

**What I Learned About Johannes Hauck, First Furnace Master of Columbia County  
(2013 – 2017)  
By Karen J. Brislin**

Four years ago, during one of my genealogy trips to Columbia County, I came across a burial record for a “Johannis Hack”. It was a typed list of burials, transcribed from an original list. According to the list, this Johannis Hack(?) (a question mark was placed next to his last name and dates, indicating the transcription was uncertain) was born on 9 January 1766 and died September? 18(25)?, 59 years old, son of Jacob and Margaretha. I pondered this record while sitting at the Columbia County Historical and Genealogical Society in Bloomsburg. Was this a burial record for my ancestor, John Hauck, the elusive Furnace Master of Columbia County who built the county’s first iron ore furnace in 1815?

A library volunteer looked over the record with me, and we both agreed the dates were all wrong. According to what I’d gleaned from other Hauck researchers, my 4<sup>th</sup> Great Grandfather, John Hauck, First Furnace Master of Columbia County, was born in Pike Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania on 21 May 1778. His father was Johannes Hauck, born in 1751. His mother was Christina Storg. Furthermore, orphan court records shared by multiple Hauck researchers documented that John Hauck died in Columbia County sometime before April of 1826, leaving a widow named Salome and 14, possibly 15, children. Yes, the dates for this new Johannis Hack were wrong and the spelling of his last name was odd, but the volunteer retrieved the cemetery vertical file anyway, and so I sat and read about a long-forgotten graveyard, which had at one time stood in the heart of Bloomsburg, that is, until someone decided the location was a good place to build a new school. The 300 plus occupants of “The Old Lutheran Cemetery,” also known as “The German Cemetery,” were excavated in 1925 and moved to the New Rosemont Cemetery in Espy, about 3 miles away. They were reinterred in the very back left corner of the cemetery property, separated from the main portion of the grounds and unseen from the road, where they were all but forgotten. The file had no additional details about the occupants. Frustrated that my lead on the burial location for my ancestor didn’t pan out, I returned the file to the volunteer and went home.

But hours, days, even weeks later, I felt unsettled. I was still thinking about that burial record. Who was this mysterious Johannis Hack now resting in the New Rosemont Cemetery? And what were the odds that **TWO** men with the same name died 6 months apart? So, back to CCH&GS library I went. I looked at the vertical file again, made some copies, asked some more questions and then I got directions to New Rosemont Cemetery. When I finally stood at the foot of this dead man’s grave, I asked him, “*Are you my ancestor?*” The tombstone was written in German. It was old and faded. It leaned precariously to the left, a few inches more and it would be in danger of snapping in two. “*Who are you?*” I wondered.



**Johannes Haak's Tombstone,  
New Rosemont Cemetery**

The photographs I took helped enhance the writing on the stone. This man was not born in January, he was born on 8 September 1769. He died on 22 September 1825, aged 56 years and 14 days. He was the son of Jacob Haak and Margaretha Dubs. Beneath the inscription was more German and even harder to read but I was able to pick out enough words (thank you Google Translator) to see it was a Biblical text.

Months later I went to the courthouse in Bloomsburg determined to find an estate record. The “H” index for Wills and Administration in the Register and Recorder’s Office was a little confusing at first, but I was thrilled when I found the Letters of Administration, dated 24 October 1825, issued to Salome “Hacke,” widow, and her co-administrator, Samuel Webb, for the estate of Johannes “Hacke.” Unfortunately, the estate record did not list an official date of death, and there was no will as John Hack had died intestate. But more importantly, this was the only John Hack listed in the index who died between 1825-1826. I was certain I was looking at the record for my ancestor, now I just needed to prove it.

I spent the next few weeks learning about Jacob Haak and Margaretha Dubs and their son, Johannes. I found a birth record for an un-named son of Jacob Hag, born on 8 September 1769 and baptized on 22 October 1769 by Rev. Philip Jacob Michael at Christ Reformed Church (aka DeLong’s Church), in Bowers, Maxatawny Township, Berks County. The sponsors were Andrew Hag and wife. It was a match for the date of birth on the tombstone, but the name of the child and mother were missing. Not a very definitive source but it was promising.

