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**The Conestoga Wagon**  
 By Thornton Oakley

The Conestoga Wagon! What inestimable service did this amazing vehicle render to our countrymen during the dramatic century from 1750 to 1850!

With especial affection do I revere the name because of the wagon's close affiliation with my Revolutionary great-grandfather, John Okely; he who, arriving in America in 1742, was one of the early settlers of Bethlehem, becoming there, in 1777, Washington's Commissary General and serving as Assistant at Valley Forge. With caravans of wagons he sent to General Washington, during that bitter winter, supplies of food and ammunition by devious routes unfamiliar to the British. As I think of those trains of horses, canvas tops and creaking wheels, the fearless drivers, I can but also ponder on the hardships, dangers of those days, the daring of our ancestors. Of curious moment were, at times, the loads that via wagons from Bethlehem my grandfather sent to Valley Forge, notably to Baron von Steuben who, stationed at Washington's Headquarters—I treasure, framed upon my wall, the Baron's letter to my grandfather — "A pair of boots; Four pounds of snuff; Three dozen white silver coat-buttons; One dozen plates of English earthenware; One half-dozen beer glasses."

To me for another reason is poignant the name of Conestoga Wagon, for in one my great-grandfather, likewise named John Okely, son of the Commissary General, in the year 1810 traversed the Allegheny Mountains to become an inhabitant of the yet tiny town of Pittsburgh—the settlement to become that spectacular city in which I was privileged to be born.

As I think back through the history of our country, I am increasingly impressed by the temerity of the early American. I marvel at the achievements of our ancestors through this servant, the wagon of his creation. I think especially of Benjamin Franklin; in 1756, at the urgency of General Braddock, he assembled one hundred and fifty Conestogas, filling them with arms and food, and dispatched them across the Red-man infested wall of the Alleghenies to aid the British General at the forks of the Ohio, in his task of arresting the onslaught of the French and Indians. The crossing of the mountains then, by means of road not much more developed than a trail, was a formidable undertaking.

1810! That was when the early trail had been somewhat widened. The road invited increasing movement toward the setting sun, but dangers ever lurked — dangers no longer of attack by Indians but of wagons plunging over brinks of precipices, and of hold-ups by mountain highwaymen. Even yet the road was tortuous, its steep ascents demanding every muscle of the six-horse teams, its declivities every possible pressure by un-failing brakes. Rapidity of movement was limited to around four or five miles an hour, requiring many, many days to cross the range. In winter wheels became imprisoned in icy ruts; in summer captured to their hubs in mire, from which the efforts both of drivers and the strength of mighty jacks was barely adequate to free them. The methods of night resting were far from comfortable. During darkness movement was impracticable. When, upon westward journeys, adventurous women accompanied their mates they slept within the wagons, the men finding beds as best they might perchance among primeval trees, or at one of the crude shelters that, separated by hours of travel, had been erected along the road to serve the wagons and their living freight.

Where have vanished the thousands of Conestogas that until the coming of the railroad thronged the highways? I am acquainted

with but four examples that dwell within museums. For years I have known of no others to appear, save one which, a decade ago, turned up at auction on a farm near Lancaster — the very center of historic wagon manufacture—and which incredibly became my own. I have it housed in a sturdy shed devised for its preservation. Its beauty, its message of the past, give me delight. It is complete, blue as the skies, with wealth of sumptuous red; with fantastic iron work, bows and ancient canvas, dip and swing of body, feed box, tool box, and lazy board; with five arched rows of bells that crowned its horses' collars, which, when I fondly tap them, give forth music. "What glorious life was yours!" I find myself exclaiming as I gaze upon my treasure.

Conestoga! The name itself is melody, recalling the colonial days of Pennsylvania, the lower regions of the Susquehanna where roamed a tribe of Indians whose name the word phonetically suggests. Soon it was applied unto a valley and a river; then unto the wagon created by the farmers about Lancaster, each vehicle emerging from its shop with individual touch, presenting variations of detail as developed by its local builder.

