

PIONEERS AND TRANSPORTATION ON NEWPORT ROAD

By HENRY H. BOMBERGER.

THE Newport road is one of the oldest roads in northern Lancaster county. It was first used as a trail through forests by early settlers on horseback to take wheat to the mill at Brandywine, to be ground into flour. It is said that the horses had to pass in single file, as the path was too narrow for them to go abreast; finally, it developed into an open thoroughfare used and named before Lancaster county was established. The road leads from Mount Hope, Pennsylvania, to Newport, Delaware, a distance of sixty-three miles. This road was important in the development of Pennsylvania's early industries, in the days of iron smelting, when Conestoga teams were the only means of transportation. It has many intersections, with some notable cross roads. In early days almost every mile contained a distillery, or a hotel. Mount Hope furnace, owned by the Grubbs, was an important industry located on the west side of Chickies creek—the original boundary line of Warwick township.

John Grubb, the first of the family on these shores, was a son of John and Helen Grubb. At the age of twenty-five, he came to America to mend his fortune, which had been seriously impaired by his support of the royal cause. Embarking from London on the ship "Kent," in 1677, he arrived at Burlington, West Jersey, after a lengthy voyage; and afterward, as early as 1682, he secured 340 acres of land on Chester creek.

Grubb's Landing, Brandywine, Delaware, became well known; and it was here that Emanuel Grubb, the oldest son of John, was born July 19th, 1682. John Grubb became the possessor of a tract of land containing some 600 acres. He was a member of the colonial assembly. A writer says of him: "He came from a stock of men second to none on the face of the earth."

At Grubbs' Landing he built a tannery, and was the first manufacturer of leather in Pennsylvania. In 1703, he left Grubbs' Landing and located at Marcus Hook, Pennsylvania, where he

acquired much land. He died there March 4th, 1708. He was an extensive landowner both in Pennsylvania and Delaware; and, like his ancestors, was a devout supporter of the Established Church of England. His wife, Frances Vane, belonged to an old English family. They had a family of eight children, — Emanuel, John, Joseph, Samuel, Nathaniel, Peter, Charity and Phoebe. Of these, Peter became distinguished through his discovery of extensive beds of iron ore at Cornwall, Lebanon county, Pa., and his prominence as a pioneer in Pennsylvania manufacturing interest. In 1734, he became proprietor of the celebrated Cornwall ore hills, containing almost pure magnetic ore. He died at Hopewell forge intestate, leaving two sons, Curtis and Peter. Peter bought Mount Hope and erected there a furnace; he also bought Hopewell forge. Mount Hope furnace used only charcoal, and this accounts for the owner of the furnace buying vast quantities of timber-land for the purpose of converting the wood into charcoal. It required an enormous amount of charcoal to keep the forge in operation, and big sheds were filled with charcoal during the winter months. Farmers were kept busy hauling the charcoal; and at times the distance was so great that three days or more were required for a single trip. A special bed on the wagon, shaped somewhat like a hopper, —wide at the top, and at the bottom about the width of the wagon, —held two hundred bushels of charcoal.

Pennville, now Elm, a village a mile east of Penryn, was at a point where five roads converged, which fact, possibly, was the reason why a tavern established there in early days was so well patronized. Molly Plaster's tavern, as it was called, became widely known, if not famous, as the headquarters of the mountaineers, and as the rendezvous of iron workers in the old days "when the forges and furnaces were in full blast."

There are about two miles of road between Elm and Halfville, on quite an elevation, having a valley on each side, with beautiful scenery, and with the city of Lancaster in the far distance. This piece of road was much used in training horses of the celebrated Speedwell stock farms, formerly Hopewell forge. Specially expert drivers, with light built skeleton runabouts, were engaged for training the horses.

