

The Conestoga Wagon

A Pennsylvania German Product

By H. C. FREY

THE Conestoga wagon was unquestionably a Pennsylvania German product. Lancaster county gets the credit for its origin. Many claimants say that it was modeled after the old English covered wagon. Might not the old English covered wagon have been modeled after the type of covered wagon that was used centuries ago and is still being used by the peasants in certain parts of the Rhine Valley and other parts of Germany? That, however, is a European problem and I shall not go into any further detail concerning it.

The purpose of this article is to show that the covered wagon, that originated in Lancaster County, is a Pennsylvania German product. Had it originated in or near Boston, New England's literary geniuses would have written volumes about this old freight-carrying vehicle, and had it had its home in the South (Old Virginny) its praises would have been eulogized even beyond the imagination of a New Englander. In Pennsylvania German communities, where farming, farm exporting and wagoning have been given the greatest amount of attention for generations, folks are prone to sit idly by, or to be so busily engaged in agricultural and industrial pursuits that they have little time to display their civic pride on such an historical subject as the Conestoga Wagon.

The name "Conestoga" has been associated with almost everything from a shinplaster to a national bank, and something should be said about the derivation of the word. Just exactly how this word came into use is a question and would furnish an interesting problem for the student of etymology. One of the earliest references to a word similarly pronounced is the name "Onestega" given to a stream on a map by Augustine Herrman dated 1665. The name of the tribe of Indians, the stream and the manor of Conestoga in Lancaster County, is another study, but we do know that all three of these were

named long before the Conestoga wagon or the Conestoga horse existed. It is also believed that both the horse and the wagon were named from the section of Lancaster County from which they originated. Whether the wagon was named from the Conestoga breed of horse or the horse from the wagon is another conjecture of little concern. [Read "The Conestoga Horse," by Herbert H. Beck, Papers of the Lancaster County Historical Society, vol. 44, p. 77.]

Quotations from early writers indicate that the Conestoga wagon in all its forms was a Pennsylvania German product: Probably one of the earliest printed references to the Conestoga wagon is that in the following advertisement in the Pennsylvania Gazette, Philadelphia, under date of February 5, 1750: "Just imported and to be sold very cheap for ready money by Thomas White at his house in Market Street, between 4th and 5th, almost opposite the sign of the Conestoga Wagon, etc." Just one week later the same advertiser uses the term "Dutch Wagon" in a similar advertisement. In those very early days the expressions "Dutch Wagon" and "Conestoga Wagon" must have been synonymous terms.

In 1754 Governor Pownall visited Lancaster, and in his journal says the place then contained "five hundred houses and two thousand inhabitants; that it was a growing town and making money, having then a manufactory of saddles and pack-saddles." This would indicate that at that time pack horses instead of wagons were used as the principal mode of long-distance freight carrying.¹

However, in the following year, Benjamin Franklin² advertised in Lancaster for one hundred and fifty wagons, with four horses to each wagon, and fifteen hundred saddle or pack horses, and secured all of these to aid General Edward Braddock in his expedition against Fort Duquesne.

Again in 1758 Lancaster assumed a military aspect by fitting out General John Forbes' celebrated expedition against Fort Duquesne.

A remnant of the type of wagon reputed to be used in Braddock's and Forbes' expeditions conveyed Abraham Weber, family, and household goods in the year 1807 from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, to Berlin (now Kitchener), Ontario, Canada. This old wagon is still preserved in the museum of the Waterloo Historical Society. An examination of the registry of names of members of this society today would show that nearly all are of Pennsylvania German heritage.

In "An Account of the European Settlements in America," published in London in 1757, the writer, Edmund Burke, in speaking of Philadelphia, says:

"Besides the quantity of all kinds of produce which is brought down the rivers of this province—the Delaware and Schuylkill—the Dutch employ between eight and nine thousand wagons, drawn each by four horses, in bringing the produce of their farms to this market."

In a diary³ kept by Captain Wiederholdt, a British officer, who was taken as

¹ William B. Sipe: "The Pennsylvania Railroad."

² Franklin's Autobiography.

³ Diary of Captain Wiederholdt (Ed. by Larned and Grosse).

a prisoner at the Battle of Trenton, he says that he and other Hessian prisoners were taken on December 31, 1776, to Philadelphia in wagons covered with ducking. These were undoubtedly Conestoga wagons, but were not mentioned as such in his diary entry.

Twenty-five years after the earliest reference to the term "Conestoga Wagon," under date of May 17, 1775, the following entry appears in Washington's diaries: "din'd at Mr. Saml. Griffins. After wch. Attended a Commee at the Conestoga Wagon."⁴ The Conestoga Wagon Inn mentioned by Washington was located on Market Street, Philadelphia, above Fourth Street, and was the same tavern mentioned as "The Sign of the Dutch Wagon" in the Pennsylvania Gazette early in 1750.

Again in 1783 we have a record of "Major General Lee⁵ dying in a small, dirty room in the Philadelphia tavern called the Canastoe Wagon, designed chiefly for the entertainment and accommodation of common countrymen," which shows that this hotel was undoubtedly used as a stopping place for Pennsylvania German farmers.

While the date of its origin is not definitely known, would it not be logical to assume that, following the primitive sled and cart, the very beginning of wagoning in the Conestoga section of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, either on the farms or on the roads, was also the true origin of the Conestoga wagon and its name as we know it today, and that it did not come about through any long consecutive evolutionary process?

Let us assume another proposition, that the Conestoga wagon (synonymously and formerly called "Dutch Wagon") was conceived and created by the Pennsylvania Dutch in the Conestoga Valley at a time when the first necessity arose there for the use of such a wagon.

Dr. Benjamin Rush, writing in 1789, says: "A large, strong wagon, 'the ship of inland commerce,' covered with a linen cloth, is an essential part of the furniture of a German farm. In this wagon, drawn by four or five horses of a peculiar breed, they convey to market, over the roughest roads, 2,000 and 3,000 pounds weight of the produce of their farms. In the months of September and October it is no uncommon thing, to meet in one day fifty or one hundred of these wagons on their way to Philadelphia."

In the translations recently made from the "Neue Unpartheyische Lancaster Zeitung und Anzeige Nachrichten" (New Unpartisan Lancaster Gazette and Advertising News) some interesting advertisements have been found, establishing the fact that in the town of Lancaster and Lancaster County taverns had adopted the name "Conestoga Wagon" at early dates. In the issue of October 28, 1789, there is an announcement that John and William Michael have moved into "that old famous tavern 'Sign of the Conestoga Wagon' in the borough of Lancaster formerly occupied by Mr. Christopher Graffert."

Johan Schoepf, writing in 1784 said: "There were probably seven or eight

⁴ Washington's Diaries (Ed. by John C. Fitzpatrick).

⁵ Thornton: "An American Glossary."

thousand Dutch Wagons with four horses each, that from Time to Time bring their Produce and Traffick to Philadelphia, from 10 to 100 miles distance. Sometimes there were as many as eight horses to a wagon. Each wagon had its feed trough suspended at the rear and the tar can swinging underneath. The procession on busy days must have been startling."

Josiah Quincy described the first part of a trip he made from Philadelphia to Washington as follows: "At three o'clock this morning [February 10, 1826] the light of a candle under the door, and a rousing knock, told me that it was time to depart and shortly after I left Philadelphia by the Lancaster stage, otherwise a vast illimitable wagon, with seats without backs, capable of holding some sixteen passengers with decent comfort to themselves, and actually encumbered with some dozen more. After riding till eight o'clock, we reached the Breakfast House, where we partook of a good meal. We then proceeded through a most beautiful tract of country, where good fences and huge stone barns proved the excellence of the farming. The road seemed actually lined with Conestoga wagons, each drawn by six stalwart horses, and laden with farm produce." ⁶

The "vast illimitable wagon" referred to was generally known as a stage wagon. A better kind of passenger conveyance was the elegant, comfortable and brilliantly-painted stage coach.

As a poet, Mr. Quincy spoke of the Conestoga wagons thus:

" Many a fleet of them

In one long upward winding row

It ever was a noble sight

As from the distant mountain height

Or quiet valley far below,

Their snow-white covers looked like sail." ⁷

H. L. Fisher, a poet of half a century later wrote a poem of thirty-one stanzas entitled "Wagoning." ⁸

The fifth stanza is almost identical with the one written by Josiah Quincy. Only the first stanza of Mr. Fisher's poem is here given:

There were two classes of these men—

Men of renown, not well agreed;

"Militia-men" drove narrow treads,

Four horses and plain fed Dutch beds

And always carried "grub" and feed;

Because they carried feed and "grub"

They bore the brunt of many a "rub."

An old wagoner from Western Pennsylvania, shortly after the Civil War period had this to say about Lancaster County teamsters: "Two brothers, Abner and David Peirt, natives of Lancaster County, at one time left their

⁶ Jacob L. Gossler: "An Old Turnpike Road."

⁷ Alice Morse Earle: "Stagecoach and Tavern Days."