Came also "Conestoga Road", entitling the highway that today, close to my beloved home, leads ever as of yore towards Pennsylvania German country and the Western hills! Ah me, the road is now a paved and mighty thoroughfare resounding with speeding automobiles, and punctuated with traffic lights. "Can this be," I question as I drive my Buick along the black top stretches, "the very road on which through vanished years, the glorious wagons conveyed supplies to Valley Forge and toward the calling mountains?" And then before my eyes a vision seems to glow of sunlight on caravans of canvas covers, and across my ears there drifts a sound as though of thud of hoofs, of rumbling wheels, of melody of bells, of songs of teamsters.

"Hark! Behold!" my heart makes answer, "never will the memory of the Conestoga die!"

**"The Walking Purchase"**  
 George W. Schultz, who has been one of our earliest members and who has recently returned to live in Wayne, has recorded many interesting facts about the Lenni-Lenape Indians whose hunting grounds covered a goodly part of Eastern Pennsylvania.

Although William Penn had received title to his vast domain direct from the King, he felt that the Indians had a right to say something about it, too, and so he confirmed his deed by purchasing from them what had already become his by Royal grant. There were, of course, no recognized property lines and, in the treaty which he made, it was therefore specified that the tract extended westward as far as a man could walk in three days. Penn and his Indian friends thereupon set out on a leisurely stroll into the woods, stopping to partake of a comfortable luncheon and camping overnight. Half way through the second day, Penn concluded that he had covered at least as much territory as he had counted on, and settled for a day and a half.

Some 50 years or so later, his sons desired to extend their already vast holding further to the north and to the east. Using the old formula of a day and a half's walk. There was nothing leisurely about the new stroll into the woods. Four young men trained for the event. Only one of them completed the march of twelve hours on the first day (15 minutes for lunch) and six hours on the second day. He covered a total distance of 66½ miles from Wrightstown, Buck County, to the foot of the Ponoco Mountains!

**Corner Stone**  
 The Radnor Historical Society was organized less than six years ago. Its history is young, but its foundation is solid. The corner stone of that foundation is the dedication of a part of ourselves to the memory of our forebears and recognition of a duty to those who may wish to preserve ours.

The materials that are needed for the structure that we have started to build are principally those of Interest, Enthusiasm, and Participation. We will gratefully accept your contribution in any amount.

Modest though our operations are, we do need financial support, too. The maintenance of our Museum, communication with our members, hall rental and refreshments for our open meetings, the publication of this Bulletin—absorb the major portion of our dues-income. That leaves but little for future development and expansion of our activities. By associating yourself with us, in membership, you can insure our permanency and progress. Dues are only \$2.00 per year; you can transmit them together with an application for membership to:

Mrs. Malcolm G. Sausser, Treasurer, 114 Walnut Avenue, Wayne.

**THE BULLETIN**  
 of  
**RADNOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY**



Volume 1. No. 3

Spring, 1953

Incorporated April 30, 1948

**HEADQUARTERS AND MUSEUM**  
**THE FINLEY HOUSE**  
**BEECHTREE LANE AND BELLEVUE AVENUE**  
**WAYNE, PENNSYLVANIA**

**YESTERDAY**  
 AN EDITORIAL

*Yesterday has passed into history. It was a day that may not have had any special significance. It began and ended like many another and, because it was all around us and within our easy reach at any time, there seemed to be no particular reason for holding it in memory. And yet, without Yesterday there could be no Today.*

*It would be difficult for anyone to live in or around Radnor Township very long without becoming keenly appreciative of the fact that this is truly historic ground, and that the story of the way of life of those who were here before us is something that should be preserved. However, unless facts are collected while they are still obtainable and unless documents and artifacts are carefully protected, the story that surrounds*

*them may become lost. That is true not only of our Colonial and Revolutionary history, but is equally applicable to the more recent times which border upon or are included within the span of our own lifetime.*

*We who live among the Radnor foothills or in the Chester Valley, enjoy a privilege and a heritage that has been painstakingly fashioned for us by the courageous people of many generations. Their dreams and their labors are the foundation of what we have today, and their record is an honorable one that we should be proud to pass on to posterity. To accomplish that, and to enjoy the pleasures of discovery in the course of doing it, are the purposes of our Society.*

