

Barbara Propst, the wife of George Frederick Propst

by Jeff Carr

George Frederick Propst was the son of John Michael and Catherine Elizabeth Propst; his wife was clearly named Barbara. I am writing this because several people have asked for verification of my assertion that Barbara Propst was a daughter of Valentine and Maria Catherine (Oberlin) Pence. Prior to this, researchers (most of whom are Swadley descendants) have believed that she was Barbara Swadley, a daughter of Mark and Catherine Swadley. It is unclear where began the notion that she was a Swadley; Oren Morton did not identify *any* maiden name for Barbara in his *History of Pendleton County, WV*; I will discuss this further in item #9. What follows is a combination of facts, circumstantial evidence, logic, and debate.

1. It is absolutely clear that Valentine and Catherine Pence had a daughter Barbara, who married a George Propst. The estate settlement (Augusta Co. WBk. 5, p.430) of Valentine Pence in 1776 clearly identifies “To Paid Geo. Probs, marr^d. Barbara, £15.8.4.” While Lyman Chalkley rendered this as George “Probo” in his *Chronicles of the Scotch-Irish Settlement of Virginia*, Vol. 3, p.144, a reading of the original record can be interpreted as “Probs.” Further, in her will in Rockingham Co., VA (Bk. 1, p.26) in 1803, Catherine Pence (the widow of Valentine) clearly named her daughter as “Barbary Propst.” The only thing that really remains in this issue is to identify *George* Propst.

2. Prior to 1800, there was no person in the Augusta-Pendleton area identified solely as “George” Propst. There is no deed, no tax, nor court record that identifies such a man. The only “George” in the local Propst family at that time was George Frederick Propst, most commonly known as Frederick, the son of John Michael and Catherine Elizabeth Propst. While one could infer that his name was *George* Frederick Propst, because his son was named George Frederick, the full of his name *is* proven. In Pendleton Co. Deed Bk. 10, p. 421, the heirs of Henry Propst (Reuben, Delila Kaylor, Harriett Royer, Malinda Propst, and Mary Ann Propst) sold to Jacob Propst the land that their father had inherited from his father; the deed clearly states that the land was “. . . formerly owned by George Frederick Propst, and by him in his last will and testament bequeathed to be equally divided among his ten children, of whom the said Henry Propst was one.” In addition to this proof, Frederick appears to have been buried at Propst Church near Sugar Grove, as there is a stone there with the initials “G.F.P.” and a death date of 1801; this date is consistent with Frederick’s will and estate proceedings.

3. Not only was there no other “George” Propst for Barbara Pence to have married, no other Propst man in that time period had a wife named Barbara. Given her generational time-frame, her husband would have been born circa 1750; as such, her husband would had to have been a son of the pioneer John Michael Propst. Only Frederick had a wife named Barbara. To the best of my knowledge, there were no other Propst families in the area circa 1770.

4. Barbara Pence was married to her husband by 1776, the date of Valentine’s estate settlement; she was still alive in 1803 when her mother died. Again, Barbara Propst, the wife/widow of George Frederick Propst, is the only one who fits that profile and time span. Frederick and Barbara Propst married circa 1768, as their oldest son (Jacob) was born in 1769. Barbara Propst survived her husband (who died 1801), and was taxed in Pendleton as late as 1806; she seems certain to have been the Barbara Propst who married Jacob Conrad Jr. in 1808. I will discuss this in more detail later.

5. Frederick and Barbara Propst had 10 children, all of whom have been proven via a combination of evidence from Frederick’s will, census returns, and several distinct quit-claim deeds (such as the one cited in prior item #2). Their children were: 1) Jacob (m. Rachel Crummett); 2) John (m. Margaret Naile); 3) Catherine (m. Tunis McElwain); 4) George F. (m. Elizabeth Propst); 5) Mary (m. Henry Propst); 6) Daniel (m. Ann Elizabeth Eye); 7) Henry (m. Elizabeth Kyger); 8) Michael (m. Mary Rexroad); 9) Adam (m. Rachel Eye); and 10) William (m. Elizabeth Waggoner). Most of these childrens’ names can be accounted for by namesakes in their Propst extended family. Of the ones that cannot: Jacob, Adam, Mary, and William; the first three **are** names found in the Pence family. While this isn’t proof of anything, it is circumstantial evidence.

6. More circumstantial evidence is found in Frederick and Barbara's son Henry; proof of his parentage is referenced in item #2, above. He is the Henry Propst who married Elizabeth Kyger on Nov. 2, 1802 in Rockingham County. Elizabeth Kyger was the daughter of Christian Kyger. This same Christian Kyger was one of the witnesses of Catherine (Oberlin) Pence's will in 1803. Clearly, there was some close relationship between the Pences and the Kygers. I suspect that Henry Propst met his future wife while visiting his grandmother Pence, who was undoubtedly a neighbor of the Kygers.