⁸ H. L. Fisher: "Ye Olden Times."

home county and came to the western part of the state where they secured jobs as teamsters on the National Pike, among wagoners of all kinds, including a few colored men. The easterners were called the 'Pennsylvania Dutch' teamsters and were admired for their steadiness, straight-forwardness and honesty. Their teams were frequently commented upon as being of the genuine Conestoga strain."⁹ This is only one example to show that of all the teams and teamsters on all the roads in Eastern United States, the Pennsylvania Dutch teamster, with his Conestoga breed of horses from Lancaster County, ranked second to none.

In the gubernatorial campaign of 1835 Joseph Ritner, often called "The Wagon Boy of the Alleghenies," because he had been a wagoner in his early days, was the teamsters' choice for the highest office in the state. At taverns, and other places where the teamsters gathered and often while driving in strings, along the pike, wagoners were heard singing the following verse in support of their candidate for Governor:

Wote nunner der Irisher
Der Josef Ritner is der Mann
Der unser Staat regieren kann.

Ritner was elected.

Workers in Iron

"The Pennsylvania German migrating from the Rhenish Palatinate in large numbers between 1685 and 1710 had no lack of master artisans of the anvil. They brought with them many centuries of experience in iron working and found here an abundance of ore together with the necessary fuel for their forges. During the eighteenth century there was hardly a village or crossroad so small that it couldn't boast of a skilled iron worker and blacksmith, whose shop stood where the garage now holds forth. And, make no mistake, he wasn't viewed as an ordinary laborer but was considered a highly respected citizen, often a leader. A glamour of romance surrounded his work and the blacksmith shop was the forum and country club combined. The halcyon dream of the country lad was to grow up and rule the forge and when an apprentice was needed the smith usually had the pick of the surrounding countryside."¹⁰

Some of the ironing on the Conestoga wagon was very ornate, especially the tool box. This part of the wagon afforded an opportunity for the blacksmith to show his artistry.

Much might be written about the ironing of the lid of the tool box. There was an early use and knowledge of iron in the Province of Pennsylvania. The smith shaped the traditions of the old world and the lore of the Black Forest in what he made, and his decorations of these old boxes are an unfailing delight. Some are almost all covered with ornate iron work, symmetrical, uniform and strongly riveted. The staples of the hinges

⁹ T. B. Searight: "The Old Pike."

¹⁰ "The Antiquarian," March, 1925.

were driven through the top rail and clinched. The hasp fitted over a staple and could be fastened by a hook or a padlock. Many different designs were used on the tool box lid. The hinges looked like snake heads, flowers, and other decorative objects. There was also a pleasing variation of axe sockets. Few sockets are decorated but they take many shapes and sometimes there is a latch to keep the axe from jumping out on a rough road. There are in existence some axe sockets, the face of which took the form of a fish and which were highly decorated, the fish eye and the fish scales being intricately worked out by the dexterous hands of the smith. The designs in this ornamental iron work were cut out with chisels and not filed. Many of the hooks and ends or fastenings were elaborate and many of the nuts had curled thumb pieces. The ingenious hook and link on the chains that kept the wagon bed from spreading deserved to be patented.

The blacksmith saw to it that every part of the wagon that needed strengthening or that was subjected to unusual wear was properly ironed before it was turned back to the wheelwright for painting. Many of the parts were almost entirely encased in iron. The tongue was plated with iron almost from one end to the other. The double-tree pin was usually made in the shape of a hammer so that it served a two-fold purpose. The hammer hasp was a favorite place on which the smith stamped or cut his initials and the date of making. The stay chains and stay chain hooks were varied and showy. It is not until you have actually seen and handled these chains with their hand-forged links, which were made in such infinite variety that you can appreciate the excellence of the craftsmanship of the blacksmith, who put so much of beauty as well as strength into his work. The "grease table" on the forward hounds was made of heavy iron; the brake lever and rods belonging thereto were also made of a heavy material. The wooden axles, that fit into the hubs, were covered with iron that extended almost around the axle and nearly to the middle of the axle-tree. The ends of the axle were reinforced by a shrunk-on band or cup-like covering.

The wheel hubs were boxed inside and strengthened with iron bands on the outside, and frequently a removable hub cap was placed over the outer end of the hubs to keep out the road dust. All parts of the wagon bed were carefully ironed and braced, sometimes as many as two hundred and fifty hand-made rivets being used to hold the poplar lining to the wagon bed frame. Each rivet had a hand-made square strap-iron washer under the head to keep it from wearing into the soft wood. The rivets were made from old horse-shoes by the apprentice. He also worked patiently hour after hour forging iron into tapered brace rods. The feed box was covered with strap iron to keep the horses from gnawing it. Of course, as said before, the tool box gave the smith an opportunity to show his artistic skill, and it was not uncommon to see the hasps and hinges of the lid intricately worked out in the heart and tulip design. The blacksmith ironed all spreaders, double trees, single trees and made all the chains and other iron fittings that were essential to a wagoner's outfit.

It was not an uncommon thing for the old blacksmiths of the road who

were mostly Pennsylvania German, to work all night at shoeing horses and repairing wagons. The blacksmith worked while the teamsters slept. The ring of the anvil at twilight served as a lullaby to put the children to sleep and also as a summons to call the male adults of the community together for loafing and tall story telling. The neighbors from far and near would gather at this "night club" to watch the sparks and smoke, the "striking while the iron is hot," the volumes of hissing steam, and to hear the exchange of puns. The persistence of working out heart, tulip, snake and knob-end motifs; the painstaking symmetry of tapering doublelink, hold-back chains; the graceful turning of hooks; and the keenness of the optic of the village blacksmith were qualities that won the attraction of all who knew him.

The smoke-blackened shop with its forge-flame illumination and comet-like sparks compared favorably with the Roman amphitheater of past centuries or the modern theater of today with its stellularly lighted ceiling.

Only the absolute necessity of getting a few hours' rest in the home bed before the next day's work broke up these nightly meetings of drowsy but highly-entertained loafers of the blacksmith shop.

Mr. Henry K. Landis, an authority on Pennsylvania German lore, thus describes the appearance of a blacksmith shop, the smith at work, and the customary way of putting on a large Conestoga wagon wheel tire:¹¹

The Village Blacksmith

"The brawny smith stands before his hearth with left hand on the bellows pole, behind him a sturdy anvil and beside it a sawed-off barrel, or a trough, with water; the tongs are in his right hand as he studies the glowing iron; soon it will be on the anvil and sparks will fly as the hammer merrily pounds an old horseshoe into a door bolt. For, the smith was a versatile genius and prided himself on making anything which could be made of iron; necessity was the spur to his genius; whether knives or forks, spoons or ladles, Conestoga wagon iron or trace chains, hinges or latches, iron pans or oven peels, it mattered little to him. He was there to make things from iron. He even made his tools; all the iron shapers and handles he made and the ring of his anvil was heard by the weary plowmen far across the fields, to remind them to have their plowshares sharpened more frequently. He knew just what temper to give an axe and how to draw it. Iron was a necessity and the smith was just as necessary. So, they brought their wagons for new tires, their sleds for new runners, their horses for new shoes; wagons, pumps, doors and farming implements had to be ironed. The smith was always busy and the boys stood around in wide-eyed admiration to watch the sparks fly as he welded a wagon tire or broken rod. A mighty man was he.

"A supply of split stumps was kept to heat the ponderous Conestoga wagon tires, and spectators gathered to watch the operation of shrinking on the new tires. The loose tire was first removed and heated in the forgefire, cut,

¹¹ "Lancaster New Era," June 22, 1929.

bevelled and again welded to the circumference desired, as measured by a 'traveler' or hand wheel. Then the tire was laid on iron or stone blocks and wood piled along its length to heat it. The wheel was placed on a peculiarly shaped trestle, the heated tire was lifted with right-angle tongs by several men, or more often a tool especially designed for this purpose was used. The huge tire was thus placed on the wheel and lustily hammered into place. Water had been placed conveniently and this was poured over the hot tire as soon as it was back on the wheel properly, shrinking it very tightly on the felloe. Sometimes the water was in a trough and the wheel was hung from two posts, the tire being immersed as the wheel was revolved. Sudden or local cooling might have resulted in a broken tire and yet it had to be cooled before the wood was charred.

"Around the shop were many curious tools, such as a barnacle of iron, which gripped the end of the horse's nose if unruly during shoeing. A twitch was used in the same way, consisting of a loop of leather or rope running through the end of a wooden handle. As the handle was burned, the loop tightened and held the horse. As a horse can think of but one thing at a time the twitch bothered him more than did the shoeing and this prevented much forcible conversation.

"The bellows with their wheeze and flop of the valve were a wonderful contrivance to raise the wind. There was a bench with stock taps and dies, and iron vise, compasses, center punches, ornamental punches, a name punch sometimes to put on new work, a charge book or slate, paint for new work which was generally red lead that had to be ground in the paint mill each time it was used, borax or other flux for welding, stock of horseshoe nails made by the smith himself from charcoal or iron nailbars received from Norway, and many other things. Around the anvil block hung punches, chisels, handled flats or shapes and upon a nearby stand was a large selection of shapers. Nearby stood a conical mandrel for making rings and there were special shapers for links used in making chains.

"We must not overlook the helper and his heavy sledge. As much work as possible had to be done before the iron became too cool, and the blows of the small and large hammers alternated rapidly and musically while the sparks flew against leather aprons and sometimes bare arms, making a notable and picturesque scene."

