

## “Conestoga Wagon”

BY EVELYN A. BENSON

There has been some speculation about the origin of the term *Conestoga Wagon*. H. C. Frey, in his able dissertation on the *Conestoga Wagon*<sup>1</sup> hit the nail on the head when he said, “Would it not be logical to assume that . . . 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 . . . ?” However, neither Mr. Frey, nor any other historian of the Lancaster area has mentioned a date earlier than 1750 for use of the term *Conestoga Wagon*. In 1750 the *Pennsylvania Gazette* carried an advertisement referring to a tavern of that name.

Although we may assume that some of the Palatines who came to the Conestoga in 1710 transported their goods in horse-drawn wagons, we have yet no proof of it. The first recorded use of a horse-drawn wagon on the road between Philadelphia and Conestoga is found in the account book of James Logan, fur merchant, under the date of May 19, 1716. The wagoner was John Miller. The first use of the term *Conestoga Wagon* occurs in the same account book under the date of December 31, 1717, when James Logan entered his purchase of a wagon and a thill horse from James Hendricks of Conestoga. These first Conestoga wagons were used to transport fur and skins from the fur traders of the Conestoga to the fur merchant, James Logan, at Philadelphia. They carried back with them to Conestoga goods for the traders to use in buying furs and skins from the Indians.

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<sup>1</sup>Lancaster County Historical Society Papers, Vol. II, No. 3

## Early Source Material

This interesting material for the first chapter in a history of the *Conestoga Wagon* is to be found in *James Logan's Account Book 1712-1719* and *James Logan's Ledger 1720-27*. Both of these documents have been available to the public for many, many years at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia, but have evidently never been examined by historians.

The story of James Logan as a fur merchant has yet to be written. There can be little doubt that Logan's position as the chief fur buyer in Philadelphia for many years played no small part in building up his influence with the Indians who sold those furs to Logan's traders. Logan's account books and ledgers show that Logan not only traded in furs on his own account, but took payment for the proprietor's lands in furs, tobacco and flour which he shipped abroad.

James Logan, William Penn's business representative in Pennsylvania, was in charge of collecting the money due William Penn in the colony, also in charge of land sales during the life of William Penn. When the Penn estate became involved in litigations Logan directed prospective buyers where to settle until legal title could be given them for their land.

As the guardian of the proprietor's estate, James Logan considered it his duty to protect the proprietor's interest by preventing settlers from obtaining any of the best land until the less desirable land had been settled. After the poor land had been taken up the proprietors could then sell or lease the excellent land at high figures.<sup>2</sup> It was a matter of personal chagrin to James Logan that Herr and Kendig had obtained the best land in the province, Conestoga land, when he was away on a trip to England. He accused Taylor, the surveyor, of having favored the Palatines in exchange for a high fee.<sup>3</sup>

## Trading With Logan

When the definitive biography of James Logan is written there will stand revealed a man whose gift for subtle intrigue has been surpassed by few in American history. He is known

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<sup>2</sup> This proprietary land policy was of major importance in developing Pennsylvania enthusiasm for the American Revolution. See Lincoln, C. H. *The Revolutionary Movement in Pennsylvania*.

<sup>3</sup> Penna. Archives, Series 2, vol. 7, p. 81, 126.

today chiefly for his enquiring mind which led him to investigate and report on matters of scientific interest, for his classical erudition, and for the fine library which he bequeathed to the people of Philadelphia. Scarcely known is an equally strong facet of his character: his manipulation of the Indians through his understanding of their economic necessity. He was able by diplomacy and trade to maintain peace with the savages and to create for Pennsylvania a legend of fair dealing and peace with the Redmen.

As early as 1705 James Logan held an Indian treaty at Conestoga in which trade was discussed and John Hans Steelman discouraged from building a trading house among the Conestoga Indians because he was not authorized by the governor of Pennsylvania. Peter Bezaillion, the Indian trader, was present at this treaty, which also included discussion of the affairs of the Shawnee.<sup>4</sup> In the following years the account books of James Logan show that Martin Chartier, leader of the Shawnee, and Peter Bezaillion were his chief Indian traders—the ones who bought furs for him from the Indians and brought them to Philadelphia.

