

## O get Personal with Fur-Trapper Peter Bizaillon

- by Dennis L Oberholtzer, Overholser Family Association

Tied to ML Martin Michael Oberholtzer & MC Marcus Oberholtzer Families, & HA Henry Overholser

**Peter Bizaillon,** bust created by Joe Hottenstein at the Haldeman House, Haldeman Mansion Preservation Society



Pierre Bizaillon was born about 1662 in Saint-Jean-d'Aubrigoux, Haute-Loire France. He migrated with his three brothers to New France around 1680, and began fur trapping by 1686. Brother Etienne traded furs with the Ottawa Indians, and was killed by the Iroquois in 1697. Brother Benoit worked with the Sioux and farmed outside Montreal. He drowned in June 1700 while in a canoe outside Montreal. Michel traded with the Illinois Indians, and helped in the First Fox War of 1715. He was later banned from trading in Pennsylvania, and lived the remaining years in Laprairie.

Peter Bizaillon attempted several business adventures as far as the Mississippi River, but came to Pennsylvania around 1688 "poor and miserable". He became a trader and fur-trapper in south-east Pennsylvania. He joined the trading company of Jacques Le Tort. Le Tort was a Huguenot refugee from the waring which happened in the Palatinate. Le Tort and Bizaillon purchased property side by side along the Susquehanna River in West Donegal Township. There in 1694, Peter met his old friend Martin Chartier, who had married a Shawnee woman, and assimilated into their tribe.

Peter purchased 500 acres of land on the edge of the Schuylkill River in Coventry Township. He later either sold or had the land reclaimed to the Free Society of Traders. From 1708 to 1713, some of the land was held by warrant to Matthew Brooks. "The survey for Brooks was that of a 500 acre tract identical with lots 1,2,3, and 4 of the Topo map near Wenilworth and Pottstown. [Years later] Marcus' eldest son Jacob, transferred the lands of lot 2 (formerly that of Marcus) and lot 4 to Christian Brewer. Lot 3 was held by Crissinger until Marcus' second son Marks returned from Bucks Co, .... obtaining a warrant for lot #3 in 1741." - John L Overholt, 3/29/1981

By 1696 Peter lived at St John's in Chester County PA, along present day Route 340 near Compass. That area was 30 mile from the nearest inhabitants at that time. There he continued to trade with the Native Americans. While there was an overabundance of furs going from Canada to France, England was very willing to pay a higher price for furs. William Penn and other Penn's Woods officials were skeptical of Peter's contacts, and arrested him sometimes on false or minor charges. But James Logan wrote William Penn on Peter's behalf: "Peter has long traded here, and behaved himself well ..."

In October 1708 Bizaillon was granted to build a house from James Logan. That was a 500 acre tract purchased in 1738 at St John's Church, in present day Compass, Chester County PA. Peter had been working with Franz Ludwig Michel, a Swiss explorer in locating mines in Conestoga. The Susquehanna Indians quarried a silver mine, and a Limestone quarry on Williams Run near Christiana. There was a copper outcrop above the London Grove Tavern which would be built to be used for experiments, surveying, and as a travel stop for newly arriving immigrants. That may be where Bizaillon met the Oberholtzer family immigrants in 1710.

- see *A Surveyor's House in Paradise?*, Overholser Family Association Website

*Marcus Oberholzer and his wife Elizabeth were born in Europe, .... and lived for a short time in Holland before traveling to London on May 6, 1709 in the first group of ships carrying Palatinate Refugees. .... They were settled by Thomas Fairman, a surveyor for William Penn, on 300 acres of the [southern] 500 acres previously held by Peter Bizaillon, a fur-trader protege of Richard Logan, Secretary of the colony [of Penn's Woods]. The land and a house built in 1700 were on the west bank of the Schuylkill River [in present day East Coventry Township in Chester County.]* - Marcus (1664-1725) and Elizabeth Oberholtzer Family, John L Overholt to OFA

David Fairman wrote his will in 1711 and died in 1714. "Pennsylvania Archives records that Marcus appeared in the court/commissioners board and said that Fairman pretended to settle him on 300 acres of land on the west bank of the Schuylkill River but died before giving him title. He paid 48 pounds of the warrant for 300 acres of land. It was surveyed and patented by his youngest son Henry in 1734 as I recall and by his eldest son Jacob when he sold land to Christian Brewer."

