

STAGE OPERATIONS AND THE MAILS IN NEW JERSEY^{©90} Part 2

By Steven M. Roth

*[This completes the two-part article on New Jersey stage lines, begun in our last issue, by Steven M. Roth (see *NJPH*, Feb. 2013, Vol 41, No. 1, Whole number [189](#) for a comprehensive introduction to the subject). See also our May 2013 Featured Cover page.]*

INTER-STATE STAGE OPERATIONS. cont'd

The Cumming Stage

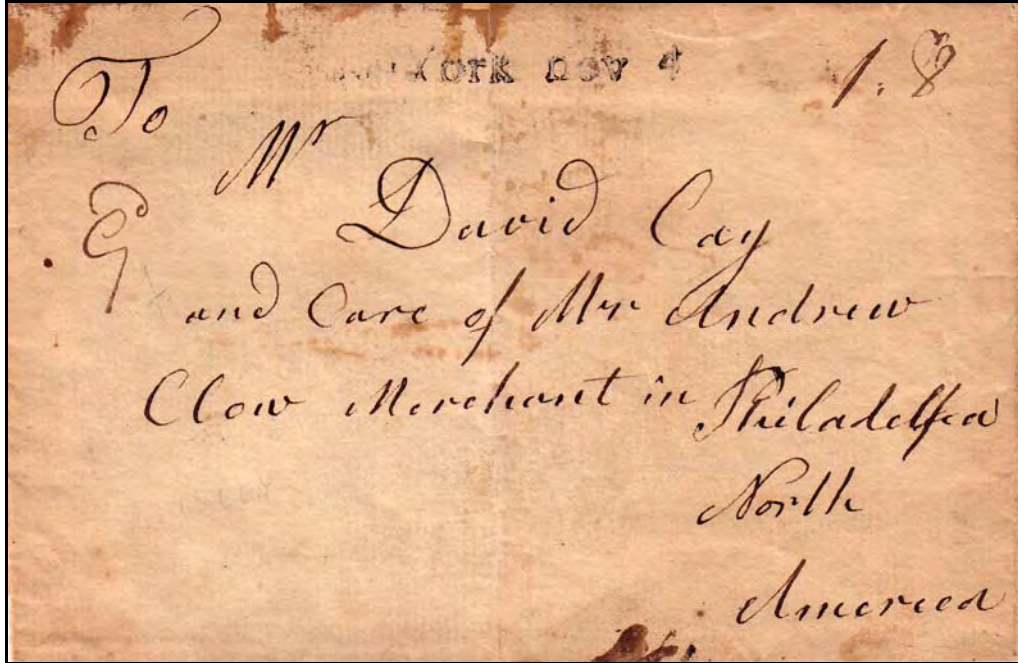
The dominant figure in New Jersey staging through most of the late 18th and early 19th centuries was John Noble Cumming of Newark who operated over the years with various partners (Richard Cumming Stockton, William Tennant Stockton, Michael Dennison and John Inskeep⁹¹). Cumming received his first contract to carry the mails in 1786 as part of the first round of mail contracts with stage lines entered into by Postmaster General Hazard. Under the contract, which continued with renewals until 1829, Cumming carried the mail in stages from Newark to Elizabethtown, Brunswick, Princeton, Trenton and Bristol, to and from Philadelphia.⁹²

Like many of his contemporaries in the staging business, Cumming owned several taverns along his route. In his case, Cumming leased these facilities to his business partners.

The Cumming Stage in the 1790s arrived in Philadelphia every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Once in Philadelphia, the stage first made its way to the Indian Tavern at 15 South Fourth Street, and then to the George Tavern at the corner of Second and Mulberry Streets. It then proceeded to the Post Office.

I have not identified any loose letters handed to drivers or passengers, and carried by Cumming and marked “stage” or “per stage.” There is much Cumming-carried mail, however, that is available to collectors that was not so marked because it was not loose mail. This mail had been placed in the post office by the senders and was then carried in a locked box aboard the stage between New York and Philadelphia. These covers generally are not recognized by their owners as stage coach mail because the covers do not have loose letter stage endorsements and because the covers’ owners are not aware of the Cumming mail monopoly for the New York – Philadelphia route. Such unmarked covers, however, were stage carried mail and are an essential part of the stage operations story even though the covers lack the desired endorsements. *Figures 14, 15 and 16* are examples of such unmarked Cumming stage mail.

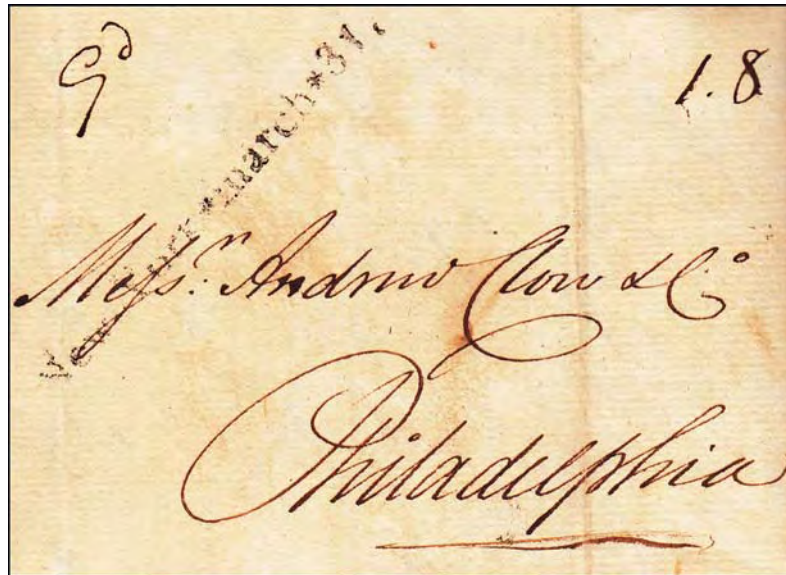
Figure 14 is an example of an unmarked letter from the Confederation Period carried by the Cumming mail stage during the third full year of its stage contract with the Post Office Department. The cover originated in Paisley, Scotland on July 19, 1788. It was privately carried to New York and entered the mails at New York on November 4, 1788. At New York it was rated 1.8 [1 shilling, 8 pence) due (there was no sea postage charged for this bootlegged letter) and placed in a locked mail box which was given to Cumming for stage carriage to Philadelphia.



