Connecting Colonial New Jersey

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Using the case of colonial New Jersey, I argue that the mastery of mid-scale mobility signaled an important metamorphosis toward American nationhood. It marked the integration of people, place, and government. For 17th-century America, mid-scale mobility is more properly associated with Native Americans. American colonists immediately incorporated large-scale and local-scale movement. But mid-scale mobility, that is, regular coverage of regional distances, waited until the mid-18th century. Until then colonists moved much less comfortably through the landscape, adopting the paths shaped by others before them. Gradually the colonists adapted the paths, widened them, and constructed new roads, forming a regional transportation network. Demand came from diverse needs of life—to conduct business, worship, socialize, participate in civic life—and road construction fed further demand and increased interaction, and led to further construction. By the American Revolution, the road was an everyday part of life that linked the New Jersey colonists world and reoriented their social, economic, and political expectations. Colonial government played a key role in the development of the transportation network, designating where and how roads were to be built, mediating conflict over them, weaving New Jersey into an effective mid-scale governmental unit; it thus demonstrated its own usefulness. These changes together undergirded the next stage, New Jersey's joining together with comparable units to form the United States.

Keywords: Colonial New Jersey, nation-building, roads, transportation, mid-scale mobility.

> Here he beholds fair cities, substantial villages, extensive fields, an immense country filled with decent houses, good roads, orchards, meadows, and bridges where an hundred years ago all was wild, woody, and uncultivated... We are a people of cultivators, scattered over an immense territory, communicating with each other by means of good roads, navigable rivers, united by silken bands of mild government, all respecting the laws, without dreading their power because they are equitable.
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> Crevecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782)

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The American colonies began as a series of discrete settlements, tied most tightly to Europe and only lightly with each other. As the regional transportation network formed, the American links began to rival the European ones. Using the case of New Jersey in the century before the American Revolution, I argue that forging a mid-scale or regional transportation network demonstrated that the colonists lived in an effective political and social unit. The formation of this New Jersey network was an instrumental step in the creation of the nation.

The emergence of nations is associated with the early modern period. Gellner (1983), Anderson (1991), and Taylor (1993), for example, describe their emergence as creating mid-scale political entities that differed from the previous political ones whose identifications were either more localized or imperial. The mid-scale nation eliminated the previous spatial discontinuities, aiming for uniformity and distinct boundaries for political and economic convenience. Identification with nation, fellow nationals, and a shared historical narrative completes the transformation. For both Gellner and Anderson language is the key to the nation's rise, while for Taylor the shift to capitalism is more pivotal. Changes in communication—technical, literal, and literary—meshed geographic and social groups into a regional coherence that ultimately defines them as a unit. Anderson calls them imagined communities because the individuals within them need not know or see each other to have an awareness of themselves as a distinct entity able to provide each other with goods, services, labor, and identity. Once formed, national and ethnic identification accelerated; distinctions large and small became paramount, but first the identity had to form.

The road system served a significant role in the creation of an imagined community; it reoriented the colonists' sense of their connections to that same mid-distance space and gave them a new underlying reality. In essence, the colony rather than the town became an activity space. It filled in mentally—the occasions and the routes grew and drew upon each other, tightening the colonists' bonds to each other and to their emerging entity. Colonists might vary in the frequency of their trips or in their dependence on travel, but over time as a group they acquired a generalized expectation of mid-scale connection.

The mechanism for the creation of the road system was critical to building a sense of effective distinctiveness. In the case of New Jersey, colonists turned to their government for help and authority to imprint their own network on the landscape they found and used the network to connect with each other. The New Jersey colonial government's role in creating a road system allowed it to penetrate and improve the lives of its residents, changing it from an outpost held by an imperial entity into a state in its own right. This transformation was largely inadvertent, for colonial government began as a politically insignificant entity. It grew consequential more through actions to cope with demand than through its own demands.

