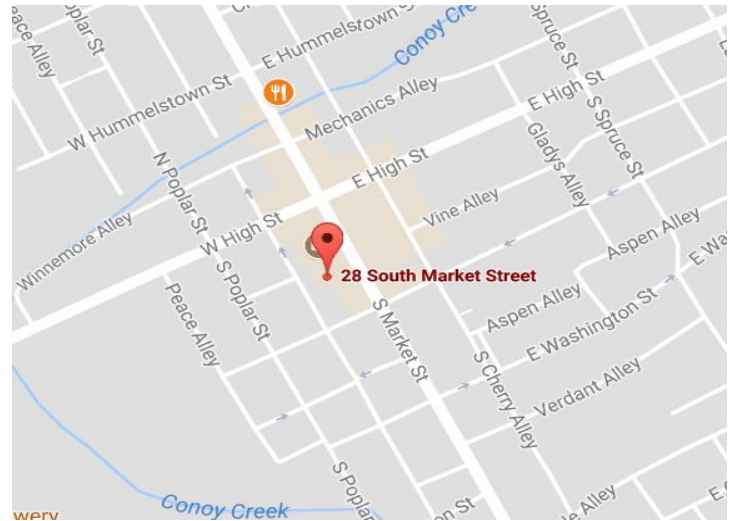# Phoenix Hotel: 28 South Market Street, Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania

Abstract:

The Phoenix Hotel, built circa 1880, is a three-story Italianate style building with a two-story attachment. The structure was built under the ownership of Aaron Dissinger who was influential in the community as the owner of several businesses. Under his care, the hotel building acted as a meeting place for several of the social organizations in Elizabethtown. These organizations include Atlas Castle No. 136 of the Knights of the Mystic Circle, the Gilt Edge Fishing Club, the Union Army veterans of John M. Good Post No. 502, and the auxiliary Women's Relief Corps No. 91. Albert L. Garrett bought the hotel and renovated it around 1915. Charles Boggs used the dining room of the Hotel, which was soon after renamed the Kennewood Hotel. Since then, it has also functioned as the Elizabethtown Inn and currently operates as Pita Pit and Funk Brewery.

Deed Search:

The current community of Elizabethtown is situated between the Conoy Creek and the Conwego Creek along the Susquehanna River. In 1534 French King Francis, I (1494-1547) colonized North America establishing New France with Jacques Cartier (1491-1557) as Viceroy in Quebec.[1] As early as 1615 Étienne Brûlé (1592-1633) explored the Susquehanna River and its tributaries in Lancaster County.[2] Pennsylvania was claimed by Sweden in 1638 and then by the Dutch in 1655. The British claimed the former Dutch holdings in 1674.[3] British King Charles, II (1630-1685) granted William Penn (1644-1718) the Province of Pennsylvania in 1681.[4] The French and British disputed control of Pennsylvania between 1688-1763.[5] During this time in 1707 French fur trader Peter Bezaillion (1662-1742) established a settlement between the Conoy and Conwego Creeks along the Susquehanna River.[6] In 1719 Peter Bezaillion invited the Piscataway Indians to move from Maryland and settle

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[1] Robert Jean Knecht, <u>Francis I</u> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 333-343.

[2] Consul Willshire Butterfield, <u>History of Brulé's Discoveries and Explorations, 1610-1626 Being a Narrative of the Discovery by Stephen Brulé of Lakes Huron, Ontario and Superior, and of his Explorations of Pennsylvania and western New York: Also of the Province of Ontario</u> (Cleveland, OH: Herman-Taylor, 1898), 49-51.

[3] Randall M. Miller, ed., <u>Pennsylvania: A History of the Commonwealth</u> (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 2002), 50-60.

[4] Jean R. Soderlund, <u>William Penn and the Founding of Pennsylvania, 1680-1684: A Documentary History</u> (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1983), 39-50.

[5] Henry Meclchior Muhlenberg Richards, <u>The Pennsylvania-Germans in the French and Indian War: A Historical Sketch Prepared at the Request of the Pennsylvania-German Society</u> (Lancaster: The Pennsylvania German Society, 1905), 16-22.

