

Barn Side Illustrates Area's Historical Side

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— "I have all kinds of people stopping. People stop in all the time," said Arthur L. Reist, owner of Oak Lawn farm. Reist's farm hosts a new, traffic-stopping historical mural on the side of his barn.

Reist is a former history teacher at the nearby Conestoga Valley School District, where he taught for more than 30 years.

Today he is partly retired but helps out on the farm. "I'm busy in historical activities," said Reist, who serves as a resource for area museums.

Reist also wrote the book, "Conestoga Wagon — Masterpiece of the Blacksmith," and owns a large collection of Conestoga wagons and associated equipment.

Besides his knowledge and interest in the famous wagons, Reist hoped to provide a memorial for Jacob Reist, a first generation Reist born in America. Jacob Reist was killed in the war as he transported goods via Conestoga wagon to the troops.

"He was a Swiss Mennonite. He was not a soldier. If he didn't sign up he would have been conscripted to take supplies," said Reist.

The mural is the work of Wayne Fetto of Elizabethtown. After seeing examples of Fetto's sign and building paintings in Elizabethtown, where his daughter resides, Reist decided that he could use the side of his barn as an avenue for public education and contacted the Elizabethtown painter.

The Painting Process

Reist showed the artist pictures and models of Conestoga wagons to ensure accuracy for Fetto's sketch of the wagon.

The high-headed Belgians in the painting were easy to find, as Reist's son, Arthur E. Reist, simply selected a few of the farm's horses from the pasture. Fetto took five rolls of pictures to get the attention-getting stances of the horses pulling the wagon.

"Pearl" provided the model for the wagon's lead horse with

her high action and alert look, characteristic of a Conestoga wagon's leader.

"The lead horse should look

Fetto enjoys meeting people, which is an important aspect of his job, especially at this particular site, where the public fre-

“This is for the community, not just for us. It's for people to enjoy. Anybody can come and look at this, that's what it's for.”

Arthur Reist

more alert and seem to see what's going on," said Reist. Other Belgians from the farm filled the remaining roles.

Besides the six horses and striking blue-and-red wagon, the mural includes a mile marker which people often mistake for a tombstone, said Reist.

quently stopped by to converse with Fetto and examine the growing work.

"He could hardly get his painting done, so many people stopped and talked to him," said Reist.

"You would not believe the amount of people that stop by



Fetto took five rolls of pictures to provide a model for the painting. Reist's son, Arthur E. Reist, selected a few of the farm's Belgians to pose for the photo shoot.

Tobacco fields provide a backdrop for the scene, a hallmark of the area. This year Oak Lawn farm is producing its 60th and last tobacco crop. The farm is retiring as, according to Reist, the oldest tobacco farm in Pennsylvania.

A Public Painting

"I enjoy meeting people and I learn so much. Every mural I do is another history lesson. Most of the work is dated, for people to reflect on," said Fetto.

and check it out," said Fetto. "People would read the lettering on the inscription, which had a way of connecting with them. It helped them understand the process," he said.

Fetto also spoke with many of Reist's former students as they stopped with their families to watch the proceedings, another opportunity for Reist to educate the public about the painting, made more personal because the story is family history.

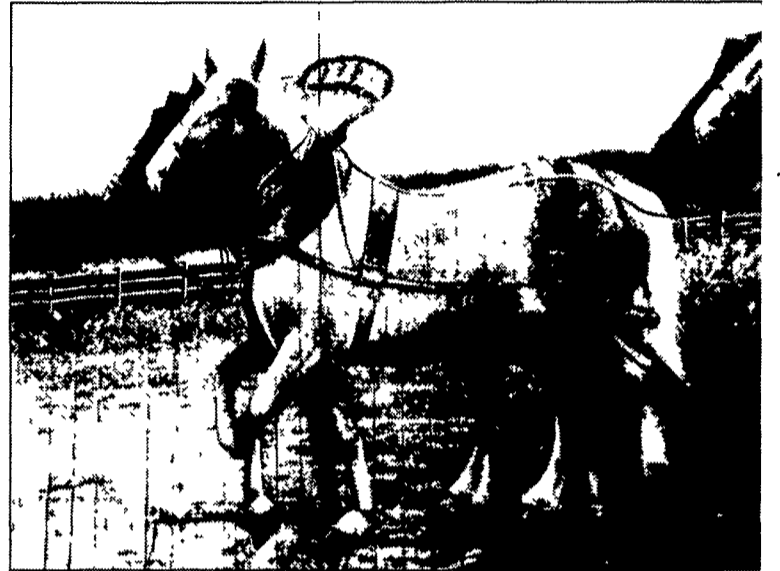
The work was completed over a period of 12-13 days in early September, said Fetto. His next project is in York County with an 1886 scene.

"I got into it (large-scale paintings) because I used to be a billboard painter, but everything is going totally automated, so I had to think of another avenue," said Fetto.

This project was one of Fetto's favorites, as he enjoyed the people he met and worked with, the educational aspect of Reist

Part of making the mural historically accurate was attention to detail. For example, according to Reist, the "jockey stick" in the picture which runs from the lead horse to the offside horse helped to direct the offside horse and consequently the entire team. The driver sat on the wheel horse on the left side to guide the team, a forerunner to today's cars, which are also set up with the steering wheel on the left.

