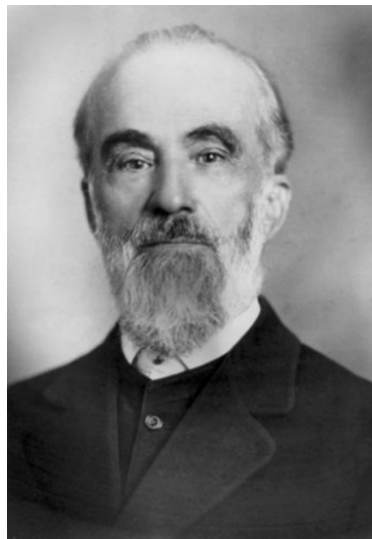


Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey  
2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027 and Shawn Gipe Class of 2027  
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## George N. Falkenstein (1859-1948)

George Ness Falkenstein was recorded to have been born near Loganville, York County, on July 16, 1859.<sup>1</sup> His parents were David Falkenstein (1816–1866) & Mary Anna Ness (1835–1874). He married Eva S Shellenberger Falkenstein (1864–1958) and eventually had one child named Lilian Falkenstein Willoughby (1892–1973).<sup>2</sup> Falkenstein worked in a grain mill from an early age following his father's death. The strenuous work at the grain mill resulted in a permanent back injury and left him with limited abilities. His work at the mill also left him with limited time for a formal education. Falkenstein decided to work long enough to earn the money necessary to attend school.<sup>3</sup> Falkenstein graduated from Juniata College in 1882 and did coursework at colleges like Oberlin (1882), Mount Morris College (1883), and the University of Michigan.<sup>4</sup>

Upon graduating from Oberlin College, he moved west to teach in Kansas and Illinois, where he also worked as a wheat farmer and harvester in between teaching jobs. He moved back east after his short period of time teaching, at which point he married Eva Shellenberger. Together

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph Schlosser, *History of Elizabethtown College 1899 - 1970*. (Lebanon, PA: Sowers Printing Company, 1971), 225.

<sup>2</sup> "George Ness Falkenstein," Find a Grave, accessed May 2, 2024.

[https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/101909136/george\\_ness-falkenstein](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/101909136/george_ness-falkenstein).

<sup>3</sup> Emmett Ferree, "George Ness Falkenstein" (Landmarks and Legends essay, Elizabethtown College, 2017), 1; *George Falkenstein Obituary*, 1950.

<sup>4</sup> Schlosser, 47; Richard Kerwin MacMaster. *Elizabethtown: The First Three Centuries* (Morgantown, PA: Masthof Press, 1999), 169.

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
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2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027 and Shawn Gipe Class of 2027  
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies

they opened a business, but it fared unsuccessfully.<sup>5</sup> Falkenstein and his wife moved back to Kansas to give their business one last shot, only to have it die quickly in the new community. After officially giving up on the business, Falkenstein accepted a job teaching at a local school. This job came to an end when a blizzard shut the school down in 1888 and left his family temporarily stranded. His streak of misfortune persisted when his house was hit by a tornado two months after the blizzard, and his first child died within the following few days.<sup>6</sup>



After taking the advanced courses at the University of Michigan, Falkenstein was invited to become a pastor at the Church of the Brethren in Germantown, Pennsylvania, during 1893, which is where he stayed until his employment as a faculty member for Elizabethtown College.<sup>7</sup> During this time was when Falkenstein wrote a book called the *History of the German Baptist Brethren Church*, an eagerly sought book with three editions, sought by libraries and those researching church history in the current day.<sup>8</sup> Falkenstein then finally moved from Germantown, Pennsylvania, to Elizabethtown to assist with the founding of Elizabethtown College and eventually join the college as a staff member.<sup>9</sup> From his house, he operated a printing press, a lending library, and a store, from which he sold items such as college textbooks, school supplies, and stationery until 1915, at which time he sold his store to

L.A. Shiffer in October of that year, who was a publisher and editor of the *Herald* newspaper (one of the only weekly newspapers in Elizabethtown).<sup>10</sup>

Additionally, Falkenstein sold postcards of Elizabethtown. Falkenstein was known to have photographed everything in town and used his photographs to both preserve history and create attractive postcards to sell to visitors.<sup>11</sup> It was during this same period that Falkenstein became involved with the founding of Elizabethtown College, as he was invited by Reverend Jay G. Francis to attend a meeting in Reading, Pennsylvania, which would discuss the possibility of placing a Brethren school in the eastern district of Pennsylvania.<sup>12</sup> Falkenstein was involved in the

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<sup>5</sup> Schlosser, 47; Emmett Ferree, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Emmett Ferree, 1; Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.; MacMaster, 169.

<sup>8</sup> Schlosser, 225.

<sup>9</sup> MacMaster, 169; Emmett Ferree, 1.

<sup>10</sup> Jean-Paul Benowitz, *Images of America: Elizabethtown*, (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2015), 82; Ibid.; Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Benowitz, *Historic Elizabethtown*, 65; Emmett Ferree, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Chet Williamson, *Uniting Work and Spirit: A Centennial History of Elizabethtown College* (Elizabethtown, PA, Elizabethtown College Press, 2001), 2; Ibid.

entire process of founding the college, from searching for a plausible location to designing the first building, Alpha Hall, alongside architect A.A. Richter.<sup>13</sup> On 13 November 1900, Falkenstein – Elizabethtown College’s acting Principal at the time – delivered the opening exercises for Elizabethtown College at the Heisey Building, since the construction of Alpha Hall had not yet been complete.<sup>14</sup>

The school opened in 1901 after Alpha Hall’s construction, at which point Falkenstein served as Elizabethtown College’s Acting Principal from 1901-1902 when I.N.H. Beahm was invalid. Falkenstein had been secretary during the meetings before the college’s existence and then served as the first Secretary of the Board of Trustees, greatly contributing to the beginning years of Elizabethtown College until 1903.<sup>15</sup> After resigning from his Principalship on September 30, 1902, Falkenstein stated to the Board of Trustees, “In severing my connection with Elizabethtown College, I feel keenly that I leave a work that was close to my heart, and I earnestly must pray its future greater success under God’s blessing.”<sup>16</sup> Additionally, On November 20, 1948, during the closing session of the forty-ninth annual Bible Institute, President A.C. Baugher gave ninety-year-old G.N. Falkenstein the title and honorary degree of “Doctor of Divinity” to honor all his contributions to the founding of the college. With respect to Falkenstein, Baugher stated, “In recognition of his pioneer work in education and in pastoral work of the church and in appreciation of his untiring services in the founding of Elizabethtown College, in recognition of his achievements in writing and preaching, he is indeed a most worthy recipient of the degree.” Falkenstein passed away on August 17, 1949, at age 90, less than a year after receiving this degree.<sup>17</sup> To give sympathy to his family and honor G.N. Falkenstein at the time of his death, the Board of Trustees and Faculty wrote the following: “The homegoing of Elder G. N. Falkenstein brings to an earthly close the activities of a beloved father among college and church leaders. We, the Trustees and Faculty of Elizabethtown College, rejoice in the many-sided ministry of the one who led the academic work of the College during its first years. He kept in helpful contact with the work of the College for nearly half a century. We recognize the sterling worth of Elder Falkenstein's strong, stable, Christlike character ripened into attractive usefulness through ninety years. His friendly, considerate, and wholesome attitude was a help to many people whom he served. His preaching was clear and forceful. His writing of *The History of the German Baptist Brethren Church*, published in 1901, was a valuable historical contribution to his church.”<sup>18</sup>

The following information from *History of Elizabethtown College 1899 – 1970* details Falkenstein’s great mission of founding the College:

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<sup>13</sup> Jean-Paul Benowitz, *Historic Elizabethtown Pennsylvania: A Walking Tour*. 2015, 38; Ibid.; Jean-Paul Benowitz, Peter J. DePuydt, “Elizabethtown College” (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2014), 13.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.; Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Schlosser, 225-226; Ibid., 47; Ibid, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Schlosser, 44.

<sup>17</sup> Williamson, 172; Emmett Ferree, 2.

<sup>18</sup> Schlosser, 225-226.

