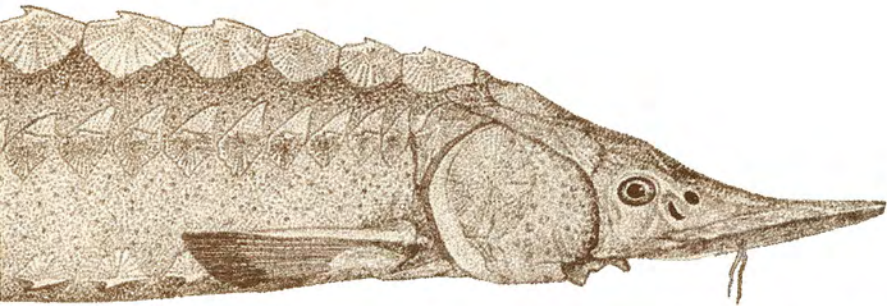


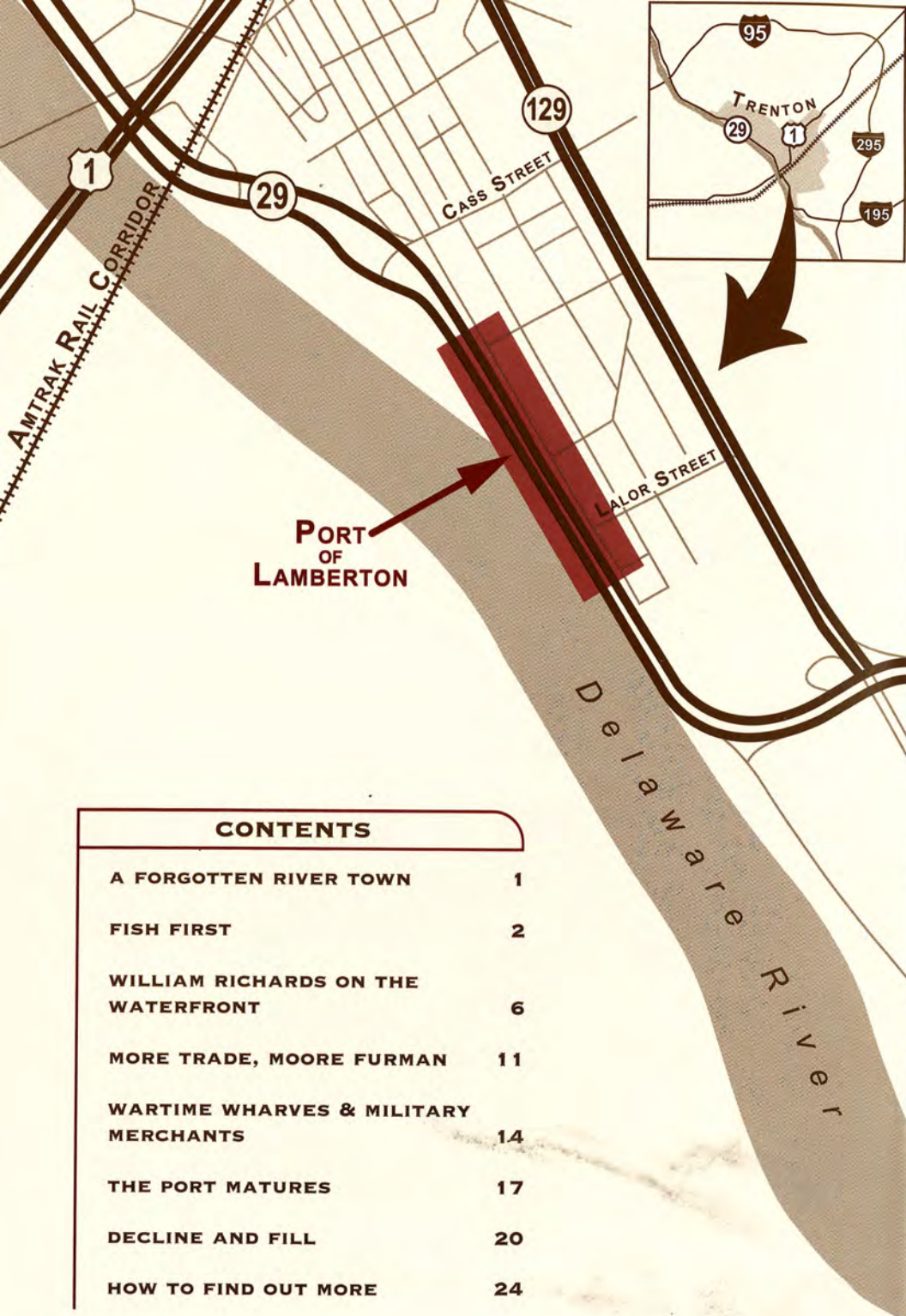
History traced by **Route 29**



Fish and Ships

LAMBERTON, THE PORT OF TRENTON





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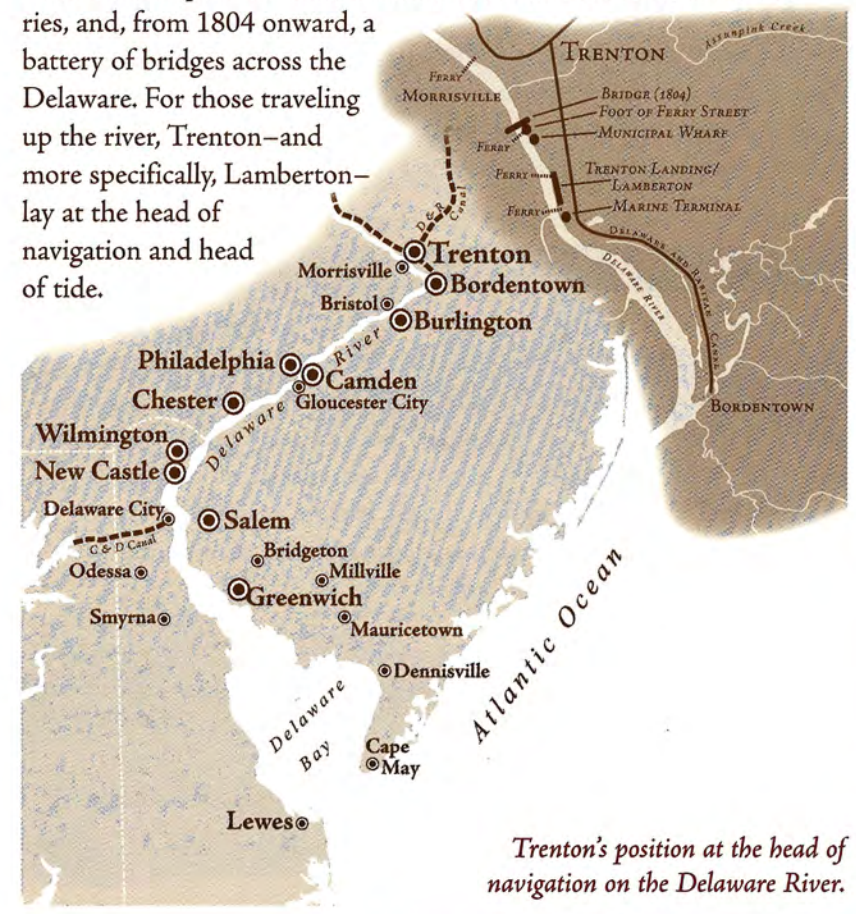
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First printing 2005