CHARLES E. ALEXANDER President

**"Let It Be Recorded"**

**A Chronicle of Our Activities**

**October 20, 1951**

Opening the season's program with the celebration of Pennsylvania Week, the Society conducted its second "Open House" tour of old homes in Radnor Township. Nearly a hundred members and guests availed themselves of the opportunity afforded through the hospitality graciously extended by Mrs. Charles C. Harrison, Mr. and Mrs. Allan M. Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. William J. Slattery, Dr. and Mrs. Morton McMichael, Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Scott, Mr. and Mrs. James Tyson, and Mr. and Mrs. D. M. Yerzy.

**November 29, 1951**

Dr. Arthur James of Temple University gave a most interesting illustrated talk on paper mills and paper making in this neighborhood. Some sixty miles in Chester County and about twenty-five in Delaware County used the old hand process and hard molds. The most famous mill was the Willcox Mill, on a branch of Chester Creek, probably the third place in the United States where paper was made. Darby Creek in Radnor Township had several paper mills above its banks in Colonial times.

**March 20, 1952**

"Bristling with musketry", as one of our early Colonial newspapers might have described it, the chapel of the Presbyterian Church took on a look that was both new and old. The occasion was a talk on the "Development of the American Rifle", weapon of peace as well as war, by Dr. Stephen Joseph Herben of Bryn Mawr College. Exhibiting a collection of every type of rifle from the Pennsylvania Flintlock to the Garand M.30, Dr. Herben delivered an intensely interesting discourse on the art and ingenuity of our old and modern gunsmiths and the part played by the rifle in making and preserving our Nation. Among those who kindly loaned exhibits were Major General Milton G. Baker and Colonel Milton H. Medenbach, of Valley Forge Military Academy, Mr. E. Reeves Hart and Mrs. Charles E. Alexander of Wayne, Mr. Albert E. Reinmuth of Royersford, Mr. "Nick" Travaglini of Bryn Mawr and Pennsylvania Historical Society through the courtesy of Mr. Richard Norris Williams, 2d.

**April 17, 1952**

Following an introduction by the

Society's Vice President, Miss Caroline Robbins, who gave the members a brief review of the background of early emigrations from Wales, Mr. George Vaux told the story of "The Welsh Party" and the influence of that hardy race upon our early history. The "Tract" upon our early history.

**May 20, 1952**

The Annual Meeting was held in the auditorium of the Radnor Grammar School. The President reported that during the past year 30 new members had been enrolled. The Treasurer reported balances of \$375.83 in the Operating Account and \$203.33 in the Savings Account. Miss Caroline Robbins, Mr. Richard W. Barringer, and the Rev. Thomas F. Roland were re-elected as Directors to serve a three-year term.

Following the transaction of the business of the meeting, a novel feature of entertainment was presented in the form of a "Quiz Program" on the early, and more recent, history of Radnor Township. Joseph M. Fronefield, 3rd, acted as Quiz Master with the following as the panel of experts: Mrs. Ruth Wood Smith, Mrs. T. Magill Patterson, Charles Morrison, and Winfred Stillwell. Totally unrehearsed, the panel committed itself admirably, even in the face of stiff competition from an audience equally eager to both ask and answer the questions.

**October 18, 1952**

Once again with the celebration of Pennsylvania Week, the popular Open House tour brought 105 visitors to "Woodstock", the home of Mr. and Mrs. Thornton Oakley, authors of "Our Pennsylvania", the "Bliss House", home of Mr. and Mrs. Walter B. Cleary in Rosemont, Miss Evalina C. Walbaum's residence on Conestoga Road, Ithan (built in 1801), and those of Mr. and Mrs. Kilshaw M. Irwin of Cambria Court, St. Davids, and Mr. and Mrs. R. Alexander Montgomery at Newtown Road, Ithan. The Society's Museum in the Finley House was also open all day, and a source of much interest to members and out-of-town visitors.