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey  
2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027 and Shawn Gipe Class of 2027  
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies

A book written by Falkenstein, known as *The Organization and Early History of Elizabethtown College*, revealed that John Herr, Elder of the Reading Church, had supposedly approved a meeting to be held and the consideration of starting a school for the Church of the Brethren in Eastern Pennsylvania. This meeting was first found out through Jay G. Francis informing Elder Jacob G. Gotwals about the meeting and asking him to come.<sup>19</sup> G.N. Falkenstein sent a letter to Jay G. Francis after hearing news of the meeting which read, "Dear Brother: Your rather startling announcement on a postal card received this day. Give me a few particulars. I am anxious to know more about the matter. By whose authority is the meeting called I should be glad to attend but cannot promise at this time. Is there hope of a profitable meeting? I am interested in the matter. We are well. I received catalog of Lordsburg College. Yours sincerely, G. N. Falkenstein." The meeting took place at 10 a.m. on Tuesday November 29, 1898, in the church of the Brethren at Reading, Pennsylvania. Falkenstein was the secretary during this meeting and read letters from brothers who were in favor of the school's creation. J.G. Francis moved for them to go forward with the school's creation in Eastern Pennsylvania, but Falkenstein suggested postponing the motion so there could be more discussion on the important matter.<sup>20</sup> After the discussion continued into the afternoon, the motion was again brought up, and G.N. Falkenstein moved that a school be built. He stated that the school should have a great character to represent them and should include Bible, academic, and collegiate departments. A school that would feel like both a home and a church. With this, the motion for the school's creation passed.<sup>21</sup> Falkenstein wrote about this meeting in his *Early History* book and claimed, "There was a free rostrum for inquiry, suggestion, and discussion. There was little use for parliamentary ruling. Speeches were not limited. Thus by a single motion the first public meeting was not only a deliberative conference but a working organization. It should be noted that in this meeting brethren and sisters voted in the election and that no decision as to the location of the school was made." G.N. Falkenstein's *Early History of Elizabethtown College* details his experiences after the meeting took place. Falkenstein apparently went through harsh conditions such as slush, mud, and snow drifts after the meeting in a six-mile walk from Parkerford to Royersford to make it to the house of Jesse Ziegler for the night.<sup>22</sup>

The work started on November 29, 1898, and finished April 4, 1899. Five men were chosen to primarily take on the school's creation, one of those men being G.N. Falkenstein, who was chosen as Secretary of the Committee. Falkenstein carried out his duties by attempting to interest towns people in the idea of a Church of the Brethren and through arranging various visits. G.N. Falkenstein found one person interested in the college's location, J. Howard Ellis. On January 11, 1899, Ellis took Falkenstein to see John W. Lock and determine if the building he owned, the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 6.

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
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2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027 and Shawn Gipe Class of 2027  
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies

Tremont Seminary, would be a suitable college location.<sup>23</sup> A second visit happened on February 22, 1899, in Norristown to consider the site, however, no offer was decided on. A third visit took place on March 7, 1899, to investigate the Tremont site and to meet with directors of the Norristown People's Bank about a proposed site. A committee made up of J. Howard Ellis and others offered 12 acres of land owned by the Norristown People's Bank for \$8,000 - 10,000\$ in cash and a donation or balance in stock. Additionally, the offer for Tremont Seminary was \$25,000 and the owner would donate \$1,000 to the school. The Committee on Location previously visited Mountville on March 6, 1899, with Falkenstein once again coming along. Six acres on a hill at the east of Mountville was offered for free by Samuel Matt Fridy and John Fraelich, though there is no record of the reactions to this offer. A visit once again took place on March 6, 1899, to a tract of land owned by the East Columbia Land Company, which offered about four to five acres of land. Additionally, B.G. Musser offered another site east of Columbia to the committee. After this, the Committee on Location visited a site on the edge of Ephrata which was about 5 acres and was deemed a great location for the college. However, on the way home from Ephrata, G.N. Falkenstein met Nathan C. Shaeffer on a train, who expressed much interest in the location of the college being within Eastern Pennsylvania. Further discussion was sparked about a location for the college in Eastern Pennsylvania, which led Ephrata supporters to start championing for the college location to be in Ephrata rather than Eastern PA.<sup>24</sup> Falkenstein and other members on the committee then visited sites in Pottstown on March 7, 1899, with the meeting being postponed to the next day due to heavy snow. *The Pottstown Daily News* wrote about the committee on March 9, 1899, "The committee are a congenial company of men with broad judgement, and they will decide in favor of the most advantageous site." Sites around both Kenilworth and Saratoga in the morning and afternoon, respectively, with several others touring with the committee such as A.K Shaner, J.G. Francis, F.F. Holsopple. And J.J Shaeffer. The committee noted three benefits to the Pottstown site location, that being the centrality of the location, the generous donation of cash to pay for about 10% of the building costs, and the scenic surroundings in the town. Following these visits, G.N. Falkenstein left Philadelphia on a train on April 4, 1899, at 6:05 am, to arrive in Elizabethtown at 10:20 am and participate in the visit. He was joined by H.E. Light in Lancaster.<sup>25</sup> An offer was made for the location to be set in Elizabethtown by Royer S. Bush, the owner of the A. Bush Sons company, who proposed to pay for 1/3 of the college's construction costs. Additionally, Addison Busch (Royer's father) along with Benjamin G. Groff also each offered to pay 1/3 of the costs. On September 25, 1900, Benjamin G. Groff and his wife gained the deed to a thirteen-acre tract of land in Elizabethtown for \$2,059.50.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

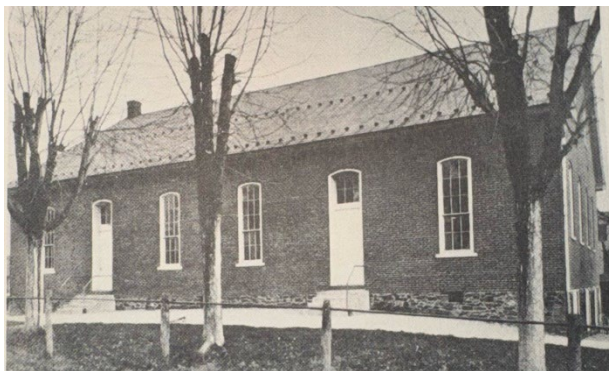
<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 12.

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
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2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027 and Shawn Gipe Class of 2027  
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies

As the Secretary of the Committee on Location, G.N. Falkenstein held the second public meeting in Elizabethtown, first sending out notices to all churches within the Eastern District of Pennsylvania and then calling for the meeting to be held in Elizabethtown's Church of the Brethren on April 5, 1899. An appointment was held to create a new committee of five members present at the meeting, with Falkenstein's nomination as Secretary being ratified and declared.<sup>27</sup> Falkenstein contended for the training of the youth under Christian influences and championed for higher education even though there was much opposition and anti-school sentiment. S.R. Zug then opened the meeting discussion to address questions like "Shall we have a school?" and "What kind of school do we want." Answers to these questions were all recorded in Falkenstein's book, the *Early History of Elizabethtown College*.<sup>28</sup> After the meeting, another committee, this time being comprised of ten people, was appointed to finalize the college location, which included G.N. Falkenstein. The committee of ten was asked to draft a constitution and by-laws for the new school, while also presenting their report at a meeting in the future.<sup>29</sup> The committee gathered at the District Meeting of Eastern Pennsylvania on April 20, 1899, and Falkenstein was elected as secretary of the committee once again. Falkenstein had some words to say about these meetings in his book, the *Early History of Elizabethtown College*: "Was it a courageous bravery because of things already accomplished, or was it a desperate determination to do the things that should be done? I will not say. That there were some who had courage, I do well know, and visions also. ... Courage, did I say Yes, it did require courage, for this young and new educational institution had to face the three largest normal schools in the state (now State Colleges), several large church colleges well endowed, and two universities-all in the eastern part of the state." Falkenstein continued speaking on these meetings and listed some issues that appeared during them, "First, it has always been a matter of deep regret that a number of our teaching ministers were not at the first public meeting in Reading to help when helping was needful. Second, the Committee on Location lost two of its most important members by resignation. Third, then there were persons who for reasons best known to themselves did everything possible against this educational movement, some from without and some from within. Of the two, I think, the force from within is most to be feared." The ten members that comprised the Locating Committee eventually became the Executive Committee of the public meeting,



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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

making various decisions until a Board of Trustees was elected at the next public meeting.<sup>30</sup> The Locating Committee met again at the Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Virginia, on May 24, 1899, in order to finalize the location of the college. G.N. Falkenstein attended this meeting, and a motion was also made requiring most of the committee to be part of the vote for the location. On the fourth ballot, Elizabethtown was unanimously approved for the college's location. At this meeting, a subcommittee comprised of G.N. Falkenstein and two others was created for the by-laws and constitution of the new college to be finalized. The committee met at Jesse C. Ziegler's house on June 1, 1899, and G.N. Falkenstein reported in his diary, "It was a hard day's work." However, Falkenstein and the rest of the committee also met in the home of S.H. Hertzler in Elizabethtown on June 6, 1899, to address two protests received from Pottstown and Ephrata. The grievance listed by these protests was based on three members of the Locating Committee being absent at the time of the May 24, 1899, vote. The vote for the college was revisited, but Elizabethtown college was determined as the location again.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, Falkenstein and the others comprising the subcommittee presented the by-laws and constitution they drafted for the school, with few revisions being made. A new debate began regarding the college's name, and "Conestoga College" was initially decided as the college name through a vote proposed by the subcommittee. However, the next morning on June 7, 1899, the Locating Committee revoked the decision regarding the name of the college, instead presenting "Elizabethtown College" for consideration. The subcommittee also revised the by-laws and constitution they drafted for the college, resubmitting them during the meeting. In afternoon of June 7, 1899, the third and final public meeting was held in the Church of the Brethren in Elizabethtown. G.N. Falkenstein stated this in his diary regarding the final selection of the college's name: "The name Conestoga College, however, was completely knocked out, but not until Elizabethtown College had been almost unanimously voted down and then brought up again for reconsideration and adopted by a large majority." Additionally, during this final public meeting 17 men were presented as nominees for the office of trustee of Elizabethtown College, with G.N. Falkenstein being voted to receive a three-year term in the office.<sup>32</sup> According to G.N. Falkenstein in his book, *Early History of Elizabethtown College*, "The Locating Committee and the subcommittee on constitution and by-laws were formally discharged and the meeting closed with devotional services and adjourned at five o'clock." In total, it had been six months and nine days since the first public meeting was held, and now finally the name and location of Elizabethtown College had been determined.<sup>33</sup>

