

Der Wetterhahn

Home of the famous John Bell Weathervane



Volume XVII Issue II The Newsletter of Renfrew Museum & Park

Summer 2009

Marvelous Mechanical Instruments

Ah...melodic, soothing tones waft miraculously from a wooden box. Magic emanates from a seemingly decorative accent piece. Whereas today the MP3® player reigns supreme, not so when the organette and music box were the choice of entertainment for the everyday person.

The term "organette" refers to a small hand-cranked instrument which produces music by wind pressure or vacuum acting on organ reeds. The earliest organette type of device was the Cartonium, constructed by J. A. Teste, of Nates, France in the year 1861. Air in the chamber of the Cartonium is thinned by two pumps and wedge-shaped bellows, worked by two pedals. When the valves are raised the air drawn in causes the reeds to vibrate; when they fall the reeds remain still. The cards are pierced by a special

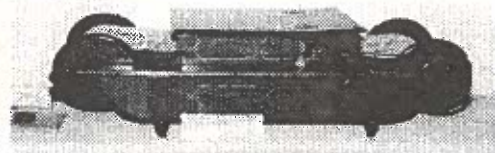
device attached to the instrument.

Organettes can be comprised of a mere 8 notes or encompass many octaves. Organettes were produced in three types: paper-as-a valve type-using air through reeds; pneumatic action system-using same principle as a player piano; and a key system-using metal or wire keys which move forward through the perforations, the reed exposed causes the note to sound.

When an opening occurs in the perforated paper music roll, air rushes through the large opening and causes the reed to sound in the paper-as-a-valve type.

T. B. Termaine, who founded the Mechanical Organette company in 1878, developed the first popular organette sold in quantity in America. The 8-note mouth-operated reed organ, named the Trumpetto, used the rewind paper roll principle.

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345. A Style C Mechanical Organette, like the one shown in photo 357 in the November 1880 advert, with added roll attachment which allowed a long musical programme to be played for dancing without the music strip getting tangled up into a large pile on the floor.

Mechanical Organette

The pneumatic action system, embodying the same principles as those of the player piano uses a tracker bar with small and closely-spaced holes. Each hole leads to a leather or rubber pouch which, when activated by the passage of air through a hole in the paper roll, causes the valve to act directly to admit air or vacuum to a reed.

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The underside, pinned roller, or cardboard strip operates a flap valve which covers the reed. When the metal or wire key is moved forward by a projection, the spring-loaded valve lifts and exposes the reed, causing the note to sound.



We are fortunate to have a wide representation of organettes as part of our current featured exhibit in the Museum. Our thanks to Mr. Russell Snyder, for loaning Renfrew these items from his personal collection. Unique pieces such as the treadle sewing machine organette (dulcipone), which generates power from the machine; a player harmonica (Rolmonica); and the Clarola and Play-a-sax, which look like diminutive versions of the real instruments, enhance our understanding.

A hand-cranked barrel organ, made by Gavioli, was a loudly-voiced instrument intended for commercial purposes, commonly known as a hurdy-gurdy. (We have an excellent example on display.) The organ grinder played while the trained monkey collected money from the crowd.

The American market for organettes began in the 1870's, increased significantly in the 1880's, and waned in the early 20th century.

Music Box

The music box is described as a self-playing instrument, which uses a rotating barrel, pinned with cogs in certain positions, and hammers that move to strike bells at a specified time to make a tune.

There are references to early developments of such a musical instrument from the 9th century. Inventors made a hydro-powered organ which used interchangeable cylinders, operating automatically. A bell ringer in the 14th century created a cylinder with pins which operated cams, which then strike the bell.

Legend has it, the first musical box was designated for the amusement of Marie Antionette.



The self-playing music box was developed from the Carillon bell towers (a set of stationary bells rung by hammers from a keyboard or by a mechanism) in Europe.

The year 1796 brought a new advancement by Antoine Favre, a clockmaker from Geneva, who used combs instead of bells, to produce a more exact sound.