- Letter to Barbara Ford by John L Overholt on January 28, 1981

Was Thomas Fairman the father of David Fairman, or the other way around? Or did he have a double name: David Thomas Fairman? Fairman was one of the Free Society of Traders, which would later become the London Land Company.

(MC) Marcus Oberholzer immigrated to America in 1712. It probably took a year till he traveled across the river at Germantown on the First Ferry, then north to Coventry Township. He would acquire Lots 2, 3 and 4, which equaled 300 acres. The northern Lot 1 would be settled temporarily by relative (ML) Martin Michael Oberholtzer until 1717, when Michael moved his family back to Conestoga at present day Millersville. There he would purchase a 200 acre tract northwest of the original 1710 Mennonite settlement. His son (ML1) Martin would follow Peter Bizaillon, and likely worked for him as a trapper/hunter on the west side of the Susquehanna River in what is now York and Cumberland Counties. When (ML) Martin Michael Oberholtzer died in 1733, his children sold the Millersville tract, and son (ML2) Jacob and moved to what would become Fredericksburg in northern Lancaster County, presently called Lebanon County, Pennsylvania. Martin was probably married at this time, yet still in contact with his parents family.

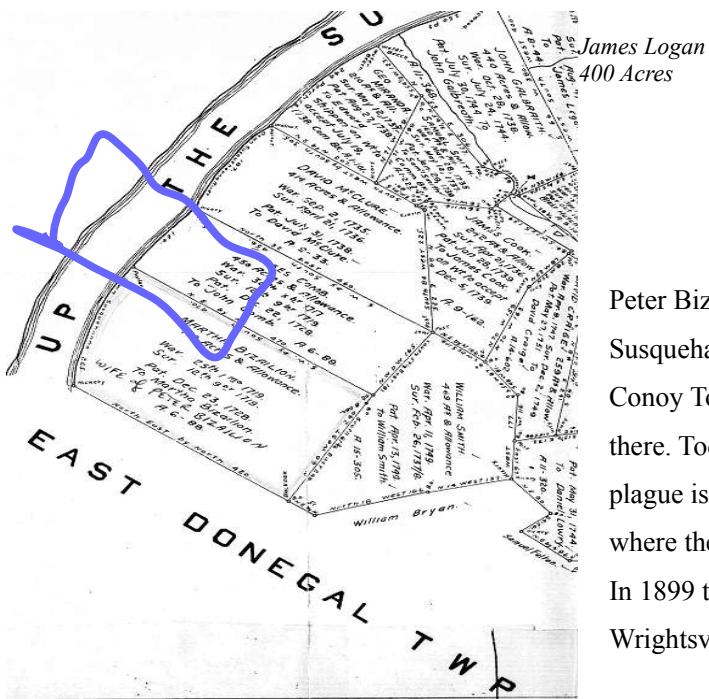
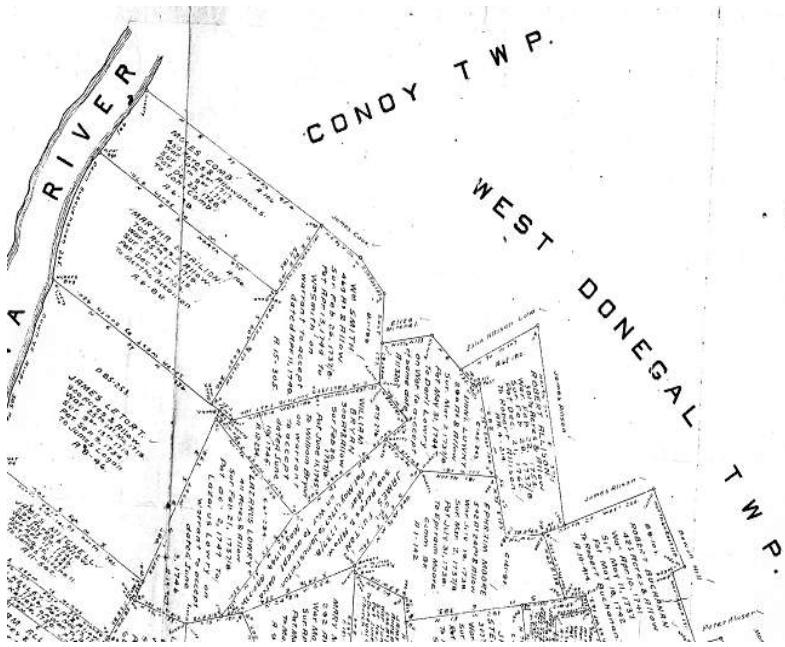
Peter's Road cuts across Lancaster County from Compass on Route 340, to the Susquehanna River at the Haldeman Mansion in Conoy Township. Named after Peter Bizaillon, it was the earliest path in the central part of the county to be used to haul goods to Philadelphia, enroute to England. Furs from both the Poplar Indians on an island in the River west of Paxtang Township, and the Conoy Indians who were working their way north by way of the River, traded furs and they were sent to Philadelphia.