The following sentimental poem by Jack Pearson helps us to visualize the romance of the days of the village blacksmith:

The old blacksmith shop is closed;
Gone is the "smith"—
The venerable Murray, a kind old man was he—
Never known to hurry.
Faithful "Shep" no longer lies at the door;
The old cronies gather no more
At the Old Blacksmith Shop.
The swallows chirrup sadly on the chimney top.

The big horses no longer stamp the floor
Of the Old Blacksmith Shop.

The water barrel is empty,
The fires no longer burn,
The wheels no longer turn,
There are no orders on the slate,
All is cold, and dead and desolate
In the Old Blacksmith Shop.

There is no longer clang of tools,
No balking, rearing mules,
The hot shoe no longer cools
In the Old Blacksmith Shop.

The window panes are falling out,
The roof is falling in.
The bellows pipe and smoke-flue
A mass of rusty tin.
The anvil never rings,
The sparks no longer fly
The smith no longer welcomes
His neighbors passing by
The Old Blacksmith Shop.

But its memories still are mine
Of the "Days of Auld Lange Syne,"
At the Old Blacksmith Shop.

The Wagon Maker

In the foregoing pages the writer tried to show the part the Pennsylvania German blacksmith played in the ironing of a Conestoga wagon. It now remains to show the Pennsylvania German influence built into the wagon by the wheelwright or wagon maker. John W. Sheaffer, an old Pennsylvania German resident of New Holland, writing in 1897, gives us briefly an idea of the construction and use of these vehicles. He says: "In 1820 the building of a Conestoga wagon was more important to the people of the New Country than the construction of several luxurious Pullman cars of today are to the present generation. To complete one of these useful wagons from the woods of the forests, fully equipped with bows, feed box, tar pot, and cover, four men would be busily engaged for two months. A finished wagon cost about \$250.00. The wagon weighed from 3000 to 3500 pounds. A wagon carrying four hogsheads required four horses and a five-hogshead wagon required six horses. From thirty to thirty-five barrels of flour made a full load. A thousand dollars or sometimes twelve hundred dollars were invested in one of these teams. A careful driver, who would care well for the horses and goods, was selected to have charge of it. Hills, bad roads, thieves and careless drivers were to be watched, and all depended on the driver to make it

pay. Usually a squad of teams went together, four or six. The drivers slept in their wagons or on the tavern floor."

M. G. Weaver, of Pennsylvania German descent, writes about his father, a builder of Conestoga wagons. He says:¹² "From 1836 my father, Gideon Weaver, was a builder of Conestoga wagons during the 'sixties' and 'seventies' in the Conestoga Valley. He continued producing the same style of wagons without canvas tops, and without the full swell of the body, for the use of forges, furnaces, and iron mines in eastern Lancaster County. I can attest to having seen many forest trees taken from the stump and converted into one of these cumbersome ships of early commerce. They were made by hand with the exception of using a saw and a turning lathe operated by water power.

"The saw mill cut the huge logs into planks, running from four inches down to two inches, by half inch differences in each plank. Another log would contain in its grading, boards of thicknesses from one-half inch to one and one-half inches. Another log would make the hubs. Several log butts produced the spokes. All were split and hewn out of the rough by the dexterous use of the hand-axe.

"In this condition the planks, spokes, hubs and boards were ranked in their proper places and re-ranked twice. This lumber was kept under the careful eyes of the wagon maker for three years, before any of it was used in a newly constructed, first-class wagon.

"There were many wagons made with six wheels—the higher set to be used for a trip to Philadelphia; and the lower set to be used on the farm. The wheels used under the front carriage in a trip to the city would be used under the rear part when the wagon was used on the farm.

"The high bodies were different to fit their intended uses. The commercial wagons had high sides with three adjustable chains across the tops to hold them together. The bottom had an enormous double swell, so that barrels, casks, or hogsheads, which constituted many of their loads, would work towards the middle instead of breaking out the sides as the wagons rolled along the road. The body used for hauling charcoal from the mountains had only one swell, but much higher sides and extra top shelvings with extra guard chains.

"The furnace teamster wanted the swell in the bottom, lower sides, with less bend in the top rails. The iron ore men demanded stronger lower sides and movable bottom. Gradually, but surely, the identity of the old ship of commerce has been lost.

"There were four varieties of lumber used in the construction of the early wagons. The axles were hickory and the hubs were of gum. These two parts were the foundation of a good wagon. The heaviest pieces were always seasoned four years before used. On the cut of the wooden spindle, the proper iron plating, and the setting of the ponderous wheels, depended

¹² M. G. Weaver: "History of New Holland."

the success or failure of the construction. Any practical teamster, or wagon maker, could tell the quality of a wagon when the many squads or caravans lumbered down the pike. All the other parts of the wagon and body were made out of white oak excepting the sides of the body and tool boxes, which were made of half-inch poplar. The white oak sliding board, which extended from the left side under the body, was pushed back under the carriage when not in use. It served as a seat or standing place for the driver when he adjusted the brakes (with a lever at the side of the body). This was a dangerous perch, and a break of the seat might mean death to the driver and destruction to the team and load."

Probably the most delicate part of the wheelwright's work was the shaping of the axles and the making of the wheels with the proper dish to stand the strain of heavy hauling over all kinds of roads. The dish in the wagon wheel was necessary in order to keep the wheel from collapsing and to brace the wagon during side sway. The axles on the ends of the axle tree were cut cone-shaped, for strength and easy removal of the wheels. The blacksmith covered the tops and bottoms of the axle with closely-fitting flat iron called "a skein." The hubs of the wheels were cut to fit the axles. The inner wearing surface for the hubs was boxed at both ends with iron rings. To make the proper dish in the wheel the wagon maker had to cut the mortises in the hub for the spokes so that they set at a slight angle. The tenons on the ends of the spokes and the corresponding holes in the felloes were also cut to the same angle.

The wheelwright used a gauge to assemble the wheel in order to give it the necessary dish. The spokes were driven into the hub with a heavy mallet, each spoke being gauged as it was placed so that the wheel when finished would be properly dished. Too little dish or too much dish would not make a good wheel. If the wheelwright did not get the dish exactly right it was up to the blacksmith to give the wheel a more perfect dish when he put on the tire. These "tricks of the trade" (dishing wheels and shrinking on tires) were important, but do not come in for detailed explanation here. It can be said, however, that to the wheelwright the making of a good wheel was of great importance, while the blacksmith was considered an expert if he could make a brake or lock that would work satisfactorily under all conditions.

Conestoga wagon bodies were painted a Prussian blue and the running gears a vermilion red. If colors can be associated with any sect of people certainly we could associate blue and red with the Pennsylvania German as closely as the sun is associated with the day. Pennsylvania German Amish have in the past and some still paint the yard gate a pale blue if an unmarried daughter resides within. Why not say then that the Conestoga wagon was painted an Amish blue and a Plain Dutch Red? The cover was white cloth.

It is generally conceded that the idea of the colors for the American Flag was gotten from the coat-of-arms of George Washington's family. Who

knows but that a new Conestoga wagon from a Pennsylvania German section of the state travelling into Philadelphia, with its vermillion red running gears and sideboards, its Prussian blue body, and its snow-white cover, did not give Betsy Ross, or her advisers, the idea of making the first national emblem in these same three colors!

Concerning Taverns

"It stands all alone like a goblin in gray,
The old-fashioned inn of a pioneer day,
In a land so forlorn and forgotten, it seems
Like a wraith of the past rising into our dreams;
Its glories have vanished, and only the ghost
Of a sign-board now creaks on its desolate post,
Recalling a time when all hearts were akin
As they rested at night in that welcoming Inn."

—James Newton Matthews.

One writer of old says that the portraits on tavern signs of half of the kings of Europe, of many warriors, and statesmen, and of numerous things animate and inanimate made the streets of Lancaster City an outdoor picture gallery. There were in Lancaster County alone such taverns as The Black Horse, The Hickory Tree, The Sorrel Horse, The Fish, The Lamb, The Swan, The Western, The Red Lion, The Hen and Chickens, The Grape, The Plow, The Sign of the Wagon, The Globe, The Hat, The Green Tree, The Eagle, The Three Crowns, Cross Keys, The Sign of the Buck, The Sign of the Ship, The Sign of the Stage and many others distinguished by pictures as well as names.

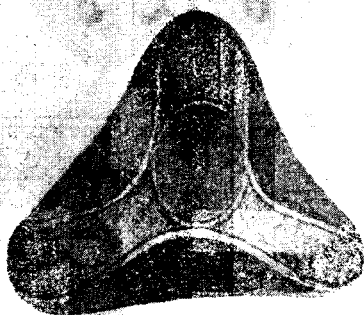
Would it be too far-fetched, then, to say that the highways, with their tavern signs, pictorially represented the pages of a Pennsylvania German primary reading book?

Concerning Accessories

A whole chapter could be written about the accessories to a Conestoga wagon. These accessories might be divided into two classes—the necessary accessories and the unnecessary (sentimental or traditional) accessories.