[6] David L. Martin, <u>A Clash of Cultures: Native Americans and Colonialism in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania</u> (Morgantown, PA: Masthof Press, 2010), 21-23.

with him along the Cony Creek and Susquehanna River.[7] Captain Thomas Harris (1695-1801) settled in Pennsylvania in 1726. In 1730, he builds a log cabin along the Conoy Creek and in 1741 he legally receives the warrant to the land.[8] Then, in 1745 he builds the Sign of the Bear Tavern, which is the first permanent structure in Elizabethtown. [9]

Harris possessed the lot from 17 April 1747 until 15 July 1751.[10] The chain of title since then has been Lazarus Lowry (15 July 1751 – 13 June 1753),[11] Barnabus Hughes (13 June 1753 – 10 June 1786),[12] Samuel Hughes (10 June 1786 – 28 October 1790),[13] Alexander Boggs (28 October 1790 – 21 February 1809),[14] Andrew Gross (21 February 1809 – 12 April 1843),[15] Adam Gross (12 April 1843),[16] Aimé LeBreton (12 April 1843 – 1 April 1856),[17] Benjamin Sheaffer (1 April 1856 – 12 October 1864),[18] Abraham Sheaffer (12 October 1864 – 31 March 1870),[19] Aaron Dissinger (31 March 1870 – 31 March 1902),[20] Jonathan R Decker (31 March 1902 – 19 October 1905),[21] Benjamin Gochnauer (19 October 1905 – 25 March 1912),[22] Albert Garrett (25 March 1912 – 31 December 1919),[23] Charles R Boggs (31 December 1919 – 8 September 1949),[24] Thomas Walsh (8 September 1949 – 11 May 1972),[25] Aaron Longenecker (11 May 1972 – 9 March 1981),[26] Kaj Skov (9 March 1981 – 28 September 1984),[27] Kent Wolgemuth (28 September 1984 – 22 July 1997),[28] Blaine Moreland (22 July 1997 – 30 August 2002),[29] SYDYL Co LLC (30 August 2002 – 24 September 2008),[30] LLS Financial LLC (24 September 2008 – 2 November 2009),[31] and most recently South Market LP.[32]

Architectural Style:

The Phoenix Hotel building was built around 1880 and is situated at 28 South Market Street in Elizabethtown. The property measures at 60 ft. x 198 ft. This three-story Italianate Style structure were constructed around 1880 in red brick. Originally used as a hotel building, the southside two-story building was joined to the hotel as a kitchen and restaurant by Charles Boggs. Before his joining, Boggs operated a restaurant on an adjacent lot but then moved the restaurant to the building next to the hotel. The second- and third-story windows have keystones above them which are a Pennsylvania mark. The symmetry of the main building demonstrates the revival of the Federal style which was known for the balance of detail and design.[33] The Palladian or rounded windows on the lower level are also a common trait of Federal style.[34]

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[7] Martin, <u>A Clash of Cultures: Native Americans and Colonialism in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania</u> 21-23.

[8] Richard K. MacMaster, <u>Elizabethtown: The First Three Centuries</u> (Elizabethtown, PA: Elizabethtown Historical Scoeity,1999), 5.

[9] Ibid., 8.

[10] FF 529

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Book: S, Volume: 16, Page Number: 209, Accessed April 25, 2017.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Book: A, Volume: 18, Page Number: 156, Accessed April 25, 2017.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Book: Y, Volume: 20, Page Number: 97, Accessed April 25, 2017.

[24] Book: E, Volume: 24, Page Number: 137, Accessed April 25, 2017.

[25] Book: I, Volume: 40, Page Number: 475, Accessed April 25, 2017.

[26] Book: I, Volume: 62, Page Number: 1160, Accessed April 25, 2017.

[27] Book: A, Volume: 82, Page Number: 282, Accessed April 25, 2017.

[28] Book: G, Volume: 90, Page Number: 91, Accessed April 25, 2017.

[29] Instrument Number: 403247

[30] Instrument Number: 5112354

[31] Instrument Number: 5739174

[32] Instrument Number: 5820717

[33] Jones, Will. <u>How to Read Houses: A Crash Course in Domestic Architecture</u>. (New York; Rizzoli, 2014), 104.

[34] Benowitz, Jean-Paul, <u>Historic Elizabethtown Pennsylvania: A Walking Tour</u>. (Elizabethtown, PA: Elizabethtown College, 2015), 31.