Peter Bizaillon's close partner Chartier died in 1718. Peter had moved just south of present day Bainbridge along the Susquehanna River, where he became a trader of furs from the Poplar Indians. It is at this time that it is surmised how ML1 Martin Oberholtzer Jr went along with Peter, and moved across the river to hunt furs for Bizaillon. Martin would die in York County PA in 1749. It is not known if Peter owned land in the present Dauphin County area. But he did establish a trading post in Paxtang.

Very little is known of (ML1) Martin Michael Oberholtzer - died 1749 York Co PA. His bond of 300 LB was dated November 20, 1740, with an inventory of 14 spoons, 5 plates, a spinning wheel, bonds & notes amounting to 68 lbs. The fact that Michael had a spinning wheel implies he had a wife. Thus it is assumed he had a family. There were only two Oberholtzer families in present day Dauphin County in the 1700's. A listing on the 1785 tax records show a JL81 Jacob Oberholtzer, son of JL8 Jacob & Anna Lehman Oberholtzer. Son Jacob married Esther Burkholder, but they had no issue. An Earhardt Oberholtzer is also listed.

Peter and his wife Martha Coomb, daughter of the late John Coomb of Philadelphia, purchased the land in Conoy Township in Martha's name. That way if Peter got in trouble, the couple would not lose their lands. French living in eastern Penn's Woods were not very well liked. By 1730 Peter retired with his wife Martha Combe (1693-1764) on the 700 + acres in Conoy Township. (note spelling variation of Coomb)

After retirement, the couple moved to St John's. Peter died on July 18, 1742 aged 80, and with his wife are buried in St John's Churchyard at Compass PA. He had one daughter, Jahanna Bezeillon, born about 1690.



Peter Bizaillon and wife Martha owned 700 acres along the Susquehanna River bordering what is today East Donegal and Conoy Townships. The Old Peter's Road ended at the River there. Today it is called Locust Grove Road. Peter's Memorial plaque is at the north end of the road at Bainbridge Cemetery, where the road meets South Second Street.

In 1899 the Haldeman house property was owned by the Wrightsville Lime Company, and it consisted of 200 acres.