Greenfield (1992) describes the Atlantic colonies' version of nation as an inheritance from England. She writes: "English national identity, from its earliest days, provided for two types of national loyalty: one was concrete and materialistic, for

its referent was a concrete reality, materialized in territory, ways of life, and specific institutions; and the other, the original one, was idealistic or abstract—this loyalty was to the national values" (Greenfield, 1992:412). For her, the challenge and requirement of nationhood for the Atlantic colonies lay in the latter term—the need to adapt the ideology; the former was unimportant since loyalty to place of soil and institutions did not derive from birth. She writes: It was in no way geography that defined such a nation. But I would argue that geography—in particular the role of roads in shrinking space and making it cohere—did turn out to matter very much in creating, molding, and binding the American nation. As the colonial governments instituted a road system, they created the conditions for Greenfield's first term, places and institutions for attachment. Such governments became institutions that could define territory, enable a way of life, and make national unity thinkable. New Jersey's colonial government thus became an imaginable character to which to turn.

New Jersey offers a particularly good location to explore the changing significance of connections. Long-distance movement was inherent to all colonial life, not just in New Jersey. New settlers and goods arriving from across the ocean offered critical sources of vitality and necessities. Transatlantic trade predated intercolonial trade and surpassed it in importance. For much of the colonial period, information and letters between colonies traveled most expeditiously when routed through England (Steele, 1986; McCusker and Menard, 1985). Domestically, too, long-distance movement remained important. Searching for better opportunities, settlers moved on regularly. Individuals, families, even communities took to the road, but these trips can be viewed as one-way expeditions, more extenders than connectors of space. Local movement also was an integral part of early settlers experience, whether they were going from village to field, to neighbors, to church. The actual patterns varied with settlement type but occurred broadly (Meinig, 1986).

However, regular middle-distance movement—coming and going within a region—developed throughout the colonial period, and was especially important for New Jersey whose reputation as transit zone dates from the colonial period. Early colonists moved hesitantly through an unfamiliar landscape shaped by native peoples to their own purposes. The settlers' first response was to accept the given routes, taking the roads and rivers as they found them. But the roads they adapted from the Native Americans formed a system that increasingly appeared haphazard as their own settlement expanded, as their locations diverged from those Native Americans had occupied, and as their expectations of transportation heightened. Their expectations of travel and linkages across space changed over the course of the colonial period to reflect the growing ties they had with each other within the Americas. New Jersey's location between New York and Philadelphia, early two of the largest, most vital urban areas in the colonies, made New Jersey an obvious path. Overshadowed by its more prominent neighbors, New Jersey has been understudied, yet it provided an important and emblematic link within the colonies and represented an early meeting and mixing ground for the many social and cultural threads—from religion to ethnicity—of the eventual nation. New Jersey's secondary political and

economic status within the colonial hierarchy would appear likely to deter it from creating an effective governmental identity. Yet the very difficulty it faced stimulated its construction; it had to build and maintain linkages beyond as well as within the colony, across and within groups. New Jersey thus illustrates the effectiveness of the hinterland governments, ones that had to connect with the more apparent leaders like Massachusetts, New York, and Virginia. Without them, the nation would not have formed.

The first part of the paper focuses on what motivated demand for a better transportation system and the increased causes of linkage; the second is more concerned with how supply was effectuated. The usual assumption that growth of population and spread of trade propelled the development of a regional network is true but incomplete. Vance (1970), for example, finds American networks as especially driven by mercantile interests; the entrepot structured the systems of connections. I would argue that more complex patterns of life produced pressure for better, easier connections. Grubler (1990:73) writes that in the 18th century, "Transport *systems*, in the contemporary sense of an *interconnected grid,* existed in only the most rudimentary forms. Consequently, long distances were covered only by the most valuable 'objects': human beings, information (mail), and high-value products (salt, spices, precious metals, textiles, luxury goods, etc.)" (emphases in original). He finds trade, because of its need to be profitable, has been less a stimulus to innovation in transportation than personal movement. I pay particular attention, therefore, to those most valuable creators of expanding infrastructure, human beings. In satisfying their needs, the colonists changed their understanding of their own requirements. Expanding social ties and communications generated a feedback loop—raising colonists' expectations of their possibilities of travel and thus building in disappointment, complaint, and further demand.

The colonists depended on water for transportation, especially of goods, but I concentrate here on roads, for they better reveal the changes in mentality. The waterways required less intervention than the roads to make them usable as paths. The roads demonstrate an exercise of intent, a greater effort, and personal investment to make them serve the colonists. They built interaction between colonist and government. They stand as a clear and constant symbol as well as concrete expression that local connection did not suffice. Concentrating on roads, one can see New Jersey turn into a connected place with its own government, which later as an effective entity could join with other such governments to create the United States.

