

**Pages from  
HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS  
OF THE  
STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

**(regarding roads and stage routes)**

**By John W. Barber & Henry Howe  
1844**

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HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS  
OF THE  
STATE OF NEW JERSEY;

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES, ANECDOTES, Etc.

RELATING TO ITS

HISTORY AND ANTIQUITIES,

WITH

GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF EVERY TOWNSHIP IN THE STATE.

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BY JOHN W. BARBER,  
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[Arms of the State of New Jersey.]



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in order to effect the establishment of this branch of commerce, was very anxious for a speedy arrangement with the Indians, whereby the lands near Barnegat might be secured; and along the whole coast whales and seals were frequently seen, the latter venturing even into the harbor of Amboy. Vanderdonck, in his 'Description of the New Netherlands,' says the whales would not compare in fatness with those of Greenland, but they 'are numerous in the winter on the coast and in the bay, where they frequently ground on the shoals and bars.' De Vries, however, who engaged in the whale-fishery during one of his voyages on the coast, in 1632-33, pronounced the business an unprofitable one.

"Previous to the purchase by the twenty-four proprietors, attempts were made to establish the whale-fishery on a permanent footing; but with what success is uncertain. On the 15th February, 1668, a commission was granted to a company in Elizabethtown to take whales, &c., for three years, and all other persons prohibited from doing so, for one-twentieth part of the oil in casks; and should Staten Island fall within the province, a town for twenty-four families was to be granted the company, at some convenient place. While this grant was in force, a whale was cast ashore at Neversink, and delivered up to the company. On the 14th February, 1678, a similar commission was granted to another company at the same place.

"In 1684, we are told that some persons were engaged in 'whaling upon the coast,' and that large quantities of fish were caught in all the rivers with long *sives*, or nets; and that one sive would secure from one to two barrels of fish, which the inhabitants salted for their own use. Gawen Laurie is instructed to encourage the whale-fishery; and, for fear that fishermen might be drawn elsewhere, he was authorized to make use of the proprietors' effects in furthering the object. We have no information, however, of any particular movement toward its establishment at that time; and it appears subsequently to have ceased being regarded as a business specially adapted to the inhabitants of the province. The writer has in his possession, however, a letter dated at Amboy, July 4th, 1755, in which the arrival of a sloop, with one whale, is alluded to, in terms that indicate her having been out on a regular whaling voyage."

#### ROADS, TRAVELLING, ETC.

"Previous to 1675 and 1676, when the legislature adopted some general regulations for the opening of roads, the only road laid out by Europeans, within the limits of New Jersey, appears to have been that by which the Dutch at New Amsterdam communicated with the settlements on the Delaware. It ran from Elizabethtown Point, or its neighborhood, to where New Brunswick now stands; and was probably the same as that now (widened and improved) known as the 'old road' between those places. At New Brunswick, the river was forded at low water, and the road thence ran almost in a straight line to the Delaware, (above where Trenton is now situated,) which was also forded. This was called the 'upper road,' to distinguish it from the 'lower road,' which branched off about five or six miles from the Raritan, took a sweep toward the east, and arrived at the Delaware at the site of the present Burlington. These roads, however, were very little more than foot-paths, and so continued for many years, affording facilities to horsemen and pedestrians principally. Even as late as 1716, when a ferry had been established at New Brunswick for twenty years, provision was only made, in the rates allowed by the assembly, for 'horse and man,'

and 'single person.' Previous to that time, however, the road had been improved, and was considered the main thoroughfare to Pennsylvania; for, in 1695, the *innkeepers* at Piscataway, Woodbridge, and Elizabethtown, were made subject to taxation, for five years, to prevent its 'falling into decay.' The sum required annually to keep this road in repair, at that time, was only *ten pounds*. An opposition road was opened by the proprietaries, in the hope of drawing the principal travelling to their seat of government; but without success. They express a wish to Deputy-governor Laurie, in July, 1683, that 'it might be discovered whether there may not a convenient road be found betwixt Perthtown (Perth Amboy) and Burlington, for the entertaining of a land conveyance that way.' This was done by Laurie the ensuing year, and he connected with the road a ferry-boat, to run between Amboy and New York, 'to entertain travellers.' Finding however that the other road continued to be preferred, Gov. Basse, in 1698, was directed to bring the matter before the assembly, and have an act passed that would 'cause the public road to pass through the port-town of Perth Amboy, from New York and New England to West Jersey and Pennsylvania;' but Basse's authority was of such limited duration that nothing was done.

