



# Haverford Township Historical Society



## ROADS IN HAVERFORD TOWNSHIP

By Richard D. Kerr

### INTRODUCTION

When discussing roads, it helps to dispense with a notion that we assume today, that roads all have officially-designated proper names. In the early days, country roads generally did not have formal names; they were referred to by where they led. Thus people spoke of “the Lancaster road” (note the leading “the” and lower case “road”) meaning “the road that goes to Lancaster,” rather than “Lancaster Road” as a proper name.

Consider this example: If you were in the township in 1850 on present-day Darby Road at Manoa Road, and you asked someone for directions, he or she would point south and tell you that was “the road to Darby,” while pointing to the north would say it was “the Coopertown road.” The same thing could happen at Darby Road’s intersection with present-day Eagle Road. This leaves the segment of road between Manoa and Darby being called “the Coopertown road” by someone pointing northward at Manoa Road and “the Darby road” by someone pointing southward at Eagle Road – two different identifiers for the same stretch of road. Prior to suburbanization, population growth and the start of rural postal delivery in the early 20th century, there was no need for formal road names, or for numerical street addresses for buildings along a road. What we take for granted today simply did not exist then.

The first roads, which were barely walking and horse paths in the wilderness, made connections between the first centers of community among the settlers in our section of William Penn’s colony – the Friends meeting houses. For example, “the Darby road” went to the Darby Friends Monthly Meeting building. A better convention was to refer to the destinations at both ends, an example being “the Radnor and Chester road” (naming two meeting houses), the majority of which we now know as Sproul Road.

A second type of destination was the early mills, so there are numerous roads with “Mill” in their name. Over time tradesmen (such as blacksmiths), shopkeepers and taverns would appear and might also become destination names useful for road travelers.

### EARLY ROADS (1683-1703)

**The Haverford Street or road** was laid out in 1683, just a year after the first Welsh Quaker settlers arrived in newly-created Haverford Township. It appears on the retrospectively drawn “Map of the Early Settlements of Delaware County, Penna.” (included in the book [History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania](#) by George Smith M. D. in 1862), as well as Thomas Hunter’s 1882 retrospectively drawn “Map of the Township of Haverford Showing Early Grants and Patents.” This “laid out” road was not present-day Haverford Road. It is shown running straight up through the middle of the township through its entire length. It is unclear if this road actually existed as a primitive unimproved road in the

very early days of colonial settlement. If it did exist, it may have been little more than blaze markings on trees through the woods. In any event, it was quickly superseded by present-day Darby Road. (A similar bisecting “laid out” road is also shown in Radnor Township on the Smith map. Bear in mind that the act, and date, of “laying out” a road are not the same thing as the actual physical construction of a road. Even when constructed, an early colonial road was simply a stretch of land, cleared by the necessary succession of landowners along the route and designated as a travel way. Some sources list this “Haverford Road” as officially opened in 1696, but this is doubtful since the similar Darby road was itself “laid out” earlier than this, in 1687. See below.)

**The Darby road**, laid out in “12th month, 7th day, 1687,” was the early road built to connect the (Old) Haverford and the Darby Friends meeting houses. Present-day Darby Road was known by many names, including **Haverford and Darby road** (1862 Smith and 1882 Hunter retrospective maps, 1908/1913/1920 Mueller maps, and 1926 Bromley map), **Darby and Coopertown road** (1868 Barnes map), and **Coopertown road** (1881 Hopkins map, 1887 and 1900 Smith maps). The northwestern end of this road was laid out later, in 1704, according to the 1882 Hunter map. The 1988 Comprehensive Plan, which references a 1918 map of Haverford Township by Milton Yerkes as its source for historic road and date information, lists “Northern section 1704,” “Middle section 1709” and “Southern section 1687.” Much later, the Ardmore and Llanerch Street Railway laid its tracks along the east side of the Darby road from West Chester Pike to just below Eagle Road, where they diverged. Then, as suburban development occurred, sections of a road called **East Darby Road** were built on the east side of the trolley tracks, creating a pair of two-way roads with the trolley line between them. When the trolley tracks were removed in the late 1960s, Darby and East Darby roads were combined and reconfigured as a divided arterial, the wide present-day Darby Road, with a center median where the tracks had once been.