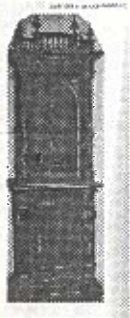
A milestone came with the evolution of the musical snuff box. Some even had a tiny drum and bells installed.

By 1811, the music box industry surpassed the much established watch making and lace trades. (Some devoted to lace find that difficult to accept.) Charles Reuge, in 1865 designed a musical movement pocket watch, thus another feat in the progression of the music box.

In 1870, a German inventor used discs to allow ease of use, providing greater possibilities afforded by a varied assortment of discs.

The first mass production of the revolutionary disc box was in Leipzig, Germany by the Symphonion Company.

The Polyphon, Musikwerke, another company from Leipzig, introduced the Polyphon in 1892. The interchangeable discs produced an exceptional tone.



Polyphon

Polyphon Company sent a team of employees to Rahway, N.J. to found the Regina Music Box Company. Competitors soon followed, which included: Capitol Cuff, Olympia, Euphonia and Symphonion to name a few.

A contraption, known as the Victrola, the handiwork of Thomas Alva Edison, was the demise of the "musique" box.

At the end of World War II, American G.I.'s brought Swiss music boxes back for family members. Thus, a new interest emerged.

Today, Regina produces vacuum cleaners, and Sankyo of Japan is the predominant force in music box production.

The marvelous musical instrument exhibit runs through August 31st!

Encyclopedia of Automatic Musical Instruments -by Q. David Bowers-Vestal Press, Vestal, NY

The Organette Book-by Kevin McElhone-Music Box Society of Great Britain



The Conestoga Wagon: “Inland Ship of Commerce”

Imagine a time when items, such as tools, cloth, cutlery, mail, or dry goods, were carried to the west in large, lumbering red and blue wagons traveling rough and rutted terrain in all kinds of weather at the very modest speed of 12-15 miles a day.

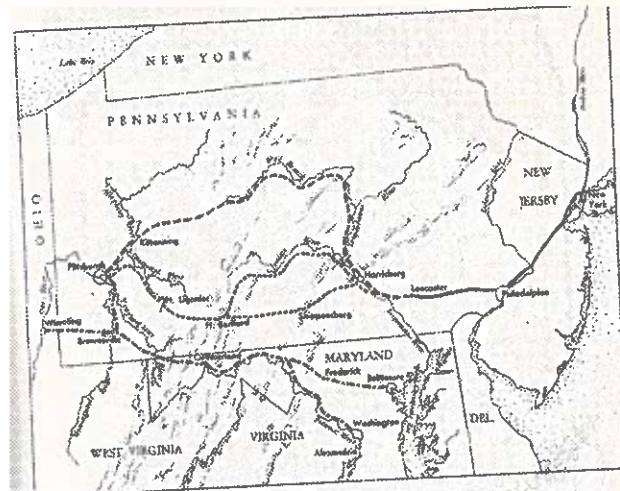
A teamster sat on the saddle or near wheel horse, one of a team pulling the wagon, which could be loaded with up to five tons of supplies. If the trail was mountainous, a second man would travel along, perched on a “lazy board,” a plank that pulled out from underneath the wagon. It was located in front of the back wheel on the left side of the wagon, giving the teamster easy access to the brake when necessary.

An original Conestoga wagon can now be seen at Renfrew Museum and Park, courtesy of owners, John and Jean Frantz. The Frantz’ purchased the original wagon in November 2008 and brought it to Renfrew for the Museum’s opening day at the end of April.

Asked what having a Conestoga wagon means to him, Frantz replied, “I think they are a wonderful piece of equipment providing another angle from which to explore the development of this country. The workmanship in terms of the ironwork and the carpentry is outstanding.” Few can be seen today; one source estimates that only about 150 are still around.

The name Conestoga comes from the Conestoga River Valley in Lancaster County, where most of the wagons were made. Other Pennsylvania counties also made wagons, all bearing the same name. Lancaster was the center of wagon-making, while other sites could be found in York, Chester, and Adams Counties, and two in Franklin County. The earliest known reference to the Conestoga wagon was in a 1717 account ledger.