The first board meeting of the Board of Trustees was held in the house of Nathan Hoffman, in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, on June 16, 1899, with G.N Falkenstein in attendance as the

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 20.

secretary.<sup>34</sup> Falkenstein summarized this meeting in his *Early History of Elizabethtown College* and states, “I think I can say, and without undue prejudice for my fellow members that the board for their day and times and their experience did a good job on the difficult task assigned to them. Their work reflects high ideals and a proper estimate of spiritual values in higher education. The Board stood for open, free, and frank discussion, and the decisions were usually unanimous. As a member of the board, I pay them high tribute for their devotion and loyalty.”<sup>35</sup> Additionally, Falkenstein made mention of the stay at Jesse C. Ziegler’s house after the meeting and says, “During that night we herded cows in the night. They broke out of the pasture field and we returned them. College trustees should make good in any emergency. Talking until after midnight and herding cattle afterward should make good trustees, or at least show what they are made of.” On January 29, 1899, G.N Falkenstein received a letter from George Bucher turning down an invitation to join the Trusteeship of Elizabethtown College. However, Falkenstein sent a letter back to Bucher imploring him to accept, resulting in years of service by Bucher as a trustee of Elizabethtown College. On August 15 and 16 of 1899, the second board meeting of the trustees was held in connection with the Church of the Brethren at Ridgley, Maryland. The board of trustees met in Mr. Replogle’s house near Ridgley at 6 o’clock, with 7 attendees. During this meeting, Falkenstein was of the trustees delegated with the role of suggesting revisions to a charter drafted by attorneys for the college, which was presented by S.H. Hertzler during the meeting.<sup>36</sup> The third Board meeting was held when the trustees finalized the charter and received it. Hosted in John H. Rider’s house on October 3, 1899, in Elizabethtown, Falkenstein reported J.G. Francis was petitioning for the creation of Mack college in Ephrata.<sup>37</sup> Falkenstein wrote about this petition and J.G. Francis in his diary, stating, “J.G. Francis had even prepared for this meeting a constitution and by-laws for an institution to be named Mack College. He had also corresponded with prospective teachers for this proposed school. But the Ephrata meeting of the petitioners was a failure and Mack College was ‘still born.’” In the latter half of the meeting, it was questioned what type of building should be used for the college, and G.N. Falkenstein moved for steps to build the college to be taken immediately. After unanimously deciding the cost of the building shouldn’t exceed \$10,000, Falkenstein presented a sketch he had made of a potential building. It was eighty-four by forty-eight feet and had three stories, including a basement. This design was infact mainly followed by the architect hired for the building’s construction. The fourth board meeting was held on October 18, 1899, at John Herr’s house in Salunga, Pennsylvania.<sup>38</sup> According to Falkenstein’s Diary, the Chairman of the Board had discussed the presidency of the new college and had said to Falkenstein, “I am willing to be led as the Lord seems to director lead. The Lord will direct in due

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 27-28.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 30.



time.” The fifth board meeting took place at the home of S.H. Hertzler on December 14, 1899 and the sixth took place at Joseph H. Rider’s house in Elizabethtown on April 12, 1900.<sup>39</sup> The seventh board meeting was several short sessions held at the Middle Creek House of the West Conestoga Church on May 2, 1900, with Falkenstein in attendance. Later in the evening around 6 o’clock, Falkenstein and other board members met at Joseph Doster’s and found agreeable terms for hiring I. N. H. Beahm as president, though it had to be approved by the board. Beahm soon became ill, and Falkenstein, writing in his *Early History of the College*, stated, “It should be noted that I. N. H. Beahm was an invalid at this time, and for some months, from a serious nervous breakdown. It was the hope of his family that he would be able to recuperate some so as to assist in the organization and even do some teaching. But much to the regret of all of us he was bedfast long before the opening of the school and was bedridden for the most part for several years. He was not able to do a day’s work during the years of my administration. Some references will appear from time to time in regard to his heroic struggle for his health, and to our great gratification after some four years he won his battle.”<sup>40</sup> In the seventh board meeting, Falkenstein was elected as a teacher and claimed he would accept the job for no less than \$600 for a school year. The Board of Trustees agreed to the offer and Falkenstein accepted the offer 10 days later.<sup>41</sup> The ninth board meeting was held at Joseph H. Rider’s house in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, on August 16, 1900, and was described as a long and hard meeting. During this meeting, Falkenstein was appointed into a committee with 3 others for catalogs, textbooks, printing and stationery, with the additional role of setting the times for the first days of classes and preparing the program for the first day. Staying at Jesse C. Ziegler’s house on August 20, 1900, the very first catalog of the college was created. Falkenstein wrote about this day in his diary, claiming, “It was one of the hardest days of my life. I. N. H. Beahm, a member of the committee on catalog, could give us no service whatever. He seems to have settled down to the conviction that he is an invalid. He is still almost helpless. He walks with much difficulty on two canes. When the Principal should be the embodiment of tremendous energy, I pity him and the principalship. I hope the Lord will direct him. I had intended that I. N. H. Beahm and Elizabeth Myer should complete the work begun by the committee on catalog at the home of S. H. Hertzler, but I found it was useless to think of getting any such work out of I. N. H. Beahm at this time. He was not able to do anything.” Falkenstein had arrived at Jesse’s farm and house while she was threshing grain, and following his arrival they had began working on the catalog. While Falkenstein and Ziegler worked until around ten o’clock, Jesse’s son, Samuel H. Ziegler, recopied their work as they produced it. Even while working most of the day, the work was not finished on that day, but was continued the following day several hours into the afternoon. Finally, Falkenstein and Ziegler had completed the 16 page catalogue for

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 34.

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
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2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027 and Shawn Gipe Class of 2027  
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies

Elizabethtown College. <sup>42</sup> Following the tenth board meeting on October 2, 1900, an adjourned session of the board was held in Lancaster Church of the Brethren during the afternoon of October 3, 1900. During this session, Falkenstein was appointed to another committee, this time the Committee on Furniture. As Secretary of the Board, Falkenstein recorded the ongoings of the first ten meetings within the Minutes of The Board. <sup>43</sup>

It was announced that Elizabethtown college would be opening on November 13, 1900, now that there was a Principal and Faculty of three in place. However, due to Principal Beahm's illness, G.N. Falkenstein, an elected faculty member, was given the responsibility of preparing for the opening of Elizabethtown College.<sup>44</sup> On the college's opening day, Falkenstein gave an address representing its faculty. Later in the evening of the opening day, Falkenstein wrote this in his diary: "We went to out lodging place in the evening: J.A. Seese, teacher, Warren Ziegler, Walter Kittinger, Rufus Bucher, Kurwin henry, my nephew, and I; all room at the same place, in the home of W.A. Withers. We all board at Mrs. Beahm's." On November 14, 1900, class recitations began in Heisey Hall. G.N. started the day with a chapel exercise, reading the twenty-third Psalm. Falkenstein wrote in his diary regarding the opening day, "This is the beginning of the actual work – small and yet auspicious. The Lord knows the end from the beginning. We do not. But I desire seventy-five students enrolled before the close of the school year – Bible and all, and I ask the Lord for same here and now. Lord Grant it."<sup>45</sup> The first college catalog was published in August 1900, a blue booklet eight inches by five and one-half inches and sixteen pages. Falkenstein was listed in the catalog with the members of the Board of Trustees and faculty as the Teacher of Sciences, Civil Government, History, and Classics.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, A dedication service to Alpha Hall was held in the afternoon of March 4, 1901, with Falkenstein reading an address detailing Elizabethtown College's education in relation to the work of the church. <sup>47</sup> Through 1901-1902, Falkenstein was the Principal and teacher of Bible, Pedagogy, and Psychology at a salary of \$600 for the school year. Through the years of 1902-1903, Falkenstein was the Principal and Teacher of History, Science, Psychology and Bible. Unfortunately, due to growing health issues, Falkenstein resigned on September 30, 1902. In his resignation to the Board of Trustees, Falkenstein stated, "In severing my connection with Elizabethtown College, I feel keenly that I leave a work that was close to my heart, and I earnestly must pray its future greater success under God's blessing."<sup>48</sup> Though, even with his failing health, Falkenstein continued serving as Secretary for the Board of Trustees until March 13, 1903.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 45.

