

AN EARLY ROAD PETITION.

It is hardly necessary for me to say to this audience that the earliest roads used by the first settlers in this country were probably the paths traversed by the Indians in going to and fro over the country, and that when real wagon roads were "laid out," as it was called, they were also upon these footpaths. Having no beasts of burden and being compelled to make their journeys on foot, it was but natural that they should select the shortest way between any two points, and also where the travel was accompanied by the least fatigue, that is, avoiding the hills and rough places that may have intervened. Wherever possible that course was no doubt followed.

In the course of time, however, as settlements were formed in various localities and mills were built here and there, that course was no longer possible, and we consequently find that all, or nearly all, the petitions for the laying out of roads in the Road Docket of the Court of Quarter Sessions between 1740 and 1775 ask for these conveniences to enable the people to more easily reach "mill and market." But horses were not numerous in these early days, and mere bridle paths were sufficient for a long time, and grain and grist was in most cases carried to and from the mills and to market on horseback. Prior to 1720, and considerably later in some localities, farmers from three to six at a time were accustomed to carry

their grain to the mills on the Brandywine and bring back the meal. But with the more general introduction of beasts of burden, horses and oxen, came also the large farm wagons and other wheeled conveyances. These required something better than bridle paths. Traffic between the settlements and throughout the country and with the county metropolis was increasing rapidly and the era of better highways came along. At almost every session of the Quarter Sessions Court petitions for roads were presented. From 1729 until 1775 fully one hundred and fifty of these petitions were acted upon.

The King's Highway.

At the Board of Councils held at Philadelphia on January 29, 1730, a petition was presented by "the magistrates, grand jury and other inhabitants of Lancaster county, setting forth that not having the conveniences of any navigable water for bringing the produce of their labors to Philadelphia, they were obliged, at a great expense, to transport them by land carriage, which became heavier through the want of suitable roads for carriages to pass. That there are no public roads leading to Philadelphia yet laid out through their county, and those in Chester county through which they now pass, are in many places incommodious. And therefore praying that proper persons may be appointed to view and lay out a road for public service, from the town of Lancaster, till it falls in with the high road in the county of Chester, leading to the ferry of Schuylkill, at High street, and that a review may be had of the said public road in the county of Chester; the prayer of which petition being granted:

"It is ordered that Thomas Edwards, Edward Smout, Robert Barber, Hans Graaf, Caleb Pierce, Samuel Jones and Andrew Cornish, of the county of Lancaster, or any five of them, view and lay out by course and distance, a convenient high road from the said town of Lancaster; and that Thomas Green, George Aston, William Paschal, Richard Buffington, William March, Samuel Miller and Robert Parke, of the County of Chester, or any five of them, in continuing to lay out as aforesaid, the said road from the division line aforesaid until it falls in with the King's high road in the county of Chester, leading to Philadelphia, and make return thereof to this board. And they, the above named persons in the county of Lancaster, or any five of them, together with the above named persons in the county of Chester, or any five of them, are further empowered jointly to review the said road within the last mentioned county, and to report to this board what alterations may be necessary to be made therein, and suit the convenience of carriages, and for the better accommodation of the inhabitants of this province."

The persons named in the preceding order of the board went to work at the task assigned to them, and on October 4, 1733, reported that they had attended to the same. Their report was approved and confirmed, and then "The courts ordered, the Governor and council having certified the same, that the respective supervisors open and clear the King's road leading from Lancaster to Philadelphia; to clear the same on the north side of the marked trees, at least thirty feet wide, and grub the underwood at least fifteen feet of the said space on the north side of the marked trees,

and make necessary bridges over swamps so as to render the same safe and passable for horse and wagon."

That was the first of the important highways laid out in this county. Others of hardly less importance to the inhabitants quickly followed. As early as November, 1730, we find that "a petition was presented to the Court by divers citizens, setting forth the need of a highway through Hempfield township, from the first unsurveyed land near Susquehannah, to Christian Stoneman, his mill, and from the said mill to Daniel Cookson's at the head of the Pequea." The road from Conestoga to Paxtang was also laid out in 1731 or 1732.

The Lancaster and Philadelphia Turnpike.

