

Lancaster County Historical Society
Oral History Project

Interviewee: Mrs. Wagner

Interviewer: Unknown

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Narrator: Mrs. Wagner, first of all, I'd like to ask you have you always lived in this area?

Mrs. Wagner: Well, I lived in this area most of my life, but I lived seven years in Philadelphia during the war. But I am...I was born the corner of Marietta avenue and Orange street in Lancaster.

N: I see, you're practically a native
(laughter)

W: Yeah I am a native of Lancaster, that's right

N: Well Mrs. Wagner I know you have an interesting story to tell us, so would like to tell us what your subject is about? And then just go right ahead and tell us about that special day

W: Well, it's the story of the liberty bell, the last time it went out of Philadelphia, was on a flat car and it came to the siding at the corner of Prince and Mulberry street and it was in July, in the summer, in fact it was on birthday, and my mother took us all to see this Liberty Bell because it was the last time it ever left Independence Hall. And of course the crowd was so great that they were putting all the little children, picking them out of the crowd and putting them on the platform, but they picked me up and put me on, but there was no more room so they sat me 'side the Liberty Bell. They set me on the Liberty Bell, right aside the crack, which was quite a thing at the time, and of course, due to the big crowd, why, they didn't know where else to put me...so they set me there. (laughter) And it was a nice day, it was really a warm day that day, of course that was the last time it was out of Independence Hall, it was on the way to the San Francisco Acquisition, at that time.

N: Did your mother talk to you about it and tell you what it was about?

W: Yes, she told me. She always kept the folder. I have the itinerary of the Liberty Bell at that time and the story of it. And of course she kept it and wrote on it the whole around it about how they picked me up and put me on the Liberty Bell.

N: That's a wonderful remembrance for you.

W: Yes it is.

N: Have you seen the Liberty Bell since that day?

W: Oh yes. When I lived in Philadelphia I used to have to take people down to Independence Hall and the museums. And all those people who came to visit me down there, and of course I had the duty to take them everywhere around Philadelphia. So I got to see it quite a bit...yes. Of course, being so small at the time the memory is kind of vague. But I know it was done because Mother has the itinerary and the things that came along with it that day.

N: You said there were a lot of crowds.

W: Oh yes it was crowded. A real crowds, you know, real extreme, because there was nowhere's else to go. And that was really an event at the time, and so of course we all went to see it. And being small, I was picked out of the crowd to be put on the Bell.

N: Do you think that people were proud of the Liberty Bell?

W: Oh yes, very proud. That was something to see. Its like Mother said, told me years later, well, you'll never get to see it again. Maybe you'll never get to see it again but at least you saw it then. And she said she don't think it will ever go out of the Independence Hall again. And it hasn't. Up till now, they are talking about taking it away for the Susque...you know the ah...Centennial

N: What kind of transportation did you use to get there and back?

W: Ah...we walked
(laughter)

N: How far?
(laughter)

W: Oh, yes, we walked. We walked from the corner of Marietta Avenue and Orange, over to Mulberry and Prince. There was no other way to get there. We had no...of course there was no cars or anything in those days, there was horse and wagons. In fact, I had a little sister who was killed right in back of our place.

N: Oh, I am sorry

W: She was only six years old at the time, and it was one of the first automobiles that had ever come around. And...ah...we were crossing from the ice wagon over home and the man hit her, run over her.

N: Well what was...do you remember what your impression of the Liberty Bell was? You were only six years old then.

W: I was only six years old, I was seven, Mother says here, but I was just seven on the sixth of July and this came in July so it must have been right around the time of my birthday because it was real hot that day, you know July is really a warm...but vaguely, I don't have too much impression. I can remember more of the train than I can of the Bell. because of the massive, the bigness of the train. You know, to a small child that's really, it's something. But, no, they sat me on there, but its too vague, I can't remember too much about it. But I know it was there. (laughter)

N: Would you like to tell us just a little bit about these remembrances you have here, I think those are very interesting.

W: Well, this was the story of the Liberty Bell and how it came into Pennsylvania, and its, very explicit on there, and of course, then this is the story, this is also the historic part of the Bell that comes with, (papers rustle) that came along with that day, they were handing these out.

N: They were given those out?

W: They were giving these out to the people that went to see it, and then it shows pictures of where it had come from...(papers rustle) where they were going to take it afterwards

N: And where it was going next.

W: Yes, where they were going next, and what the Bell signified. And of course, there's Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of...telling why they had the Bell (papers rustle) of course there's Carpenter's Hall, and then City Hall in Philadelphia. And of course on the back it gives you the Council of Philadelphia, there members of the Council down there at the time. And that's where the Liberty Bell was going to Pan-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco.

N: Was it on its way to San Francisco?

W: It was on its way, uh huh, and at that time the train came across, the main line of the railroad right in back of the...where the White Star Restaurant is there, where the Buchanan Hotel is. Well, right in back of that was the main line of the railroad that came into Lancaster to our railroad station. For years that was across from the Hotel Brunswick. And I rode that a many a times.

N: Did they have the flatcar draped in any way? Was it ah..

W: I can't remember, I don't think they did. I think only had was just the Bell on there.

N: It was just open on a flat car?

W: Just open on a flat car, set on a [trestle] like.

N: And the crowds just stood around...

W: We just stood around, of course they had a speaker there but I don't remember anything that the speaker, my mother would but know I don't. But they had a program to tell people all about the Liberty Bell, you know. But, of course, I wouldn't know, remember any of that, no more than what she told me but they did have a program and that's how they handed out these folders for the exposition they were going to, to tell where they were going.

N: Well, I thank you very much Mrs. Wagner, that was very interesting, I think that maybe when Lancaster has its 300th birthday, when some one will sit here and listen to your story, as I have and it was very interesting. Thank you
(laughter)

W: Yes, that's true. You're welcome. I would just like to add that this was the year 1915.

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