

OLD-TIME CUSTOMS IN LANCASTER

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

"The venerable Past is past, no longer in its shadows we'll stay;
'Twas good no doubt, 'tis gone at last; there dawns another day.
The Present needs us. Every age bequeaths the next for heritage
No lazy luxury or delight, but strenuous labor for the right.
For now the child and sire of time demand the deeds of earnest men,
To make it better than the Past, and stretch the circle of its ken."

—Anon.

QUAINT TAVERN SIGNS

IN the good old days, when taverns were known by quaint old names and were often under the management of people of the best social rank, the streets of Lancaster, because of the painted signs of these taverns, resembled an out-door picture gallery. These signs hung from a projecting bar of iron, usually from the second story, over the main entrance to the hostelry, and bore, for instance, the names and the pictured representations of the "King of Prussia," "Prince Ferdinand," "William Pitt," "General Washington," "Dr. Franklin," "Indian King," "Indian Queen," "Flying Angel," and others, too numerous to mention. They reminded travelers, no doubt, of an attractive and extensive street portrait gallery. Then, too, above the doorways of other and no less important taverns were signs on which were the names and pictures of birds and animals, such as "Bird-in-Hand," "Black Bear," "Unicorn," "Black Horse," "Buck," "Cat," "Bull," "Leopard," "Red Lion," "Spread Eagle," "Turtle," "White Horse," "White Swan," etc., which to many must have suggested a menagerie or aviary. In addition to these, there were taverns which were known by the no less romantic names of inanimate objects, as "Conestoga Wagon," "Cross Keys," "Fountain Inn," "Grape," "Green Tree," "Hat," "Hickory Tree," "Pennsylvania Arms," "Plow," "Rainbow," "Rising Sun," "Ship," "Thirteen Stripes," and many others.

When storms and tempests beat upon the quiet little inland town of Lancaster, what a tumult of sound those creaking signs must have made as they swung to and fro in the blasts!

The early inn or tavern was the center of far more personal

interest than the modern hotel or cafe. Telegraphic communications, newspapers, the radio, and the "movies" of to-day, supply the news, the shameful scandals in public life, the latest accidents and other items of general interest, which the gossip, who made his headquarters at the "village inn" or "country store," was in the habit of recounting to those who were accustomed to assemble at such places. This interesting character of "ye older times" has long since passed out of existence; and the chairs which once surrounded the blazing hearth fire, or the old-fashioned cannon stove, are now relegated to the lobby, or the front pavement, where drummers, traveling salesmen and tourists congregate to read the news, and smoke or gossip. But the real personal intercourse and friendly sociability of the old-time tavern guests are forever gone.

OLD-TIME HOTEL LIFE

To-day, there is much less general interest felt in hotel life than there was a century or more ago. The guests do not mingle together as formerly, and the old-time feeling of hearty good-fellowship no longer prevails. Even travelers themselves are conscious of a less friendly contact than formerly existed. An old-style Lancaster hotel usually presented a scene of bustle and activity in the days when it was the stopping place of the rollicking Conestoga wagoner and the boisterous drover. Emigrants, also, en route for the West, which in the early days meant beyond the Alleghenies, frequently stopped for a little time at these old taverns. Roustabouts, or, as we now call them, "tramps," were also often found loitering around the yard of the old hostleries, hoping to get a meal or a place to sleep, by doing an odd job. Hired men from neighboring farms and laborers about the town, added to the motley crowd. Last, but not least, among the company, was the genial landlord, "mine host" of the establishment.

Old-fashioned taverns were not grand or pretentious affairs like the present Brunswick of Lancaster or the Bellevue-Stratford of Philadelphia, but they were, usually, solidly built structures, and in them travelers were almost sure to find excellent meals and comfortable quarters. The staring, "high-hatted" clerk of to-day, who waves you to your room with an air of lofty condescension, befitting an emperor, is a poor substitute for the genial, portly landlord of other days, who graciously opened the carriage door to

welcome the newly-arrived wayfarer, and gave him a smile no less kindly when he departed.

From the porch of an old tavern, especially of one that fronted on much traveled highways, such as East and West King streets, or North and South Queen streets, in the borough of Lancaster, opportunities were afforded almost daily to witness a singularly interesting panorama moving through the crowded thoroughfares in the shape of wagons, carriages, droves of horses, mules, swine, sheep, immense herds of cattle, and even turkeys.