**November 20, 1952**

"Wayne's Watch and Ward" was the subject of the talk given by Captain James H. Bones, Radnor's Chief of Police. Going back to the

days when Constable "Dick" Leary, the State Constabulary, and the members of the North Wayne Protective Association kept watch and ward over the community, Captain Bones traced the development of the present highly efficient, thoroughly equipped and trained force. Paying tribute to his predecessors, Captains Leonard Haskett, Martin Mulhall, Edward J. Sweeney, James Lafferty, and Wilmer N. Clemence, the present Chief, did not add, as he might have done, the highly important part that he has played through his personal inspiration of confidence on the part of youngsters in the integrity of his force and its policy of being a friend in need.

**January 20, 1952**

Summoned to the Presbyterian Church Chapel by the stirring strains of the bagpipe, the members foregathered to hear Messrs. T. Bayard Beatty, Jr. (son of the former High School Principal) and Covington K. Allen, Jr., tell of "The Scot — Perfect Pioneer". Dressed in full Highland regalia, and accompanied by Piper James Brown, they exhibited a fascinating collection of broadswords, dirks, and other Scottish regalia.

Admitting that there was still some debate as to whether the bagpipe is a musical instrument, Jim Brown related how, when General Forbes marched to the relief of Fort Duquesne, the war whoop of the Indians was drowned out by the retaliatory skirling of the pipers of the Black Watch.

**March 17, 1952**

Believing that the Society's history is that of preserving the history of all things that are a part of our life and the American heritage, this evening's program entailed a new field with the presentation of "The Ancestry of Aeronautics" by Mr. William G. Gerhardt of Radnor. Relating the story of Blanchard's first American balloon ascension in 1783, the use of observation balloons in our Civil War and the pioneering of Zeppelin with the dirigible, Mr. Gerhardt reminded his audience that this year of Jet realization and Rocket dream marks but the 50th anniversary of Orville and Wilbur Wright's proof of the practicability of the heavier than air machine. Truly, history is ever in the making, and the time to record it is while we live it.

**IN MEMORIAM**

Mrs. William Henry Sayen, Wayne's oldest resident, was in her ninety-sixth year at the time of her recent death. Spanning a period of momentous events in history, her own life was one of extraordinary interest and notable activity.

Her life began on June 12, 1857, in a covered wagon that was part of a California-bound train that had halted in the vicinity of the present city of Lincoln, Nebraska. James Buchanan, Pennsylvania's only occupant of the White House, was then President and the Civil War still several years in the future.

Mrs. Sayen was the last surviving charter member of the Saturday Club, the second oldest Women's Club in Pennsylvania, and was twice its President. She was Honorary President of the State Federation of Pennsylvania Women's Clubs, and a former Regent of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. She was also a member of the New Century Club, and the Wayne Musical Coterie and a charter member of the Historical Society.

Mrs. William E. Boryer, whose tragic and untimely death was a

great shock to her many friends, was deeply interested in the Society's activities and those of the Wayne Garden Club. She served as Vice President of the latter organization and was particularly active in the work of the Wayne Presbyterian Church.

Nathan P. Pechin was, in point of residency, Radnor Township's eldest citizen and a descendant of its early settlers. A charter member of the Historical Society, an enthusiastic participant in all matters of civic interest, and an ardent sportsman and conservationist, he will be long remembered by all who enjoyed the privilege of his friendship.

As a former Sheriff of Delaware County, he was a public officer who combined courage with tact and human understanding, attributes which both inspired and justified the confidence of his fellow citizens without regard to political affiliation.

C. Laurence Warwick, whose position as Executive Secretary of the American Society for Testing Materials made heavy demands upon his time and abilities, was ever ready to serve his com-

munity in any capacity in which he was called. He served as Township Commissioner for sixteen years and as President of the Board of Commissioners and Chairman of the Council for Civil Defense during his final term of office. He was also a past President of the North Wayne Protective Association, and always a progressive leader in civic thought and action.

