been a custom in said church from its foundation and indeed is one of the rules and articles of their dicipline to solemnize Marrage after that form. It consists well with the whole tenor of their doctrine and belief inasmuch as all important steps taken by its members in worldly affairs are after consultation and advice either withe the church in its organized character or with the members individually so in relation to the act of marage the fact that a man wishing to change his state of single blessedness to that of a married life must communicate and consult upon the subject and when no Just cause is known to exist or proper objection made he may progress in his design and if successful he has still the ordeal proclamation to undergo in public meeting when all persons are notified to state their objections if any are known and this is required at three distinct periods, then they may be solemnized in marrage by a minister of the above named church

Your petitioners would therefore respectfully request that a law may be passed granting to them as a society the right to solemnize marrage by the publication of banns, and they will ever pray & e.

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Martin was the eighth child born to Peter and Elizabeth (Coffman) Burkholder, Jr. Peter's uncle Christian (1746-1809) was said to be the first bishop of Weaverland District in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Peter, Jr., Martin's father is well known for publishing the first Mennonite Confession of Faith in English in 1837. Peter Jr. had a brother David who became a minister.

Martin Burkholder's sisters were Margaret (Mrs. Jonas Blosser), Esther (Mrs. John Hildebrand), and Elizabeth (Mrs. David Hartman). His brothers were Christian (married to Frances Lahman), Abraham (married to Susanna Zimmers) and David (married to Anna Beery). David was also a minister.

Martin's mother came from Greenbrier County, Virginia (now West Virginia), from a small and weak church, whose last known minister was David Whanger, who died in 1861, after Union soldiers stole his horses.¹ In the late 1700's the Wengers and Coffmans had moved to Greenbrier County. The Wengers changed their name to Whanger.

Samuel Coffman, successor to Martin Burkholder in the office of bishop, also came from Greenbrier County. Coffman's enthusiasm for the peace position during the Civil War is well known and a bit ironic, because his brother David joined the Confederate army.

Martin married Rebecca Shank, daughter of Bishop Henry Shank on Nov. 27, 1838. They had nine children, five of whom died before Martin did. They were named John, Elizabeth, Mary, Jacob and Tilman (the last two named died on July 25 and 30, 1860, the same year Martin died on Dec. 18.) The four who survived Martin were Samuel M., who married Mary E. Rhodes and became a deacon, Rebecca, married Abraham Burkholder, Caleb, married Mary Heatwole and Sophia, married John H. Barnhart. Sophia was six months old when her father died and the oldest living child upon Martin's death was Samuel M. who was 12.

¹Thomas Richard Whanger, *The Trail of Agony*, published by the author, [1992?].

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To become a member of Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians and receive copies of the newsletter, send name and address and 2002 dues (\$10 per couple, \$6 for individual memberships) to James Rush.

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SHENANDOAH MENNONITE HISTORIAN

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