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
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2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027 and Shawn Gipe Class of 2027  
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies

G.N. Falkenstein was going to become the Principal of Elizabethtown College for a second term, but as previously mentioned, Falkenstein's failing health prompted his resignation on September 30, 1902. Falkenstein was once a student in the York County Academy and was a graduate in a course on education at Juniata college in 1882. He was also a student at Oberlin College in 1882 and a student at Mount Morris College in Illinois during 1883. Falkenstein taught at various public schools for several years when he was called to teach at Mount Morris College. Also, he took advanced courses at the University of Michigan while teaching classes at Mount Morris College. After taking the advanced courses at the University of Michigan, Falkenstein was invited to become a pastor at the Church of the Brethren in Germantown, Pennsylvania, which is where he stayed until his employment as a faculty member for Elizabethtown College. Overall, Falkenstein's work as Secretary for the meetings before the college was created, and his time as Secretary of the Board of trustees, was invaluable to the creation and success of Elizabethtown College.<sup>50</sup>

A Bible Term was voted to be instituted at Elizabethtown College by the Board of Trustees on January 8, 1901, as in accordance with the wishes of the founders of the college. This term was to be annually held in the College Chapel and would initially last about four weeks, with G.N. Falkenstein chosen as one of the "special teachers" for this purpose. According to the records, these Bible Terms were very successful, having good sized day classes and especially drawing in an exceptional amount of people for the evening classes, which were open to the public. From the year the Bible Terms were put in place to 1909, enrollment grew from 115 to 356 people<sup>51</sup>. In September of 1901, there was talk of creating a model school to better help with the preparation of teachers, with three of the initial student's enrolled being G.N. Falkenstein's children. However, the Model School was discontinued in 1904-1905.<sup>52</sup> A celebration was held on Thursday, December 22, 1921, at the special Chapel exercises, for the new administration of President J.G. Myer, with G.N. Falkenstein addressing and speaking on the standardization of the college during the program.<sup>53</sup> The Anniversary of the Thirtieth Milestone was celebrated at College Chapel on November 13, 1930, and Falkenstein, as the past principal of Elizabethtown College, gave the Anniversary Address during the program.<sup>54</sup>

The following information from *Uniting Work and Spirit* also details Falkenstein's founding of the College:

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 116.

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Chet Williamson's *Uniting work and Spirit: A Centennial History of Elizabethtown College*, is dedicated to the memory of G.N. Falkenstein.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, the book's content is heavily relied on by the writings of G.N. Falkenstein and other founders of Elizabethtown College.<sup>56</sup>

On the day that planning began for the new college, G.N. Falkenstein was displeased with the dreary atmosphere, preferring that the undertaking of a new institution such as a college should happen on a sunny day instead. The night before, there had been cold rain that had melted much of the snow from a storm three days earlier, however, this only made Falkenstein's journey to Reading more miserable. Falkenstein had taken a trolley from Germantown to Wayne Junction, then had to take a steam car to Columbia Avenue, and finally, a train to Reading, arriving at the church just 12 minutes before the meeting would start to discuss the practicability of creating a new college for the Church of the Brethren.<sup>57</sup> When J.G. Francis sent a letter informing the elders of the church regarding this meeting, Falkenstein was somewhat skeptical and very aware of the obstacles they would end up facing but had great faith in the Church of the Brethren, and believed the creation of a brethren college was necessary.<sup>58</sup> G.N. was a pastor for the Germantown, Pennsylvania, Church of the Brethren. At the time of the 1898 meeting in Reading, Pennsylvania, the Germantown Church of the Brethren was the largest of the three major Brethren Churches that descended from the original Anabaptist movement.<sup>59</sup> During the meeting at Reading, Falkenstein was given the role of Secretary, and much of what is known from this particular meeting is attributed to his recordings both during and after the meeting. These are not stenographic reports, but they are full of detail and complete to a great degree.<sup>60</sup> Falkenstein's recordings give the impression that J.G. Francis wanted both approval for the college and its location in Ephrata to be solidified immediately, however, the elders of the church were not willing to decide without meticulous planning and decision making.<sup>61</sup> Falkenstein compared the nature of this meeting to a "New England Town Meeting" over again – a conference effort to get the view of the people. Additionally, according to the proceedings at the meeting from Falkenstein, "There was no power of decision, as a school, or where to locate it," and "The meeting instructed the Committee to decide upon a time and place for the next Public Meeting and report." Among four others, Falkenstein was elected to be part of the aforementioned committee. Forty years later regarding the meeting, Falkenstein stated that "The Public Meeting transformed itself from a conference of deliberation to a working organization."

Almost all of the work had now fallen to the Committee on Location and G.N. Falkenstein as its secretary. Falkenstein's job as secretary involved writing any necessary letters, planning

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<sup>55</sup> Williamson, ii.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., iv.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

notices, and visiting all locations under consideration for the college site. Falkenstein had apparently dreaded going to the first site for visitation in Norristown on January 11, 1899, the coldest day in winter. After no decision being made, Falkenstein and the Committee visited the sites of Mountville, Columbia, and Ephrata, on March 6, 1899. In reference to this work, Falkenstein mentioned how “the terrific grind of these days was beginning to tell.” On a train ride back to Reading from the visit at Ephrata, Falkenstein chatted with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. N.C. Shaeffer, for most of the trip about the school’s potential creation. Falkenstein’s long chat with him on this train ride is a potential source of Shaeffer’s interest and friendliness toward Elizabethtown College.<sup>62</sup> Next the committee visited Pottstown, however, the freezing cold weather apparently stood out more to Falkenstein than any of the proposed sites.<sup>63</sup> After Falkenstein’s visit at Pottstown was done, he got back to writing, printing, and mailing postcards to announce the second public meeting, which was chosen to be on April fifth. Falkenstein had apparently invited people from all across the district and printed out cards on a “simplex” printing machine he owned. On April fourth, the day before the public meeting, Falkenstein and the committee had visited Elizabethtown to visit two potential sites, one being owned by Benjamin G. Groff. In Falkenstein’s book discussing the college’s founding, he titled the section of the book covering April fourth as “THE LAST DAY \* A CLIMAX, AND SO ENDETH A CRISIS.” Falkenstein’s reference to a “climax” is thought to be related to the arrival at Elizabethtown. Additionally, the mention of a “crisis” is touched on in Falkenstein’s writings, but not entirely described. Falkenstein stated, “I must not close this [section] without saying a few things that are apparent to anyone who will read between the lines, but I think in justice to myself and those interested in the cause of education at that time the matter requires a brief recital here.”<sup>64</sup> He continued, “In referring to some of the elements that I feel constituted this Crisis, I want it distinctly understood that I am not complaining or criticizing nor apologizing for lack of accomplishment. I am writing the stern facts of history and history is nothing if not facts.”<sup>65</sup> Falkenstein then made another reference to the “crisis,” however, it’s still unclear the true nature of the conflict. Falkenstein wrote, “First, it has always been a matter of deep regret that a number of our teaching ministers were not at that “Educational Meeting” at Reading to help when helping was needful. Second, The Committee on Location lost two of its most important members by resignation.” The reason for J.H. Longenecker’s resignation is unknown, but John Herr’s resignation was purportedly due to ill health. However, Falkenstein placed “ill health” in quotation marks which raises some questions as to the actual reason for resignation. Falkenstein made another note which reads, “Third, The “Committee” saw fit (maybe of necessity) to hand the major part of the work over into the hands of the Secretary who was already overloaded with multiplied

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

duties of pastoral responsibilities and much other church work. I have no doubt this overloading in time and strength was a distinct handicap to the progress and development of the work for the time being, and led to my ultimate breakdown.”<sup>66</sup> The breakdown mentioned in these notes would not happen until the fall of 1902, Falkenstein enduring 3 years of committee work and visitations while teaching at Elizabethtown during the weekdays, followed by working through the weekends as a pastor for the Germantown pastorate. Falkenstein also writes about other obstacles when creating Elizabethtown College, “Fourth, then there were those persons, who, for reasons best known to themselves, did everything possible against this educational movement, some from within, some from without. Of the two, I think, the force from within is most to be feared. Well, perhaps, in the end, this opposition, within and without, had but little permanent effect, but for the time being it added to the burden of the secretary in his tremendous, single-handed struggle?” Falkenstein did not record who the people mentioned above were nor what their actions against the educational movement was. However, apparently these people eventually changed their views on the college as Falkenstein claimed, “Even if there were those discouragements, there was a measure of success, for the effects of my struggles were cumulative and when such results became apparent some were anxious to scramble into the bus when it was ready to go.” As evidence from the conflicts mentioned above, the process for creating a college was no easy process, and Falkenstein claimed the next part of the process “the hardest struggle of all.”<sup>67</sup>