SPACIOUS YARDS AND STABLES

Many of the early taverns had unpretending fronts, and along side of them an arched passageway for horses and wagons to enter into a spacious court yard, back of which was extensive stabling, in which the old Conestoga horses and wagons were housed in the days when teaming was the only means of transportation. The numerous rooms of the ampler rear buildings opened on long galleries that surrounded and overlooked the court yard. In the "long rooms," theatrical performances were given, for the reason that there were no theatres or buildings devoted to theatrical purposes in Lancaster in those days. It was in these rooms, also, that suppers, banquets, birthnight festivities and other entertainments, were held. If the walls of some of these old-time hostelries could speak, what stories they would tell of the gaieties of former days! It was in the taverns, also, that meetings of the Masonic lodge were held before a hall was erected for that purpose; and when the court house was burned in 1784, courts were held in one of the leading taverns of the town. It was also in the taverns that the great, and near great, were cared for when they visited Lancaster, and in which they were comfortably entertained while they remained. The old inn was frequently the scene of dances, to the music of a rustic fiddler; and in those dances, proprietor, family, guests, wagoners, stage drivers, and country laddies and lassies,

"Danced all night, till broad day-light."

With but few exceptions, the old inns have disappeared; the winding horns of the stage coaches have ceased to echo through the streets; the "bells of the horses" are no longer heard; the romantic old Conestoga wagons have vanished; the traditions of

famous personages who once visited Lancaster and frequented the taverns, "grow faint and fainter still;" the smiling landlord and the quaint old characters no longer pass along our streets; indeed, even the very inns themselves, have long since vanished and are forgotten by the present generation. "*Sic transit gloria mundi!*" ("Thus passeth the glory of the world!") Nevertheless, the natural desire of many of us is to look back longingly—back to the hills that are green; back "to the days that are no more," with "thoughts that breathe and words that burn." The tender lines of Lowell come to mind.

"Swiftly the present fades in memory's glow,—
Our only sure possession is the past."

MATZABAUMS

About Christmas time, years ago, there was manufactured in Lancaster a cake or confection locally known as "Matzabaum." Considerable discussion has arisen, at times, as to the origin or derivation of the name. The confection was of two kinds, those which could be eaten; and those which were made especially as a Christmas tree decoration.

The former was made of flour, sugar, eggs, spices, and a variety of powdered nuts, such as peanuts and almonds; and, when baked, formed a delightful tidbit not unlike macaroons; the latter was made of starch, and of different designs, such as birds, fish, butterflies, and the like, gorgeously painted. Both varieties were formed in clay or wooden molds by pressing the plastic material into the design. There were quite a number of local manufacturers of these Christmas-tree ornaments, prominent among whom was the father of Samuel J. Demuth, who lived on South Duke street.

As to the origin of the name it is supposed to have been derived from "Matza," a name applied by the Hebrews to the unleavened bread used in the feast of the "Passover." Evidently "Matzabaum" is a corruption of the German "Marzipane" (pronounced "Marr-tsee-pahn"), or "Marcus-Bread," a form of sweet bread (panis Marcius), probably in honor of the inventor, or of some distinguished citizen of Venice. By the French it is called "masse pien;" and in English, "marchpane."

The second part of the word is evidently the Latin *panis*,

meaning bread. The first part has been identified by Professor Mahn as identical with the Latin *maza*, in which opinion Diez and M. Hayne agree. It means "mush."

The same idea was approved by the late Dr. Oswald Siedenticker, of Philadelphia, who stated that the name was in use in Germany during the sixteenth century; and in support of his statement, he quoted from Grimm's "Woerterbuch." The English "marchpane," was also evidently in use in England in the sixteenth century, as is proven by the following quotation, from Shakespeare's tragedy of Romeo and Juliet,¹ in which one of the serving men in Capulet's house says: "Good, thou, save me a piece of marchpane." It seems strange that such a delightful confection, as the edible variety is said to have been, should have been called "mush bread" by the Latins. A Christmas tree loaded with the starch "Matzabaums," and illuminated with tapers,—for there were no electric lights in those good old days,—must have presented a very attractive sight. "Matzabaums" are unknown to the younger generation, but older citizens of Lancaster remember them. Their manufacture ceased years ago, when the common tinsel and paper Christmas-tree ornaments, came into vogue, to be in turn superseded by glass ornaments and electric fixtures, which now illuminate the trees instead of the ancient and dangerous tapers.

