

TRANSPORTATION

By Mrs. Frederick Stothoff

Transportation facilities in Hunterdon County have undergone great changes during the past two hundred and fifty years. In contemplating these changes one may recall from what humble origins our routes and modes of travel have sprung. When the first white settlers came to the area, they traveled over numerous Indian footpaths already worn through the forests. These trails have formed the skeletons of our present road system. For instance, a path which led from New Hope and the Delaware, thence through Lambertville, Mount Airy, Ringoes, Larison's Corner, Reaville, Three Bridges, Centerville and ultimately to the Newark area, became the Old York Road, one of the best known of Hunterdon County highways. Other Indian paths were used by the settlers as the foundations for their initial roads.

To make these trails passable later for carts or wagons, work had to be done felling trees, clearing away matted vines and stunted brushes, and laying to one side the decayed tree trunks which had fallen. Where there were gullies, trees were cut down to fill in, and logs were laid over small streams to create crude bridges.

Before the first decade of the eighteenth century, the land now comprising Hunterdon County was still largely unsurveyed wilderness. But emigrants were moving westward, up the Raritan River and its branches, and northward up the Delaware. The main road for north and south travel was the road leading from Trenton through Flemington, Cherryville, Pittstown and Hampton, ultimately reaching the Delaware Water Gap. Another early road ran east and west between New Brunswick and Easton. At Reaville, the Amwell Road branched off from the Old York Road, leading to New Brunswick. Further south at Lambertville an alternate route to New Brunswick through Hopewell became the Hopewell road. Similar roads connected settlements along the northern part of the county.

Road conditions in the eighteenth century were very bad, but they were accepted with resignation by most inhabitants as being a part of the way of life in this still-new area. One gentleman, however, did not appreciate the crude roads. He was the Rev. William Frazer, rector of three widely separated Episcopal parishes in Amwell, Kingwood, and Musconetcong. In a letter dated October 20, 1768, he wrote to his superior, the Rev. Dr. Benton in London, as follows: "Muskenetconk does not seem calculated to be joined with Amwell and Kingwood as they are separated by a ridge of high mountains (the Musconetcong range) which the frost and snow in winter render quite impassable, and even in good weather I find it very troublesome from the distance which is twenty-five miles and the roughness of the roads—to attend once in three weeks."

Little attention was paid to the improvement of roads during the Revolutionary War. After the War, through constant use by so many heavy wagons, roads continually grew worse. Yet roads were vital for the county's prosperity in agriculture, trade and commerce. This need stimulated both government and private companies to make plans for building new roads. Private companies were given monopolies by the state, in return for which they were to surface and maintain the roads. Profits were to come from tolls levied for use of the roads, and improvements were to be made from these tolls.

The northern part of the county was crossed by the New Jersey Turnpike, incorporated in 1806, which ran between New Brunswick and Easton. In Hunterdon County it took over the old road, leading through Whitehouse, Potterstown and Clinton. Farmers along the road, particularly in Hunterdon County, forcibly resisted paying tolls. After thirty years of existence the New Jersey Turnpike surrendered its Hunterdon County portion to the various townships.

The New Germantown and the Spruce Run Turnpike Companies were both incorporated in 1813 for the purpose of connecting the Washington and the New Jersey Turnpikes. The New Germantown Company road began at North Branch, intersecting and branching off from the New Jersey Turnpike, thence on through present day Oldwick and terminating at the Washington Turnpike in Morris County. The company failed after some years of financial difficulties. The Spruce Run Company built its road from Clinton northward through the Spruce Run Valley, also intending to connect with the Washington Turnpike. The road was never completed, although sections of it were improved. In the southern part of the county the old Hopewell road was taken over and improved to become the Georgetown and Franklin Turnpike. This highway to New Brunswick was used by many Conestoga and Jersey wagons.

Too many turnpikes were built in sparsely settled regions in anticipation of traffic that never materialized. Profits were lacking, and the tolls received were never enough to maintain the roads. In other words, the turnpikes failed because of lack of public support.

Roads throughout the county continued to be "fair-weather" roads, and the men appointed to be overseers usually let the road repairs wait until their farm work was completed, and their spring carting finished. They would then get to work, using up their appropriations quickly during that slack season. When fall came, the roads were again in disrepair. Through the winter, little was done to make roads more passable. On April 8, 1830, Dr. William Johnson of Whitehouse wrote a letter to his son James, who was living in Philadelphia. He mentioned having sent a letter some time previously by a friend who was going to the city, but who, "finding the roads much worse than he expected, he returned after getting as far as Lambertville."

Winter presented the worst problems- blizzards and resulting drifts, strangling traffic. While people could travel during the winter on horse-drawn sleighs, it was risky business because they might be caught some distance from home in a thaw, with a discouraging trip home via wagon or horseback. The spring presented new problems- deep ruts and mire so deep as to cause injury to horses and anger to men. The need for better roads became increasingly apparent.

