History of Taverns in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania

Taverns were a central part of most colonial towns, and Elizabethtown was not an exception. Around 1770, the number of taverns and public houses and taverns in Elizabethtown was growing. This vouched for the importance of Elizabethtown as a stop for travelers, wagoners, and drovers.[1] Taverns were meant to be for the casual traveler or visitor to ask for directions, rest, and/or refresh themselves.When people came into town, they would naturally find their way to a tavern, since taverns were often located in prominent places in town. Taverns were a place for good food and drink, surely, but also provided a place to stay for the night and good conversation. In 1807 the town had at least five taverns for patrons. It is difficult to say with certainty exactly how many taverns there were specifically, because taverns had a habit of being bought and sold frequently, and new owners would often change the names of the taverns.[2] Taverns were important to towns, including Elizabethtown, because they were most often the locations for public meetings of all sorts, such as meetings for stockholders. Also, taverns were often the polling places in elections, which gave them additional significance. On any day, though, taverns still provided insight into the life of a town. Discussions or debates between citizens, buying and selling wares, sharing news.[3] All these things in more occured in taverns, making them the hub of town life. Two of the most prominent taverns from early Elizabethtown History are the Sign of the Bear Tavern and the Black Horse Tavern; however, there were numerous others as well.

In 1745 the Sign of the Bear Tavern was built by Thomas and Mary Harris. In 1726 Thomas Harris moved to America from Donegal, Ireland and arrived in Philadelphia. Shortly after his arrival Harris married Mary McKinney, whose family sailed on the same ship. By 1730 the couple settled on a plot of 230 acres along the Conoy Creek.[4] A year later, in 1731, a turnpike later known as "The Great Road" was built to connect Harrisburg to Philadelphia.[5] The route of the road was in part determined by the success of the Harris Tavern. In 1749 Harris sold his tavern, called the Sign of the Bear Tavern to Lazarus Lowrey. Lowrey leased the bear to Barnabas and Elizabeth Hughes until the time they purchased it in 1753. In 1761 Hughes, a trader, moved to Baltimore to work with firms from Belfast and Londonderry.[6] At the time of the move Hughes began leasing the Sign of the Bear to Thomas Black who operated the tavern for three years.[7] After Black, Abraham and Esther Holmes operated the Bear, however it was still owned by Hughes. In 1763, Hughes, ever the businessman, began selling lots of land around a central area, and calling it Elizabeth Towne after his wife.[8] Hughes was determined for a town to actually form, so he sold land to farmers with the following condition: if they didn't build on it within two years the land reverts back to being Hughes' property. In 1765 Hughes died, leaving his property, including an iron furnace in Maryland to his son Samuel Hughes.[9] In 1790 Samuel Hughes sold the

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[1] Richard K. MacMaster. Elizabethtown: The First Three Centuries. (Elizabethtown, PA: Elizabethtown Historical Society, 1999), 37.
[2] Ibid., 59.
[3] Ibid., 60.
[4] Jean-Paul Benowitz. Historic Elizabethtown Pennsylvania: A Walking Tour. Rev. ed. (Elizabethtown, PA: Elizabethtown College Press, 2017.), 7.
[5] Historic Elizabethtown, 7. MacMaster, 28.
[6] Historic Elizabethtown, 6-7.
[7] Historic Elizabethtown, 7. MacMaster, 30.
[8] Historic Elizabethtown, 7.
[9] Ibid., 8.

