

The Morris Turnpike Company was incorporated by the New Jersey General Assembly on March 9, 1801 (PL1801, c 38), to lay a road, between 4 and 5 rods in width, from Elizabeth through Morristown to Sussex County. This was one of 47 turnpike incorporations in New Jersey between 1800 and 1820. <sup>1</sup> The stock price was set at \$25 per share and the company permitted to raise \$7,000 capital for each mile of road created. A dividend of 8% was to be paid by 1803. (See 1827 Morris Canal map<sup>2</sup> for probable road routes of phases one and two, Elizabeth to Morristown, Morristown to Stanhope.)

On February 26, 1802 the Turnpike Company laid out a plan for a road from Elizabethtown Point to the Delaware River, across from Milford PA, a distance of “sixty-two miles, seventy-one chains and fifty-seven links.” In 1804 Governor Joseph Bloomfield appointed Col. Phineas Morning, Jason Ralston and John Nobel Cummings commissioners to inspect the progress of the Turnpike Company, as required by the 1801 legislation. <sup>3</sup> By January 3, 1810 forty-eight miles, seventy-seven chains and seventy-one links of roadway and eight toll gates had been licensed by the NJ Governor. Under its enabling legislation, the Company license to build any more turnpike had expired. Uncompleted was thirteen miles, seventy-three chains and eight-six links. “...the fourteen unfinished miles were not continuous.” (1818 NJ 191, State v The Morris Turnpike Co.)

The company was run by a Board of Directors (“Lockholders”), elected the first Tuesday in May beginning in 1802. The founding Board in 1801 was

Gabriel H. Ford (also lawyer for the Co.)  
David Ford  
Israel Canfield  
Joseph Sharp  
Elias B Dayton  
Silas Condict  
Jonas Wade  
Daniel Stewart  
Thomas Anderson

[Note: the Fords and Canfield were also among a group of local “proprietors” incorporating a “Morris Aqueduct” November 16, 1799. Gabriel Ford would also later invest in the Washington Tpk Company.]

Company roads, in 1801, were not to go through graveyards or displace churches or private home worth \$500 or more. Toll gates were permitted at five mile intervals. “Tollgatherers” collected

14 cents for every 20 sheep, hogs or calves  
30¢ for 30 cattle, horses or mules  
5¢ for a horse and rider or a led mule or horse  
12.5¢ for a carriage pulled by a single “beast”  
10¢ (more) for an additional 2-4 beasts  
15¢ (more) for 5-8 more animals  
5¢ for a sleigh or sled pulled by a single animal, 1 more for each additional beast.

Tolls were not collected from

- Churchgoers in the parish, on their way to/from worship
- Those traveling between home and gristmill for grinding of private grain supplies
- Funeral processions
- Those on “common business” to and from their farms
- Militia men going to training on muster day

A \$2 fine was levied for failure to keep right.

In 1850 the Company was authorized, by the General Assembly, to issue an additional \$100,000 of stock so the turnpike could be plank surfaced, “in a good and workmanlike manner.” When six miles had been completed the company was permitted to collect

- 2 cents for carriage, wagon, sleigh, sled or other vehicle drawn by one beast
- 2¢ for every additional beast
- 1¢ for horse and rider or led horse or mule
- 2¢ for every dozen calves, sheep or hogs
- 5¢ for every dozen horses, mules or cattle

Vehicles hauling fertilizer paid only half the toll rate.

A year later, in 1851, the NJ Assembly reduced the value of the company stock from its original \$25 per share to \$10.

*And whereas it is necessary that the present value of the stock should be fixed by law, to enable the said company to use and dispose of the right of way ... .*

The legislation also allowed the Morris Turnpike Company, with written approval of a majority of the stockholders, to further depreciate the stock to no less than \$5 per share. (L 1851, p 210).

No further record of company activity has yet been found. In his 1906 annual report William Nelson, corresponding secretary of the New Jersey Historical Society, characterized the Turnpike Company records as missing.<sup>4</sup>

To be investigated is the possibility the company was taken over by the Morris Canal and Banking Company—or failed, after 1851, to raise sufficient funds to move to the preferred planked surface of the day. Founding Director Gabriel H Ford died August 26?, 1849<sup>5</sup>, after 21 years as a Associate Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court, and New York Times articles ca 1852-1856 demonstrate a sharp rise in passenger traffic on the Morris & Essex Railroad (chartered 1835).