I walked the Union Cemetery of Bowers, across the street from DeLong’s Church, and saw many Haak stones. At one end of the graveyard three stones stood side by side: Jacob Haak, 3 May 1744 – 26 January 1829; Margaretha Dubbs Haak, 26 November 1746 – 24 August 1826 (the parents of the mysterious Johannes Hack buried at New Rosemont Cemetery) and finally, another son, Jacob Jr., 6 July 1773 – 30 September 1823.

Further down the row I found a stone for Maria Barbara Haak, maiden name Dreibelbis, wife of Johannes Haak, born 23 May 1773 and died 7 February 1807. Another mystery! I wondered if Maria Barbara was the first wife of Johannes Hack who is buried in New Rosemont Cemetery. Further research into DeLong’s church records revealed baptismal dates for several children of John and Maria Barbara Haak. The Last Will and Testament of Maria Barbara’s father, Abraham Dreibelbis, who died in November 1803, confirmed that John Haak was indeed her husband. John Haak must have been a worthy son-in-law as Abraham Dreibelbis made him one of the executors of his estate.

In



Jacob Jr., Margaretha & Jacob Sr. Haak - Tombstones at the Union Cemetery of Bowers.

the following months I found additional records to support my theory. An 1820 indenture for land in Rockland Township spelled it out beautifully, *“This Indenture made the twentieth day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty, Between John Haak of Catawissa Township in the County of Columbia and State of Pennsylvania, Iron Master, and Sarah his wife of the one part and George Sell of Maxatawny Township, Berks County and State aforesaid, Yeoman of the other part...”* I later learned that George Sell was married to John Haak’s sister, Barbara. Clear title mentioned in the document showed how the land passed hands from 1743 to 1797 when John Haak’s father, Jacob, purchased the land, and in 1805 then sold the land to his son.

But the real clincher in my theory was the Last Will and Testament of John Haak’s and Maria Barbara Dreibelbis’ youngest daughter, Barbara, who married Benjamin Hottenstein. Barbara died a wealthy widow and her estate record is long and very detailed, so detailed it even listed a family tree. Barbara Haak Hottenstein outlived her husband and her only son, Jairus. She leaves the bulk of her estate to her only granddaughter and to her half-siblings from her father’s second marriage to Salome. The family tree named every half-sibling, their spouses and their children.

There is no doubt. The man buried in New Rosemont Cemetery is the long-lost John Hauck, First Furnace Master of Columbia County, but in finding this alternate information it blew apart my family tree. My 4<sup>th</sup> great grandfather had a different date of birth, different parents, and finally, a confirmed date of death! For years many Haak/Hauck/Houck researchers, including myself, had our family tree originating from the wrong man and the wrong Hauck family! Fast forward four years, and I am pleased to share with you what I have learned about my ancestor and pioneer, John Hauck.

Johannes Haak was the first son of Jacob Haak and Margaretha Dubs. He grew up in Maxatawny Township, Berks County, not far from the Sally Ann Furnace, which may explain where John learned how to build and operate an iron ore furnace. Next came a sister, Barbara, born on 19 August 1771 and died on 16 June 1860, who would eventually wed George Sell. Both George and Barbara are buried at the Union Cemetery of Bowers. Lastly, Jacob Jr., born on 6 July 1773

and died on 30 Sept 1823, who never married. These are the only children of Jacob Haak and his wife Margaretha who survived to adulthood.

Grandparents, Andreas Haak and his wife, Anna Cunigunda (maiden name unknown) are the original immigrants for this branch of the Haak tree. They arrived in America on 8 Sept 1738, aboard the ship “Winter” under Captain Edward Paynter. Immigrant, Andreas Haack and wife settled first in Philadelphia before applying for a land warrant of 225 acres in Maxatawny in 1742. Together they had 11 children. Andreas Haak’s will names the children as well as the spouses of his daughters. The will was written on 9 October 1775 and probated on 18 November 1780.