Sign of the Bear Tavern to Captain Andrew Boggs.[10] Boggs was first licensed as a tavern keeper in 1782 in Donegal Township where he owned a farm and tavern near Bainbridge.[11] In 1789 Boggs sold both his farm and tavern to Valentine Bossler and moved to Elizabethtown where he bought the historic Sign of the Bear Tavern and changed its name to the Black Bear Tavern.[12] Only two years later, in 1801, Boggs advertized the Bear Tavern for sale, but didn't find a satisfactory buyer for several years.[13] In the meantime, he leased the tavern and his farm to John Wolfley, and then in 1809, sold the Black Bear Tavern and 238 acres of land to George Wealand, who owned an inn already. Wealand held this property until he died in 1816. His heirs sold the tavern to John Bender.[14] Under both names, the Bear Tavern was patronized by the Scotch-Irish citizens or other people who spoke English.[15] Over time, taverns went out of fashion as the main meeting place for people. However, The Black Bear Tavern (The Sign of the Bear Tavern) would not be destroyed. The building served many other purposes over the years. It was a tenant house, or a house meant for temporary rental, for a time. It was later a privately owned residence for one family, and then later the office of Abraham C. Treichler. Most recently, the building was an insurance office, and now it stands empty.[16] Even as it is now, it has still fared better than another of Elizabethtown's more prominent taverns: The Black Horse Tavern.

In 1757, on South Market Street, George and Susanna Redsecker built the Black Horse Tavern.[17] In direct contrast to the Bear Tavern, The Black Horse Tavern was where the German speaking residents and visitors of Elizabethtown went to drink and stay. The food was similarly influenced by German culture instilled in the area by immigrants from Germany.[18] The tavern, like many others, changed hands several times while it was opened. In 1831, it was sold to John McLaughlin who only possessed it for a few years before he too sold it. In 1835 Jacob Redsecker purchased the Black Horse Tavern and in 1836 expanded it.[19] In 1842 Christopher Hoffman bought it, and sold it to George Boyer in either 1849 or 1854. In 1890 it was remodeled to match the architecture of the late Victorian era, as it would stay for nearly a century. In 1985 the Black Horse Tavern would be destroyed by a fire and would be converted into a parking lot, as the site still is today. In modern times the location previously occupied by a well patronized tavern is a parking lot for the Elizabethtown First Church of God, a group who would disapprove of the activities which tend to take place in establishments such as the Horse.[20] The Black Horse hotel was known to serve a similar dish to chicken pot pie to its German speaking customers. However, as chicken was not eaten every day during this time, in place of the chicken one could find vegetables and gravy in a miniature pie shell. Local farmers viewed it as a way to consumer leftovers. The Pennsylvania Dutch replaced the American pie crust with German style egg noodles. What we know today as Pennsylvania Dutch chicken potpie is an American invention, not traditionally German.[21]

Although not as prominent and influential as the Black Horse and Sign of the Bear, there were several other taverns throughout Elizabethtown whose food continues to have an impact on society. A member of the Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren, Sally Holsinger was the owner of Aunt Sally's Kitchen on West High Street. It was one of the first restaurants in Elizabethtown to commercially feature cooking from the

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[10] Historic Elizabethtown, 8. MacMaster, 48.
[11] MacMaster, 49.
[12] Historic Elizabethtown, 8. MacMaster, 48.
[13] MacMaster, 59.
[14] Ibid., 60.
[15] Ibid., 31.
[16] Historic Elizabethtown, 8.
[17] Ibid., 34.
[18] Historic Elizabethtown, 34. MacMaster, 31.
[19] Historic Elizabethtown, 34. MacMaster, 54.
[20] Ibid., 34.
[21] Jean-Paul Benowitz, "The Sign of the Bear Tavern," *The Elizabethtown Advocate*, October 2017, accessed October 24, 2017.

Pennsylvania Dutch. French cultural aspects can be seen in throughout Pennsylvania Dutch culture, such as using chicken fat instead of butter or lard in cooking. French fried potatoes were a popular dish found on many Pennsylvania Dutch menus named "schnidden." These were created by the French and Belgians after the Spanish introduced the potato to Europe from South America. Dumplings of varying kinds are very common in the food of the culture.[22] Whoopie Pies are still a common baked good found in Pennsylvania Dutch culture today, although it originated from New England farm women with left over cake batter and icing. They were later sold by a commercial cake company in the 1920s. Later, a woman named Anna Mae Burkholder entered a recipe for Whoopee Pies in an Amish magazine. This is how it later became attributed to the Amish culture.[23]