A FORGOTTEN RIVER TOWN

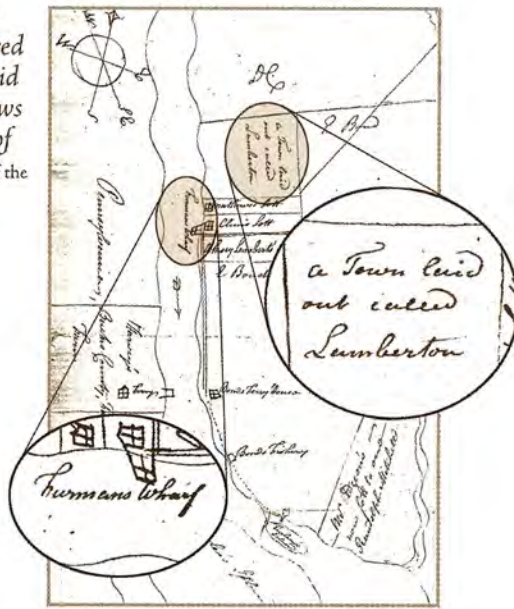
Sturgeon and shad. Sloops and steamboats. Fish and ships. For almost a century, from the early 1750s into the 1840s, first fishing and then river transportation sustained Lambertson as a river town on the Delaware and as Trenton's port. Indeed the wharves at the foot of Lalor Street continued to be used by barge and steamboat traffic into the early 20th century, long after the port community had passed its prime.

Today Trenton's historical relationship to the Delaware River and its reliance in the preindustrial era on the port of Lambertson as a connection to the outside world are seldom appreciated. Yet before the canals and railroads came to rule the regional transportation network in the mid-19th century, the river provided the primary link between the city and the surrounding region. For those passing overland along the New York/Philadelphia corridor, Trenton was home to a ford, several ferries, and, from 1804 onward, a battery of bridges across the Delaware. For those traveling up the river, Trenton—and more specifically, Lambertson—lay at the head of navigation and head of tide.



Trenton's position at the head of navigation on the Delaware River.

This map titled Survey of the Lands of Elijah Bond, prepared in 1773, marks out "a Town laid out called Lambertton" and shows "Furmans Wharf" at the foot of modern Lalor Street. [Collection of the New-York Historical Society]

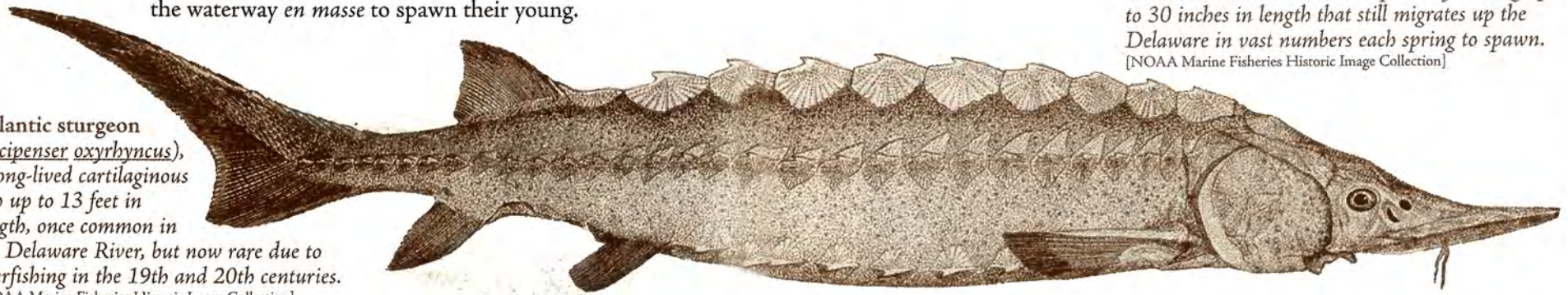


Trenton's river heritage is now largely forgotten. Reconstructed Route 29 courses through a tunnel that has carved away most of the riverbank where Lambertton's port facilities formerly stood. Commuter-laden cars now rush by where Lambertonians once fished, loaded goods into and out of all manner of shipping, replenished themselves in taverns, conducted commerce, and engaged in a few select industrial endeavors—fish processing, coopering, baking, pottery making, distilling, ice-making, brewing, and bottling.

FISH FIRST

Long before Lambertton, and ever since Native Americans first ventured into the Delaware Valley, the river had given up its seasonal bounty of fish to those venturing into its waters with spears, hooks, nets, and weirs. Between Philadelphia and Trenton the Delaware is a freshwater tidal river and each spring certain species of fish, notably sturgeon and the type of herring known as shad, ascend this stretch of the waterway *en masse* to spawn their young.

Atlantic sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus*), a long-lived cartilaginous fish up to 13 feet in length, once common in the Delaware River, but now rare due to overfishing in the 19th and 20th centuries. [NOAA Marine Fisheries Historic Image Collection]



With the small catches in the river today, it is hard to appreciate the volume of fish found by European settlers along the Delaware in the early colonial period. But, as Thomas Budd noted in 1685, "in the Delaware River are great plenty Sturgeon, which doubtless might be a good trade, if managed by such Persons as are skilful in the Boyling and pickling of them, so as to preserve them good to Barbados." It was this prospect, focused initially on the large and fleshy sturgeon, which launched commercial fishing below the falls of the Delaware.