NEW JERSEY ROADS

New Jersey's colonists gradually filled an area already inhabited by the Lenni-Lenape or Delaware, who had their own well-worn network of paths connecting village or camp sites with coastal areas. The first Europeans, the Swedes and Finns along the Delaware River and the Dutch to the north, set up a few isolated colonies

along waterways (Pomfret, 1973). The earlier settlers dependence on Native Americans for trade and information led them to use the Indian transport network, as did the difficulty of construction, especially when houses had to be built, land cleared, crops planted (Lane, 1939).

More contiguous settlement occurred once the territory came under English dominion after 1664, but change was slow. Of 1675 New Jersey, Whitehead (1846:94–95) writes:

> Much of the province was as yet an unexplored wilderness, or one which had been traversed only by the hunter of the wild game that abounded, or the no less hardy seeker after desirable tracts of land. A single road, or more probably a bridle path, afforded the only means of communication with West Jersey, crossing the Raritan at Inian's Ferry, now New Brunswick, and the different rivers and streams were the principal avenues whereby intercourse was kept up in other directions.

With rising numbers (see Table 1), colonists penetrated the interior, moving away from the waterways. In January 1685 Robert Fullerton wrote his brother in Scotland, "We have the honor to be the first Inland planters in this part of *America*, for the former Settlements have been by the *Riversides*, which are all possessed by the *Quit-renters*, the which I would have grudged at, had I not found the goodness of the land upwards will countervail the trouble of transportation to the water" (italics in original) (in Whitehead 1846:323). As the first inland planter, Fullerton begins the shift toward a new occupation of space. His own willingness to overcome the trouble of transportation became not just a personal effort, but built to a larger effort of reorientation that eventually was undertaken by the wider community. First riverfront property filled, then inland movement increased. Over the century, legislation ensured connections—in town, between plantation and landing, town and plantation, and town and town. Each increase in categories of connection simultaneously increased the range of expectations. Figure 1, New Jersey Colonial Roads of 1770, shows a place far more interwoven than the New Jersey Whitehead described above with its single path connecting across the center through New Brunswick.

THE STATE OF THE ROADS

Even as the road system expanded throughout the colonial period, travel remained difficult. Travel journals report on the dismal, indeed perilous, condition of the colonial road (Benedict, 1922). Weather was often a danger. Passing through New Jersey in 1690 on his way from Virginia to Massachusetts, Cuthbert Potter

Table 1: Estimated Population of New Jersey 1670–1780.

Year	*Population*	*People Added*	*Percent Growth*
1670	1,000		
1680	3,400	2,400	240
1690	8,000	4,600	135
1700	14,010	6,010	75
1710	19,872	5,862	42
1720	29,818	9,946	50
1730	37,510	7,692	26
1740	51,393	13,863	37
1750	71,393	20,020	39
1760	93,813	22,420	31
1770	117,431	23,618	25
1780	139,627	22,196	19

Source: U.S. Historical Statistics of the U.S. (Census) Series Z, p. 1168, plus calculations.

stopped in Elizabeth, "There having been so very much rain...my horse fell with me, and by Gods mercy I escaped drowning..." (Mereness, 1916:5). Wagons overturned on stumps left in the road. Swedish naturalist Per Kalm, visiting New Jersey in the late 1740s, remarked, "In a sandy soil the roads are dry and good; but in a clayey one they are bad. The people here are likewise very careless in mending them. If a rivulet be not very great, they do not make a bridge over it; and travelers may do as well as they can to get over; Therefore many people are in danger of being drowned in such places, where the water is risen by a heavy rain" (Kalm, 1972:180).

