

# The Bridgeport and Horseshoe Turnpike

By HORACE R. BARNES, LL.D.

## "HORSE-SHOE ROAD"

According to Ellis and Evans, "the old 'Horse-Shoe Road' was laid out in 1738," to meet the need of a road from Lancaster to the "Coventry Iron-Works" on French Creek, Chester County, "with a branch to Reading Furnace."

The road commenced "at a hickory tree standing in the Lancaster High Road, at Benjamin Wittmer's, Sr., Lane (about one mile east of 'Wittmer's Bridge,') thence in a northeasterly direction 254 perches to a line in Benjamin Wittmer's, Jr. land, thence 590 perches to Jacob Heller's land (Heller's Lutheran Church); thence 296 perches to George Line's land; thence 216 perches to Andrew Mixell's land; thence 407 perches to Hans Good's land; thence 531 perches to Philip Shaver's land (now New Holland); thence 576 perches to Casper Stever's land; thence 414 perches to Michael Rank's land; thence 224 perches to Jacob Weaver's land; thence 384 perches to David Evans' Run; thence 684 perches to John Mendenhall's land; thence 24 perches to a Run; thence 88 perches to Matthias Stouffer's land; thence 121 perches to Nathan Evans' land; thence 458 perches to Evan Hughes' land; thence 69 perches to the eastern branch of the Conestoga Creek; thence 673 perches to George Hudson's land; thence 244 perches to Thomas Williams' land; thence 148 perches to John Bowen's land; thence 274 perches to the land of Hugh Hughes; thence 112 perches to said east branch of Conestoga Creek, by the land of Thomas Morgan; thence along said creek 12 perches; thence 354 perches to Robert Ellis' land; thence 85 perches to Moses Martin's land; thence 334 perches to the division line between Lancaster and Chester Counties."\*

Frank R. Diffenderffer writing of roads and highways mentioned three prominent highways in Earl Township in his book, "The Three Earls." One

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\*From "History of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania," by Franklin Ellis and Samuel Evans; published by Everts and Peck, Philadelphia, 1883; p. 310. The reference to "Heller's Lutheran Church" is not an error. What we now call Salem Reformed Church at Heller's, was until 1838 used by both Reformed and Lutheran congregations.

of these was the Horse Shoe Road, running east and west, upon which New Holland is built, and the road upon part of whose course the New Holland Turnpike now rests.

The road in which we are particularly interested, and which is the subject of this paper was known as the Bridgeport and Horseshoe Turnpike which began at Bridgeport, just east of the old Witmer's Bridge. The act of incorporation for this turnpike company was approved April 3, 1867.

At a meeting of the Board of Directors held September 14, 1867, the Board proceeded to the election of an engineer for the purpose of commencing the road as early as possible. Mr. B. E. Hayes was subsequently appointed to this position. The members of the Board, consisting of A. M. Frantz, president; Amos Bushong, Samuel Curtis, Jacob Rohrer, Stuart A. Wylie and Wm. M. Wiley, as directors, and D. G. Eshleman, secretary-treasurer, acted promptly, for at a meeting held Saturday, September 21, 1867, the engineer's profile of the road was approved. At this same meeting it was resolved "that the road shall be constructed the width of twenty-one feet on the long cut from the Philadelphia Turnpike to where the summer road commences, near B. Groff, and twenty feet on the balance of the road; that the ballast shall average one foot in thickness, and that the summer road shall be twenty feet wide and shall be on the north side of the turnpike."

In less than two weeks, namely on October 2, the contract for the construction of the road was awarded to Jacob F. Hautz and John Tomlinson. At the same time "an installment of five-dollars per share of the capital stock" was ordered called, "payable on the 1st day of November, 1867, and an installment of six dollars on the first day of December, 1867."

Perhaps it was a mild, open winter, but at any rate rapid progress was made. On March 3, 1868, David Bair was elected gatekeeper, and on April 27 of the same year the salary of the gatekeeper was fixed "at one hundred dollars per annum with the uses free of rent of one-half the toll house." This was certainly not a munificent wage, especially when one reads in the minutes of the meeting held August 24, 1868, that "Mr. D. W. Bair, the gatekeeper, was present and refused to accept the keepership on the terms offered because there was not room enough for his family in one-half of the house, whereupon on motion of Mr. Bushong it was resolved that David M. Bair be appointed gatekeeper until the 1st of April next, with a salary at the rate of one hundred dollars per annum and the use of the whole house, and that the president be authorized to enter into a written agreement with him to that effect." This rate was maintained for many years. In the minutes of the meeting of the directors February 23, 1880, it is recorded, "That, the Misses Zook, gatekeepers, be allowed for compensation as toll collectors two dollars a week, which sum is to be paid to them weekly."