Steven M. Roth collection

Fig. 14: A letter which originated in Scotland, but did not enter the mail stream until it reached New York (see straight line cancel) Nov. 4, 1788. It was carried by Cumming to Philadelphia.

Figure 15 is an example of an early Constitutional Period unmarked (locked box) cover carried by Cumming from New York to Philadelphia. The folded letter is dated March 31, 1790, and was rated 9 pence due [9^d] by the New York Post Office. At Philadelphia, the letter was rated 1.8 due, representing, unlike Figure 14, 1 shilling 6 pence for postage due (the equivalent in Philadelphia currency to the New York currency, adjusted by an inflation factor of 1.67 pence⁹³) plus 2 pence due for carrier service from the post office to the addressee in Philadelphia.



Steven M. Roth collection

Fig. 15. A Constitutional Period cover, carried from New York to Philadelphia. Posted March 31, 1790, with New York straight line cancel.

Figure 16 is a similar Cumming Stage example, but one that traveled in the opposite direction from Philadelphia to New York, and was rated in cents due [10¢] rather than in shillings and pence, a change which occurred under the Act of June 1, 1792. This folded letter does not show an inflation factor for the carrier service from the post office in New York City to the written street address in New York. This cover is dated January 12, 1797, and shows the common Philadelphia Bishop mark used at this time in place of a straight-line or CDS post office identification mark.



Steven M. Roth collection

Fig. 16. Another Cumming cover, but this one travelled from Philadelphia to New York, and was cancelled with a Philadelphia Bishop mark.

Hoboken Stage

The inter-state operation of this line occurred because, until 1803, there was no stage operation set up on the west bank of the Hudson River (as there had been established in 1785 along the east bank between Albany and New York when Van Wyck and his partners received a ten year monopoly). The cities on the western shore – Newburgh, Kingston and Catskill – received their mail prior to 1803 from the eastern shore.

In 1797, a stage from Hoboken began making weekly trips through the pass in the Ramapo Mountains at Suffern (then called New Antrim) to Goshen, NY. The stage line was started by Anthony Dobbin, a Goshen tavern keeper, but financed out of Albany by the State. His stage ran from Goshen to the New Jersey state line. This operation continued until 1803 when the New York legislature financed a stage route from Albany to Goshen (on the post route to Bethlehem & Philadelphia through Sussex County, NJ), and to other towns on the west side of the Hudson (Kingston and Newburgh), to and from New York City.⁹⁴

Moorestown Stage

Figure 17 presents a typical problem when trying to determine the route followed by a local stage that carried a cover. *Figure 17* originated in Philadelphia and was addressed to Westfield, then in Essex County. The letter is dated August 1, 1842.



Steven M. Roth collection

Fig. 17. From Philadelphia to Westfield, noted by stage Moorestown, datelined August 1, 1842. It is difficult to tell which route it might have followed.

Figure 17 was carried across the Delaware River from Philadelphia to Cooper's Ferry aboard the stage boat. The stage then carried the letter from Cooper's Ferry to Moorestown. At Moorestown, there were three possible routes for the stage to follow:

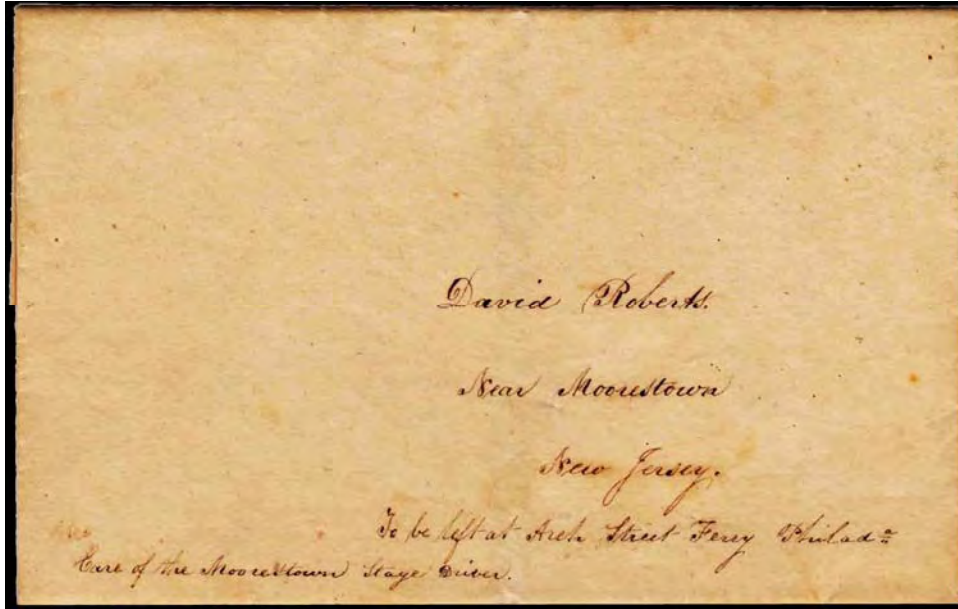
Route 1: Philadelphia → Delaware River [stage boat] → Cooper's Ferry → Moorestown → Trenton → Brunswick → Westfield

Route 2: Philadelphia → Delaware River [stage boat] → Cooper's Ferry → Moorestown → Bordentown → Hightstown → Cranberry → Perth Amboy → Westfield

Route 3: Philadelphia → Delaware River [stage boat] → Cooper's Ferry → Moorestown → Burlington → Hightstown → Cranberry → Perth Amboy → Westfield

Several stage lines passed through Moorestown on the King's Highway at this time so it is not possible to identify which specific stage line carried this letter or over which route, although the most direct route (and perhaps, therefore, the most likely) was the Trenton – Brunswick route (Route 1 above).

Figure 18 is an interesting Moorestown stage cover that traveled to a destination near Moorestown and, therefore, likely was carried from Cooper's Ferry directly to Moorestown where it was delivered (out-of-the-mails) to the addressee.