Historical Context and Purpose:

Hailing from County Donegal, Ireland, Thomas Harris settled in Lancaster County in 1726 and married Mary McKinney.[35] Harris settled near the Conoy Creek and traded with several Indian tribes including the Conoy and Paxton. In 1730, he built a log cabin to use as a trading post.[36] In 1745, the foundation for what would become the Sign of the Bear Tavern was laid by Harris.[37] In 1736, Harris applied to the Lancaster County Court to sell beer and hard cider. Two years later he was granted the right to keep a public house.[38] In the same year, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania built a road through Elizabethtown which connected Harrisburg and Lancaster over Market Street. The new road, the Harrisburg Pike or the PA Route 230, insured all who travelled on the road would pass Harris's public house, the oldest structure in the Borough of Elizabethtown.[39]

Also hailing from Ireland, Lazarus Lowry come to America in 1729. Lowry was licensed as an Indian trader after being recommended by the Governor of Pennsylvania at the time, John Penn. [40] Lowry work in Ohio to help protect Indians from French influence. A French commanding officer offered a reward for Lowry's scalp.[41] Lowry bought the Sign of the Bear Tavern in 1751 and almost immediately began leasing it to Barnabas Hughes and his wife Elizabeth. Lowry sold the tavern and land to the couple in 1753.

Barnabas Hughes was also from County Donegal, Ireland, emigrating in 1748 and taking property in Lancaster the following year.[42] The Sign of the Bear Tavern became the location where goods from Philadelphia were brought for distribution.[43] Hughes, being Commissary Captain, also readied soldiers and supplies for Fort Hunter and Fort Swatara when the French and Indian War began. Before moving to Baltimore in 1761, Hughes split the original plot around the Sign of the Bear Tavern into smaller lots measuring at 60 feet wide and 165 feet long. Hughes then named the new village "Elizabeth Towne" more than likely in honor of his wife. Hughes dubbed the streets "Market" and "High" and the side alleys "Cherry", "Peach", and "Rose."[44]

Barnabas's second son, Samuel Hughes, became a successful businessman early on in his life. In 1776, Hughes served as a delegate to the Maryland state convention. He later served as a state senator from 1781-1790. He also acquired half of his father's iron furnace business in Washington County, Maryland. After his time with politics, Hughes opened up his iron works for Congress, making heavy artillery for the new army. Making cannons for the government proved to be profitable as Hughes paid off British investors and was able to buy his bothers' shares of their father's real estate in 1786. The tracts of land he purchased included, the Sign of the Bear Tavern, a 252-acre tract, and 145 adjacent acres.[45]

In 1790, Alexander Boggs purchased the Sign of the Bear Tavern and the land of the northeast border of Elizabethtown as far as High street. He renamed the Sign of the Bear to the Black Bear Tavern.[46] Boggs continued to live in a two-story log building nearby. Caleb Thornberry lived in the Black Bear Tavern as a tenant in 1798.[47] By 1801, the Black Bear Tavern had five structures including a two-story stones house, a log barn, a stone shed, a stone stable, and a smith's shop.[48] Boggs also leased the tavern plus the farm to John Wolfley.

Andrew Gross, who was in Andrew Boggs' Donegal Company in 1784, was a wheelwright and wagon builder in Elizabethtown.[49] Gross signed the petition in 1791 for a street to be made which would run through Elizabethtown. He was listed as a grantee in the deed for the use of land for the "Roman Catholick Society" in Elizabethtown.[50] In 1795, he and the other trustees of the property began to make plans to build on the site. He

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[35] MacMaster, 5.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Westafer, Ray. "Reflections On How It Was In E-Town The Past 60 Years," *Elizabethtown Chronicle*, February 10, 1977, accessed April 25, 2017
[38] MacMaster, 5.
[39] Benowitz, 5.
[40] MacMaster, 5.
[41] Ibid., 5.
[42] Ibid., 19.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Benowitz, 5.
[45] MacMaster, 47-48.
[46] Benowitz, 5.
[47] MacMaster, 54.
[48] Ibid., 60.
[49] Ibid., 41, 52.
[50] MacMaster, 50.

along with Conrad Gross who was his brother, Stephen Felix, Henrick Eckenroth, Johannes Kaufman, and Joseph Shitz were chosen as managers of the property which had its ceremonial laying of the cornerstone on 30 May 1799.[51] In 1804, Gross wrote his will which stated he wanted his youngest child and daughter, Rosannah, to be sent to school and to be taught how to read and write in both English and German as much as would be needed for her as a woman.[52] Andrew Gross passed his trade onto his son, Adam Gross, but his other sons, Jacob and Henry, were a shoemaker and saddler, respectively.[53]

