

**An Assessment of the Story of the Haupt Family from Bucks County, Pennsylvania:
Nicholas and the Philadelphia Bells of Christ Church
By Dr. John V. Richardson Jr., 6th Great Grandson
16 January 2024**

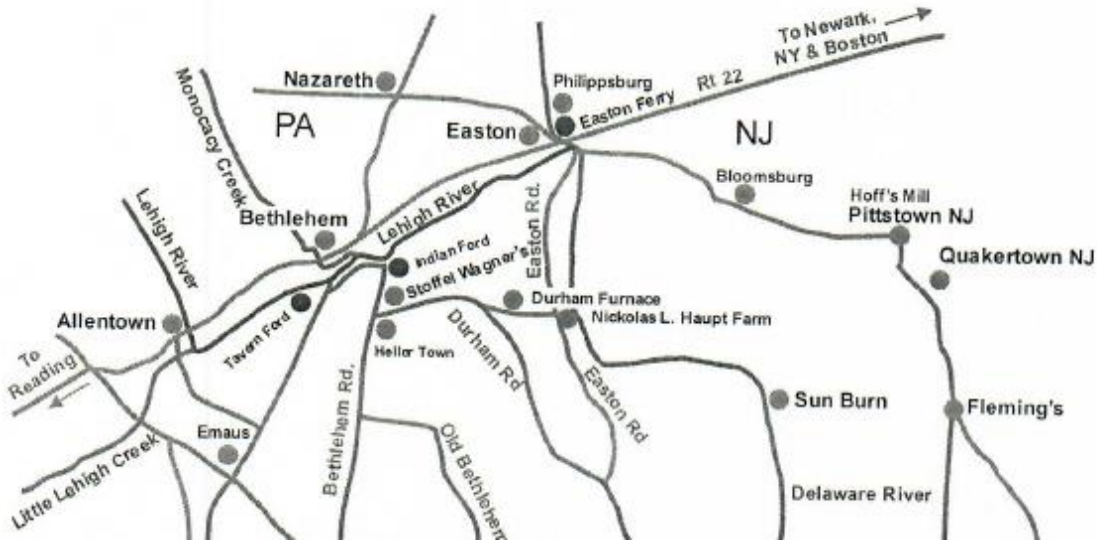


Figure 1. Courtesy of Donald Billig (2024)

Oral family histories can be a significant source of relevant information about one's ancestors, but establishing the kernel of truth in these stories can be challenging. The following is a case study of the Haupt family's story about their ancestor, Nicholas Haupt (1725-1792) carrying the 2,040-pound Christ Church Bell (entry no. 1 in Billig's Inventory, chapter 20, p. 28) in his wagon to safety in late September 1777.

Locale: Nicholas Haupt lived with his wife, Anna Maria, and at least six minor children in Nockamixon Township in Bucks County on the Easton Road near the Durham Furnace, about fifty-six miles away from the city of Philadelphia which is in general panic due to the imminent arrival of British in late September 1777.

Research Questions: Myriad questions arise about the verisimilitude of this story given the circumstances and details—why is a German Lutheran farmer helping an Anglican Christ Church miles away to remove their bells? Assuming that his story is true, what kind of wagon would he most likely own? Why would he be in Philadelphia? Isn't there some place closer and less dangerous like Trenton to sell his farm goods? If he is there on his own volition, is there a bill of lading? Is there a certificate of delivery? Is there a receipt for payment?

If these documents do not exist, then alternatively, perhaps, Haupt is impressed into service by the Pennsylvania state militia¹ or the Continentals during the panic to escape Philadelphia before the British arrive? If not the state militia's lieutenant or county/township wagon master, there would/should be a warrant for impression from the Continental (see Billig's chapter 16, p. 10).

