

## Chapter 9

### Crossroads of the States

The earliest pathways and trails in Monmouth followed rivers to the seashore. Dutch and English settlers widened these Indian paths into dirt roads for their horses and wagons. Having no foundation these dirt roads became quagmires for wagons and horses when it rained. Horses were changed every twelve hours at tavern stops, while passengers endured the heat and dust of the bone-shaking trips, connecting New York to Philadelphia by the Old York Road.



**August and Minnie Thomas with  
their children Augie, Jr. and Hope  
at the 1939 World's Fair in  
Trenton, New Jersey**

Traveling to the shore, stage connections were made in Allentown, Freehold, Colts Neck, and Eatontown. There were thirty stage connections daily to reach the seashore at Long Branch. The Union House in Red Bank served stage passengers beginning in 1791. Eventually, steamboats and railroads would make traveling more comfortable and easier.

In the 1820s steamboats had regular schedules between New York and Red Bank, carrying sixty passengers a day. There were two main canals in the state by 1820 connecting towns and villages with the cities. One was the one hundred mile long Morris Canal, connecting different elevations by using inclined planes along the Delaware and Passaic Rivers to the Hudson River. Barges could be raised one hundred feet as the canal crossed the Paterson Falls of the Passaic River. Canals allowed villages to sprout up away from the coastline. The Morris Canal is now highway Route 80.

The other canals were the Delaware and Raritan, completed in 1836, connecting the coal areas of Pennsylvania to the industries of northern New Jersey. These canals brought passengers and merchandise to the shore. The Eatontown dock on the South Shrewsbury River became a depot for storing and shipping charcoal.

The American Hotel in Freehold served as a stagecoach stop since 1824, serving food and beverages to passengers crossing the countryside. If the horses needed assistance, passengers were expected to help push and pull the coach out of the mud or up a hill.

Frances Trallope described a trip to the shore in 1830 by writing, “we sat on benches and there were no springs under the wagon. Green-headed flies, insects and pests disturbed us the entire trip. We had to be lifted out upon our destination.” Another passenger wrote, “We were so bothered by mosquitoes that we drove to Eatontown in the evening to escape them. It was cool and pleasant.”

New Jersey Governor Bloomfield fostered the development of turnpikes between 1800 and 1829 by granting fifty franchises to have turnpikes built. Stage lines for mail delivery were established in 1839 connecting Keyport, Red Bank and Long Branch. Another stage line connected Keyport, Matawan and Middletown.

James Buckingham, a member of the British Parliament, wrote in 1838 of his travels from New York to Philadelphia:

*The stage traveled ten mph to Newark, which is one of the prettiest towns in America, then to Princeton's Nassau Inn, which had one hundred horses in immense stables to serve thirty stages each day. At Camden we took the ferry to Philadelphia but had to cut through fifteen-inch thick ice to get to the other side of the river. We left*

*Philadelphia in May and ascended the Delaware to Bordentown where we took the railroad, whose average speed was sixteen mph until we reached Amboy. Then we boarded a steamboat and traveled forty miles to New York. It took over seven hours to travel one hundred miles. Average speed was fourteen mph.* He commented about the orchards full of fruits, apples, peaches and pears brought to market by the Swedes.

The principal source of prosperity for people in Monmouth County in the 1840s was trade with New York City. There were thirteen sloops and schooners that sailed daily from Red Bank, carrying vegetables, cordwood, umber and oysters. When the Red Bank Steamboat Company built three vessels on the Navesink in 1852, Red Bank became one of the earliest shipbuilding centers in New Jersey.

Monmouth County contains various mineral springs, which brought thousands of people suffering with rheumatism, piles, weakness, diarrhea, diseases of the skin and other disorders. The Newman Springs Hotel on the Tinton Falls-Red Bank border became a well-known destination.

The Tinton Falls Hotel, located where the Tinton Falls firehouse is today, also became a resort destination for people wanting to bathe in the sulfur water from the falls. Spring Lake and Cold Indian Springs also drew visitors who found relaxation, refreshment and entertainment from the waters of the area.

One citizen described traveling in Monmouth County in 1845 stating “since there were no sidewalks to keep one’s shoes out of the mud, it was nearly impossible to cross the street.” Traveling by boat on the rivers was the preferable over public roads. Efforts to improve conditions included plank roads, made of fallen trees. Cedar and pine tree cutting was profitable until the lumbering ended in 1879. Wood had been the chief fuel

and was needed to build homes and factories and produce heat for steam engines. The cost of acreage rose from ten cents an acre to over \$25.00 an acre near transportation facilities.

By 1857 there were twenty-three corporations, which laid out routes over the old dirt pathways. One was the Red Bank-Eatontown Turnpike, today called Broad Street or Highway 35, which connected Red Bank and Long Branch. The Red Bank-Middletown Turnpike extended Red Bank to King's Highway, called Mountain Hill Road today. Farmers using the road paid at the tollhouse on Oak Hill Road. If farmers thought their rights were violated or they had been denied free access the shipping points and markets, they burned tollhouses and destroyed tollgates. By the 1850s, sixty stagecoaches met the passenger boats docking in Red Bank to transport them to Long Branch whose pier was not long enough to dock steamboats.

Another tollgate was located on a private road, Hance Avenue in Tinton Falls, which connected Sycamore Avenue with Newman Springs Road. A tree branch was suspended across the road until a fee of one cent was paid for every person, carriage, sleigh, wagon or sled. Every animal, calf, sheep or hog was charged another cent. Five "mills" were charged for every horse and rider. By 1860 there were seventy-six turnpikes and plank roads in New Jersey. Private express stages were established to meet the growing demand for faster transportation. Exempt from tolls were persons going to church or a funeral and militiamen on their way to training.

Paved roads outside the cities were nonexistent. Horses pulled everything on wheels before trolleys and trains were introduced into the area. Bumpy stagecoach lines lost passengers to more convenient water travel. One traveler related his story of having

to take a stagecoach from New York to Philadelphia to reach Freehold adding one hundred unnecessary miles and time to his trip.

With the coming of faster transportation of railroads, stagecoaches and steamboats disappeared from the county. The first locomotive called a steam wagon ran six hundred –thirty feet on a track in Patterson in 1825. Soon the Freehold and Keyport Railroad was chartered to meet the demands of farmers in central Jersey, who had been bringing their crops to the coastal docks and ports for shipping to New York markets.

The discovery and use of marl as a fertilizer increased production of crops. To reach marl pits in present day Marlboro, farmers needed more efficient rail transportation. This brought the Squankum Railroad and Marl Company into existence as freight transported by horse and wagon to Raritan Bay, became unreliable due to muddy roads and bad weather.

As passengers found it difficult to reach Monmouth County, except by boat, the Camden and Amboy Railroad transported passengers to the shore. Passengers took a steamboat to Port Monmouth and then continued south by trolley and train. Responding to the need for better transportation, the Freehold and Jamesburg Agricultural Company built tracks eliminating the stagecoach route between Freehold and Jamesburg. Soon, the company connected Heightstown in 1853.

The War between the States brought new demand for transportation as soldiers, military supplies and material for the war effort increased from 1855 to 1864. The federal government designed the Seashore Railroad to connect Sandy Hook, Spermicetti Cove, Sea Bright and Monmouth Beach to Long Branch and serve the coastline of Monmouth County. The company appealed to President Abraham Lincoln for assistance to lay track.

Tracks were laid so close to the ocean that storms washed the ocean over the tracks and tipped over the engines.

Track was laid at Port Monmouth in 1856 that reached Eatontown Junction south of Lewis Street in 1860, connecting Long Branch, Farmingdale and Lakewood, then called Bricksburg, by 1861. Soon, Squan Village (Manaquan) and other shore towns would never be isolated again from the rest of New Jersey, by the Delaware Bay-Raritan Railroad.

Commuting to the cities increased travel by rail service, which provided scheduled stops after 1850. Clocks were now set according to the railroad time schedules. Better transportation caused suburbs continued to grow. New Yorkers began buying summer cottages and second homes at the shore. By 1850 there were two hundred miles of rail track in New Jersey. By 1860 almost six hundred miles of track crisscrossed the state. Consequently, railroad companies were forced to merge or go bankrupt.

After the war, rail service joined Elizabeth Port and connected the main line to the shore towns. This was also the first time Long Branch had direct access by ferry across the Hudson River to New York City. The line passed through Red Bank where it connected with the Delaware-Raritan Railroad to Philadelphia. Additional rail lines were added connecting Upper Freehold, New Egypt, Cream Ridge, Imlaytown, Hornersville and Sharon.