**Sproul Road** (present name), originally called the **Radnor and Chester road** and the **Chester and Radnor road**, was laid out in 1691 to connect the Radnor and Chester Friends meeting houses. It cuts through the northwest corner of the township, and Darby Road ends at Sproul, thereby connecting the Radnor and Haverford Friends meeting houses as well. The road was later renamed in honor of William Cameron Sproul (1870-1928), a Delaware County resident who as a State Senator in 1911 drafted the Sproul Highway Act which created the state highway system. Elected Governor of Pennsylvania (1919-1923), he continued his focus on improving roadways in the Commonwealth. The stretch of Sproul Road at Darby Creek was relocated about one-tenth of a mile east when a newer parallel bridge replaced the original covered bridge.

**The Haverford road**, laid out on 1703 (1862 Smith retrospective map), came into the township from Merion Township (now Lower Merion) and angled northward parallel to Cobbs Creek for a short distance, as present-day Haverford Road does. However, the old Haverford road then turned sharply west, crossed Cobbs Creek and went uphill to the (Old) Haverford meeting house along the route of present-day Eagle Road, ending at Darby Road. It was later extended northward from Eagle Road east of Cobb’s Creek, creating the length of today’s Haverford Road. The original route was part of the longer “great road from Philadelphia to Goshen,” so it was also referred to as part of **the Goshen road**.

The above roads are the only ones shown of the retrospectively Smith map drawn in 1862. (The Hunter map, drawn in 1882, appears to show early land parcels superimposed on the larger road network contemporary to 1882, rather than depicting an earlier old road network.)

**The Haverford and Merion road**, it appears, should be added to this list of early roads. In his article on this road in Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography (Vol. 58 No. 3, page 232, 1934), Charles R. Barker makes the case that this road pre-dates the old Haverford road. It connected the Merion and

(old) Haverford meeting houses, the first two in the area. It actually went beyond the meeting houses, with a short westward extension to meet the Haverford and Darby road and a longer eastern extension in Merion to the Levering Ford of the Schuylkill River. (Remnants of the old Haverford and Merion road still in use today include East Darby Road and Wynnewood Road in Haverford Township, then into Lower Merion generally along West Wynnewood Road and Wynnewood Road, Haverford Avenue in Narberth, and Meeting House Lane and Levering Mill Road in Lower Merion.) The Haverford road, compared to the Haverford and Merion road as a route from Haverford to Philadelphia, offered a route that was several miles shorter and took advantage of a ferry across the Schuylkill instead of an in-water ford. The section of road between the Haverford and Darby road and the old Haverford road, which is now called East Eagle Road in present-day Oakmont, went by many descriptive names, including **the Church road** (1868 Barnes map), also **the Haverford and Merion road** (1896 Mueller map), and was also part of the longer **Goshen road** route to that Quaker meeting house and township from Philadelphia. Other sections of Eagle Road are discussed below.

### LATER ROADS (1755-1884)

In the 1935 “Haverford Township Directory” issued by the Haverford Township Chamber of Commerce, the roads and initial dates listed below are presented, with the information described as “found on the records.” The present-day names of these roads are used there and below. I have added columns showing confirmation from maps drawn in 1816 (“Map of Delaware County” drawn by John Melish), 1848 and 1868, some brief notes, and some roads and dates from the 1988 Comprehensive Plan for Haverford Township.

#### Eagle Road

1816 (all) 1848 1868

The extension of the Haverford and Merion road became known as **the Eagle road** because it led to the Eagle Hotel (established 1815) on the West Chester road. As Eagle Road was extended westward from Darby Road and then southward, it stopped at present-day Steel Road; North Drexel Avenue did not appear as an extension of Eagle Road until later. In fact, “the Eagle road” designation turned westward on present-day Steel Road, then on present-day Burmont Road. If you continue west on Burmont Road across the bridge over Darby Creek into Springfield Township, the name “Eagle Road” persists there even today. This was a very early travel way used by colonial settlers and farmers because it led to Chester, where the first grist mill was located. Haverford Township’s 1988 Comprehensive Plan lists three segments of present-day Eagle Road separately: “Railroad tracks [Newtown Square Branch] to eastern end - 1697,” “Railroad tracks to West Chester Pike - 1763,” and “Western section (Steel Road) – 1755.” Some of this seems erroneous, since the railroad was not laid until 1894. Today Eagle Road in Haverford is fairly unique in covering all four compass points, with parts formally identified as East Eagle Road, West Eagle Road, North Eagle Road and South Eagle Road.)

#### Manoa Road

1816 1848 1868

(West of Darby Road to Bethesda Church 1755, east of Darby Road 1756)

This road was originally just known as “the public road.” The eastern end from the Haverford road in Lower Merion to Cobb’s Creek was later called **Kelly’s Lane** after Dennis Kelly, since it led to his home and textile mills there. The name “Manoa” was non-existent in Haverford Township until storeowner Samuel Moore adopted it in 1882 as a replacement name for his “Haverford” contract post office where the road crosses West Chester Pike.

