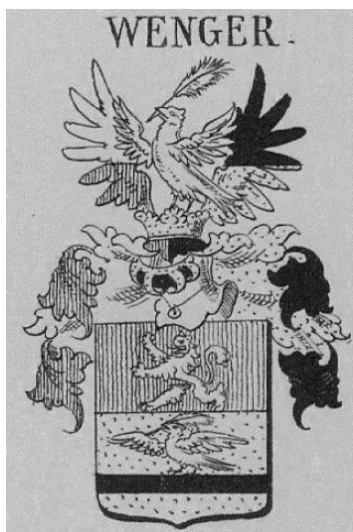


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Christian Wenger (1698-1772)

Christian Wenger was born on May 8, 1698, in Bern, Switzerland, and died on February 9, 1772 (aged 73) at West Earl Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, USA. Wenger was buried at the Groffdale Mennonite Brick Church Cemetery in Leola, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, USA. Christian Wenger's parents were Christian Ulrich Wenger (1667–1759) and Chistina Engel (Unknown). His wife was Eve Rosina Graybill Wenger (1705–1790), whom he married in 1727 and had seven children.¹

When Fairview Hall was being renovated, a descendant of Christian Wenger, John E. Fetzer, pledged \$40,000 to the renovations on the condition that additional members of the Wenger family.² After receiving many donations from the Wenger's, the renovated Fairview Hall was renamed the Christian Wenger Center for the Humanities.³

¹ "Christian Wenger," Find a Grave, accessed July 1, 2024.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/36228757/christian-wenger>.

² Chet Williamson, *Uniting Work and Spirit: A Centennial History of Elizabethtown College* (Elizabethtown, PA, Elizabethtown College Press, 2001), 261-262.

³ Chet Williamson, *Uniting Work and Spirit: A Centennial History of Elizabethtown College* (Elizabethtown College Press, 2001), 262.; Jean-Paul Benowitz, Peter J. DePuydt, "Elizabethtown College" (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2014), 16.

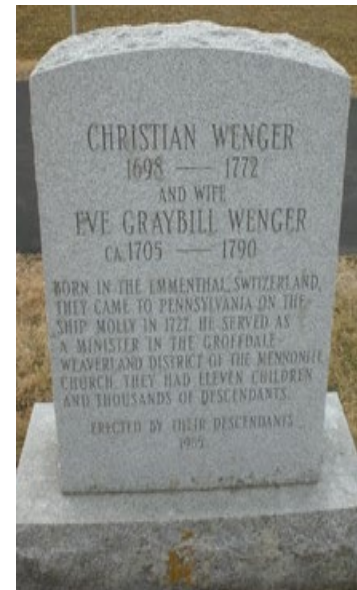
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Find a Grave details Christian Wenger's life when first arriving in America:

"Christian Wenger, the progenitor of the Wenger family of our lineage in America, emigrated from Europe to this country in 1727. According to official records, different Wengers came across the ocean to America on different occasions, but that the above mentioned Christian Wenger is the progenitor of our lineage is proved

beyond a doubt by the family records copied from his Bible and handed down from one generation to another. This record corresponds with the official records of immigrants arriving at Philadelphia, Pa., during the years from 1700 to 1800. The traditions of our grandfathers tell us that when the above Christian Wenger from Europe arrived at Philadelphia, then a young man, he made his way up through the country to Lancaster Co., Pa., into the neighborhood of Strasburg, where the Herrs and Brennemens and others settled. Here, it seems, he hired out to a man by the name of Hans (John) Groff. Said Hans Groff's horses strayed away on a certain occasion and were found at what is now known as Groff's Valley, at the large spring. It seems that Groff became attached to this place and purchased a large tract of land, setting the four corner stones, marking the outlines of the tract he desired. But on surveying he found that he had more land than money, and also found himself involved in debt which he was not able to meet. Therefore, young Wenger, who had some money to invest, in order to help Groff out of his dilemma purchased 300 acres of it along the west side, paying forty dollars for it, in the vicinity now known as Groffenthal, in Earl township, Lancaster Co., Pa., in the church at which place even at present (1900) the aged Joseph Wenger, a descendant of the fifth generation of the same Wenger family, is the presiding minister. Here then we have the site of the old homestead where our progenitor, Christian Wenger, took upon himself the hardships of a pioneer life, and began to carve out of the dense forest a home for himself and family, contenting himself with but few requisites. Having no stoves, they built a fireplace in one end of the house, upon which an open fire was kept to protect them from the cold of the winter season. The cooking was done by means of kettles hung over the fire, and the baking was done in ovens that were built outside of the house, and which were simply places arched over with stone and clay. Our grandfathers tell us that as the



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land was cleared off, the soil was broken up by means of the hoe and the spade, and after sowing the seeds, a heavy brush was drawn over it by hand. We may feel inclined to think that this was a rude way of starting out in life, but by hard labor and strict economy they prospered, and, I believe, enjoyed life in their humble new home at that time as well as if not better than we do in our modern and more commodious homes.

MARTIN D. WENGER
*Elkhart, Ind. (1903)*⁴

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⁴ "Christian Wenger," Find a Grave, accessed July 1, 2024.
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