METZEL SOUP

Near Christmas time many people killed the hogs which had been fattened during the year, and this season in the good old days became known locally as the "metzel soup season." Metzel soup, which many of the present generation do not know anything about, was a portion of sausage, pudding, or small cut of spare ribs, and was as highly-prized a gift among the rural people as a present of jewelry, or wine and cake, among the residents of the Lancaster of to-day.

In the early days in Lancaster county and borough, it was customary to invite numerous friends to assist in the hog-killing and dressing, and the broth in which the pudding meat was boiled, was used as a soup. Rye bread was broken into the savory liquor and guests were invited to partake of the metzel soup.

¹ Act 1, scene V.

In time, this custom became unpopular, for when intoxicating drinks were added to this soup, people became beastly drunk. To escape such orgies, the metzel soup was converted into a present of sausage, pudding and meat, which the neighbors also greatly enjoyed.

NEEDLEWORK

If the present day flapper could be transported to the Lancaster of her great grandmother's generation, she would discover, to her surprise no doubt, that the ability to make shirts for her future husband was a necessary accomplishment. Yoke, collars and cuffs had to be stitched by hand—four threads forward and two back; and the back stitch had to be exactly in the hole of the last stitch. To make it more complicated, each stitch had to be exactly two threads; and gathers were two threads up and four down—a process which "girls in the old days" had to be master of before they were considered ready for the marriage state; and one which, in all probability, would make the modern girl throw up her hands in despair.

SIMPLE BEAUTY CULTURE

Nor did the girl of former days have a number of "aids to beauty," to choose from. If she wanted "sweet waters" and pomades, which were then used in lieu of the present-day perfumes and cosmetics, she would have to make them for herself. Which means that when Lancaster was young, the belles of that early day had to find means of making their own beauty materials, as they were not then sold in stores. They also made a cucumber lotion to be used on the hands and face, to keep them soft and white; and pomades were made at home from crude materials.

Kid gloves were too expensive to be used except for state receptions and grand parties. Ordinarily, gloves were knitted of fine linen thread, woven by hand. For general use they were plain, but every lady tried to have one or more pairs, with fancy knitting down the back. Mitts (which were without fingers) usually were knit in a lace stitch, hence the name "lace mitts."

In those days, when ladies went out to spend an afternoon, they put on their mitts when they took off their gloves, if sleeves were short. This left their fingers free for knitting or sewing, without which useful occupation they rarely spent an afternoon.

Life was too serious a matter to be spent idly. While their fingers were busy, they also frequently engaged in intelligent conversation, during which they discussed the news of the day, the latest doings of Congress, the governor's reception or some statesman's latest speech. They were interested in and conversant with the news of that time, although newspapers were few.

The first half of the nineteenth century was a period of great contrasts. Lancaster found itself adopting many innovations and discarding old customs and habits, but, notwithstanding the advent of numerous devices and inventions, many Lancastrians retained the old order of things—customs, furnishings and accoutrements that were prevalent in the days of their forefathers.

WOMEN'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Housewives, however, were as dainty in their tastes then as now, and, woman-like, tried to make their surroundings homelike and attractive. There were no pretty wall-papers used in Lancaster at that time, so the cold, bare-looking, whitewashed walls were simply tinted pale pink or buff. After the room had its coat of wash, they took a large potato, cut it through the center, cut a conventional design on it, and after dipping it in whitewash, touched the walls with it at intervals, making a quaint but pleasing pattern.

At bed-time, the last duty of the housewife of long ago was to see that the embers in the fire-place were carefully covered with ashes to keep them alive for the morning's fire. Should the fire die out before morning, it could be re-kindled by striking a spark with flint and steel, and igniting punk or shredded cloth, called tinder. Not every family, however, owned a tinder-box, and those without that important convenience, or without skill in striking a spark, sent over to the nearest neighbor to borrow live coals with which to kindle the fire for the day. That was when the "fire-pot"—a crock with a handle and a cover—was put to use. The handle was added to the crock because, when containing fire, it became too hot to hold. When it was necessary to carry fire some distance, ashes were first placed in the crock, then live coals, and on them another layer of ashes. The lid was then put on, to keep out the air, after which the crock was carried to the home where a fire

was to be kindled from the live coals in the pot, often a distance of miles.

When ladies went horseback riding they used dress-protectors of a heavy material that would protect them from rain, mud or dust. One was worn beneath the skirts, the other over the dress. The lower skirt buttoned over the upper one. In this way, riders arrived at their destination fresh and clean.