#### Steel Road, laid out Sept. 14, 1755 (1882 Hunter map)

1816 1848 1868

This refers to the portion west of Eagle Road to Burmont Road. The eastern portion came later, reflected in the fact that today the western portion is a state road, and the eastern portion is a township road. The Steel family in this area owned farmland and also included operators of the Haverford New Mill.

**Marple Road** (1759) (also named **Church Road** on 1868 map)      1816      1848      1868

**Earlington Road** (1764)      1816      1848      1868

The first section of present-day Earlington Road was part of a longer early Mill road shown on the 1816 map that led from present-day Manoa Road and then turned westward on present-day Mill Road. This section was later extended southward to Township Line Road and was known as **Lewis Lane**. The last segment, Mill Road northward to Eagle Road, came later. Earlington Road is listed in the 1988 Comprehensive Plan as a “southern section” 1764 and a “northern section” 1869.

**Buck Lane** (1810) (east of Haverford Road)      1816      1848      1868

This road led to the Buck Tavern. Confusingly, it meets with the perpendicular Back Buck Lane, often shortened to just “Buck Lane,” which actually led to the Buck Tavern’s location. Back Buck Lane is now known as one of the several unconnected County Line Roads.

**College Avenue** (1810)      1816      1848      1868

The 1988 Comprehensive Plan lists the following: West of Golf House Road 1810, Vicinity of Haverford Road 1852, and Vicinity of Haverford College 1876, and the 1816 map shows it between present-day Darby Road and Cobb’s Creek. This road later received its name from the fact that it led to Haverford College (established in 1833).

**Old Lancaster Road** (1814)      1816      1848      1868 (truncated)  
(see separate history “The Lancaster Road and Turnpike”)

**County Line Road** (1816) (later named **Township Line Road**)      1816      1848      1868

(different than the present-day County Line Roads; see “Old Buck / County Line Road” below.) Some maps up through 1875 identify this road as “County Line Road;” the 1881 Hopkins map is the first to identify it as “Township Line Road.” It is not along a county border, except for a very short distance east of Cobbs Creek where Haverford adjoins Philadelphia. At times, this road also has been called **City Line Road** or **City Line Avenue** in Haverford Township as far west as West Chester Pike, even though Haverford’s border with Philadelphia does not extend farther west than Cobb’s Creek. The 1816 map appears to show this road extending just a little west of Darby Road, and later maps show it extended westward to Burmont Road. (The curved part west (or “south”) of Burmont came much later.)

**Radnor Road** (1818)      ---      1848      1868

This road leads off of the upper part of present-day Darby Road into Radnor Township, where it is named Mill Road.

**Coopertown Road** (1836) (both sections)      1816      1848      1868

Coopertown is Haverford Township’s longest lasting place name, referring to an early cluster of buildings, along present-day Darby Road between Coopertown Road and Marple Road, which included a cooperage for a barrel maker and a blacksmith shop. Despite the 1836 date given in the 1935 directory, the southern portion between Darby Road and College Avenue is depicted on the 1816 map.

**Mill Road** (1844) (originally **Dickinson Mill Road**)      1816      1848      1868

See the Earlington Road entry above for a description of the earliest shown section. This road led to the sawmill and grist mill on the west side of Cobb’s Creek that was owned or operated over the years by Miller, Leedom and Dickinson. The portion west of Earlington Road to Darby Road came at a later date.

**Lawrence Road** --- 1848 1868  
 (The 1988 Comprehensive Plan states Ellis Road to West Chester Pike 1858 but it appears on the 1848 map, and Eagle Road to Ellis Road 1888)

**Ellis Road (1858)** --- --- 1868  
 The center portion originally did not follow its present route connecting to Ardmore Avenue.

**Ardmore Avenue** (not listed in the 1935 directory article) is shown on an 1870 map of the township, extending from Lower Merion Township as far west as Haverford Road; an 1875 map shows it extending further west to Darby Road. The 1988 Comprehensive Plan lists it as dating from 1869.

**Railroad Avenue (1872)** (confirmed as converting from railroad to road between the 1870 and 1875 atlas maps) (see separate history “Abraham Lincoln Came and Went Through Haverford”)

**Darby Creek Road (1876)** This date may be in error; it is not shown on the 1887 map, but does show on the 1902 Baist map.