In addition they were given, free of rent "one-half of the gatehouse." The toll house was located on a site now occupied by a double frame house opposite the schoolhouse at the Greenfield Road.

The wages of the gatekeeper were kept at two dollars per week until November, 1909, when "the weekly pay of the gatekeeper was increased from two to two and 50/100 dollars. The following November it was further increased to three dollars, and on October 15, 1919, it was increased to seven dollars.

Following the completion of the building of the road the next step was to provide for the erection of the tollgates, and to set a date upon which the collection of tolls should begin. These matters were provided for at a meeting of the Board of Directors held on July 27, 1868, when it was "Resolved that the gates be put up and tolls be collected on and after the 1st day of August, A. D. 1868."

In a paper on economic history, such as this, it is always both interesting and informative to know something of prices, costs and wages for the period under discussion. I will, therefore, discuss briefly such matters as toll rates, wages, and stock dividends.

Apparently the officers and directors of the Company were not required at first to pay toll for in the minutes of the meeting of the Board held April 30, 1877, we read, "Resolved than hereafter the directors and officers of the Bridgeport and Horseshoe Turnpike Road Company shall be required to pay toll when passing through the Gate the same as all other persons traveling the road.

"Resolved that a copy of the above resolution be placed in the hands of the Gatekeeper and that he be and is hereby directed to carry out the provisions thereof."

Following the offering of this another director moved that these "resolutions be post-poned to the next meeting." At this meeting which was held November 5, 1877, the president called the attention of the Board to these resolutions with the result that they were "laid on the table."

Even though some felt that no concessions should be made for officers and directors, it is evident that regard was had for the clergy, for on November 1, 1869, it was "resolved that the Rev. D. W. Gerhard be permitted to pass through the gate when he is going to church or to a funeral free of toll."

The first schedule of toll rates was adopted July 31, 1868, and you will note that it clearly reveals the type of traffic most characteristic of the times in Lancaster County. "For every score of hogs two cents, for every score of sheep two cents, for every score of cattle four cents, for every horse and his rider or every lead horse two cents or three cents for round trip, for every sulky chair or chaise with one horse and two wheels two cents, for every sulky chair or chaise with two horses and two wheels three cents; for every chariot coach, phaeton or dearborne, with one horse and four wheels, five cents or nine cents for round trip, for every chariot coach, phaeton or dearborne with two horses and four wheels six cents or 10 cents for round trip, for every chariot coach, phaeton or dearborne with four horses and four wheels eight cents, for every other carriage of pleasure the like sums according to the number of wheels and horses.

"For every stage and two horses six cents or 10 cents for round trip, for every stage and four horses eight cents, for every sled 1 cent per horse; for every sleigh two cents per horse; for every cart or wagon with wheels less than four inches wide two cents per horse, for every cart or wagon with wheels more than four and less than seven inches wide 1 cent per horse; for every cart or wagon with wheels more than seven inches wide one-half cent per horse."

Further action governing annual toll rates, in addition to the itemized rates just quoted, was taken. For example, the toll of "Jacob Landis was commuted at the rate of sixteen dollars per annum and that of Abraham S. Landis at the rate of ten dollars per annum, payable monthly."

Another difference in rates is found in the resolution of November 2, 1868, which reads as follows: "Resolved, that for the present and until further notice, Henry N. Landis shall be permitted to commute his toll at the rate of Five Dollars per annum payable monthly in advance; I. Ronk at the rate of Six 50/100 Dollars and Peter Johns at Eight Dollars, each payable monthly in advance."

Another change was made May 1, 1896, when the directors decided "that hereafter tolls may be collected by the year upon the following terms, viz, from those who average one trip per week at the rate of five dollars per year for the whole road and three dollars per year from the gate, and from those who average more than one trip per week a proportionate increase."

Apparently the first schedule, which was adopted in July, 1868, and which, among other details emphasized the width of the wagon wheel in determining the toll rate, proved too complicated for on September 5, 1881, we find the following rates quoted:

"Single trip over the entire road, for one horse, and four wheeled vehicle four cents; round trip seven cents.

"For two horses single trip five cents; round trip 10 cents.

"For three horses, single trip 7 cents; round trip 13 cents.

"For four horses, single trip 8 cents; round trip 16 cents.

"For horse and rider, single trip 2 cents; round trip 3 cents, and in the same proportion for lesser distances."

The officers and directors of this turnpike were determined to keep the gatekeeper working until rather late in the evening in order not to miss too many tolls, for in 1883 they "resolved, that the gatekeeper, keep the gate open every evening during the week till 9 o'clock, except on Saturday evening when it is to be kept open till 10 o'clock, and also to collect toll when persons pass through toward Lancaster, and not to take their promise to pay when they return: or to take toll coming and going." Imagine the life of a gatekeeper, as well as the annoyance to the traveler in these days of all-night travel over the highways by automobiles and trucks, if such a system were in operation today. No mention is made of the hour in the morning when the gates were to be placed in operation.