Harry W. Bryan, for many years a well-known member of the force of the Wayne Post Office, participated in the making of history as well as in recording and preserving it. Together with the late Arlington W. deCanizares, Sr., he enlisted in Company M of the Pennsylvania Volunteers at the outbreak of the Spanish-American War. Continuing in the service, he also saw action in the suppression of the Philippine Insurrection. He was a member, and prominent in the activities of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Quiet and unassuming in nature, faithful in the performance of duty, and a solid citizen in all respects, he is typical of the many whose contribution to their country and community it is the purpose of this Society to remember and to preserve.

**Washington's Prayer for the United States of America**

Almighty God: We make our earnest prayer that thou wilt incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government, and to entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another and for their fellow citizens of the United States at large. And, finally, that thou wilt most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of mind which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion, and without a humble imitation of Whose example in these things we can never hope to be a happy nation. Grant our supplication, we beseech Thee, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. AMEN.

(An illuminated copy of this Prayer hangs over the Altar of Valley Forge Memorial Chapel.)

**The Romance of Old Deeds**

By Thomas F. Roland, O.S.A.

History is recorded in the buildings, roads and other structures of a place. It is recorded also in smaller items, and hidden away in the official records in Township offices and other such sepulchres. But many of us have at hand the deeds to our homes, and therein we may find spelled out for us a bit of history, the story of the title of the estate which is ours today. For it is never to be forgotten that the land we live on is in direct physical contact with the days of the Indians, yes, even with the days of the glaciers.

Two such Deeds are among the many preserved in the Villanova College Archives. One recites the sale on July 5, 1793, of a long narrow strip of ground stretching from County Line to Radnor Street, with a marked kink in the middle where the tract crossed a small stream of water. The "party of the first part" was Ezekiel Rambo, yeoman. His name brings memories of the Swedes who long before Penn founded his "greene city", had established their homesteads along the Delaware and Schuylkill rivers, settled Swedenland a few miles from here, and possibly cleared the first farm in Radnor. The designation, yeoman, reminds of a more democratic era that farmers here were not gentlemen in colonial times, nor for some years following our independence, while feudal titles of nobility left their aura throughout the new Republic. Rambo had acquired his land from Richard Thomas, burdened with a mortgage, which shows that mortgages have a long and splendid history in our Township.

The consideration named in the 1793 sale is 970 pounds specie, current gold and silver money of Pennsylvania, plus the assuming of the old mortgage of 230 pounds, also specified as lawful money of Pennsylvania. Such use of Pennsylvania money a year after the adoption of the first United States coinage law introducing a national currency, would seem to indicate that the new coins had not yet achieved national circulation. And the difference in the prices paid in two transactions involving the same tract might indicate either new values in Radnor real estate, or reflect the inflation that depressed the value of our money even in those long past days.

The "party of the second part" in this transaction is named as Thomas Paul, of Oxford Township, Sussex County, New Jersey. Does this mark the coming to Radnor of the first member of the Paul family, so long prominent here? Thomas Paul's estate was sold in 1812 to John Rudolph, by the administrator, James Paul, and Rudolph's, in turn, became the site of Villanova College.

Other family names to be seen in this Deed, mostly as owners of adjoining lands, are Joseph Miles, Michael Stadelman, David Reese, John Mather, James Hunter, William Thomas, John Roberts, Thomas Denis and Edward Stiles. Some of these names go back in our local history to the very beginnings of Radnor.

Among those claiming damages for destruction caused by the British after the Brandywine were a Miles, a Stadelman and a Thomas. The document bears the signature of Hugh DeHaven, Esq., who as a Justice of the Peace took the acknowledgements of Ezekiel and his wife Elizabeth. James Elliot is another witness, and the Recording Officer in Chester signs himself, Wm. R. Atlee. Would he be the same person whose "consort Margaretta only daughter of Maj. Gen. Anthy. Wayne" was buried in Old St. David's churchyard in 1810?

