

# FAMILY BACKGROUND, BIRTH AND BAPTISM OF DANIEL GABRIEL FAHRENHEIT<sup>1</sup>

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**Keywords:** history, history of Gdansk, history of science

**Family Background.** The Fahrenheit family came from Krolewiec (Koenigsberg – now Kaliningrad), yet its beginnings should be searched for in Lower Saxony. The first known representative of this family, merchant Hans Fahrenheit, arrived in Krolewiec in 1512 from Rostock, yet his origins were in Hildesheim. In the church books of Krolewiec 50 of his probable descendants were found, living in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Among them there were 2 councilors and 5 aldermen, including one in Kaunas. Also the daughters of the family very often married the representatives of the authorities elite. Those of the family who did not belong to authorities were usually merchants. They all lived in the richest of the three cities of Krolewiec – Knipawa (Kneiphof). Gaps in sources do not allow to establish reliably whose son was Reinhold Fahrenheit, born in 1617 in Krolewiec, the grandfather of Daniel Gabriel. Basing on the family repetition of names, it is possible to presume that his father was born in 1592 Reinhold the Elder, son of the Knipawa councilor Bernhard Fahrenheit (1548–1610) and of Margaret Haussmann (1555–1596), and the grandson of alderman Bernard the Elder and Barbara Stoltzenkirch from the Old City of Krolewiec. Reinhold the Younger moved to Gdansk, where on 4 March 1649 he received merchant citizenship. The following year, on 6 February he married Anna Greverath at St. Mary's Church. The bride, 6 years younger than himself, was the daughter of merchant Dirk (Theodore) Greverath (1596–1642) and patrician Anna Scheweke (1599–1632), from a very old Gdansk family, which provided the city with 3 mayors and 3 councilors. From among 5 or 6 children of Reinhold and Anna, 3 died in infancy. About the eldest son, Reinhold,

<sup>1</sup> The following pages are taken from the book “Dzieciństwo i młodość Daniela Gabriela Fahrenheita” (The Childhood and Youth of Daniel Gabriel Fahrenheit) by Andrzej Januszajtis, which appeared in 2002.

born in 1652 we only know that in 1677 he received merchant citizenship. We will talk about the second one – Daniel, father of Daniel Gabriel – later. The youngest son of Reinhold and Anna could be born in 1663 Christoph Fahrenheit, who in 1690 married Euphrosine of an unknown surname, and that is all that we know.

As it seems, they all died before 1701. Their father bought in 1659 a tomb at St. Mary's Church and immediately buried his second son, who only lived 2 and a half weeks. He himself must have died before 1677, the year of his wife's death, as the church burial register refers to her as "Reinhold Fahrenheit's widow". She was buried on 19 January that year in the Greverath family tomb number 174, at the crossing of the north body aisle and the west aisle of the northern arm of transept – by St. George's chapel.

**Father.** As has already been mentioned, the father of Daniel Gabriel Fahrenheit was the middle son of Reinhold, Daniel. We do not know the exact date of his birth, yet, knowing when he died and how old he was at the moment of death, we can presume it was 1656. There is no information about his childhood and education, either. He is not mentioned in the register of students of the Academic Gymnasium. He was probably educated in the usual way, preparing to perform the job at his father's firm. When the father died, Daniel was too young to take over his duties, yet his elder brother did so, and it was probably him who decided about Daniel's further education.

The formal condition for being able to perform a job was obtaining citizenship – of course after reaching a mature age (25 years). As a son of local merchant, born in Gdansk, Daniel did not have any problems with that; he even did not have to pay. It was enough to show up in Weta (a Police-Trade Court at the City Hall) with equipment and take an oath, which was saying:

"I, Daniel Fahrenheit, swear to be faithful and obedient to the Royal Majesty of Poland, to my Dearest King and Master and to the Noble Council of this city; anything I learn, that might be against the Noble Council or against the general welfare, I will honestly notify and reveal; the equipment is my own, I will not diminish it, yet improve and multiply, and I will not enter into co-operation with anyone from outside the Hanseatic association, nor will I exchange foreign currency or goods myself or by other parties; I duly taxed my belongings. So help me God and His Holy Word."

A solemn oath of new citizens took place as usually on Saturday, 22 February 1684. A note in the citizens' register says "Fahrenheit Daniel, son of citizen Reinhold, merchant". According to law the new citizen had to marry within one year and one day. Daniel did so even before obtaining citizenship, on 16 February 1684 at the main church of Gdansk – St Mary's.

**Mother.** Born in 1657 (baptized on 20 January) bride was named Concordia. In spite of a young age she was a widow of an early deceased Friedrich Runge and had two small boys. She came from the Schumann family – one of the most prominent ones in the history of the city. The progenitor of the family was Michael, a knight from Człuchow, a courtier of the west Pomerania prince Boguslaw IX. His great-grandson Erasmus, son of Matthias and Elżbieta of Konarski family, was a councilor in Chojnice. He married Gertrud, daughter of Jan Jaski, the progenitor of the Gdansk Köhne-Jaski family, and of Barbara of Niżynski family. He died in 1571. The son of Erasmus – Christoph

(1528–1602) was the mayor of Chojnice. Two main lines of Gdansk Schumann families begin with his brother and son, both carrying the melodious name of Gabriel. We are interested here in the second one – the great-grandfather of Concordia Fahrenheit.