On April 5th, a meeting was held, and the Committee on Location was disbanded while plans for the new college continued. The meeting was held in Elizabethtown German Baptist Brethren Church on Washington street, which is the current day location of the parochial school of St. Peter’s Roman Catholic Church. Falkenstein had sent notices of the meeting to every Brethren Church in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, with the meeting starting at 9:30 am. During this time, officers of the meeting were chosen, with Falkenstein as Secretary once again. The remainder of the meeting was spent listening to reports on possible sites for the college, while the afternoon session solidified the decision to proceed with the college’s creation.<sup>68</sup> Falkenstein then made a motion: “That we establish a school of such character that compares favorably with any of our school, including Bible, academic, and collegiate departments - a school to be at the same time a home and a church.” Falkenstein’s motion was passed and a committee of ten was created with authorization to decide on the college’s location, draft a constitution and write by-laws for the college. Falkenstein was once again chosen as Secretary on this committee.<sup>69</sup> Writing about this meeting, Falkenstein stated, “...altogether in a different spirit. It was not cautious in the approach to the tremendous problems involved and it was not conservative in deciding things that must concern generations to come. Was it courageous bravery because of things already

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 14

accomplished, or was it a desperate determination to do the things that should be done. I will not say. That there were some who had courage, I do well know, and visions also. Neutrals counted with the majority. The unanimity in decisions was striking, and that impression has lasted forty years.”<sup>70</sup> Falkenstein’s observation of most people being neutral and votes being unanimous makes sense when remembering the united front that the Church of The Brethren wanted to present. At the sign of any disagreement or haste in judgement, conflicts were carefully considered before voting. This was also shown on May 24<sup>th</sup> during the church’s annual conference in Roanoke, Virginia, in which the location of the college was being decided on, but votes were split. While the first three ballots were split between Elizabethtown, Pottstown, and Mountville, the fourth ballot showed the unanimity of the Brethren when all seven committee members voted for Elizabethtown. After the location was chosen, a sub committee was created to write the constitution and by laws of the college, which Falkenstein found himself a member of. During this time the stress of continually working on the founding of the college was finally getting to Falkenstein as he stated, “I was not only tired, but at times bilious and dull and disinclined to work and disqualified for work.”<sup>71</sup> Despite Falkenstein tiring, he started preparing for the next public meeting and met on June 1st at Ziegler’s house in Collegeville, where the meeting was spent preparing drafts of the college’s constitution and by-laws. The public meeting was set for June 7<sup>th</sup> and during the time between these meetings, Falkenstein makes more mention of “tremendous problems” due to “unexpected opposition from within,” which “did make the going more difficult.” Some of these issues could be seen on June 6th, the day before the next public meeting, in which disagreements and protests were once again expressed about the location of the college, despite it already being decided in the previous meeting.<sup>72</sup> Elizabethtown was again unanimously chosen as the location, but it was still necessary to decide on either of the two sites in Elizabethtown for the college. Additionally, it was necessary to choose a name for the college, which was another contentious decision that needed to be made. The tract of land owned by Benjamin G. Groff in Elizabethtown was chosen for the location of the college and the name was deemed “Conestoga College.” However, the name was soon changed at the third and last public meeting. Falkenstein claimed the name was “completely knocked out” and a large majority of the Brethren decided “Elizabethtown College” was best. The by-laws and constitution drafted by Falkenstein and the subcommittee were discussed and analyzed, but only minor changes were made.<sup>73</sup> Trustees of the college were selected next, and the Locating Committee nominated 17 men for the Board of Trustees, with George Falkenstein being given a three-year term as secretary. With the meeting adjourning, the college, constitution, and by-laws were all finally set in stone.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 18.

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After appointing members of the board, members were sent to solicit funds for the college from churches. At the August 6<sup>th</sup> board meeting it was found that they had a total of \$4815 raised for the college, most of it being from Elizabethtown. Apparently, Falkenstein had little luck soliciting funds in Philadelphia as he was faced with opposition to the school's creation.<sup>75</sup> On September eighth Falkenstein wrote in his diary, "I received a shameful letter from J.G. Francis. He is bitterly envious and jealous at my activity with Elizabethtown College work and he is working to start a second movement to establish a College, viz: 'Mack College.' I should call it 'Beissel College' because it is the spirit of Beissel and not Mack."<sup>76</sup> Falkenstein makes reference above to Conrad Beissel, who split from Alexander Mack and his followers to founded the Ephrata Cloister. Three days after receiving an invitation from Francis to attend the meeting in Ephrata to discuss "Mack College," Falkenstein declined attending the meeting with Ziegler and wrote in his diary, "It is a bold, audacious, shameful, malicious move to crush Elizabethtown College."<sup>77</sup> The following days were tense and apprehensive in nature for Elizabethtown College and Falkenstein until he received a letter from Samuel H. Hertzler, who essentially stated the meeting was 9/10 Francis's doing and other Elder's had little idea about it. Francis claimed that the meeting's purpose was to once again reconsider Elizabethtown College's location, but it was a move made due to brooding over the matter and claims he was wrong to make it. Falkenstein received Hertzler's letter detailing the Ephrata meeting and wrote in his diary, "Mack College 'failed' (I suppose it might be said it was 'still born.') Well, it is best it did not live, for it had very poor generation."<sup>78</sup> Fifty years later J.G. Francis still seemed to be bitter from the way things went, but equally bitter about Francis's movements from forty years ago was Falkenstein, who still called Francis's attempts to circumvent Elizabethtown College's plans as "mischief-making trickery." On October third Francis made one last attempt to petition the location of Elizabethtown College, but the petition was quickly discarded by the Elizabethtown College Board of Trustees.<sup>79</sup>

With Francis's petition discarded, work of the Board of Trustees continued working. On October 3, 1899, a trustee meeting was held discussing plans for the college building. It was stated the building should not exceed \$10,000, with Falkenstein then displaying a drawing and his first attempt at architecture he had made for the proposed building. The building displayed a front elevation and was referred to as a "twin building" by Falkenstein due to the two front entrances. The trustees decided the building would be 48 by 84 feet, the first and second story being nine feet high, and the basement and third floor at eight feet. The appointment for the president of the college was also considered on October 10, with Board member Jesse Ziegler discussing the probability of Falkenstein taking the position.<sup>80</sup> Regarding leadership, Falkenstein stated, "I am willing to be

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 26.



led, as the lord seems to direct, or lead. The Lord will direct in due time.” Several months passed and money was continually solicited, meanwhile Falkenstein and his wife were in suspense, unknowing as to whether or not Falkenstein would gain the position of president. Falkenstein wrote about this time stating, “Brother Ziegler told me he hadn’t any doubt that I would be called upon to organize the school and take charge of it. He would have presented the matter [at the December 14<sup>th</sup> trustee meeting] if there had been any time.” Falkenstein had notable credentials and the fact he had already done so much work for College’s creation made him a suitable candidate for the position of president. However, the obstacles that come with the position are also notable, which Falkenstein clearly understood as he wrote, “the winding ways through which we must yet pass, we little dreamed of, and the severe tests of faith left many by the wayside.”<sup>81</sup> However, at the April 19<sup>th</sup> board meeting I.N.H. Beahm was elected principal of Elizabethtown College. There are no recorded discussions from Falkenstein regarding this motion. Falkenstein had the better education, but Beahm was likely chosen due to his experience and previous roles as a midwife to two brethren colleges, currently being president of the third, and teaching at four in total. Falkenstein was ostensibly disappointed at not being chosen, especially with Ziegler heavily purporting he would/should be chosen. Falkenstein commented on the minutes of the meeting: “We often lacked time when our meetings were secondary to some other meeting, and sometimes we passed on big questions without due consideration in order to rush business while we had a quorum. I often much regretted this whole matter and what I regret most of all that we did business sometimes when we were not ready, but someone wanted to get things off hand.” Another meeting was held on May second and a concern of Beahm’s health was addressed. There are also supposedly writings of Beahm’s health in his official correspondence to Falkenstein.<sup>82</sup> Attending the June 11 board meeting, Falkenstein left at 2:15 am from his house to arrive at Board Street Station in Philadelphia at 8 am. Falkenstein’s early starting hour for this meeting shows that many issues were likely to be discussed.<sup>83</sup> On this day an offer was made to Falkenstein with a chance to finally get compensation for his incredible effort founding the college. After a discussion comprised of the trustees with Falkenstein outside of the room, he was asked to return and found he was elected to the teaching faculty. Falkenstein stated he would accept the position for no less than \$600 dollars a year, which the trustees found to be an agreeable offer. However, Falkenstein did not immediately accept, writing in his diary: “The matter came as a complete surprise and therefore could not accept, desiring to consult Eva (who is visiting her mother in Ohio).” Falkenstein was given ten days to accept the offer and was pressured by the trustees to do so sooner rather than later. I.N.H Beahm also wrote Falkenstein a letter acknowledging how beneficial he

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>82</sup> het Williamson, *Uniting Work and Spirit: A Centennial History of Elizabethtown College* (Elizabethtown College Press, 2001), 29.