In making the toll schedules the managers of the road had due regards for the effects of tires upon the road-bed, as is evidenced by the following resolution which was adopted November 4, 1901: "Resolved, that the Superintendent be instructed to notify the haulers of milk who pass through the gate at reduced rates, that unless they put four-inch tires upon their milk wagons the reduced rate of toll which they have been paying will, after the next meeting of the Board in May, 1902, be restored to the former rate."

That this was a busy highway at the beginning of this century is evidenced in the report of the treasurer to the Board of Directors on May 6, 1901. This report reads in part, "from tolls collected from 3007 vehicles passing through the gate from February 18, 1901, to May 6, 1901—\$395.90." During the period May 5, 1901, and November 4, of the same year, "5551 vehicles passed through the gate."

The turn of the century brought changes in this country, and one of the major of these has been found in highway traffic due to the automobile. In May, 1906, we find the first reference to automobile travel over the Bridgeport and Horseshoe Turnpike in a resolution passed at a meeting of the Board of Directors "fixing the charge for automobiles on this pike, as follows:

The full length of road charge 5cts.

To the gate.....charge 3cts.

To Landis Lane.....charge 4cts.

Round trips 10cts-6cts.....& 8cts.

#### WAGES

In these days of automobiles, and excellent roads with the attendant spread in travel, there is a certain degree of pleasure in attempting to visualize the travel fifty and more years ago on a Lancaster County toll road. The more conveniences and relatively high wages and prices of 1938 offer marked contrasts with those of a half century to three-quarters of a century ago. Think of securing two persons to work for the use of one half of a small frame house, and, in addition, two dollars per week wage. To be sure the work was not arduous, but it demanded long hours for the duties required, as stated above, "that the gatekeeper, keep the gate open every evening during the week till 9:00, except on Saturday evening when it is to be kept open till 10.00."

Another side-light on the amount of wages paid for manual unskilled labor seventy years ago is found in the following resolution, adopted July 27, 1868. "Resolved that the wages to be paid for labor on the road shall be at the rate of \$1.50 per diem of ten hours." Other labor was secured at a lower rate. Note, for example, the following facts from the books of the treasurer of the turnpike company:

"Paid—Sept. 28, 1870—B. M. Weeks 1 day's labor \$1.50

Jan. 23, 1871—D. M. Bair 3 days at \$1.50

& 6 days at \$1.00.....\$10.50

Feb. 13, 1871—D. M. Bair 1½ days at \$1.50

& 1 day at 1.00

Feb. 27, 1871—D. M. Bair 3 days at \$1.50

& 3 days at 1.00

Jan. 19, 1881—E. A. Landis, Horse and cart & self, 1 day \$2.00."

### THE FINANCIAL PICTURE

The account book of the Bridgeport and Horseshoe Road Turnpike Company was opened in June, 1867, by Mr. D. G. Eshleman. During the first several months, indeed until August 10, 1868, the only receipts were installments from stockholders. On that day we note the first toll receipts. "Aug. 10, 1868. To cash from Gate 30.50."

The method used in collecting money during the first fourteen months of the life of this turnpike company was that of assessing each stockholder as is evidenced from the following cash book entries.

"D. G. Eshleman in account with Commissioners to organize Bridgeport & Horseshoe Turnpike Road Co."

1867							Dr.
June 17	To cash from Stockholders on assess't of \$1.00 per share						25.00
Aug. 8	" " " " Do Do						300.00
" 9	" " " " " "						250.00
" 14	" " " " " "						80.00
" 19	" " " " " "						170.00
" 23	" " " " " "						65.00
Sept. 4	" " " " " "						75.00
" 6	" " " " " "						35.00
							<hr/>
							1000.00

The type of expenditures as shown on the first credit page of the cash book are:

1867			Cr.
May 14	By cash paid for Corporation		10.00
" 14	By cash paid Treas. for copy of act of Incorporation		5.00
Aug. 8	By cash paid for stamps		.50
" 19	By cash paid Treas. for Letters Patent		5.00
Sept. 6	By cash paid for Stamps		.15
" 10	By cash paid for Do "Examiner"		2.00
" 10	By cash paid for advertising "Inquirer"		6.50
" 14	By balance on hand		970.85
			<hr/>
			1000.00

The par value of the stock was \$15.00 per share.