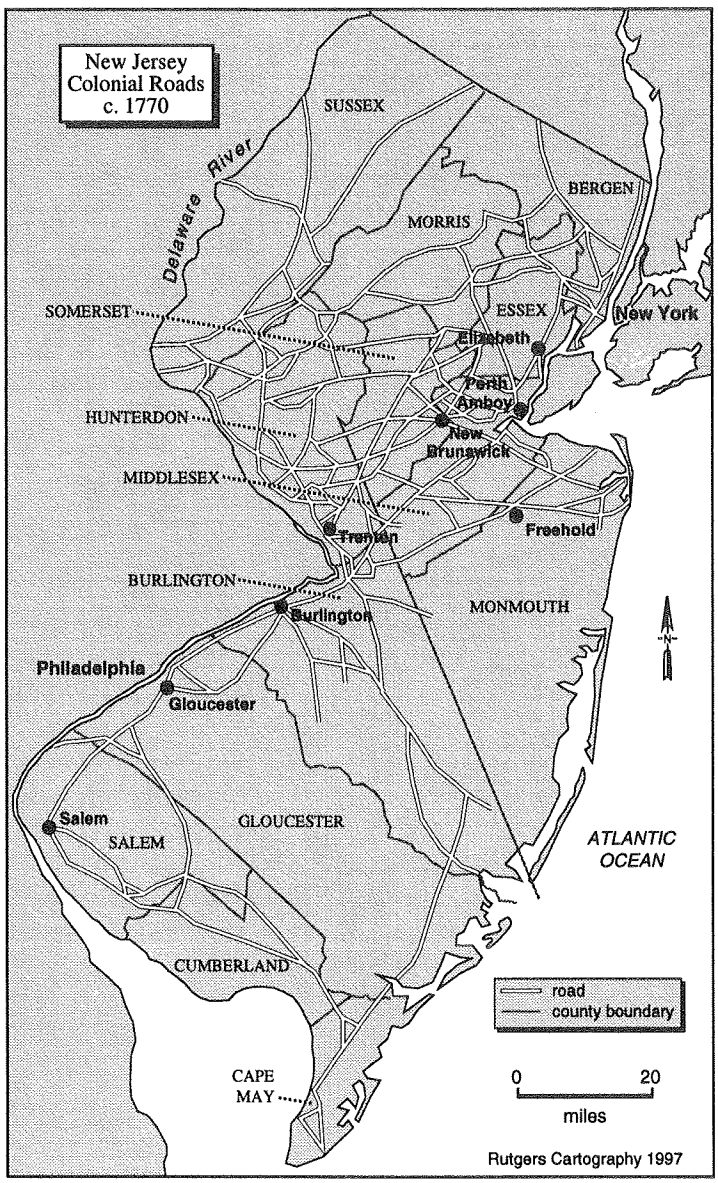
Despite these difficulties, travel was common, if not frequent. Merchants, farmers, lawyers, clergymen, and doctors—with many individuals holding several of these positions—managed to overcome the obstacles to their work. The continuing widening of these circles of travelers operated to reinforce the expanding network.

Trade

New Jerseyans often shuttled back and forth to the major ports. Rothenberg's study of the emergence of the market economy suggests self-sufficiency was more exceptional than commonplace (Rothenberg, 1992). For the middle colonies, including New Jersey, exports of wheat were especially important. New Jersey was a hinterland whose farmers had to travel to New York or Philadelphia for their sales. The legislature attempted to strengthen the colony's trade position with its neighbors, but such efforts never proved successful (Whitehead, 1846). The flow of goods and people, whether to Philadelphia or New York, varied with the going prices at each. Kalm (1937) writes in 1749 that prices were better in New York, and so wagons going north carried wheat and other merchandise and some passengers, while those heading south mainly held passengers. The traffic was so heavy that Kalm described

Trenton, the entry point for boats from Philadelphia, as profiting extensively from its carriage and hostelling trade, with the sale of goods secondary. John Reading's journal includes expenses for separate trips for himself, his wife, his sons, and his daughter (Reading, 1746–1767). The flow of people represented a broad spectrum of population.

Figure 1: New Jersey colonial roads c. 1770.



Source: The map is derived from roads appearing on a 1777 map of New Jersey (Faden, 1777), which was based on a 1769 survey.