Ed and Jean Siskin collection

Fig. 18. *Inscribed: "To be left at Arch Street Ferry Philad"/Care of the Morristown Stage driver." Mr. Siskin has informed me that the cover, based on a now-missing enclosure, was dated 1820.*

Morristown Stage

According to Donald A. Chafetz, the leading student of Morristown postal history, stage service between Morristown and New York City existed at least as early as 1771.⁹⁵ This service was provided by Daniel and Silas Burnet who called their operation the "Morris town Stage Wagon." [sic] The stage service operated between the Paulus Hook ferry (conveying freight and some mail from New York), Springfield and Morristown. The trip was made every Thursday from Paulus Hook (present day Jersey City) with regular return trips. The journey was completed in one day. In 1774, the Burnets joined with Captain Joseph Morris to extend the line westward from Morristown through Mendham to the Black River.⁹⁶ This service operated at least until 1776. Mr. Chafetz also reports that a rival service, operated by Constant Cooper, commenced operations in 1771.

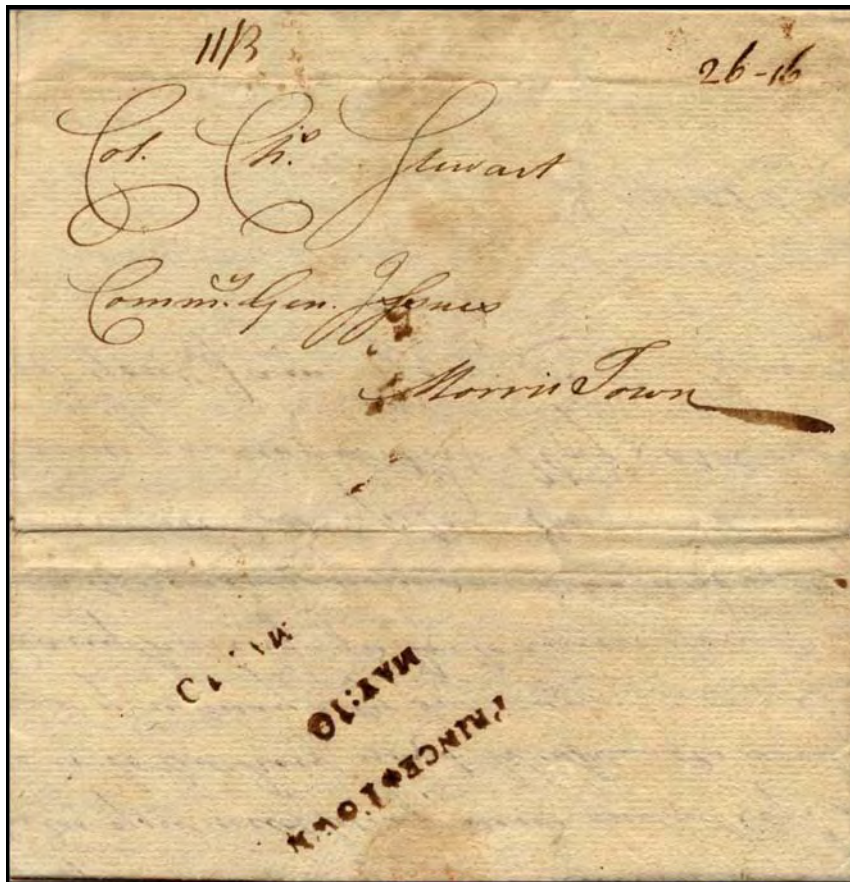
In his series of article on the Provisional Posts, Calvet H. Hahn reprinted a lengthy advertisement for a subscription post that would be carried by stage south from New York to Morristown, then to other New Jersey towns.⁹⁷ The March 9, 1775 issue of Holt's Journal carried news of the operation which involved running regular stages from Morristown to Paulus Hook, Springfield, Newark, and Passaic.⁹⁸

Hahn also reprints a report, dated April 11, 1776, from London's *New York Packet*, as follows:

Notice is hereby given to the Public in general that the MORRIS-TOWN STAGE continues as usual to set off from Hackets-Town, every Monday morning. Every Tuesday morning sets off from Captain Dickerson's in Morris-Town at sunrise to Powles-Hook; from thence to return every Thursday morning at 7 o'clock as usual; And every Saturday morning again to set off from the house of Captain Dickerson at Morris-Town by way of Chatham and Springfield to Powles Hook and return from thence on Monday evening at 7 o'clock the same road to Morristown, and will be continued by DANIEL BURNET, JOSEPH CUNLIFFE AND SILAS BURNET.⁹⁹

The service continued until late in 1776 when the Revolution interrupted service.

Hahn, in a different series of articles, stated that the Morristown stage service resumed in 1780, connecting Philadelphia, Trenton, Princeton and Elizabethtown with Morristown.¹⁰⁰ *Figure 19*, a scarce cover owned by Robert G. Rose, Esq., is an example of a cover carried by stage on this route.



Robert G. Rose collection

Fig. 19. Dated May 10, 1780. This cover is one of two known (and the only one in private hands) showing the "20 times" inflation rate instituted by the Continental Congress on December 28, 1779. This rate was in effect until December 1780.

The Morristown stage cover illustrated by Mr. Chafetz in his *NJPH* article, was a cover that originated in Morristown in 1797, addressed to New York. This cover is shown as *Figure 20*.



Donald A. Chafetz collection

Fig. 20: A 1797 cover from Morristown. Internal comments show it was carried by stage to Paulus Hook.

The notations at the upper right corner of this cover do not relate to the stage transport. As Mr. Chafetz explained in his *NJPH* article, internal statements within the folded letter referred to the carriage of the letter by stage from Morristown to Paulus Hook for further transmittal to New York.¹⁰¹

Morris and Sussex Mail Stage

A later line originating in Newton and passing through Morristown to New York was established by 1815. In his study entitled “Early Travel and Mail Transport in N.J.,” Len Peck notes that “the first stagecoach line was established between Newton and Morristown in 1808: It was at this time also that the mail contract was transferred to the stage coach line to be operated by Isaac Basset, Pettit Britton and James Hinchman, three prominent Newtown businessmen who started the Morris to New York stagecoach line. One of the drivers of this line was Zephaniah Luse who later became a co-owner of the line with James Hanna.