Contrary to popular belief, and the influence of Hollywood, these were not the wagons that headed west across the plains. They carried only freight and no passengers, following the main routes that we know today as Rt. 30, the Lincoln Highway, and Rt. 40, the National Highway, to terminal points such as Pittsburgh, Wheeling, W. Va., and Youngstown, Ohio.

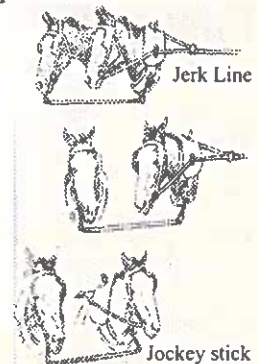


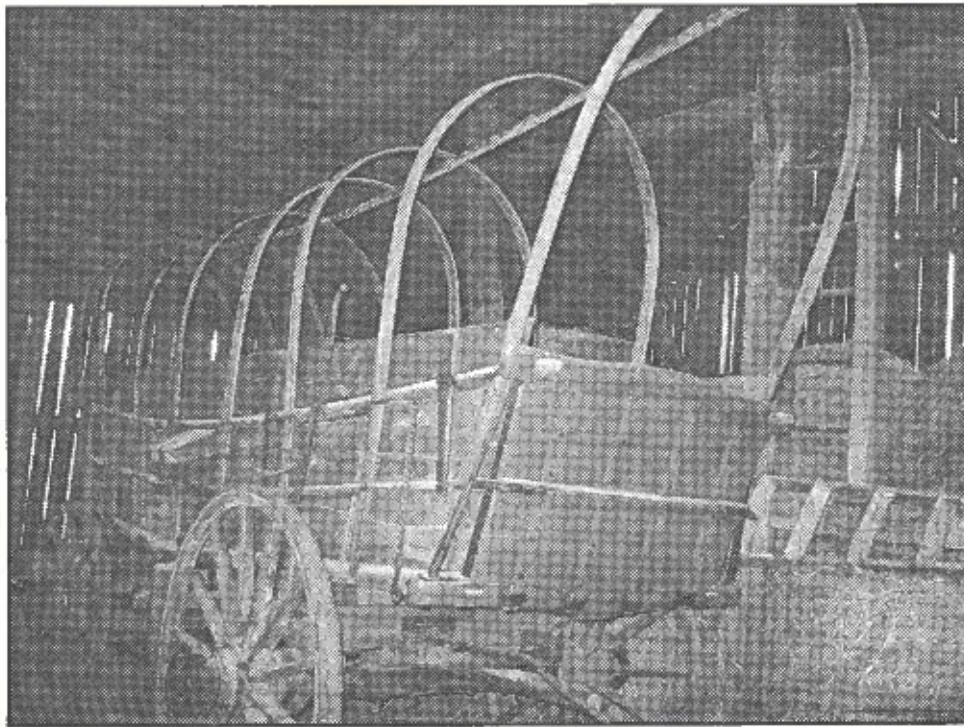
Chief Wagon Route Map

Wagons were individually owned by a teamster who loaded up in Pennsylvania for western destinations and returned with raw materials, such as furs, flour, hemp, whiskey, and tobacco. A typical trip from Lancaster to Youngstown ran about \$240 for a round trip. Most drivers headed out with little money, stopping along the way at a tavern or wagon stand. Drinks then came in pint and quart sizes. On the return trip, now paid, the drivers would take care of their bill. According to legend, the phrase “mind your p’s and q’s” came from this arrangement.