Landholders and Lawyers

Travel was required to secure title, to collect rents, and to oversee one's lands. Personal contact was the most effective way to enforce a contract. For example, James Parker, land agent for Proprietor Robert Barker, spent much of his time on the road. He passed a good deal of 1754 going between Perth Amboy, Potterstown to the west, and Griggstown to the southwest, trying to collect rents or evict squatters who had turned out his chosen tenant (Parker, 1723–1797). Registration of deeds and surveys had to be done in person with the proper government agent. Fulfillment of contracts between masters and indentured servants needed registration. The fact that the colony amounted to a gigantic real estate venture operated under English law induced travel. Conditions peculiar to New Jersey generated an especially large volume of travel: its history as a proprietary colony in two separate parts, East and West, until 1703; the change of proprietors; confusion over rights of alienation; the question of who precisely spoke for them; successive divisions of land; the sharing of its royal governor with more powerful colonies until the 1730s. Each of these factors complicated the conveyance of land (Wacker, 1975; Pomfret, 1973).

More than one individual often claimed the same land, and boundaries remained in dispute. Registration of deeds and conveyance had to be entered both in the colony and in London, but before 1688 neither set of records was kept accurately. Pomfret describes land tenure as rife with confusion. By example, he points to a group from Elizabeth offering land in Somerset, with the suggestion that even with a lawsuit, the owner could profit from the sale of timber before settlement. He quotes attorney John Kinsey, writing in 1775, "A person reading these transactions can hardly suppose the Parties to have been in their senses when they executed some of the Deeds" (Pomfret, 1973:157–158). Wacker writes: "Indeed, because of error or intent both East and West Jersey continued to sell each other's division for well over a hundred years" (Wacker, 1975:233). So court dates were among the most advertised occasions. Almanacs, probably the most common serial publication of the time, listed court dates more regularly than any other sort of occasion, including market dates (Shammas, 1990).

The early settlers viewed lawsuits as abhorrent. Gabriel Thomas 1698 pamphlet promoting settlement in Pennsylvania and West Jersey recommended the colonies for their scarcity of lawyers and physicians: "the Country is very Peaceable and Healthy; long may it continue and never have occasion for the Tongue of one, nor the Pen of the other, both equally destructive to Mens Estates and Lives" (Thomas, 1903:43). But both increased in number and became part of the growing colonist interaction.

Hoffer (1992), a legal historian, says that as colonial society absorbed a growing number of strangers, in other words, people from different social, ethnic, economic, and religious groups, use of the law increasingly became a way of asserting one's rights. New Jersey, as the most diverse of the colonies with its population of Dutch, Swedes, Finns, New Englanders, Quakers, Scots, Scots-Irish, Presbyterians, Irish,

and Africans, serves as a prime example. Litigation between these strangers was compounded by the murkiness of land transactions (Wacker and Clements, 1995). According to Hoffer (1992), between 1710 and 1730, Gloucester County's docket entries rose steeply, well beyond its population increase, and by mid-century the Assembly was handling six times the number of petitions it had received thirty years earlier.

Property law and the possibility of legal proceedings were always near at hand (Horwitz, 1992). Civil trials became the standard means of handling complex social problems such as transfers of wealth and exaction of responsibility. Criminal trials functioned as social affairs; the community would appear and watch. A 1730 witch trial in Mount Holly in Burlington County, where two were accused of making sheep dance and hogs speak, drew three hundred (*Pennsylvania Gazette*, 1730). Hoffer says lawyers became orators, characters in a drama. Lawyers, clients, and the general populace moved along the roads to execute their business or view others'.

Civic Responsibility

The requirements of running the society, of civic virtue, put people on the road. The heritage of East and West Jersey proprietorships meant that even as a royal colony, the legislature met alternately at Burlington and Perth Amboy. Early road legislation spoke of enabling the fulfillment of civic duties (Leaming and Spicer, 1881). Judges attended sessions throughout the colony. New Jersey's lack of one strong center multiplied the number of such locations. Civic jobs abounded: surveyor, clerk, road commissioner, tax collector. McCreary (1971) describes the colony as subject to a "mania for public office". Each office had some responsibility that led to travel whether by officeholder or petitioner.

The difficulties of travel resulted in more counties and more dispersed government offices, in turn increasing the public presence across the colony. For example, in 1707 the Assembly increased probate offices from one in Burlington to one in each county to respond to complaints about inconvenience (Smith, 1977). The petitions that resulted in the formation of Morris County from Hunterdon and of Cumberland County from Salem noted the difficulty of transacting public business because of distance. Soon there was more government on the landscape and more roads between outposts.