Five NJ laws, an 1818 Supreme Court decision and excerpts from Gabriel Ford’s papers follow. See also Drew University Library, Archives, the Gibbons family papers, 8:9, account book. Archivist Masato Okinaka advises (Nov. 9, 2009)

*There are 3 sections, each detailing installments of "Thomas Gibbons Esquire subscribed to the first [second and third] district of Morris Turnpike road..." with the number of shares, price per share and totals. Dividends are recorded on facing pages. The dates are from 1802 to 1818, all written on 5 pages out of 80 in this small leather covered notebook.*

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<sup>1</sup> Klein, Daniel B. *Turnpikes and Toll Roads in Nineteenth-Century America*.

<http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/Klein.Majewski.Turnpikes> Accessed November 8, 2009

See also his discussion of plank roads.

<sup>2</sup> Rutgers University, Geography Dept., Mike Siegel, staff cartographer. Accessed November 10, 2009

[http://mapmaker.rutgers.edu/HISTORICALMAPS/Morris\\_Canal1827.jpg](http://mapmaker.rutgers.edu/HISTORICALMAPS/Morris_Canal1827.jpg)

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Gov Joseph Bloomfield to General Jonathon Dayton, November 12, 1804, in “The Federalist Fathers and the Founding of Jersey City,” Wm H Richardson, *The Historical Society of Hudson County: papers*, issue 22, pp 46-47. The same three men were re-appointed commissioners in 1807, to examine the Morris to Sussex section of the turnpike.

<sup>4</sup> *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*, October 1905, p. 193

<sup>5</sup> *Newark Daily Advertiser*, August 29, 1849.

**Morris County Library  
Reference Dept.  
Morris Turnpike Company, 1801-1851**

**APPENDIX**

Units of measure, US Natl Institute of Standards and Technology 2009

Rod = 16.5ft

Link = .66ft

Chain = 100 links

Mile = 80 chains

From A treatise of practical surveying, 9<sup>th</sup> ed., Robert Gibson (Philadelphia, 1808), “the length of a link in a statute-chain is 7.92 inches.” p 129

<http://books.google.com/books?id=52Y1AAAAMAAJ&vq=inches&pg=PP3#v=onepage&q=inches&f=false>

See also tables of long measure, etc. in The American tutor's guide: being a compendium of arithmetic : in six parts .. James Thompson (E & E Hosford, Albany NY, 1808) p. 22+

<http://books.google.com/books?id=8R8AAAAAMAAJ&vq=miles&pg=PA5#v=onepage&q=miles&f=false>

**Money:** a dollar in 1801 = \$17.46 in 2008 in spending power

Over the life of the Morris Turnpike Co the purchasing power of the dollar fell, from \$1 in 1801 to 60¢ in 1851. The unskilled worker’s wage rose 15¢ on the dollar

<http://www.measuringworth.com/index.html>

Unskilled wage index (costs of unskilled labor)

<http://eh.net/databases/unskilledwage/wage%20index.txt>

1801 \$71

1851 \$81.60

2008 \$17,110

**Research**

Morris County Library, Reference Dept, <http://www.mclib.info>

NJ Supreme Court, Ford family papers (David and Gabriel Ford, founding directors), *Centinel of Freedom* (newspaper), April-May 1802, *New York Times*, 1851-1915

Morris County Historical Commission <http://www.co.morris.nj.us/MCHC/archives.html>

Morris County Archives, 1802 road returns (proposed turnpike route)

NJ State Archives, laws, 1801-1851 and company records, Bette Epstein

<http://www.state.nj.us/state/darm/links/archives.html>

Corporate recording, Div of Revenue file A-10802, 1807-1809 and these citations:

1801, c 38, pp 80-89, March 9<sup>th</sup>

1803, p 232-22, Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>

1832, p 96, March 6<sup>th</sup>

1850, pp 161-162, March 1<sup>st</sup>

1851, p 210, March 12<sup>th</sup>

also: **NJ Secretary of State’s Deeds** Volume: AB of Commissions, page 207 &212

Licenses to erect tollgates, 20 Aug. 1807 & 5 Nov. 1804.