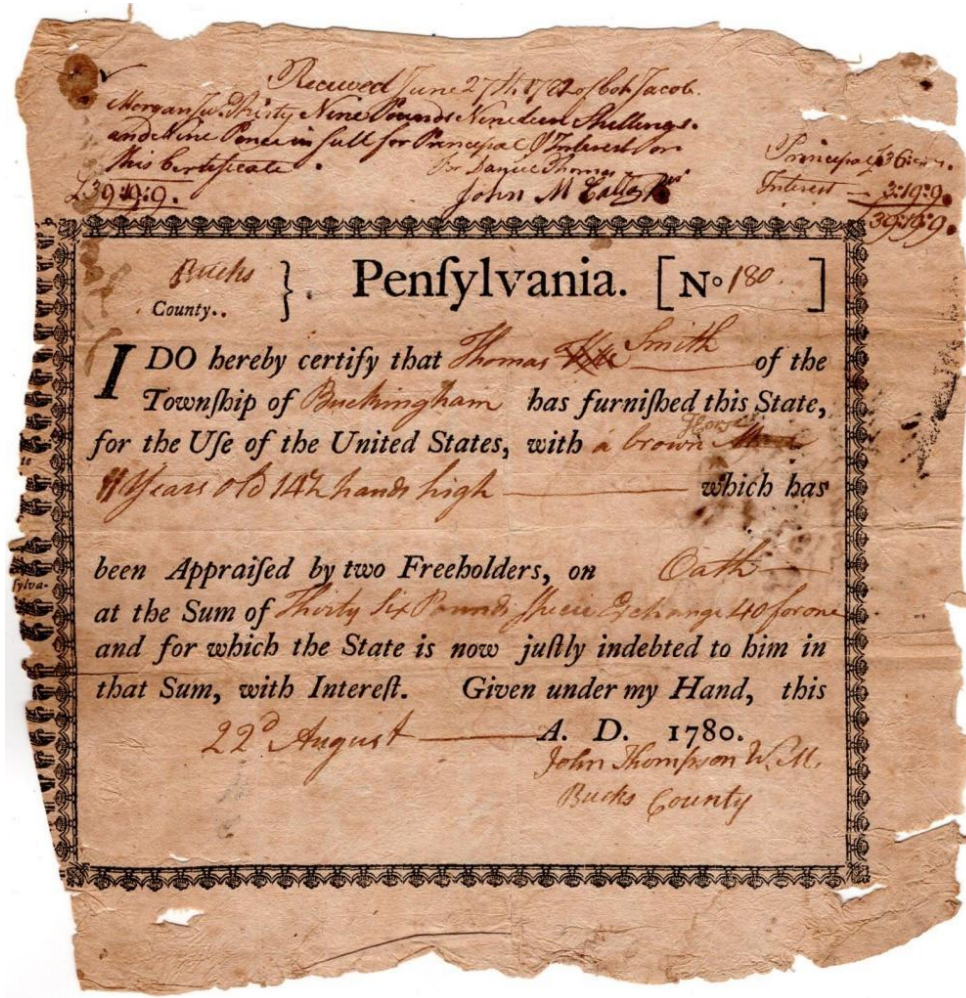


Figure 2. Military Impression in Bucks County

Let's see if we can establish a probable chronology of events which happen.

¹ Either the County Lieutenant or the County Wagon Master?

CHRONOLOGY:

- 19 Dec 1754: Governor R. H. Morris recommends a wagon law to the Pennsylvania Assembly which would serve "to settle and establish the Wages or Hire of Tradesmen, Horses and Carriages" impressed for military service.²
 - Aft 1775: "Congress set a fee of 30 shillings a day for a wagon, four horses, and driver."³
 - Aft 3 Jul 1775: The QM Department of the Continental Army had two other divisions: 1) a Commissary Department and 2) the Forage Department. There is a QM General: 1) Stephen Moylan, 2) Nathanael Greene, and 3) Timothy Pickering. The Deputy QM General is Clement Biddle. There is an Assistant QM as well. Each county had a wagon master and then a deputy wagonmaker in the township, according to PA wagon law. Robert Towers is the state QM? John Oakley or Robert Hooper is the deputy QM? When? Apparently, there is a wagon master and then clerks (who "recorded each driver's name and place of residence and required a bill of lading for the wagonload") insured the arrival of wagons and the contents. Conductors may have had ten wagons?
 - 1777-1778: "Impressment of horses and wagons was widespread in Pennsylvania"⁴
- 14 May 1777: Continental Congress created Forge and Wagon Departments within the QM however "The Wagon Master General received horses, cattle, and wagons, but could not purchase without an order from the Commander of the Army, the Quartermaster General, or one of his deputies." Hired civilian transport OR impressed into service during emergencies.
- 16 Jun 1777: Assembly of Pennsylvania voted on removal of bells, copper, and brass? And the lead downspouts?

² Robert Hunter Morris to Pennsylvania House of Representatives, *Pennsylvania Archives*, series 8, volume 5, page 3799.

³ "Land Transportation" at https://webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/ebook/p/2005/CMH_2/www.army.mil/cmh-pg/books/revwar/risch/chpt-3.htm. Apparently, the price was too low price because a rate of only forty-five or fifty shillings would discourage drivers who could get three or four pounds per day from private merchants; and even so, the typical delay in payment meant inflation devalued the compensation by half.

⁴ James A. Huston, *The Sinews of War: Army Logistics, 1775-1953* (Washington, DC: GPO for Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1966), p. 37, col. 1.