Medicine

Roads were important to doctors; they made housecalls. Patients too traveled for medical treatment. The first New Jersey medical society, established in 1766 by a group of doctors for "The maintenance of the Dignity of the Profession, and the Security of the Public from Impositions and the like, set fees as one of its first pieces of business" (New Jersey Medical Society, 1766–1870). The members were concerned that customary arrangements for compensation led to poor practice, namely

prescribing without need. The fee schedule listed rates for consultations, treatments of specific diseases, and surgery. It maintained the prior custom of charging by distance. It first set a basic rate: "Visits in Town, where the patient can be seen without riding, to be charged according to the duration of the ailment." Country visits were assessed much like a taxi ride: the basic fee plus additional shillings by distance—so much for the first half to 1.5 miles, and another 1 shilling for 1.5 up to 15 miles, and so on.

The Society's wish to meet frequently conflicted with the difficulty of getting together. The group ruled that attendance at meetings was compulsory and levied fines for absences. It determined to hold general meetings twice a year and established regional subgroups to meet more often. These regional meetings, however, took place only occasionally, for they were attended with many inconveniences owing principally to the distant situation of some of the members. Health was a major concern of the colonists. Almanacs and newspapers regularly featured home remedies for numerous conditions. Medical care entailed trips, whether of doctor to patient, patient to doctor, patient to apothecary. All had need of an adequate road system especially as local availability was not sufficient.

Religion

Church-going often required either congregants or minister to travel beyond the local area. Expansion and contraction of population both resulted in communities lacking church facilities. Many of the earliest settlements were established by a group of co-religionists who were promptly able to establish a church, but a heavy influx of settlers could then lead to an inadequate supply of clergy and schoolmasters, as occurred in the 1680s and 1690s (Whitehead, 1846). Throughout the period the Dutch Reformed numbers dwindled—in part due to a slowing of new immigrants, in part from losses to the Presbyterians. By the end of the colonial period, several established Dutch Reformed churches were no longer maintained and so resorted to traveling ministers (Stryker, 1788).

Colonists often came to New Jersey as individuals rather than in groups and settled in communities composed of different denominations. In some cases, it took several decades before congregations formed for all the sects. Those without a local church attended when traveling preachers appeared. The denominations also organized units that extended beyond the local church. Quakers, for example, set up meetinghouses in Salem in 1676 and Burlington in 1678, but by 1681 they sent representatives to quarterly meetings that covered a more extensive area. Yearly meetings too were held, and these drew on an even wider area. Under the leadership of Elias Keach, the Baptists organized quarterly meetings for several congregations to join together (Jamison, 1964).

New Jersey had its charismatic movement. Powerful preachers like Gilbert Tennant and Theodore Frelinghuysen sparked a religious revival and drew large crowds. They served several congregations and often exchanged pulpits. George Whitefield

preached in New Jersey on his trip to the colonies in the 1740s, and seven thousand came to hear him in New Brunswick (Cunningham, 1966). Organized religion required overcoming distance to create effective communities of worship. Driven to testify, the ministers and the congregants represented an interest for road improvement. As a memoir about Frelinghuysen stated, he "encountered many difficulties, owing in part to the scattered population, dense forests, unbridged streams, and ill-marked roads incident to a newly settled country..." (Chambers, 1863:14–15). (The writer remarks that the state of the souls encountered was far worse than the state of the roads, however.)

Social Contacts

Family and social associations continually expanded the colonists' geographic range, especially for those active in the civic life of the colony. Letters of the period reveal regular contacts between people within and across the colonies. Thus William Paterson, later Governor, while a student at Princeton compares notes on his affairs of the heart. The young women he sees and hopes to see again are from Bergen, Freehold, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston (Mills, 1903). The letters of political leaders like Charles Read are full of engagements with others scattered all over the colony (Woodward, 1941). John Reading's accounts indicate visits various family members made across the region. As the colonists married and moved, they extended their range. Visits to relatives, co-religionists, fellow planters, legislators, and business and social friends put them on the road as the colony filled in. Just as Crevecoeur (1904 edn.), author of the classic 1782 *Letters from an American Farmer*, later notes his enjoyment of travel from western Pennsylvania to Philadelphia because it offered opportunities to stop with friends along the route, so New Jerseyans of the colonial period drew together, making arduous trips into sources of pleasure and underpinnings of group identities.

