

Crossing the Delaware River: The Delaware River and Bay is nearly 300 miles long, rising in the western Catskill Mountains only about 30 miles west of the Hudson River Valley. Soon it forms the border between New York and Pennsylvania and then for most of its length, the border between New Jersey to the east and Pennsylvania and Delaware to the west. Two major tributaries come in from the west, the Lehigh and Schuylkill Rivers, both entirely in Pennsylvania, with many creeks and short tidewater rivers as well. The Delaware River cuts through a ridge of the Appalachians, known as the Delaware Water Gap, about 90 miles upstream from Philadelphia, and it is navigable from Trenton, New Jersey, to its mouth, a distance of about 140 miles.

There were Swedes and Dutch in the Delaware Valley as early as 1638, and the area was ceded to England, along with New York, in 1664. Early Quaker settlements had begun in what was called West Jersey at least 10 years before William Penn sailed up the river and established Philadelphia in 1682. Penn traveled extensively up and down the Delaware as he laid claim to his new colony to the west. On his second visit in 1699-1701, he built a fine country home called Pennsbury, facing the river about 25 miles upstream from his capital at Philadelphia.

With several Quaker Meetings having been established in what are now Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Salem Counties in New Jersey, frequent crossing of the Delaware to Philadelphia, the capital of Penn's Quaker colony, became mandatory. Many ferries were established, several surviving into the 20th century. History indicates that not only could wagon teams cross the ice for several weeks in the winter (probably not during all winters), but a farmers' market was established on the ice in the middle of the Delaware River opposite Philadelphia. That has not been possible in the past 150 years. George Washington and his army crossed the Delaware about eight miles upstream from Trenton on December 25, 1776, but there is no evidence that his crossing was blocked by ice.

In the upper reaches of the Delaware, the river is less than one mile wide- in some places less than ½ mile. Tiny ferries were established along the way, in most cases less than 10 miles apart. By the 19th century, wooden covered bridges were taking their place at important crossings. As the 20th century dawned, steel truss bridges were replacing the covered bridges. Two covered bridges across the Delaware that I remember were at Portland, Pennsylvania, and Belvidere, New Jersey.

From the north, early crossings were at Hancock (NY), Port Jervis-Matamoras, Dingman's Ferry (PA), Portland (PA), Belvidere (NJ), Easton-Phillipsburg, Stockton (NJ), New Hope-Lambertville, Washington's Crossing (PA-NJ), Trenton-Morrisville, Bristol-Burlington, Philadelphia-Camden, Chester (PA), Wilmington-Penns Grove, and New Castle-Pennsville. Originally all ferries, early bridges replaced them, first on the upper sections of the river where it was not wide. Railroad bridges were often built before those for the highways. The first bridge for vehicular traffic at Philadelphia, now called the Ben Franklin, was opened in 1926, as part of the city's Sesquicentennial Exposition.

Today, all these crossings remain important, and many additional spans have been added during the last half of the 20th century. In midcentury, a new ferry service was added across the mouth of Delaware Bay from Lewes, Delaware to Cape May, New Jersey, a distance of about 15 miles. All other ferries on the river are gone. The southern-most bridge, the first of two Delaware Memorial Bridges, opened in 1951, and the nearby New Castle-Pennsville Ferry closed down immediately. The Bristol-Burlington Bridge and the Tacony-Palmyra Bridge, both upstream from Philadelphia, were built in the 1930s, and the Walt Whitman and Betsy Ross bridges, south and north of Philadelphia, date from the mid-20th century. In the late 1950s, the Pennsylvania Turnpike was connected to the New Jersey Turnpike with a new bridge over the Delaware about eight miles south of Trenton. Finally, in the early 1970s, the Commodore Barry Bridge replaced the Chester-Bridgeport Ferry, and a second Delaware Memorial spanned the Delaware alongside the original 1951 bridge.