During the latter quarter of the nineteenth century there was State legislation which enabled the county to take over, macadamize and maintain in repair certain main roads. But since the landowner was to bear the greater part of the cost of construction, no roads were macadamized as yet in Hunterdon County. Some time later new legislation provided that only one-tenth of construction costs should be paid by the owner, with State aid up to one-third of the cost, the balance to be paid by the county. Still there were objections. The main street of Flemington had its face lifted and macadamized in 1901, and when the road broke up because of heavy travel the opponents to the new roads were delighted. When further legislation permitted that ten per cent of construction costs be paid by the township instead of the landowner, the objections to macadamizing rapidly decreased. The first macadamized road of the county was that from Lambertville to Ringoes, a road which was extended on to Flemington the following year. By 1909 Alexander B. Allen, in a booklet issued by the Flemington Board of Trade, could write: "Macadam roads extend from the town so that either New York or Philadelphia can be reached on macadam from Flemington." Between the years 1910 and 1915 the county borrowed a total of \$315,000.00 to repair roads.

Two factors were important in the movement for better roads. First, bicycles had become quite popular, and bicycle clubs agitated for better roads. Second, automobile traffic on the highways during the first years of the twentieth century made existing macadam roads quite inadequate. The Freeholders were constantly besieged to construct better roads, and although the cost was high they were gradually forced to acquiesce. The new highway system gradually filled out over the county, so that today no one is far from a surfaced road.

In the early 1920's there was agitation for a State road through the county. There were several reasons for this. Road costs had increased; there was no large city within the county to help bear the burden of road construction costs; and new highways were without doubt beneficial to people of other areas. A bill was finally passed in Trenton authorizing the construction of a State road through the county. The roads from Trenton to Buttsville and from Ringoes to Lambertville were taken over and the roads from Flemington to Somerville; Flemington to Frenchtown, and the old New Jersey Turnpike.

Even greater changes have taken place more recently. The old New Jersey Turnpike, with some changes in routing, has become United States Route

22, a most important highway servicing the county and all surrounding areas. Interstate 78 is supplementing and in the future will further supplement Route 22. Dualization of Route 202 from Somerville to Flemington was completed in 1962, and the section from Flemington to Ringoes is presently in the process of dualization.

At this writing, the county has 88 miles of State roads, 247.9 miles of county roads and 756 miles of township roads. The rural charm of the county's roads has not as yet been destroyed, for delightful roads, relatively free of traffic, can be reached within a very few minutes' ride from almost any point in the county.

Early crossing of the streams and rivers of Hunterdon County was by fording them at shallow places. The Indian paths had often crossed the stream at fording places. However, fords were at best not very satisfactory.

The use of ferries on the Delaware River in present Hunterdon County began early in the eighteenth century. The early ferries were small, and were propelled either by poles, oars, or sails. The traveler and his saddlebags were conveyed across the stream, which his horse swam behind. Later ferries, upon the opening of roads and the coming of wheeled vehicles, were, according to Lequear in his "Traditions of Hunterdon," long, narrow boats with flat bottoms and vertical sides. "The bottom sloped upwards at the ends, to the heights of the sides, which were parallel and about a foot high. At each end was a flap, so hinged as to be turned in board while crossing and outward at the landing, to make connection with the shore, forming a short bridge for the passage of teams."

The various ferries along the Delaware have gone under many names during the course of their existence. The best known in history is Coryell's Ferry, at what is now Lambertville. Originally owned by Samuel Coates (who had evidently operated it without a patent), the ferry was inherited in 1723 by his son John, who obtained a patent for it in 1726. The ferry was bought in 1728 by John Purcel, who in turn sold it to John Emanuel Coryell on February 8, 1732. Coryell's patent is dated January 7, 1733, and was granted by the Royal Governor in the name of King George III. Coryell's Ferry figured strategically in the early part of the Revolutionary War. On three occasions, substantial numbers of the Continental Army were conveyed across the river. Joseph Lambert succeeded the Coryells at the Ferry, which was abandoned at the building of the bridge to New Hope in 1814. The ferry at this point had to divide the traffic with another from present New Hope.

The ferry at present Stockton was started by John Reading, one of the first settlers in Hunterdon County. It became known as Howell's Ferry after 1735, having been purchased by Daniel Howell. A change of name came about again after 1772, when the ferry became Robinson's Ferry. However, when a George

Hoppock took it over in 1791 it reverted to the early name of Howell's Ferry. After the completion of the Centre Bridge at Stockton in 1814, the ferry was abandoned.

Frenchtown had ferry service dating from about 1741, when it was noted as London Ferry. It has had many names, after various operators of it on both the New Jersey and Pennsylvania shores. At various times the ferry was called Mechlenburg Ferry, Tinbrook's Ferry, Prigmore's Ferry, Calvin's Ferry, Sherred's Ferry, and Edwin's Ferry. It was of such strategic importance during the Revolutionary War that the Council of Safety of New Jersey on April 13, 1778, agreed to exempt "John Sherard and three men employed by him at his ferry from doing duty in militia until further orders. "Thomas Lowrey, famous Hunterdon County landowner, purchased the ferry property about 1785. In 1794, he sold to Paul Henri Mallet Prevost, a French refugee, and the village and ferry soon were called Frenchtown. A bridge replaced the ferry in 1844.