Jacob Haak, Sr. was the 3<sup>rd</sup> eldest son of Andreas and Anna Cunigunda Haak. He owned several plantations and appeared to be a prosperous man. His Last Will and Testament was meticulous, leaving the estates and money to his grandchildren and his only surviving daughter, Barbara, married to George Sell, but with one stipulation – he excluded all the children from his son John’s second marriage to Salome! Only the children from John’s first marriage to Maria Barbara Dreibelbis received a substantial inheritance. The leftovers, if there were any, could then be claimed by *“all the children from my said son John Haak.”* A slight if ever I saw one, but it also explained the odd instructions in Barbara Haak Hottenstein’s will. Perhaps Barbara was trying to right a wrong by leaving part of her estate to her half-siblings. In her will, Barbara never mentions her full-blooded siblings and not a penny of her estate is left for them. She was obviously a woman of great kindness and a lot of spunk!

Now that I had a better picture of John Haak’s life, I was finally able to put names to the 15 children referenced in the April 1826 orphan court record located in the Bloomsburg courthouse. Like most orphan court records, only the minor children are named, so for years many researchers wondered who the older 6 children were. Thanks to Jacob Haak Sr.’s will and baptismal records from Delong’s Church, I now knew the names of the children from John Haak’s first marriage to Maria Barbara Dreibelbis.

1. George (27 July 1798 – ?)
2. Esther (21 September 1799 – 15 April 1875), m. Peter Miller
3. Jacob (20 June 1801 – ?)
4. Johannes (01 March 1803 – 18 December 1873), m. Elisabeth Angstadt
5. Susanna (1805 – 1853), m. Benjamin Tyson
6. Barbara (abt. 1806 – 26 September 1886), m. Benjamin Hottenstein

John Haak’s second marriage was to Salome, also called Sarah. Documentation is scarce, but I know the marriage took place sometime after February 1807 but before January 1809. Salome was born on 10 May 1792 and died on 27 July 1875. She would have been about 16 years old when she married John. The following children were born:

7. Jonathan (22 January 1809 – 24 June 1894), m. Lucinda Troy
8. Benjamin (31 August 1810 – 28 January 1889), m. Sarah Michael
9. Peter (10 December 1812 – 11 March 1872), m. Lucy Ann Michael
10. Anna (14 May 1814 – 3 March 1888), m1. Jesse Rhoads, m2. Jonathan Knittle
11. Sarah (abt. 1817 – 9 August 1881), m. Peter Trump
12. Margaret (7 February 1819 – 28 October 1889), m. Issac Betz
13. Andreas (12 March 1822 – 1872), m. Hannah Hughes

14. Henrich (2 April 1824 – 5 May 1897), m. Rachel Brouse
15. William (15 April 1826 – 11 May 1883), m. Elizabeth Yetter (Note: William was born 7 months after John Haak's death)

*(For more information on John Haak's children see my record "What in the World Happened to Johannes Hauck's 15 Children?" copy held by CCH&GS.)*

At the time of John Haak's death, he owned over 900 acres of land in Columbia County and 500 acres of land in Schuylkill County. In Main Township alone he held a Charcoal Fueled Iron Ore Furnace, Forge, Grist Mill, Saw Mill, 17 Several Dwelling Houses, Barns and Stables. Essentially, what John Haak built was an iron ore plantation—an industrial development where his employees lived and worked. Technical information about Haak's furnace is lacking, but I did find one interesting document published in Philadelphia in 1850, just 25 years after Haak's death. "*Documents Relating to the Manufacture of Iron in Pennsylvania,*" published on behalf of the "*Convention of Iron Masters,*" gave a detailed statement of the Cold Blast Charcoal Furnaces in Eastern Pennsylvania. The furnace, located in Mainville, was built in 1815, and used Fossiliferous Red Oxyd or Fossil Ore. Largest product 750 tons, actual make in 1849 was 500 tons. 53 men were employed and 50 oxen/horses or mules. The build of the furnace had 1 tuyere for blowing the furnace, the stack was 8 ½ feet at the bosh and 32 feet in height. It was water powered by the Catawissa Creek to make coarse grey or best foundry iron and close grey iron, marketed in Philadelphia. The capacity was 1,350 tons. Benjamin P. Frick ran the furnace in 1847. He rented the property from Abraham Griesemer who had purchased the 400-acre furnace plantation from Salome Haak in 1829 for a tidy sum of \$10,550. Frick purchased the furnace outright in 1849 after Griesemer's death, but by then the 400 acres had been partitioned. Frick owned the furnace, but the forge was purchased by brothers George and Rudolph Shuman.