"They always had the smartest horse as the lead horse," said



Above, Fetto used pictures of Oak Lawn's "Pearl" to paint the wagon's lead horse. Pearl's intelligent demeanor is characteristic of a Conestoga wagon's leader.

"The lead horse should look more alert and seem to see what's going on," said Reist.



Reist has used his barn to create an outdoor educational exhibit for passersby. "Every mural I do is another history lesson," says painter Wayne Fetto, Elizabethtown. According to Fetto the work was completed over a period of 12-13 days in early September.

teaching the public, and the large overhang of the barn which provided him with constant shade.

One of the biggest challenges, according to Fetto, was making sure that "everything was accurate to that timeframe, the way they made the harness, or how they made the wagon. I learned quite a bit."

Conestoga Wagon History

"Two of the most important contributions to early America were the Conestoga wagon and the Pennsylvania rifle, and they were both developed and made in this area," said Reist.

The wagons, said Reist, were freight vehicles, the "tractor trailers" of the day. The larger wagons carried 4-5 tons of commodities such as produce, spices, rum, building materials or iron. Not a passenger vehicle, the wagons carried goods from Lancaster to Philadelphia. "They traveled 12 to 15 miles a day on very bad roads," said Reist.

"Pennsylvania was the breadbasket of the colonies," said Reist. Wagon teamsters hauled freight to Philadelphia, a five-day trip one way.

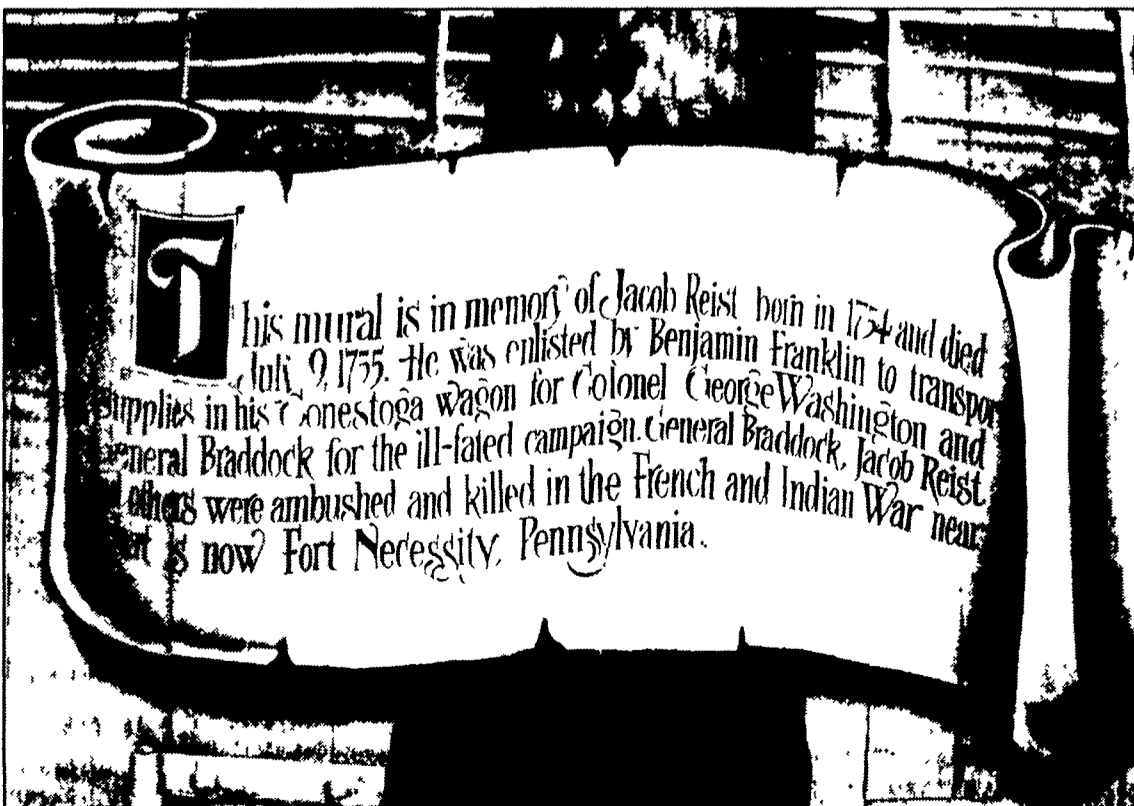
Reist. "A teamster sat on the wheel horse and could drive six horses with one line."

The wagons also hauled freight to West Virginia. En route, the teamsters smoked tobacco grown in Lancaster County, which led to the nickname "Stogie," short for "Conestoga."

Reist also explained the brass bells dangling from the harness above the horses. "If something happened during the trip to the wagon, they didn't pull out their credit cards, they had to use these bells, which they hated to lose," said Reist. This method of emergency payment gave rise to the well-known saying, "Come home with your bells on."

A century farm, Oak Lawn has been in the family's name since 1843. Reist and his wife, Marian, are the fifth generation and now his son, Art, Art's wife Rachael, and their children reside on the 60-acre farm. Along with tobacco, they raise several crops and prizewinning Belgian horses.

The farm is located in Manheim Township across from Lancaster Bible College.



The painting provides a memorial for Jacob Reist, a first generation Reist born in America. Jacob Reist was killed in the war as he transported goods via Conestoga wagon to the troops.