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PETER GERHART 1716 - 1767

Gerhart's Tavern, Montgomery Co., Pa., 1739

Peter Gerhart was born in Alsace, France, in 1716; died in Montgomery County, Pa. in 1767. He married 29 October 1723 Elizabeth Smith, a native of Franconia Township, Montgomery County, who survived him.

The family of Peter Gerhart were Huguenots. In company with his brother and sister, Peter escaped at night into Holland. They emigrated to America and in 1739 bought 96 acres of land which comprised the present Rising Sun Hotel property, lying in Montgomery County on the Allentown Road, 30 miles north of Philadelphia. Peter later acquired more land in the area and by 1757 held more than 250 acres.

Being of strong religious conviction, Peter Gerhart was one of the founders of the Indian Creek Church. He was a member of the consistory and served on the committee that erected the modest church building in 1754.

The Gerhart Homestead was known as Gerhart's Tavern for nearly a century; it was the center of political and social activity. It grew and prospered until the death of Peter Gerhart in 1767. The inventory of his estate lists among other items "two casks of wine, a cask of rum, cordials, cider royal, and two hogsheads of cider, as well as a number of empty hogsheads."

Elizabeth Gerhart operated the tavern for 20 years following the death of her husband Peter. Eventually she turned it over to their son Jacob and the tavern remained in the direct Gerhart line until 1880 when it was deeded to a son-in-law, Erwin Hartzell. This ended over 140 years of lineal ownership.

- by George B. Zendt

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