



The Intercourse Stage

by Ruth Hess Williams

As a wide-eyed impressionable child of tender years I approached The Leopard Hotel to meet my Uncle, D. Coleman Diller, who owned and operated the stage coach line between Intercourse and Lancaster. This line traversed the Old Provincial Highway now known as the Old Philadelphia Pike or the Old Road.

The first stage coach line between Intercourse and Lancaster was established, as near as can be determined, in 1898 by Martin Glouner. A single horse drawn conveyance similar to a market wagon, with a roll-up curtain and double set of seats, was the vehicle which for years plied back and forth between Lancaster and Intercourse. Landis Miller of Intercourse took over from Mr. Glouner and later D. Coleman Diller purchased the route from Landis Miller in 1902. The schedule called for a round trip every day, but many times during the winter the schedule was cut to three or four days because of the weather. At times the road was a cloud of dust in summer, and a sea of mud in winter. No matter what the weather, the stage was expected to go through. Many were the times when from Intercourse to Bird-in-Hand four horses were used to pull the stage coach because the mud at a number of places was axle deep and half-way to the horses' knees. When the weather created sleighing the trip was made by bob-sled. The passengers sat in the open, wearing a few more clothes than usual; and when the driver knew of passengers beforehand their comfort was added to by hot bricks, heated the night before in the oven and wrapped in newspaper to preserve the warmth.

The stage coach at the time of my experience was an enclosed carriage, capable of seating six persons inside, and two more could ride with the driver; and this vehicle was drawn by two horses. This stage coach was the only way some people along the line had of visiting the City of Lancaster and to obtain various commodities. On the morning trip to Lancaster the stage coach hauled large quantities of milk, eggs and butter from various farms and delivered to grocers, ice cream plants and restaurants. The driver was called upon to shop for many items of groceries, hardware, personal items of ladies' wear, children's clothing, and almost anything needed in the home.

The stage-coach ride to Intercourse was a revelation to me. The top of the coach as well as the back was methodically stacked with merchandise of all description that had been ordered, including many gallons of Marrow's ice cream packed in ice. My Mother and I got in the stage coach along with several other passengers. We started from The Leopard Hotel in early afternoon, and as we drove along the route, some people awaited the coming of "The Stage" only to wave and exchange a friendly greeting. Many stops were made as my Uncle Cole delivered newspapers and commodities that had been ordered; and we reached our destination, the end of the line, by suppertime.

It was a ride never forgotten, indelibly etched in my memory as we drove down the old dirt road, it seemed forever until we got there and were welcomed by my Aunt Alice and Cousin Mart.

And then the Fire Company festival that evening, which stays in my memory as a large field, many people, much to eat, and at least one very tired little girl.

As time went on improvements were made in the roads, and in 1910 Mr. D. C. Diller purchased a motor truck and put it in service on the stage coach line. This event was an historical one as it marked the passing of the old horse drawn stage coach in this vicinity.