Two years after the treaty of 1705 James Logan accused the Pennsylvania Assembly of trying to establish a republic.<sup>5</sup> They later impeached him and tried to arrest him, but he fled to England to tell his side of the story to William Penn.<sup>6</sup> Very soon after Logan's departure Peter Bezaillion and his goods were seized,<sup>7</sup> the pretext being suspicion of French sympathy. Bezaillion remained in the Philadelphia prison for two years, his release from prison, with permission to trade as formerly, coinciding with Logan's return from England, still possessing the favor of William Penn.<sup>8</sup>

James Logan's relation with other Lancaster County fur traders would make a book in itself, as would the story of Mr. Logan and the Donegal settlement, much unused material for which is to be found in the unpublished Logan papers. James Logan's intrigue in managing the Cresap War on the Susquehanna, making it appear in the records to be a spontaneous clash between border ruffians, is another interesting episode in Lancaster County his-

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<sup>4</sup> Colonial Records II, p. 244-46.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 235.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 508.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 509.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 539, 545. See also Eshleman, H. Frank. *Annals of the Susquehannocks*. Lancaster. 1909.

tory, well documented by unpublished manuscripts at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Enough has been said to show that James Logan was a dominant force in early Lancaster County business and politics.

We know for certain that in May 1715, James Logan made a journey to Conestoga and Paxtang.<sup>9</sup> At that time the account book of 1712-19 shows that Martin Chartier and Peter Bezaillion were James Logan's chief fur traders. In 1718 Logan still referred to Peter Bezaillion as "my greatest trader."<sup>10</sup>

### **Deep In The Fur Trade**

The winter following his 1715 trip to Conestoga James Logan embarked more deeply than ever into the fur trade. In January 1716 his account book shows £104 18.7 worth of Indian goods advanced on credit to an Indian trader, Richard Cloud, "near Pecquean," followed by more large advances to other traders, to be repaid in furs and skins. Logan's view of the land in 1715 evidently also resulted in a determination to secure the best of the remaining Conestoga land for the proprietor, accomplished by the survey of 16,000 acres, the Conestoga Manor, February 1, 1718.<sup>11</sup> Although some people had already settled on this land and many others tried to settle there later, they were consistently driven off and their homes burned in the proprietary interest.

At the time of the original Manor survey two tracts of the Manor, of 500 acres each, were laid off, one to John Cartlidge, and one to James Logan. Although Logan modestly noted on a draft of the survey that this land was surveyed to him without his knowledge (practically forced on him?), curiously enough his account book shows that for several months before the survey he had been planning to open a store and trading house at Conestoga with John Cartlidge in charge. Strangely enough it was located on the very land in Conestoga Manor surveyed by the thoughtful Jacob Taylor.

### **Stiff Competition**

For the next few years James Logan wrote pessimistically to his London business associates of the unprofitable aspects of

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<sup>9</sup> Account Book, p. 107.

<sup>10</sup> James Logan Parchment Letter Book 1717-31, p. 37. HSP.

the skin trade, "Maryland will ruin us" (1717).<sup>12</sup> "I have few skins . . . the Indians having had a bad winter and New York & Maryland cutting us out of a great deal . . ." (1718)<sup>13</sup> yet he continued energetic activity in that trade to the point that in 1719 he confided in Governor Hunter of New York that an Indian war would be disastrous to him because he had a considerable part of his fortune in the hands of Indian traders who would not be able to make him any returns unless a good understanding was maintained with the Indians.<sup>14</sup>

The first wagon to travel between Philadelphia and Conestoga hauled furs to Philadelphia, Indian goods to Conestoga. Most of the goods going both ways belonged to James Logan. The first wagoner between Philadelphia and Conestoga mentioned in James Logan's account is John Miller, May 19, 1716. John Miller brought down furs for James Patterson, Ann Le Tort, Peter Bezaillion and Martin Chartier all during the year 1716 and took back lead, gunpowder, blue duffels, rum, kettles, salt—goods for these traders to use in purchasing furs. In September 1716, John Miller "the Wagonar" bought from Logan two half faggots of steel. James Logan paid the carriage on the skins and furs brought from Conestoga but charged the traders with it in his accounts.

The skins also continued to be carried in the old way, by pack horse. In 1716 Peter Bezaillion at various times brought down nine horse loads of skins, and Martin Chartier seven horse loads. During 1717 Richard Grist is frequently paid for bringing down the furs of the traders by pack horse.

The account book seems to indicate that in 1716 there was only one wagon plying between Philadelphia and Conestoga. Logan refers to it as "*the* waggon" and he refers to payments for carriage to "Jno. Millar of Conestogoe." That the wagon belonged to Miller is shown by the entry of December 31, 1716, "Sundry Accots Dr. to Peter Bezaillion for Skins &c brought down pr Millar's Waggon . . ."

