

OLD PENNSYLVANIA MILESTONES.

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[A paper read before the Pennsylvania Society of Colonial Dames of America.]

On the King's Highway or "Old Road," and on the Lancaster and Philadelphia "Pike," in my childhood days I travelled in summer's heat and winter's cold. Once a week we drove to Harmony Hall, my maternal grandmother's country place, nine miles from Lancaster, and on Sunday afternoons with my father to Carpenter Hall, twelve miles, the home place of his mother. The memory of the milestones comes back to me, and how my brothers and I never tired counting them, or when cold or weary with the drive, we could always be amused by looking out for the next one. They bring back so many happy recollections that they seem like the friends of my early life.

Two years ago the electric road was built from Lancaster to Christiana. From the car window I observed the improvements, freshly painted houses and barns, gardens and lawns well kept, flowers blooming everywhere. Improvement seemed to be the order of the day; only in the old milestones were the lines of the beautiful hymn verified: "Change and decay in all around I see." The wish was suggested that the Pennsylvania Society of the Colonial Dames of America should care for them. And now I can say with pleasure that the Society has restored these ancient landmarks on two of the oldest roads in the United States.

One mile from Lancaster is Witmer's Bridge, which spans the Conestoga Creek. The road there forks; to the right is the Philadelphia and Lancaster pike; to the left the "King's Highway" authorized in 1730.

Indian trails were the first highways known in this country. Generally speaking, they were along not only the

easiest routes, but the shortest. Of this the early settlers were not slow to take advantage; many of the earliest roads located by the whites being over the old Indian paths. As the necessities of the pioneers demanded more means of easy communication, they were compelled to depart from that early plan, and the road system was gradually broadened, mills and business places having become objective points. But while these answered for local uses, the need of highways between cities and towns remote from each other became apparent. The King's Highway, authorized in 1730, was laid out, upon the petition of the people of Lancaster County, for a distance of thirty odd miles, until it reached a like road in Chester County, which ran all the way to the Schuylkill at Philadelphia. Sixty years later came the famous Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike; but, unlike the earlier King's Highway, it was built by private enterprise. It has the distinction of being the first macadamized road built in the United States. These roads were of incalculable benefit to the people in Pennsylvania, and assisted very effectively in hastening its material development. For the building of this turnpike the books were opened at the State House in June, 1792, and kept open until midnight, when it was found that 2,276 shares had been subscribed for. Each subscriber paid down \$30 on each share, their names were then put into a wheel, and 600 drawn to form the company. The commissioners appointed to receive the names of subscribers were: Elliston Perot, Henry Drinker, Jr.; Owen Jones, Jr.; Israel Whelen, and Cadwallader Evans, of Philadelphia; Edward Hand, John Hubley, Paul Zantzinger, Matthias Slough, and Abraham Witmer, of Lancaster. Shares were to be \$300 each. The business men of that day were so impressed with the value of canals and turnpikes as a means of communication that Elliston Perot, in his will, advised his executors to invest his money in turnpike and canal stocks.

Hand-boards were required to be put up at all points where the turnpike intersected cross roads, giving the names

and distances of the places to which such roads led. Milestones were also required to be placed on the north side of the road, beginning one mile west of the Schuylkill, and extending thence to the borough of Lancaster, on which the distance from the west bounds of Philadelphia was marked.

The original road-bed was not a complete success; it was, however, so well constructed on the macadam plan that Francis Baily, in his *Journal of a Tour in North America*, 1796, wrote: "There is at present but one turnpike road on the continent, which is between Lancaster and Philadelphia, a distance of sixty-six miles, and is a masterpiece of its kind. It is paved with stone the whole way and overlaid with gravel, so that it is never obstructed during the most severe season." Toll-gates were placed on the road, the first one two miles west of the Schuylkill River [at Forty-first Street]; the ninth one at Witmer's Bridge. A system of collecting was published, giving the amount of toll per mile for passing over the pike. The size of the wheels and the amount of weight to be carried were also controlled between December first and May first. "Nor shall more than eight horses be attached to any carriage whatsoever used on said road, and if any wagon or other carriage shall be drawn along said road by a greater number of horses or with a greater weight ($3\frac{1}{2}$ or 4 tons) than is hereby permitted, one of the horses attached thereto shall be forfeited to the use of said company, to be seized or taken by any of their officers or servants, who shall have the privilege to choose which of said horses they may think proper, excepting the shaft or wheel horse or horses." The freight was packed and carried in old Conestoga wagons; on the rear was suspended the trough carrying the feed, the water-bucket and tar-can swinging underneath. Many a traveller has earned a seat on the wagon and a share of the wagoner's mattress at night on the floor of a tavern, by attending to the lock and brake. One writer says he was told by one of the wealthiest ironmasters of Pittsburgh that he arrived in that city on a load of salt, having attended to the brake from Philadelphia.