<sup>83</sup> het Williamson, *Uniting Work and Spirit: A Centennial History of Elizabethtown College* (Elizabethtown College Press, 2001), 30.

would be as part of the college's faculty. During the interim of the August 16<sup>th</sup> board meeting, Falkenstein accepted his position on the teaching faculty and agreed to help Beahm organize the college.<sup>84</sup> Beahm was present for his acceptance of the position, but Falkenstein wrote something worrying in his diary stating, "I am almost discouraged with him. He seemed to have settled down to the conviction that he is an invalid. He is almost helpless. He walks with much difficulty on two canes. When the principal should be the embodiment of energy, I pity him and the principalship." However, despite Beahm's health, he was appointed along with Falkenstein to a committee for planning the school's catalogue, textbooks, printing, and stationary. Ziegler was also on this committee and spent the whole day working with Falkenstein on the College catalogue, which would require two full additional days of work in total.<sup>85</sup> The final document was sixteen pages with blue covers and very concise in nature, completed on August 21. Among the faculty who were listed in the catalogue, Falkenstein was noted for teaching sciences, civil government, history and classics. The part of the catalogue that supposedly took the longest for Falkenstein and Ziegler to complete were the educational departments and the courses of study that would be offered.<sup>86</sup> With the catalogue finally being created, Falkenstein and other trustees set about to distribute it. In the following weeks Falkenstein traveled the surrounding counties while advertising the College and giving the catalogue to parents who had students around college age. The goal was to raise funds for the Elizabethtown College and also bring it some recognition. Difficulties continued when it came to raising funds for the college, with Falkenstein writing in his diary, "So many things to do and think about. I am struggling somewhat as a man who is beyond his depths. I hope I may soon be able to wade again."<sup>87</sup>

The weeks before the College's opening involved Falkenstein writing letters, choosing textbooks and furniture for the students, planning and gathering books for the library, and several other tasks. Additionally, because of I.N.H. Beahm's deteriorating health, most of his responsibilities fell to Falkenstein. Falkenstein wrote the necessary letters, committee reports, and program for the opening day, while keeping the school's records and dealing with the Germantown Church affairs. He did all this in a small back room of his house, only lit by a window in the daytime and a coal lamp at night. During this time he was even writing his book, *History of the German Baptist Brethren*. On Saturday, November 3, 1900, Falkenstein made various visits, one of them to Beahm in order to arrange a place to hold opening day exercises for the college.<sup>88</sup> Additionally, he went to Lancaster to have programs for the college printed and visited the *New Era* office to discuss his upcoming book. The day before the college opened, on November 12th, it was seeming likely that the opening would have to be delayed since the building wasn't finished

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 39.

and there were no other places available. Fortunately, Falkenstein quickly arranged for classes to be held in the same place as the opening exercises, the A. Heisey building on the South Market and Bainbridge Streets. Six students that were enrolled at the college attended the opening exercises came to be known as the “The Faithful Six,” one of which was Falkenstein’s nephew, Kurwin D. Henry, and came to be known as the “First Gentleman student of the College.”<sup>89</sup> The opening exercises were to see how proficient students already were in the subject matters and due to I.N.H. Beahm’s illness, Falkenstein took on the role as principal for the opening day. When classes ended Falkenstein wrote in his diary: “This is the beginning of the actual work – small and yet very auspicious. The Lord knows the end from the beginning. We do not, but I desire 75 students enrolled before the close of the school year, - Bible and all, and I ask the Lord for the same here and now! Grant it!” In the spring session of 1904, Falkenstein’s prayer would finally be answered with 75 students enrolled. By the time the second College catalogue was released, 27 students were enrolled and Falkenstein stated, “Things are getting in fair shape in our schoolwork. It begins to look like school and feel like it. Sister Myer is proving herself to be an excellent teacher. The boys are settling down to good work, and most of them are going to be good students, in conduct and work. Apparently Falkenstein had been trying to help I.N.H. Beahm with his health on the side, administering massage and surface rubbing treatments. According to Falkenstein’s diary, he was tired most days due to tending to the College’s needs and Beahm’s health.<sup>90</sup> Tending to his pastoral duties at the Germantown Church of the Brethren the following Sunday, Falkenstein claimed he “...preached twice, as usual and people would not have suspected I organized a College during the week, 87 miles away.” On Monday, November 19th, the Rider house was finally ready to accommodate students. After classes were finished in the Heisey building, the time was spent making three different trips on a two-horse hardware wagon, moving furniture and books to Washington Street. Falkenstein ended the day by giving I.N.H. Beahm his massage treatment. Falkenstein also apparently had interactions with a Janitor and student of the Rider house named Walter Kittinger. Falkenstein supervised Kittinger and talked to him about giving up smoking, which Kittinger promised he would. While the Rider house was sufficient for now, Falkenstein and Hertzler became fearful of the delays in completing the actual college building. For this reason, they asked Groff about adding additional plasterers to the job. Groff claimed that plasterers were hard to come by, however, Falkenstein speculated the actual reason was due to the heating cost that would need to be covered for each worker. It seemed that Falkenstein and Hertzler pressured Groff, as he agreed to adding ten more plasterer’s to the job.<sup>91</sup> As the building process continued, Falkenstein and Hertzler viewed the rooms as they were completed, measured them for carpet, furniture, and equipment. In the meantime, Falkenstein continued teaching, running the college, treating Beahm with massages, and experimenting with other medical treatment. Falkenstein wrote

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 42.

about this treatment stating he “Gave Brother Beahm magnetic treatment (by clasping his ankles in my hands) hoping to be rejuvenated (sic) by my overflow of vital fluid... I had no faith in it, but I was interested in him and was anxious to help him if I could, even though it seemed utterly useless.”<sup>92</sup> Shortly after College Hill building was finished, known today as Alpha Hall, a dedication service was held on March 4<sup>th</sup> in which Falkenstein among others gave sermon and addresses.<sup>93</sup> Additionally, a model school opened on September 9<sup>th</sup> to put future teachers in a classroom setting, with three of the enrolled students being Falkenstein's children. Falkenstein was hired as Acting Principal before, but for the 1901-1902 school year he was elected as the official College Principal. Falkenstein and his wife lived in two recitation rooms at Alpha Hall with their four children, likely to make his work more convenient, and eating their meals in the College dining room. Falkenstein also added to his workload by opening a small bookstore early in the year 1902. With work piling up between his arduous teaching schedule, administrative work for the college, and church duties at the Germantown Church, Falkenstein inevitably caved into the pressure and fell ill at the beginning of the 1902 fall term.<sup>94</sup> Falkenstein resigned as both a principal and then stated to the Board of Trustees: “In severing my connection with Elizabethtown College, I feel keenly that I leave a work that was close to my heart and I earnestly must pray for its future greater success under God’s blessing.” Falkenstein did serve as secretary of the board of trustees for five more months until he turned his full attention to his bookstore in which he sold books and stationery, in addition to music, candy, wallpaper, and dress patterns. However, Falkenstein’s main source of profit was from selling picture postcards, which was a very popular fad. Unfortunately, by the mid 1910s the fad had begun to fade, and by 1915 Falkenstein had to close his bookstore. Falkenstein’s resignation left the position of Principal open and he would also not be seen at Elizabethtown College for many years.<sup>95</sup> Daniel Reber followed in the footsteps of Falkenstein when receiving the position of Principal, taking on both his workload and administrative responsibilities for the college.<sup>96</sup>

In 1908 the Church of the Brethren was fighting against alcohol usage and Elizabethtown’s Church of the Brethren already had a “temperance committee” with G.N. Falkenstein included on its board. The committee requested the Eastern Pennsylvania District to create a “Local Option Law” that would allow local municipalities to ban the sale and manufacturing of alcohol. However, the petition did not pass.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>96</sup> het Williamson, *Uniting Work and Spirit: A Centennial History of Elizabethtown College* (Elizabethtown College Press, 2001), 47.

<sup>97</sup> het Williamson, *Uniting Work and Spirit: A Centennial History of Elizabethtown College* (Elizabethtown College Press, 2001), 55.

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Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies

In January of 1920, a red colored and used Model T-Ford was purchased to help trustees with solicitation trips. Falkenstein and other trustee members drove house to house asking for money and pledges from members within Church of the Brethren congregations.<sup>98</sup>

Around 1939 Elizabethtown was faced with a absence of newspapers due to them being said to possibly contaminate the “virgin-pure minds” of students. G.N. Falkenstein’s grandson, William Willoughby, published a letter speaking on the elimination of their daily papers: “..you [the editor] have not taken the pains to investigate the problem, of which the lack of newspaper is but a minor indication. As long as the choice of periodicals reflects a partisan attitude, which few will deny, Elizabethtown is not conducive to good citizenship, the primary requisite of which is a thorough knowledge of the issues of the day, and the ability to evaluate that knowledge. So far as I can ascertain, there are no magazines in the library which are in sympathy with the present administration... Another fundamental weakness of the library is the lack of many worthwhile books...The NEA gives in its journal for January a list of 100 books which everyone should read, chosen by prominent Americans. Of the books listed, only fifty-eight are in our library.”<sup>99</sup>



George N. Falkenstein, right, who is credited with the survival of the College in its early years. He is pictured here on the Henry Hess farm near Aberdeen with Daniel Miller, left, and Samuel R. Zug.<sup>100</sup>

With Elizabethtown College entering its second fifty years, the college dealt with the losses of G.N. Falkenstein in 1949, and then a year later with the loss of the College’s first Principal, I.N.H Beahm, on November 11, 1950, during a car accident. Additionally, a few months later, the President of Elizabethtown in the early 1920s died in Seattle.<sup>101</sup>

Among Falkenstein and other founding members of the college, J.G. Francis outlived the rest of the founders and died in Lebanon, Pennsylvania on August 27, 1958, at age 88.<sup>102</sup>

In 1972, two years after the completion of Founders Hall, the four wings within it were named after those who were instrumental in the College’s founding, one of those wings being named after G.N. Falkenstein.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> het Williamson, *Uniting Work and Spirit: A Centennial History of Elizabethtown College* (Elizabethtown College Press, 2001), 86.