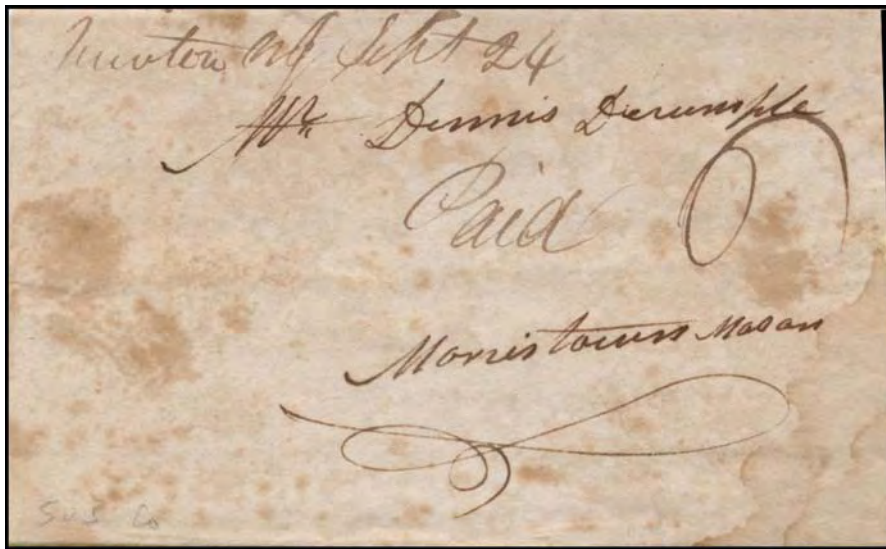
“The stagecoach line as originally established ran once a week, starting at Newtown by way of Stanhope, Succasunny Plains, Morristown, Bottle Hill, Chatham, Springfield and Newark to Paulus Hook (now Jersey City) and ferry to New York. The earliest advertisement that could be found of this line in a local newspaper appeared in the *Sussex Register* dated January 2nd, 1815. The transcript follows:”¹⁰²

Z. Luse & James Hanna, proprietors of the Morris and Sussex Mail Stage between Newtown and New York;—Inform their friends and the public, that in consequence of a late regulation of the Postmaster General, they will in the future leave Newtown every Monday morning at nine o'clock, lodge at Morristown, and arrive in New York on Tuesday at twelve o'clock noon. Will leave New York every Wednesday morning at nine o'clock, lodge at Morristown, and arrive at Newtown next day at one o'clock,

P.M.—Going and returning will pass through the following places, Stanhope, Succasunny Plains, Morristown, Bottle Hill, Chatham, Springfield and Newark to Paulus Hook and ferry to New York

The fare through, Three Dollars, and in that proportion for any part of the way. Seats to be engaged in Newtown at Mark Luse's or at Daniel Harker's tavern, or of either of the proprietors; at Morristown at L Hayden's tavern; at Newark at Moses Raff's tavern, and at New York at Sanfords at the lower end of Courtland street, near the ferry stairs.

As the proprietors will always drive the Stage, they will take charge of any business and attend to the same with diligence, for a small compensation. Any person having business on the route through to Newburgh, are informed that a stage starts every Friday morning from Daniel Harker's tavern, and will pass through Hamburg, Vernon, Warwick, Florida and Goshen. Also that the mail starts the same day for Milford, Pennsylvania. January 2, 1815.



Leonard Peck collection

Fig. 21: *This 1816 cover was sent by Isaac Bassett of Newtown shortly after the establishment of the new stage service which he helped initiate. It is datelined September 24, 1816 and is addressed only to Dennis Dalrimple, Morristown Mason.*

Salem Stage

As previously mentioned, Salem was connected to Cooper's Ferry (and thus to Philadelphia) by a stage line operated by Aaron Silver beginning in 1767.

Hahn in his Provisional Post series states that an advertisement appeared in the March 2, 1774 issue of the *Pennsylvania Packet* stating that Bennoni Dare had started a subscription post that would be carried by his stage wagon from Greenwich to Salem then on to Cooper's Ferry for the crossing to Philadelphia.¹⁰³ Hahn stated that this route followed the main roads through southern New Jersey.¹⁰⁴

The well-known Ed and Jean Siskin collection of pre-1800 postal history contained a 1775 folded letter sent by stage from Salem to Philadelphia via Cooper's Ferry. *Figure 22.*



ex-Ed and Jean Siskin

Fig. 22. 1775 from Salem to Philadelphia, note by stage.

INTRA-STATE (LOCAL OR ACCOMMODATION/FEEDER) STAGE OPERATIONS

Accommodation stage lines (also sometimes called local or feeder stage lines) serviced towns within New Jersey without ever leaving the state (the “local” aspect of the operation) and also serviced steamboat ports and landings as well as railroad depots as feeder lines, bringing passengers and freight from the interior (the accommodation aspect) when steamboats and railroads became unstoppable rivals to the stages.

Little is known about these lines. We find indirect references to them in travelers’ guides which give route and mileage/distance information, and also learn about them from newspaper ads. It is clear that much more work needs to be done with respect to identifying local and accommodation stage lines and their operations.

I have set forth below those local and accommodation lines about which I have some information. This is not to be viewed as a definitive list of the lines or even as an accurate naming of the lines. This is set forth by me to “start the ball rolling” on the endeavor to learn more.

Hackensack Stage

An ad appeared in the New York Mercury on July 14, 1783, for this line:

The subscriber having established a STAGE WAGON to run between Hackensack and Hoebuck Ferry hereby informs the public that the roads are now very good, his Wagon and horses in very good order and proper attendance will be given. He sets out from Hackensack every Tuesday and Saturday morning at seven o’clock and returns the same day from Horbuck(sic) at 3 o’clock in the afternoon. He hopes so useful an institution will receive the encouragement of the public who it shall be his Study to Oblige.¹⁰⁵ (spelling as the original)

Cape May Stage

According to Craig Mathewson, the leading student of Cape May mail, sometime around 1800 a weekly stage began to run from Cooper's Ferry through Gloucester, Salem and Cumberland counties to Cape Island.¹⁰⁶ He developed a map of stage routes to Cape May (see *Figure 23*), but more research is necessary to know the exact stage companies and dates of operation on these routes. We encourage contributions from other members on this subject.



Fig. 23: Map of stage routes to Cape May, drawn by Craig Mathewson.