The first class would include the tar pot, the axe, the water bucket, jack, teamster's mattress, harness, bridles, hames, collars, housings, line, spreaders, fifth chain, saddle, blacksnake whip, rough lock chains, ice cutter, tool-box equipment—such as pinchers, open links, middle rings, horseshoe nails, linch pins, and probably corncobs to stick into the hubs to keep the linch pins from bouncing out.

Among the sentimental or traditional accessories would be included the bridle rosettes, pompons, ribbons, tassels, and the musical brass bells with all their trimmings and adornment, to say nothing of the horse chestnut often carried in the superstitious teamster's pocket to ward off rheumatism. The farm bull dog that was sometimes tied to the rear axle tree, imaginarily helping to push the load from the rear, might be included in the class of "traditional accessories" to a wagoner's outfit.

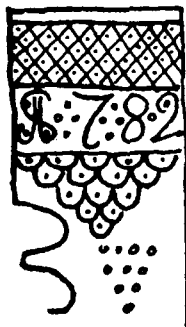


Sign of the Hat Tavern which stood on the old King's Highway between the villages of White Horse and Intercourse, Lancaster County.

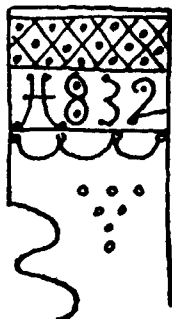
(See Page 72)

1. *u i i a*

2. *u d u*



3.



After Drawing by
Mr. Henry K. Landis

(See Explanation on Page 75)

Space prohibits the discussion of all the accessories. Only one will be discussed in this treatise—the wagon jack. The wagon jack was the ratchet type jack with a very tall wooden base, in which the metal lifting arm engaged a sprocket or gear wheel attached to a crank at the side of the jack. The jack was almost as high as the axletrees of the wagon and needed to be raised very little to lift the tires from the surface of the road. It was customary for the blacksmith to put the year date and his own initials near the top of the lifting arm. Why the first digit of the year date is represented in so many variant forms still remains a much-mooted question. Since the vowel I and the consonant J are represented by the same symbol in the German alphabet, it would seem but natural that such use should also be continued among the Germans in Pennsylvania. The “ones” shown in the groups under the numerals 1 and 2 in the illustration would seem to be variants of the medieval or Gothic script, the like of which are frequently met in the Palatinate and elsewhere in Germany carved into wood, tombstones and keystones of gateways. Those under the numeral 2 in the illustration are believed by Mr. Henry K. Landis to signify Anno Domini. The elaborate figure one, represented by the crossed double J (see number 3 of the illustration) and common on Conestoga wagons, may mean “Jahr des Herrn Jesu,” or only “Jahr des Herrn”; perhaps it represents a capital A for Anno; perhaps too it is but a late echo of that medieval love of elaborating upon initial letters, which is also characteristic of Pennsylvania German fraktur writings. All blacksmiths learned their trade by working as apprentices and they learned to do things exactly as the master did them, and if any blacksmith had been asked a century ago why he made such a peculiar “one” in dating, he probably would have answered by saying that he was taught to do it that way. It is altogether reasonable to assume that he was but working in the spirit and in the traditions of his forebears in the fatherland.

The writer is the owner of four of these old wagon jacks, dated 1760, 1808, 1809, and 1824 respectively. He has seen many others and has made a careful study of their construction and dating. Those of the eighteenth century period were made without a ratchet and pawl on the outside to hold the handle from reversing. A hook and staple held the crank in place. The figure “one” on the jacks of the eighteenth century was like that of 1782 in the illustration. The nineteenth century jacks had a ratchet and pawl on the outside, and the figure “one” on jacks of this period was made like that of 1832 in the illustration.

Concerning Songs

Even the songs of the Conestoga Wagoners assumed a decided Pennsylvania German aspect. The long-distance teamsters of a century ago whiled away many hours singing. On the road they usually sang those long narratives like “Barbara Allen,” “Darby Ram,” the never-ending Liewer Heindrich,

etc. In the barrooms they usually sang their favorite drinking songs—"Lauterbach," "O du Lieber Augustin," and "Little Brown Jug" being most popular.

Skitty songs like "O'Reilly" and "Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines" were sung by the wits to amuse the crowd.

The old Pennsylvania population were intensely religious, frowning on levity and gaiety, and their song collections were either romantic or pious. Those daring to flout this sober atmosphere were looked down upon and relegated to the devil. Their songs were often unfit for print. It is certain that most of the old teamsters took part in the hilarious and devilish type of singing. Most teamster songs were horrible examples of English "as she should have been spoke." The context of their songs was often meaningless, ridiculous, and sometimes profane and vulgar. The music varied but little in range or key, although the old tunes never became monotonous to the listening ear.

Die Alte Zeite

M'r hen 'n Fier-Geils Fuhrwerk g'hat,
Un 'n gedeckter Waage;
Noch Pittsburgh odder Baltimore,
Isch unser Fuhr als zwe mohls Johr,
Mit Flour un Dram gelaade;
Un's hot e' Woch 'ner drei als
g'numme
So bis sie widder z'rueck isch kumme.

Oft hen die Nochbare z'samme
g'schpannt
Un sin mitnanner gange;
Es Bett un's Esse hen sie mit
Nooch Baltimore un a'h nooch Pitt',
Un all die Geilsg'scherr-Schtange
Un Hai, hen als die Wert gefunne
For all die fiele Fuhrwerks-kunne.

Flour un Dram, des hen sie als
Nooch Baltimore gefahre;
Un Groceries fon Baltimore
Nooch Pitt, (wie schon mohl g'saad
dafor)
Un noch fiel annere Waare;
Fon Pitt', war nix as Blackschmidt
Kohle
For Nochbar's Blackschmidt z'rueck
zu hohle.

Die Baerschtub un die Wertschaft-
kuech
War foll lebhaft Leut;
Die Fuhrleut hen gedantz un g'sunge
Bis Kuech un Baerschtub hen geklunge
In jener alte Zeit;
Un's war ken Geig im ganse Land
Dort muesig g'hanke an d'r Wand.

* * * *

Sel ware gute alte Zeite—
Die Leut hen Aerwet g'hat;
Was hen sich Leut un Zeit f'raennert!
Un's hot mich a'h shon oft gewunnert
Was dan die Welt noch waert;
Ich meen ebmohl wan's so fort macht
Geht Nacht zu Dag un Dag zu Nacht.

Juscht guck e'mohl wie des Ding
schafft,
M'r braucht jo bal ken Team;
M'r braucht jo bal ken Fuhrwerk meh,
Ken Waage un ken Geil—f'rschteh—
'S waert alles g'runnt bei Schteam;
'S waert bal nix g'schafft as bei
Machine,
D'r Mensch, der runnt sich a'h bei
Schteam.

M'r travelled nau be Land un See,
 Bei Locomotive Team;
 'N Fuhr isch nix meh g'eschtemiert,
 Un wan mr's Lewe a'h f'rliert,
 M'r travelled doch bei Schteam;
 Die alte Weg sin all f'rduzt,
 D'r Schteam hot alles rewoluzt.

M'r sin als in d'r Stage getravelt,
 So uewer die Berge naus;
 Nau huckt m'r sich juscht in die Cars,
 Un esst un drinkt un schmokd Cigars,
 Juscht wie daheem im Haus;
 M'r leegt sich hi un schlooft un
 schnarcht,
 Un fahrt nau unner de Berge dorich.

D'r Mensch isch wunderbar erschaffe,
 For neue Weeg ausfinne;
 Er fahrt un seelt, er mahlt un seegt,
 Er wescht un dresht, er schpinnt un
 weebt,
 Un losst das Alt dahinne;
 Er isch jo selwer 'n Machine,

Er esst un schlooft un leebt bei
 Schteam.

An alle Kreuzweg kan m'r's leese
 "Look Out For'n Locomotive;"
 Ich will net saage juscht an all,
 Un doch gewacht! er kummt doch bal,
 Er gebt em lawful Notice;
 Hoerscht net wie's dunnert un wie's
 brummt?
 Gewacht, wan er um's Eck rum
 kummt!

So arg das ich d'r Deufel hass,
 Er guckt ebmohls doch schoe;
 Un's isch nix schoener's in d'r Welt,
 As wan'r sich so for em schtellt,
 Un bloosd Schteam in die Hoeh;
 Un wan'r peift, danort gewacht!
 Bleib aus'm Weg, schunscht gebt's 'n
 Schlacht.

—Aus H. L. Fischers
 'S ALT MARIK-HAUS MITTES IN
 D'R SCHADT, York, Pa. 1879.
 (The original spelling has been retained)

For the past several years a group of descendants of Pennsylvania German teamsters from York County, under the direction of the writer, appeared at the Pennsylvania State Folk Festivals under the name "Conestoga Wagoners." These amateur songsters attempted to revive the traditions of their forefathers by singing the old songs of wagoning days. Their performances at these unusual events attracted wide attention because of the selective old songs contained in their various programs.

In conclusion the writer wishes to say, after a careful analysis of the blacksmith's forging, the ingenius and ornate hooks and fastenings he created, the wood carving and the stability worked into the wagon by the wheelwright (to say nothing of Pennsylvania German influence shown in tavern signs and the songs of the Conestoga Wagoners) that only the ingenuity and skillful craftsmanship of the Pennsylvania German people could construct such a useful and commodious freighter as the Conestoga Wagon proved itself to be.