<sup>99</sup> het Williamson, *Uniting Work and Spirit: A Centennial History of Elizabethtown College* (Elizabethtown College Press, 2001), 147.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 262.

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey  
2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027 and Shawn Gipe Class of 2027  
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies

Geoge N. Falkenstein, Principal, 1901-02.<sup>104</sup>

Information from online sources:

Find a Grave, database and images

([https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/101909136/george\\_ness-falkenstein](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/101909136/george_ness-falkenstein): accessed May 28, 2024), memorial page for George Ness Falkenstein (16 Jul 1859–17 Aug 1949), Find a Grave Memorial ID 101909136, citing Bupps Union Cemetery, Seven Valleys, York County, Pennsylvania, USA; Maintained by Flinsbach (contributor 49222948).

Falkenstein was born 16 July 1859, In York County, Pennsylvania, USA

Falkenstein died on 17 August 1949 (aged 90), In York County, Pennsylvania, USA

Falkenstein ws buried in the Bupps Union Cemetery at Seven Valleys, York County, Pennsylvania, USA

Parents: David Falkenstein 1816–1866 & Mary Anna Ness Ness 1835–1874

Spouse: Eva S Shellenberger Falkenstein 1864–1958

Children: Lilian Falkenstein Willoughby 1892–1973

Siblings: Jacob Ness Falkenstein 1855–1947, Barbara Falkenstine Henry 1857–1935, David Falkenstein 1861–1862, Elizabeth Falkenstine Stambaugh 1863–1953, and Dr Andrew Ness Falkenstein 1865–1917

Half siblings: Annie Mary Ness 1872–1906 & William Henry Ness 1874–1917

Memorial ID: 101909136

Longitude and latitude of burial: 39°51'50.2"N 76°43'55.6"W

“George Ness Falkenstein -Taught Bible, psychology and pedagogy at the College—served as the acting principal, filling in for Isaac Newton Harvey Beahm during the 1900 – 1901 academic year.”



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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 341.

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey  
2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027 and Shawn Gipe Class of 2027  
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies

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Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey  
2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027  
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies



## Abner Augustus Ritcher (1872-1928)

Abner Augustus Ritcher was born May 5, 1872, in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania in the North Annville township.<sup>1</sup> His parents' names were James Madison Ritcher and Lydia A (Ruff) Ritcher. Abner Augustus Ritcher died on November 17, 1928, at age 56 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He is buried in a mausoleum plot at Mount Lebanon Cemetery. Pictured below is his certificate of death which indicates that he was buried at West Laurel Hill, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His obituary indicates that he was temporarily interred at a vault at West Laurel Hill until his mausoleum -- which he was the architect for -- at Mt. Lebanon was completed.<sup>2</sup>

His paternal grandfather was Charles Ritcher who was born in North Lebanon township in Lebanon County and was a painter by trade. His maternal grandfather was John Ruff who came to America and settled in North Annville Township after leaving Wurtemberg, Germany at twenty years old. Ruff was a farmer and lived until the age of ninety-one. Abner Ritcher's father, James M. Ritcher was a carpenter.<sup>3</sup> Abner Ritcher attended Lebanon high school and graduated in 1888. Soon after he entered the office of architect H.T. Haur where he stayed for two years until beginning work with H.A. Roby, another architect of Lebanon. Ritcher spent nine years with Roby, the later four being his partner. In 1899, Roby retired and Ritcher continued his business.<sup>4</sup> In 1893, Abner Ritcher married Philadelphia Native



<sup>1</sup> H Beers, *Biographical Annals of Lebanon County, Pennsylvania: Containing Biographical Sketches of Prominent Men and Representative Citizens and of the Early Se* (Franklin Classics Trade Press, 2018), 782–83.

<sup>2</sup> "Photos of Abner Augustus Ritcher." Find a Grave, accessed May 21, 2024.

[https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/205249429/abner\\_augustus-ritcher/photo](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/205249429/abner_augustus-ritcher/photo).

<sup>3</sup> Beers, 782–83.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
 National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
 Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey  
 2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
 Ava Barton Class of 2027  
 Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies

Irene Bentz, daughter of Harry Bentz. They had two sons, Henry Bentz and Walter James.<sup>5</sup>

Abner Augustus Ritcher was an architect from Lebanon PA and was responsible for drafting the plans for Alpha Hall -- Elizabethtown College's first building.<sup>6</sup> During the sixth board meeting for Elizabethtown College, held at the home of Joseph H. Rider on April 12, 1900, conditions for an architect for Alpha Hall were discussed. T. F. Imler and S. H. Hertzler made up the committee on securing an architect. W.W. Bretherick was the architect the committee was looking to initially hire, but Bretherick was relieved of his responsibility after he failed to meet his contract.<sup>7</sup> In search of a new architect, the committee had

arranged for an architect from Lebanon PA by the name of A. A. Ritcher to be present at the board meeting.<sup>8</sup> After a two-hour interview with Ritcher, the board decided they would employ him as the architect of Alpha Hall on the following conditions:

- If the committee finds his contract price too high, Ritcher will revise his plans to lower the price within the budget of the Board.

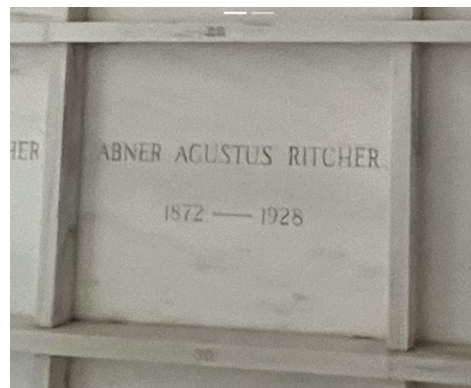
- If revisions are necessary to the plans, Ritcher is to receive \$150 for said revisions.

- If the contract price is too high to erect the building at this time, Ritcher is to be paid \$75.00 and the balance when the building has been erected.

- Plans are to be in the hands of contractors no later than May 3, 1899.<sup>9</sup>

During the seventh board meeting, which took place at the Middle Creek House of the West Conestoga Church, on May 2, 1900, the members discussed plans and specifications for architect, A. A. Ritcher.<sup>10</sup>

This photograph depicts the groundbreaking at Groff farm for the building of Alpha Hall in 1899.<sup>11</sup> Alpha Hall was designed by President Faulkenstein and dedicated on March 4, 1901. A.A. Richter, the architect, drafted the plans which were then executed by the builder Benjamin Groff.<sup>12</sup> "The



<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ralph Schlosser, *History of Elizabethtown College 1899 - 1970*. (Lebanon, PA: Sowers Printing Company, 1971), 32.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Paul Benowitz. *Images of America: Elizabethtown* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2015), 80.

<sup>12</sup> Jean-Paul Benowitz, and Peter J DePuydt, *Elizabethtown College*. (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2014), 13.

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey  
2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027  
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies

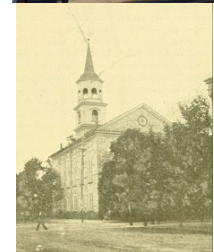


basement included a heating plan, kitchen, dining room, and science laboratory, while the first floor housed the chapel, library, bookstore, and three classrooms. Dormitories were on the second floor.<sup>13</sup>”

Ritcher designed other buildings in Pennsylvania as well, most notably the Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church, located at 119 North Eighth Street, Lebanon County, Pennsylvania.<sup>14</sup> The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2010.<sup>15</sup> On the

property of Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church there are two buildings from different time periods and built in different architectural styles. One is called Old Salem, which is a Colonial style 18<sup>th</sup> century building. The other is the Salem Memorial Chapel which is a ”19th century High Victorian Gothic style building with Richardsonian Romanesque influences.”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Abner Ritcher also designed the building for the largest dry goods store in Lebanon called “Shen’s Dry Goods Store.” Designed in 1888, this building is a Victorian-Second Empire-style structure which housed one of the earliest elevators in Lebanon. From 1934 until the early 2000s it was Logan’s Dress Shop. The building was completely restored in 2005.<sup>18</sup> It is located on 816 Cumberland St, Lebanon, PA 1702. <sup>19</sup> Ritcher built the St. Marks Reformed Church which is now known as the St. Mark's United Church of Christ.<sup>20</sup> In May of 1903, Ritcher drew up the plans for the building. The plans were for a main church that was 60 by 105 feet and a Sunday school chapel alongside the church that was 50 by 105 feet. The church and building are in the Gothic style and the



<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> “National Parks Gallery,” National Register Digital Assets, accessed July 1, 2024, <https://npgallery.nps.gov/AssetDetail/NRIS/10000402>.