In the sixty-two miles from Philadelphia to Lancaster there were sixty-one taverns. They were of two distinct and separate classes, known as the stage and wagon taverns; to conduct one of the former required great capability. The proprietor had to be a man of intelligence, and a certain amount of culture, and like the Macgregor sat at the head of his table. The position was filled in many cases by members of Congress, as well as State Representatives. The Comte de Segur said, in writing of his journey in America: "At first I was surprised, on entering a tavern, to find it kept by a Captain, a Major, or a Colonel, who was equally ready to talk, and to talk well, about his campaigns, his farming operations or the market he had for his produce." It was considered a lasting disgrace for one of the stage taverns to entertain a wagoner, and the tavern would be sure to lose the patronage of the better class of travel should the fact become known. In Paradise, ten miles east of Lancaster, at a time when the traffic was unusually heavy and all the wagon taverns were full, a wagoner applied to the proprietor of the stage tavern for shelter and refreshment; after a great deal of consideration on his part and persuasion on the part of the wagoner he consented, provided the wagoner would take his departure early in the morning, before there was any likelihood of aristocratic arrivals, or the coming of the stage. As soon as the wagoner had left, the hostlers and stable boys were put to work to clean up every vestige of straw or litter in front of the hotel, that would be an indication of having entertained a wagoner over night. A huge sign, swinging and creaking in the wind immediately in front of the hotel, bore a painted representation of the name by which the house was known. One sign on the King's Highway bore three crowns, and as Washington's army marched along the road, they riddled it with bullets.

Road making was not as expensive in those days as it is now. In 1793 unskilled labor was paid \$6 per month and board from May to November, and \$5 from November to May.

A wagoner, next to a stage-coach driver, was a man of local importance, and they were inclined to be very clannish, and would unite to fight landlord, stage-driver or coachman who might cross their path.

When taking up the pleasant duty of restoring the mile-stones, a toll-gate keeper on the pike, S. P. Gibbons by name, was recommended to me, to do the work. Many of the stones were buried to within a foot of their top; some were leaning at an angle of forty-five degrees; while others were almost flat. They are made of soft stone not unlike the sandstone of the Lebanon Hills; consequently the weather had obliterated the markings on many of them, but enough of the original figures could be seen to establish the mileage both ways. Those which had fallen over were reset; where broken off, a hole three and a half feet deep was dug, filled with broken stones and cement, and the stone set in that mixture, forming, when dry, a substance as firm as a rock. Gasoline or coal oil was poured over the stone; it was then scrubbed, which brought out illegible cutting, making it easier for the man to cut the old marking deeper.

Two of these stones are within the city limits of Lancaster, one in West King Street marked "63 M to P—10 M to C," meaning 63 miles to Philadelphia, 10 miles to Columbia. The other is in front of the Lancaster County Prison. Both of these are in good condition, needing only scrubbing and recutting. It is from this prison stone that the mileage to Lancaster is computed from Philadelphia. One mile east of the prison stone, in the middle of Witmer's Bridge, the milestone is built under the marble tablet to Abraham Witmer; it is laid sideways, and on it is: "61 M to P." The twelfth, sixteenth and seventeenth milestones to Lancaster have not been found. One stone was discovered in a field, the farmer having moved his fence to take in several feet of the road. The first three stones out of Lancaster to Columbia were in rather good condition. The top of one was broken off, but was banded together with iron. The other six stones were all broken off, and reset with stone and

cement; the tenth stone, just outside of Columbia, cannot be found. All the stones have been recut over the original marking.

From the Chester County line to Columbia, on the Susquehanna River, the stones except the four missing ones are all in place, reset and marked, on the north side of the road; the thirteenth stone from Lancaster, however, is on the south side.

At Paradise, where of all places misrepresentation should not occur, an artist with good intentions, but lack of knowledge, painted the ancient markings of the stone, but mistaking the three for a five, the stone reads 55 instead of 53 M to P. In the new deeper cutting the mistake has been rectified as well as possible.