### A Second Wagon

Within one year from mention of the first wagon, another wagon was on the road. May 27, 1717, James Logan paid James

<sup>12</sup> See note 10, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Logan Letter Book II, p. 213. HSP.

Hendricks of Conestoga for goods "pr his Waggon" and on the same day paid for other goods which came "pr Millars Waggon." In July a third wagon appears in the accounts when Joseph Cloud's wagon brought down skins with Richard Cloud in charge.

It must have seemed extravagant to James Logan to permit his traders to pay out so much money to the wagoners. By the end of November, 1717, he had purchased a wagon by means of which he could collect the carriage fees from the traders himself, and he had established a store house at Conestoga for the sale of hardware and household goods to the Germans and other settlers as well as Indian goods to the traders. Logan's first entry concerning his own Conestogan store and wagon is dated November 18, 1717, and reads,

"Sundry Acc. Dr. Conestogoe Store House & Waggon. Dr. pd.  
Jno Ball for his Grey Stallion ..... £ 8.10.—"

The entry of November 20, 1717, says,

"Conestogoe Store & Waggon Dr. to Sundry Acco. for Sundries  
sent John Cartlidge by John Balls Cart . . ."

On December 31, 1717, James Logan purchased the wagon of James Hendricks of Conestoga which thus has the distinction of being the first wagon in history recorded as a *Conestoga Wagon*. On that date Logan entered in his account book,

"Sundry Accot. Dr. to James Hendricks of Conestogoe viz.  
Conestogoe Waggon & Store Dr. £ 22 for his Waggon  
& a Thill horse bought of him for that money."

The first horse bought for the Conestoga wagon had been a grey stallion from John Ball, the second was a thill horse of James Hendricks and the third another grey horse from John Ball. A John Ball came from Long Island before William Penn's arrival in Pennsylvania as is shown on a map of Blockley Township on file at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Throughout the year 1718 the work at the Conestoga store and James Logan's income from the Conestoga wagon are entered often in the account book. On May 1 Robert Cook was paid nineteen shillings for nine and one half day's work with the masons at the Conestoga store. The same month the Conestoga store account includes 23½ yards of "Borelaps at 19 pence a yard." On June 10, 1718, James Logan made a number of significant entries regarding his Conestoga wagon and store:

“Conestogoe Waggon Dr. pd. for 2 Bells 11/6 E. Jenks help  
12s C. Jones 12”

“John Cartlidge . . . sundries sent him by my Waggon at his  
request . . . To Waggon for carriage of 1100 lb. at 3s  
. . . £ 1.13.—”

The same day James Logan listed goods sent to stock what  
may well have been the first general store on the Conestoga:

“Acct. of Merch. at Conestogoe to Sundry Accots for the fol-  
lowing Goods Sent up by my Waggon viz. to Accot of Car-  
goe from Bristol”

The articles on this list were locks, gimlets, iron handsaws,  
steel handsaws, hammers, spurs, augers, girths, broad axes, strap  
hinges, chisels, gouges, files, silk crepe, Indian camlets, thread, tape,  
thimbles, pins, needles, whip cord, children’s hose, shoe buckles,  
hunting saddle with snaffle bridle, shares and coulters, nails, cross-  
cut saws and bed cords.

For building the Conestoga store John Maultsby received  
twenty-one pounds. On July 1, 1718, Logan bought for the wagon  
twenty yards of Luback canvas for 18 pence a yard and a larger  
piece of Luback Canvas from Alexander Arbuthnot for two pounds  
ten shillings.

The next day, July 2, presumably under cover of the Luback  
canvas, James Logan sent to John Cartlidge, the merchant at  
Conestoga, “the following Goods by my Waggon”: camlet, drugget,  
shalloons, duroy, buttons, silk, mens stockens, silver knives and  
forks, iron knives and forks, horn combs, gartering, Japand To-  
bacco boxes, ground ginger, iron, glasses, mohair, womens fine  
hose, pepper, nutmeg, spices, cinnamon, cloves, mace, rum, mo-  
lasses & sugar, earthenware 6 — 3 pt. mugs, 12 — 1 qt. mugs,  
18 pints, 24 — 1/2 pints, 2 chamber pots, 2 four gallon jugs, paper,  
1 one qt. tin pot & 1 half pint ditto, 1 half gall Tin pott, a trunk  
& cord.

