The Indians had a village at Conestoga, in what is now Lancaster County, not far from the Susquehanna River. When they wanted for any reason to go to Coaquannock, at the site of Philadelphia, they followed the Conestoga Creek to its head-waters and thence crossing to the sources of the French Creek, went down this stream to its mouth, where is now the borough of Phoenixville. On the way they passed through the beautiful valley in which later was erected the forge for making iron called Coventry, the second if not the first in the province. The deposit of iron-ore at this place was discovered and pointed out to Samuel Nutt, the founder of the industry, by an Indian chief, and it is pleasing to know that Nutt, not ungrateful, gave to the daughter of the Indian an iron kettle for which he was charged 4s. 6d. At the point where the trail reached the river Schuylkill, and where many years afterward the British under Cornwallis, in the campaign of 1777, forced a passage of the stream, there was a ford long called by the settlers Indian Ford or Indiantown Ford, but to become famous at the time of the Revolution as Gordon’s Ford. To the region of country on the east side of the river extending as far southward as the Perkiomen, the Indians gave the euphonious name of Olethgo or Oletheho. In the sorry modern days, when men of enterprise and wealth in Philadelphia seek the relief of country life, they are carried out to the flat unwatered and unattractive lands along the main line of the Pennsylvania railroad, but in the early time, either more discerning or less subject to influence, they pushed their way northward and founded homes where be-
tween rugged hills, through green and fertile valleys, rapid and romantic streams empty their waters into the Schuylkill. Among these vigorous men was Joseph Richardson. On the second of June, 1710, he bought one thousand acres of alluvial land lying in the corner enclosed by the Schuylkill and the Perkiomen, and thereafter is described in the records, and described himself as Joseph Richardson, of Olethgo. He was the only son of Samuel Richardson, the first alderman of Philadelphia, member of the Court of Common Pleas, Provincial Councillor, and with the exception of Samuel Carpenter, the richest man in the city, owning all of the ground on the north side of Market Street from Second Street to the Delaware River. Joseph Richardson collected down to the time of his death, the ground rents upon this property which had been devised to him by his father. William Hudson, Mayor of the city, married his sister Mary. Abraham Bickley, whose warehouse is shown on Cooper’s Prospect of the Port of Philadelphia and from whom he bought the tract in Olethgo, married his sister Elizabeth. Edward Lane, who owned seventy-five hundred acres on the Perkiomen, where he built a mill and a tavern and founded St. James Episcopal Church, married his sister Ann, and doubtless he was influenced by the proximity of Lane, a personal friend of Penn, in making the purchase. When he married Elizabeth, daughter of John Bevan, June 29th, 1696, there was an elaborate settlement after the English fashion, on record in Philadelphia, in which his father gave him five hundred acres of land at Bristol, and her father gave her £200 as a marriage portion. While living on this tract at Bristol, he sent his four sons, Samuel, Aubrey, Edward and John to school to Francis Daniel Pastorius, and that learned scholar and famous colonist wrote in his book of accounts: “1712, 1 August Abre & Neddy to school at 4d. per week to the 3d day of November 104 days 8s 8d.” He was a Friend, very rigid in faith and observance. The minutes of Haverford Monthly Meeting in 1714 set forth: “friends inhabiting about Per-