Ocean-going freighters and a few passenger ships ply the Delaware as far as Philadelphia and sometimes to Trenton. Members of the Delaware River and Bay Pilots' Association, based in Lewes, Delaware, are responsible for piloting all shipping in the Bay and River. Not a government agency but fully accredited by the Coast Guard and the Army Corps of Engineers, this association has an apprentice system whereby a candidate works for little more than room and board for three or four years, after which, if accepted, he shares equally in the profits of the association. I have two cousins and had a good trapshooting friend who were pilots in this association.

The Delaware River and Bay Authority, with members appointed by the Governors of New Jersey and Delaware, operates the Delaware Memorial Bridges and the Lewes-Cape May Ferry. The bridges have heavily subsidized the ferry service, but their revenues can easily do that.

Work Report: On Tuesday, June 27, eight volunteers attended, as follows: Ted Kamen (in charge), Steve Bryce, Bob Jordan, Dave Leon, Brent McDougall, Bill Scheper, Neal Sobocinski, and Mac Taylor. The Lionel electric trains were worked over in preparation for their use on July 2. Inventory and organization of A.V.R.R. supplies and equipment was undertaken. The Stanley Models EX, 725, and 735 were cleaned and wiped down. The left running board on the '37 Packard, essentially finished, was "fine-tuned" to perfection, and the installation of the new mat and trim on the right running board was begun. The jig made last week for forming the trim strips held its proper bend and will be used for the right-side running board.

The Model 76 was brought to the upper garage, mainly for the repair of the leak in the fitting on the bottom of the boiler under the water column. The badly-corroded fitting was removed, but the hole is enlarged, and a new 1/4" pipe tap would not produce a clean thread. The hole will need to be drilled for 3/8" pipe.

On Wednesday, June 28, five volunteers answered the call, viz: Jerry Lucas (in charge), Bill Schwoebel, Dave Leon, Tom Marshall, and Jeff Morrison. The new wheels for the Model 607, plus the left rear door, were taken to Byrd's paint shop for painting. They had been thoroughly prepped by our volunteers, using an epoxy filler and a lot of sanding. The door was needed to match the car's color. The Mountain Wagon was further prepped for its use on July 1 (a special charter of the Wheelmen) and our Steamin' Sunday the next day. Carbon was removed from the burner forks.

The Model H-5, with its newly rebuilt engine, was fired up and driven several miles. All worked well, and the crosshead slides remained cool, as they should. Although this car has been "out of service" for several years, it now appears the wait is worth it. Special thanks to Howard "Dewey" Johnson, Jim Personti, and Jerry Lucas for the many hours expended to bring this outstanding hill-climber back to life.

On Thursday, June 29, ten volunteers took part: Larry Tennity (in charge), Steve Bryce, Tom Marshall, Bob Jordan, Ted Kamen, Paul Kratunis, Lou Mandich, Jim Personti, Tim Ward, and Kelly Williams. Our Model T Ford and the Rauch & Lang electric were made ready for their use on July 2. The Cretors popcorn machine was moved to the upper garage. The Model 87 was moved from the garage to the museum. The tops were put down on the Models 71 and 607.

On the Model 76 boiler project, the hole in the bottom for the water column and one of the blow-downs was drilled and tapped for 3/8" pipe, and new heavy-duty steel fittings were installed. The burner was thoroughly cleaned, although the holes in the grate were in good condition. Work progressed on installation of the right-side running board covering for the '37 Packard, and a portion of the garage floor was pressure-washed.

The events of July 1 and 2 went well. The Auburn Valley trains and their crews had little trouble, and the ride-giving antique autos worked perfectly. It was a pleasure to entertain about 110 Wheelmen with their high-wheeled bicycles on Saturday. A total of 287 visitors were counted on Sunday. Sunday's visitors were entertained by Mike Venezia's 1905 Wurlitzer Band Organ (rebuilt in 1926). The weather was hot but pleasant.