

Delaware and Raritan Canal Chronology (1676-1850)

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| <p>1676 William Penn signed a document authorizing surveyors to examine the possibility of constructing a canal across the Jerseys from the Delaware River to New York Bay.</p> <p>1794 William Winterbotham, an English traveler, detailed a possible canal and portage route across the “waist” of New Jersey.</p> <p>1804 The New Jersey Legislature chartered the New Jersey navigation Company to build and construct slack water navigation from the Raritan River at or near New Brunswick to tidewater on the Delaware.</p> <p>1808 Christopher Colles devised a plan for the construction of a unique all timber canal across New Jersey from Bordentown on the Delaware River to Middletown point on New York Bay.</p> <p>1811 Albert Gallatin recommended a conventional canal across the “neck” or “waist” of New Jersey in his <u>REPORT ON ROADS AND CANALS</u> submitted to the United States Senate.</p> <p>1816 The final route of the canal was surveyed by John Randel, Jr. and was followed generally with but few changes by Canvass White in 1830. Governor Mahlon Dickinson’s annual message to the New Jersey legislature contained an eloquent plea for the commencement of the Raritan Canal project.</p> <p>1820 A bill to incorporate the New Jersey, Delaware and Raritan Canal Company was adopted by the legislature. The company failed.</p> <p>1830 An act was passed permitting the two companies, the Delaware & Raritan Canal Company and the Camden & Amboy Railroad Company, to consolidate their stock and use their joint funds for the completion of both railroad and the canal.</p> <p>1832 An epidemic of Asiatic Cholera brought death to many of the Irish laborers working on the canal. The Bordentown to Amboy portion of the Camden and Amboy Railroad was completed and opened for service, well ahead of the canal.</p> <p>1833 The portion of the canal from Trenton to Kingston was opened for local traffic.</p> <p>1834 The Delaware and Raritan canal was completed and formally opened for through navigation. Canvass White, Chief Engineer for the Delaware and Raritan Canal as well as other major canals in the northeast; died.</p> <p>1835 Ashbel Welch, Jr., of Lambertville, NJ was appointed Chief Engineer of the Joint Companies.</p> <p>1836 A contract was made with the Merchants’ Line to pay the canal 25% of its receipts instead of fixed tolls. Many similar agreements followed.</p> <p>1837 Due to a financial panic in the United States, Robert F. Stockton went to England to raise capital for the Delaware and Raritan canal. While there he recognized the value of John Ericsson’s screw propeller and commissioned him to design a screw steamer for the Delaware and Raritan canal.</p> <p>1838 The canal was completed to full dimensions, 7 feet deep and 75 feet wide at the water line, which were specified by the act of the incorporation. The Joint Companies specified embarked upon the mining of coal and transported it to market from the Schuylkill area.</p> | <p>An act to prevent frauds in the manifests of vessels navigating the Delaware and Raritan Canal was passed by the New Jersey legislature.</p> <p>1839 The Robert F. Stockton (later renamed the New Jersey) was tested in England and then became the first iron vessel to cross the Atlantic Ocean, as well as the first commercially successful propeller driven vessel in America. The Camden and Amboy Railroad was extended thirteen miles along the east bank of the canal from Trenton to Kingston where it veered off and proceeded to New Brunswick, thus forming the first continuous railroad route from Philadelphia to the Hudson opposite New York.</p> <p>1840 Winter transportation of canal freight by the Camden and Amboy Railroad commenced when the Delaware and Raritan was closed to navigation. This served to prevent establishment of sea lines which would have reduced canal business during the navigation season.</p> <p>1842 The iron hull canal steamers Anthracite, Vulcan, Black Diamond and Ironsides were built for the Delaware and Raritan Canal Company to carry coal to points east of New York. Ironsides travels from Philadelphia via the Delaware and Raritan to Hartford to become the first steam propeller schooner to ply the Connecticut River.</p> <p>1845 The iron side-wheel tow barge Camden was built for the Delaware and Raritan Canal Company to shuttle canal boats between Bordentown and points on the Delaware River.</p> <p>1846 One of the earliest commercial installations of the telegraph was used to expedite boat traffic and control water levels and flows. Another use was to catch ships speeding over the 4.5 mile per hour limit.</p> <p>1847 John D. Hager, an original stockholder and formerly Secretary of the company, instituted proceedings in Chancery against the company’s officers alleging fraud and violations of trust and demanding an accounting. Outlet locks were built for the Delaware Division Canal and the Delaware and Raritan Canal at Wells falls, just below Lambertville and New Hope, providing a connection via a cable ferry across the Delaware River for the two canals. Travel time and distance was reduced but tolls were not. The original masonry lock at Bordentown began to fail and was replaced by a new heavy timber lock which was floated into position and sunk over its dredged resting place.</p> <p>1849 Beginning of a program to replace the upper miter gates at each lock on the main canal with drop gates.</p> <p>1850 Construction of the Belvedere and Delaware railroad along the original towpath of the Delaware and Raritan feeder was began. The feeder towpath was moved to the berm bank.</p> |
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