- 25 Aug 1777: Howe's troops land at Elk River intending to occupy Philadelphia; Head of the Elk is a major Continental Army depot site.
- Aug-Sep 1777: Selection of the waggoneers by the "calling out" done by the Lieutenant for Bucks County, Pennsylvania?
- 14 Sep 1777 (aka "Disturbed Sunday"): Members of the Second Continental Congress directed the Board of War and Ordnance (in existence from 24 Jan 1776-7 Feb 1781) to apply to the Supreme Executive Council of the State of Pennsylvania "for an order to remove all public bells, in Philadelphia, to a place of security, upon a near approach of the enemy to the city."⁵
- 14 Sep 1777: the Pennsylvania Council authorized Col. Benjamin Flower, the Commissary General of Military Stores, to employ carpenters "to take down the Bells of all the public Buildings in this City, & convey them to a place of safety."
- 16 Sep 1777: Rector of Christ church, the Rev. Jacob Duche asks for delay in removal
- *** Sep 1777: Wagons leave Philadelphia.
- 28 Sep 1777: "Return of Bells at Allen Town in Northampton County 28th Sept 1777 Belonging to the City of Philadelphia"
- 6 Oct 1777: Congress "empowered the Commissaries General of Issues and Purchases and their deputies and assistants to impress wagons and storehouses within a seventy-mile radius of the encampment of the army until January of 1778."
- Nov 1777: Quartermaster General Thomas Mifflin resigned in November 1777 but supervised John Goddard or Joseph Thornburgh, the Wagon master General for the Washington's army who was responsible for the procedure to hold wagon drivers accountable for their loads? There is a Jacob Hiltzheimer, agent for wagons as well.
- Jan 1778, Pennsylvania appoints wagon master general and county wagon masters as well as deputy county wagon masters. Prior to that date, the County Lieutenant⁶ was empowered to impress individuals.

⁵ See Billig, volume 8 (p. 741) of the *Journals of the Continental Congress* to direct the Board of War to ask the Supreme Executive Council to order the bells be removed "to a place of security."

⁶ William H. Egle, ed., *State of the Accounts of the County Lieutenants During the War of the Revolution, 1777-1789* (Harrisburg, PA: Clarence M. Busch, 1896), vol. 1, p. ***. (need to search)

- 1779: Nicholas Haupt paid taxes on his animals including two horses.⁷
- 1845, I. Daniel Rupp, *History of Northampton, Lehigh, Monroe, Carbon, and Schuylkill Counties* (Harrisburg, PA: Hickok and Cantine) says the bells of Christ Church which “chime so merrily” were concealed in Allentown⁸ on page 141.
- 1914: **FIRST MENTION OF FAMILY STORY** about Haupt and two of the Christ Church bells in Charles R. Roberts et al., *History of Lehigh County*, vol. 1, p. 137, col. 2: “Nicholas Haupt, a resident of Bucks County, was in charge of one of the wagons, upon which were two bells.” The text on page 138, col. 1 goes on to discuss “These bells were of varying sizes and weights, some extremely heavy, and it was not possible that they could all be hauled in one vehicle, therefore | several wagons and drivers were employed in this duty.”
- 1924/1925: Rev. William H. Haupt’s *Haupt Family in America* (Chariton, Iowa: By Author, date?—LoC asserts 1924 but Google Books says 1925) on page A19, entry 1 asserts: “It is said that when the British besieged the city, he hid the bells of Christ Church in his hay wagon and buried them on his farm [in Nockamixon Township, Bucks Co.] til the danger was past.” In his chapter 3, page 9, Billig asserts that this quotation is in a Genealogy by General Herman Haupt.
- 1996: Ray Haupt’s *Haupt Family Origins in the Rheinland-Pfalz and their American Descendants* (Greensboro, NC: By Author), vol. 1, p. 174 states "It has been written [by WHH in 1925] that at the taking of Philadelphia by the British, Johann Nicholas took the bells of Christ Church in his haywagon and hid them on his farm until the danger was over."⁹

⁷ If he owned two horses, then he probably owned a conveyance such as a wagon. Note that Francis R. Clark described a “Philadelphia Waggon” (length 12 feet 3 inches; width, wheel to wheel – inside measurements – 6 feet 3 inches; height of sides, 10 inches)” in his role as Inspector and Superintendent of His Majesty’s Provision Train of Wagons and Horses. See the Clark Papers in the APS’ Feinstone Collection.

⁸ After 1811, Allentown was known as the Borough of Northampton?

⁹ Ray Haupt to Richardson, 21 December 2021 — “Only because I had encountered it in my library visits I do not have any proof of it’s (sic) truth. It is a quaint tale. Folklore. It may or may not be true. I have encountered no evidence to support it.”

Rate of travel: 2 days for a traveler to cover the 90 miles between NY and Philadelphia; Carlisle, York, Reading, Lancaster, Allentown, and other places in Pennsylvania became deposit points from which the Quartermaster's Department transported supplies," p. 65

See Erna Risch's *Supplying Washington's Army* (Washington, DC: GPO for the US Army Center of Military History, 1981) as well as "Land Transportation" pp. 64-90.

Gen. Herman Haupt (1817-1905) et al., *Reminiscences of General Herman Haupt* (Milwaukee, WI: Wright and Joys Company, 1901)? See Billig, chapter 3, p. 9, note 19. This title doesn't appear to have any mention of the bells.

Search for wagons which may be used to carry the papers to Lancaster; see also Valley Forge Reports.