

Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania. Genealogy, Family History, Biography, Containing Historical Sketches of Old Families and of Representatives and Prominent Citizens Past and Present. In Two Volumes – Illustrated, Volume II, Chicago, J. H. Beers and Company, 1916

A. Frank Geist, of Hegins, is a business man who has attained honorable standing by giving his patrons the best accommodations to be obtained in the local market, and he is equally esteemed for his worth as a man. The **Geist family** to which he belongs is of pioneer stock of Northumberland County, this State, where he and his father were born. His grandfather, **Peter Geist**, lived and died there, following his trade of blacksmith and also engaging in farming. The history of the family has been lately traced back to the year 1129. From the Official Register of the Holy Roman Empire, we find that the family has an official "Coat of Arms" and is of the nobility of Ravensburg, Germany. A copy of this "Coat of Arms" is in the hands of **A. F. Geist** of Hegins, Pennsylvania. The word **Geist** has been spelled in six different ways. We find it first **Gayst Van Wildeneck**, A. D. 1129, King. In 1300 we find it spelled **Geyst**, in 1590 **Geist**, in 1750 **Goist** in Germany, and in the Colonies of America **Geist** and **Gist**. In 1842 and to the present time it is spelled **Guist** in Germany and in the United States **Guist** and **Geist**. The family to which **A. F. Geist** belongs and whose biography appears later, emigrated from Lorraine, Germany, with the Schwenkfelders' colony in or about the year 1725 and settled at Pottstown, Montgomery Co., Pa., where **A. F. Geist's** great-grandfather, **Andrew Geist**, was born on Jan. 26, 1755. This great-grandfather of **A. F. Geist** came to what was then and is yet known by some people as Swoven Creek or Green Brier post office, Northumberland Co., Pa., in or about the year 1777. He came to this place in his young manhood and took up a tract of land from the United States government about the time of the Revolutionary war, consisting of about three hundred acres situated half way between the Leek Kill and Green Brier post offices. He died Dec. 18, 1849 at the age of ninety-four years, ten months, twenty-three days, on the old homestead which he obtained from the United States government, and is buried at Himmel's Church, Roebuck's post office, or about four miles west from the old homestead. This church property consists of a beautiful church situated on a tract of land given by the United States government to the Reformed and Lutheran congregations for church and school purposes; said property is today under the control of these congregations and in its cemetery are buried some soldiers who fought in the Revolutionary war.

While great-grandfather **Andrew Geist** was working on this homestead in Swoven Creek, he had but one cow on these three hundred acres of land, and this cow had no tail. During this period the Revolutionary war was in progress and **Andrew** was drafted to serve in this great war for freedom, and not desiring to serve he sold this tailless cow in order to raise money to buy a substitute to serve in his place. It was during this time, from the landing of the Schwenkfelders colony to the close of the Revolutionary war, that the word **Geist** was spelled **Gist**, appearing this way on official records and papers examined by **R. P. Geist**, justice of the peace, Green Brier, Northumberland Co., Pa., 1915.

On the homestead of **Andrew Geist**, the grandfather of **A. F. Geist**, **Peter Geist**, was born Dec. 21, 1804, and died at this place on Jan. 8, 1875, aged seventy years, eighteen days. He is buried at St. John's Reformed and Lutheran Church, Leek Kill, Pa. In his boyhood days **Peter** left the old homestead and went to Washingtonville, Montour Co., Pa. There he learned his trade, that of blacksmith. He also married at this place and soon after moved back onto the old homestead in Swoven Creek, where he continued at his trade and did farming. Here **Jacob**, the father of **A. F. Geist**, was born Feb. 11, 1835.

Jacob Geist, father of **A. Frank Geist**, learned the trade of carpenter in his youth and followed that calling all his life. In 1881 he came to Hegins, Schuylkill County, where he continued work at his trade and resided to the end of his days, dying in the year 1898. His widow, whose maiden name was **Catherine Schwartz**, still lives in Hegins Township, near Hegins, on the **Geist** home place. She was born in Hegins Township, Schuylkill County, where her father, **Abraham Schwartz**, engaged in farming and made his home until his death. Eight children were born to **Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Geist**, four sons and four daughters, namely: **Ellen** is the widow of **Samuel E. Schwalm** and lives in Hegins Township, at what was known as Kessler's gristmill; **S. Calvin** resides at Hegins; **Elizabeth** is the wife of **S. R. Masser**, who has a general store at Hegins; **Cora** is married to **A. C. Kessler**, a farmer of Hegins Township; **Katie** is married to **Harry Leonard**, of Tremont, Schuylkill County, baggage master in the employ of the Philadelphia & Reading Railway Company; **A. Frank** is next in order of birth; **Thomas J.** is a graduate of the Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pa., and now engaged as a teacher at Ephrata, Lancaster Co., Pa.; **Nathan Francis** is doing a general hauling and teaming business at Hegins, where he lives.

A. Frank Geist was born in 1877 in Northumberland County, Pa., and has lived at Hegins from early boyhood. He began his education in the Hegins Township schools, later attended graded school at Hegins, and supplemented his public school training with a course at the Shamokin (Pa.) business college, in his native county. In his young manhood he taught eight terms of school in Hegins Township, during the winter season, finding employment the rest of the year at the carpenter's trade, which he learned partly under his father's tuition. It was only a step from that vocation to his present line. In 1907 he established the lumber trade and planing mill at Hegins which has since occupied most of his time. His experience as a carpenter has proved an extra qualification for the business he now follows, assisting him in judging the quality of materials and filling mill orders intelligently. No doubt his knowledge of building materials and requirements has had much to do with the prosperity of his enterprise, for it has been gratifyingly successful, and the plant is considered one of the most useful industrial establishments in the locality. **Mr. Geist** is looked upon as a trustworthy man in every respect. His fellow members in the I. O. O. F. lodge at Hegins have chosen him secretary, and he is serving at present as treasurer of the Reformed Church of Hegins, to which he and his wife belong. Fidelity to all his obligations is one of the most noteworthy characteristics he possesses.

In 1900 **Mr. Geist** married **Katie Bair**, a native of Hegins Township, and five children have been born to this marriage: **Allen H.**, **Guy A.**, **Lloyd W.**, **Tillie V.** and **Earl B.**

Cyrus W. Bair, **Mrs. Geist's** father, was born in Perry County, Pa., and her grandfather, **Joseph Bair**, was also a native of that county. The latter was a farmer by occupation. The father learned the trade of plasterer, and besides following same farmed and taught school, following his profession for more than thirty years, in the Mahantongo Valley, Schuylkill County, and in Dauphin County. He died in 1910, and is buried at Fountain, in Hegins Township. He was twice married, first to **Isabella Otto**, a native of Hegins Township, daughter of **David Otto**, a farmer of that township. **Mrs. Isabella Bair** died about twenty-five years ago, and is buried in the cemetery at Fountain. She was the mother of two children, **Mrs. Geist** being the elder; the younger, **Jesse A. Bair**, lives at Ashland, Schuylkill County. For his second wife **Mr. Bair** married **Mrs. Sarah Smith**, of Barry Township, Schuylkill County, and to this union were born three children: **Lydia** is the wife of **Robert Eckler**, of Hegins; **Roy S.** and **Stephen A.** also live at Hegins, making their home with their sister, **Mrs. Eckler**.