Appendix I.

MOSES HARTZ, CONESTOGA WAGON TEAMSTER

There were many teamsters of Pennsylvania German descent on the road a century ago, but since the names and personalities would not be recognized at this late date it would be useless to mention even a small number of

these persons and their experiences. Therefore in this appendix the story of only one of these teamsters of old will be told.

More than a century ago, Moses Hartz, a young man, nineteen years of age, came to the Conestoga Valley of Lancaster County in search of work. He applied at the home of Mr. Mast, a farmer, a former teamster, and the forefather of what proved later to be a family of teamsters. Mr. Mast turned the stranger away, telling him that he had no such employment as the young man desired. The penniless young man, with his worldly possessions wrapped in a handkerchief and tucked under his arm, was broken hearted and turned to walk away. As he walked down the path from the farmhouse, the heart of the old farmer was touched and he beckoned him to come back. A rear view of the youngster showed that he was a strong, robust man of perfect physical proportions with the possibilities of making a hard-working and useful farm hand.

Mr. Mast consented to give him work and adopt him into his home, for a while at least. The young man proved his worth on the farm during the summer and attracted the attention of the neighbors by his honest and trustworthy habits and his willingness to do plenty of hard work.

In the fall the farmer fitted up young Hartz with a Conestoga wagon, six horses and bells, and told him to wend his way to Pittsburgh and on to Ohio. He was instructed to take on any hauling he could get en route, and to bring from Ohio, a load of clover seed for the use of the Conestoga Valley farmers for their spring sowing. He was requested to be sure to get back in plenty of time to help to do the spring work on the farm. With those parting words young Moses Hartz started his career and venture as a teamster across the sparsely settled mountainous region of Pennsylvania. For the time being the young teamster and his team were in a sense lost to civilization. The means of communication were such that the young man neither communicated with his guardian nor did the old gentleman expect to hear from him during the severe, but what later proved to be a short winter season. Days, weeks, and months passed (the ground hog probably failed to see his shadow) and the warm days of spring made an earlier appearance than in former years. Of course, it goes without saying that young Moses Hartz suffered the same experience as all other long-distance teamsters in those days. He ate but two scanty meals a day, slept on bar-room floors, became hard-bitten (maybe frost-bitten) and toughened to the point of despising comforts.

When the spring season rushed in and the weather was favorable for spring work the time was up for the young Conestoga wagon teamster to make his way back to the fertile farm in the Conestoga Valley. Mr. Mast became alarmed and anxious concerning his whereabouts. The suspense of waiting was so great that the old farmer decided he would make a search for the missing teamster. From the number of horses in his stable he selected his best rider, placed a saddle on his back, mounted him and proceeded westward on horseback over the only wagon road then in use in the hope of finding out something about the fate of the boy teamster. He continued on

to Pittsburgh and over the Ohio state line. There he found the young man on his way east with the load of clover seed. The team was sleek looking, in excellent shape, and the young fellow was in a most happy mood. Mr. Mast was about to reprimand his ward (tactfully of course) for his tardiness on his return trip, when young Hartz drew from his pockets goodly sums of money which he had earned for his guardian over and above his expenditures. He had been doing short hauls in the western state, business was so good, he was making money, and he consequently delayed his return trip just as long as possible. The old Pennsylvanian was pleased with this report, immediately proceeded back to Lancaster County on horseback, leaving the young man with the Conestoga wagon load of clover seed to find his way back over the mountains to his destination in the East.

By the time Moses Hartz got home clover seed had advanced considerably in price and the Conestoga Valley farmer sold it at a much greater profit than he had expected. The young man who was nearly turned away from the farmer's door had proved his trustworthiness and had shown that his ambition in life was to give unselfish service to others. With this initial trip for Mr. Mast, young Moses Hartz inaugurated his career as a teamster. As was the custom in those days, he worked on a farm during the summer season and teamed to the West in the winter. He was what was commonly known as a "Militia" teamster. Moses proved to be a good manager, an indefatigable worker and a righteous man. He attended and later united himself with the church of which the Masts were life-long members—called the Old Order Amish Congregation. He married a young woman of the same congregation and he later became Bishop in charge of the church.

Moses Hartz's career as a teamster, a farmer, and a minister, was a remarkable one. He often told of how he started farming with "five wheels," the four wheels on his old Pitt wagon and a wheelbarrow. He and his wife were the industrious, self-sacrificing individuals that worked six days in the week and walked or rode horseback many miles to attend religious services on the Sabbath. He became one of the most prosperous farmers in Lancaster County, was a much respected citizen, a leader in his community, and was reputed to be the owner of one of the largest farms in Conestoga Valley. He was hale, hearty, and robust, and managed to ward off the calls of a physician all his life. He accumulated wealth, and died at the ripe old age of ninety-eight.

(Information about Moses Hartz was furnished by H. H. Stoltzfus, Elverson, Pennsylvania.)

Wagoners' Lines

The author has collected various odds and ends pertaining either directly or remotely to the Conestoga wagon and its wagoners, and adds them here in the belief that they may be found either valuable or entertaining.

Large covered wagons were used at times as long-distance hearses or for carrying funeral parties.

Yes, the Conestoga wagon was the "armored car" used to transport money

from the mints. An old account book of a teamster in Chester County shows that he charged seventy-five cents to haul 10,000 large copper cents from the Philadelphia mint to Chester, Pennsylvania.

Wagoners, loyal to a tradition, "stuck by their teams" and often refused shelter from the rain if the team had to remain unsheltered.

Wagon loads of hay were at one time sold in Center Square in the city of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in much the same manner as vendors of peanuts sell their products to-day.

Wagoners were often drenched by rain at the end of a day's drive and, if the fire in the barroom fireplace burned out during a cold night, they sometimes found their pantaloons frozen stiff the next morning.

Some long-distance wagoners were so religious that they refused to move their wagons on Sunday.

Many wagoners were so addicted to the use of liquor that they carried a gimlet bit and a little brown jug, stealing their supply of whiskey from the barrels that made up their cargoes.

Economy was practiced to such an extent that empty salt barrels were soaked in water and the water kept on hand for cooking purposes.

Wagon wheels were driven on to planks on cold nights to keep them from freezing in the mud, and horses that stood out all night sometimes had their feet frozen to the ground.

Honest old Jacob Givens, a Philadelphia-Pittsburgh wagoner from York County, Pennsylvania, on his death-bed called one of the members of his family to his side and asked him to return to a neighbor a peck of salt he had borrowed for his cattle because he did not want to die with any unpaid obligations. Within a few minutes after the member of the family reported that this matter had been attended to and that his record was clear, old wagoner Given expired.

Some wagoners were so proud of the sound of their team bells that they filed notches in the bells if they did not appear to be properly tuned to their musical ears.

The little rings attached to the big ring through which the single line passed was not an ornament but a jingling alarm to the five horses other than the lead horse in a six-horse team, to pull with the leader when the line was stretched.

A wagoner one time tried to rush a very large wide load of hay through a covered bridge in Berks County, Pennsylvania, with the result that the load became wedged in the bridge and required the greater part of the day to clear the obstruction.

A wagoner used to demonstrate his ability to drive by word of mouth by lying flat on his back in a field back of the barn, then talk to his lead horse, drive the six horses and wagon over his body, turn them around and have them repass over him again without getting off the flat of his back.

Lumber was so plentiful that logs were used to corduroy the low places in the roads, and miles of roads were built of planks.

Many wagoners drove through the streams around the bridges in preference to using the bridge. This was done to cool the horses' feet, drive away

the flies, and swell the dry wagon wheels. Marks cut into the rocks in the bed of Juniata River can still be traced or seen at Juniata Crossing in Bedford County, Pennsylvania.

Short and Steep: A prominent wagon road in Chester County, Pennsylvania, at one time contained a grade that was shorter than a wagon was long and so steep that the lead horses had to be unhitched in traversing it, because the slightest pull by them would have broken the wagon tongue.

Before PCA laws were effective a cruel teamster would sometimes hitch his "laziest" horse opposite the saddle horse and tie the horse's jaw to the end of the wagon tongue with a rope so that the horse had to pull or break his jaw.

Feats of wagoners included: Lifting a 100 lb. keg of nails on to the wagon by grasping the narrow edge of the keg between the fingers and thumb of one hand; unloading a 600 lb. barrel of molasses single-handed; walking off with a half ton of pig iron to win a wager; handling a 56 lb. weight at old mills like the modern gymnast handles a dumbbell; lifting a wagon off its four wheels by lying under it and pushing upward with both hands and both feet.

Altzeit Fuhrmans Lied

Noch Baltimore geht unser Fuhr
Mit dem gedeckte Wage;
Der Turnpike zeigt uns die Geschpur,
Die Geil sin gut bechlage;
En guter Schuck, Glick zu der Reis,
Der Wiskey scheigt, Flaur fallt
im Preisz—

So blose die Posauner—
Hott! Schimmel, hott, ei Brauner!