### Death Of Indian Trader

In the spring of 1718 Mr. Logan had made a trip to Conestoga,  
called there by the death of one of his chief Indian traders, Martin  
Chartier.<sup>15</sup> The account book may hold a key to much Indian

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<sup>15</sup> Lancaster Examiner & Express, May 24, 1879. Logan letter of April  
26, 1718.

discontent and bloodshed of succeeding years. For one thing it indicates that in 1718 Logan employed John Cartlidge to sell out the Martin Chartier estate in order to settle that old trader's account. In this may be seen a seed of the discontent which caused Martin's son Peter Chartier and his Shawnees to go over to the French some twenty-five years later. In another entry, September 18, 1718, Logan complacently notes a gift of goods valued at nineteen pounds, four shillings to the Indians Sassoonan, Pokehaisaiyanaman and Ghattypeneeman "on their signing a release for all ye lands between Delaware and Sasquehannah to Lechey [Lehigh] Mountains." He no doubt considered he had performed a very profitable piece of business for the proprietors, but it was a bargain paid in blood some forty years later.

The Indian traders who paid James Logan for the use of his wagon in bringing their furs and skins to him in 1718 included James Le Tort, John Cartlidge, John Orton, Ann Le Tort, Martin Chartier's estate, James Patterson and Edmund Cartlidge. That the wagon traveled by way of Gray's Ferry is shown by the payment, September 24, 1718, of £1.15.5 to Geo. Gray's wife in full for ferriage for the "Waggon Dr." In that year John Comb and Peter Cock received payment as wagoners on Logan's Conestoga wagon which made trips to the mill for Logan, besides its Philadelphia journeys. In the winter of 1718 Logan paid on the wagon's expenses twelve shillings for two new axletrees, nine shillings eight pence for eight nights' pasturage, other small sums for hay and corn, leather and "oyl." The largest expense was "keeping six horses this winter," eighteen pounds.

### Unsold Stock

Evidently at the end of the year John Cartlidge bought out the unsold stock sent to equip Logan's Conestoga store. On November 30, 1719, Logan made an entry "John Cartlidge Dr. to Accot of Merch. at Conestogoe for all the remainder of the goods sent thither 4th & 5th month, 1718 excepting the iron used to the Waggon 49s & £9.5 which he returns is £73.13." John Cartlidge was paid twenty pounds for his services to James Logan in 1718.

*James Logan's Ledger 1720-27* takes up the accounts of the Indian traders, the Conestoga wagon and the Conestoga store where



the other account book leaves off. In 1720 John Cartlidge paid Logan thirty pounds "for my store house at Conestogoe." Although he had sold the store Logan retained the wagon and the ledger continues to itemize expenses connected with it. The account of John Cartlidge of Conestoga shows that Cartlidge continued to buy goods for the store from Logan and charged Logan for keeping the wagon and the horses at his house. The "Account of my Waggon & Team 1720-23" includes "Accot of Stock for sd Waggon 6 horses & harness" eighty-four pounds, and "New forewheels to ye old wagn" on November 19, 1720. In 1720 James Logan paid "Thomas Peel my Waggoner 1 years wages £20." He also paid various sums for "Peel's disbursements on his Journeys to Conestoga," expenses along the Conestoga road at the houses of Thomas Moore, Castener on Pecquea Creek, Richard Hughs, Richard Lewis, Simeon Woodrow and David Harry.

### **In Serious Trouble**

John Cartlidge and his brother Edmund were in serious trouble<sup>16</sup> in the spring of 1722. They had killed a Seneca Indian in the woods after making him drunk with rum in a fur trade. It was the first Indian killed in the province by an Englishman since the first coming of William Penn. At almost the same time rumors of copper being found just west of Susquehanna sent surveyors from both Pennsylvania and Maryland scurrying through the woods to stake out claims on the possibly rich mine sites.<sup>17</sup> This conjunction of circumstances led to Governor Sir William Keith's purchase of James Logan's six-horse wagon team. The date of purchase, just before Keith's trip to an Indian treaty at Conestoga concerning the Cartlidges and survey of land over Susquehanna, leads to the inevitable conclusion that the six-horse team pulled a wagon load of supplies and Indian goods for the governor from Philadelphia to Conestoga in June 1722.