quoming and this side of Schuylkill in ye Valley being desirous y a meeting might be allowed y every other mo. to be and begin att Lewis Walker's house the first in 2nd Mo. next and thence every other month at Joseph Richardson's house until ye 9th mo. next." When John Fothergill, the father of Dr. John Fothergill, the most famous physician of his time in London, travelled through the country in December of 1721, he said in his journal: "The 15th we went over to Perquiomon, where we had a good Meeting in a sense of the Prevalency of the Power of Truth. We lodged with Joseph Richardson in whose house we had a serviceable humbling season with his Family and some others, who came in that evening." Years later he was tempted and to some extent fell from grace. The fact is recorded on the 28th of 3d mo., 1745, in the following words: "Providence overseers acquaint this meeting that Joseph Richardson had given leave to the Priest to marry his Daughter contrary to the Discipline of Friends and he being present acknowledged his Transgression and was sorry for it, which was received." Happily for him the Meeting could be forgiving, as well as just in the rendition of judgment. Notwithstanding the strictness of his Quaker creed he had several controversies, one of which even John Cadwalader found it difficult to settle, and he wore on his coat silver buttons, some of them still preserved, on which were engraved the arms of the family. He owned ten negro slaves, Angola, Jack, Jack's wife, Cudgo, Edinborough, Solomon, Phillis, old Phillis, Betty, and Parthenia. These were not his only servants. We are told in the Pennsylvania Gazette for May 9th, 1733, published by Benjamin Franklin: "Run away the 6th. of this instant May from Joseph Richardson of Perkiomy in the Township of New Providence in the County of Philadelphia, a servant Man named William Brown alias William Darrell, aged 21 years, he is of a middle Stature, hollow eyed, large nose, down look, and very round shouldered, his Hair lately cut off; he had on when he went away a new Felt Hat, a close bodye Coat
and a great Coat of a lightish colour and brass Buttons, a Pair of Pumps with Peaked Toes; he took with him a large black Gelding branded with W. B. Paces well, shod all round, and took a man’s Saddle and Bridle, likewise a Small Trunk, having in it some Womens apparel viz. Some Handkerchiefs, Caps and a Black Padesway Hood and Six Shillings in Money. Whoever takes up said Servant and Horse and brings them to Joseph Richardson aforesaid or to George Emlen in Philadelphia or Secures them so as they may be had again shall have eight pounds as a Reward and reasonable Charges paid by me.

JOSEPH RICHARDSON.”

Fate has many anomalies and time brings many reverses. The descendants of the Norman dukes of the days of the Conquest have disappeared from the earth, and the descendants of the villeins and peasants own the land over which they held sway. The records of the past tell us with minute detail the features of the servants, but the faces of their masters have faded into obscurity. However, we know that Joseph Richardson, of Olethgo, when he went abroad rode a black branded horse whose gait was a pace and not a trot, that it was customary to shoe the horses that followed the woods paths only in front, that he wore boots with round toes and when he went home at nights he took them off and put on pumps with peaked toes, and that his wife wore caps, covered them with a black Padesway hood lest they be too conspicuous and that she used pocket handkerchiefs. It may be added that when she came to him she brought with her not only the £200 in money, but a pedigree that ran back into many a line of Bourbon and Plantagenet.

The great city, of perhaps ten thousand people, where his early days had been spent and where his ground rents matured, was twenty-four miles away. How did he get to it on his black horse? The purpose of this story, piecing together the facts which some old manuscripts have by a lucky chance preserved, is to tell the manner of his going.