Sheetz's blacksmith shop, at the cross-roads, had a tile roof and an old leather bellows; also an old pump, which was near the

shop. This was a busy place during the early transportation period. A garage now occupies the site. At this point three townships—Penn, Elizabeth and Warwick—meet, and also Bomberger's tract. Warwick township is one of the twelve townships named when Lancaster county was formed from Chester county, in 1729. It was named by Richard Carter in honor of Warwickshire, England, from whence Carter came. He took up a tract of land near Conestoga creek but never having received a deed for it, it passed to another person. He died at about eighty-five years of age, and is buried in Millport cemetery.

The first settlement in Warwick township was made by Christian Bomberger, who, with his wife Maria, two sons, John and Christian, and six daughters, left the tenantry of "Baron von der Fels," Eshelbroun, Baden, on May 12th, 1722, and was given a certificate of honorable dismissal by the government officials. He arrived six weeks later at Philadelphia. He took up 564 acres of land, and, later, added thereto $23\frac{3}{4}$ acres, and built a dugout at Newport road in 1734. He received a deed from the Penns,—a large seal of beeswax, about three inches wide, with the words, "Love, and Peace, and Truth," on one side; and, on the other, "Justice and Mercy," is attached to the deed by a blue silk ribbon. This land, which lies two miles north-west from Lititz borough, is cut through by the Newport road. The old deed and 157 acres of the original tract, are in the writer's possession, having been handed down from father to son, but never changing the name, to what is now the sixth generation. Two of Christian Bomberger's daughters died unmarried. He himself died in 1742, and is buried in God's acre at the old homestead on the hill. After his death, his son Christian received 200 acres, his son John 200 acres, and his son-in-law, Martin Bucher, 160 acres.

Jacob Bomberger, son of John, was born in 1744, on his father's farm in Warwick township. He received the rudiments of a German education at Lititz and was reared on his father's farm during the Provincial era. He served as an officer in the second battalion of the Pennsylvania troops, under General Forbes and Colonel Bouquet. During the Revolution, he was occasionally in the service, but, turning his attention to religion, he began the study of such theological works as were within reach. After the peace of 1783, he went into the western country, and was, for

many years, a missionary among the Indians of the north-west. During the War of 1812-14, when he was well advanced in life, he returned to Pennsylvania and remained there with his friends until his death, near Harrisburg, Pa., August 4th, 1829, at the age of eighty-five years. He was buried in Shearer's grave yard. The labor of Mr. Bomberger was of that self-sacrificing spirit and devotion which proved that there were others besides the zealous Jesuit and the faithful Moravians, whose religious fervor and Christ-like example stand out as a shining light.

In 1760, Christian Bomberger, Jr., with his 200 acres of land adjoined the 200 acres of Christian, Sr. The water supply of Christian, Sr., was so short in 1775, that Christian, Jr., sold to him a water-right containing two springs of water on twelve acres, furnishing sufficient water for the older man's farm, giving the right to dig trenches and to remove all obstructions in order to convey water to the farm, to him, his heirs and assigns, forever, for fifty dollars. A distillery was on this farm. Christian Bomberger, farmer and distiller, had a team of six black horses on the Newport road for several years, hauling flour for Christian Eby, Warwick township, now Elizabeth township. The writer has in his possession the books of Christian Eby's accounts, dating from 1761 to 1804, written in German. The record is as follows:

Christian Eby, Dr., to Christian Bomberger:

1792						£	s	d
June	5th	12	Bbls.	flour	to Newport	3	6	
"	16th	12	"	"	"	3	6	
"	29th	12	"	"	"	3	6	
Sept.	5th	12	"	"	"	3		
"	13th	12	"	"	"	3	15	
"	19th	13	"	"	"	2	18	6
"	25th	14	"	"	"	3	3	

Christian Bomberger, Dr.

1792								
June	5th	5	Bushels	corn		1	5	
"	16th	3	"	bran			3	
July	12th	300	lbs.	ship stuff		1	2	6
"	23rd		Money	paid at Newport		2	5	
"	30th	"	"	"	"	16		

The accounts show that during the month of February no hauling of flour was done. There were also accounts of Robert

Coleman, John Bomberger, William Coleman, Henry Grubb, Cyrus Reeb, John Hess, William Cowne, John Erb and Samuel Wissler. Hopewell forge had the heaviest account, £155.