"Such were the two routes travelled between New York and Philadelphia, under the proprietary government; but no public conveyance for the transportation of either goods or passengers existed on either. One *Dellaman* was permitted by Gov. Hamilton to drive a wagon on the Amboy road, but had no regular prices or set time for his trips.

"In April, 1707, the assembly, enumerating their grievances to Lord Cornbury, complained that patents had been granted to individuals to transport goods on the road from Burlington to Amboy, for a certain number of years, to the exclusion of others; which was deemed not only contrary to the statute respecting monopolies, but also 'destructive to that freedom which trade and commerce ought to have.' The governor, in his reply, gives us an insight into the facilities afforded by this wagon. After stating the difficulties which had previously attended the carriage of goods upon the road, he says, 'At present, everybody is sure, *once a fortnight*, to have an opportunity of sending any quantity of goods, great or small, at reasonable rates, without being in danger of imposition; and the settling of this wagon is so far from being a grievance or a monopoly, *that by this means, and no other*, a trade has been carried on between Philadelphia, Burlington, Amboy, and New York, which was never known before, and *in all probability never would have been.*' As none of the grievances suffered under Lord Cornbury's administration were removed until his recall, in 1710, it is probable this wagon continued to perform its journey 'once a fortnight' till then, if no longer. Soon after, however, the road seems to have been more open to competition.

"The first advertisement respecting the transportation on this route, which I have met with, is in Andrew Bradford's Philadelphia '*Mercury*,' of March, 1732-33. It is as follows:

"This is to give notice unto Gentlemen, Merchants, Tradesmen, Travellers, and others, that *Solomon Smith* and *James Moore* of *Burlington*: keepeth two *Stage Wagons* intending to go from *Burlington to Amboy*, and back from *Amboy to Burlington* again, Once every Week or oft'er if that Business presents. They have also a very good store house, very Commodious for the Storing of any sort of Merchants Goods free from any Charges, where good Care will be taken of all sorts of Goods.'

"About this time, also, a line ran by the way of New Brunswick, and in 1734 the first line *via Bordentown* was established, running from South

river, the proprietor of which would be at New York '*once a week, if wind and weather permit, and come to the Old-slip.*'

"In 1744, the stage-wagons between New Brunswick and Trenton ran twice a week.

"In October, 1750, a new line was established, the owner of which resided at Perth Amboy. He informed all gentlemen and ladies 'who have occasion to transport themselves, goods, wares, or merchandise, from New York to Philadelphia,' that he had a 'stage-boat' well fitted for the purpose, which, 'wind and weather permitting,' (that never-forgotten proviso,) would leave New York every *Wednesday* for the ferry at Amboy on *Thursday*, where, on *Friday*, a stage-wagon would be ready to *proceed immediately* to Bordentown; where they would take another stage-boat to Philadelphia—nothing being said (very wisely) of the time when they might expect to arrive there. He states, however, that the passages are made in *forty-eight hours* less time than by any other line. This was probably the case, for the route was so well patronized that, in 1752, they carried passengers twice a week instead of once, endeavoring 'to use people in the best manner;' keeping them, be it observed, *from five to seven days on the way!*

"The success of this line seems to have led to an opposition, in 1751, originating in Philadelphia; which professed to go through in twenty-four or thirty hours, but which nevertheless appears to have required the same number of days as the other. Great dependence was placed upon the attractions of the passage-boat between Amboy and New York, described as having a fine commodious cabin, *fitted up with a tea-table*, and sundry other articles.

"In 1756, a stage line between Philadelphia and New York, via Trenton and Perth Amboy, was established, intended to run through in *three days*. This was followed, in 1765, by another to start twice a week; but nine years had worked no increase of speed. The following year a third line of 'good stage-wagons, with the seats set on springs,' was set up, to go through in two days in summer, and three in winter. These wagons were modestly called '*Flying Machines*,' and the title soon became a favorite with all the stage proprietors. These lines ran, I believe, by the way of Blazing Star ferry, and put an end to the transportation of passengers on the old Amboy route.

