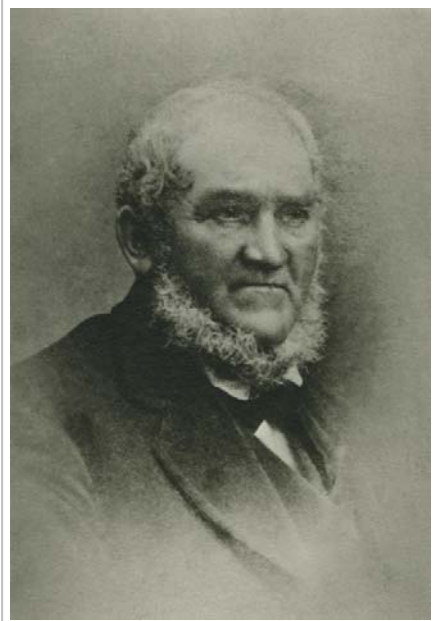


Jacob Fronheiser

Obituary

Front Page of Johnstown Tribune – Monday, 11 February 1884



Jacob Fronheiser

Up to within a couple of years past there was no more conspicuous and familiar form on our streets than that of Jacob Fronheiser. Then the infirmities of age began to bear heavily upon him, and for weeks at a time he would not be seen, being confined to his residence. When he did appear his steps were tottering and slow, and the evidences were plain that his sands of life were nearly run. Latterly Mr. Fronheiser's ailments became more acute, and a little over two weeks ago he was taken with the illness which terminated his life on Saturday evening, at half-past 9 o'clock. Shortly before that hour his attendants had assisted him from his couch to a chair for the purpose of "making" the bed. While this work was in progress he spoke to those about him several times, his mind being perfectly clear and his other faculties apparently unimpaired. When the bed

was ready for his return to it, the attendants approached him to render the necessary assistance, but, to their astonishment, they found that life was extinct, his death being caused, according to the attending physician, by congestion of the heart.

Deceased was born in Biedenkopf, Hesse-Darmstadt, on the 8th of October, 1814. On the 23rd of June, 1833, he landed in the city of Baltimore, his earthly possessions then amounting to a few personal effects and fifty cents in money. He obtained employment as driver of a baker's delivery wagon, but in a short time was given a position in the bakery to learn the trade. After a year's service in the establishment, during which he learned most of the details of the business, he left Baltimore for the West, stopping at Huntingdon, Hollidaysburg, and other places. At Hollidaysburg he remained some months. He then came to Johnstown and found employment with Samuel Holliston, who had a bakery in a building that occupied the present site of Mr. L. M. Woolf's clothing house. After a year's engagement with Mr. Holliston, Mr. Fronheiser entered the service of Mr. Christopher Pershing, whose bakery was located on Clinton Street, opposite Railroad.

In the course of ten or twelve months he became dissatisfied, thinking he could do better elsewhere, and he left town, visiting Pittsburgh, Beaver Falls, and other points. Subsequently he returned to this place and re-entered the employ of Mr. Pershing. During the summer of 1837 Mr. Fronheiser was united in marriage with Miss Catharine Meyer, who then lived with the



Catharine Meyer Fronheiser

family of the late judge Evan Roberts. In the fall of that year he leased a piece of ground and erected a small one-story frame building on the "Island". The structure occupied a position on Portage Street, between Louis Diener's and George Kurtz's, until a year ago, when it was destroyed by fire. Sixty dollars is said to have been the amount of capital with which Mr. Fronheiser and his young wife began business. They prospered far beyond their expectations. The location of their bakery was favorable. Boatmen and travelers patronized the establishment liberally in the purchase of pies, cakes, etc. As business increased and Mr. Fronheiser became possessed of some capital, he began to branch out into other lines of trade. He chartered boats and made frequent trips between Pittsburgh and Hollidaysburg,

Mrs. Fronheiser conducting the bakery. In this undertaking he was very successful, making money rapidly. Seven years were spent in the little building on the "Island", and then the business house on the corner of Main and Clinton Streets, now in possession of Mr. Jacob Wild, was leased and stocked with a large supply of general merchandise. The bakery was then sold. After carrying on the store at Main and Clinton Streets for some time, Mr. Fronheiser erected the large brick building that still stands at the corner of Railroad and Clinton Streets. This was probably the first open-front store building in the place. Immediately upon the completion of this building he opened a store of large proportions, each line of goods forming a different department, like the Company Store. An immense trade came to the new establishment, and the proprietor in this, as in most other undertakings, made money rapidly.

About this time also he was engaged in the foundry business, the buildings being at the corner of Railroad and Coal Streets, Conemaugh Borough. Stoves, plows, railroad chairs and frogs, and general castings were made. This concern, while it did a large business, was not, according to Mr. Fronheiser's own statement, profitable to him.