During this period there were only four banks in the country, and these were in Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore and Boston, and that their bills were only local, accounts for the fact that these teamsters carried large sums of money to make settlement at Newport for their merchandise on return trips.

The fourth John Bomberger, the writer's grandfather, a farmer and a carpenter, lived at the old home on the Newport road when he was sixteen years of age. He made a rocking cradle for his brother Abraham in Lebanon county, and delivered it on horseback at night over the Newport road, a distance of eighteen miles. This cradle is now in the possession of David Bomberger, at Annville, Lebanon county. He also made a grain cradle and carried it on his shoulders for twelve miles to a place near Chestnut Hill, before sunrise, and was then ready to do a day's work at carpentering, which he did. He built all the furniture in the homes of his three daughters, and also made cases for grandfathers' clocks for his two sons. He also occasionally had a team on the Newport road.

He was known as Johnny Bomberger. He was a trustee of the first school house, before free schools were adopted,—a union church, and log school building in which Byerly's speller and Sanders' readers were used. A teacher there once asked his scholars, "Who made the world?"; a boy promptly answered, "Johnny Bomberger."

In 1802, he built a house in Brickerville, which is still standing in good condition. About four years ago, the owner rebuilt the chimney and found between bricks and boards a paper written with purple ink, bearing this message: "I, John Bomberger, made this chimney on the 8th of September, in the year of 1802. May he who finds this think of God, and also of me." A marker, with a bronze tablet, is erected in honor of Christian Bomberger, first settler, at the lane of A. Z. Bomberger at the Newport road. The Bomberger cemetery is near-by on a hill where seven generations sleep.

At Bucher's crossroad, Newport road is crossed by a road from Lebanon to Lancaster, known as the King's highway; from Bricker-

ville to Lancaster, at every mile there is a stone marker. This road is known as: "Heavily up, and heavily down; this is the way to Schaefferstown." It passes by the mansion at Elizabeth farms, where tradition states that George Washington was the guest of Robert Coleman in 1792.

Elizabeth farms, formerly Elizabeth furnace, was owned by Jacob Huber in 1750. He claimed to be the first and only German in America who knew how to make iron. A few years later, it passed into the hands of Henry William Stiegel, erroneously called a baron, and Steadman. This road was laid out by Stiegel at the time when he was in the zenith of his wealth and popularity. Stiegel had built a tower seventy-five feet high at Schaefferstown; he was also instrumental in securing a mail route between Lebanon and Lititz. The mail was carried for a long time, on foot, once a week, owing to the meager salary; then a carrier from Lebanon was appointed, who made a trip every other day on horseback, and, toward the last, he used a horse and sulky. At times, large sums of money were entrusted to him.

Bucher's crossroad was named after Martin Bucher, who took out a patent in 1738 for over two hundred acres of land from the Penns, and settled at the old road. John Bucher had an account with Christian Eby, miller. In 1793, he hauled flour to Newport. This farm had several very old buildings and a blacksmith shop on it. In 1884, the dwelling house was burned, with some rare antiques. A shed, with a thatched roof, which remained until 1894, was the last of its kind in this community. To make a good thatched roof of rye straw in that day was considered quite an art. The long, flail-threshed rye straw was first tied into small bundles, neatly trimmed, called fackles, and these were firmly fastened to the laths with bands of twisted straw in consecutive rows overlapping each other from eave to peak, after the manner of a shingle roof; the comb or peak was closed by a row of untied straw placed cross-ways and held in place by poles, fastened with wooden hooks. A well-made, neatly-kept straw roof lasted many years and was not an unsightly object. It was cool in summer and warm in winter. It gave a modest, comfortable air to the old barns, — one that is wanting to-day in many of our modern, slate-covered structures. Straw roofed barns held their place with some of our well-to-do farmers as late as 1850.

