

## STORIES of New Jersey

The first years of the 19th century are called the turnpike era in America. New Jersey, too, felt the impetus of this new road building. Roads up to this time were only slightly better than in the Colonial period. Road building machinery was unknown, and the use of stone or other surface unheard of. Deep ruts still marked the right of way, and vehicles bogged down in mud holes.

In England crushed stone was being used experimentally as a road surface. The proof that such roads could withstand the heaviest traffic offered the solution to the poor road problem in America. The only drawback was the expense. Pennsylvania got around this by chartering private companies to build toll roads. These turnpikes made money for their owners and speeded transportation.

Between 1801 and 1829 the New Jersey State Legislature granted charters to more than 50 turnpike companies, although not all the roads were built. Tolls were paid at the gates which were placed at intervals across the road. Although freighting brought in most of the toll revenue, stagecoaching was second. In one year the Trenton-New Brunswick pike collected \$2,500 from stage lines that used it.

Paralleling the rise of the turnpike was the development of the steamboat. Although the early steamers were not so fast as the coaches, they were novel, and passengers to whom time was not essential preferred to take the trip to New Brunswick by boat, go across to Trenton by stage and continue their voyage to Philadelphia by steamer down the Delaware. The Expedition Stage of the Cumming line was at the time making the run overland in about 12 hours. As boats became more luxurious and faster, however, the stage operators lost patronage despite their greater speed. They adjusted their schedules to meet the steamers in Trenton and New Brunswick.

When there was but one steamer on each river, the stage operators had to compete for the privilege of transporting passengers from the steamships between the two river ports. This disadvantage was lessened when more boat lines were formed. The stagecoaches could never be completely eliminated by steamboats, for during the bad winter months the rivers were impassable, and the New York-Philadelphia trip had to be made overland.

Realizing this, many boat owners took a financial interest in the stages that connected their lines. The Stevens family of Hoboken that owned the Hoboken ferry had been building and operating boats almost ever since their invention. By a complicated amalgamation of existing stage and boat lines they eventually formed the Union Line, a complete transportation system across the State--boats on the Delaware, stages from Trenton to New Brunswick and ships to New York.

Although the Union Line was the most complete, there were other excellent transportation facilities across the state. The group of stages run by the Cumming interests included a line that connected with boats on the Delaware and with boats leaving from Elizabethport on the northern end of the trip. The Union Line later bought the Cumming system. The Common Stock Line, which also operated over the Trenton-New Brunswick road, finally merged with the New Brunswick Steam Ferry Company to form the Exchange line. One of the boats of this new concern once made the 45-mile trip between New York and New Brunswick in 3 hours and 25 minutes. To increase patronage, competing lines speeded their service and dropped their rates. At one time the fare for the boat ride between New York and New Brunswick came down to 12½ cents, and for a short time no charge at all was made, and the passengers were given a good dinner free. The through fare to Philadelphia had dropped to \$2, and it was remarked that times had gotten so hard that a passenger who wished to save money could not afford to walk. Still later the New York-Philadelphia fare was dropped to \$1, and the boat trip