

GENEALOGICAL
AND
PERSONAL HISTORY
OF
BEAVER COUNTY

PENNSYLVANIA

UNDER THE EDITORIAL SUPERVISION OF

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SWERINGEN The two most common spellings of this name are the one given at the head of this chronicle and Swearingen. Members of the branch herein recorded use the two interchangeably, a fault that will probably always be a fruitful source of error in identifying family records. The record of this branch begins with Gerret Van Sweringen, born in Beemsterdam, Holland, in 1636. He was the youngest son of a family belonging to the nobility, and received a liberal education. When a young man he performed responsible duties in the maritime service of the Dutch West India Company, and in 1656, when that company fitted out the ship "Prince Maurice" with emigrants and supplies for the Dutch colony on the Delaware river in America, he was appointed its supercargo. This vessel sailed from the port of Amsterdam on December 21, 1656, and was to have touched at New Amsterdam (now New York City), but on the night of March 8, 1657, was stranded off Fire Island, near the southern coast of Long Island. The next day, in freezing weather, the passengers and crew, in a frail boat, gained the barren shore, where they remained for several days without fire. On the third day they saw some Indians, one of whom was sent with a message to Stuyvesant, then governor of New Amsterdam, who came with a sloop and carried them to that place. A part of the cargo of the stranded ship having been saved before the ship disintegrated and sank, another ship was

loaded, chartered at New Amsterdam, and on the sixteenth of April they sailed for their destination, which they reached in safety in five days. After the wreck Gerret asked to be released from the company's service, as he intended to there make his home, and there being "nothing more for him to do" his request was granted. In some of his writings the events, political and military, of the time, are well-described, and furnish confirmation of many historical topics, concerning which there might have been room for doubt.

He married (first) at New Amstel, about 1659, Barbarah de Barrette, who was born at Valenciennes, France. He was sheriff, commissary, and a member of the council, being also "interested in the cultivation of some low-lands, a duck-pond, and trade." In 1660 he went to Holland, accompanied by his wife, and there remained a year in behalf of the colony. Returning the following year, he resumed his former duties. After New Amsterdam was surrendered to the British in 1664, Sir Robert Carr was sent to demand the surrender of New Amstel. Gerret Van Sweringen writes concerning this: "The Fort and Country was brought under submission by Sir Robert Carr as deputed with two shippes to that intent. Sir Robert Carr did protest often to me that he did not come as an enemy, but as a friend demanding only in friendship what was ye King's right in that Country. There was taken from the City and inhabitants thereabouts one hundred sheep, and thirty or forty horses, fifty or sixty cows and oxen, the number of sixty or seventy negroes * * * and the estate of the Governor and myself, except some house stufte, and a negro I got away, and some other moveables Sir Robert Carr did permit me to sell." It has been said of him that after the surrender of the colony to the English he publicly broke his sword across his knee, and throwing it to the right and to the left, renounced all allegiance to the Dutch authorities. Shortly after the surrender he moved to Maryland, where in April, 1669, he, his wife, and two children, on their petition to Lord Baltimore, were naturalized by act of the general assembly held at St. Marys in that province. The act is important because the ownership of land was restricted to British subjects.

Some years after going to Maryland he wrote an account of the Dutch settlements on the Delaware river, which account was probably written for the Maryland council to use as evidence in the boundary dispute between Lord Baltimore and William Penn. It was executed May 12, 1684, "at a council at Matapany Sewall, in the Province of Maryland," and the jurat described Gerret as being "of the City of St. Maries, gent, aged eight and forty years or thereabouts." He was an "innholder" at St. Marys and owned land in that county and also in Talbott county. In the proclamation of the charter of the city of St. Marys, issued by Lord Baltimore in 1668, he was appointed an alderman

of the city. In 1674 he built the city's stocks and whipping-post. He was appointed sheriff of the county in 1686 and again in 1687.

Barbarah Van Sweringen, his wife, died about 1670, and he married (second) Mary Smith, of St. Marys, the ante-nuptial marriage settlement being executed October 5, 1676. He died in 1698 and his widow some years afterwards, she "in the faith of the English church." The children of his first marriage were: Elizabeth, Zachariah, Thomas, of whom further; children of his second marriage were: Joseph, Charles, Eleanor, who married a Carroll, Theresa, Dorothy, and another daughter, who married William Bladen.

Gerret Van Sweringen was born in Beemsterdam, SWEARINGEN Holland, in 1636. He was the younger son of a family belonging to the nobility and received a liberal education. While still a young man he performed responsible duties in the service of the Dutch East India Company, and in 1656, when that company fitted out a ship, "Prince Maurice," with emigrants and supplies for the Dutch Colony on the Delaware river in America, he was appointed as supercargo of the expedition. This vessel sailed from the port of Amsterdam, December 21, 1656, and was to have touched at New Amsterdam, now New York City, but on the night of March 8, 1657, the vessel was stranded off Fire Island, near the southern coast of Long Island, and the next day in freezing weather, the passengers and crew managed to get to the barren shore in a frail boat. They had no means of making a fire and were exposed to all the fury of the elements. On the third day they saw some Indians, and one of them was sent with a message to Stuyvesant, then governor of New Amsterdam, who came with a sloop and carried them to safety in that city. A part of the cargo of the ship having been saved, it was put aboard another vessel chartered at New Amsterdam, and on April 16, they sailed for their destination, arriving there in safety after a further voyage of five days.

After his unfortunate experience with this vessel, the "Prince Maurice," Gerret Van Sweringen asked to be released from the service of the Dutch East India Company, as he intended staying in the new country and as there "was nothing more for him to do." His request was granted.