Father of MC Marcus Oberholtzer and ML Martin Michael Oberholtzer :

I-D Marx Oberholzer (twin of Hans Heinrich) 1633 Aa, Wald, Zürich , bap July 2, 1634 - d Sept 14, 1680

1657 emigrated to Buhenauerhof, near Sinsheim

1657 emigrated to Durlachauerhof, near Sinsheim  
1660- lived at and 1661 Keeper of the Immelhauserhof

Buried at the Buschenhoff in Hilsbach (today Baden, between Heidelberg & Heilbronn) without singing or bells.

- m Margaret (Barbary) Dobler (Tobler)  
Widow immigrated with sons Jacob, Martin, & Marcus.  
?Margaretha & Barbary were interchangeable names.
- 1--1 Catherine Barbara Oberholtzer 1663 - 18 in 1682 Renounced Anabaptism, Essenz Reformed Ch.  
1--2 [MC] Marcus Oberholtzer c1664 EUR - Dec 3, 1726 Coventry Twp, Chester Co  
1st Party to leave Rotterdam; Arrived 1709 in England from Rotterdam at age 45, with wife & 5 children.  
Immigrated 1712 Mary Hope
- m Elizabeth Ely Lived in Coventry Twp, Chester Co PA
- 1--3 Hans Jagli (Jacob) Oberholtzer c1665 - Lived at Steinsfurt, GER Mennonite in 1690  
1st m prior to 1686 Since [JF] Jacob is born prior to the marriage of Maria Nussler  
2nd m Apr 15, 1690 by their "Lehrer", Steinsfurt Reformed KB Ch. to Maria Nussler  
d/o Jacob Nussler
- 1--4 [ML] Martin Michael Oberholtzer c1667 EUR - dp 1733 Lancaster Co Imm 1710 Mary Hope  
Lived on Bezaillon property in Chester Co till 1717, moved to Millersville, Lancaster Co (included Dauphin & Lebanon at that time)  
1710 Warrant in Pequea, not on 1711 survey. 200 acres in 1725 Millersville surveyed by Taylor 10/21/1718  
1733 sons Jacob & Martin sold land to Michael Kryter.
- 2--1 [ML1] Martin Oberholtzer - 1749 York Co PA ?In York Co due to fur trade?
- POSSIBILITY: The following connection of Earhart Oberholtzer's mother and family is on the pretense of place and time only, and that all information available does not conflict. It is hoped that with this info, others may be able to search for and find other clues as to these people. - Dennis L Oberholtzer, April 2008
- m \_\_\_\_\_ Earhardt dau of Phillip Earhardt who lived beside Bezallion in Chester County PA prior to 1719.  
Peter Bizallion having purchased a small improvement made by Nathaniel Christopher on the Susquehanna River, above Conestoga, desires to purchase 700 acres of Land, to include the said Improvement, the whole being for Martha his Wife, daughter of John Coomb, late of Philadelphia. It is agreed that 700 acres be laid out to the said Martha, the Wife of the said Peter Bazillion, in the Place aforesaid, in a regular tract fronting on the said River and to include the said Improvement and to extend so far back into the Woods as the Place will bear, for which the said Peter agrees to pay L70 for the whole and on Shill. Sterling Quitrent for each 100 acres. The Warrant signed, dated ye 25th 1st Month, 1719.  
- Pennsylvania Archives, Minute Book H, 2nd Series Vol 19, F146, Pg 41
- Peter Bezallion moved to Paxtang in 1719 to grow his fur trade, including trade w/Conoy Indians. Earhardt Oberholtzer's father is likely ML1 Martin Oberholtzer. They are the only recorded Oberholtzer names found in the Daulphin and York/Cumberland area in the 18th century.
- 3--1 Earhardt Oberholtzer On 1790 Dauphin Co Census, w/ 1 female, 4 male under 16  
Earhart is estimated to be born c1770, and possible bro/o HA Henry Overholser  
4--1 son \_\_\_\_\_ Oberholtzer  
4--2 son \_\_\_\_\_ Oberholtzer  
4--3 son \_\_\_\_\_ Oberholtzer  
4--4 son \_\_\_\_\_ Oberholtzer
- 3--2 HA Henry Overholser c1772 - Has the proper age to be a brother of Earhardt. A DNA test between someone of the HA family and someone from the ML or JA families could confirm this.
- 2--2 [ML2] Jacob Oberholtzer pos1690/1700 -  
1739 warrant 169 acres on Swatara Creek in Fox Hall, Bethel  
169 acres patented by son Martin July 21, 1773
- 3--1 [ML21] Martin Oberholtzer c1733 - Apr 1815 Bethel Twp m Anna Frantz
- 1--5 Anna Barbara Oberholtzer b1670 - widow age 72 - d 1742 - John L Overholt, 1985

