

BURKHOLDERS

By

Earl Burkholder

for

Mennonite Life

1963

BURKHOLDERS

Name and origin

In 1937 Professor Henry L. Burkholder, president of the Burkholder Family Association of America, made a trip to Europe, mainly Switzerland, to study the origin of the Burkholder clan of America. With the State Archives of Berne, Switzerland, as a valuable source of information he made a detailed study of the Burkholder clan. At the Archives he located a document that was issued to Rudolph Burkholder in 1344 A.D. After studying in Europe he returned to America in 1938 and one year later he died, much lamented by many.

The name Burkholder in America and Burkhalter in Switzerland are from the same origin, that of Burghalde. Burghalde, which meant Castle Slope, was the name of a farm and the family was known as Burghaldens. It was estimated that in the tenth century A.D. a man from a tribe of people, which lived in what is now-a-days German speaking part of Switzerland, moved to the hilly region. This region was East of Ruesgay and northeast of Lutyelfluh and he most likely moved because of the increasing population of the lower regions. He chose to name the farm, which was located in Emmental Valley, Burghalde. He and his family went by the name of his farm because as the population grew the citizens needed more name differences, so he took the name of his farm. The farm was bought and sold occasionally and the different families all carried the name of the farm. This goes to show that all Burkholders are not kin although the forefathers all tilled the same soil. The changes of language and dialect of the region account for the many variations of the Burkholder name. The Burkholders were generally farmers and it wasn't until later years that some of them became merchants and public officials. The record of the document issued to Rudolph Burkholder was about his appearing to witness something. This is one of the earliest government records that contain the name of Burkholder.

During the Anabaptist movement many Burkholders were members and more were sympathetic with the movement. This was a hard time on the Burkholder Mennonites, however there is only record of two victims of the religious persecution—a mother and her son. Just because only two were persecuted don't mean the others had it easy. Many Burkholders left Switzerland and went to Alsace and the Palatinate. In order to leave Switzerland the emigrants had to pay a leaving tax—ten percent of their fortune. In the seventeenth century another wave of Burkholders from the Emmental Valley to the Palatinate because the valley was crowded and the land in the Palatinate was cheap. Another group migrated to America and settled in Pennsylvania. From here they migrated to Canada and Virginia.

* Christian Burkholder

Christian Burkholder was a native of the canton of Berne, Switzerland. He was making plans to come to America but he died while making preparations. His wife carried out their plans and she, along with six children, made the long dangerous trip to America. They arrived in Philadelphia in 1755 and from there moved to Lancaster County northwest of New Holland. One of the six children was Peter Burkholder.

* Peter Burkholder

Peter Burkholder was born in 1748 in Switzerland and at the age of seven he came with his mother to America from Switzerland. He married Margaret Huber of New Holland, Penna. who was born in 1750 and died in 1798. When he was forty two years old Peter took his family to the Shenandoah Valley and settled near Dale Enterprise as a farmer. His wife is buried at Treslers (Trisles?) church in Va. He died a few years later while on a trip to Lancaster and he was buried there. They had eight children- Ulrich, Henry, *Peter, David, Elizabeth, Anna, Marie, and Barbara.

* Revrend Peter Burkholder

Peter was born in Lancaster County, Pa. on August 27, 1783. He was the son of Peter Burkholder and Margaret Huber of the first generation of Burkholders. At the age of seven he came along with his father and mother to the Shenandoah Valley and settled near Dale Enterprise where his father was a farmer. At that time Dale Enterprise had a post office, general store and a blacksmith shop. This accounts for the fact that their address was Dale Enterprise but would now be Harrisonburg, Va. as the post office, store, and blacksmith shop are all gone and Harrisonburg has grown to include them. On October 11, 1803 at the age of 20 he married Elizabeth Coffman, of Greenbriar Co. West Va. daughter of Christian Coffman. Two years later he was ordained a minister in the Mennonite Church, the church of his choice. After he was married he lived near Broadway, Va. but he later moved to what is now the Guy Heatwole place about 2 1/2 miles west of Harrisonburg and 2 miles north of Dale Enterprise. In 1836 he was ordained bishop for the entire Va. district. In 1840 the Va. district was divided into three districts and he served the middle district. In 1846 he wrote a book entitled, "Mennonite Confession of Faith", in German. Joseph Funk translated this book along with his other writing into English. He also wrote a number of tracts and pamphlets on church doctrine and discipline. He served the church until his death on December 24, 1846 at the ripe old age of 83. He is buried in the old Weavers Church cemetery near Harrisonburg, Va. He was a heavy set man of medium height, a long beard, a strong character, and a preacher of more than ordinary ability.

His wife died on April 26, 1846. They had a total of nine children, 1. Margaret 2. Esther 3. Christian 4. *Abraham 5. Peter 6. David 7. Elizabeth 8. Martin 9. Maria

* Abraham Burkholder

Abraham Burkholder was born near Broadway, Virginia on February 20, 1809. After he married Susanna Simmons who was born June 15, 1806 and daughter of Michael and Elizabeth Simmons he moved to Harrisonburg. Here he set up as a blacksmith. He died on February 8, 1848 at the age of 39 and is buried in the "Evers Cemetery". His wife lived to be 76 years old before she died. Their children were 1. Noah 2. David 3. Lydia 4. Rebecca 5. Sarah 6. *Simon 7. Elizabeth 8. Mary 9. Susanna 10. John D. and 11. Martin.

Simon Burkholder

Simon Burkholder was born near Harrisonburg, Va. on Jan. 26, 1839 and his parents were Abraham and Susanna Burkholder. He married Lydia ~~Simmons~~ and she was born on July 16, 1841. He was a blacksmith and lived near Harrisonburg, Va. On November 23, 1895 he died and she died nine years later in November 1804. Their children were * Charles Newton, John Franklin, Frances, William P. and Mary V.

* Charles Newton Burkholder

Charles Burkholder was born on June 5, 1868 near Harrisonburg, Va. on October 11, 1903. He married Enna Landis and she was born July 2, 1869. He was a farmer near Harrisonburg, Va. In 1916 he moved to the Jacob Custer homeplace about three-fourths of a mile from Rev. Peter Burkholder's home place. In the spring of 1942 he passed away. His wife died six years later in the fall of 1948. Their children were - Ada C. who lives in Park View, * Irvin N. and an adopted son, Robert L. Custer, manager of a feed store.

* Irvin Burkholder

Irvin Burkholder was born on May 20, 1907 near Dale Enterprise. At the age of 9 he, along with his parents, moved to the Jacob Custer homeplace. On April 1, 1934 he married Brownie Bowman, daughter of Luther and Ottie Bowman. He is a farmer on the homeplace of his father. Their children are David, born Sept. 3, 1936. He married Lois Caplinger on Sept. 1, 1956. Emma Jane, born Mar. 7, 1940, Clarence, born Dec. 12, 1941. He married Sarah Molher on April 15, 1961, Boyd, born July 28, 1943, Earl, born Jan. 9, 1946, Lois, born Dec. 22, 1949, Dwight, born July 26, 1952 and Kuel born April 8, 1955.

* Direct Grandparent.