The ferry at Point Pleasant (Byram) was probably established about 1739 and continued to serve until the Point Pleasant Delaware Bridge was built in 1855. According to an undated petition (prior to 1779) for the granting of a license for Warford tavern, this was a very busy area in that "two great fisheries" were built there and "vast numbers of people are collected there." Apparently the ferry was used extensively through the years.

The ferry at Milford had been known by various names. It was called the Lowreytown Ferry (after Thomas Lowrey) for a time, then Burnt Mills Ferry, and finally Mill-ford Ferry. It was abandoned after the building of the Milford Delaware Bridge in 1842. Another ferry, opposite Durham, Pa., at the mouth of the Musconetcong River, was known as Pursley's Ferry or Parsley's Ferry. Later, in 1797, Andrew Rose in applying for his tavern license stated that he resides at the "old ferry known by the name of Jones Ferry." With the building of the Riegelsville Bridge, just outside the county, in 1837, the ferry was no longer needed.

One can readily imagine the amount of traffic across these various ferries, with travelers going in all directions on business. The ferries were vital to the fisheries, iron furnaces, lumber mills, flour mills, and stores at many locations along the Delaware and other streams.

As early as 1795, the County Board of Chosen Freeholders began levying taxes to bridge the inland creeks. Spanning of the Delaware was, however, left in the hands of private stock companies, which built toll bridges at Lambertville and Stockton in 1814. After much agitation for more bridges across the Delaware, the following were built: Raven Rock in 1835; Riegelsville in 1837; Milford in 1842; Frenchtown in 1844; and Point Pleasant-Byram in 1855.

All of these bridges were covered wooden structures. In their day their construction was completely utilitarian, for the wooden covering kept ice, snow and rain from the roadway. Most of them had picturesque toll houses. These covered bridges had their troubles, however. Several suffered from the ravages of fire or lightning, and all were partially or completely destroyed by the floods of 1841, 1862 and 1903.

There is no longer a bridge at Point Pleasant-Byram, only ruined piers. Raven Rock bridge was destroyed in 1947 after being condemned a few years before as being unsafe. A suspension foot bridge now exists over the stone piers. The bridge to Riegelsville was destroyed in the flood of 1903, and now also has a suspension bridge. At all four other locations steel and cement bridges have been built to withstand the fury of the Delaware at high flood times. Between 1919 and 1933, all of the bridges became free as the result of the operations of a joint state commission.

A look at the minute book of the Milford Delaware Bridge Company gives some idea of transportation facilities, and of the trials and tribulations of the bridge owners. Rates in 1842, when the bridge was completed, were as follows:

“For every coach, landau, chariot, phaeton, or other pleasurable carriage with four wheels drawn by four horses, cents	50
For the same carriage with two horses,	37½ “
For every wagon with four horses,	37½ “
For every carriage of the same description drawn by two horses	25 “
For every chaise, riding chair, sulkey, cart or other two-wheeled Carriage, or sleigh or sled, with two horses,	25 “
For the same with one horse,	15 “
For a single horse and rider,	10 “
For every led or driven horse or mule,	5 “
For every foot passenger,	1 “
For every head of horned cattle,	3 “
For every sheep or swine,	½ “

Toll rates for hauling of iron ore, lime, stone, coal, plaster lumber, flour and meal were regulated from time to time. Persons going to church and returning home were able to pass free of toll. Later, however, the toll collector was instructed to collect toll from those churchgoers who crossed the bridge twenty minutes or more after church service had ended! In 1912 the toll keeper was allowed to open the tollgate and close the toll office while he went to church. Anyone disposed to travel faster than a walk was to pay a fine of five dollars.

By 1886 a toll rate of three cents one way was levied on bicycles. By 1900 tolls were fixed for automobiles- one seat, ten cents one way; two seats or more, fifteen cents one way. Automobiles with three seats or more were levied

on in 1913 at thirty-five cents one way. At the same time, a charge of twenty-five cents one way was made on circus teams. The Joint Sales Commission finally bought the bridge after more than one try at it, and at the same time, the Frenchtown bridge, for \$45,000.00 each.

Today covered bridges are considered a romantic relic of the past, and are greatly admired and coveted. The only remaining covered bridge in the county and in the State is known as the Green Sergeant's Bridge, near Sergeantsville. Recently this old bridge was completely renovated by the State, and thus preserved for posterity.

In the early days of the county nearly everybody traveled by horseback. Lequear, in his Traditions of Hunterdon, tells of a John Manners who went to a gristmill at Trenton, on horseback, from Ringoes. The road was little more than a bridle path through the forest. One horse carried three bushels of corn- another horse carried one bushel plus the rider. Riders waited for their corn to be ground and brought it back with them. However, wagons of various sizes were soon to be found on the roads. Other vehicles included two-wheeled carts, or sulkies, so-called "chairs" pulled by one horse and chaises or "shays" pulled by one or two horses. A few gentlemen had carriages. The use of private coaches was restricted to the wealthy.