Martin was one of the signers of the June 24, 1710 letter of thanks to the Dutch from London. A letter written by William Penn to the English Minister to the Netherlands gave them passage through Holland. This letter was written in London, England June 21, 1710 and signed by Martin Oberholtzer, Martin Kendig, Christian Herr, Jacob Muller, Jacob Meile, and Hans Herr. They were then in England ready to sail in a few days to America. They took passage on the "Mary Hope" of which John Annis was master. It sailed from London on Friday June 29, 1710 with ninety-four passengers on board, and arrived at Philadelphia in September 1710.

**ML Martin Michael Oberholtzer** c1667 Europe - dp 1733 Lancaster Co, one of the signers of the 6/24/1710 letter of thanks to the Dutch from London; immigrated on the Mary Hope, arriving in Philadelphia 9/23/1710. He was on the 1710 warrant for 10,000 acres in Pequea, now Lancaster County, but was not on the 1711 survey, was on 10/21/1718 Talyor.

Martin purchased 200 acres by the Conestoga Creek, southeast of Millersville, from Alexander Benes. On 5/14/1733 Martin was deceased and his two sons Jacob and Martin Jr sold the land to Michael Kryter.

REF: Chester Co Old Rights Bk, Vol 2 p112; John L Overholt, *The Marcus Oberholtzer (1664-1725) Family* PMH Magazine Oct 1986 pp 30-31; Jane Evans Best, *Swiss Origins of Groff, Hess, Weber, Landis, & Oberholtzer Families* PMH Magazine Apr 1990 p25; Survey of Alexander Benes land, Chester Old Rights Book, Vol 1 pg 112, see also Book D-82 p 43.

**ML1 Martin Oberholtzer** c1703 GER - 1749 York Co PA His bond of 300Lbs was dated 11/20/1749, sureties were Peter Leaman,

Michael Laup & John Adlum with Peter Leaman as administrator. In his inventory were 14 spoons, 5 plates, a spinning wheel, bonds & notes amounting to 68Lbs. No distribution is in the file from the inventory, we assume that he had a family. He was not on the ship records of 1710 immigrant list. He would have been underage. See article on Peter Bizaillion, as he was likely a fur trapper for Peter.  
REF: York Co Adm 11/20/1749; birth date by Jeanne L Trump, Palmyra PA

REFERENCES:

- Warrant Maps of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania*, Geri Gilbert, Masthof Press 2005  
John L Overholt writings in Overholser Family Association Files  
Joe Hottenstein, curator at Haldeman Mansion in Conoy Township, 2025  
*Oberholtzer-Landis Family*, Dennis L Oberholtzer 2011  
1899 *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Lancaster County*, Fox Chapel Publishing, 2006 Historic Arts Press  
Note: Peter Bizaillion is spelled several different ways in the historical records. I chose to use his French spelling.  
*The Oberholtzer Book*, 1995 Barbara B Ford  
Joe Hottenstein of Haldeman Mansion Preservation Society (Birthplace of Professor Samuel Steman Haldeman 1812-1880)  
*Six Oberholzer Emigrants from Wald Switzerland*, Feb 2009 OFA Bulletin