Modes of conduct gradually changed throughout the colonial period. Localism expanded and enlarged as individuals increasingly connected across their own colony and to others. Maintaining one's business, health, soul, and sociability depended on an extra-local community. These needs had especial force because of the diversity of the colony. One found kinship and aid in various places—for example, nearby neighbors of different religions might prove friends while equally significant contact with co-religionists might promote more far-flung contact. Ensuring one's property put one on the road to collect rents, to register contracts undertaken and fulfilled, to lobby for dispensations from the legislature. Understanding of place shifted gradually, imperceptibly, to a mid-scale, more regional locale.

GOVERNMENT AS ROADBUILDER

New Jersey's colonial government began as a cross between an economic and civic enterprise with the economic predominating. A proprietorship, its ruling in-

terest was located in England. The landscape of the colony was to be manipulated to effectuate a transfer of wealth from one place to the other. Responsibility for this transfer was delegated to a circle of local leaders who were to develop the infrastructure to derive profit. With settlement, internal improvements became some of the many pawns in the power struggle over who would run and profit from the colony, but the colony proceeded through this struggle to forge connections through a less personalized government.

Legislation

The first charters, East Jersey's Grants and Concessions of 1664 and West Jersey's of 1676, required that land be set aside for road development: "We do grant convenient proportions of land for highways and for streets, not exceeding one hundred foot in breadth in cities, towns and villages, etc. & for churches, forts, wharfs, kays, harbors and for public houses" (Leaming and Spicer, 1881). No rents or taxes applied on such lands. Further specification was left to the governing body.

The first road legislation passed in East Jersey in 1675 simply called for two men in each town to lay out common highways (Leaming and Spicer, 1881). Subsequent legislation enlarged the scope of the commissioners from town to county (1683) to cross counties (1716/1717) (Leaming and Spicer, 1881; Bush, 1977). Modeled on the English grand jury system, the highway legislation required the appointment of commissioners responsible for fixing rates, taxes, and assigning labor for laying out and maintaining highways, bridges, and ferries (Leaming and Spicer, 1881).

As a rule, responsibility for road maintenance belonged to the locality, but certain roads were viewed as more regional in their traffic and benefits. Responsibility for them was spread more widely. For example, one act read:

> Whereas the new road from Mr. John Inians, his house upon the Rariton river [in New Brunswick], to the limits of this Province towards Burlington, is a part of the great thorough fare of this Province from New England, New York &c. to the westward, which yet being unsettled may fail to decay, to the great inconvenience of all travelers, who may pass and repass that way, unless care be taken to maintain the same, until such time as it may be maintained by those who may hereafter inhabit it. (Leaming and Spicer, 1881:354)

The law levied an assessment on those holding property in nearby Piscataway, Woodbridge, and Elizabeth (Leaming and Spicer, 1881). By 1716/1717 the legislature allowed for alteration of roads where past decisions on siting proved infelicitous: "Roads which are Discommodious to the adjacent Towns or Precincts, or goes through Swamps, or Ground not sufficient for High-Roads, or is over-much Disadvantageous to the Owners of the Lands where said Roads go through" might be altered by the duly chosen surveyors (Bush, 1977:196–201). Thus, New Jerseyans could both initiate and improve their road network.

After 1717 new legislation tended toward clarification of existing laws, specification of particular roads, or improvements. Road legislation was sometimes part of the factional struggle for power. Governor and Assembly, for example, held up each other s bills—including road bills—as each vied to obtain their own advantage, particularly concerning taxes (New Jersey Council, 1872; Pomfret, 1973). However, as settlement became increasingly realized rather than speculated, government and citizen responded with more road action. The number of road bills increased, and in 1760 new highway legislation was passed, bringing together into one act the bits and pieces that had been accruing over previous decades (Bush, 1977).