When one thinks of Hunterdon County and its stagecoaches, it brings to mind the Old York Road. Although this road was one of the first wagon roads in the Colony, the first recorded mention of this road was in the Will of Samuel Coates, first owner of the Coryell Ferry, in 1723, where he describes his land as being near the "Yoark Road". According to Dr. G.S. Mott the road was never surveyed. In 1764 it was designated a "King's Highway".

The coaches of the wealthy came long distances along the road, often accompanied by an outrider mount, to be ridden should the lady riding in the coach tire of the monotony of the trip. Philadelphia aristocracy traveled along the York Road on their way to Schooley's Mountain, which in the days after the Revolution was a popular resort, being well known for its "iron spring". These wealthy folk traveled in their own large coaches, drawn by four to six horses, and with the family coat-of-arms emblazoned on the sides.

An advertisement appeared in the Pennsylvania Chronicle of September 25, 1769, which reads as follows:

THE NEW STAGE

To NEW YORK, on the OLD YORK ROAD

"SETS out Tomorrow, the 26th instant, from the sign of the Bunch of Grapes in Third-street, at Sunrise, proceeds by the Crooked Billet, Coryell's Ferry, Bound-Brook, Newark, and from thence to Powle's Hook, opposite New-York. It will set out regularly every Tuesday Morning, during

the Winter Season; perform the journey, from Philadelphia to Powle's Hook, in Two Days, and exchange passengers at the South Branch of Raritan, at the house of Obadiah Taylor, formerly kept by Daniel Seaburn (Three Bridges), on Wednesday Morning, when one Stage returns to Philadelphia, and other to Powle's Hook.

"Each Passenger to pay TEN SHILLINGS from Philadelphia to the South Branch, and TEN SHILLINGS from the South Branch to Powle's Hook, ferriage free, and THREE PENCE per mile for any distance between; and goods at the rate of TWENTY SHILLINGS per hundred weight, from Philadelphia to New-York.

"That part of the country is very pleasant; the distance and goodness of the road not inferior to any from this to New-York. There is but one ferry from this to Newark. The road is thickly settled by a number of wealthy farmers and merchants, who promise to give every encouragement possible to the stage. And as the principal proprietors of said stage live on the road, the best usage may be expected."

This route was considered a rival to the stages which operated between Philadelphia and new York on other routes outside of the county. The stages at first were light wagons built high in the rear and low in front, chaise fashion. Passengers sat on hard wooden benches placed across the wagon. Stage coaches replaced the wagons in the latter years of the eighteenth century.

Service was discontinued during the Revolutionary War, but was resumed after it. Stages ran from each city on weekdays, stopping overnight at Centerville. The "Swiftsure Line" was founded in 1799 by a group of twelve men who lived along the Old York Road. The fare in 1799 was \$5.00, and packages and freight were also carried. After 1800 the stage line began to stop off overnight at Flemington instead of at Centerville, continuing on in the morning and picking up the Old York Road at Centerville. In 1808 trips on Sundays were included. This line continued in operation between Philadelphia and New York until railroad lines cut across its route.

An advertisement appeared in the Hunterdon Democrat in 1844 to the effect that a daily stage would run from Flemington to Somerville every day except Sunday, arriving in Somerville "in time for the New York cars." Return time was 1:00 P.M. at Somerville, arriving in Flemington at 4:00 P.M. to "connect with the Philadelphia stage." There were a few other short-run stages in the county during the first half of the nineteenth century, among them a stage from Trenton through Ringoes, Flemington and Pittstown to Bloomsbury. This line connected with a steamboat line from Philadelphia at Trenton.

When railroads appeared, the number of short stage lines increased. One of the first to serve as a feeder to a railroad was the route from Flemington to

New Brunswick, via Reaville, Clover Hill, Neshanic and Millstone. The stage stopped at Millstone in later years when that town received a rail connection. Another stage came from West Portal or Bloomsbury, to Clinton, then to Somerville to connect with the New Jersey Central. Whitehouse Station became the terminus for this stage line after the Jersey Central had reached that point. Flemington Junction came to have a stage line from Flemington in 1875 when the Lehigh Valley Railroad (then Easton and Amboy) had reached the Junction. At various times there were short stages operating between Milford and Clinton; Annandale and Clinton; Pottersville and Whitehouse; and Oldwick and Whitehouse Station.

One looks back on stagecoach travel in America and is amused to think of taking up to three days to travel from Philadelphia to New York. Yet, in those colonial and post-colonial days, speed was as essential as it is to the twentieth century. Visitors in New York remarked even then about the hurrying of the pedestrians, and the galloping of the cart horses on the streets. Likewise, one is amazed to think that there was so much activity on the Old York Road, the Amwell Road, the Hopewell Road and the stage roads to the north counties of the state.