Edward Broadfield, newly arrived from London and an expert in the curing and pickling of sturgeon "after the Baltic manner," was the first to try his hand. Beginning in 1753 in Bordentown, and then moving the following year to what would become the Lambertton riverfront, Broadfield was soon supplying sturgeon and shad to shopkeepers in New York, Philadelphia, and other mid-Atlantic towns. The fishery struggled, however, suffering from a weak local demand for sturgeon and difficulties in shipping product to the more profitable markets in England and the Caribbean. By the early 1760s Broadfield was bankrupt.



An early 20th-century fisherman holds aloft a shad freshly caught on the Morrisville bank of the Delaware River across from Riverview Cemetery. [Trenton Public Library]



American shad (*Alosa sapidissima*), also known as white shad, a species of herring up to 30 inches in length that still migrates up the Delaware in vast numbers each spring to spawn. [NOAA Marine Fisheries Historic Image Collection]

FISH PROCESS AND FISH PRODUCT

Preparing fresh-caught fish for human consumption involved pickling them in vinegar, packing them in kegs, and shipping them off to market. Extended preservation for up to two years could be achieved by curing fish in barrels of salt brine and then smoking them. Through controlled boiling and cleansing, fish were also rendered into oil, glue, or isinglass (a gelatin used as a clarifying agent for jellies, liquor, and glue).

A more ambitious fishery scheme quickly followed, put in place by **Charles Read** of Burlington, an influential politician and wealthy gentleman farmer. Read (1715–74), a colleague of Benjamin Franklin, is one of New Jersey's most intriguing colonial entrepreneurs. A member of the American Philosophical Society, he authored an important treatise on the science of agriculture and invested considerable energy and money in several farming and manufacturing ventures.

It was Charles Read who laid the foundation of the port of Lambertton.

In 1763 he took the critical step of leasing a 2½-acre tract on the riverfront from plantation owner John Douglas where he quickly developed a state-of-the-art fishing operation.

Douglas had earlier bought this property from the Lambert family. Here arose the Lambertton fishery, a



An illustration of a fish-smoking shed included in Denis Diderot's *L'Encyclopédie* (1751–77).

commercial entity that underpinned the growth of the port and continued in business well into the 19th century. Within a couple of years, Read had erected several buildings, including a boiling house for converting fish into oil, glue, or isinglass, a cellar for curing sturgeon and herring, a cooper's shop, and a dwelling. He also dammed the mouth of Douglas Gut, a small tributary of the Delaware, to create a pond where live fish could be kept.

Just as the Lambertton fishery began hitting its stride, Charles Read turned his attention to exploiting the bog iron deposits of South Jersey for iron manufacture. Needing capital to build furnaces and purchase acreage with ore and timber, he decided to sell off his fishery interests. These were acquired in the spring of 1765 by a pair of Philadelphia merchants, William Richards and Thomas Riche. Richards and Riche promptly hired the original Lambertton fisherman Edward Broadfield

to run the operation, but he was dismissed within months. Soon after, Riche also departed the partnership, leaving Richards the sole holder of the lease to the fishery tract.

William Richards, who figures prominently in Lambertton over the following quarter century, retained the lease until the 21-year term negotiated by Charles Read expired in 1784. He added pickled sturgeon and shad to the long list of goods he offered in his Philadelphia and Lambertton stores, and likely traded this valuable commodity up and down the eastern seaboard and in the Caribbean. One of Richards' several ships was a sloop named the *Herring*, a vessel that frequently made the run to Barbados (Richards' place of birth and a thriving market for North Atlantic fish).

Local fishing was in its heyday during William Richards' tenure, with several different fisheries being operated between the falls and Bordentown. Others included the fishery of Jonathan Richmond and Benjamin Yard upstream near the falls and Elijah Bond's fishery just downstream near Sturgeon Pond, but the Lambertton fishery was always the dominant facility. In 1795 the rights to the Lambertton fishery were acquired by Edward Ingleton. Ingleton's successor, Thomas Grant, who took over in 1800, continued the operation of the fishery into the late 1830s, by which time both commercial fishing and river trade were on the wane.



Foundations of a waterfront building believed to date from the time when William Richards owned the Lambertton fishery. The interior of this building yielded countless sturgeon scutes (bony plates that cover the back and sides of this fish) and scales of herring, shad, and striped bass. [Hunter Research, Inc.]

NAMING THE PORT

The name Lambertton honors the Lambert family, the original Quaker settlers along this stretch of riverbank. It first appears in an advertisement in *The Pennsylvania Journal* on August 7, 1764, which noted that an "Irish servant lad nam'd Mark McLoughland" had fled from "Lambarton fishery." By the Revolutionary era the riverfront between modern Landing and Lalor streets was also referred to as Trenton Landing.

WILLIAM RICHARDS ON THE WATERFRONT

The Lamberton fishery gave William Richards a foothold on the riverbank. Within a few years he built additional facilities on the fishery tract and on adjoining land to the south owned by the Cadwalader family. Between the late 1760s and the early 1780s, aside from the fishery and fish-processing business, Richards operated warehouses, a pottery kiln, a cooper's shop, a bakery, a store—all ranged along the Lamberton waterfront and keyed to 170 feet of wharves that allowed



An illustration of the interior of a typical 18th-century European bakery included in Denis Diderot's *L'Encyclopédie* (1751–77).



A bake oven owned by William Richards, found during excavations for the Route 29 tunnel. The domed roof has been removed exposing the oven chamber and floor (scale in feet). [Hunter Research, Inc.]

him to maintain an economic lifeline to the Lower Delaware Valley and beyond. Richards quickly became one of Lamberton's leading entrepreneurs, while at the same time living and managing other commercial interests in Philadelphia.

William Richards' involvement with Lamberton occurred late in his career as a moderately wealthy, mid-Atlantic colonial merchant. In his lifetime he prospered from the burgeoning triangular trade between the colonies, the Caribbean, and Europe, and then successfully weathered the more restrictive mercantile climate of the 1760s and 1770s. Finally, after contributing significantly to the patriot cause, he managed to survive the rigors of the Revolutionary War with most of his holdings intact, living out his final years on the Lamberton waterfront.

