



*Archival and Manuscript Collections Finding Aid*

**ACCESSION No.:** HRHS – 127

**COLLECTION TITLE:** Peter Bernhart Fraktur Collection

**DATES:** 1810

**SIZE:** 1 folder

**DONOR:** Thomas Shank – Samuel Shenck fraktur and unissued fraktur  
Timothy T. Herring, Jr. – Lewis Long fraktur

**PROCESSED:** Processed 03/17/2015

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:**

In the 18th and 19th century, frakturs were common ways to commemorate important family occasions, like housewarmings, births and weddings. The most prolific local fraktur artist among the German-Swiss community was schoolmaster Peter Bernhart.

Peter Bernhart was born in the mid-1700s. We know from census records that he was born before 1766. His wife was Mary, but we do not know her last name. The couple's first documented appearance in Valley records is in 1788 when they purchased 30.5 acres of land along the Great Wagon Road in Woodstock, Virginia. The Bernharts are said to have run an inn in Woodstock. The next year, the couple sold their Shenandoah County land and moved to Rockingham County.

In June 1789, the *Virginia Gazette and Winchester Advertiser* newspaper noted that Bernhart was now an agent for Winchester's German-language newspaper *Virginische Zeitung* in the "Kieseltown" area of Rockingham County. In August 1789, Bernhart announced in the *Gazette* that "the first of August he commenced the business of riding as Post from Winchester to Staunton" every other week carrying mail and the English and German newspapers from Winchester.

Bernhart rode from his home near Keezletown to Winchester every other Wednesday to begin his route. He arrived in Rockingham County by Friday and finished the route in Staunton on Saturday. Bernhart functioned as post rider over this course for nearly thirty years, from 1789 to 1817. He described the mail he carried as all that "any person may wish to forward with care." When regular mail service began between the two Valley towns, Bernhart gave up his route.

The Bernhart family lived in Mountain Valley north of Keezletown near Armentrout's Church in 1791. He taught a German school in the log schoolhouse at the church that year. Bernhart sold some of his Mountain Valley land in two parcels in 1792 and 1793.

**SCOPE AND CONTENT:**

Three Peter Bernhart frakturs, one for Samuel Shenck dated 1810, one unissued, and one for Lewis Long dated 1808.

**COLLECTION INVENTORY:**

Peter Bernhart fraktur for Samuel Shenck dated 1810.

Peter Bernhart fraktur, unissued and undated.

Peter Bernhart fraktur for Lewis Long, 1808