Moses Coates, a Quaker, the first settler where is now Phoenixville, had made his home on the north bank of the French Creek near its mouth. Francis Buckwalter, a Swiss Mennonite, had taken up the extensive meadows in the great bend of the Schuylkill at what is called the Black Rock. Daniel Walker lived where the Valley Creek empties into the river and there, having learned to make iron at Coventry, he erected the forge to become so celebrated in the War of the Revolution. James Hamer, a Quaker, occupied the high ground back of the present village of Mont Clare. These persons together with Thomas Rees, Robert Thomas, Jonas Potts and Thomas Coates (obscure), united with Joseph Richardson in a petition Dec. 3, 1722, to the Court of Quarter Sessions in Philadelphia, as "Inhabitants of Oletheho and the neighboring parts." They set forth that "there are already many families settled in the aforesaid place called Oletheho upon Scoolkill side and probably severall more to settle in and about the same place," that "there is a Mill put up at the French Creeks mouth or Indiantown fford"; that "there is no certaine Road laid out from thence towards the city of Philadelphia" and they asked the court to order "a Kings Road or Cart way through the various Hills and ups and downs of the afore-mentioned place to wit, from the Indian town fford to the next established Kings Road that will suit best the inhabitants of Oletheho to the said city of Philadelphia." The court granted the petition and appointed William Harmer, the ancestor of the Revolutionary general Josiah Harmar, Joseph Richardson, Abraham Dawes, Meredith David and Andrew Robeson, who had been a Provincial Councillor, who had a mill on the Wissahickon, and who is buried at Manataway, a jury to lay out the road, and at their head placed Hendrick Pannebecker, the Dutch Patroon, living on the Skippack, where he owned large tracts of land and where eleven years later he bought Bebber's Township. The court likewise appointed Joseph Richardson and Robert Thomas "overseers of ye above road." As a surveyor,
Pannebecker ran the lines for many of the manors of the Penns, and he laid out the road according to the following courses and distances, covering an extent of eleven and three-fortieth miles: "we Began at a white Oak standing in the King's high Road near ye Plantation of Joseph Samuel on Plymouth Road, then North seventy-five degrees westerly one hundred and Twenty perches then North forty-five degrees westerly seventy perches. Then North sixty-four degrees westerly three hundred and eighty-four Perches Then north seventy-two Degrees westerly two hundred and Thirty-four perches. Then north Ninety-one Degrees westerly fifty-two Perches Then North sixty-two Degrees westerly fourty-two Perches. Then North Eighty-six Degrees westerly sixty-eight perches then North seventy-five degrees westerly one hundred and forty-Perches Then North sixty-five degrees westerly fourty Perches Then North ninety-eight degrees Westerly twenty-eight Perches Then North forty-four degrees westerly fifty-eight perches Then north forty-four degrees westerly fifty-eight perches Then north seventy Degrees westerly one hundred and Twenty perches Then North sixty-five degrees easterly Thirty-eight perches Then North fifty-seven degrees Westerly two hundred and Twenty perches Then North sixty-five Degrees westerly sixty-eight perches Then North seventy-two Degrees westerly one hundred and Twenty perches. Then North sixty-five Degrees Westerly two hundred and Twenty perches Then North sixty-five Degrees westerly sixty-four perches Then north Ten Degrees East one hundred and seventy-six perches Then North five degrees East one hun-
dred and Thirty Perches to the Indian ford in Schuillkill." The report was made to the court and approved in the following March. Then came trouble. It is much easier to take bearings and carry a chain than it is to cut down oak and hickory and level hills. What public improvement was ever proposed, without arousing the opposition of those who are disturbed by its progress? Further down the river Isaac Norris had bought the manor of Williamstadt, containing ten thousand acres of land and it had been divided into lots. The proposed road would cross this manor and he did not want his land taken for any such purpose. There was no occasion for a road anyhow. Many people who interfere with their neighbors by asking for roads are mere squatters without any real right, and they deserve no consideration. There was another road which ran through his property by Edward Lane's to Manatawny, and this would be almost parallel. Why should there be two roads through the country? Happily for us, he wrote down at the time the tale of his woes. Otherwise the events we are narrating would have been buried in oblivion. On the 8th of November of 1725, Norris at the request of Richardson, left his home in the city and journeyed to his manor that he might go over the road as it was laid out "if they must have one there abt," and suggest whatever changes in the route might be necessary. Richardson and Pannebecker met him in the woods. There were others in the party, but who they were we are not told. However, we know from an old draft preserved in the library of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, copied from one made in 1704, that on this occasion Pannebecker took them to a line tree in the manor of Williamstadt marked "W. P.," from which it may be inferred that he had early surveyed that manor perhaps in the company of Penn himself. They started upon the line following the courses as shown by Pannebecker's compass and for a time all went smoothly, although Norris found one of his trees girdled and several others cut. Presently they came to within about sixty perches of a white