Mer fahre bis zum Blaue Ball,
En deutscher Wirth, en guter
Schall—

Hott! Schimmel, hott, ei Brauner!
Do scheht en Berg, dort ligt 'n
Dhal,

En Zollhaus gegeniewer—
Es singt e' Lerch, es peift en
Schtar—

"Die Freiheit isch uns liewer"—
Hott! Schimmel, hott, ei Brauner!

Es regert, un' der Belz wert nass,
Mer scheigte in der Wage
Un' ziege aus 'm erschte Fass

Was gut isch for der Mage,
Un' macht das wider frischer geht,
Sunscht bleiwe mer dahinne;
Denn, wer des fahre recht ferschteht,
Loszt sich net lodisch finne—
Hott! Schimmel, hott, ei Brauner!

Wan Flaur un' Wiskey sin ferkauf
Un's Gelt isch in de Tasche,
So, wan mer wider z'rick sin, braf,
Dhun mir's in Kischt un' Kaschte:
En guter Schluck, Glick zu der Reis,
Der Whiskey scheigt, Flaur fallt
im Preisz—

So blose die Posauner—
Hott! Schimmel, hott, ei Brauner!

Jetz hen mer, ah en gute Lod
Fon allerlee e' Ware.
Do fahre mer mit heemzus grad,
Um Zeit un' Gelt zu schpare.
Der Fuhloh zahlt des Zehrgelt z'rick—
Mir sin ke' schalke Jauner—
En guter Schluck, zu allem Glick!
Hott! Schimmel, hott, ei Brauner!

The above "Waggoner's Song" is attributed to Lewis Miller, better known to the citizens of York, Pennsylvania, of two generations ago as "Loui." He was born of German parents in 1796 in the town of York, where he followed the carpenter's trade for more than forty years. He had enjoyed good schooling under his father's tutelage in the German Lutheran Parochial School. Though untrained, he was an artist of no mean attainments, and through his long life with pen and brush chronicled the life and history of early York and of the young nation. Some fifteen hundred such sketches are now the prized possession of the Historical Society of York County. They are unique in the annals of early American Art. Lewis Miller died in 1882.

The Pennsylvania German dialect poet, Henry Lee Fischer, a contemporary and friend of Lewis Miller, writes of him in an article prepared for John Gibson's "History of York County," 1886, as follows: "As a rustic poet and writer of popular Pennsylvania German songs, Loui Miller had few superiors. Following is the "Waggoner's Song" of the olden time, when all surplus farm products, no small part of which was whiskey, apple jack, and peach brandy, since almost every big farmer had his little distillery where these popular and necessary beverages were made, and which together with flour, clover, timothy and flaxseed, were from this and some other southeastern counties conveyed to the Baltimore market in Conestoga wagons drawn by four or five stalwart horses driven by a jolly teamster, usually the farmer himself, his oldest son or hireling. The back-loading consisted of dry goods, groceries, etc., for the village or country stores, and oysters and sweet potatoes for private use."

We have printed Lewis Miller's "Waggoner's Song" as Henry Lee Fischer published it in his book "Kurzweil un' Zeitfertreib." It has the swing of a real folk ballad, and we can only regret that no other of Miller's songs have come down to us. It must be looked upon as one of the earliest songs of Pennsylvania German origin. Ann Hark in her recent book "Hex Marks the Spot" includes a slightly different version, that found in Dr. Harry H. Reichard's "Pennsylvania German Dialect Writings and Their Writers."

Wagoning

The following poem will take the reader back to the days of the Conestoga wagons, and particularly to the thirties of the nineteenth century. It is found in Henry Lee Fischer's "Olden Times; or, Pennsylvania Rural Life Some Fifty Years Ago," published in York, Pa. in 1888.

O! for the good old moderate times
Which have been, but no more can be;
Each farmer had his still-house then,
And stilled his surplus fruit and
grain;

From exciseman and excise free,

In Conestogas drawn by four
He hauled the "bree" to Baltimore.

Free from the odious whiskey-tax,
For this repealed was now no more;
And "Liberty and No Excise"
Had come by law, free from the vice
Of Tom the Tinker's lore;
And old Monongahela-bree
Flowed exciseman and excise-free.

Methinks I see the sturdy team
Once more en route with heavy load

Of flour and whiskey, moving slow—
So slow it scarcely seems to go—
Upon the winding turnpike-road;
Thus man and beast, to toil inured,
In patient hope the toil endured.

* * *

There were two classes of these men,
Men of renown, not well agreed;
"Militia-men" drove narrow treads,
Four horses and plain red Dutch beds,
And always carried "grub" and feed;
Because they carried feed and "grub,"
They bore the brunt of many a "rub."

These were the thrifty farmers' teams
That wagoned only now and then;
They made their trips in winter-time;
They trudged along through rime and
grime
And hurried through it, back again;
An annual trip, or two, they made,
And drove a sort of coastwise trade.

They gathered up promiscuous loads
Of produce in the neighborhood—
Some whiskey, flour and cloverseeds,
To suit a city dealer's needs,
And always did the best they could,
By hauling these to Baltimore—
Back-loaded for some country-store.

The "Reg'lars" boldly ventured out,
Despising danger, doubt and fear;
And like the gallant merchant-ships,
They made their long, continuous trips
All through the seasons of the year,
No matter whether cold or warm,
Through heat and cold, through calm
and storm.

I've seen a many a fleet of them
In one long, upward, winding row;
It ever was a pleasant sight,
As seen from distant mountain-height,
Or quiet valley, far below;

Their snow-white covers looked like
sail,
From mountain-height or distant vale.

I see them on their winding way,
As, in the merry olden time,
I saw them with their heavy loads
Upon the old-time turnpike-roads,
The rugged mountains climb;
Like full-rigged ships they seemed to
glide
Along the deep-blue mountain-side.

The "Regulars" were haughty men,
Since five or six they always drove,
With broad-tread wheels and English
beds,
They bore their proud and lofty heads,
And always thought themselves above
The homespun, plain, Militia-men,
Who wagoned only now and then.

(Who has not seen, who has not felt,
The cursed arrogance of purse!
E'en in the wagoners of the past
Was seen this haughtiness of caste,
And felt the old, old social curse,
That measures manhood by success
More than by native nobleness.)

So were all goods transported then—
By "Reg'lar" or "Militia" team—
And though a slow and toilsome way,
It was the best known in its day,
Before the world had got up steam;
As now this steam-dependent world
Is round its business-axle whirled.

I hear the music of the wheels,
Slow moving o'er the frozen snow:
Like distant bugle-notes they sound,
While from the mountain-height's
around,
Or from the dark-green depths below,
Perchance the music of the bells
This weird, enchanting echo swells.

I hear the wagoner's hoarse, harsh
voice
Still urging on the lab'ring steeds;
I hear the sharp crack of his whip,
I see the horses pull and slip,
Still urged to more herculean deeds,
The while their steaming breath con-
geals

Like hoar-frost in the wintry fields.

O'er mountain-heights and valleys
deep,

Still slowly on and on they move
Along their tedious, rugged way—
Some eighty furlongs in a day—
Their stalwart strength and faith
they prove,

And oft to their extreme delight
Some old-time tavern looms to sight.

There Custom always called a halt,
To water, rest and take a drink;
And not unlikely, while they stopped,
A jig was danced, or horses swapped;
And so perchance a broken link
The smith was hurried to renew,
Or tighten up a loosened shoe.

Meantime the jolly wagoners stood
And swaggered 'round the old-time
bar—

The latticed nook, the landlord's
throne,

Where he presided all alone,
And smoked his cheap cigar,
And reckoned up the tippler's bill
For whiskey at a "fip" a gill;

Or other kinds of old-time drinks,
All full of good and hearty cheer;
As apple-jacks, and peach-brandies,
Or cider-oils, or sangarees,
Or, O, the foaming poker'd-beer;
Or apple-toddies, steaming-hot,
Or cherry-bounce, almost forgot.

There never was a rougher set,
Or class of men upon the earth,

Than wagoners of the Reg'lar line,
Nor jollier when in their wine,
Around a blazing bar-room hearth;
How did they fiddle, dance and sing?
How did the old-time bar-room ring?

There were few idle fiddles when
Old wag'ners drank their jolly fill
Of beer and cider by the quart,
And wines and gins of every sort,
And whiskey, measured by the gill,
And cherry-bounce and cider-oil,
And bitters spiced with penny-royal.

Sometimes the question, who should
treat,

Was left to doubtful luck, or chance;
A game of cards at whist, or loo,
Of checkers, chess, or domino;
And after that the hoe-down dance;
Sometimes the question—who had
beat?

Was settled by the landlord's treat.

Around a blazing hearth at e'en,
Or roaring ten-plate Pinegrove stove,
Those heroes of the turnpike-roads—
Those haulers of the heavy loads,
Or weary drivers of a drove,
Forgathered many a winter's night
In freedom, fun, and fond delight.

They sat in all the different ways
That men could sit, or ever sat;
They told of all their jolly days,
And spat in all the different ways
That men could spit, or ever spat;
They talked of horses and their
strength,
And spun their yarns at endless
length.