From that time onward the multiplication of roads all over this county proceeded rapidly. The rapid settlement of the county rendered this a necessity. But it must not be forgotten that all these roads were what is now called dirt roads, as distinguished from State or Macadam ones, which came along later. The first turnpike in the county and the first one in the United States was what has always been known as the "Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike." That road was built by a company that was chartered by the General Assembly of the State on April 9, 1792. It was not a State road, as many believe, but was the result of private enterprise, ten persons being the incorporators, of whom five were from Lancaster county; the latter were General Edward Hand, Matthias Slauch, John Hubley, Paul Zantzinger and Abraham Witmer. The original capital authorized was \$300,000, but that was found insufficient, the road having cost when

finished \$465,000, or \$7,500 per mile. This road has been the subject of three papers read before our Society, and therefore requires no further mention here. I have mentioned it only now as marking the commencement of the era of turnpike building in this county, and the country at large.

A New Highway Called For.

The foregoing brief account of the early road making has been prepared as introductory to an attempt made by the people of this city and county in 1770 to have a new King's highway built between Lancaster and Philadelphia, by a shorter and better route than the then existing one, which, owing to its having been badly located in the first place and not having been kept in good repair, had, according to the petitioners, become almost impassable. During a business visit to the archives department of the State Library at Harrisburg a few weeks ago, my attention was called by Mr. Luther R. Kelker, the archivist, to a document of prodigious size, which had lately been found and renovated. The original was almost four feet long and two feet wide. During the 136 years it had lain in the archives and from the rough treatment it had no doubt met, having been stowed away in all manner of recesses and corners, it was worn through along its many creases and seemed in the last stages of dilapidation. But under the careful processes which all the old manuscripts are now undergoing under the authority of the Archives Commission, of which Mr. Kelker is the director in charge, and owing to the deft manipulation of some of the female help employed in this work, the ancient document has taken on a

new lease of life and looks respectable in spite of the many mendings it has received.

This document, upon examination, I find, as already stated, to be a petition signed by 155 prominent citizens of Lancaster city and county for a public highway eastward from Lancaster. It was wholly new to me, and no reference is made to it by the writers of any of our local histories, it having evidently been unknown to all of them. I thought it of sufficient interest to have a copy made of it for presentation to our Society, which was done by Mr. Kelker, he having refused all compensation for the work. About one-third of the names to the petition were written in German, and these were also Englished that they might be intelligible to every reader.

The petition states that it was laid before the Governor and Council on September 10, 1770. I have carefully examined the colonial records, the first series of archives and the messages of the then Governor, John Penn, without finding even a trace of the petition. Was it favorably or unfavorably acted upon? I do not know. It must be kept in mind that this projected new highway was asked for thirty-six years after the previous one between the two places had been built. During that interval the trade by wagon between Lancaster and Philadelphia had increased to a wonderful extent.

The Petition.

“To the Honorable John Penn Esquire Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Pennsylvania and counties of New Castle, Kent and Sussex on Delaware, and his Honorable Council—

The Petition of divers Inhabitants

of the County of Lancaster Humbly
Sheweth

That the great Road from the upper parts of the said County, especially, from the Borough of Lancaster, to Philadelphia, is by the constant use of it with heavy Loaded Carriages, and by its being laid in many places on very bad ground, now rendered almost impassable, and is attended in many parts of it with such Danger and Difficulty, that the Waggoners in many seasons are under the necessity, when heavy loaded, to, or from the Philadelphia Market, of traveling in Parties, that they may afford each other Assistance—

That notwithstanding the great Labor, Care and Expense used in repairing the said road, it is constantly in bad Order: and as the Trade & Commerce of the Province increases, & it is more used by heavy carriages will be still more troublesome and difficult—

“That another Road upon better Ground, and nearer by some Miles, may be had, and is now absolutely necessary for the accommodation of the back inhabitants of the said County in their Commercial intercourse with the City of Philadelphia— The want of a good Road seems to threaten a diversion of the valuable trade of this County or some parts of it, to other places; and now, not only, actually prevents many Farmers from attending the City markets; but puts them under the disagreeable necessity of trusting and giving Commissions to others to carry the produce of their Farms to market, by which, many have suffered greatly: Whereas were the Roads good and safe, their own horses & Carriages might be employed for that purpose, and would take back for them Salt & other Articles

for their home consumption, which they could purchase most reasonably in the City—

