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STORIES of New Jersey

Governor Lawrie was instructed to see what could be done. In 1684 a road was laid out, and to induce travelers to use it Lawrie established a ferry at Perth Amboy that connected with New York. Halfway between Perth Amboy and Burlington he built a tavern to accommodate those making the trip.

Although the villages were told to build other roads, the farmers were not interested in cross-state roadways; they wanted only routes leading to the nearest large town or river landing so that they could sell their produce. As the State's natural resources were exploited, narrow roads were hacked through the backwoods to carry the iron and lumber from the interior to the nearest waterways.

There were, by the 18th century, three main thoroughfares leading from New York to Philadelphia: the Old Dutch road that followed the Assanpink trail from Trenton to Jersey City through Princeton, New Brunswick and Newark; Lawrie's road from Perth Amboy to Burlington; and the York road that crossed the Delaware at Lambertville, went through Somerville and Plainfield and ended at Elizabeth.

Some time during the last decade of the 17th century a man named Dell was given permission to drive a passenger and freight wagon over Lawrie's road. There was no fixed schedule and the amount of freight and passengers carried was very small, for the route was little more than two ruts. No brook wider than a few feet was bridged, and the wagons forded all the other streams. To get from New York to Perth Amboy, where the road began, meant a long trip in a boat, and to get from Burlington, the terminal, to Philadelphia meant another.

In 1706 Lord Cornbury, the first royal governor, granted to Hugh Huddy of Burlington the sole right to cart goods over the Burlington-Amboy route. Huddy ran his wagon every two weeks at announced rates, but the people of New Jersey disliked monopolies, and two years later, when Governor Cornbury was recalled, Huddy's privilege was withdrawn. Not until 21 years later is there another mention of regular land transportation facilities. Then, in 1729, Redford's ferry, connecting Perth Amboy and South Amboy, was advertised for rent. At the ferry, the advertisement said, was a stage wagon connecting with Burlington.

In the next four years two more stage lines appeared. One operated on a regular schedule, between Burlington and Perth Amboy. The wagons took three or four days to make the trip in one direction. While the stage wagons completed their task when the traveler arrived at Burlington or Perth Amboy, the passenger was not yet at his destination. He had to sail the rest of the way to Philadelphia or New York.

Another service was started over the old Dutch trail running from Trenton to New Brunswick, where passengers took a sloop that sailed down the Raritan River and through the bay to New York. Probably in an effort to take the business away from the Burlington-Amboy line, this new establishment claimed that their wagons would be "fitted up with Benches, and Cover'd over so that passengers may sit Easy and Dry..."

Neither of the lines carried enough passengers to be a financial success, and both soon quit. The Trenton-New Brunswick line was revived in 1740. In the same year Joseph Borden, who founded the city of Bordentown and hoped to make it outdistance its nearby rival Burlington, started his stage line over Lawrie's road. His most important bid for patronage was running his line to Bordentown instead of Burlington, which lopped 10 miles off the hard land trip. Borden also operated a boat line from Bordentown to Philadelphia. The ships and stage wagons ran on a weekly schedule.

Throughout the first half of the 18th century through-state passengers and freight were carried over one of the three lines: Trenton-New Brunswick, Perth Amboy-Bordentown or Perth Amboy-Burlington. Because Borden's route was short-