Boys and girls of that day had much to learn about home-making and housekeeping. As they frequently married when in their teens, they had to commence their education early. The small daughter was knitting stockings at four years of age; and at six, she was making samplers. The sampler was an important thing, as it contained three or four sizes and styles of letters with which to mark linens for her hope chest. When older, she learned to spin flax and wool for household use and for clothing. She pieced quilt after quilt, in the prettiest patterns she could find; and during winter months quilting parties formed an interesting part of the social life of the family. Ladies from neighboring homes and farms, came directly after dinner to the house where the quilting party was to be held, and stitched until supper time, when they were joined by their husbands, and all had supper together. If the quilting was elaborate, four or six ladies quilted for a week on one spread, and spent another week padding it.

A century ago, Lancaster mothers were more particular about their daughters' deportment than they are to-day. When the small daughter sat on her stool to do her daily task, she had her feet in footboards, "to train her to keep them at the proper angle, as became a lady." When sitting or walking, she had to keep her shoulders back and down; to help her to do this, she wore a shoulder board for half an hour each day. This was a half-inch board put through the hook of her arms by which means her elbows were held back and kept her as "straight as a major."

Parents then believed obedience to be a divine law. (Would that such ideas prevailed to-day!) Fond present-day fathers often cite the fact that children were more obedient when their mothers wore slippers; but a slipper wasn't the only paddle the mothers of early Lancaster carried with them. The "stomacher" was the fashion of the day, and it wasn't pretty if wrinkled; to prevent this ladies wore a thin board, about three inches wide, inside their

corsets, and, as the bodice was low, the board was easily drawn out to spank a disobedient child.

LOVERS' LIGHTS

Electric lights were unknown in the houses of Lancaster in those days; even gas had never been heard of. When evening came, the small tilt-top tables, or candlestands, were brought out and one or more home-made candles placed on them. Two people could sit at one of these small tables, to sew or to read. As a rule, furniture of that day stood near the wall to allow these tables to be placed wherever desired. The candlestand was also called "the lover's table." If left tilted and the candle was placed on the rest back of it, there were no shadows to tell tales on the love-makers.

When fashion decreed that shoes should match dresses, the tops were usually made at home, of the same material as the dress, — wool, silk, velvet or linen, depending on the season. They had a seam front and back, and were laced on the inside. The seams of the outside and lining were rubbed open with a rubber stick before the two parts could be put together and the eyelets worked. Laces were made of silk or linen, to match the shoes. The soles were put on by a shoemaker, who, in the earlier days, traveled from place to place twice a year, stopping at a home as long as was required to finish shoes for the family.

After the summer work, came butchering. The butcher came to the house; and, if the family could afford to have him, he with his helpers, remained until the work was finished. Meat for pudding and for sausage, had to be cut by hand; and the skins were filled by the same method. This work required much time. After it was done, the lard was "rendered," and the pork and beef salted. Ham, shoulders and beef for smoking, were prepared separately. The "bree," in which the puddings were boiled, was kept in a large kettle for a few days, during which time the winter's supply of "pan haus" was made. Then followed the making of mince meat, which often was baked immediately into pies, and stored in chests until needed.

Candle-making finished the year's work. It was slow and tedious, even after molds came into use, for many candles were required for a year's supply.

HOUSEHOLD PROVISIONS

Home makers always felt more comfortable when the cellar contained salt pork, beef, pudding, sausage, lard, sauer-kraut, cabbage, potatoes, beets, turnips and pumpkins; and they were never content unless there was a quantity of apples in evidence. This did not mean a basketful, or even a barrellful, but bushels of them, and of several varieties. The store-room contained apple and pear butter, stands of pickles, bags of dried fruit and vegetables, hams, shoulders and dried beef. Hams were never cut until "Easter Monday," when everybody had ham and eggs. The winter snows might shut them in but food was plentiful.

With spring came the "setting of the leach barrel"—a ritual that was looked for by the youthful members of the household as a pleasant omen which foretold balmy days out-of-doors, after months spent in the house. Leach barrels had holes in the bottom and were placed in a small tub, filled three-fourths full of wood ashes, over which several buckets of water were poured. It was allowed to stand for three or four weeks. The water, draining through the ashes, resulted in a good lye which was used in soap boiling. The general soap boiling usually was left to the mother or grand mother's helpers, but she superintended the making of toilet soaps herself, using some of her "sweet waters" to perfume them.