“That a King’s Highway or Public Road hath lately been laid out by order of the Governor and Council, from the Middle Ferri on Schuykill to the Sign of the Ship in Chester county; & from thence along or near the old Gap-Road as far as the Village of Strasburg in Lancaster county— This road, your petitioners beg leave to say, is laid out on much better ground than the old Road, is some miles shorter & your Petitioners conceive is the best, straitest and most convenient Road for the back Inhabitants; and will be of Great Utility to the Trade of Philadelphia. The Inhabitants of Lancaster; and such as shall chose to pass through that Town, from the remote parts of the Province, will have an easy road from thence to the said Public Road, whereby they will shun eight or ten Miles of Hills & bad ground, which are upon the old Road between the Town and the Sign of the Ship; and those whom it may best Suit to take the back Road, from Harris’s by the Dunker Town (Ephrata), formerly called Peter’s Road, may enter into the Said new laid out Road, near the North Branch of Brandywine Creek & by that means have an easy, safe & shorter Carriage from thence to Philadelphia—

“Your Petitioners therefore pray the Honourable, the Governor & Council, to take the Premises into Consideration, and, as the said New Road seems to have been laid out Chiefly with design to encourage and Secure the Trade of the Inhabitants of the interior parts of the Province to the City of Philadelphia, & is the best Road yet pointed out for that purpose,

to confirm the said New-laid out Road as a King's Highway or Public Road and to order that the same may be forthwith opened and closed;—

“And your petitioners will pray, etc

The Signers.

“ JOHANNES MILLER
MARTIN MILLER
HENRICH KINDIG
GEORGE DOSH
JACOB RUBLE
JOHANES WURMLE
JOSEPH BRUCHBAKER
DAVID KINPORT
JAMES WRIGHT
SAMUEL BARR
SEBASTIAN GRAFF
JOHN SMITH
ABRAHAM HESS
MATTHIAS GRAFF
PETER FARNEY
ABRAHAM NEWCOMER
LENHART BENDER
JACOB BEISS
JACOB MUMERT
CHRISTIAN STAUFFER
JACOB MEIER
CHRISTIAN STAUFFER
RUDY HERR
MICHAEL SCHAUCK
JACOB BEYER
JOHN CARPENTER
JOHN HERR SR.
JOHN WITMER JUR.
BERNHART ESCHLYMAN
CRISTLI SCHENCK
VALENTIN BRENNOISER
HENRY BOWMAN
GEO. LEONARD
JACOB BEAR
ABRAHAM HEIR
JAMES OLD
JOHN SCHNABELE
PETER HOFFNAGLE
JOHANNES BORCKHALDER
JACOB CARPENTER
EM'L CARPENTER JUNR.
MARTIN MEYER
FRANCIS LEECH
JOHANNES _____
ROBERT CUNNINGHAM MILLER
ANDREAS KUFFMAN
MATTHIAS SLOUGH
WM. ROSS
MICHAEL GROSS
JACOB DUNDORE
JACOB ENCK
JOHANNES ENCK
JACOB MILLER
JACOB CARPENTER
JOHN BRACKBILL
HANNES SINTZENIG
CHARLES PHILLIPS
JOHN HOUSENBERG
JOHN WALTER
JOHN FEREE