Absecon Stage

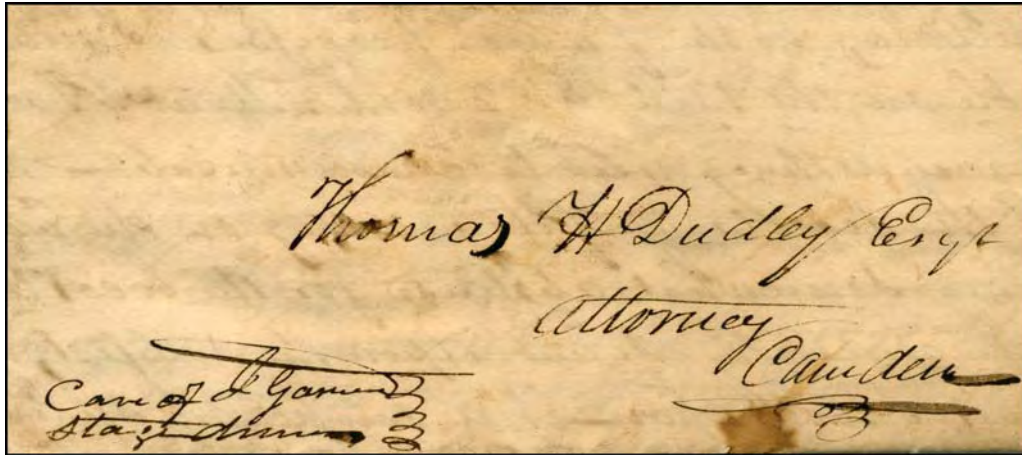
In 1773, William McCarrell started a line that ran between Cooper's Ferry and Absecon (present day Absecon near Atlantic City). It left Ann Risley's tavern at Absecon on Monday mornings and went by Thomas Clark's mill near present day Port Republic and the Forks of Little Egg Harbor to the Blue Anchor Inn near present day Mullica, then on to Longacoming (present day Berlin) and Haddonfield, arriving at Samuel Cooper's Ferry Tuesday afternoon.¹⁰⁷

Manahawkin, Mount-Holly and Burlington Stage

Based on the advertisement shown as *Figure 29*, this stage line seems to be one of the stages that passed regularly through Mount Holly and Burlington. I have not been able to identify any cover carried by this stage line.

Marlton Stage

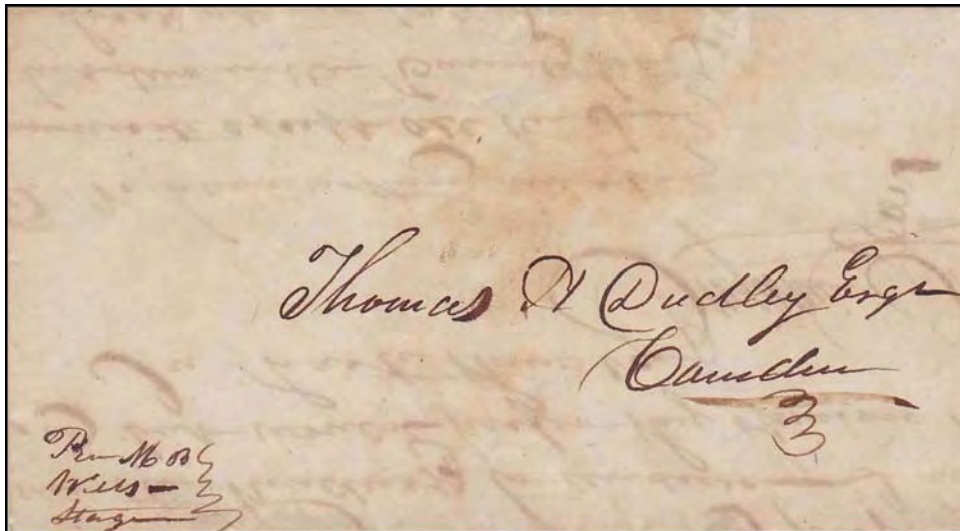
The Marlton Stage was a local stage that operated between Marlton and Camden. It appears to be one of those lines that was known by the names of its drivers. (See *Figure 24*)



Steven M. Roth collection.

Fig. 24: This cover originated at Marlton on January 10, 1841, and made the ten mile trip to Camden.

The sender endorsed the cover with this admonition: "Care of J. Garner/Stage driver." Based on the admonition, it appears that the sender of this cover left it for the stage driver at some place of convenience (for example, an inn or a store).

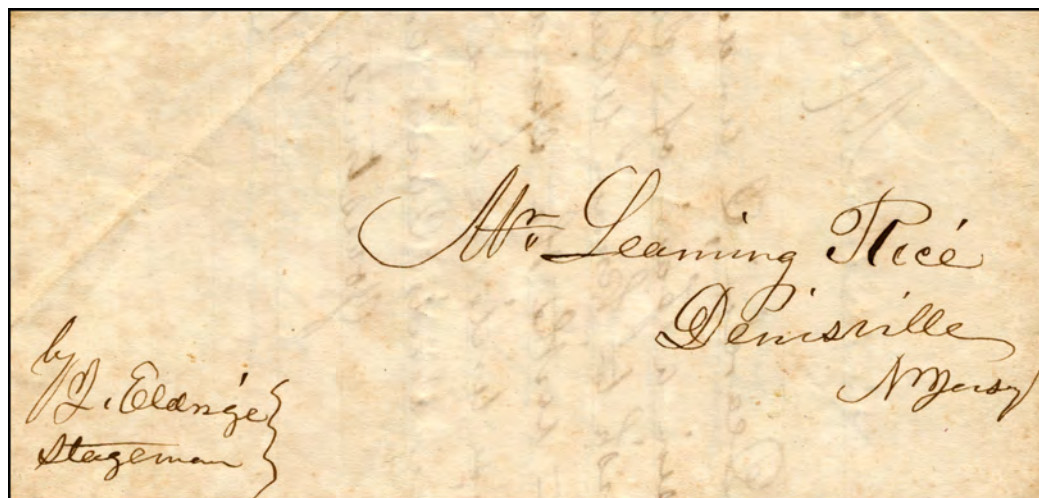


Ed and Jean Siskin collection.

Fig. 25: This cover followed the same route on March 27, 1845. Note the admonition "Per MB Wills Stage."

Millville Stage

This stage line is an example of an arbitrary naming by me of a stage line in my effort to categorize and organize the local and accommodation stage lines. There was, to my knowledge, no stage line known as the Millville Stage. Rather, according to Craig Mathewson, the leg of the operation that serviced Millville was part of a larger through stage line that operated from Cooper's Ferry to Cape May. Millville was one stop among several along the way. *Figure 26* is an example of such a letter.



