

Wagon Loads of Gold in Lancaster

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

THE late William Uhler Hensel, a former vice-president of our Lancaster County Historical Society, and widely known as a leader of the Lancaster bar, would, when in a reminiscent mood, often sigh for "the days of yore, when taverns were known by the good old names and kept by people of the best social rank."

If many of us could have the fulfilment of our desires, perhaps we would restore the old days when Lancaster was the Eldorado of our great State of Pennsylvania, and gold and silver money was so plentiful that it was hauled through the streets of the borough in wagons. Now, doubtless, this statement about the gold and silver will startle the sober-minded members of this honourable Society who are assembled here this evening, and will recall to their thoughts the famous stories of Baron Munchausen (Mun-chau'-sen), nevertheless, the statement is true, if we are to believe the following news item, which appeared in the Lancaster Journal of Thursday, May 5th, 1813:

"Yesterday passed through Lancaster, seven or eight wagon loads of silver and gold, amounting to three hundred and fifty thousand dollars. This money is to go to the state of Ohio, to pay and provide for our Northwestern army. This makes about seven hundred thousand dollars, that have passed through Lancaster for the support of our unprofitable war. The money, to be sure, is all borrowed; but it must be repaid some time; and then our farmers and mechanics will be better able to count the cost."

Thomas Ashe in Lancaster

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IN the Library of Congress is an old and interesting book on travel in the United States. The work, in three volumes, was printed in 1808, in London, for Richard Phillips, Bridge street, by John Abraham, Clement's lane. It describes a journey, in 1806, by Thomas Ashe, Esq., presumably an Englishman, "performed," as stated on the title page, "for the purpose of exploring the rivers Alleghany, Monongahela, Ohio and Mississippi, and ascertaining the produce and condition of their banks and vicinity."

In a letter, dated "Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, October, 1806," Mr. Ashe writes:

"The town of Pittsburg is distant rather more than 300 miles from Philadelphia: of which space, 150 miles are a continued succession of mountains, serving as a barrier against contending seas, and as a pregnant source of many waters, which take opposite directions, and after fertilizing endless tracts, and enriching various countries, are lost in the immensity of the Mexican Gulf and the Atlantic Ocean. Knowing the road to be mountainous and stony, I preferred travelling on horseback to going in a stage-coach that is seven or eight days on the road; and the fare in which, for the whole journey, is twenty-four dollars. The first sixty miles were a turnpike road; and my horse, which cost me only eighty dollars, arrived tolerably fresh at the end of them in twelve hours.

"The place at which I stopped was Lancaster, the county-town of [Lancaster county] Pennsylvania. The inhabitants are chiefly Dutch and Irish, or of Dutch and Irish extraction: they manufacture excellent rifle-guns and other hardware. The town is large, clean and well-built; but in spite of these attractions, I quitted it the next morning by sun-rise. Dr. Johnson was never more solicitous to leave Scotland, than I was to be out of the Atlantic States.

"In hurrying along the next day, my career was interrupted by the rapid Susquehanna. The peevishness and dissatisfaction which before possessed me were now compelled to yield to contrary sensations. The breadth and beauty of the river, the height and grandeur of its banks, the variation of scenery the verdure of the forests, the murmur of the water, and the melody of birds all conspired to fill my mind with vast and elevated conceptions."

On leaving Lancaster, Mr. Ashe proceeded toward Harrisburg. He states that he did not stop there.

Matthew Clarkson in Lancaster

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MATTHEW CLARKSON, who passed through Lancaster borough in the summer of 1766, was a son of Matthew and Cornelia De Peyster Clarkson. He was born in New York city, April 15th, 1733. On June 13th, 1753, at the age of twenty, he was married to Mary, daughter of Thomas and Sarah Boude. Matthew Clarkson was an uncle of the Rev. Joseph Clarkson, rector of Saint James's Protestant Episcopal church, Lancaster, from 1799 to 1830.

Early in life he was engaged in mercantile business in Philadelphia. In 1766, he was connected with the house of Baynton, Wharton and Morgan. In that year he went, in the interest of the firm (which, it is presumed, constituted, in whole or in part, what he calls "the company") to explore the prospects of the openings for trade on the Ohio, and the regions of the new West.

Mr. Clarkson made the journey from Philadelphia to Fort Pitt, or Duquesne, on horseback. From the hasty journal kept by him on the way, it is possible to construct a narrative which cannot be read without interest and instruction. The diary, edited by his great grandson, John Hall, was published in 1890, under the title, "Memoirs of Matthew Clarkson of Philadelphia."

On Wednesday, August 6th, 1766, Mr. Clarkson, with a servant, left Philadelphia before seven in the morning. He was accompanied, as far as "the ferry," (Gray's), by Mr. Robert Levers. Soon after taking leave of his companion, he met a wagon loaded with skins from the Indian country; and at the Spread Eagle tavern found another with a load of pork for the garrison at Fort Pitt. Later, he met three more on the way from the fort with skins for Dr. Bond, in Philadelphia. At noon he dined at George Ashton's (Admiral Warren hotel), which, he states, was twenty-three miles from Philadelphia. "Met a load of skins from Virginia; overtook our four Germantown wagons, and lodged at the Ship, thirty-five miles. Next morning breakfasted at Miller's [Compassville, Chester county, Pa.], forty-seven miles; met three loads of skins from the fort for Baynton & Co.; stopped at the Duke of Cumberland [$\frac{1}{4}$ mile east of Leacock Presbyterian church, Lancaster county, Pa.], fifty-seven miles."

That night he lodged at his kinsman's, Joseph Boude, in Lancaster. On August 8th he crossed the Susquehanna at Wright's Ferry, now Columbia, and at sundown reached Greber's, at York.

On the evening of August 18th, 1766, he arrived at Fort Pitt.

On April 16th, 1792, Matthew Clarkson was chosen mayor of Philadelphia, and was re-elected annually three times.

He died in Philadelphia, October 5th, 1800, in the 67th year of his age. He was buried in Christ Church graveyard at Fifth and Arch streets.