**Cobb’s Creek Road (1882)** (shown on 1887 map) Now called **Karakung Drive**.

**Penn Street (1884)** (shown on 1887 map)

**Highland Lane (1888)**

The following additional roads are shown (without names) on the 1816, 1848 and/or 1868 maps, as indicated:

**Lancaster Turnpike** 1816 1848 1868

**Landover Road / County Line Road** --- 1848 1868

**Old Buck / County Line Road** (Railroad to Old Lanc.; intersects Buck Lane) 1848 ---  
 (The 1988 Comprehensive Plan lists “Northern section 1704” which may be the east-west extension of Landover Road, and “Ardmore Avenue to Haverford 1869” which would explain the absence of this section on the 1868 map.)

**Panmure (Railroad to Buck)** --- 1848 ---

**West Chester Turnpike** 1816 1848 1868

This road is labeled on the 1816 map as “West Chester Stage Road.” The turnpike was incorporated later than that, and the road was a turnpike only as far west as Newtown Square, not all the way to West Chester. As a turnpike, it was originally “improved” as a “corduroy” road formed of two parallel lanes of crosswise wood planks; however, these would quickly shift and deteriorate to a condition that was not an improvement at all. The planks were removed and a trolley line to West Chester was later built on the south edge of the road, and when “West Chester Pike” was expanded to four lanes in westward-heading stretches after World War II, the added eastbound lanes were built south of the trolley tracks,

which ended up in a median strip. In the mid-1950s a long four-lane bridge was built over Darby Creek into Marple Township, and the road was shifted northward onto that, leaving behind a short portion in Haverford which was then renamed "Old West Chester Pike."

**Burmont Road** (named **School Lane** on the 1868 Barnes map) 1816 1848 1868

**Stump Lane** (Steel Road to County Line / Township Line Road) --- 1848 1868

The 1870 and 1875 maps show this road going only as far south as present-day Burmont Road.

Starting in the mid-1880s, the rural, fairly static character of the township changed dramatically. Suburban development began a period of rapid introduction of new roads, mainly local residential streets lined with homes, which today constitute the majority of the hundreds of roads in the township.

## STATE AND NATIONAL ROADS

When the Sproul Highway Act of 1911 became law in Pennsylvania, the only roads in Haverford Township designated to become state highways were West Chester Pike and the short length of present-day Sproul Road. Today, the township is somewhat unique in that all major roads within it, along with some minor roads, are managed by the commonwealth through the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). PennDOT is responsible for maintenance and operation of state roads and U.S. highways, including the section of Interstate highway I-476 within the township.

Haverford Township hosts sections of two important early national highway routes, the Lincoln Highway and the Atlantic Highway. In 1913 the Lancaster Turnpike (U.S. Route 30 today) became part of the Lincoln Highway, the nation's first transcontinental improved highway. Designated with special signs, it stretched from New York City to San Francisco. Through its Department of Highways (the predecessor to PennDOT), Pennsylvania took over control of the Lancaster Pike in 1917 from its private owners. The Atlantic Highway (today U.S. Route 1 in our area) was designated in 1915 and extended from Maine to Florida. As traffic levels increased, the pioneering Pennsylvania Turnpike (now part of Interstate Highway I-76) was built to remove most long-distance traffic from U.S. 30 and the old Lincoln Highway. Similarly, Interstate Highway I-95 was constructed to relieve the Atlantic Highway and U.S. 1, which today handles mostly local traffic as well.

## LOCAL ROADS

Local roads, mostly within residential subdivisions and developments, are generally named by the land subdivider or developer. Many of the names chosen have historical significance, while others are simply named by whimsy. Road names with historical significance that we have uncovered include the following:

**Allgates Drive** (built in former Allgates estate property of Horatio Gates Lloyd)

**Beechwood (Drive and Road)** (in Beechwood development)

**Bon Air (Terrace and Road)** (in Bon Air development)

**Brookline Boulevard** (the major road in the Brookline development)

**Buck and Old Buck/Back Buck** (led to area of the Buck Tavern)

**Caernarvon Lane** (in former Caernarvon estate)

**Carroll Road** (in Carroll Park development; name of former landowner)

**Cedar Brook Road** (names of famous golf courses were used in Merion Golf Manor development)

**College Avenue** (led to Haverford College from early Darby/Coopertown Road)

**Coopertown Road** (named after location of cooper (barrel maker); lower portion originally called xx while upper Darby Road was referred to as “Coopertown Road”)