Steven M. Roth collection

Fig. 26: This was sent in August 1851 from Millville to Denisville by private stage carrier.

Figure 26 was sent in August 1851 from Millville to Denisville by private stage carrier and was handled entirely outside the mails. The Cooper's Ferry – Cape May Stage serviced both Millville and Denisville as way stops.

The sender's endorsement indicates that the letter was given to and sent "by J. Eldrige/Stageman." In the letter, the writer urges the recipient to "please write me a word by Mr. J. Eldrige."

Mount Holly Stage

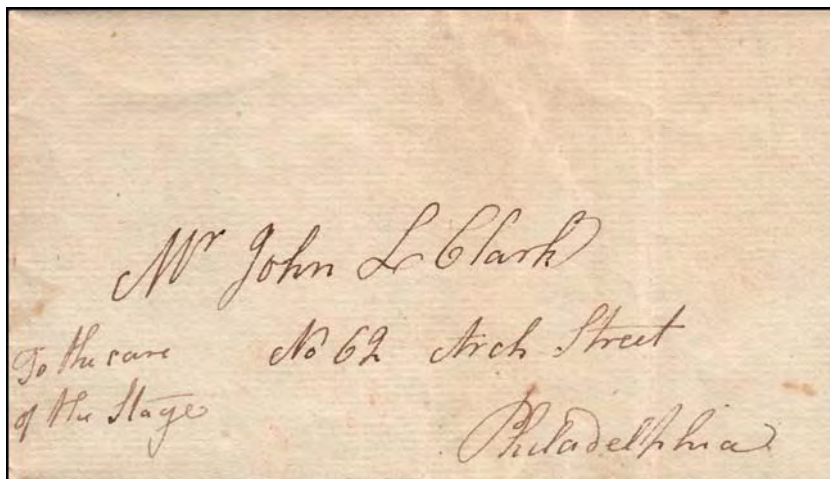
The definitive study of the Mount Holly Stage (which, like the names of other local lines discussed in this article might be a misnomer) was published in an article by Jean R. Walton in 2003.¹⁰⁸

According to Ms. Walton, Mount Holly, like many communities in early America, did not have a post office until long after the community had been settled. In Mount Holly's case, the first post office opened September 18, 1800. Before that date (and often afterward, too), mail was sent by stage driver or passenger outside the mails. The nearest post office to Mount Holly before 1800 was at Burlington.

Mount Holly, according to Ms. Walton, had a stage line as early as 1759. It was part of through service from Cooper's Ferry to Sandy Hook. When this through service ended, local accommodation stage lines replaced it.

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Stage mail between Mount Holly and Philadelphia was given to private stage drivers and passengers who carried the mail (if going to Philadelphia) to Cooper's Ferry where the stage boarded a stage boat. Mail from Philadelphia to or through Mount Holly traveled in the same manner, but in reverse order. This pattern of private out-of-the-mails transmission continued even after Mount Holly opened its post office, as demonstrated in the well-known Clark correspondence by *Figure 28*.

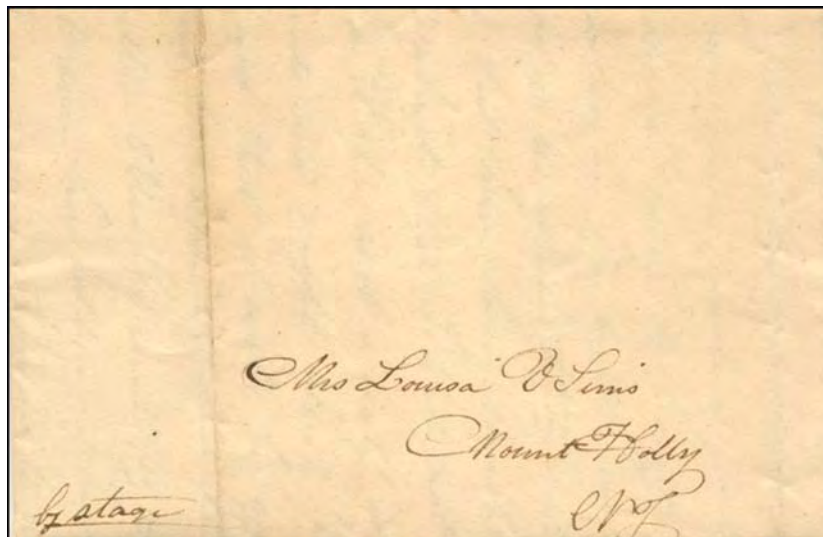


Steven M. Roth collection

Fig. 27: This cover originated at Mount Holly, and is dated June 26, 1797.

As Ms. Walton pointed out in her article, because several stage lines passed through Mount Holly at this time on their way to Philadelphia, we are not able to identify which private stage line carried the letter.

Figure 28, also part of the Clark family correspondence, originated in Philadelphia on March 11, 1824, after the opening of the Mount Holly Post Office. Nonetheless, the folded letter was sent privately.




Steven M. Roth collection

Fig. 28: Although Mount Holly now had a post office when this letter was posted in 1824, it was still sent by stage, outside the mails.

One of the stage lines that passed through Mount Holly in the 1820s was the Mannahawkin [sic] – Mount Holly – Burlington Stage. This line ran through the named towns with an extension to Tuckerton, all as seen in the ad previously published in *NJPH*, and shown here as *Figure 29*. Note that in *Figure 29*, one of the stages is referred to by the name of its driver rather than by the name(s) of the town(s) it passed through. We saw this, too, when we examined the Marlton Stage.

**Mannahawkin, Mount-Holly and
Burlington Stage.**



THE subscriber proposes running a Stage from Mannahawkin, every Monday and Thursday mornings, and meet Wm. C. Budd's Stage, at the Inn of Thomas B. Smith, in Mount-Holly, on the same evenings—from whence, passengers will be conveyed on the following mornings, to Burlington, in time to meet the Steam-boats passing to and from Philadelphia and Trenton. Returning, the Stage will leave Burlington every Tuesday and Friday evenings, and arrive at Mannahawkin on the following afternoons, in time to meet the Stage for Tuckerton, the same evenings. Good Boarding may be had in Mannahawkin, at the moderate rate of from \$2 00. to \$3 50 per week. Passengers will be conveyed at any time across the Bay, to James Cranmer's, Hazleton Cranmer's and Stephen Inman's.