With all the handicraft necessary in early days, the mothers of the old times were well-versed in the three R's. They had their beautiful old writing desk, with its dainty inkwell and sand box. There was no blotting paper then, and writing had to be carefully sanded to dry the ink. The inks were home-made products. The task of making them was generally given to the men of the family. Red ink was made from the pokeberry; brown from walnut hulls, and black from a gummy substance imported from Europe; but, in all probability, there was a home-made article that also produced black ink. Every boy or girl had to know how to make and mend a pen from a quill of a goose wing. If the pens broke, or "sputtered," they were mended by cutting a new one on the quill just above the broken one.

Stills, of a different type and used for a different purpose than those "discovered" to-day, were prevalent in many Lancaster homes. They produced syrups, "simples" and wines, which were used for

many purposes. Wines were made for medicinal and general use.

When the house-wife had her washing done, the washer-woman received twenty-five cents for a full day's work and her gin or wine; while a man was paid from twenty-five to fifty cents a day, and his beer or rum. When a man bought goods, he was given a glass of beer or rum, but this procedure usually held true only when large quantities of goods were purchased, and not for one or two articles.

If the head of the household was a merchant, certain social customs were in order when people came to pay their bills. If customers brought their wives or daughters with them, the merchant's wife entertained them, giving them cake and wine. Currant was a favorite, but grape, gooseberry and blackberry, were also used. Dandelion, rhubarb and elderberry were used for medicinal purposes, also a spiced blackberry cordial. The use of wines was brought from the old country, where water wasn't as good or as plentiful as in America. With an abundant supply of good water, and a decreasing supply of grapes, the custom of the daily use of wines gradually died out in the majority of families.

VISITING CUSTOMS

In those days there was plenty of visiting back and forth between Lancaster and the nearby towns. When guests came to Lancaster, all the friends of their hostess invited them to partake of a meal, if they remained long enough for them to do so; and at such times the news of the day was thoroughly digested, new styles in dress discussed, and new recipes exchanged. Just as the Lancastrians of to-day think little of motoring to York, Harrisburg or Reading, for an afternoon or evening, ladies of the olden time thought little of getting into their carriages, or mounting their horses, and traveling a number of miles for a day's visit. If, upon their arrival, the hostess said: "You're just in time, Barbara is giving a party to-morrow," and later discovered that her guests didn't have a gown to wear to such a function, it was of small moment. Out she went for material and the gown was made and worn the next evening. So much for home resources.

So it was in those brave old days, when Lancaster's streets were merely unpaved roads, when taverns reigned supreme, and when life wasn't of the hustling and nerve-shattering variety prevalent to-day. At night candles burned in the homes and cast their

fitful light out on the street. An open fire, and the click of knitting needles were ideal accompaniments of the pleasant evening hour.

The grandfather's clock, ticking slowly and monotonously in an adjoining room or on the landing of the stairs, and the quiet atmosphere which prevailed in those nerve-quieting, unhurried days, were, undoubtedly, instrumental in causing tired eyelids to droop still farther, and in making nine o'clock seem like mid-night to us of the present. Finally, laying aside her knitting, the weary mother would gather her children about her, hear their prayers, and bundle them off to bed, after which she would resume her knitting, while the fitful flames in the fire-place cast their ghostly shadows on the wall, and the hour drew near when she, too, after a day spent in the demandful duties of the home, could lay aside her cares and retire for the night to her own well-earned rest.

How little did these devoted men and women in the formative days of Lancaster, when conveniences were limited and luxuries almost unknown, realize what far-reaching examples of unselfish simplicity in living they were transmitting to us who are now taking their places; and it may be that many who walk our streets a century from now will be as much surprised to learn of our, to them, old-fashioned and primitive ways of living, as we who read this article, are to learn of the doings of our forebears of early Lancaster.

"Tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis."

("Times change, and we change with them.")

CENTENARY OF GEORGE WASHINGTON'S BIRTH OBSERVED IN LANCASTER

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

A LARGE and respectable meeting of citizens was held in the court house in Penn square, Lancaster city on Thursday evening, February 9th, 1832, for the purpose of making provision for the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of General George Washington, "the Father of his Country." John Mathiot, Esq., mayor of the city, was chosen president of the meeting; George Louis Mayer and Emanuel C. Reigart, Esqrs., vice-