Henry Boll's Hall was originally one of Elizabethtown's early public schools. The building was constructed before 1840 and was later turned into a hotel. Henry Boll was the proprietor of the Brewhouse on Market Street and later purchased the building and made it into Boll's Hall, a public social house.[24] In 1926, Harry Wagner and Morris Hinkle turned the cite into a bottling company. They purchased Orange Crush syrup and distributed soft drinks from Elizabethtown to Maryland. It was later turned into a restaurant titled Cec's Place.[25] In 1831, Henry Boll established a brewery in an old 1747 tavern. John Abraham Sprenger, a brewer originally from Maytown, purchased the Brewhouse in 1834. He later moved to Lancaster to join his brother-in-law and brother in the family brewing business. A few years later he went into business for himself from 1857 to 1873. However, he sold the business in 1896 to a stock company named Sprenger Brewing Company. Taverns during this era not only provided a place for travelers to stay but they also served as club and meeting paces for those in the area. Because they were meeting houses, it was also the common place for town news to be announced.[26]Henry Boll's Brewhouse provided drinks to the Black Bear Tavern, within feet of the property. Barnabus Hughes was an owner of both of those properties. This location is now Lucky Ducks Bar and Grille.[27]

In December 1877, Anthony Harchendrader, a member of St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church, sold his house on the square to John Horst who opened an ice cream parlor and restaurant called Horst's Hall. Horst installed electric lights, the first business in Elizabethtown to do so, and it was the meeting place for many clubs and groups around Elizabethtown such as the Crescent Club, Patriotic Sons of American, and Knights of the Mystic Chain. John Horst's restaurant was known for all you can eat buffets. All you can eat smorgasbords were not reflective of the Pennsylvania Dutch family tables. Historically, Pennsylvania Dutch tables featured a one-pot meal called "gumbis," a dish common in Elizabethtown and Lancaster County until the 1930s. This too was introduced by the French. Gumbis was served on the table in a common bowl. Members at the table would break off pieces of crusty bread and dip it into the bowl; this was sometimes referred to as "dunkesbrod." One custom of the Pennsylvania Dutch was to take a big casserole pot, already filled with ingredients, to the local bread bakery, where it would be baked and able to be picked up after church the next day for Sunday dinner.[28] In addition to buffets, Horst's Hall was also known for featuring oysters and catfish and waffles. This "catfish and waffles" dish is the origin of the Pennsylvania Dutch "chicken and waffles." Therefore, this dish can be

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[22] Ibid., 11-12.
[23] Ibid., 13.
[24] Richard K. MacMaster, <u>Elizabethtown The First Three Centuries</u> (Morgantown, PA: Masthof Press, 1999), 81.
[25] Ibid., 13.
[26] Ibid., 76-77.
[27] Joseph Santos, "Boll's Brewhouse: 45 North Market Street, Elizabethtown Pennsylvania," Elizabethtown College, April 25, 2017, accessed October 24, 2017, https://www.etown.edu/programs/honors/Bolls%20Brewhouse2.pdf.
[28] Benowitz, <u>Historic Elizabethtown Pennsylvania: A Walking Tour</u>, 24-25.

attributed to the Elizabethtown area. Many truck stops and diners on rural Pennsylvania highways today still serve this dish.[29]

The Phoenix Hotel was located on South Market Street but was bought in 1910 by A. L. Garret, demolished, and in its place, was built a brick hotel three stories high titled Hotel Garret then several other names throughout the years. In 1925, it was purchased by Charles Boggs and he moved his restaurant next door. [30] Boggs' Restaurant was known for his turtle soup for nearly fifty years until closing in the 1940s.[31] Since this time, it has been used as the Elizabethtown Inn and is currently the residence of Funk Brewery.[32]

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[29] Jean-Paul Benowitz, "Horst Hall," *The Elizabethtown Advocate*, June 2017, accessed October 24, 2017.
[30] Benowitz, Historic Elizabethtown Pennsylvania: A Walking Tour, 29.
[31] MacMaster, 193.
[32] Miller, 1.