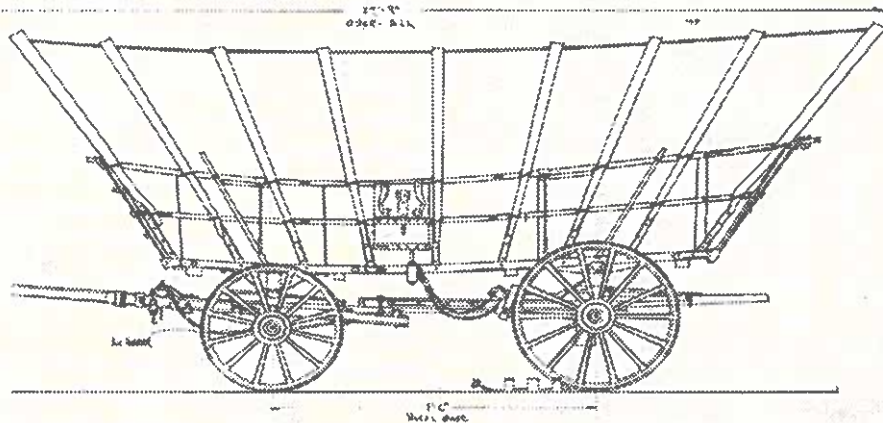
The Conestoga wagon at Renfrew is an eight-bow—some go up to 13—and originally would have been covered with a rough canvas or a homespun flax cover. The bed of the wagon has a curved bottom, the better to hold the merchandise, with sturdy sideboards. The parts are riveted together rather than nailed. It has no springs and the bed is not fastened to the frame. Everything on board would have been carried in barrels.

Managing the horse team of a Conestoga wagon took a deft hand. The driver controlled the horses with a single line, known as the jerk line, which was connected to the bit of the left front horse or the leader. This was supplemented by voice commands.





Conestoga Wagon

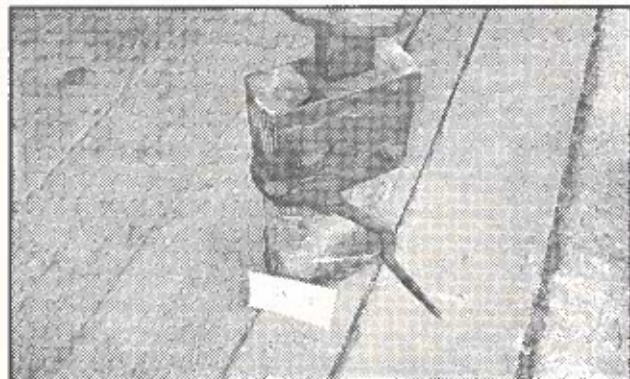


Scale drawing of a Conestoga wagon from Lancaster, now owned by Mr. and Mrs. James A. Keillor.

Drawing from book: Conestoga Wagon



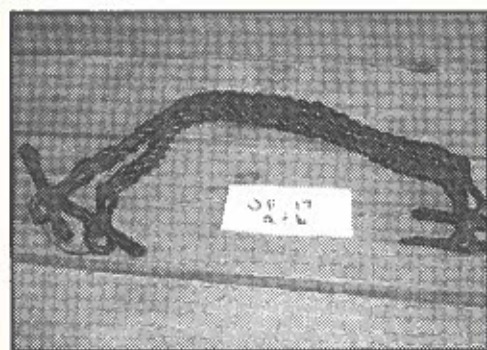
Conestoga Essentials



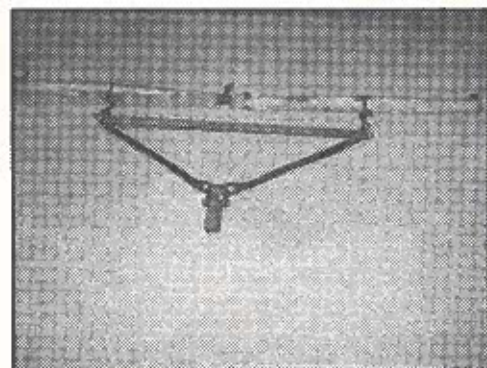
Conestoga Wagon jack-1859



Wagon saddle



Breast chains



Spreader

I've seen a many a fleet of them
In one, long, upward, winding row;
It ever was a pleasant sight,
As seen from distant mountain-height,
Or quiet valley, far below;
Their snow-white covers looked like sail,
From mountain-height or distant vale.

I see them on their winding way,
As, in the merry olden time
I saw them, with their heavy loads,
Upon the old-time turnpike-roads,
The rugged mountains climb;
Like full-rigged ships they seemed to glide
Along the deep-blue mountain-side.