Fare through \$1 75.

JOB F. RANDOLPH.

April 6, 1821. 316m

Fig. 29: Advertisement for one of the Mount Holly stage lines

Newark Stage

Newark was a busy and prolific staging center. It was, for example, the northern terminus of the Swift Sure line. Some of this commerce is shown in the listing below in the section, “Other Local/Accommodation Stage Lines.”

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The completion in 1766 of the causeway across the Hackensack and Passaic marshes to Newark, as well as an opportunity to avoid the harsh and dangerous trip via the Amboy – New York City ferry, turned much of the Philadelphia stage travel to the Newark route. It also opened the way to the establishment in 1768 of a local stage (name unknown, but possibly the New York and Philadelphia Mail Stage) to Newark under the ownership of Matthias Ward.¹⁰⁹ The route was generally known as the Old York Road, and the stage was the first to go by way of Newark and to use the new causeway.¹¹⁰

A notice placed by Hugh Gaines in the New York Mercury on May 19, 1783, is the earliest mention of staging in Newark I have been able to find:¹¹¹

NEWARK STAGE

Peter Stuyvesant who for many years drove a STAGE WAGGON from Powles Hook to Brown's Ferry proposes to begin again next Wednesday for the purpose and will set off from Comunapu [sic] at nine o'clock in the morning and four in the afternoon every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday and drive to Brown's Ferry where Joseph Crane will be ready with another WAGGON to receive all passengers and proceed to Newark. A Boat will attend at Coenties Market to receive all passengers on the days above mentioned at seven o'clock in the morning.

Paterson Stage

In the summer of 1770, Cornelius Neefie advertised a line running from Paulus Hook to his tavern in Passaic Falls (present day Paterson).¹¹² I have no other information concerning this stage line.

Princeton Stage

This stage ran from Princeton to Trenton and connected at Trenton with the steamboats coming into that port. See *Figure 31*.

Tuckerton Stage

As shown in *Figure 29*, an accommodation stage existed in 1831 (at least) that ran from Mannahawkin to Tuckerton as part of the Philadelphia, Trenton, Mount Holly and Manahawkin line. I have not identified any covers associated with this line.

Union Stage Line

The Union line of stages was under common ownership with the Union line of steamboats. This arrangement is graphically shown in its advertisements as seen in *Figure 30*. See below [“The Symbiotic Role of and Competition from Steamboats and Railroads”] for a discussion of the roles of steamboats and railroads in the lives of the stage lines. The stage portion of the operation served as a local or accommodation stage line. See also *Figure 31*.

Union Line.—

THE subscribers respectfully inform the public, that they intend running a Stage, during the summer season, for the accommodation of those disposed to visit the Grass Plains, Manahawkin or Tuckerton—to commence the 1st of May next. The Stage will leave Manahawkin every Monday & Thursday mornings, and arrive at Jonathan Deacon's Tavern, in Mount-Holly, on the same evenings; from which place, passengers will be conveyed to Burlington, on the following mornings, in Jonathan Deacon's Line of Stages, in time to meet the Steam boats for Philadelphia & Trenton. Returning, they will leave Burlington every Tuesday & Friday evenings, and arrive at the Ferries of Samuel Gray, Esq and Nathan Haywood, in Manahawkin, early on the following evenings:—where ladies and gentlemen can be accommodated with genteel boarding and lodging, at the moderate rate of \$2 50 per week; and conveyed at any time across the Bay, to James Cranmer's, Hazleton Cranmer's and Stephen Inman's.

Fare through \$2 00.

**Samuel Gray,
James Bodine.**

April 2, 1820. 207 14w.

A conveyance will be in readiness at Manahawkin, for Tuckerton.

Fig. 30: Ad for the Union Line

Other Local/Accommodation Stage Lines

There are many stage lines that operated in New Jersey about which we have no or very little information. In most cases no covers have been identified by me as carried by these lines. The following list has been taken from advertisements and timetables/schedules which have appeared from time-to-time in *NJPH*:

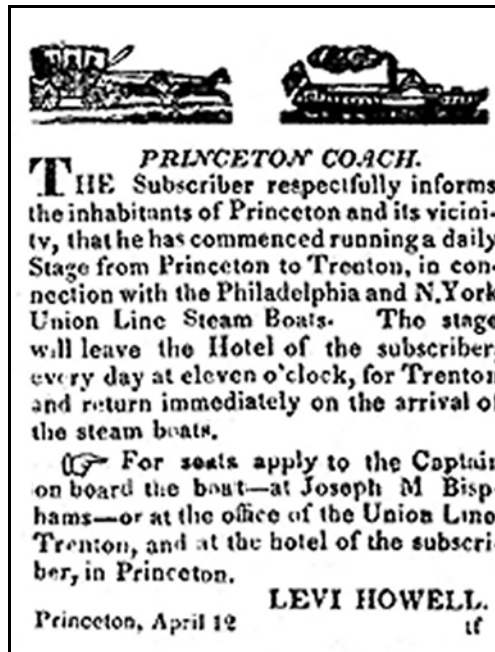
- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Allentown Stage | Belleville & Newark Stage |
| Bound Brook Stage | Paterson & Newark Stage |
| Dover Stage | Parsippany & Newark Stage |
| Scotch Plains Stage | Camptown & Newark Stage |
| Springfield Stage | Elizabethtown & Newark Stage |
| Orange & Newark Stage | Caldwell & Newark Stage |
| Bloomfield Stage | Princeton Stage |

There are several pre-Revolution stage lines mentioned in an article in an early issue of *NJPH*, but I have no other information about these operations and, in several instances, the information is too cryptic to incorporate into this article.¹¹³

The Symbiotic Role of and Competition with Steamboats and Railroads

Just as stage coaches replaced the individual horse for travel and for carrying freight and the mails, the steamboat replaced the stage and forced the stage lines to adjust their business models. Thereafter, the steamboat, too, was superseded in part by the railroad. Yet neither the steamboat nor the railroad could do everything that a stage could do. The steamboat could not travel inland away from navigable waters to pick up and drop off passengers and freight; the railroad could not travel anywhere tracks had not been laid down. The savvy steamboat and railroad operators realized this and entered into arrangements with stage lines to service the interior of the state to bring passengers and cargo to the landings and depots, and to take them back again to the interior. Hence was born the concept of the accommodation stage lines such as the Swift Sure stage, the Union Stage, and others.