About 1858 the stock of goods in the store was traded by Mr. Fronheiser to Major Hamilton for the Cambria House, now the Merchants' Hotel. The building was then but three stories high. It has since been greatly enlarged. After disposing of the store Mr. Fronheiser received a contract for making the pike between this city and Geistown. Upon the completion of that undertaking he was authorized by the Council of Johnstown to pave the principal streets of the borough, and for two years, from 1861, he was engaged in completing that task. Main, Washington, Locust, Market, Clinton, Bedford, Franklin, and perhaps one or two other prominent thoroughfares were cobbled by him in that time. Upon the termination of this work he

ceased all active business, and devoted himself thenceforth exclusively to the management of his estate and private affairs, which had assumed large proportions.

Mr. Fronheiser was a man of very positive opinions. He would not have any of his property insured, claiming that insurance cost more than it was worth. The only dealings he ever had, so far as known, with any insurance company or agent, was the taking out of a life policy many years ago for \$1,000 in the North America, just to oblige and assist a friend who was agent for the company here. This policy he carried to the time of his death. Banks were also institutions avoided by Mr. Fronheiser, and so far as his relatives are aware, he had not a dollar deposited in any banking house. His aversion to these financial institutions dated from the failure of the famous old Bank of Lancaster in 1872, in which institution he had \$4,700 deposited, and which he, of course, lost. He did not believe in partnerships, and although often solicited by good parties to form such alliances he invariably refused, preferring to manage his own business in his own way.

There was nothing German about Mr. Fronheiser but his name and the manner of his speech. At heart he was thoroughly American. When he and his son James were aboard a vessel a few years ago, on the Delaware, that was to carry James across the sea on a visit to the Empire of King William, the latter asked his father if he would like to accompany him all the way. The old gentleman pointed toward the opposite shore of the river and replied: "If that was the coast of Germany I would not take the trouble to set foot upon it." He often said that he became an American the day he landed in Baltimore, and that he had no love for the Fatherland.

As regards Mr. Fronheiser socially it is said that he was very kind to those sick or in distress; that he mingled but little in society, cared nothing for the ordinary run of amusements, and spent most of his leisure time, which was always limited, at home with his family, all of whom will therefore miss him the more, but none so keenly as the venerable sharer of his joys and sorrows.

Politically Mr. Fronheiser was always a Democrat when questions of State or National importance were in the balance, but in local matters he was independent, voting entirely according to his judgment as to the fitness of men. He never held any office except that of Town Councilman, in which capacity he served a number of years.

Mr. and Mrs. Fronheiser had a large family of children, each of whom is herewith named in the order of birth: Elizabeth, born in 1838, deceased; George, born in 1840, deceased; Jacob, born in 1842, deceased; Justina, born 1844, wife of Mr. Charles Kress; Amelia, born 1846, wife of Mr. Fred. W. Kress; James J., born 1849; Edward H., born 1851; Mary, born 1854, wife of Mr. F. W. Stammler; Emma, born 1857, deceased. He leaves two sisters, one the wife of Mr. Charles Zimmerman, Sr., and the other the wife of Mr. Casper Burgraff.

Mr. Fronheiser was one of the founders of the German Lutheran congregation of this

place, and continued a member of the church throughout his life. He was a member of Cambria Lodge of Masons and Conemaugh Lodge of Odd Fellows, but he was initiated into the mysteries of both Odd Fellowship and Masonry in Hollidaysburg, long before there were any organizations here.

The funeral, which will take place to-morrow afternoon at 2 o'clock from the residence on Locust Street, will be in charge of the deceased's Masonic brethren.

It is not known whether the deceased left a will or not. The members of his family say they are not aware of any such instrument ever having been executed. They do remember of having heard him say that he did not believe in such things, thinking the law sufficiently plain in regard thereto. What the value of the estate is cannot be ascertained. The relatives decline to make anything known about the matter, but it is said that his wealth was much greater than was generally supposed. How it was accumulated we have briefly told. It is generally believed that much of it was made by contracts for furnishing supplies to the old Portage Railroad. This impression the members of the family wish us to state is erroneous. He had nothing, they say, whatever to do with the old Portage in any such connection.

I. O. O. F.

The members of Conemaugh Lodge, No. 191, are hereby notified to meet at their Hall at 1 o'clock to-morrow (Tuesday), February 12th, to attend the Funeral of our late Brother, Jacob Fronheiser, which will take place at 2 o'clock from his late residence on Locust Street.

BY ORDER OF THE N. G.
J. S. TITTLE, Secretary.

DIED

FRONHEISER ----- In Johnstown, on Saturday, Feb. 9, 1884, Mr. Jacob Fronheiser, aged about 70 years.

Funeral to-morrow afternoon at 2 o'clock; interment in Sandyvale Cemetery.