



YESTERDAY'S
NEWS

JERSEY JOURNEYS

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The Birth of the New Jersey Turnpike

New Jersey's first roads — foot and horse paths — were made by clearing brush. Later some of these same paths were widened and used by wagons and stagecoaches. New Jersey developed stagecoach routes to accommodate travelers going from one city in the state to another and from Philadelphia to New York. In 1766 passengers on the “Flying Machine,” a covered stagecoach, could travel from Philadelphia to New York in just two days — providing weather was good!

By the end of the Revolutionary War in the late 1700s, however, the country suffered many economic problems, and towns and counties couldn't keep up with road repairs. New Jersey was no exception. Its local roads were in horrible shape.

In the early 1800s private turnpike companies were formed to create roads and maintain them. More than 70 chartered turnpike companies in New Jersey created 550 miles of good roadway. Eventually, however, the turnpike companies suffered financial problems, and many went bankrupt. There was also competition from railroads and canals that provided better transportation systems. At the end of the 19th century, New Jersey's country roads were in bad shape. City streets, on the other hand, were in better condition. They had to be in order to transport goods

and people from one place to another. Taxes paid for road improvements in cities.

It wasn't until the League of American Wheelmen — a biking organization — came along in the late 1800s that attention was finally paid to rural roads. Bicyclists relied on these roads to tour the countryside, and they demanded better conditions. The League helped form Good Roads Associations that sprang up in many states. In 1894 the Associations held a national road conference where they recommended that states establish and fund systems of state roads. New Jersey was the first state to set up a system of roads. In 1894 New Jersey established a Commission of Public Roads.

The federal government also got involved in road improvement with the creation of the National Office of Road Inquiry in the early 1890s. Its commitment to improving America's roadways was strengthened with the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916.

In the early 20th century roads and highways were not only built but also maintained according to specific standards. Safety became a major concern. The need for road improvement was also linked to the fact that more and more people were driving cars and trucks. Because of vehicles many roads were now made of concrete and asphalt.



The League of American Wheelmen published this pamphlet in 1896. It supplied cyclists with detailed bike routes, some in New Jersey, and road rules. (*Collections of The New Jersey Historical Society*)

After World War II New Jersey Governor Alfred Driscoll and other lawmakers were dedicated to building a safe superhighway that would connect Philadelphia and New York and provide a link to all existing major highways. In the late 1940s the New Jersey Turnpike Authority was organized, and a few years later vehicles were traveling on the flexible asphalt surface of the New Jersey Turnpike. ★

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New Jersey Roads: From Dirt to Asphalt



1 A bicyclist rides on the dirt roads of Bayonne. (Collections of The New Jersey Historical Society)

A Few Rules From the League of American Wheelmen

1. Never expect pedestrians to get out of your way; find a way around them.
2. Never ride rapidly by an electric car [trolley] standing to unload passengers.
3. Never coast down a hill having cross streets along the way.
4. Do not ride too close to a novice [beginner], and in meeting a novice give plenty of room.
5. When riding after dark, always carry a lantern.

Bicyclists were also cautioned to “remember the greatest enjoyment and benefit are had by moderate speed. You are not obliged to go fast simply because you can.”



2 Although this corduroy road — made with logs and dirt — was in North Carolina, these roads were also found throughout New Jersey in the 1900s. (Collections of The New Jersey Historical Society)



5 Can you tell what these Trenton workers are using to make a road? It doesn't appear to be logs or boards. (Collections of The New Jersey Historical Society)



3 Above: These motorists travel “one of the better roadways of about 1910” in Newark. Notice the locomotive chugging along on the side of the road. (Collections of The New Jersey Historical Society)



4 Right: In the same year wagons use a plank road (made of thick boards) in Kearny. (Collections of The New Jersey Historical Society)

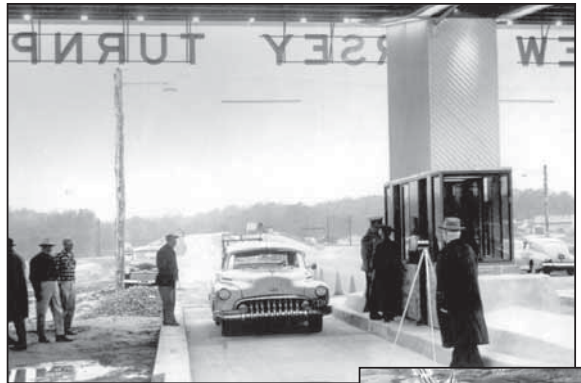


New Jersey Vehicles: From Electric to Gasoline Powered



6 With the growth in road building came growth in the automobile business. New Jersey's first automaker was Andrew Riker. In 1899 he founded the Riker Motor Vehicle Company in Elizabethport (present-day Elizabeth) to produce electric vehicles. Electric vehicles were soon replaced by those with gasoline-powered, internal-combustion engines. *(Collections of The New Jersey Historical Society)*

9 During World War I trucks could be found on all of New Jersey's roads. Trucks could travel shorter distances faster than trains and could pick up or drop off deliveries right at the door. This "1919" truck is parked on a brick street. Early city streets were often paved with stone or brick. *(Collections of The New Jersey Historical Society)*



Although the Midwest was the center of the automaking industry in the early 1900s, New Jersey was home to sixty automakers at that time.