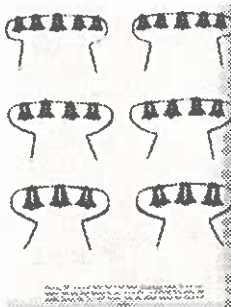
From the poem:
Wagoning
by H. L. Fisher

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The wagons were self-sufficient with accessories to get driver and horses through most any eventuality. On the front hounds was an axe holder; a feed box for the animals was located on the slanted tailgate; the tool box (stocked with such items as nails, a horseshoe hammer, and leather repair tools) was about midway on the left side; and a tar bucket was suspended beneath by a hook on the axle. Also on board were a wagon jack (now a prized collectible) and an ice cutter.

The horse team was connected by double twisted link chains, displaying the artistry of the blacksmith. Each team also wore an iron arch of brass bells, with five bells carried on the lead team, four on the swing team, and three on the wheel team. On mountainous curves, a teamster would often stop and listen for the sound of bells. If another wagon was approaching he would wait for the other team to make the turn; this was particularly true if the wagons were driving at night. If a teamster found himself bogged down in the roadbed or off, and



Conestoga Bells

needed help from another, payment was often made in bells. Losing one's bells was considered a major disgrace, giving rise to the expression: "I'll be there with bells on."

The heyday of the sturdy Conestoga was in fact rather short—with the height of its activity during the years 1820-1840. They opened up the Frontier ferrying the basic needs of settlers moving west and provisioning early war efforts furnishing supplies to Major-General Edward Bradford's British troops on Forbes Trail and hauling cannon powder to Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry's fleet on Lake Erie. However, they met their match with the birth of the railroad, with most wagon routes ceasing operations before the start of the Civil War.

Article by: Cheryl Keyser

Information for the article came from: Conestoga Wagon 1750-1850 – Freight Carrier for 100 years of American's Westward Expansion by George Shumway, Edward Durell, and Howard C. Frey

Did you know?

Renfrew Museum has a direct link to Mrs. Emma Nicodemus. Our phone number, 762-4723 is the same one Mrs. Nicodemus had in her home.

The phone line, which came from the main highway (Rt. 16), was made of iron wire. On the telephone pole it was protected by glass insulators. From there it extended to the smokehouse and then went underground into the basement of the main house.

Grant Support for the Traveling Trunk Program

Renfrew Museum and Park recently received a grant from the Alexander Stewart, M.D. Foundation of \$500 to be used to take the museum's "Traveling Trunk" program to local Senior Centers. This Foundation provides monies primarily for human services and mental health, including support for historical societies and libraries. They award grants to non-profit organizations in the counties of Cumberland, Franklin, Fulton, and Perry.

Readers of this newsletter are familiar with the Traveling Trunk program, an outreach program of Renfrew Museum. A trunk (and supplementary tote) is filled with museum artifacts. These objects are passed around, identified, and commented upon by those participating under the direction of a museum staff member. The intent is to make this more of an activity than a lecture. These historical items are chosen to be interesting, to represent different aspects of living in the past, and to elicit stories. We encourage the participants to tell of their experiences, or retell stories passed down through generations. Like dominoes lined up in a row, these tales bring on others' stories... and smiles all around.

In its third year, the Traveling Trunk is becoming well traveled, visiting many retirement communities and nursing homes from Shippensburg to Frederick, MD. With the help of this grant money, we are happy to expand our reach to Senior Centers.

Perhaps you may know of another site that could enjoy this program. Call us and we'll make the contact.

Article by: Bob North

What's New

The latest addition to Renfrew's Gift Shop are the striking photos of Andy Smetzer. Herewith a bit of background on the photographer.

Waynesboro native, Andy Smetzer has been taking pictures off and on since he attended then East Junior High School, now Waynesboro Middle School, and went to the Art Institute in Pittsburgh.

"I prefer doing landscapes and nature photos," said Smetzer, "I shoot mainly in color but sometimes process in black and white." A member of the Tri State Astronomers, he has taken a number of photos of the heavens, including the Hale-Bopp comet and the northern lights which can be seen on the website www.tri-stateastronomers.org.