On the King's Highway there are very few stones remaining; and in appearance they are more antique than those on the Philadelphia turnpike. There are but two left between Lancaster and the village of Intercourse, both of which have been straightened and recut. A most interesting stone stands west of Bird-in-Hand, on the King's Highway, the cutting almost obliterated. It marks the boundary between townships; stands higher than the milestone, and is narrower.

There is a stone, east of Intercourse, "55 M to P—11 M to L," and one mile beyond, "54 M to P—12 M to L." Many stones east of these two could not be found, so I determined to search for myself. At the first stone east of Intercourse we tied a long white streamer to the tire and one spoke of the wheel. My companion said, "You cannot speak until we reach the next milestone; each revolution of the wheel must be counted by the white streamer." The wheel made 470 revolutions from stone to stone. Silence reigned, until again there were 470 revolutions, 53 M to P—13 M to L, but the stone we looked for could not be found. Again we counted the white streamer 470 times, which brought us to 52 M to P—14 M to L. A thorough search showed no trace of it. The man, opposite whose

house it had stood, told us he had not seen it for many years. Silence again, and the monotonous count commenced, but the stone which should have been 51 M to P—15 M to L was also gone. We were assured that the stone 50 M to P—16 M to L could not be found, and had not been seen for years, but this assurance did not daunt us. Again the counting, again the search, when reward came, in the stone, broken off, top pointed, only about a foot from the ground, only one-third the width, and some of the marking plainly visible.

Again silence, and counting, but at the end of the 470 revolutions no sign of the hunted for milestone. Driving about 600 yards we found the stone had been broken off at the ground. A Mr. Sweigart had had it carried the 600 yards and laid it against his barn to protect it. It has been restored to its old-time place, and made sound by cement and stones. The next one, 48 M to P—18 M to L, has been taken for a door-sill in a neighboring house. I have, however, the promise that this will be restored to its original place.

The next one and the last in Lancaster County, 47 M to P—19 M to L, stood at Mr. Arthur Burt's "Waterloo Farms." Mr. Burt wrote me that since the farms had come into his possession he had never seen the stone. Many years ago there was a new survey of the King's Highway making the road pass in front of the barn at "Waterloo Farms," instead of in the rear. The old inhabitants think, after the survey, the road was ploughed and put into a field, and that the milestone was not removed to the new road; probably it was broken off or broken into small stones.

There are ten milestones between the west end of Coatesville Bridge, over the Brandywine, and the Lancaster County line. The one in Coatesville is in good condition, the marking plain; 37 M to P standing in pretty good condition, marking not legible; 39 M to P marking plain; 40 M to P not legible; iron bound, back a few feet from road fence in a field; 41 M to P not legible; 42 M to P almost obliterated;

43 M to P good in every way; 44 M to P quite plain; 45 M to P not found. If in place this last stone should be in Lancaster County, about one fourth of a mile from the Chester County border. The Strasburg Turnpike is also an old pike with milestones on it.

The Ephrata and Harrisburg Turnpike crosses the southern corner of Lebanon County. This road, made many years since, was once a great thoroughfare over the mountains, and is furnished with milestones marked so many miles to Philadelphia and so many miles to T., the latter signifying the Tuscarora mountain, west of the Susquehanna. Judge Frankes used to tell a story of his asking a brother Judge for what the *T* stood. He replied quite in earnest, "So many miles to Towningtown," meaning Downingtown, in Chester County.

The boundary line between Pennsylvania and Maryland is marked by stones by the agreement of the proprietaries. Every five miles a large stone was set up or planted, on the respective sides of which were graven their arms—Penn's arms on the northern side, Calvert's on the southern side—and between the larger stones smaller ones were set, with the letters P. and M. on the respective sides. It is an established fact that, from the very earliest days of our country, milestones were used.

These old roads abound in reminiscences. The scenery is attractive; nowhere in the country are there more valuable or better cultivated farms. There are many old Colonial homes of the early settlers, which architecturally are beautiful, and the remains of some of the stables which housed the coaches and horses, each night of the going to and from Philadelphia, are to be seen.

On the King's Highway are three historic churches: Old Leacock Presbyterian Church, St. John's Church, Pequea, and Christ Church. In the God's Acres attached to them sleep many of the men and women who helped to make this land what it is: a possibility for themselves, and a blessed surety for their descendants.