7 Above: The 1910 model of the American Simplex, a luxury car, was made in New Brunswick. It sold for anywhere between \$5,000 and \$15,000. (The mass-produced Model T sold for less than \$500.) *(Collections of The New Jersey Historical Society)*

10 This photo captures the first car waiting to enter the New Jersey Turnpike at Interchange 3 on November 5, 1951, opening day. On that day 4,225 vehicles used the Turnpike and paid \$1,996 in tolls. In its first full year of operation, 17.9 million vehicles used the Turnpike and paid \$16.2 million in tolls. Today about 218 million vehicles travel the Turnpike in a year and pay \$392 million in tolls. *(Photo by Courier-Post, The New Jersey Turnpike Authority)*



8 Right: The Mercer (1916), another luxury car, was made in Trenton. It sold for about \$3,700. The stock market crash in 1929 signaled the end of New Jersey's automaking industry. *(Collections of The New Jersey Historical Society)*

11 The Turnpike's first interchange at Deepwater. *(Collections of The New Jersey Historical Society)*





The New Jersey Turnpike Turns 50!

“The New Jersey Turnpike will be financed by the sale of revenue bonds to private investors. No tax money will be used for its construction, repair, maintenance, or operation.”

—1949 NJ Turnpike Authority Press Release

This year marks the 50th birthday of the New Jersey Turnpike, one of the most heavily traveled toll roads in the United States, which runs from the George Washington Bridge in the north to the Delaware Memorial Bridge in the south. Built in 23 months, the first section of the superhighway opened at approximately 8 a.m. on

November 5, 1951. The final section was opened on January 15, 1952. In all, the Turnpike ran 118 miles. Since 1951 the road has been lengthened and widened and extended. Today it runs 148 miles. The Turnpike was designed by hundreds of engineers and built by thousands of laborers. Today the day-to-day operations are handled by staff from administration, operations, engineering, maintenance, and toll collection. The Turnpike is supported by money earned from tolls and concessions. Construction projects are funded by revenue bonds. ★



The East Brunswick Service Area in early 1952. Today the Turnpike’s 12 service areas are named for widely known Americans with New Jersey connections. This service area is now the site of the Joyce Kilmer Service Area. Do you know who he is and what his connection to New Jersey is? (*The New Jersey Turnpike Authority*)

What effect do you think the Turnpike has had on New Jersey?

TO FIND OUT MORE

Exhibition

In September 2001 The New Jersey Historical Society will open an exhibition on the New Jersey Turnpike called *What Exit?* Be sure to visit the Society and “travel” the superhighway that’s known all around the world. The exhibition will run until July 2002. See The New Jersey Historical Society’s hours of operation listed on this page.

Web Sites

Drive into the New Jersey Turnpike’s Web site at www.state.nj.us/turnpike, and discover everything you need to know about the state’s major roadway. The League of American Wheelmen is now called the League of American Bicyclists. Pedal into their site at www.bikeleague.org.

DID YOU KNOW ...

that the Society has the records (1800–1912) of the New Jersey Turnpike Company? The company was incorporated in 1806 with the purpose of building and operating a toll road between Easton, Pennsylvania, and New Brunswick, New Jersey.

... the records (1805–09) of the Newark Turnpike Company? The company laid out and maintained a local toll road between Jersey City and Newark. In

COMING UP NEXT FALL

Jersey Journeys takes a vacation from June to September. In October we’ll get on track as we ride New Jersey railroads. We’ll be passing through many of the state’s cities and towns and making plenty of stops along the way. No tickets are needed.

1832 the New Jersey Railroad and Transportation Company bought the company.

- ... a 19th-century tollgate sign?
- ... a late 19th-century metal bicycle with a large front wheel?
- ... a plastic and metal keychain that includes the logo of the New Jersey Turnpike?
- ... a New Jersey Turnpike’s toll collector’s jacket? It is light blue and double-breasted with wide lapels. A “NJTP” patch is sewn on the top of the left sleeve. The uniform was made by the Best Uniform Company of New York, N.Y.

NJHS HOURS

Office hours: Mon.–Fri., 9 a.m.–5 p.m.
Public hours: Tues.–Sat., 10 a.m.–5 p.m.
Library hours: Tues.–Sat., 12 p.m.–5 p.m.
Closed Sunday and Monday
Admission to the Society is free.

For more information on Education Programs for grades Pre-K–12, after school and scout groups, family and adult programs, and Teachers’ Workshops at the Society, please call the Education Department at (973) 596-8500.

To order a subscription to *Jersey Journeys* call (973) 596-8500 and press “0.”

Costs: Large classroom subscription (35 copies per issue, one Teacher’s Guide) \$65. Small classroom subscription (25 copies per issue, one Teacher’s Guide) \$50. Annual resource packet (2 copies per issue, mailed at year-end) \$25. Individual subscription (1 copy) \$10.

Main Sources: “What Exit?” By C. Charles Bertschi, Columbia University, Project Researcher. The New Jersey Historical Society; The New Jersey Turnpike Authority.

WORDS ON THE GO

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| Turn•pike | a main road where travelers stop at a barrier (in early days poles, or pikes, that turned) in order to pay a toll, or fee, for using the road |
| High•way | a major road for the public to use. Highways are also known as thruways, expressways, interstates, parkways, turnpikes, freeways, and thoroughfares. |
| As•phalt | a dark bituminous substance that is found in natural beds and as residue from petroleum distillation. It consists mostly of hydrocarbons. According to the National Center for Asphalt Technology, 96% of all paved roads and streets in the United States are surfaced with asphalt. |
| Pave•ment | artificially covered hard surface of a road |
| Rev•e•nue bond | a bond issued by a public agency authorized to build, acquire, or improve a revenue-producing property (toll road, for example) and payable out of revenue derived from such property. Revenue is the total amount of money earned. |

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