Sometimes they raffled for the stakes,
And sometimes shot therefor at mark;
A many a foolish wager laid,
And many a reckless swap was made

Of horses, traded in the dark;
Sometimes disputes ran wild and high,
To bloody nose or blacken'd eye.

All such disputes were ended quick
By an appeal to harden's fists;
These were the courts of last resort,
That settled pleas of every sort,
That came upon the wagoners' lists;
No other forum, then, was sought,
When THE decisive fight was fought.

Ten wagoners in a bar-room, well,
Say, twenty feet by scant sixteen;
A ten-plate stove, that weighed a ton,
Stood in a wooden-box-spittoon,
Which was of course not very clean,
Mid clouds of cheap tobacco-smoke,
Thick, dark, and strong enough to
choke.

Huge benches and some pond'rous
chairs,
Such as the world no more may see;
An ample pile of hickory logs,
An old tom-cat and several dogs
And playful pups, some two or three,
All 'round one stove or bar-room fire!
A scene an artist might admire.

And superadded to all these
Were unwashed feet and shoes and
boots,
And bootjacks, slippers, tallow dips,
And some greatcoats and Loudon
whips
And heaps of wagoners' oversuits;
While currying-shirts and overalls
Embellished the surrounding walls.

But O the kitchen of the inn,
That heaven on earth, in days of yore!
The pots and pans and ovens, Dutch,
The home-baked bread we loved so
much,
The want of which we now deplore,

While vainly seeking nutriment
In alkalies for ailment.

There buxom lasses and their beaux
On winter nights, in olden times,
In freedom sang their merry songs,
And on the shovel, with the tongs,
Rang out the rude and rustic chimes;
While on the pon'drous iron crane
Hung pot-rack, hook and dusky chain.

There in their homespun woolen
gowns,

When daily labors were well o'er,
The lasses used to sing and sew,
Or trip the light fantastic toe
Upon the burnished kitchen-floor;
And though around a kitchen-hearth,
The most enchanting place on earth.

How many a troth was plighted there,
How many a happy match was made?
How many a legend there was said
By tongues and lips long cold and
dead!

How many a roguish trick was played
Upon some happy bride and groom.
By hands long mouldering in the
tomb?

Where are those kitchens of the past,
Those rugged chimneys built of stone?
Where is the pitchy fagot's blaze,
Which, like the Borealis-rays,
From out the chimney corner shone?
Like those who danced and frolicked
there,
They're numbered with the things
that were.

The fragrance of their memory hangs
And lingers 'round us like the air;
They haunt us in our waking dreams,
And often in our sleep it seems,
As if again we saw them there;
But stern realities arise
While moisture gathers in our eyes,

Wagoners and Wagoning

(The following notes on Conestoga wagons and their wagoners found in the Appendix of H. L. Fisher's "Olden Times: or Pennsylvania Rural Life, Some Fifty Years Ago" (York, Pa., 1888) will supplement the article, "The Conestoga Wagon.")

The military terms "Regulars" and "Militia" were applied as sobriquets to the two classes of wagoners: to those who followed the business regularly and extensively, the term "Reg'lars" was applied in the spirit of respect and compliment. To the farmers, or common country teamsters who drove Conestogas, and whose trips were short, few, and occasional, the term "Militia" was applied derisively by the Regulars. A prosperous and successful, or rather lucky, regular was usually the owner of several teams, one, the principal, and finest of which he drove himself in the van of the procession, his hired drivers bringing up the rear. The difference between these two classes of teams and teamsters was very apparent. A "Reg'lar" never drove less than five horses, generally six, and in case of emergency, seven. His harness, or gears, were not so heavy and clumsy as those of the "Militia." Every horse had his housing of deerskin or other suitable material trimmed with heavy red fringe; and the bridle head-stall with bunches of bright colored ribbon. Bell-teams were comparatively common; each horse, except the saddle-horse, being furnished with a full set, trimmed with ribbons of various bright colors. The horses were placed in military order "rank and size," the heavier pair nearest the wheels, the next in size at the end of the tongue, and the lightest and gayest at the lead, or end of the chain.

The wagons used by the "Reg'lars" were heavy, high-wheeled, broad-tread, furnished with the patent-locking machine, or brake. . . . The bed or body of the wagon was long, rather deep, and somewhat galley-shaped; painted a deep blue and furnished with sideboards of a bright red color. The "Reg'lars" carried neither feed nor "grub," but depended on the jolly host of the old-time inn for both. He took great pride in his team, and much rivalry and jealousy prevailed among them as to the strength and beauty of their horses and the loads they could haul. Many beautiful teams there were. Sometimes a whole team of one color—iron, or dapple grays, blacks or bays of fine blood and groom. Even the noble horses themselves seemed at times to manifest a certain instinctive consciousness of the pride taken in them by their owner or driver, and when he, proudly enthroned in the saddle, drew the long rein on his prancing leader, flourished his famous Loudon whip, making the sharp snapping silk tingle in their ears, the faithful wagon-dog, the while leaping and yelping encouragement in advance, every horse sprang into the harness, stretching every trace to its utmost capacity, and moving the ponderous load steadily forward with an ease and grace that was simply grand and beautiful, when the train consisted, as it often did, of as many as a dozen teams, all thus moving in steady procession . . .

The wagon-beds or bodies were arched with six or eight stately bows, the middle or lowest being midway between the ends, and the rest rising

gradually on either side to front or rear, so that the end ones were nearly of equal height; and over all these was stretched the great strong hempen cover, well corded down at the sides and ends. In the red sideboards, white covers, and blue beds, were proudly shown the tricolor of the National Ensign. Not unfrequently the loads were up to the bows, and as many as 60 to 80 hundred pounds, or three to four tons, were hauled at a load. . . .

All wagoners, "Reg'lars" and "Militia," carried their beds with them. These consisted of rough mattresses, coarse blankets, coverlets or robes, but no pillows. At bedtime they were unrolled and spread, side by side, upon the bar-room floor; and if the occupant appreciated the luxury of a pillow, he readily found it on the back of an inverted chair placed under the head of his bed. . . .

One important feature of the times remains to be noticed—the great tide of foreign German immigration westward. Thousands and tens of thousands of families annually passed through from the eastern cities to Ohio, Indiana and Illinois; the latter being then regarded as "the far West." In many instances one or more of these families were provided with a wagon which they brought with them from the Vaterland, and in which they transported their meagre household, bed, and other clothing, and such members of their families as were unable to travel on foot. These wagons were small and light, constructed almost exclusively of wood, without paint, and drawn by one or two horses. An ordinary muslin cover stretched over a few rude bows afforded a slight protection from sun, wind and rain to those who were huddled together under it. The rest trudged alongside through dust or mud; many of them begging their way, whilst hundreds and thousands of Thalers were snugly stowed away in the little Koffern (chests) on the wagons, or concealed on their persons. The great mass of them, however, took through-passage, at least to Pittsburgh or Wheeling, on the great road-wagons of the "Regulars;" sometimes to the exclusion of other loading, but frequently "topped out" the usual freight with bedding, women and children, while those who were able, trudged alongside or behind. And what a grotesque group of humanity was a wagon-load of German immigrants! The males in their short blue coats and pants, profusely trimmed with legendary gilt buttons; their clumsy, heavy-nailed boots and shoes, their little, flat, blue cloth caps, and their enormous, long-stemmed gracefully curved pipes, always in their mouths and nearly always in blast. The females in their short gowns, long, heavily-ribbed stockings, or (if in summer) bare limbs, heavy wooden shoes, and their borderless but neatly quilted little caps; these with their children of various ages and sizes, sitting or rather hanging with their lower limbs greatly exposed out over the sides of the wagons, to say nothing of the unmentionable scenes which sudden emergencies or pressing necessities frequently occasioned while the caravan was halting to rest and water in a town, a village or at an intermediate tavern. Yet many of these German immigrants and hundreds of thousands of their descendants are now among the worthiest and wealthiest citizens of our great and growing West.

Appendix II

APPROXIMATE SPECIFICATIONS FOR MAKING A LARGE CONESTOGA ROAD WAGON

NOTE: Conestoga Wagons were all hand-made; hence, no two were exactly alike and measurements differed slightly. The writer drew up the following composite specifications merely for his own records and would not suggest their use for wagon making unless used by skilled wagon makers of the old school.

While these specifications for the making of a large Conestoga road wagon were in preparation, E. M. Brown, Director of the Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles, California, was given an advance copy of them from which he constructed a one-tenth size model, it being more or less accurate, and quite attractive to the far westerners who seldom see a replica of any other covered wagon than the Prairie Schooner. After seeing the museum model just mentioned, a Pacific Coast individual from Pasadena, California, secured a copy of these same specifications for building his own model.

The wheelwright shall provide all the wood necessary, and all the workmanship shall be done by hand. There shall be no skimping of materials and wherever it would seem logical for ornamentation purposes the wood shall project, and the projection shall be ornately carved. The wheelwright shall, of course, use his judgment in altering any of the specifications here given.