The second of our Deeds bringing to life the days of early Radnor transfers from John Morgan to Jonathan Miller the title to a tract of one hundred acres. It is dated November 17, 1801. It recites that John Morgan acquired

**Membership**

Present membership in the Society totals 222. New members, since publication of our last Bulletin, include:

- Mrs. Charles E. Alexander
- Mrs. Charles S. Boles
- Miss Eugenia Campbell
- Mrs. Gertrude Ware Case
- Mr. and Mrs. Robert Colgan
- Mr. George F. Creutzburg
- Mrs. George F. Curwen
- Mrs. Robert Hare Davis
- Mr. H. H. Davy
- Miss Charlotte C. Eckfeldt
- Mrs. Henry Ecroyd
- Mrs. and Mrs. O. L. Ehmann, Jr.
- Mrs. Robert P. Elmer
- Miss Emma M. Ewing
- Mr. and Mrs. John H. Foster
- Mr. Joseph M. Fronefield, 3rd
- Mrs. John G. Hartley
- Mr. and Mrs. K. M. Irwin
- Mr. Guy W. Knight
- Mrs. Glenn Koger
- Mrs. William H. Lathrop
- Mrs. E. A. Leinroth
- Mrs. Walter S. Mertz
- Mrs. Thomas McKean
- Mrs. Morton McMichael
- Mr. Charles Myers
- Mrs. E. H. Oliver
- Mr. James I. Patin
- Mrs. B. P. Ramsay
- Mrs. Homer C. Rice
- Mrs. R. S. Sawyer
- Mr. Osmond Saven
- Mr. W. A. Strzalkowsky
- Mr. Ambler D. Tees
- Mrs. George Vaux
- Mrs. James R. Wilds
- Mrs. James D. I. Wood

Won't you let us add YOUR name to the list? Dues are only \$2.00 per year; paid now, they will cover your membership until May 1954.

the property by the Will of his father, Samuel, dated May 1, 1759. These, of course, are early members of that family, which came with the first settlers in the Welsh Tract, and gave the name to Morgans Corner and to the work horse of the United States Army, the famous Morgan breed. Jonathan Miller is called an innkeeper of Haverford Township. He kept The Buck Tavern, which can still be seen in Haverford, though modified to suit its latest function. The consideration given was "four thousand dollars current gold and silver money of the United States of America." The days of Pennsylvania money were over.

This Deed specifies that any entail is invalid, "agreeable (it reads) to an Act of Assembly passed the sixteenth day of January, 1799 to debar Entails"—a very important Act in the development of Real Estate Law in this State. Others named herein are John Evans, Widow Jermans, and Henry Reese, all families to be found on the map of Early Settlements in Delaware County. John Lindsay is the Justice of the Peace who took Morgan's acknowledgement of payment received, and James Barnard recorded this instrument: both names come down to our day.

Not alone for their contents are these two old documents interesting, but for their outward appearance also. Both are written out in longhand, on parchment. Metes and bounds are marked by stones, walnut trees, spikes, bushes and such, all to the despair of any modern surveyor, trying to lay out his courses according to date long since destroyed. Nor is the spelling always in the modern way. Lancaster Road might be a slip of the pen, or another form of the familiar word. At least one of the principals had to make "his mark" serve for his signature; but since his wife signed with him, and his name is evidently by the same hand as hers, perhaps it made little difference.

Such are some of the interesting details to be found in such documents of our early days in Radnor. And they are interesting not in any merely antiquarian fashion, but as bringing vividly into our days the mannerisms of another era, while underlining the ties which bind us to them, who laid so well and truly the foundations of our freedom and prosperity.

**A Word About "The Bulletin"**

This is Volume 1—No. 3 of the Society's Bulletin. Previous numbers were published in booklet form in the Spring of 1950 and the Summer of 1951, and were sent to all members. Believing that many more residents of the Township and the nearby vicinity would be interested in the purpose and activities of the Society if they knew more about it, the Directors conceived the idea of publishing Number Three as a page of "The Suburban." Through the cooperation of Mr. A. M. Ehart and his staff, this was made possible.

Should we undertake the publication of a book that might be entitled "Old Radnor"? David S. McLean, Superintendent of Radnor Township's Schools, suggests the idea to us. Are there members of our Society who would contribute separate chapters on varying subjects of our time? Would our citizens of Radnor and neighboring Townships give support to such a project? Tell us what you think!