NJ State Library <http://www.njstatelib.org>

1807-1809 Petitions and reports to and commission of Gov Jos Bloomfield, Deborah Mercer

US Dept of the Interior. Natl Park Service

Ford Mansion, Morristown NJ, Dr. Jude Pfister, stock certificate found in collection

<http://www.nps.gov/morr/historyculture/index.htm>

In 1808 County residents lodged complaints with Assemblyman Frelinghuysen about incursions onto their land by the Turnpike Company. See Council and Assembly documents.  
[http://mcl.mainlib.org/turnpike/tpk\\_council.pdf](http://mcl.mainlib.org/turnpike/tpk_council.pdf)  
[http://mcl.mainlib.org/turnpike/tpk\\_assembly.pdf](http://mcl.mainlib.org/turnpike/tpk_assembly.pdf)

From "Alden's New Jersey Register and United States Calendar" 1812

**Board of the Morris Turnpike Company:**

Gabriel H. Ford, President

Elias S. Dayton, Treasurer

Jeremiah Ballard, Secretary

Aaron Ogden, Christopher Robert, Isaac H. Williamson, Robinson Thomas, James Wade,

John Gustion, Directors

Other industrial organizations in the county, in the same volume, are:

**Morris Aqueduct [founded 1799]**

Lewis Condict, President

Wm Canfield, Vice President

Daniel Pierson, Director

Sm Hones, Vice Director

Chas Russel, Treasurer

William Beach, Accountant

Henry King, Clerk

**Washington Turnpike Company**

David Welch, President

John Doughty, Treasurer

Sylvester D. Russell, Nicholas Neighbor, Jar4ed Haines, Wm McCoullough, Henry

Dusenbury, John Bruleman, Directors

"The length of this turnpike from Morris to Easton is 40 miles, 59 chains and 20 links. From Morris to the Mineral Spring at Schooley's Mountain is 19 miles, 71 chains and 80 links."

Note: Gabriel H Ford also a shareholder of the Washington Tp Co. See his account books for stock purchases.

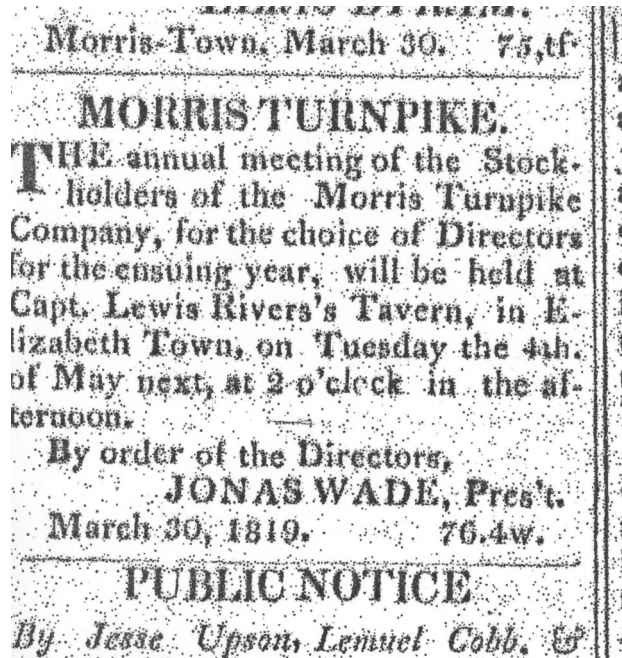
**Morris County Library**  
**Reference Dept.**  
**Morris County Turnpike, 1801-1851**

**Further research**

Under incorporating legislation the Morris Turnpike Company was to

1) Hold Bd of Directors each May, advertise meetings in April. Find in newspapers of the period, 1802-1852?

From *Palladium of Liberty*, Morristown, NJ March 1819



- 2) Every decade submit a two-year abstract of accounts to the General Assembly. When did this reporting begin, in which years submitted? See Legislative record.
- 3) is there any surviving copy of the 1802 road survey the company did, per enabling legislation?
- 4) Did the company dissolve in the financial panic of 1853, perhaps unable to raise the \$100,000 (\$2.5 million in 2008 money) as permitted by law in 1850?

**Myths**

A web mention of Thomas Edison's Portland-Cement Co building a "concrete mile" of road for the Morris Turnpike Company in 1912 seems to be in error. The mile is in New Village, NJ, current Rte 57. The area is more likely to have been part of the Washington Turnpike Company's mandate.