Gabriel Schumann Jr. was born in 1559 in Gdansk. He worked in the big trade. In 1615 he became a councilor. He died in 1631, and was buried at St. Mary's church in the tomb number 356 that he bought himself. His wife Anna Schultz died in 1602, after giving birth to the eighth child. The youngest son Georg, born in 1599, was the grandfather of Concordia, that is the great-grandfather of the scientist. He got married before 1624. We do not know the surname of the wife or their dates of death. Their son Michael (1624–1673) got married in 1656 to Elizabeth Dassau (1632–1665), daughter of Georg, in whose tomb (nr 362) at St. Mary's Church they were both buried. Apart from the daughter Concordia they also had a son Johann, Georg, who died in 1663 after a year and three months. The baby was buried by his grandfather's side in the tomb nr 362. To make the picture of the family with which Daniel Fahrenheit was connected by marriage complete, we should add that the Schumann family had been noblemen for a long time, which was confirmed by the emperor's diploma. Their coat of arms, showing two crossed black-and-gold hunting horns against a red background, can be seen for example on the epitaph of "both Gabriels, both councilors" from 1654 on the pillar at St. Mary's Church (the other Gabriel was the elder brother of the aforementioned Georg). The Schumann family gave the city of Gdansk 3 mayors, 8 councilors and 2 aldermen. The Polish branch of the family, still in the country, had many members merited in the field of fighting for Polish culture in the previous Prussian partition. Among of the most famous was professor Stefan Szuman, who died in 1972. The power of tradition in the family is shown by the fact that his second name was Gabriel, a name very popular among the family members for centuries.

**Brothers and sisters.** Daniel and Concordia Fahrenheit had 10 children, yet only 5 of them reached mature age, which is in accordance with the average death-rate among the inhabitants of Gdansk in those days. In human terms that meant infinite tragedy in almost all families. In the baptisms and deaths registers of St. Mary's Church we can find the dates of ceremonies and the names of the children. The first-born son, baptized on 24 January 1685, was buried on 5 August the same year. The second one was Daniel Gabriel who was lucky to live half a century. The next son, who was baptized on 15 May 1687 with the names Salomon Gotfryd, lived till September or October the following year. In the meantime Ephraim was born, baptized on 12 July 1688, who was more lucky and lived 50 years, like his brother Daniel Gabriel. The daughter born after him – Anna Concordia, baptized on 5 September 1689, also enjoyed quite a long life, as did the next child – Constantin, entered in the baptism register on 15 November 1690. Beniamin, baptized on 8 April 1692 died when he was 2 years old. His mother was already pregnant with the next daughter, who was baptized on 20 July 1694 with the names Virginia Elisabeth. The date of her death is not known, yet she was surely still alive in 1707. The two youngest children: Adalgunda Constantia, baptized on 11 August 1695, and Natanael, whose baptism took place on 17 May 1697, did not live through their second birthdays. It is possible that the present day medicine could account for that, for example – the Rh antigens incompatibility,

yet in those times the Fahrenheit family was surely supposed to be haunted by ill fortune. The worst, however, was yet to come...

Before we proceed to discuss the life of Daniel Gabriel in detail, let us take a closer look at the relatives and family friends. We will get most information studying the names of people asked by Daniel and Concordia to be the godparents, or – according to the registers terminology – to be the witnesses of the baptism ceremonies of their children. At every baptism there were three of them – two men and a woman for a boy, two women and a man for a girl. Similarly as today, people who were generally liked and respected were chosen, who were connected with the parents either by family or business ties, the first type of connection being much more popular. Among 29 witnesses of baptism of the ten Fahrenheit children 17 were their relatives or kinsmen. In the group we can find 5 aldermen, including 5 future councilors (2 mayors) and 1 medicine doctor, the others were merchants. A group of charterers dealing with foreign sea trade is of importance. There were three of them, and three others were members of the godparents' families.

Daniel Fahrenheit was a charterer himself. In the years 1693–1696 he owned a so-called “part”, which was a partial ownership of the “Gilded Peasant” (Der Vergulde Bauer) ship. The ship of 180 last (400 tons) of deadweight cost 16 600 florins, which was the price of 116 tons of silver. Fahrenheit owned 1/8 worth 1075 fl, which was 14.5 tons of silver. His partners were: Arendt Buckhack, Crafft Stahl, Daniel Davisson (a Scotsman born in Zamość, the grandfather of the future founder of Hevelius' epitaph at St. Catherine's Church), Friedrich Hagedorn (wine trader, the holder of the Russian Cellar under the Artus' Court), Anton Koomen, Daniel Haderschliel and Heinrich Herix. Most of them had partial ownership of many ships. The record holder in that group was Davisson, a co-charterer of 11 ships. The co-operation that Fahrenheit entered owned 4 ships.