William Richards is not to be confused with his better-known namesake and contemporary of Batsto furnace and ironworking fame. Our Lambertonian William Richards was born in Barbados in 1716, the fourth of six sons of Warner Richards, who by the early 1730s had moved his family to a new plantation in New Barbadoes Neck, Bergen

County at the mouth of the Hackensack and Passaic Rivers. Although little is known about William's early life, by the early 1760s, he was a ship owner and merchant operating out of Perth Amboy. He engaged in coastal and Caribbean trade, and partnered in a business providing overland transportation services between New York and Philadelphia.

By 1765 William Richards had relocated to Philadelphia and was making a living as a merchant, ship owner, sometime ship's captain, apothecary, and shopkeeper. He rented space for his shop on Market Street, near Second Street, and with his younger brother, Burnet, ran a thriving shipping business from a wharf on the Philadelphia waterfront. It was during this period that William began his involvement with the Lamberton fishery, probably attracted as much by the riverfront trading opportunities as by the fishing business. Also, faced with growing colonial sentiment against importing goods through Britain, he may have been looking to reorient his trading activity around the Delaware River and eastern seaboard, rather than the Caribbean and Europe.

Newspaper advertisements in the mid-1770s show Richards' Philadelphia store still dealing in a wide range of specialized goods freshly imported from London, notably drugs and medicines, although at his Lamberton base he was also selling pickled and cured fish, stoneware pottery and staples such as rice. The Revolution put a damper on trade in the Delaware Valley, especially between 1776 and 1778, but by 1780 William Richards had resumed most of his business operations and was shipping a wide range of items on the river between Philadelphia and Lamberton, including wine, tea, hides, cotton bales,

A receipt documenting payment by General John Cadwalader to William Richards for delivery of herring and pottery to Cadwalader in Trenton. [The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Cadwalader Papers]



iron pots, earthenware, stoneware, cider, soap, paper, sugar, chocolate, and fabric. Key to Richards' trading activity was his maintenance of a vessel on the river. In 1774 he advertised that he had just put into service a new schooner, the *Lamberton Packet*, in support of his river trade. This ship remarkably survived the naval hostilities on the Delaware during the Revolution and was still in use in the 1780s.

After the Revolution, William Richards' fortunes wavered. By the summer of 1781, he was living and running his store in Trenton Landing (as Lamberton was also known around this time). Although an advertisement in the *New Jersey Gazette* in December of that year shows Richards selling an expanded range of goods at the Trenton Landing store, this was because he was phasing out his Philadelphia operations. His Philadelphia store was closed by early 1783, possibly earlier. William Richards died in 1787 at age 70, leaving his estate to his widow, Elizabeth. The inventory of his holdings itemizes his Lamberton property, including the contents of his store, as well as land in New Barbadoes Neck, "silver plate," "an old Negro man," and various household items. Perhaps more telling is the listing of his schooner, presumably the *Lamberton Packet*, noted as condemned, and the fact that his estate was unable to cover his debts and was eventually subjected to a sheriff's sale.

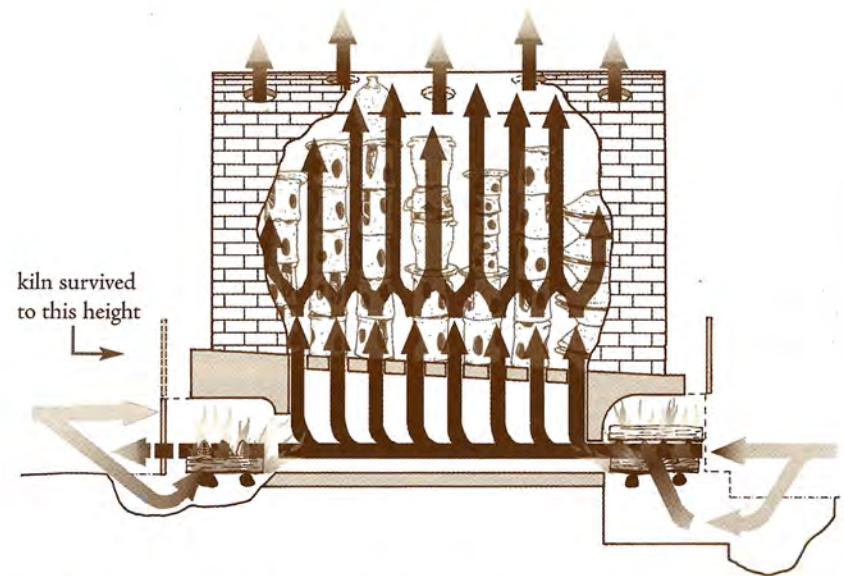
Archaeology has given tangible expression to William Richards' colonial endeavors on the Lamberton waterfront. Monitoring of Route 29 tunnel excavations documented numerous foundations and artifacts along the riverbank between Landing Street and Cliff Street, many of which can be linked confidently with Richards. In addition to the fish-processing building noted earlier, the footings of warehouses, a pair of commercial bake ovens, and a stoneware pottery kiln were exposed. This last find was accompanied by more than 10,000 pottery "wasters" (misfired, discarded vessels) and pieces of kiln furniture. With its many distinctive wares and limited period of operation (from around 1773–74 to no later than the early 1780s), William Richards' stoneware pottery kiln is an archaeological discovery of international importance.

RICHARDS' KILN - A RARE FIND

To date William Richards' kiln is one of only three 18th-century stoneware pottery kilns in North America excavated by archaeologists. Others have been studied in Yorktown, Virginia, and Cheesequake, New Jersey.



William Richards' stoneware pottery kiln was exposed during excavations for the Route 29 tunnel and now lies preserved beneath the northbound carriage-way. This view shows the floor of the firing chamber with vents opening into the pair of parallel flues below). [Hunter Research, Inc.]



A schematic diagram of William Richards' stoneware pottery kiln showing fireboxes at either end and the flow of heat through the flues and firing chamber. [Hunter Research, Inc.]

molded face decoration on jug fragment



storage jar



saggar



ointment pot



porringer



tankard



jug



chamber pot



pipkin



A sampling of William Richards' "useful Dutch stone ware" made at Lambertson in the 1770s. [Hunter Research, Inc.]

MORE TRADE, MOORE FURMAN

William Richards by no means had a monopoly over Lambertson's trade in the 1760s and 1770s. In fact, from the 1750s through the 1790s, a succession of firms—Reed and Furman; Furman and Hunt;

Coxe and Furman; Coxe, Furman and Coxe;

Moore Furman & Company—conducted business along the Lambertson waterfront immediately downstream from Richards' wharves, rapidly surpassing Richards' operations in the extent of their trading network, volume of goods handled and profitability. The key figure, as implied by this string of company names, was Moore Furman, Trenton's most distinguished 18th-century merchant.



Moore Furman (1728–1808), Trenton and Philadelphia merchant and a leading figure in Lambertson's development as a port. [Trenton Public Library]

From the 1750s until the Revolution, Moore Furman's Lambertson activities were mostly centered on the transshipment of goods. He maintained wharves and warehouses at the foot of modern Lalor Street, but unlike Richards, did not engage in waterfront craft and industry. Furman's initial focus was on getting the goods to market, be it Philadelphia or Trenton or other hinterland communities. It was not until he returned from Philadelphia to Trenton to live in 1780 that he opened a store on the Lambertson waterfront and began to expand his role in the growing port. Ten years later, Furman acquired the fishery tract, the base of the late William Richards' port facilities, thus gaining control over virtually all the Lambertson waterfront. Finally, in the late 1790s, he moved to Lambertson to live out his final years within the community that was so central to his mercantile success.

Moore Furman was born into a farming family in 1728 in Furman's Corners (today's Marshalls Corner), roughly 10 miles north of Trenton. By 1750 he was living in Trenton and a year later was partnered with Andrew Reed in the firm of Reed and Furman. This business was headquartered in Trenton's commercial core at the intersection of King (Warren) and Second (State) streets, but interestingly, despite their partnership, Reed and Furman operated separate stores located catercorner at this crossroads. Their firm also ran branch stores in Pennington, Princeton, and Amwell.

To grow their business, Reed and Furman needed a presence in Philadelphia, the regional and international hub around which market towns like Trenton revolved. With Furman installed in Trenton as junior partner, Reed moved to Philadelphia. Over the following decade the firm prospered, tapping into a much expanded trade network. Thus, just as the Lambertton fishery was taking shape, so also were Reed and Furman shipping increasing quantities of freight between Trenton and Philadelphia, making use of wharves on the Lambertton waterfront. During these boom years, Furman was able to acquire a sizeable estate in northern Hunterdon County and became the driving force behind the development of the mill-based community soon known as Pittstown.

In 1762, with Andrew Reed approaching retirement, Moore Furman dissolved the firm of Reed and Furman and became a partner in two new related entities—Furman and Hunt, in which he took in Abraham Hunt, a local mill owner, as junior partner; and Coxe and Furman, wherein he allied himself with William Coxe. The latter, a son of Daniel Coxe III, was a member of the Philadelphia elite, had strong family ties to Trenton, and was one of the wealthiest landowners in New Jersey. Like Reed before him, Furman relocated to Philadelphia, while Abraham Hunt minded the Trenton stores. Furman and Hunt basically served as a Trenton affiliate of Coxe and Furman, focusing on the Delaware River trade.



Abraham Hunt (1740–1821), Trenton merchant who partnered with Moore Furman in the firm of Furman and Hunt between 1762 and 1780. [William S. Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, 1898]

The firm soon began to dominate the Lambertton waterfront, leasing and then owning wharves at the foot of modern Lalor Street, and operating several vessels on the river.

Coxe and Furman was an altogether different commercial venture, conceived from the outset as an import/export business of international scope and stature. The company was established for the “Business of Buying, Selling, Vending, Importing, Exporting all kinds of Goods, Wares and Merchandizes as well as buying, holding, employing, freighting and selling all kinds of Ships and other vessels.” William Coxe, uninterested in hands-on management, supplied most of the capital; Moore Furman oversaw the firm’s daily operations on the wharves and

Moore Furman & Company,
HAVING established a store at Lambertton (commonly called Trenton Landing, one and a half miles below Trenton) beg leave to inform the publick, that they are now opening a general assortment of merchandize, which will be disposed of wholesale and retail, at the most reasonable prices, for cash or country produce.
 June 21, 1784. 4w¶

Moore Furman advertises his Lambertton store in the *New Jersey Gazette*.

market floors of Philadelphia. Up until the Revolution, Coxe and Furman thrived mightily in their dealings with merchants in the West Indies and European ports like London, Amsterdam, and Lisbon. They also profited by acting as purchasing agents for other American colonial merchants from Boston to the Carolinas.

However, colonial discontent was brewing throughout the 1760s and 1770s as the British Parliament imposed unpopular import duties. William Coxe briefly served as a collector of the stamp tax in 1765, but soon resigned, and by the end of the year Coxe and Furman had joined the nonimportation movement in protest of British regulations. As the Revolutionary hostilities swelled and neared the Delaware Valley, one

of William Coxe’s sons, Tench, joined the firm as a partner in the spring of 1776. Coxe and Furman thus became Coxe, Furman, and Coxe. The corporate dynamic was irreversibly altered and Moore Furman, a declared Revolutionary (see below), now found himself sandwiched between two noncommittal but Loyalist-leaning Coxes.



A survey map of property owned by William Trent in the Lambertton area in 1777; Lambertton Road follows the course of modern Third and Cliff Streets, terminating on the river bank just above Furman’s Wharf.

[The Historical Society of Pennsylvania]

Coxe, Furman, and Coxe continued awkwardly in business through the peak of the Revolution until the firm finally dissolved in late 1780. Furman returned to live in Trenton in the same year, resuming business as a merchant, albeit in a scaled-down capacity, but still trading out of Lambertton with the West Indies and London. Through the 1780s and 1790s he resided in both Trenton and Pittstown, groomed Peter Hunt (a nephew of Abraham Hunt) as his business successor, and gave much of his time to public service. In 1792 Moore Furman was sworn in as Trenton's first mayor, a well-deserved honor for one who had brought such energy to the city's commerce. In 1798, following the marriage of his daughter, Maria, to Peter Hunt, Furman built the couple a house in Lambertton and transferred ownership of his Lambertton holdings to them both. Soon after, he moved in with his daughter's family and lived out his final years in Lambertton, dying in 1808.