7. Another bit of circumstantial evidence is that Frederick and Barbara Propst had a grandson who named a son "Valentine Pence Propst." John and Elizabeth (Propst) Propst's [John being the son of Jacob and Rachel (Crumett) Propst, and Jacob a son of Frederick] son Valentine Pence Propst was born March 1, 1842, and was baptized at Propst's Church near to that time. It seems certain that he was named after an ancestral family member, as opposed to some acquaintance of the family (especially one that had died 80 earlier!, though old Valentine had Pence namesakes alive at the time of this birth). Neither John nor Elizabeth had any descent from the Henry and Mary (Pence) Swadley family, so the name didn't come from there. In fact, this Valentine P. Propst had double descent from Frederick and Barbara Propst, in that his parents were first cousins-once removed; his mother was the daughter of Daniel and Anne Elizabeth (Eye) Propst, with Daniel being another son of Frederick and Barbara. If Barbara had been a Pence, then this Valentine Pence Propst had double descent from Valentine Pence, his great-great-grandfather.

8. It seems likely that the most resistance to this notion of Barbara having been a Pence may come from Swadley descendants. These same descendants seem to have accepted the notion/evidence that Henry Swadley's wife Mary was the daughter of Valentine and Catherine Pence (and rightly so; I believe this as well). The evidence for this is from Valentine's previously referenced estate settlement in 1776, wherein it is referenced "To Paid Henry Swatzer who marr^d. Mary Pence"; they received an equal share of the estate, £15-8-4. Further, in her 1803 will, Catherine Pence made a bequest to her daughter "Mary Swartley." If one accepts such estate records as proof of Mary (Pence) Swadley's identity, then one must give equal consideration/acceptance to the identity of Barbara Propst. In fact, the spelling of "Propst" in these records seems more consistent than that for "Swadley," though I think there can be no doubt that these records clearly identify Henry and Mary Swadley. Given such accepted identification of the Pence-Swadley relationship, this gives a direct, documented connection between the Pence family in Rockingham County and a family in the South Fork area of Pendleton County. It is no further stretch to consider that another Pence daughter (Barbara) may have married another man (Frederick Propst) from the South Fork of the Potomac.

9. It is not clear to me what or whom the origin is for the previous identification of Frederick Propst's wife as a Swadley. I had originally thought that the source was Oren Morton's *History of Pendleton Co., WV* (1912). However, in his Propst subsection (p.277), he simply identified Frederick Propst's wife as "(Barbara -----)." Nor did he identify any daughter Barbara in the Swadley subsection on p.303. She was identified as "Barbara Swadley Propst" in the "Additions and Corrections" section of *Grave Register II, Pendleton County, West Virginia, 1980* (p.107). It is remotely possible that the late Mary Harter, a well known and respected researcher of Pendleton families and records, had *conjectured* that Barbara *may* have been a Swadley. As many of us know, such conjecture can become "fact" when passed along 2-3 times removed from the source. There is no doubt that there was a close relationship between Henry Swadley and George Frederick Propst. Their descendants intermarried, and Henry witnessed Frederick's will. Their having married Pence sisters would easily account for such a close relationship. The bottom line is that there is no known *real* evidence (deeds, probate record) to support a claim that Barbara Propst had been born a Swadley. I do not believe anyone will ever find any such evidence.

10. Even if someone does find (though unlikely) some circumstantial evidence to further suggest that Barbara had been a Swadley, I think this "Barbara Pence-as-the-wife-of-Frederick Propst" assertion has enough validity that this same someone would have to *rule out* the Barbara (Pence) Propst named in her parents' probate records. Even if one does not accept what I consider to be direct proof (cited in items #2-4), the preponderance of evidence still supports that George Frederick Propst's wife was Barbara Pence.

11. Regardless of Barbara's maiden name, it seems certain that Frederick Propst's widow remarried Jacob Conrad Jr. (1744-1829) in 1808. In the first place, there was no other Barbara Propst of comparable age to have married Jacob Conrad; her comparable age is verified by the 1810 Pendleton

Census, in which she was over 45. Secondly, the widow Barbara Propst's disappearance from the personal property tax lists (1807) coincides closely with this marriage date. In spite of the *appearance* that there are two separate graves for Frederick's wife and Jacob Conrad's second wife (as presented in the two volumes of *Grave Register, Pendleton County, WV*), such is not the case in reality. It is unclear if Frederick's wife has a tombstone with initials, beside him. Such a grave was not entered into the first *Grave Register, Pendleton County, WV, 1977*, but was added in the previously referenced second edition (p.107); many of these additions were from descendant report, and were not necessarily newly found tombstones or ones missed in the first pass. Clearly, the grave of Barbara (Propst) Conrad, as Jacob's second wife, was just *assumed* and reported to the those who collected the information for the first *Grave Register* book; I say "clearly" because her listing therein references no dates, and a note indicated that "there are no markers [in this cemetery]"(Vol. 1, p.89). There is no stone in the Conrad cemetery with Barbara's name on it. The evidence is not clear as to where she is buried. As has often been the case throughout the years, Barbara Propst's family could have taken her to be buried beside her first husband.

Given all of this, there seems little room for doubt that George Frederick Propst's wife was Barbara Pence, the daughter of Valentine and Maria Catherine (Oberlin) Pence. Much of the Pence family has been written about in *A Guide to The Pence Families of America* by Richard A. Pence, though the identity of Valentine's daughter Barbara is not clearly elucidated therein.