Adam Gross was left tools of his and his father's trade when his father passed.[54] In 1829, he was a cosigner to receive land on behalf of St. Peter's Catholic Church in order to expand church property for a church yard where communing members would be buried free of charge.[55] In 1854, the first tax assessor came to Elizabethtown and Adam Gross was charged $3,000 which was the second highest amount.[56]

Aimé LeBreton was a translator for the Trappists, a group of silent monks who came to Elizabethtown in 1814 on their way to a new site for a monastery, and was born in France. One of the monks took ill and died and LeBreton provided for the funeral which took place in St. Mary's Church in Lancaster.[57] LeBreton was a refugee from the French Revolution and moved to Elizabethtown in 1827. He was known as a book-binder and book-seller who had previously been successful in Philadelphia as well as Lancaster before moving. LeBreton died in Cincinnati while in a trip to retrieve a grandchild who had been orphaned.[58]

Benjamin Sheaffer was a charter member of the Elizabethtown Lodge, No. 128, Independent Order of Odd Fellows in 1845.[59] In 1859, he was known for making clocks and watches.[60] In the same year, he was listed as proprietor of the West Donegal House.[61]

In 1859, Aaron Dissinger worked with his brother, Henry Dissinger, John Coble, and Israel Davis at his father's store which was in the southwest corner of Center Square.[62] In 1858, he was on a committee with Henry A. Wade and John W, Roeting to find a fire engine for the Friendship Fire Company and they did find one for sale in Baltimore.[63] In 1864, during the American Civil War, Dissinger received a shipment of goods at his store, Dissinger's Cheap Store, from Philadelphia for which he put an ad in the newspaper of the time declaring he had dry goods, clothing, fresh mackerel, alum, salt, and cider vinegar.[64] After the Farmer's Bank of Elizabethtown opened in 1869, he joined the staff.[65] In 1879, Elizabethtown businessmen organized the Fidelity Beneficial Society in Elizabethtown and Dissinger was elected treasurer. In 1885, he was chosen to be on the first board of directors of the Elizabethtown National Bank. During the first meeting, Dissinger was elected president.[66] By 1890, Dissinger had a hardware store.[67] Under Dissinger's ownership in the 1890s, the Pheonix Hotel hosted the Atlas Castle No. 136 of the Knights of the Mystic Circle and the Gilt Edge Fishing Club for weekly and monthly meetings respectively. The hotel also hosted the Elizabethtown Cornet Band's rehearsals, The Union Army veterans of John M. Good Post No. 502, and the auxiliary Women's Relief Corps No. 91. In Dissinger's store building on West High Street, the John Wanamaker Republican Club met in a room on the .floor above.[68] Dissinger was a member of the Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church and because of construction costs, the congregation was in debt, however, Dissinger donated enough money to erase almost all of the debt.[69]

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[51] Ibid., 53.
[52] Ibid., 54.
[53] Ibid., 70.
[54] Ibid., 71.
[55] Ibid., 103.
[56] Ibid., 107.
[57] Ibid., 76.
[58] Ibid., 93.
[59] Ibid., 100.
[60] Ibid., 108.
[61] Ibid., 109.
[62] Ibid., 108.
[63] Ibid., 113.
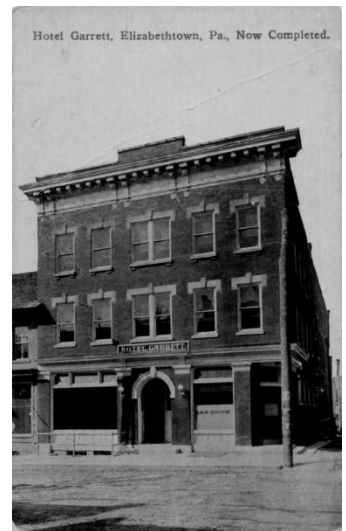[64] Ibid., 118.
[65] Ibid., 121.
[66] Ibid., 140.
[67] Ibid., 133.
[68] MacMaster, 144.
[69] Ibid., 162.

Johnathan R. Decker was appointed Justice of the Peace in 1883.

Appendix Historical Photos:

Kennewood Hotel
Boggs Restaurant Elizabethtown

Hotel Garrett, Elizabethtown, Pa., Now Completed.

Appendix Current Photos: