

## STORIES of New Jersey

120 passengers between New York and Philadelphia. The Amboy-Bordentown and Amboy-Burlington routes could carry about 44 passengers each, while the York road with only one wagon a week in each direction was capable of transporting only 22 passengers weekly.

As settlements increased, short routes were developed to carry passengers and goods between outlying points and the larger communities like Bordentown, Burlington and Cooper's Ferry (Camden) in the south and Powles Hook in the north.

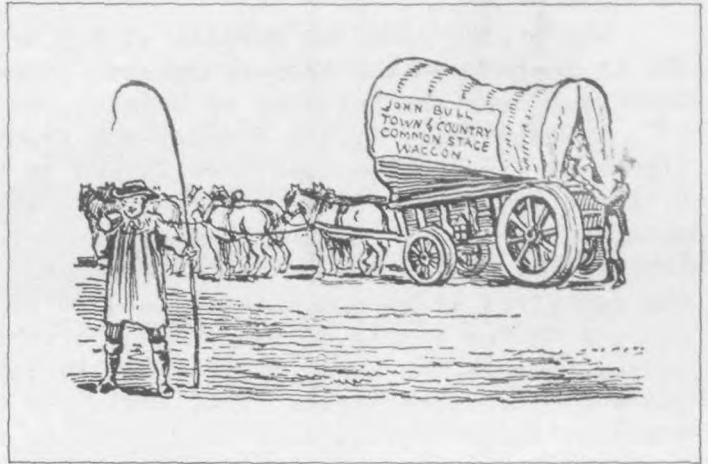
Because almost any trip by stage meant spending one or more nights on the road, taverns and inns multiplied. The crude 17th century accommodations were bettered as stage travelers stopped more frequently. Most taverns in the 18th century had a large main taproom which connected with the dining room. Upstairs were the bedrooms. When taverns were crowded several guests shared a room, and if all the rooms were full, latecomers slept on the floor of the taproom.

The Revolution thoroughly disrupted stage travel. Wagons, boats and horses were confiscated, but except when actual fighting was in progress attempts were made to keep the lines open. After Clinton raced his army across the State to New York, most of New Jersey was once more in the hands of the Americans, and the stage lines were set up again. Less than a month after the Battle of Monmouth was fought a stage line was running between Cooper's Ferry (Camden) and Little Egg Harbor and Great Egg Harbor.

Shortly after the establishment of the American army near New York, the Borden line was revived. His stage boat connected Philadelphia with Bordentown, from which point the wagons took passengers to New Brunswick and then to Elizabeth. In 1779 the Burlington line began again, and the next year the three-cornered fight for patronage was on once more when Gershom Johnson ran his coaches between Trenton and Newark by way of Princeton and New Brunswick. By using four shifts of horses and driving them to exhaustion, he made the trip to Philadelphia in one day, bettering by one-half day the best time made before the war.

The post roads provided for by the Post Office act of 1794, which also permitted the government to make contracts with stage lines for carrying the mails, stimulated the transportation facilities. The government could not pay the stagecoach operators more for delivering the mail than was actually received for postage, but this income was often the margin of profit to the operator.

One of the chief remaining handicaps to achieving the greatest possible speed was the lack of bridges. New England had sped stage services by substituting toll bridges for the ferries which consumed so much time. New Jersey followed this lead, and by 1795 stages could travel from New Brunswick to Powles Hook without interruption by way of the new wooden spans over the Hackensack and Passaic Rivers. The bridges were built north of the big bend in the Passaic River at what is now Harrison. Two-horse coaches paid 29 cents toll and four-horse vehicles 39 cents to cross the 492-foot Passaic span. The rates, limited to not more than three-fourths of the ferry charge, were slightly higher on the 980-foot Hackensack River bridge. Two new short stage lines were formed to accommodate commuters to New York.



Stage Wagon. From Earle's Stage-Coach and Tavern Days.