During a considerable part of the county's history, freighting by wagon was the principle means by which a farmer was able to sell his produce and a storekeeper to buy supplies. One can readily picture all the hustle and bustle as the heavy wagons loaded with all manner of merchandise traveled over the Old York- Amwell Road, the Hopewell Road and the Easton Pike to New Brunswick. Traffic was heaviest in fall after the harvest and in the spring when the accumulation of flour, applejack, cheese, barreled meat and other products was carried to market. At both times, too, storekeepers laid in stocks of manufactured goods. Wagons were driven sometimes by farmers relishing the opportunity to get away from their chores, but more often by hardened teamsters, who were hired for regular trips to New Brunswick, Trenton and Raritan Landing.

At the old stone storehouse at Mt. Airy cured hams and other meats were stored in huge vats. When weather and road conditions permitted, these would be taken by heavily laden wagons drawn by four to six horses to the Delaware, there to be loaded into Durham boats and carried to Philadelphia. Similar wagon traffic came into Frenchtown, Milford and other river points.

The Conestoga wagon was one of the newer types of wagons which became popular in New Jersey during the late eighteenth century. It had been developed by German settlers in the Conestoga valley in Pennsylvania. Because of its construction a load of produce was kept firmly in place no matter how steep a hill might be. It had a body shaped like a boat, and the bottom was curved. The distinctive silhouette of the Conestoga wagon was made by slanting the ends of the wagon outward. The wagon was covered with a piece of white homespun material. The rear wheels of the larger Conestogas were from five to

six feet high, with tires six inches board. Such a wagon was capable of carrying a load of about six tons, one ton for each horse. Great changes in freighting by wagon came about with the coming of the canals and railroads. Trips were shortened considerably, and marketing facilities for farmers were increased greatly.

Transportation by water assumed great importance in early days. Rafts, flatboats and dugout canoes were much used at flood times. The farmers in the eastern part of Hunterdon County transported their produce down the Raritan to Raritan Landing and New Brunswick. The Delaware River, especially, was used for transporting produce and lumber, although it presented some serious hazards to transportation. Rapids and rocks near Lambertville required a pilot who knew his work well.

There were three types of craft used on the Delaware River: the raft, the Durham boat, and the coal ark. The raft was made of logs or of logs covered with lumber. In the late eighteenth century rafting developed into an important business. The rafting season was at its height in early spring when the winter cutting was over and the river was at a higher level than normal, making passage quicker and easier. Thousands upon thousands of board feet of lumber were shipped down the Delaware from the Lehigh Valley and the upper Delaware. Gradually, as the resources of these areas were depleted, rafting declined, so that after 1900 few rafts appeared on the river.

The Durham boat answered the needs of the craft which could go against the current. It was so named because of its use in carrying iron from Durham, Pennsylvania, to the market. Before the days of canals and railroads these Durham boats carried the majority of the freight between Philadelphia and the upper Delaware. An ordinary Durham boat, being sixty feet long and eight feet wide, could carry 150 barrels of flour or 600 bushels of corn. Some towns along the river owned a single boat or even small fleets of them. The Durham boat did not survive the coming of the canals, for it was not well adapted to canal travel.

Coal arks were used on the Delaware for carrying coal to Philadelphia from the upper Delaware. These arks were rectangular boxes made of heavy planks spiked together. They were 16 to 18 feet wide and 20 to 25 feet long. According to M.S. Henry in his "History of the Lehigh Valley," two of these sections were at first joined together by hinges, allowing them to bend up and down in passing dams and sluices. Then as the channels were straightened and improved, the number of sections in each boat was increased, until their whole length sometimes reached 180 feet. Coal arks also became obsolete upon the coming of the canals.

The residents of New Jersey had long felt the need for canals across the state. The Morris Canal, completed in 1831, was of some benefit to northern Hunterdon, but residents were more interested in the second canal, the Delaware

and Raritan. Finally in 1830 a company was enabled to begin construction, completing it in 1834. The canal traversed east and west between Trenton and New Brunswick, by way of the Assanpink, Millstone and Raritan Rivers. The canals gradually brought river trade to a standstill, because the handling of bulky products such as coal could be taken care of more efficiently by canal boats.

Hunterdon shared the use of the Delaware and Raritan through a navigable feeder which diverted water from the Delaware River at Raven Rock. Irish immigrants were among the men who came to Hunterdon County to help dig the feeder for the canal. Lambertville profited greatly with the coming of the canal. Long hauling trips were made shorter; the town received much shipping business. Flour mills and sawmills utilized the canal's flow for their operation. Boats with considerable tonnage used the canal to Trenton.

The construction of a Pennsylvania canal- The Delaware Division Canal- gave the flour and corn mill operators the opportunity to haul their produce over the Milford and Frenchtown bridges to connect with this canal. Canal boats, having been loaded at the lime kilns, were brought down this Delaware Division Canal, pulled across the Delaware River by a cable just below Lambertville, then shunted into the feeder canal.