The 1760 legislation was especially concerned with efficacy. Much more detailed than earlier acts, it specified work requirements, including labor and equipment; it updated penalties giving cause, amount, collection procedures; it set repair procedures. This legislation reflected the increased seriousness with which roads were viewed as well as government's shift in management. Earlier legislation had facilitated roads, but the results often fell short of the intent (Lane, 1939). The 1760 legislation was intended to eliminate that possibility. It responded to those like "Publicola", who, writing in the *New American Magazine* in 1758 stated: "That the public roads, in many of these provinces, are very bad, even in places where the material for making them good are easy to be got, is a truth obvious to every traveler..." He is not sure "[w]hether the cause be the want of proper laws to oblige the inhabitants to their duty in this respect, or it be want of public spirit and industry to put those laws into execution." But he is certain that: "The pleasures of the country depend greatly upon agreeable out-lets..." (Publicola, 1758:52–54).

Petitions. The expanding impact of roads and governments can be found in the record of petitions. In Middlesex County (Middlesex Courthouse Records, 1714–1772), the numbers of road petitions fluctuated with population change but overall rose. The types of requests diversified too. Typically the earliest requests were simply for a road, stating the inhabitants suffer "For want of a road". As time passed, the petitioners additionally asked for improvements to existing roads—a more direct or less boggy route. They needed approval from the highway commissioner to solve the "inconvenience of traveling Several Miles further than Is Necessary and over very Uneven ground...". Other petitions complained of inconvenience for neighbors; one requested action on a crossroads that "upon experience proves to be discommodious for the inhabitants and overmuch disadvantageous to the plantations through which it goes." Such roads were returned, in the language of the day, or relaid. But the well-established roads were declared unalterable—the Elizabeth-Trenton and Perth Amboy-Salem ones. Businesses along these two—taverns, blacksmiths, and the like—would have suffered from a change of route.

As travel increased, New Jerseyans relied upon their colonial government to mediate their road disputes, to fix what did not work, and to guarantee what would. The increase in petitions suggests the colonists had an expanded and thickening network. New roads were put in place. Occasions for travel multiplied, as did the number of travelers. Increased use in turn aggravated the roads poor conditions.

Rising demand meant either repairing the roads or moving them to a more suitable location. To organize and authorize upkeep and improvement, the colonists turned to their government, for they were not likely to retreat from regional contact.

Colonial government began with an awareness that roads were important, but grew to value them as part of a network. Its own way of enabling this network too developed into a more interconnected set of actions as its authorizing statements on highways added statements of rules, responsibilities, and consequences. Government made space usable and accessible, but for it to do so it needed cooperation. Citizen and government were partners in a dance. Citizens asked more of government—more roads, better connections, fairness, opportunities to prosper, protection from harm. Government penetrated the life of citizens—more courts, more deeds, more surveying, more mediating. The dance itself continually anchored them in place in the colonies and away from Europe.

CONCLUSION

Vance (1990) has called transportation the silent story of settlement. Colonial New Jersey's roads brought the colony together, forged a link in the movement toward nationhood. New Jerseyans, living in a place between, had to travel for trade and purchase. The colony's several centers—its two capitals, for example—also fostered regional travel. New Jersey's social diversity spun off increased travel: the transfer of property and the litigiousness generated by a society of strangers meant more trips to courts. The religious diversity created a need to bridge space to create viable congregations. Such factors, coupled with the expanding population and the dispersed social circles, called for a regional road network. Its development in turn helped knit the colony together. Lane (1939:54) describes eighteenth century New Jersey as grounded in localism, but slowly acquiring a sense of unity made possible by its "rude but effective system of transportation". Anderson's imagined communities that gave rise to nations could not be fantasy concoctions, intellectual creations. They needed the substantive connections of physical ties to undergird their imagined closeness.

The colonial government, as the agent designating and approving the roads of the colony, played a critical role in creating this network. Despite its many weaknesses—its factiousness, its weakness compared with its neighboring colonies—New Jersey's colonial government satisfied a function. It produced mid-distance links; these turned the colony from a series of discrete settlements more attached to a distant Britain into a place where the local, the distant, and now the regional were all within range. For New Jerseyans, mastery of their space eventually translated into mastery of their polity. A similar process played out in other American colonies in the late 18th century and subsequently in other American states. It represented an essential stage—an inevitably material rather than intellectual one—in forming a nation.

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