This relationship is demonstrated by the advertisement previously reprinted in an issue of *NJPH* and shown here as *Figure 31*:



PRINCETON COACH.
THE Subscriber respectfully informs the inhabitants of Princeton and its vicinity, that he has commenced running a daily Stage from Princeton to Trenton, in connection with the Philadelphia and N. York Union Line Steam Boats. The stage will leave the Hotel of the subscriber, every day at eleven o'clock, for Trenton and return immediately on the arrival of the steam boats.
For seats apply to the Captain on board the boat—at Joseph M Bishpams—or at the office of the Union Line, Trenton, and at the hotel of the subscriber, in Princeton.
LEVI HOWELL.
Princeton, April 12

Fig. 31: Ad for the Princeton Coach

Steamboats, at least initially, were slower than stages; they were dirtier from the smoke; they were subject to blocked or delayed passage from ice in the water; and, too often – at least in the early days – they were subject to fire and the explosion of their boilers. But they had one significant advantage over stage travel: they were more comfortable for passengers who could stroll around the deck rather than be restricted to hard, jarring bench seats and often poor road conditions.

As previously noted, the Swift Sure stage line was one of the earliest examples of the symbiotic relationship between stages and steamboats. The line not only was fortified with a mail contract which helped keep it in business when other stage lines were sinking, but it also profited from its flexibility and willingness to focus on local or accommodation and feeder travel.

The New York Evening Post for August 8, 1832 contained an ad which stated:

The Swift Sure Line is the pleasantest line now running between New York and Philadelphia. Fare reduced to \$2.75. Passengers by this line start from New York every Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning at 10 o'clock from Pier No. 1, Washington Street, corner of the Battery, in the splendid new steamboat "Cinderella" for Elizabethtown, Westfield, Scotch Plains, Plainfield, Bound Brook, Somerville, Centerville, and lodge at Flemington. Start next morning via Ringoes, Lambertville, New Hope, Buckingham, Willow Grove and Jenkingtown, and arrive at Philadelphia to dine. . . .

In preparing this article, I examined twenty-two traveler's guides published between 1823 and 1859 to determine both the means of travel (stage, steamboat and/or railroad) and the routes taken.¹¹⁴ The steady trend from stage travel to steamboat travel to railroad travel (and to combinations in varying degrees) was clear and inexorable, with the railroads eventually dominating the means of carriage to the point that eventually the guides were nothing other than railroad guides with footnotes mentioning places where stage or steamboat travel was required to supplement train travel.

Conclusion

Stage travel offered an important advance in terms of the development of the country and in furthering the dissemination of personal and commercial transportation in early America. It also was necessary for the spreading of the news and delivery of the mails. But little is known about the subject of stage lines and their operations – certainly far less than is known about railroad and steamboats. Much work on New Jersey stage lines and their routes remains to be done. This article is only the beginning, and we would welcome more information from other members. Please send information to me at stevenroth@comcast.net.

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ENDNOTES:

- ⁹⁰ © 2013. Steven M. Roth
⁹¹ Sometimes also spelled Inslip.
⁹² See, for example, Returns of Post Office for 1790, *Ibid.*, *American State Papers*, 9.
⁹³ *Pennyweight/Sterling Conversion Table*, Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries, Sale No. 944 (October 24, 2007), Appendix, p. 171.
⁹⁴ *Diary of Anthony Dobbin* (Albany 1823), p. 183.
⁹⁵ Chafetz, D. A., “A Cover Analysis”, [NJPH Vol. 6, No. 1 \(January 1978\) Whole No. 26](#), 1ff; and Chafetz, D. A., “The Unknown Colonial Post Office”, *American Philatelist*, (January 1980), 45ff. Much of the information I present here concerning the Morristown Stage is my synthesis of information published by Mr. Chafetz in these two articles.
⁹⁶ NJ Archives, First Series XXIX, 400.
⁹⁷ Hahn, C.M., “The Provisional Post of the United States,” *Collectors Club Philatelist*, March 1975, 97.
⁹⁸ *Ibid.*
⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 98
¹⁰⁰ Hahn, C. M., “Express Business: Origins and Definitions”, *The Penny Post*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (October 2003), 63.
¹⁰¹ Chafetz, D., [NJPH](#), *Ibid.*
¹⁰² Peck, Leonard, “Early Travel & Mail Transport in New Jersey,” [NJPH, Vol 36, No. 1 \(February 2008\), Whole No. 169.](#)
¹⁰³ Hahn, op. cit. 99.
¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 100.
¹⁰⁵ Quoted in [NJPH, Whole 1-25 \(Reprint\)](#), 43.
¹⁰⁶ [NJPH Vol. 33, No. 3 \(August 2005\), Whole No. 159](#), pp. 130.-131
¹⁰⁷ *Pennsylvania Journal*, March 24, 1773.
¹⁰⁸ Walton, J.R., “Mount Holly, N.J. Stage Mail”, [NJPH, Vol. 31, No. 1 \(February 2003\), Whole No. 149](#), 29ff.
¹⁰⁹ NJ Archives, First Series XXVII, 274, 289; XXVIII 150, 475, 507, and XXXI 133, 173, 206, 216, 127.
¹¹⁰ NJ Archives, First Series XXVI 500, 513, and 545.
¹¹¹ *New York Mercury*, May 19, 1783.
¹¹² *New York Journal*, May 3, 1770.
¹¹³ [NJPH 1-25 \(reprint\)](#), 19.
¹¹⁴ *Morse Pocket Gazateer* (1823); *Davison’s Traveller’s Guide* (1833); *Disturnell’s Travel Guide* (1836; 1843; 1848; 1853); *Tanner’s American Traveller* (1839; 1844); *Holley’s Travel Guide* (1844); *Thompson’s Traveller’s Guide* (1845); *Appleton’s Railroad And Steamboat Guide* (1847; 1849; 1859); *Mitchell’s Traveller’s Handbook* (1849; 1857); *Colton’s Traveller’s Guide* (1850;); *Conklin’s Guide To Travel* (1850); *Ensign, Bridgman & Fanning’s Travel Guide* (1857); *Trow’s New York City Directory* (1859).



AN ARRIVAL IN THE OLDER TIME.