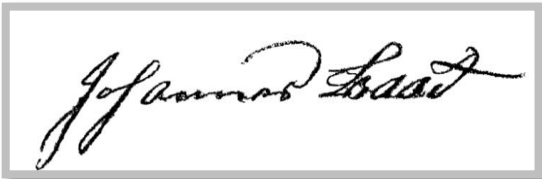
Before I close I wanted to share what I learned about Salome Haak. After John's death she remained a widow until about 1833-1835 when she married widower, Casper Rhodes. That marriage produced one child, Joseph Casper Rhodes, born on 21 January 1836 in Columbia County and died on 25 June 1908 in Schuylkill County. He married Lydia Whery. Joseph's death certificate gives Salome's maiden name as "Rothermel". Information listed on death certificates is known to be precarious and fickle. I'll feel more secure about this maiden name when I find a birth record for Salome.

By May of 1837 Salome was once again a widow. She goes back to the orphan court in April 1838 and petitions for guardians for her sons, William Haak and Joseph Rhodes, who were still minors. But Salome was a resilient woman and remarried yet again to German immigrant, George Hartzel. They lived in Roaring Creek until her death on 27 July 1875. A May 1879 auditor's distribution report states that Sarah Hartzel had been married three times and had 10 children with no issue from her last husband. The distribution list names all ten children or their heirs. Accounts of the property taken from the estate records speak of a house and barn in disrepair and sadly there is very little money in her estate. Cemetery burial records compiled by researchers Joseph Meiser and Sarah Roadermel Meiser (copy held by CCH&GS) document Salome's date of birth and date of death. She is buried in Saint Paul's Reformed Cemetery, Numidia. I have not yet found a tombstone and would not be surprised if there isn't one. George Hartzel died a few years after Salome, as noted in the May 1879 report. I believe Hartzel lived in Northumberland County at the time of his death and is buried in Saint John's Cemetery,

Snydertown. His Find a Grave memorial lists 22 July 1805 as his date of birth and 6 May 1877 as the day he died.

One researcher asked me why John Haak was not buried on the other side of the river in Catawissa Township. I replied that the place John called home was his 120-acre farm in Bloom Township along the Susquehanna River. It makes sense that Salome would have buried him in the Old Lutheran Cemetery located in Bloomsburg. I have yet to find an obituary for John Haak, but newspapers from 1825 are very scarce. One possible cause of death is mentioned in the book "The History of Columbia and Montour Counties," by J. H. Battle. On page 149 is a short notation about a deadly bout of influenza, "*The year of 1825 was marked by the prevalence of a bilious fever of unusual virulence throughout the county. In Bloom township alone there were seventy-one deaths.*"

By any measure, John Haak was an amazing man. In the 56 years he walked this earth he accomplished many remarkable things. As a pioneer of Columbia County, John helped build an industry that lasted long after his death. I firmly believe his legacy was temporarily lost when his grave was moved in 1925. Four years after finding his tombstone I have pulled every court record I could find in an attempt to learn about his life and his children. His descendants are numerous, as are the many ways the name Haak is spelled throughout the family. One thing is certain; John Haak's mark on history is fixed by his achievements and the achievements of his descendants.



Johannes Haak's, signature from his 150-acre land warrant in Catawissa.