The canal and feeder were able to compete with the railroads for some years, and in the 1860's carried their peak loads. But by the turn of the century operations had nearly ceased. The feeder today has no value as a transportation facility, although it is important for carrying industrial water to Central Jersey.

Even before the canals were built, agitation for railroads was begun in the state. Plans were being promulgated for a railroad from Elizabethtown to Somerville, and citizens of Hunterdon foresaw gains in securing a line from Somerville to Flemington, with a spur to Clinton. Agitation for such a line resulted in public meetings and lobbying in Trenton. It was some years, however, before these efforts bore fruit. The Elizabethtown and Somerville Railroad Company received its charter in 1831. Constantly at financial disadvantages, the company after many difficulties managed to run its line to Somerville in 1841. The Camden and Amboy Railroad had been operating for seven years by this time.

The county still had no railroad; but late in 1847 the Somerville and Easton Company, a newly chartered corporation, pushed the railroad from Somerville to Whitehouse. In May of 1852, the railroad went as far as Clinton, where passengers could take a stage to Easton. Then, in July of 1852, the last rails were laid. A celebration was held, and the directors, their guests and a band traveled the distance to Easton via the "glorious landscapes of Hunterdon and Warren" to the cheers and flag waving of the crowds at the stations.

The two railroad companies were joined in 1849 to become the Central Railroad of New Jersey. This railroad was most important to the northern part of Hunterdon County in opening up its resources. Increase in trade, population, and contacts with the outside resulted. One could even visit New York and return on the same day! Even more important, the railroad brought in anthracite coal, much needed by industry, timber of the area having long since been depleted.

In 1856 a junction was made with the Delaware-Lackawanna Railroad at Hampton Junction. Flemington finally in 1863 had a branch line from Somerville. Today the New Jersey Central has passenger stations at Annandale, Ludlow-Asbury, Hampton, High Bridge, Lebanon, Glen Garner, Whitehouse and Bloomsbury. Commuters from these stations account for an average of 279 passengers per weekday to the New York metropolitan area. Freight stations on the Central are located at Flemington, Annandale, Whitehouse, High Bridge and Hampton.

Many people felt that a railroad line from Trenton to Belvidere along the Delaware River would be most desirable. The State in 1848 finally authorized the road, but a branch to Flemington was voted down. The railroad was constructed to Lambertville in 1851. Frenchtown and Milford were reached by 1853, and Belvidere, the terminus, in 1854.

A number of Flemington and Lambertville citizens now formed the Flemington Railroad Company, pushing through a charter for a separate line. The railroad from Lambertville to Flemington was finished in 1854, and although passenger business gradually increased, freight business was by far more important. The Pennsylvania Railroad eventually absorbed both the Belvidere and Delaware and the Flemington Railroads.

The Lehigh Valley Railroad began as the Easton and Amboy Railroad. A plan for a very direct route east to Perth Amboy meant construction of a tunnel through Jugtown or Musconetcong Mountain, a tremendous undertaking. Irish and Negro laborers working on the tunnel became involved in racial altercations with the result that several men were killed in 1872. Locally this affair was known as the Pattenburg Riots.

Local contractors worked on building the road and grading while the tunnel was being dug. Finally in 1875 the road was completed. Stations were built at Flemington Junction, Landsdown, Pattenburg, Bloomsbury, and at other points for passenger trade, which was a secondary consideration for the company. Spurs were eventually built to Clinton, then from Flemington Junction to Flemington, and from Landsdown to Pittstown. The tunnel at West Portal was widened in 1927 and 1928 and is one of the widest tunnels in the world. Before ceasing its passenger operations in 1961, the railroad carried approximately 300 commuters to the metropolitan area, each day.

One other railroad line in the northern part of the county filled a great need for carrying produce for a time. This was the Rockaway Valley Railroad (known locally as the "Rockabye Baby"), which had plans to connect the Jersey Central at Whitehouse with the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western at Morristown. Begun at Whitehouse in 1888, it finally reached its destination in 1900. This railroad suffered through the failure of the peach crop, once so important to the economy of the county. It never had enough traffic, and became bankrupt. Finally, it went out of existence during World War I.

For a time after 1905, citizens of Lambertville were proud to live in the only town in the county possessing a trolley line. Running west across the Delaware bridge to New Hope, and south to Trenton, the line never penetrated further into the county.

Those Hunterdon County residents of today who were the "young folk" of the 1890's can recall with a great deal of nostalgia the bicycle craze which affected just about everyone. While bicycle clubs demanded better roads strictly for bicycle jaunts, their agitation was unwittingly a big factor in the building of better roads for the automobile then coming into limited use. Among the bicycle-riding enthusiasts were evidently some individuals who did not obey the law, for in the Hunterdon County Republican of August 26, 1896, the editor bewailed the fact that the "ordinance requiring bicycles to carry lanterns is not obeyed." Early in the 1900's the bicycle craze left as suddenly as it had begun.