We do not know what kind of ship the “Gilded Peasant” was. A so-called fleut was very popular in Gdansk in those days – a ship of a squabby stern and a relatively small draught. Tall masts and narrow sails added to its slenderness. The main and the fore masts had yard sails, the mizzenmast – a yard sail and a Latin sail. An additional sail was put under the bowsprit. The crew could be up to 80 people. The ship sailed to France for salt. We can imagine the joy of the charterers when the ship got back from its dangerous cruise and moored in the Long Embankment (Długie Pobrzeże). The little Daniel Gabriel surely went there often with his parents and discovered its various corners.

One more proof of Fahrenheit's connections with the society of sailors and charterers, and of the admiration he enjoyed among them, was his participation in the governing board of St. Jacob's hospital, since 1414 functioning as a sailors' refuge. The board usually consisted of four provisionals, appointed by the Right City Council, although the hospital was situated in the Old City, in Łagiewniki Street. Since 1691 Daniel Fahrenheit was one of them, and three years (1691, 1696, 1699) was their chairperson. The other provisionals were then: Bruno Plander, Daniel Jesebusch and Matthias Marquard – all charterers! Having such a position was also a proof of good financial standing of the person.

**Birth and Baptism.** Daniel Gabriel Fahrenheit was born on 24 May 1686, as a second child of Daniel and Concordia. He was named Daniel after his father, and Gabriel – most probably after his great grandfather on his mother’s side. As has already been mentioned, the English sources give the date 14 May as his birthday till today. The discrepancy is caused by the fact that in those days England had Julian calendar (till 1752), while Gdansk, as well as the whole of Poland, accepted the Gregorian reform when it was introduced in October 1582.

The ceremony of baptism took place on 4 June 1686. The registers of St. Mary’s Church give the names of the child – Daniel Gabriel, the names of the parents – Daniel Fahrenheit and Concordia, and the names of the godparents. They were: Natanael König – merchant and charterer, later a councilor, Gabriel von Bömmeln – the future mayor, who was later famous for defending king Stanisław Leszczyński during the siege of Gdansk by the Russians in 1734, and Dorothea Elizabeth, the daughter of Gabriel Schlieff, who became an alderman a year later. The first godfather was a member of the oldest family circle: König’s father, after his mother died, got married to Barbara Greverath, the great-aunt of Daniel Gabriel. Inviting miss Schlieff to be the godmother the Fahrenheits entered into a relationship with the old Kołobrzeg–Gdansk family, which in both cities had two mayors, five councilors and two aldermen. A remembrance of the family in Kołobrzeg (Colberg) is the famous chandelier with Godmother, called the Schlieffs’ crown, and in Gdansk – the beautifully reconstructed, late Gothic house at 14 Chlebnicka Street, whose original facade was moved in 1824 to Peacock Island in Potsdam (today in Berlin). The relationship with the von Bömmelns tightened 10 years later, when Gabriel’s brother – Georg – at that time the secretary of the Council, married Concordia’s cousin Anna Constantia Schumann.

According to the Council’s disposition from 1681, on a weekday (the 4 June was a Tuesday) a baptism ceremony was to take place between 3 and 4 in the afternoon. The mother, called in the disposition “the woman in childbed” or “sixsunday” (from 6 Sundays, which meant 6 weeks), should be “modest in all jewellery and decorations and should be dressed properly to the poor and sad times”. The ceremony had a strictly defined course. Greeting the gathered guests the minister reminded that since Adam’s times everyone is born burdened with the original sin, which can be expiated thanks to Christ’s sacrifice. He then asked about the child’s name and addressing the baptism in the Jordan River he prayed for expiating the baby from the sin through baptism. Then chapter X, passage 13–16 of St. Mark’s Gospel was read, which can be summarized by: “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these”. After the words “and (... he) put his hands on them and blessed them” the priest put his hands on the little catechumen, then the godparents uncovered his head and approached the font to answer in the positive the sacramental questions: “Do you renounce Satan and all his deeds? Do you believe in God Almighty Father, the Creator of heaven and earth?” and so on. Next they gave the baby to the priest for baptism.

The baptism itself was not much different from the present day ceremony in the Catholic Church. All the ceremony took place by the wonderful renaissance baptismal font of St. Mary’s Church, cast in 1556 by the Dutch masters. The metal work masterpiece has unfortunately been lost during the last war, yet the preserved plaster model makes it possible to prepare an exact copy.

The moment his head was splashed with water and the words were uttered “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”, little Daniel Gabriel ceased to be a nameless creature and became a member of the Christian society – Lutheran in that case.

After the ceremony everyone was invited to the family house to celebrate. The law forbade to prepare rich parties and to eat any kind of food: “only eight kinds of sweets are allowed (nothing that is crystallized), also marzipan and one kind of wine; who would act against this will have to pay 10 thalers. Under the same punishment, however, it is obligatory to act against this while treating godparents at the end of childbed or on any other occasion; it is also forbidden to treat servants or present them with anything”.

These strict regulations were to prevent any luxury, yet the wealthy citizens usually did not observe them, treating the 10 thalers punishment as a kind of tax on luxury. The Fahrenheits surely did not limit themselves to sweets only or to just one kind of wine...

*Translation: Anna Kucharska-Raczunas*