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Renfrew Membership 2009-continued

Individual Memberships

Ms. Carolyn Augustine
Mrs. Peggy Sandel

Family Memberships

Mr. Thomas G. Burkey
Robert and Teresa Dee
Bill and Cynthia Gillard
Ms. Audrey Eshleman
Scott and Connie Mendoza
Bob and Connie Morrow
Joseph and Mary Shoemaker
Craig and Judy Wellterlen

Sustaining Membership

Mr. Thomas Moore

Renfrew Society

Ms. Rose M. Dagen
Thane and Charlene Farmer and "Yuma"

Standard Business Membership

Johnson Controls

Recognition of Individuals and Contributors; Renfrew Committee, and Renfrew Executive Committee members; Renfrew staff and Renfrew Wish List

Contribution to tannery site marker-
Ken Gilland
Contributions and food stand operation
Opening Day-Esther North and friends
Support by Franklin County Visitors Bureau
for Opening Day- Ben Franklin (Michael
Levick)
Portrayal of Daniel Royer (Ed Miller)
Music Instrument display- Russell Snyder;
also William Smith and Peggy Sandel
Deer skins for Opening Day Tannery Exhibit
Jack Olszewski
Opening of tannery sites- Chapter #27 of PA
Archeological Society
Support for Navy Cruisers Concert and
Antietam Diary ice cream- Franklin County
Visitors Bureau

Renfrew Committee, Inc. Members-2009

Douglas Tengler, President
Allie (Allison) Vice President
David Hykes-2nd Vice President
George Buckey-Treasurer and Director
Edgar Hykes-Director
Judge John W. Keller, Director
Alice McCleaf, Director & Assistant Secretary
George P. Buckey, Treasurer

Renfrew Executive Committee Members-2009

David Hykes, Chairman
George Buckey- Treasurer
Richard "Red" Mohn
Thomas Moore
Allison "Allie" Kohler
Virginia Rahn
Steve Graham

Renfrew Museum and Park Staff-2009

Bonnie Iseminger-Administrator
John Frantz-Supervisor of Buildings and
Grounds
Bob North-Visitor Services Personnel
Cheryl Keyser-Visitor Services Personnel
Ron Harbaugh-Building and Grounds
Personnel

Renfrew Wish List-2009

1800's Flint drinking glasses
Large butchering kettles
Pewter or wood plates-pre 1840
Pre-1840 drinking glasses
Local history books
Interpretation underwriting
Listed above are a few items that would
enhance our programs and facilities. All
contributions to Renfrew Museum and Park
are tax deductible, as allowed by law. If you
need assistance with a pick up of your items,
we would be happy to arrange a time. Please
call 717-762-4723. Thank you for your
continued support!
We would also appreciate more memberships
and volunteers. Support the rooster!



**Renfrew's
Gift Showcase**

We have just received some really nice gourd bird houses from Meadowbrook Gourds. Just in time for your "feathered" visitors this summer!

We also have added decorator boxes, and new "battery-free" toys.

Gift Showcase hours are: Tuesday-Friday noon until 4:00p.m. Saturday and Sunday from 1:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m.

Bonnie Iseminger-Editor

Contributors: Articles: Cheryl Keyser, Bob North & Bonnie Iseminger
Photos: Bonnie Iseminger

**Renfrew
Upcoming Events**

Monday, July 20-7:00p.m.-FREE a concert by Waynesboro's own Wayne Band. A talented group of musicians playing a diverse program. **Rita's Italian Ice will be available for sale!**

Saturday and Sunday, August 8 and 9- Annual Civil War Encampment at Renfrew Park. Camps open at 8:00a.m. each day, events planned. Ends at 1:30p.m. on August 8th.

Sat., Sept. 12- Cumberland Valley Pottery Fest- 10:00a.m.-5:00p.m. The fifth year of this popular event, presented by Renfrew Museum and Park and the Nicodemus Center for Ceramic Studies at Penn State Mont Alto and the Mont Alto Pottery Cooperative. Featuring 24 potters, this rain or shine pottery fest is not to be missed.

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Wetterhahn

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