Automobiles had begun to appear in the county before the turn of the century. The Republican in its issue of September 23rd, 1896 told readers that the Duryea horseless wagon was being shown at Trenton and being raced around the racetrack. The editor was somewhat doubtful as to the merits of the horseless wagon, but he was willing to give the readers the "opportunity to judge for themselves during the Fair." The automobile *did* catch on. By 1900, the covered bridges of the Delaware had toll rates for automobiles, both one-seaters and two seaters. In 1909, the Flemington Board of Trade booklet proudly announced, "Fifty-two automobiles are owned in the town. Two garages are required to attend to the wants of their owners." By 1956, there were nearly 25,000 cars in Hunterdon County, and the end was not in sight.

The motorbus first took over the remaining stagecoach lines, then branched further afield. Buses play an important role today in the county. Since the Lehigh Valley Railroad terminated its passenger services, metropolitan commuters have been forced to drive to Whitehouse or to other points north to connect with the New Jersey Central; or to Hopewell for the Reading Railroad; or to Raritan or Somerville also for the New Jersey Central. For some time now the West Hunterdon Transit Company has been giving daily express service to New York from Frenchtown, Baptistown, Croton and Flemington. Many commuters from this area are taking advantage of this facility. Transportation from New

Hope and Lambertville to New York, and from Clinton to New York is provided by the Public Service buses.

The county benefits directly and indirectly by trucking, a major factor in transportation of all industrial and commercial facilities. Hundreds of trucks, both registered in New Jersey and out of state, traverse the county's highways daily, particularly Interstate 78, and U.S. 22, U.S. 202, and N.J. 69.

A fair number of the county's residents use the facilities of the metropolitan airports for business and pleasure trips, as well as for air express and freight. Private planes are flown by a number of residents of the county. Sky Manor, a private flying club near Pittstown, teaches prospective pilots, and has hangars for privately owned planes. In addition, flight transportation is available from Sky Manor.

A history of transportation in Hunterdon County cannot neglect the pipelines. The oldest pipeline in use in Hunterdon County are owned and operated by the Tidewater Pipe Co., Ltd., with offices in Hazleton, Pa. These lines at one time transmitted crude oil to the Bayonne refineries. Today, however, the Tidewater refineries in Delaware ship fuel oil by tanker to Bayonne, and from that area the fuel oil is piped to Changewater and on through Hunterdon County via Tewksbury and Lebanon Townships westward to Hudsonale, Pa.

Another early pipeline was laid by the Tuscarora Oil Company about 1906. This line had storage tanks on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware, at Centre Bridge, and transported unprocessed oil. The route which the Tuscarora followed began, in Hunterdon County, north of Lambertville near the Alexauken Creek Bridge; thence northeasterly through Delaware and East Amwell Townships to a point south of Ringoes; thence entering Somerset County near Clover Hill. The company was eventually absorbed by Standard.

During the Second World War, eleven major oil companies organized the corporation known as the War Emergency Pipelines, Inc. and entered into an agreement with Defense Plant Corporation, a government agency, to furnish experienced personnel to build and operate a 24-inch pipeline for crude oil, and also a 20-inch pipeline for processed petroleum. These pipelines were to be constructed from Texas to the Eastern seaboard. Permission was granted early in January of 1943 by the County Freeholders to a Texas contractor to burrow under the County highways in Delaware, Amwell, and Raritan Townships to lay the big pipeline, the route roughly paralleling the line of the Tuscarora Oil Company. The veteran Texas and Oklahoma crews faced problems with the Hunterdon County red shale, which was in a muddy state during those winter months. In addition they experienced difficulty dynamiting the trap rock of the Sourland Mountains. Work was finally completed in Hunterdon County after delays of several months.

A project related to the installation of the “big Inch” was the construction of the pumping station at the foot of Mt. Airy, off Route 69. In order to give the crude oil the last surge to force it to Bayway, extra power lines were required. This station was the eastern-most of 26 stations along the line which ran from Texas to Illinois. The line used 24-inch pipe to Phoenixville, Pa. where part of the load was diverted to Philadelphia. The line across Hunterdon is 20-inch. The “Little Big Inch” system for processed petroleum products was begun in April of 1943, and was completed in early 1944. This system paralleled the Big Inch in Hunterdon County.

When World War II ended, Texas Eastern Transmission Corporation bought the two pipelines, and in May of 1947 began transmitting natural gas through them. Gas transmission at that time was a fairly recent development. In 1949 Texas Eastern, together with several other companies, formed Algonquin Gas Transmission Company to extend natural gas service into New England. A new pipeline was constructed and tied into Texas Eastern’s system at Mount Airy. This 26-inch pipeline left Hunterdon east of Reaville. Two other lines were constructed to satisfy the growing demand for natural gas- one, a 30 inch line in 1958; the other a 36 inch, in 1961. Texas Eastern thus has four lines for gas transmission through Hunterdon County, plus the one by way of the Algonquin tie-in.

