



Simon Finck
1867-1950

Founder of the
Simon Finck Fund in

The New York Community Trust
909 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022

In 1959, the Will of Simon Finck established the Simon Finck Fund, to be administered by the New York Community Trust for charitable purposes.

In the tradition of men who built small businesses into thriving enterprises, Simon Finck possessed a combination of talents: craftsmanship, foresight, salesmanship, acute business sense, and the willingness to work long and hard. He was the founder of the S. Finck Company, one of the earliest successful businesses in the country to specialize in floor coverings.

Simon Finck was born in New York City in 1867, the son of Marx and Theresa Finck. He grew up in Upper Manhattan and attended public schools there. As a young man his goal was to have a business of his own, and before many years had passed he opened a small retail shop on 125th Street in Harlem, selling and installing ceramic tile floors.

Not long after the S. Finck Company was founded, Simon acquired a lifetime partner. She was pretty Meta Breisacher, the eldest of five children of German immigrant parents. Both the Finck family and the Breisacher family were opposed to the marriage, for Meta was Lutheran and Simon was Jewish. But late in the winter of 1900, Meta, who was then 27 years old, and Simon, 33, decided that they would marry despite the opposition.

Meta and Simon moved into an apartment a few blocks from the store, and together they began to build the business. Simon was among the first to appreciate the huge potential offered to businesses such as his by the large banks and

office buildings that were rapidly changing the face of New York. His company provided office floor coverings and draperies for many of the major corporations in the city.

A new invention helped the company to grow. It was the straight-line inlaying machine for the manufacture of linoleum. Invented by the Englishman, Frederick Walton, in 1863, linoleum had become a major industry by 1900. America's first plant had been established at "Linoleumville" on Staten Island in 1872. Straight-line inlaid linoleum, which featured squares and other geometric designs integrated into a continuous smooth surface, combined the formality of appearance with the ease of installation needed for offices and large rooms. Coming just after the turn of the century as Simon and Meta Finck were getting their business on its feet, this product made a major contribution to their success — success which rode the wave of New York's growth and culminated in the explosive building boom of the 1920's.

While Simon attracted customers and supervised the installations, Meta, who was an excellent seamstress, tailored the long, heavy draperies that were to hang in the windows of the banks and other institutions that were their clients.

*The Finck Home at
121 North Terrace Avenue,
Mt. Vernon, New York,
with Simon's first car,
a Dodge, about 1923.*



As the business grew, the S. Finck Company moved to larger quarters in lower Manhattan. Now Simon added carpets to his range of products. He imported the finest carpets from Europe for the luxurious executive offices of his clients. He was one of the first in the industry to advocate extensive use of carpeting in business establishments. The telephone company and a number of radio stations, recognizing the acoustical properties of carpet, were among his early carpeting customers. By the mid 1920s, the S. Finck Company was a prosperous concern with thirty employees. In 1924, Simon acquired the business of a similar company when he bought the Dreadnought Flooring Co., Inc.

As in all families, there were sadness and disappointments for the Fincks. A child named Dorothy died soon after her birth in 1903. Not long afterward, a second child did not survive birth. As much to recover from her own grief as to aid the business, Meta continued to work with her husband. However, as Harlem became increasingly crowded, the Fincks decided to move out of the city. They bought a house in Mt. Vernon, New York. Meta enjoyed her new surroundings and soon became active in her church there. But Simon had to give up one of his greatest pleasures — taking his brother Moses's children for rides in Central Park in a cart drawn by a pair of goats.



Simon Finck with his dog, Buster, about 1925.

During the Mt. Vernon days, automobiles took the place of goat carts as one of Simon's diversions. His first car was an open Dodge. As his enthusiasm for "motoring" mounted, he owned not one REO (the popular auto built by R. E. Olds before his Oldsmobile became a household word) but two. And relatives who were then wide-eyed youngsters recall being treated to rides in their uncle's luxurious Lincoln or in "the roadster with the rumble seat." Drives through the countryside, they remember fondly, often ended with the treat of a restaurant dinner.

Simon and Meta loved to travel, and each summer they drove to a different part of the United States. Young members of the family looked forward to the return of their aunt and uncle, who never failed to bring them souvenirs and stories of their trips.

Then, when Simon's business was in its prime and he and Meta were preparing to leave on a

second honeymoon to celebrate their silver wedding anniversary, Meta was suddenly taken ill with pneumonia. She died a few days later, on February 22, 1925, at the age of 52.

For a couple of years after Meta's death, Simon continued to drive from Mt. Vernon to his Manhattan business each day. But the house in the country no longer gave him the pleasure it once had, and he moved back to New York. There he shared an apartment near the Hudson River with his sister, Ray Davidov, who had been widowed more than twenty years earlier. To make the load easier, his brother's two sons joined him in the store. He still enjoyed going for drives, but he was content to let someone else handle the wheel. A niece and her daughter, of whom he was especially fond, visited him often, and he took great interest in the young girl's school and camp activities.

Simon Finck died on October 29, 1950, at the age of 83. Until his last days the S. Finck Company was still the center of his life, and Simon Finck was its guiding force. His will provided a life income to his sister, Ray Davidov, until her death in 1957, at which time his estate came to the New York Community Trust. The income from his Fund is used to benefit the community he loved.



The New York Community Trust provides centralized management service, on a non-profit basis, for individual foundations and charitable trust funds. New York's major banks serve as trustees. Trustee for the Simon Finck Fund is the Chemical Bank.