When news of the death of the Indian reached Philadelphia, March 6, 1722, Logan and Col. John French hurried to Conestoga with a warrant for the arrest of the Cartlidge brothers. The close business connection between the Cartlidges and James Logan could not but have been an advantage to the brothers, but the

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<sup>16</sup> Colonial Records. Vol. III, pp. 146-201.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. pp. 160, 176, 178, 181.

feud developing between Keith and Logan at that time did not dispose the governor in their favor. Governor Keith proposed to try them immediately under the English law for murder.<sup>18</sup> We may detect the influence of James Logan in staying the trial until the governor had had conferences on the subject with the Six Nations at Albany. The Indians, having received ample gifts which, according to their custom, was adequate recompense for the death of a relative, begged clemency for the Cartlidge brothers who after that continued in business as usual.

### Two Letters

The late Charles Montgomery found in London two tantalizing documents contemporary with the Cartlidge affair and the copper rush. These two letters show that some Pennsylvania ore sent to London by "Mr. John Cartlitch" assayed at the direction of Sir Isaac Newton, had been found too small in quantity for an adequate analysis, but so far as observable was worthless since it "evaporated in a selphurous fume."<sup>19</sup> The date of this report was September 25, 1722. Considering the length of time needed for communications to pass between Philadelphia and London at that time, we can see that Mr. Cartlidge's ore undoubtedly left Philadelphia at the time he was under arrest there for the murder of the Indian. The first indication of a furor about copper west of the Susquehanna enters the record very soon after the arrest of the Cartlidges. Could it be that John Cartlidge had extended this bait of hidden wealth to ameliorate the official attitude towards his crime? James Logan, Cartlidge's friend, the most learned man in Pennsylvania, was in constant communication with the scientific men of London. We can only assume, of course, that it was he who sent John Cartlidge's ore abroad.

There can be no doubt, however, that news of the copper discovery, said to have been brought by an Indian, filled the woods west of Susquehanna<sup>20</sup> with surveyors from Maryland and Pennsylvania soon after the arrest of the Cartlidges in March 1722.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 168.

<sup>19</sup> C O 5—1233—PRO London.

<sup>20</sup> Other copper mine references: Lancaster County Miscellaneous Papers 1724-72, p. 7; Logan Papers I, p. 125; Logan Letter Book II, p. 263; Broad-sides vol. 5, No. 612 (all these preceding at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania). At the Library Company, Ridgeway Branch Yi. 966. F, 1, 2, 3; Penna. Archives, Series II, vol. 7, p. 69, 77; vol. 19, p. 712.

At that time the heirs of William Penn were at odds over their inheritance. James Logan favored one branch of the family, and the governor, Sir William Keith, favored another branch of the family. Telling the Indians that the surveys were only to protect them from avaricious settlers and unscrupulous Maryland surveyors, both gentlemen set in motion surveys for the benefit of their clients on the west side of Susquehanna river.<sup>21</sup> Logan was the first in the field and had his survey of 2,000 acres completed on April 10 and 11, 1722. Keith's survey, attempting to take in 70,000 acres, was made June 19 and 20, 1722. Having completed his survey, Logan was quite willing to help Sir William Keith . . . at least to the extent of selling him his wagon team of six horses for eighty pounds. This deal, entered in the ledger, was made May 25, 1722, when Keith was preparing for his journey to Conestoga and thence across the river to survey a vast territory in hopes of acquiring copper and the favor of the Penn family.

The very week in September 1722, that Sir Isaac Newton received the negative assay report in London, the Cartlidge brothers, in Philadelphia received assurance of their release from the unpleasant Indian affair.<sup>22</sup> Because of the slowness of sailing vessels and winter coming on, it was certainly months later that Sir Isaac's negative report on the assay of the Cartlidge ore reached Philadelphia. The copper boom collapsed, but after the American Revolution the Penn heirs based their claims to land in York County upon these two surveys ordered by Keith and Logan.

The account book and ledger of James Logan, 1712-27, give a new picture of the first five years' history of the Conestoga wagon. A minute study of these two account books would provide even more details of the Conestoga wagon's earliest days than those given here.

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<sup>21</sup> Cadwallader Papers, Penn Agency 25, Penn Agency 28. HSP.

<sup>22</sup> Col. Records III, p. 201.

NOTE: The use of a wagon in 1716 pre-supposes the existence of a road. The story of the road has been exhaustively treated by H. Frank Eshleman in *The Great Conestoga Road*, Lancaster County Historical Society Papers, Vol. XII, No. 6.