oak, where Norris saw that the ground was of just the kind suitable for a road and he proposed to them to go that way and then they might cross the next lot "O as it pleased yea." Richardson had a different view. The ground about that white oak did not impress him favorably and "in his weak unmanerly way ** he called ye Surveyor off." His interference stopped the whole business. Thereupon, Norris took out his own "circumferenter" and determined to run up to that particular white oak. They all followed, but nothing more could be accomplished on that day. Somewhere they spent the night all together, perhaps in some house, but because of what must have been a dearth of accommodations, more probably in the woods. Norris wrote on the 9th, "after much talk last night we essayed an accommodation," but still he was far from content. When he found a marked poplar on the bank of the Schuylkill he said: "Tis a blind line & I suppose run by fairness to cut of a part of my land." Up the river they found a corner tree "cald by John Taylor a dog tree but by some of ye people now with me calld a sort of gum, by others thought a kind of elm." While they may have understood surveying, they were certainly unlearned in botany. Norris says they followed the courses and measured the distances of the proposed road "to Indn Creek," and "up ye hill," and to the spring "on ye opposite side," but he concluded with evident dissatisfaction: "these are ye courses taken from Pannebecker but they are wrong either in course or distances or both for they will not come right by protraction." Nearly two years later, on the 5th of 4th Month, 1727, he presented a petition to the court. This petition stated that he "is informed a Road was lately granted and said or pretended to be laid out leading from Plymouth Township to Perqueoming Creek wch runs aslant more than four miles through his land commonly called the Manor of Wm Stadt obliquely cutting the lines of the severall lotts laid out many years before in the sd Manor very injuriously"; that he "had not ye least notice or knowledge either of the petition
Joseph Richardson's Road.

grant or laying out the sd Road”; (oh! friend Isaac Norris). And he asked that six housekeepers be directed to ascertain whether there was any occasion for the road at all and if so, to locate it in places causing the least inconvenience. He declared that he had met with both “abuse and ill treatment.” The court appointed a jury of review but they too proved obdurate. Among the papers of Norris, is one drawn up by him giving the courses and distances precisely as they had been found by Pannebecker in 1722, endorsed “Jos. Richardson’s Road through ye Mannor” and on which he wrote March 27, 1729, “found the marked trees crooked as they pleased to choose ye ground.”

The next year on the 7th of September, 1730, James Hamer in behalf of himself and the inhabitants of Olyer-theho (sic), sent a petition to the Court. In it he says that in 1722, they had been granted a road from Plymouth, “through Isaac Norriss Lotts to the upper Indian Town ford upon Schuylkill,” but that “Since Sd Road was laid out it hath caused some uneasiness in Isaac Norris,” so that they could not have it cut through his land though “they have cleared it below & above.” “In order that amity and love may abound and this controversy be ended,” he asked that an impartial jury be appointed to view the road “beginning at a white oak at the Side of sd Norriss Mill Race and thence through his Land to ye cleared Road.” This suggestion, evidently intended as a proposition to make the road satisfactory to him in so far as it affected his own land, was still not sufficiently soothing. On the back of his copy of this paper he wrote: “James Hamer’s Petition—Joseph Richardson’s dictation,” which shows that he thought Richardson continued to be a disturbing influence. It is his final comment, and here our evidence and the story of an old dispute both come to an end. The road may be found on Scull’s map of 1759, connecting Providence Meeting with Plymouth Meeting. In modern description it runs from Phoenixville by the hamlet of the Green Tree to the Perkiomen at Oaks Station, and thence through Audubon, vol. xxxv.—4
Jeffersonville, and Norristown, of which it became the main street, on to Plymouth. The Schuylkill Valley Trolley Company now runs its cars where Norris found only white oaks, and trees which may have been either gum, or elm, or dogwood. Could he have foreseen that the only preservation of the name of Norris on the map of Pennsylvania is where the thriving and populous borough of Norristown grew up along Joseph Richardson's Road, he would doubtless have been more content and been on better terms with his neighbor. How often it happens in the affairs of men that that to which they most object turns out to be to their advantage.