"From 1765 to 1768, attempts were made by the legislature to raise funds, by lottery, for shortening and improving the great thoroughfares; but without success. Gov. Franklin, alluding to them, in a speech to the assembly, in 1768, states that 'even those which lie between the two principal trading cities in North America are seldom passable, without danger or difficulty.' Such being the condition of the roads, it was a great improvement to have John Mersereau's '*flying machine*,' in 1772, leave Paulus Hook three times a week, with a reasonable expectation that passengers would arrive in Philadelphia in *one day and a half*. This time, however, was probably found too short, for two days were required by him in 1773-74.

"The mails, being carried on horseback, moved at this time with rather greater speed than passengers; but they had been a long time acquiring it. To Col. John Hamilton, son of Gov. Andrew Hamilton, of New Jersey, (himself at one time acting governor, as president of the council,) were the colonies indebted for devising the scheme by which the post-office was established. This was about the year 1694. He obtained a patent for it, and afterward sold his right to the crown. It is presumed that an attempt was soon made to carry the mails regularly; but speed was little regarded.

“In 1704, ‘in the pleasant month of May,’ a New York paper says, ‘the last storm put our Pennsylvania post a week behind, and is not yet com’d in.’

“In 1717, ‘advices from Boston to Williamsburg, in Virginia, were completed in four weeks, from March to December, and in double that time in the other months of the year;’ but there is some probability that the mails south of Philadelphia did not continue to be carried regularly some time thereafter.

“About 1720, the post set out from Philadelphia every *Friday*, left letters at Burlington and Perth Amboy, and arrived at New York on *Sunday* night; leaving there Monday morning, on its peregrinations eastward.

“In 1722, a Philadelphia paper states that the New York post was ‘*three days behind his time*, and not yet arrived.’

“In 1729, the mail between the two cities went once a week in summer, and once a fortnight in winter; and this continued to be the case till 1754, when Dr. Franklin became superintendent, and improved the condition of the post-office materially. In October, notice is given that until Christmas the post would leave the two cities *three times a week*, at eight o’clock, A. M., and arrive the next day at about five o’clock, P. M.; making thirty-three hours. After Christmas, ‘being frequently delayed in crossing New York bay,’ (the route was *via* Blazing Star ferry,) it would leave only twice a week. Further improvements were made in following years, and in 1764, ‘if weather permitted,’ the mails were to leave every alternate day, and go through in less than twenty-four hours; and such was the rate at which they travelled until the revolution put a stop to their regular transmission.

“In 1791, there were only *six* offices in New Jersey—Newark, Elizabethtown, Bridgetown, (now Rahway,) Brunswick, Princeton, and Trenton.. The total of their receipts, for the year ending October 5th, 1791, was \$530, of which the postmasters received \$108.20—leaving \$421.80 as the net revenue.”

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#### FIRST PRINTING—PRINTERS, ETC.

“The first newspaper printed in New Jersey was the *New Jersey Gazette*, the publication of which was commenced Dec. 5th, 1777. Imprint—‘*Burlington*, printed by *Isaac Collins*. All persons may be supplied with this Gazette at *twenty-six shillings per annum*. Advertisements of a moderate length are inserted for *seven shillings and six-pence* each the first week, and *two shillings and six-pence* for every continuance; and long ones in proportion.’ It was printed on a folio sheet about one foot by eight inches. It was discontinued in 1786. Before this period, however, a magazine of some note was published at Woodbridge, in Middlesex county. It was styled ‘*The American Magazine*,’ was the first periodical in the province, and only the second monthly magazine of the kind on the continent. The first number appeared in January, 1758, and it continued to be issued monthly until March, 1760, when it was discontinued for want of patronage, and some years thereafter many copies were sold in sheets by the printer as waste paper. Each number contained about forty pages octavo, and in variety and interest it will compare with many modern publications in good repute. A history of America and a traveller’s diary, were published in connection with each number, paged separately, in order to form distinct volumes at the end of each year. The appellation ‘*new*,’ was to distinguish it from its only predecessor, at Philadelphia, which, however, it superseded,—