WARTIME WHARVES & MILITARY MERCHANTS

Trading from the wharves of Lambertton was not always smooth sailing. In the Revolutionary War, Trenton Landing, at the head of navigation on the Delaware, quickly emerged as a strategic location in the military landscape. As early as the fall of 1776, George Washington established Trenton and its port as a "provision magazine," where rations sufficient to sustain 20,000 men for three months were to be maintained. For five long years, until the late summer of 1781, when the British finally capitulated at Yorktown, Lambertton served as a major supply base and transshipment point for the Continental Army. Forage, provisions, clothing, lumber, ordnance, and other war materiel were gathered here before being transported to American winter encampments at Morristown and Middlebrook and other military positions in the New Jersey and Hudson Highlands. The wharves were often abuzz with activity as boats were docked, storehouses filled and wagons loaded. Americans in active military service also passed through here, crossing the river at reduced rates using Elijah Bond's "Continental Ferry."



Continental troops loaded supplies on to wagons on the Lambertton waterfront. [Larry Lowenthal, ed., *Days of Siege: A Journal of the Siege of Fort Stanwix in 1777*, 1983]

ABRAHAM HUNT, CIVIL OR TREASONABLE HOST?

On Christmas night, 1776, the eve of the First Battle of Trenton, Abraham Hunt entertained Colonel Johann Rall, Hessian commander at Trenton. This act, for which Hunt was tried for treason and acquitted, diverted Hessian attention from Washington's successful advance early the next morning.

Early in the war, from late 1776 through the British evacuation of Philadelphia in the summer of 1778, military activity in the area was intense and conflict often near at hand. Lambertton's merchants—William Richards, Moore Furman, and Abraham Hunt—found their trading facilities co-opted by the Continental Army and all three men soon became important figures in the American military supply network. Lambertton mostly escaped the fighting that took place in December 1776 and January 1777 around the time of the Battles of Trenton and Princeton, but the riverbank was the scene of frequent troop movements and military shipments in support of Continental Army actions. One rather more serious incident occurred on Friday, January 3, 1777 (the day of Washington's victory at Princeton), when American troops accidentally burned down a house they were occupying that was owned by William Richards.

Richards, in May of 1776, had been appointed "Ships' Husband" (effectively the manager) of the Pennsylvania Navy, an amorphous fleet of sloops, galleys, guard boats, and other vessels assembled to defend the Delaware from British naval assault. With his seafaring background, knowledge of the river and merchant connections, Richards was the ideal person to oversee the upkeep and provisioning of the Pennsylvania Navy's 57 boats. Moore Furman and Abraham Hunt played an even greater role in support of the American cause and for close to four years committed their Lambertton and Trenton trading facilities—wharves, storehouses, shops, and equipment—to the military effort.

WILLIAM RICHARDS AND BETSY ROSS

Whether the Philadelphia seamstress Betsy Ross designed and made the first U.S. flag remains a subject of some dispute, but she did at William Richards' request make ships' colors for the Pennsylvania Navy over the winter of 1776–77.

In 1775, Furman, an ardent Revolutionary, was appointed a captain in the newly formed Third Battalion of the Philadelphia Associators, led by Colonel John Cadwalader. On March 2, 1778, he assumed the important post of Deputy Quartermaster General for New Jersey, reporting to General Nathanael Greene and sometimes directly to George Washington. In this capacity, Furman acquired and distributed provisions, horses, and military supplies for the Continental Army during a critical phase of the war when the bulk of the American forces were based in central and northern New Jersey. Furman mostly orchestrated this activity from Trenton, Lambertton, and his estate in Pittstown. After more than two years of solid service, he resigned on July 24, 1780, and returned to civilian life.



Nathanael Greene (1742–86), Revolutionary War general who oversaw Moore Furman's supplying of the Continental Army through the port of Lambertton from 1776 through 1780.
[Portrait by Charles Willson Peale, 1783, Courtesy of Independence National Historical Park]

By this time the focus of the war had shifted to the southern colonies and Lambertton's military significance was much reduced. One final major duty remained, which was for Trenton and its port to play host on September 1 and 2, 1781, to the combined French and American expeditionary force that moved south from Newport, Rhode Island, to Yorktown, Virginia, returning again a year later. The outbound journey involved a substantial mobilization, with the French army crossing the Delaware by ford and ferry and the American forces dispatching more than 30 vessels and 4,150 troops downriver from Lambertton's wharves.



A map prepared by cartographer Louis-Alexandre Berthier for General Rochambeau showing the site of the French army encampment at Trenton in 1781. The wharves and port community of Lambertton are depicted just downstream at the mouth of the creek known as Douglas Gut.
[Princeton University Library]

THE PORT MATURES

As the Revolutionary War wound down in the early 1780s, Lambertton was still a small port—a smattering of wharves and warehouses along the riverbank, a few workshops, a handful of houses, perhaps a pottery and a ferry, but only one store, that of William Richards, which had resumed business in 1781. Over the next couple of decades, as the fledgling republic spread its new trade wings, the port developed rapidly, mostly through the commercial investment of Moore Furman and his soon-to-be son-in-law, Peter Hunt. Furman opened his own store in 1784 and bought up several Lambertton properties over the following decade. By 1796, with Furman now in semi-retirement, Hunt was effectively in control of some 700 feet of river frontage between modern Landing and Lalor streets. In 1789 Lambertton was designated an official port of delivery by the First Congress of the United States, a status that cemented the future of the settlement as a trading hub.



The Abraham Woglum house at 1126 Lambertton Street dates from around 1784 and is the oldest surviving building in the community. The house may also have served as one of the port's many riverfront inns. [Hunter Research, Inc.]

Another thread in Lambertton's growth in the early federal period lay in the new nation's search for a site for its capital city. For a few years, in the mid- to late 1780s, the banks of the Delaware in the Lambertton/South Trenton area were a serious contender for the seat of national government and the location preferred by the New England and northernmost Mid-Atlantic states. Over the winter of 1784–85, the United States Congress even met in Trenton in deference to this political pressure. Ultimately, with George Washington's backing, the present-day site of Washington, D.C., was selected for the national capital and Trenton settled instead for the lesser role of New Jersey state capital, a mantle it assumed in 1790. However, the federal aspirations of the Lambertton area drew attention to its economic potential and led to a flurry of land speculation and building in the postwar years. By 1800 Lambertton was much more than a string of riverfront facilities and was beginning to expand inland along a street grid corresponding to modern Centre, Second, and Cliff streets.