The wagon bed shall be 14 feet in length at the bottom and 17 feet in length along the top rail. It shall be 32 inches high with two tiers of panels of equal height. There shall be at least a six-inch sag in the bottom of the bed, the greater part of the sag coming forward of the middle. The skeleton framework of the body shall be made of oak, the bottom pieces 3" by 3", the middle pieces 1½" by 2", and the top pieces 2" by 2" in thickness. The upper and middle parts of the framework shall have the same sag as the bottom. There shall be 5 crosspieces in the bottom of the body framework, the rear and middle crosspieces extending about 8 inches beyond the side of the wagon bed. The skeleton framework shall be so constructed that there will be upper and lower framelike parts on each side so that when the inner lining is attached it will appear as though each side is made up of twenty-two panels, each differing slightly from every other one in shape. The bottom part of the frame in the rear end shall be arched so as to permit the easy sliding of barrels into the wagon. The interior of the wagon bed shall be made of poplar or white pine planed wood one inch in thickness. The detachable sideboards shall be 12 or 13 inches wide in the middle and about 4 inches wide at the ends so that the top of the wagon with sideboards shall have a level appearance. The sideboards shall not be paneled. Both the front and the rear end gate shall be paneled.

There shall be 12 hickory or oak bows about 15 feet long and about 2½" wide and ¾" in thickness. These bows shall be bent and shaped, broad at the top, and extend down on both sides of the wagon bed to the bottom. The top of the bows shall be about 70" from the bottom of the wagon bed, and

the bows shall be strapped with rawhide to a supporting light strip of hickory wood running the full length of the top of the bows.

The front wheels shall be 4 feet high and shall contain 12 spokes. The rear wheels shall be $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet high and contain 16 spokes. The felloes of the wheels, 2 spokes to each section, shall be made of oak $3\frac{1}{2}$ " by 3". The hubs of the wheels shall be made of locust or sour gum and shall not be less than 18" in length and have a circumference of not less than 36". The spokes of the wheels should be made of oak wood and of shape and size to conform to this kind of wheel.

The bolsters and axletrees shall be made of oak not less than 4" by 5" in size, and shall be shaped for the blacksmith to do his work properly. The axletrees shall be mortised for the linch pins. The front hounds shall be about $3\frac{1}{2}$ " by $3\frac{1}{2}$ " and shall be so constructed that the wagon tongue can be removed or attached to them with ease. The rear hounds should be made of somewhat heavier material and joined together in proper fashion to fasten the coupling pole thereto. The front hounds shall be about 6 feet long and the rear ones about 8 feet in length.

The brake beam shall be made of oak approximately 5" by 4" by 68" long, and the rubber block shall measure at least 8" by 16" by 4". The tread of the entire wagon shall measure 60 inches from the middle of one front tire to the other front tire and shall measure 60 inches from one rear tire to the other so that the wheels will "track" themselves. The coupling pole shall extend 12" to 18" beyond the rear end gate and shall have a hole bored in it so that an auxiliary coupling pin may be placed back of the rear axle tree. The coupling pole shall be about 13 feet long. The wagon tongue shall be about $10\frac{1}{2}$ feet long, of appropriate size and properly shaped. There shall be standards running from the rear bolster up along the sides of the wagon box. There shall be a lazy board about a foot wide, $1\frac{1}{2}$ " thick and $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet long. The detachable feed box shall be 6 feet long, 13" wide at the bottom, 17" wide at the top and about 12" deep. The tool box shall be 18" high behind and 10" high in front, not less than 12" wide and 6" in thickness. The lid shall be ornately notched or carved along the edges.

The blacksmith shall work in conjunction with the wheelwright and shall do all his work by hand, making it ornate wherever he so desires, in order to make the whole job such that it would demand the commendation of all those who might observe it.

The tires of both front and rear wheels shall be 3" wide and made of $\frac{3}{4}$ " material. The axletrees shall be protected from wear by being properly ironed and be fitted at either end with a hand-made tar skein, and the ends of the axles shall be entirely enclosed with a cup-like ring. The hubs of the wheels shall be boxed with heavy metal lining and shall be strengthened by heavy strap iron bands, and a hub cap or hub-end cover shall be provided for each wheel. It shall be notched into the linch-pin hole in the hub and shall be fastened on the other side of the hub by a hasp and hook.

The front hounds shall be strongly ironed throughout, and the cross-piece between the hounds shall be ironed with heavy strap iron. The left

front hound shall be provided with a ring and ornamental staple for holding an axe, the blacksmith to use his own ingenuity in providing these fittings. The bolster shall be bolted and fastened securely to the front axletree, and heavy strap iron supports must be used at either end of this bolster to enable it to stand the strain. The rear bolster must be securely bolted to the rear axletree.

The brake rod shall be made of $1\frac{1}{2}$ " square iron with round ends fit into heavy eye bolts fastened to the rear bolster. On the left side of the wagon there shall be attached to this brake rod a stout brake lever about 6 feet long with an accompanying chain about 7 feet long. A one-inch brake pull rod shall be used from the turning brake rod to the brake beam. The brake beam shall be ironed properly to hold the rubber blocks and there shall be a pin in the beam to fasten the brake lever chain.

There shall be a wide, heavy band of iron around the joined ends of the rear hounds and coupling pole, with the coupling pin passing through a hole in this band and the coupling pole. The coupling pin shall be about 10" long and one-inch in diameter. The "King bolt" shall be a long, heavy pin running from the wagon bed down through the pillow block, the front bolster and the forward axletree. There shall also be heavy iron plates, known as rubbing plates, attached to both the pillow block and bolster through which the king pin passes. The chassis in general shall be ironed throughout for strength. The double tree shall be connected to the tongue by a hammer-headed pin of considerable weight so that it would serve as a heavy hammer in case one was needed. On either end of the double tree shall be a single tree (sometimes called swingletree, whiffletree, or whippetree.) There shall be stay chains which hook into an eye on rear side of double tree and over a hook on the axle tree to prevent the double tree swinging too far. Both the chains and hook shall be ornate, especially the hooks. Proper clevises and trace hooks would be required on the double and single trees. The tongue, of course, must be ironed for protection, strength and utility.

The wagon bed shall be braced and strengthened by supporting rods wherever needed, at least four of these rods being used on each side of the body running from the top to the bottom of the frame. There must be triangular braces from the extended crosspieces to the top of the wagon box.

The sides of the bed must be thoroughly riveted and the bottom bolted to the frame work, and to make this part of the work substantial there shall be required at least 250 rivets, each with a square strap iron washer about an inch square to keep the rivets from wearing into the soft wood.

There shall be chains attached to the middle cross-pieces of the body on both sides that may be used to fasten around the felloe of the rear wheels and serve as an auxiliary lock in descending hills. There shall be two staples for each bow on either side of the body into which the wooden bows can be fitted. The staples into which the front and rear bows fit at the top of the bed shall be hammered "S" shaped for ornamentation. Staples or rings shall also be provided well down on the sides of the body for cording down the cover.

There shall be projecting rods with pins, as well as hasps and hooks to fasten the end gate securely. Wing nuts should be used to bolt the cross bar of the end gate securely in place. These wing nuts should be fancy in style.

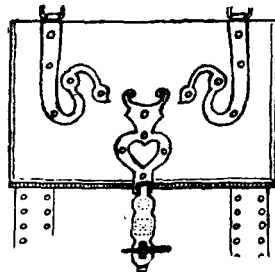
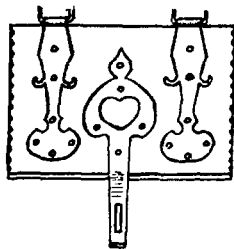
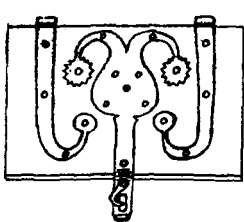
The wagon bed shall be equipped with two or three sets of cross chains to keep the body from spreading under a heavy load. These chains must be fastened to an iron band or stirrup which passes around the heavy top edge of the wagon box. The style of hook and the kind of chains ingeniously contrived and generally used for this purpose shall be used. There shall be also breast chains of double twisted flat links to attach to the harness with cross bars at both ends. These pass through a ring at the end of the chains permanently attached to the tongue ring—all of which shall be hand made throughout. There shall be a "fifth chain" to connect the spreader used by the lead horses to the end of the wagon tongue. Other chains, braces, bolts, plates and fittings shall be provided to complete the wagon satisfactorily.

The feed box shall be protected from the horses' chewing the wood, by the use of strap iron. At any other part of the equipment where there may be unusual wear on the wood, the blacksmith shall thoroughly protect the wood by ironing. The ironing of the axle socket and the wagon tongue shall be well and carefully, if not ornately, done.

The tool box shall be most ornately ironed as an exemplification of the superior craftsmanship and artistic skill of the iron mechanic. The "heart and tulip" design on the tool box would be most appropriate and would probably afford the blacksmith the most pleasure and satisfaction in his accomplishment.

The completed wagon shall weigh from 3200 to 3400 pounds. Any required finishing touches other than those mentioned in these specifications shall be added to make the whole job an accomplishment of which both the wheelwright and the blacksmith can point to with pride.

The wheelwright shall paint the running gear and the detachable sideboards a vermillion red and the body a pale blue. The wagon shall be equipped with a canvas duck white cover.



Tool Box Lids. The Landis Valley Museum.



Sign of the Waterloo Tavern, Salisbury Township, Lancaster County.

(See Page 72)