**Country Club Lane** (near Llanerch Country Club and its predecessors)

**Darby Creek Road** (along Darby Creek)

**Davis Road** (landowner name)

**Dill Road** (landowner name)

**Ellis Road** (settler/landowner name)

**Fairlamb Avenue** (landowner name)

**Flintlock Road** (tribal names and pioneer terms were used in the Aronimink Estates development; each section also had a name based on a tribe name or pioneer term)

**Fox Fields Road** (in the Fox Fields development; a former estate name)

**Friendship Road** (tribal names and pioneer terms were used in the Aronimink Estates development; each section also had a name based on a tribe name or pioneer term)

**Garfield Avenue** (names of U.S. presidents were used in this development)

**Golf House Road** (adjacent to Merion Golf Club East Course and its golf house)

**Golf View Road** (adjacent to Merion Golf Club East Course)

**Grant Avenue** (names of U.S. presidents were used in this development)

**Harding Avenue** (names of U.S. presidents were used in this development)

**Harvard Road** (names of Ivy League universities were used in this development)

**Hiawatha Lane** (tribal names and pioneer terms were used in the Aronimink Estates development; each section also had a name based on a tribe name or pioneer term)

**Highland Lane** (was an access drive to the Highland Farm estate)

**Humphreys Road** (in former Humphrey/Humphreys family “Pont Reading” estate land)

**Karakung Drive** (Lenape name for Cobbs Creek)

**Lakeside Avenue** (was along a lake created by the Nitre Hall Powder Works dam on Cobbs Creek)

**Lawrence Road** (settler/landover name)

**Leedom (Road and Avenue)** (landowner/miller name)

**Lincoln Avenue** (names of U.S. presidents were used in this development)

**Lynnewood Drive** (in Lynnewood development)

**Manoa Road** (led from Haverford Road and across Darby Road to early “Manoa” post office and community)

**Manor Road** (after Manor Real Estate Co., a real estate arm of the Pennsylvania Railroad)

**Marple Road** (leads from northern Darby Road into Marple Township)

**Martin Avenue** (landowner name)

**Millbrook Lane** (named after the Garrigues family “Millbrook” farm)

**Naylor's Run Road** (named for parallel Naylor's Run stream)

**Old West Chester Pike** (former segment of the West Chester Turnpike)

**Paddock Road** (landowner name)

**Parkside Drive** (along Hilltop Park)

**Parkview Drive** (leads to and through Community Park at Haverford Reserve)

**Penfield Avenue** (in Penfield development)

**Penn Street** (honoring William Penn)

**Pilgrim Lane** (tribal names and pioneer terms were used in the Aronimink Estates development; each section also had a name based on a tribe name or pioneer term)

**Polo Road** (near Bryn Mawr Polo Association's Polo Field, now a park)

**Pont Reading Road** (name of the extant Humphreys family house)

**Powder Mill Lane** (named after site of Nitre Hall Powder Works)

**Preston Road** (landowner name)

**Princeton Road** (names of Ivy League universities were used in this development)

**Radnor Road** (leads from northern Darby Road into Radnor Township, becoming Mill Road there)  
**Railroad Avenue** (former path of early Philadelphia and Columbia Railroad)  
**Richland Avenue** (in former Richland estate property)  
**Roosevelt Avenue** (names of U.S. presidents were used in this development)  
**Shawnee Road** (names of famous golf courses were used in Merion Golf Manor development)  
**Signal Road** (tribal names and pioneer terms were used in the Aronimink Estates development; each section also had a name based on a tribe name or pioneer term)  
**Springhouse Lane** (after extant spring house in former Flintlock estate)  
**St. Denis Lane** (named after St. Denis church)  
**Steel Road** (landowner/miller name)  
**Stump Road** (location of tree, later stump left purposefully, that marked property line)  
**Treaty Road** (tribal names and pioneer terms were used in the Aronimink Estates development; each section also had a name based on a tribe name or pioneer term)  
**Warrior Road** (tribal names and pioneer terms were used in the Aronimink Estates development; each section also had a name based on a tribe name or pioneer term)  
**West Chester Pike** (once a privately-run turnpike from Philadelphia toward West Chester)  
**Westgate Road** (in Westgate Hills development)  
**Whitemarsh Road** (names of famous golf courses were used in Merion Golf Manor development)  
**Wilson Avenue** (names of U.S. presidents were used in this development)  
**Woodmere Way** (in Woodmere Park development, on site of previous golf course)  
**Yale Road** (names of Ivy League universities were used in this development)

©2014-2018 by Haverford Township Historical Society. Personal non-commercial use permitted; all other rights reserved.