The Buckeye Pipe Line Company installed, about 1953, an 18-inch pipeline which runs from Bayonne to upper New York State. In July of 1959, a new site for a pumping station was chosen on the west side of Route 69 near Copper Hill. The new station was designed to boost the flow of petroleum across the county below Flemington. In July, 1958, Transcontinental Gas Pipe Corporation made application to the Freeholders to cross county roads in order to install 30-inch pipe for the piping of high pressure gas to the Leidy underground storage field near Williamsport, Pa. This line was to be a branch line connecting the company’s main line running from Texas to New York, also crossing Hunterdon. Several Stanton residents opposed the line on the grounds that the right of eminent domain did not apply to gas storage as it did to transmission of gas. After lengthy testimony on either side, the verdict went to Transcontinental. When the work was finally completed gas could flow into storage in the old exhausted natural gas field near Williamsport through the warm months, and in the opposite direction during the winter heating season.

It may be interesting to mention that according to a county newspaper account Samuel VanSyckle, born in Hunterdon County, was the originator of the pipeline transmission system. The article states that VanSyckle went to the Pennsylvania oil fields in 1860, and after cornering the oil barrel market, hit upon the idea of a pipeline because he was paying exorbitant fees to teamsters who carted the barrels of oil from the wells. VanSyckle is buried in this county, at Little York, also according to the newspaper account.

TRANSPORTATION (1989)

Updated by John Kellogg

In many respects, the changes which Hunterdon County has seen in the past 25 years have been as significant as those which the County experienced in the preceding 250 years. To a large extent, this period of rapid change can be attributable to the region of the State in which the County is located and the highway network which serves the County. The completion of Interstate 78 through the northern part of Hunterdon County in the late 1960's irreversibly opened up the County to the growth pressures which the northern part of the State experienced from the New York metropolitan area during the period following the Second World War.

The census in 1960 recorded a county population of 54,107. In 1989 the Hunterdon County Planning Board estimated that the total number of County residents had increased to 114,592. This more than doubling of the County's population in a 30-year period is the result of new employment opportunities coming on-line in the counties to the east of Hunterdon and the easy access from Hunterdon to these jobs which Interstate 78 provided. During the 1970's many of the research and office projects which have resulted in the transition of New Jersey from a manufacturing economy to a service economy in the closing years of the twentieth century developed along the Interstate 287 Corridor in Morris, Somerset and Middlesex Counties to the east. Many of the workers in these facilities turned to Hunterdon County as a place to live.

During the 1970's, Hunterdon County offered an attractive housing alternative to those relocating to the new jobs in the counties to the east. At that time real estate in Hunterdon County was relatively inexpensive compared to those areas of northern and central new Jersey which were closer to the New York metropolitan area and which had already been subjected to significant development pressures. To many who had tired of the older suburbs closer to the New York City area, Hunterdon County and its rural character offered an attractive living alternative. The opening of the Interstate highway in the late 1960's made the County accessible for those working to the east and who chose the lifestyle which was made available here.

While the decade of the 1970's was marked by the emergence of Hunterdon County as a bedroom community, the 1980's saw the first of what are likely to be many major employers relocating to the County. In the early 1980's the Exxon Corporation opened a major research facility in Clinton Township. A few years later the Burroughs Corporation (now Unisys) opened a computer assembly plant in Raritan Township. In 1987 Foster Wheeler relocated their new corporate headquarters to Union Township. Ground was broken in 1988 for the new Merck corporate headquarters in Readington Township. In the early 1990's it is expected that many of the several million square feet of office space which have received municipal approval will come on-line in the County.

One of the reasons that Hunterdon County has become attractive to major office developers is the easy access which the area has to Newark International Airport. With the completion of the missing link of Interstate 78 in the Watchung area of Union County in the mid-1980's, most of the northern part of the County is now within 30-45 minutes of a major metropolitan airport. Advances in communication technology within the past decade no longer make it necessary for major corporate facilities to be located in close proximity to each other. Access to major transportation facilities and desirable places to live are now among the major factors considered by corporations in deciding where to locate.

While the impact of Interstate 78 on Hunterdon County has been significant, it certainly has not been the only reason the County has grown rapidly in the past couple of decades. The County's location midway between New York and Philadelphia, as it was when a convenient overnight stop in the days when a stagecoach ride between these two major cities took two days, is now within a reasonable commuting distance for those who choose to work in the metropolitan areas and maintain a rural lifestyle. Convenient commuter bus service to New York is available from both Flemington and Clinton. Major state highways such as Routes 202, 31, 12, and 29 provide access to and through the central and northwestern parts of the State. The County road system funnels traffic through the County to a roadway network, which consists of municipal, county, and state highways.

A challenge which the County and its municipalities have been faced with in the past decade has been to encourage growth to occur in those areas served by the best roads so that the limited funds available to maintain and upgrade our highway system will be spent most effectively. The narrow, winding roads with one-lane bridges that characterize much of Hunterdon County are remnants of a former time. Having outlived their usefulness, they will need to be updated to meet the needs of the twenty-first century. Hopefully, with thoughtful planning, this will be accomplished without destroying the rural character, which has always made Hunterdon a unique region of New Jersey.