### THE STATE BUYS THE ROAD

The interest of the State in the road first appears in the minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors held November 4, 1917, when, "in response to a request from the State Highway Department, the president of the turnpike company was authorized by the directors to suggest \$25.00 per share

as a proper price for the stock of this company." This price was adhered to when the Board of Directors met in special session on October 15, 1919, "to consider the proposition to sell the road to the County Commissioners of Lancaster County." The Board, at this meeting, decided that, "based on the earning capacity of the stock as shown by dividends declared during a recent period of ten years, it was determined that the shares are worth \$25.00 each, counting money at 6%." Messrs. John A. Coyle and Willis Rohrer were appointed "to confer with the County Commissioners and secure a definite proposition."

A special meeting of the Board of Directors of the Bridgeport and Horseshoe Turnpike Road Company was held December 15, 1919, to consider the following offer to purchase the road:

PENNSYLVANIA STATE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT  
HARRISBURG, PENNA.

December 12, 1919.

Bridgeport and Horseshoe Turnpike  
Road Company,  
John A. Coyle, Pres.  
110 East King Street,  
Lancaster, Penna.

Dear Sir:

In Re: Purchase of the Bridgeport and Horseshoe  
Turnpike Road.

On behalf of the Commissioners of Lancaster County and the State Highway Department of Pennsylvania, after taking into consideration the physical condition of the road and the earning capacity of the property, but exclusive of any tollhouse or tollhouse property, the sum of Fifteen Thousand Dollars is offered for the property of said turnpike road company.

Yours very truly,

[Signed] JOSEPH W. HUNTER,  
Township Commissioner.

After considerable discussion, "it was reluctantly decided to recommend to the stockholders that they accept the offer, in order to save further trouble and expense and possible litigation." At a special meeting of the stockholders held on December 22, 1919, at the Lancaster County National Bank, it was decided to sell and "transfer to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania the entire property of the said Turnpike Road Company, including its entire road-bed, bridges, culverts and appurtenances thereunto belonging, exclusive of its tollhouses and appurtenances, in consideration of the payment to the treasurer of said Company of the sum of Fifteen Thousand Dollars (\$15,000) —it being the full intent and purpose of this resolution that full and absolute authority is hereby given by the stockholders of this Company to vest a complete title to the entire Turnpike property of the Company aforesaid, in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, or in such Department or municipal sub-

division thereof as the State Highway Department, by its Commissioner, may designate upon the terms and conditions aforesaid."

From an investment standpoint, this turnpike was profitable to the shareholders, as the rate of yield in dividends was high some years and at other times at least satisfactory. Let us consider a few of the dividends which were declared. Dividend No. 1, which was 20 cents per share, was paid amounting to \$197 on 985 shares.

On May 8, 1869, a second dividend at the rate of 28 cents per share was paid. Approximately six months later, namely, November 1, the stockholders received another dividend. This time it amounted to 33 cents per share. A whole year elapsed before dividend No. 4, amounting to 42 cents per share, was paid November 7, 1870. The Company was still earning money, and further enrichment to the stockholders came on May 8, 1871, to the extent of 20 cents per share, to be followed on November 1 of the same year with 40 cents per share. To summarize, the stockholders received 61 cents per share in 1869, 42 cents in 1870, and 60 cents in 1871. But let us note further evidence of increased business, as well as the fact that the severe Panic of 1873 apparently was unfelt, if not unknown, in the vicinity of the Bridgeport and Horseshoe Turnpike Road Company. Total dividends paid each year from 1872 until dividend No. 23 in 1880, both dates included, were 1872, \$750; 1873, \$780; 1874, \$800; 1875, \$1000; 1876, \$810; 1877, \$820; 1878, \$850; 1879, \$1050; and 1880, \$1050.

The last dividend, namely, dividend No. 101, was declared November 3, 1919, at the rate of 80 cents per share. The road had been making money in the years preceding this date. One dollar and five cents (\$1.05) per share was paid in 1919; one dollar and twenty-five cents (\$1.25) in 1918; one dollar and fifty cents (\$1.50) in 1917; and one dollar and eighty cents (\$1.80) in 1916.

On March 22, 1920, the final distribution of the capital of the Bridgeport and Horseshoe Turnpike Road Company to the stockholders was authorized. Fifteen thousand dollars (\$15,000) was distributed to thirty stockholders, owning one thousand (1000) shares at the rate of \$15.00 per share. The smallest number of shares held by any one stockholder was four, while the largest was one hundred.

After the paying of the \$15,000, the treasurer reported that there would be a balance of \$777.48. Of this amount, \$255.60 was obtained by selling the dwelling used as a tollhouse for \$202.00, and sundry other items such as coal house, table, wheelbarrow, etc., for \$53.60. This balance was used to pay the dissolution and other expenses which had accrued.

Thus we mark the passing of another toll road in historic Lancaster County. The stretch of approximately two miles which figured in the deal ran from Bridgeport at Witmer's Bridge to the junction with the State road, route 340, which runs from this point by Heller's Salem Reformed Church to Mechanicsburg (Leacock post office). The State and the County each paid half of the purchase price.