THE FATEFUL VOYAGE OF THE FAME

In 1799 the brigantine *Fame*, owned by Moore Furman and the ship's captain James Hunt, set sail from Lambertton for Madeira. Captured first by the French, and then by the British, the vessel was taken to Lisbon and ransomed by its owners. Sailing again for Madeira, the *Fame* was captured by the French a second time and taken to Spain where its cargo was condemned. Reclaimed by its owners, the *Fame* finally returned home via Madeira with a cargo that included wine and salt as ballast.



A mid-19th-century engraving of the Trenton waterfront from Morrisville. In the foreground a raft of lumber is being floated downstream over the falls of the Delaware. [John W. Barber and Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of the State of New Jersey*, 1845]



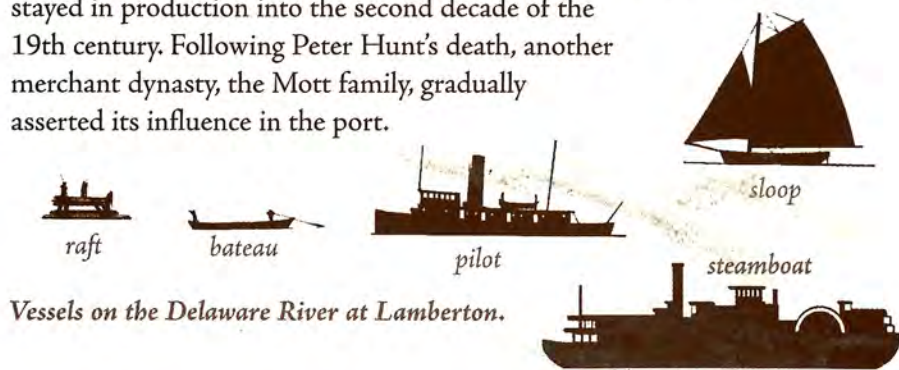
A view of the Delaware Inn on Lambertton Street around 1900. Erected in the 1790s, and still standing today, this building housed one of Lambertton's busiest taverns; it later served as the offices for the neighboring brewery. [Trenton Public Library]

In the late 1790s and first decade of the 19th century, Peter Hunt was the dominant force in the community. In 1797 he established a new ferry that crossed the Delaware from the foot of Landing Street, although this service faded into obscurity soon after the first bridge was built across the river at Trenton in 1804. Hunt owned or part-owned several vessels on the river and numerous warehouses; together these plied a busy trade, notably in lumber and wine.

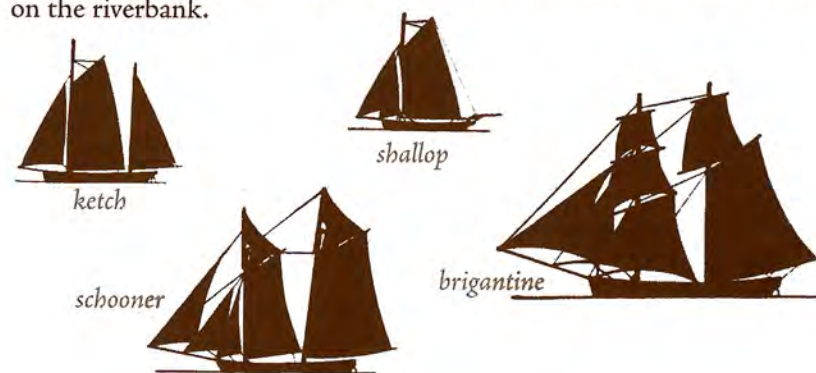
The Hunts were not alone in reaping the benefits of the port. The fishery continued in operation. A state-of-the-art distillery with a brick malt kiln and steam still was established on the riverbank south of Landing Street by Alexander Anderson and John Hall prior to 1801. Dr. James Ewing acquired Anderson's share in 1803 and the distillery stayed in production into the second decade of the 19th century. Following Peter Hunt's death, another merchant dynasty, the Mott family, gradually asserted its influence in the port.

Gershom Mott (1785–1848) served as collector of the Port of Lambertton, a post in which he was succeeded by his namesake son of Civil War fame. Together, the Gershom Motts were the driving force behind Lambertton's commerce for almost 70 years.

Throughout the first half of the 19th century, Lambertton came bursting to life whenever the Delaware experienced its periodic freshets. Usually in the spring, occasionally in summer and fall, the overflowing river was harnessed to transport logs and other timber products to the mills and markets of the Lower Delaware. Rafts of logs lashed together and flat-bottomed plank vessels known as arks, frequently piled high with boards, shingles, staves, tanbark, and even stone, were floated downstream from the Upper Delaware. Lambertton, just below the falls, was a popular layover, and raftsmen, boatmen, and lumbermen patronized a growing number of taverns, hotels, and stores on the riverbank.



Vessels on the Delaware River at Lambertton.



One enterprising pair of brothers, David and William Lenox, realized that steam tugboats could be used to tow the rafts and arks, expediting the final leg of the journey downstream. Typically, one tugboat could tow 25 to 30 rafts at a time. In a given year the Lenoxes, with four boats operating from their Lalor Street wharf, might assist as many as 1,700 rafts in the trip downstream. Rafting on the Delaware peaked in the 1840s and 1850s, and began to wind down around the time of the Civil War as timber sources became depleted.

DECLINE AND FILL

The Delaware River was not always Lambertson's friend and the freshets were often more than the port could handle. As the 19th century wore on, progressive clearing of woodland upstream in the Delaware drainage increased run-off into the river and surging floodwaters periodically swept away vessels, wharves, and buildings on the Lambertson waterfront. In 1852, for example, an ice freshet scoured away the Lenox wharf and warehouse at the foot of Lalor Street.