About 1825, lime was first used as fertilizer. Lime burning was quite a business with Christian Bomberger and Jonas Bucher. Bomberger furnished lime for the Mount Hope and Speedwell farms. Bucher's neighbor, Joseph Brubaker, was one of the first farmers to use it as a fertilizer; he was followed by Frederick Keller.

In 1870, when there was plenty of snow and good sleighing, Jacob R. Bucher, who could handle a Conestoga team, hitched four horses to a big sleigh loaded with his friends, and came up the Newport road. He then turned toward Clay to spend the evening with other friends who were also enjoying the sleighing. About one-third of that happy number still survive.

Jacob Huber took up a tract of land in 1733, and settled next to Bucher at Newport road. In this house Count Zinzendorf preached in 1742. George Klein, a neighbor, was prejudiced against the preacher and would not hear him; during the night he was much disturbed over his conduct, and resolved to follow the count to Lancaster the next day. This he did, and heard Zinzendorf preach in the court house. He was deeply moved, was converted, and became a member of the Moravian Church. The exact date of the arrival of Klein is not known, but it was prior to 1740. He took out several patents. In 1753-55, he conveyed about 500 acres of land to the Moravian church, Lititz, Pa. Jacob Huber passed this farm to Christian Erb. A distillery, and, later, a hotel was on his farm. Mr. Erb had a team of six black horses on the Newport road and delivered goods. In looking over the accounts of Eby's mill, the writer found that only a few shipments of flour were made to Reading; later, most all shipments were made to Newport and some to Philadelphia. Mr. Erb's team was above the ordinary. Erb was a brother-in-law of Bomberger. No doubt each wanted the best. It seems that there was much pride among these teamsters. The Erbs are buried in a small cemetery on the farm, which is now owned by Paul Hershey. Huber's crossroad was named after Hans Ulrich Huber. This road was laid out in 1793 and leads from Yundt's mill, now B. B. Snaveley's—not operating—through the land of Christian Erb, now Market street and Lincoln avenue, Lititz, Pa. Hans Ulrich Huber settled on 300 acres at this crossroad in 1757. Sixty acres of this land are in possession of A. S. Huber. In his barn some runaway slaves hid

for a week, and were fed by Mr. Huber. At this crossroad a hand board pointed to Newport, fifty-three miles distant and to Mount Hope, ten miles away.

During the Revolutionary War some soldiers crossed the Newport road, and passed by Huber's going toward Christian Eby's mill, and there they helped themselves to flour. Mr. Eby happened to be at his barn; the man at the mill called Eby's attention to the soldiers, but Eby said, "Don't interfere; let them have all they want."

The Hess family, from Switzerland, came to America in 1712, and settled near Pequea. In 1734, a son, Jacob, took up a tract of two hundred acres of land in Warwick township, east of Lititz. The original farm is now owned by W. H. Muth. The Hesses are buried in the family grave yard, now owned by B. F. Grosh. A distillery, in the early days, was on this farm. The field where Hess's Mennonite church and cemetery are located, is owned by the Rev. John Hess. This field has never been out of the Hess name.

Christian Hess, of the fifth generation, and his wife, Barbara, the writer's maternal grand-parents, married in 1811, and started housekeeping at the old Hess home with three chairs, a table, a chest, a bed, and a stove. In November, 1832, a century ago, grand-mother Hess, with the eldest boy, went to the Lancaster market with horse and cart. The cart was loaded with turkeys. The weather being very cold, they kept their feet close to the turkeys in order to keep warm. It was before day-light, and on their way they saw a shower of stars and were so frightened that they almost turned back, thinking that the world was about to end; but grand-mother said to her son, "Keep on as long as you can." They had five sons and six daughters. This farm is now in possession of Ralph Hess. He also had a team on the Newport road, but not a regular one.