Fort Casimir, on the Delaware river, was established by the Dutch in 1651, and was surprised in 1654 by the Swedes, taken into possession by them, but regained by the Dutch in 1655. At this time its name was changed to New Amstel, now New Castle, Delaware. The Dutch held it until 1664, when all New Netherlands came under British dominion. Concerning current affairs, Gerret Van Sweringen says:

The Company being soe indebted to the City of Amsterdam as to the setting out of a man of war in reducing the South river (the Delaware) into their possession again they were resolved to make sale of their said title unto the said City. In fine the City of Amsterdam were Lords and Patrons of that colony. A ship called the Prince Maurice was provided to goe to the said Colony, a Gov. and Councils appointment, and a company of soldiers consisting of about sixty men put aboard, and I myselfe was made Supagargo over the said ship and goods. The passengers coming into Deleware in a ship called the Beaver, hired at New York,

after the ship Prince Maurice was lost. This was the 25th day of April, 1657, when we took possession of the fort now called New Castle, and the soldiers of the West India Company quitted the same. He was married at this place, about 1659, to Barbarah de Barrette, who was born at Valenciennes, France. He was sheriff commissary, and a member of the council, and was also interested in the cultivation of some low lands, a duck pond and trade.

The following letter of a personal nature was written to a friend in Holland, who was evidently a government official. It was filed with the official records, probably because of its reference to the affairs of the colony, which references are, in the main, omitted here:

Noble, Worshipful, Wise, Right Prudent Sir.

Sir:—With due respect and reverence have I hereby taken the liberty to greet you, through bounden duty of gratitude to devote to you all the days of my life. I hope you will not consider the insignificance of my person, but excuse the previous and present boldness of so freely writing to your Honor. Such being the case, I cannot neglect thereby to communicate my promotion; about a year and a half after my departure from Patria, with your Honor's favorable recommendation, I have been appointed schout (sheriff), here subject to the approbation of the Honorable Principals; previously I have taken care of the store as a clerk; and, after J. Rinevelt's death, as a commissary, from which I have now requested to be discharged, as I have been recently made Second Councillor. Have received some goods from my Brother all which I have laid out in my house, horses and mules. I am also married. Herewith I commend your Honor to the mercy and protection of the Most High God, and remain your most Obedient humble servant.

G. V. Sweringen;

New Anstel, 8th of Dec. 1659.

In 1660 he went to Holland, taking his wife with him, and remained there one year in behalf of the colony. Returning the following year, he resumed his duties. After New Amsterdam was surrendered to the British in 1664, Sir Robert Carr was sent to demand the surrender of New Anstel. Gerret says:

The Fort and Country was brought under submission by Sir Robert Carr as disputed with two shippes to that intent. Sir Robert Carr did protest often to me that he did not come as an enemy, but as a friend demanding only in friendship what was ye King's right in that Country. There was taken from the City and inhabitants thereabouts one hundred ships, 30 or 40 horses, 50 or 60 cows and oxen, the No. of 60 or 70 negroes, and the estate of the Gov. and myself, except some house stuffe, and a negor I gott away, and some other moveables Sir Robert Carr did permit me to sell.

It has been said of him that after the surrender of the colony to the English, he publicly broke his sword across his knee, throwing the pieces to the right and left, and renounced all allegiance to the Dutch authorities. Shortly after the surrender he removed to Maryland. In April, 1669, his wife and two children, on their petition to Lord Baltimore, were naturalized by the act of the general assembly held at St. Mary's in that province. The importance of this act will be understood when it is stated that the ownership of land was restricted to British subjects. Some years after going to Maryland he wrote an account of the Dutch settlements on the Delaware river, which account was probably written for the Maryland council to use as evidence in the boundary disputes between Lord Baltimore and William Penn. It was executed May 12, 1684, "at a council at Matapany Sewall, in the Providence of Maryland," and the jurat described Gerret as being "Of the City of St. Maries, gent, aged 8 and 40 yrs. or thereabouts." The extracts heretofore given are from this account.

He was an "innholder" at St. Mary's and owned land in that county and also in Talbott county. In the proclamation of the charter of the City of St. Mary's, issued by Lord Baltimore in 1668, he was appointed an alderman of the city. In 1674 he built the city's stocks and whipping post. He was appointed sheriff of the county in 1686 and again in 1687. Barbarah de Barrette, his wife, was born at Valenciennes, France, died about 1670, and he married Mary Smith, of St. Mary's, the ante-nuptial settlement being executed October 5, 1676. He died in 1698 and his widow some years later. She "in the faith of the English Church." The issue of his first marriage: 1. Elizabeth. 2. Zacharias, born in New Castle, Delaware, about 1663, was yet an infant when his father removed to Maryland; in 1694 he, with his father, joined in the address of the officials and freemen of the city of St. Mary's to the governor, against having the meeting of the assembly changed from that place to Annapolis; his widow, whose given name was Martha, survived him; in her will she mentioned a daughter Jane and appointed a guardian of her children, and refers to Zacharias as "late of St. Mary's county." 3. Thomas, see forward. Children of second marriage: 4. Joseph, who was probably born in St. Mary's in 1677; his father in his will appointed "wife and son Joseph" executors. 5. Charles, probably died before his mother, as he was not mentioned in her will while he was mentioned in his father's. 6. Eleanor, who married a Mr. Carroll. 7. Theresa. 8. Dorothy. 9. Another daughter, who married William Bladen.