Onlookers gather on the riverbank to watch a tugboat plow through the ice-clogged waters of the Delaware River in the early years of the 20th century. [Trenton Public Library]

While depletion of woodland and worsening floods contributed to Lambertson's downfall, the port's mid-19th-century decline was even more a consequence of the canals and railroads. The Delaware and Raritan Canal, constructed 1831–34, passed some 1,500 feet inland of the Lambertson waterfront, entering the Delaware River at Bordentown. The Camden and Amboy Railroad network, extended into Trenton in the late 1830s, likewise bypassed Lambertson, paralleling the canal and crossing the Delaware at the falls. More reliable, speedier, and with a greater carrying capacity, the canals and railroads soon lured freight and passengers away from the river. Lambertson the port withered and eventually died.

In the post-Civil War era, steamboats still docked at the Lalor Street wharf and farther upstream at the foot of Ferry and Federal streets, but the stretch of intervening riverfront lay dormant. During this period, local potteries and metalworking companies came down to the riverbank to dump their industrial waste. The shoreline edged out farther into the river, burying the remnants of the old port and creating a strip of fresh-filled land on which buildings could be erected.

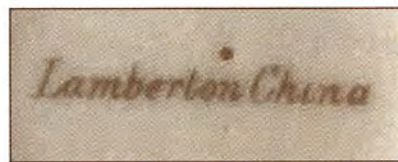


From the mid-1870s into the early 20th century Rockingham, majolica, and ironstone china wasters from Joseph Mayer's Arsenal Pottery were dumped along the Lambertson riverbank. [Hunter Research, Inc.]

Beginning in 1890, the riverbank at the foot of Lalor Street was redeveloped by the Kuser family as the site of an ice-making, brewing, and bottling complex. Home successively to the Trenton Hygeia Ice Company (1890–99), the Trenton Brewing Company (1891–99), the Peoples Brewing Company (1899–1949), the Metropolis Brewery Company (1949–72), and Iroquois Brands Ltd. (1972–86), this plant supplied quality beers to the Waldorf Hotel in New York City in the early 20th century, stayed in production during the Prohibition era making “near-beer,” and then later flourished as the maker of the malt liquor known as Champale. The latter business closed in 1986 and the factory buildings were pulled down in 1998.



Champale—the main product of the Metropolis Brewery Company plant at the foot of Lalor Street in the second half of the 20th century. [Trenton Public Library]



An early 20th-century postcard view of the Lamberton waterfront looking downstream toward the Peoples Brewing Company plant at the foot of Lalor Street.



Wharves at Lalor Street were used by barges bringing coal into the brewery complex well into the 20th century. From at least the 1890s, the Lalor Street wharves also served as Trenton's principal terminus for passenger steamboats. The river was too shallow for these large vessels to dock any farther upstream, closer to the city center. In 1919, however, a new municipal wharf was opened at the foot of Federal Street and, shortly after, the river channel was deepened. The steamboat terminus shifted upstream and the Lalor Street wharves declined in importance. These developments coincided with the creation of the Sixth Ward Park in 1918–19, a riverfront beautification project that extended from Landing Street south to Riverview Cemetery on either side of the brewery. Finally, in the 1930s, the wharves at both Lalor and Federal streets were eclipsed by the newly opened Trenton Marine Terminal, and Lambertton the port was once and for all consigned to history and archaeology.



A view of the Sixth Ward Park and the Peoples Brewing Company plant at the foot of Lalor Street around 1920. [Trenton Public Library]

From the early 1890s until around 1920 the Maddock Pottery Company's Lamberton Works discarded defective pieces of hotel and restaurant china along the Lamberton waterfront. [Hunter Research, Inc.]



The construction of the Route 29 tunnel revealed much of the lost history of the port of Lambertton. In addition to this booklet series, much of this history has been recycled into the exhibits in South River Walk Park located on top of the tunnel. [Hunter Research, Inc.]

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE

Places To Visit

- ♦ **South River Walk Park**, Lambertton Street, Trenton, New Jersey: this history-themed park on top of the Route 29 tunnel occupies the historic Lambertton waterfront; exhibits detail aspects of the port's history.
- ♦ **Independence Seaport Museum**, Penn's Landing, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: the principal maritime heritage museum in the Delaware Valley; in addition to putting on events and programs, the facilities include family-oriented interactive exhibits, ship models, artifacts, and art.
- ♦ **Greenwich**, Cumberland County, New Jersey: this well-preserved town on the Delaware Bay still has numerous 18th-century buildings that evoke the atmosphere of a small Middle Atlantic colonial port.

Reading Suggestions

Trenton Historical Society, *A History of Trenton, 1679–1929: Two Hundred and Fifty Years of a Notable Town with Links in Four Centuries*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey (1929).

David Budlong Tyler, *The Bay & River Delaware: A Pictorial History*, Cornell Maritime Press, Cambridge, Maryland (1955).

Levitt, James H., *For Want of Trade: Shipping and the New Jersey Ports, 1680–1783*, New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey (1981).

CREDITS

This booklet series is the product of historical and archaeological investigations undertaken for the New Jersey Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration in mitigation of the effects of the reconstruction of Route 29 in the City of Trenton. The preparation of these booklets and other related research activities were conducted in compliance with Federal and State historic preservation laws and regulations. For more detailed technical reporting of the topics addressed in these booklets, readers are referred to the five-volume *Archaeological Data Recovery Excavations and Monitoring, New Jersey Route 29, City of Trenton, Mercer County, New Jersey*, available at selected local libraries, the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office, and the New Jersey Department of Transportation.

This booklet was conceived and authored by Richard Hunter of Hunter Research, Inc. Janice Wilson Stridick of Wilson Creative provided design and editorial services.

We gratefully acknowledge: David Zmoda, Nicholas Caiazza, Robert Davies and Kathy Diringler of the New Jersey Department of Transportation (project administration); Damon Tvaryanas, Nadine Sergejeff, James Cox, Richard Hunter, Ian Burrow, Patricia Madrigal, William Liebeknecht, Charles Ashton and Rebecca White (research assistance) and Michael Murphy, James Lee, Frank Dunsmore, Douglas Scott and Dawn Turner (graphics assistance) of Hunter Research, Inc.; Lisa Smith (graphic design) of Wilson Creative; Wendy Nardi of the Trentoniana Local History and Genealogy, Trenton Public Library; and Sally Lane, Trenton Convention and Visitors Bureau.

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