Becker's crossroad was named after Valentine Becker. Here the Newport road is crossed by a road leading from Tulpehocken to Lancaster, known as the King's highway. (See Archives of the Moravian church, Lititz, Pa., for a draft of the road crossing the breast of the dam of the old Lititz mill built in 1756 by the Moravians and operated by them). In 1775 the mill was burned, but was immediately rebuilt. In 1777, they made a profit of \$2,500.00.

In later years it was sold to a Mr. Keller and for three generations it was in that name.

Valentine Becker—known as Velty—with his brothers, George, Conrad, and Michael, were among the 190 passengers on the ship, "Snow Betsy," from Germany. They arrived in America August 27th, 1737. A tract of land was surveyed and deeded to Valentine Becker in Warwick township March 25th, 1738, and another tract October 28th, 1746, in all about 200 acres. The tract was conveyed to his son Arnold, September 10th, 1795. The original tract passed from Arnold to his son Christian, August 26th, 1826. The old homestead passed from Christian Becker to his son Henry. A part of Becker's land is now owned by Rev. John Hess. In the early days a hotel was on this farm.

Christian Becker, while farming, would keep only black horses. At one time he had fifteen. Henry Becker was a miller, a distiller and a blacksmith. He had several delivery teams for hauling to Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Newport. On one occasion when he crossed Cocalico creek, the water had risen very high, and he hesitated before attempting to cross. He filled his pockets with stones and urged his team of five horses to go through. When the leading horse began to swim he pelted him with stones, and in this way he got through. He was quite a pedestrian, and often started from his home in the morning and walked to Lancaster, from thence to Columbia, and after he had transacted his business he returned the same day, having walked a distance of thirty-five miles. At one time he walked to Harrisburg and on the trip he met a man whom he knew. The man invited him to go home with him, saying that he would give him a horse to ride, but he replied, "I have horses myself." He had received letters from the United States government for useful improvements in distilling. This system was in use until prohibition took effect. He did not receive a patent as the office burned down at that time, and when he looked into the matter later, another man was ahead of him. The old homestead is now owned by the seventh generation of Beckers. The Becker cemetery on the hill near the house, is where the forefathers are buried.

Rothsville, known as Rabbit Hill, named after Philip Roth, who, in 1790, bought eighty acres of land and started a tavern at the junction of the Lititz, New Holland and Newport roads. This

was the starting point of the village. In 1845, the stage route was changed so as to go over Rabbit Hill, and a post office was established and named Rothsville. It is said that in this village the first pretzel was baked, and taken on horseback in a big basket, to Lititz by a man called Dutch Charley.

Below this village the road crosses Cocalico creek, the boundary line of Warwick. Forney's hotel was one of the most popular taverns along the Newport road. A fine marker has been erected at the cemetery on Forney's farm, now Rudy's. The road crosses the Conestoga river at Talmage, then passes through Mechanicsburg, Leacock and Salisbury townships, then through Cochranville, Chester county, to "Hockessin," and then to Newport at "tide water" on the Delaware river.

A few years ago the writer had the pleasure of accompanying a friend and historian over a part of this road, where one hundred and fifty years earlier the Conestoga teams were unloading their goods, flour and whiskey, at Newport. At the present time, Newport has many improvements—a drawbridge, railroads, banks, etc. These teams and drivers had to endure many hardships, facing all kinds of weather and high water when streams had to be crossed. Such was transportation on the Newport road, first on men's shoulders, on horseback, by horse and cart, or ox teams, and then, later, by Conestoga teams.

The hooting of the owl and the peculiar call of the fox, and the old chestnut tree, from which Prof. Abraham Reinke Beck and his school boys picked nuts, when they took walks to the farm, all have changed; but the grand old hills, the beautiful valleys, and the sparkling streams, are the same to-day as when placed by the great Creator; and the noon-day sun, the moon and the stars, with their silvery light, shine on the graves of the pioneers who leveled the forests and broke the ground for agriculture.