

THE BAER FAMILY
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Baer is a common name in America and Europe and for this reason the writing of a family history of the Baer's is a difficult task. We learn from the colonial records that prior to 1750, there were over forty immigrants by this name, and since then the number has increased very materially. They also trace their descent to different nationalities, but those of Pennsylvania and the middle and western states are generally of German origin.

Variant Spellings

One of the great problems is the great variety of ways in which the name is written. We find Baer, Baehr, Bhaer, Bahr, Bar, Bair, Bare, Barr and Behr. There is no question that Baer is the correct way for those of Eastern Pennsylvania. They are of German origin, the German way of spelling the name is Bär, and a with the um-lant is equivalent to ae.

In tracing this history intelligently, we will have to deal with three distinct branches of the families, those of John, Melchoir and Christophel, or Steffel, as he was familiarly called. These three along with others, came across the ocean in the ship "Phoenix" and landed at Philadelphia, Sept. 30, 1743. They settled in eastern Pennsylvania and their descendants today number several thousand.

The exact relationship of these three immigrants has never been established. Some think that they were brothers or at least close relation because they came on the same ship and settled in the same section of the state and belonged to the same religious faith, the Reformed Church, but there is no documentary evidence to prove anything. There is old tradition of "three brothers" but it is only tradition. That there is some relationship is not doubted for the Baers' carry the badge of kinship all over their faces.

There are many interesting facts connected with the family history. One of them is the peculiar character of the will of Christopher Baer. He distributed all of his land to his children while yet alive, but he made a will in which he bequeathed to each of his children a copy of the Holy Bible. He describes minutely the character and imprint and where it was to be bought and thus bands it down as the one great treasure of the earth.

The church record at Rieschweiler shows a Christophel Barr had married Catharina Wingert and later left Europe for America on the ship "Phoenix." Prior to his coming to America, he patented 560 acres of land in what is now Whitehall, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. When Christophel bought his tract of land in America, the English agent, eager to transplant the name "Baren Hutte" called it "Bruin Rest." This point can still be pointed out on the old Baer homestead about a mile south-east of Whitehall, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. His history is complete. The records at Easton, show that he was a systematic business man, possessed of great force of character. He was the great-grandfather of George F. Baer, the distinguished lawyer and railroad president. His family consisted of 6 children.

The Baers have large reunions and render interesting programs. Reunion was first organized in 1899.