HENRICH MATTES
HENRICH NEFF
NICHOLAS STOFFER
JACOB SHEITS
ABRAHAM BUETSCH
JOHN MILLER
JOHN MILLER JUNIOR
JACOB KINDRICK
MARTIN KINDRICK
HENRY WEAVER
JOHN WHITE
HANNES HARNISS
CHRISTIAN MARTY
CHRISTIAN YORDE
EMANUEL KARL
MICHAEL GREITER
JOSEPH HAINS
SAMUEL MILLER
CHRISTIAN CARPENTER
THOS SLECHER
CHRISTIAN NESSELBROOD
HANNES BRUCHBAKER
JOHN BOWMAN
GEORGE WITHER
JOHN WITHER
MATHDES MILLER
CHRISTIAN HARE
ABRAHAM HERR
GEORG STREIN
CHRISTIAN WENDITZ
THO. BARTON
WILL ATTLEE
CHRISTIAN VOGHT
JOHN HOPSON
GEO. MOYER
JOHN FELTMAN
LUDWIG LAUMAN
CHRISTIAN BUCH
CAS. SHAFFNER JN.
LODWICK STONE
FRED STONE
GEORGE EBERLY
ADAM REIGART
CASPAR SHAFFNER
PETER SHAFFNER
MICHAEL FORDINE
GEORGE BETZ
WILLIAM WHITE
SAML. BOYD
CHAS. HALL
WILTON ATKINSON
CHARLES KLUG
BARD HUBLEY
DANL. FRANK
CHRISTOPH _____
PHILIP FRICK
WILLIAM BAUSMAN
A. HUBLEY
JOHN STONE
MATTHIAS DEHUFF
BENJAMIN POULTNEY
JOSEPH SIMON
JOSEPH DAVIES
ISAAC SOLOMON
JOHN HENRY
MARTIN BAUMAN
EBERHART MICHAEL
WILLIAM BUSCH
ARNOLD BOMBARGER
HENRY DEHUFF

DAVIETT TRESLER
 FELLIX McCOWAN
 GEORGE BURCKHURST
 ANTHONY SNYDER
 SIMON SCHNEIDER
 EDWD. SHIPPEN
 WILLIAM HENRY
 JAS. BICKHAM
 ADAM SIMON KUHN
 EVERHARD GRUBER
 EMANUEL CARPENTER
 JAMES BURD
 ISAAC SANDERS
 ROBT. BOYD
 J. P. DE HAAS
 ZAECHUS DAVIS
 JAS. WORK
 ALEXDR. LOWREY FORESMAN
 PETER GRUBB
 NICKL. HAUSSEGGER
 ————— HUTTENSTEIN
 MARTIN SCHULL
 NICKLAUS JOB
 DANIEL KINPORT
 JACOB SHAFFER
 JACOB FETTER."

The Prominent Men in the Community

The chief interest in this old petition, after all, lies in the names that are signed to it. It will be observed that among them are those of the most prominent men in the borough and county at that time and during the remaining years of the eighteenth century. Many of them became the local leaders during the struggle with the Mother Country that came on soon after. An interesting article could be written by singling out a dozen or more of the names set down, and presenting brief sketches of the careers of their owners.

They were the men who were foremost in every public enterprise, men to whom Lancaster city and county owe much of the early and later importance they have attained. A few prominent names, it will be observed, are absent. Judge Jasper Yeates, of the Supreme Bench; General Edward Hand, the gallant soldier; George Ross, the signer; William Webb and Caleb Cope, the prominent Quakers; Paul Zantzinger, the merchant, and

others. One cannot but wonder why their signatures are absent. But the others were for the most part representative men; men of education and culture. Thirteen of them were among the incorporators of the Juliana Library; fifteen or more were at various times associated with the borough government as Burgesses and Assistant Burgesses. The man would have plenty to do who should take it upon himself to prepare biographical sketches of Judge Atlee, of Parson Barton, William Bausman, Edward Hand, the worthy scion of an illustrious house; William Henry, merchant, patriot, soldier, skillful artisan and useful citizen; the Hubleys, soldiers, and ever true to their trusts; Joseph Simon, richest of all the Indian traders; the Shaffners, good men and true; Col Slough, prominent in all public affairs; the Neffs and the Kuhns, our early doctors; the Carpenters, a goodly list, with that excellent man, Emanuel Carpenter, at the head; the Graffs, than whom none are better known; Alexander Lowrey, Col. Peter Grubb, Col. Philip de Haas, John Hopson, Zaecheus Davis, and, last of all, Col. Nicholas Hoosacker, the soldier of fortune, who deserted the patriot cause, and, with several officers and twenty soldiers, joined the British forces at the battle of Princeton.

All in all, I question whether there is another local document extant that has the signatures of so many notable men attached to it.

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