<sup>15</sup> “National Register of Historic Places - Pennsylvania (PA), Lebanon County,” National Register of Historic Places, accessed May 22, 2024, <https://nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/pa/lebanon/state.html>.

<sup>16</sup> “National Archives NextGen Catalog,” National Archives Catalogue, accessed May 22, 2024, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/71996199>.

<sup>17</sup> “H J Shen Dept Store - 1926 between 8th & 9th on Cumberland, Lebanon (Became Logan’s Dress Shop),” Pinterest, accessed May 30, 2024, <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/458874649530652389/>.

<sup>18</sup> MapLeb, *Heritage Trail: Downtown Lebanon* (Lebanon Valley, PA: Visit Lebanon Valley, 2021), P. 5. [https://visitlebanonvalley.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Lebanon\\_HeritageTrail\\_Map.pdf](https://visitlebanonvalley.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Lebanon_HeritageTrail_Map.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> MapLeb, 5.

<sup>20</sup> Beers, 782–83.

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey  
2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027  
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies

finishing of the building is oak. The estimated cost of the church was \$50,000 and ground was broken on May 12.<sup>21</sup>



St. Mark's Reformed Church.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Daniel Miller, *History of the Reformed Church in Reading, Pa (Classic Reprint)* (Reading, PA: Forgotten Books, 2018), 421–22.

<sup>22</sup> “Lebanon, Pa - St Mark's Reformed Church and Parsonage,” eBay, accessed May 30, 2024, <https://www.ebay.com/itm/353687548339>.

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey  
2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027  
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies



Abner A. Ritcher second from left (1896) Courtesy Michael Trump the Lebanon County Historical Society



Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey  
2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027  
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies



Abner A. Ritcher seated in the center (1895) Courtesy Michael Trump the Lebanon County Historical Society

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey  
2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027  
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies



Abner A. Ritcher back row far right (1892) Courtesy Michael Trump the Lebanon County Historical Society

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey  
2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027  
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies

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## Benjamin G. Groff (1847-1905)

Benjamin G. Groff was born on February 17, 1847, in Lancaster County Pennsylvania. Groff, along with his family, were members of the Church of the Brethren, also called the German Baptist Brethren or Dunkers. Groff belonged to the White Oak congregation, dating back to the early eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Groff was also on the board of directors for the first National Bank of Elizabethtown.<sup>2</sup>

A new college was trying to be established by the Church of the Brethren who were seeking to create an institution of higher education for their members in Eastern Pennsylvania. The Committee on Location for the new College was in charge of visiting potential towns for the school to be located. The committee visited Norristown, Mountville, Columbia, Ephrata, Pottstown, and finally, Elizabethtown. On April 4, 1899, the committee convened at the home of S.H Hertzler in Elizabethtown and spent the morning discussing proposals from all of the towns that were bidding for the college location. In the afternoon, the Committee on Location drove around Elizabethtown to view the various potential sites – one was near the Pennsylvania Railroad station and the other was east of the town on farmland owned by Benjamin G. Groff.<sup>3</sup> There was the question of which of the two sites in Elizabethtown was better for the college's location. The citizens' committee met, and they each expressed their opinions, which led to the Committee on Location finally deciding on the tract of land southeast of town on the farmland belonging to Benjamin G. Groff.<sup>4</sup> Not only did Benjamin Groff sell the college the land on which it was built, he was also the

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Kerwin MacMaster, *Elizabethtown: The First Three Centuries* (Morgantown, PA: Mastof Press, 1999), 124.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>3</sup> Ralph Schlosser, *History of Elizabethtown College 1899 - 1970*. (Lebanon, PA: Sowers Printing Company, 1971), 12; Chet Williamson, *Uniting Work and Spirit: A Centennial History of Elizabethtown College* (Elizabethtown, PA, Elizabethtown College Press, 2001), 10.; Jean-Paul Benowitz, and Peter J DePuydt, *Elizabethtown College*. (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2014), 12.; The Committee, *History of the Church of the Brethren of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania*. (Lancaster, PA: Press of the New Era Printing Company, 1915) 629.

<sup>4</sup> Williamson., 17.



Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey  
2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027  
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies

contractor who built the first building on campus, known as Alpha Hall, along with many others. The committee had received bids from various contractors based on the architect's plans but all of them exceeded the \$10,000 target. The trustees consulted Benjamin G. Groff who had submitted a \$15,000 bid. They asked him if he could reduce the amount and he agreed to donate \$750 which brought down his final bid to \$14,250.<sup>5</sup> The board accepted this offer, making him the contractor of Alpha Hall and ground was broken on July 10, 1900.<sup>6</sup>



Pictured left: "Ground breaking takes place at the Groff farm for Alpha Hall in 1899. George Falkenstein (sixth from left with shovel) designed Alpha Hall with plans drafted by architect A.A. Ritcher of Lebanon. Benjamin Groff was the contractor. Alpha Hall was dedicated on March 4, 1901."<sup>7</sup>

"This is a view of Elizabethtown College from the railroad station. The campus was established on 10 acres owned by Brethren Benjamin G. Groff of Groff

Mills. The brothers Royer S. and

J. Harvey Buch of the Brethren firm Buch Manufacturing paid one third; their father, Adison Buch, trustee of the Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren, paid one third; and Groff donated the remaining third of the tract to the college.<sup>8</sup>"

Groff was particular about the way things were built and had an eye for detail. For example, in the building of Alpha Hall he wanted white keystones placed above each window. This would be an additional expense to the college, but Groff was set on the keystones so he offered to pay twenty-five percent of the cost, the board agreed as long as the additional expense did not exceed sixty dollars. The front of Alpha Hall alone required thirty-four stones, as well as the additional work of laying the irregular brickwork around them.<sup>9</sup>

Later in the building process of Alpha Hall, the board would decide to enter a protest against Benjamin G. Groff for how long he was taking on the college building. The board's disapproval may have motivated Groff and his workers because Alpha Hall was ready for occupancy seven weeks later.<sup>10</sup> Brothers Hertzler and Falkenstein were fearful of future delays in the construction of the college building. They spoke to the contractor,



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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>6</sup> Schlosser, 34.

<sup>7</sup> Jean-Paul Benowitz. *Images of America: Elizabethtown* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2015), 80.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Williamson, 33.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 40.

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey  
2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027  
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies



prevailing in their argument because soon enough an additional ten plasterers were on the project. “For one time at least, urgency trumped Pennsylvania German Thrift”.<sup>11</sup> Though Groff would often try to save money where he could, he was extremely generous to the college, donating nearly a thousand dollars of contract work to Alpha Hall.<sup>12</sup> During the board of trustee meeting on March 28<sup>th</sup> the building was accepted from Benjamin G. Groff to the College at a cost of \$14,318.71. “At last Elizabethtown College had a home.”<sup>13</sup> Groff served as superintendent of the grounds and buildings and erected all college buildings until his death in 1907.<sup>14</sup>

There was a need for a bank in Elizabethtown that met the strict guidelines imposed by the National Bank Act of 1864. Through the autumn and winter of 1884, a committee met to decide on the principals this new bank would uphold and ensure that it met the standards to qualify it as a National Bank. On February 25, 1885, stockholders gathered for an organizational meeting.<sup>15</sup> “They chose John H. Coble, Aaron Dissinger, Jacob Dyer, Christian Gingrich, Benjamin G. Groff, Martin G. Keller, Frederick Olweiler, Winfield S. Smith, Abraham G. Stauffer, and Samuel R. Zug as a board of directors. At their first meeting the board members elected Aaron Dissinger, president; Jacob Dyer, vice president; Isaac S. Longenecker, cashier; and Jacob Hertzler, teller. John S. Risser and Jacob G. Stauffer joined the board in 1886. Nathan S. Zug came on the board in 1889; John H. Myers was elected a member in 1891 and Ephraim C. Ginder in 1895.”<sup>16</sup> “Under the National

Brother Groff about the potential of adding additional plasterers to the two already on the job. Groff disagreed saying that plasterers were currently hard to get, but Falkenstein suspected that the small size of the crew was because Groff had to supply the heat for his workmen and he wanted to wait until the building’s heating plant was installed. But Hertzler and Falkenstein ended up



<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 44.; Schlosser, 42.

<sup>14</sup> Williamson, 42.

<sup>15</sup> MacMaster, 139.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey  
2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027  
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies

Bank Act of 1864, the Elizabethtown National Bank shown in the photographs was organized in 1885.”<sup>17</sup>

Benjamin G. Groff died on June 21, 1907, at age 60, in Elizabethtown, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Groff is buried at the Mount Tunnel Cemetery in Elizabethtown. His gravestone is pictured below.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Benowitz, 69.

<sup>18</sup>“Benjamin G Groff (1847-1907),” Find a Grave, accessed May 22, 2024.  
[https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/103917614/benjamin\\_g-groff](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/103917614/benjamin_g-groff).

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary  
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey  
Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey  
2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP  
Ava Barton Class of 2027  
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