

John Vogan Founder of Voganville.

BY H. M. HOFFMAN.

In the township of Earl, at the western side of said district, is located the village of Voganville, a hamlet sequestered, and isolated from trolley lines, railroads or modern macadamized highways; yet within close proximity to this village was born a man whose life is full of history and importance to mankind—John Vogan, born on March 22, 1782. His parents emigrated from Ireland, from the County of Caven on the Emerald Isle. His father was James Vogan, born in 1744, about the time of the outbreak of King George's War with our colonies, and his mother, Margaret, was born in 1752, not far from where her spouse was born or about the time when the French were contemplating drawing a line of forts along the Ohio to confine the English to the country east of the Alleghenies. Mr. Vogan erected the first house in this town in 1839 during Martin Van Buren's administration. Some part of the original building is still standing at the southeast corner in the center of the town. To beautify his lawn he planted a walnut tree there, which tree has grown quite large and is still standing. Mr. Vogan was not inclined matrimonially and consequently was never married.

Several years after the erection of this primitive house which was a frame one, he established a brick yard on his farm east of the town where bricks were made with a single mould and by hand and burnt in the kiln by wood. These bricks were carried by boys singly and laid in the sun to dry temporarily before being placed in the oven to burn. Of these bricks Mr. Vogan erected about half the houses of the town, generally superintending the work of construction himself. Later on he disposed of the buildings or rented them at a reasonable profit, thus starting the foundation of his accumulation of wealth in later years. He was in the real estate business of some magnitude and owned hundreds of acres of land in this part of the county. His holdings later on extended to West Earl, Ephrata, East Earl, and East Cocalico townships; he also owned a number of properties in Lancaster and Philadelphia. He used good judgment and business tact in buying this real estate which consequently enhanced his profit in disposing of his property. His life was characterized by eleemosynary propensities, which he emphasized shortly before his death in his last will and testament which contains forty-five different bequests. From his servants he never exacted any strenuous labors and remembered every one of them substantially at his death. The most prominent bequest he made, and one that is a standing monument to his memory and life, is a substantial sum of money left in trust, the interest to be appropriated annually for the purchase of coal for the poor and indigent of Voganville. This bequest can be found in his will, recorded in the Register's' Office of Lancaster County in Record Book of Wills.

Volume X, at page 575, and the fifth item. His will has been strictly adhered to in this respect, and during some of these intervening years since 1863, the interest on the fund which he provided had not all been used, owing to varying circumstances connected with the families of this town; consequently this excess of interest has been added to the principal, which today has trebled in amount; aggregating a neat and substantial fund for this useful purpose, for a small village like Voganville. We doubt if there is any other town in the county that has a similar charity compared to the size of this town; and many poor families should be imbued with a true spirit of gratitude and love while sitting by their warm fireside so comfortable through the charitable disposition of our venerable friend, the subject of this sketch. Through his generosity it was made possible to erect the "Union Church" at this place notwithstanding he never had connected himself with any religious sect. He also contributed to the financial aid of the Groffdale Mennonite Church, an old stone building since replaced by a modern church edifice near the site of the settlement many years ago by Hans Graef. From a dozen to fifteen families receive their coal from the fund provided by Mr. Vogan.

Several years ago the Post Office Department decided to discontinue the post office at this place, contending that all the patrons could easily be served by an R. D. route and had actually posted up a placard in the office the latter part of June stating that the office would be discontinued on the first of July, which was a comparatively short time to make any effort to restrain the postal authorities from so doing. But the writer of this sketch being desirous of retaining the history and memory of its founder, drew up a petition several days prior, praying the postal authorities to retain the office, if for no other purpose than not to distract any reminiscence from such a public spirited benefactor. A copy of this petition was mailed to Washington, and another copy given to our worthy Congressman, Hon. W. W. Griest, who through his kind efforts, and intervention saved the day, and the little post office named after the founder of the town is still on the map. Politically our worthy friend was a staunch Republican, and cast his initial ballot for Thomas Jefferson, and his last vote was for our martyred President, Abraham Lincoln. He never aspired to any office, although frequently tendered the support of his friends to this effect, rather preferring the life of a retired yeoman, taking great pride in his old "Conestoga" wagon with a selected team of six well-trying steeds, one of which teams was found on every one of his farms and all of which made periodical trips to Philadelphia to convey different agricultural products from the garden spot to the metropolis of the state. During his illness, which lasted only some few days, in 1863, when the Civil War between North and South was at its height in our country, he expressed the desire to see slavery forever obliterated from our country, but the grim reaper claimed him as a victim and called him hence before his wish was realized. The town and the community lost in him a good, true and benevolent man; a man whose kind and charitable disposition is realized substantially every year and whose benevolent bequest will forever remain a lasting monument to his memory.

The data and history above set out are correct, and authentic, as the writer gained his knowledge of them from his father, who was a close friend

of the subject of our sketch and had many pleasing and domestic episodes with Mr. Vogan, and, by the way, lived in the first house Mr. Vogan erected in the village. Squire C. S. Hoffman executed the will of the departed philanthropist, and did all his legal business locally, for many years.

A prominent monument in the Union Cemetery towering above all the others in Voganville, marks the last resting place of this beloved man.

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