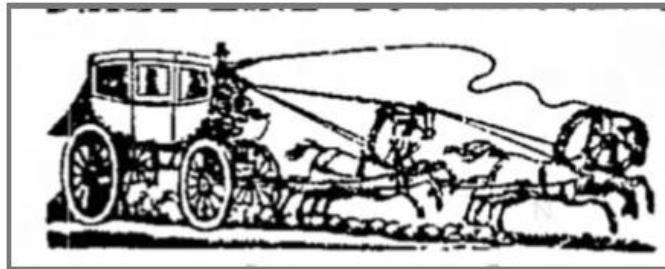


Travel: Mail Coach vs. Railroad

W. M. Baillie

Before railroad lines gradually spread through Columbia County beginning in 1854 (Catawissa), the stagecoach lines known as “mail routes” were the chief public means to get to many parts of the county.

The following mail routes in Columbia County were announced by the postal service for the period of 1 July 1852 to 20 June 1856 (summarized from *The Star of the North*, 6 Nov 1851). In most cases these routes continued existing routes, though the days and times were altered. The starting times for the trips were as early as 3 a.m. and as late as 4 p.m.; the days of travel were specified in the notice but are here given as the number of trips per week. The newspaper listing does not specify the type of carriage or wagon used; perhaps a stage coach is assumed in all cases similar to this 1858 cut from the *Adams Sentinel* published at Gettysburg:



Note that the coach speed that is called for on mail routes varies considerably, from 2.5 mph to 4.5 mph average. The differences presumably take account of the terrain and the quality of the road surface on each route.

NORTH of the river:

Bloomsburg to Cambra (via Lightstreet, Orangeville, Pealer's), 3 weekly, 18 miles, 5 hours, 3.6 mph

Pealer's to Davidson, Sullivan Co. (via Stillwater, Benton, Cole's Creek, Central), 2 weekly, 20 miles, 6 hours, 3.3 mph

Bloomsburg to White Hall (via Buckhorn, Jerseytown), 1 weekly, 14 miles, 5 hours, 2.8 mph

Bloomsburg to Muncy (via Mordanville, Millville, Chesnut Grove, Moreland), 30 miles, 1 weekly, 11 hours, 2.7 mph

Berwick to Fairmont Springs (via Foundryville, Fishing Creek, Cambria), 2 weekly, 18 miles, 4 hours, 4.5 mph

Berwick to Jerseytown (via Briar Creek, Orangeville, Rohrsburg, Millville), 1 weekly, 26 miles, 9 hours, 2.8 mph

Cambra to Muncy (via Benton, Polkville, Lairdsville), 1 weekly, 28 miles, 10 hours, 2.8 mph

SOUTH of the river:

Bloomsburg to Fountain Spring (via Cattawissa, Roaring Creek), 6 weekly, 22 miles, 6 hours, 3.6 mph


Cattawissa to Cattawissa Valley (via Maineville, Beaver Valley), 1 weekly, 20 miles, 8 hours, 2.5 mph

BY RAIL:

For comparison, we can note the railroad schedules just before the Civil War. The Lackawanna and Bloomsburg Rail-Road published regularly its summer schedule for trains running twice daily from Scranton to Northumberland along the North Branch (see below). A morning train left Scranton at 6:10, stopped at seven towns including Berwick at 8:20 and Bloomsburg at 8:50, and arrived at Northumberland at 10:00. The schedule doesn't list mileage, but the route was about 80 miles in 3 hours 50 minutes, giving an average speed of 22 mph, including stops.

The image below is from Bloomsburg's *Star of the North*, September 12, 1860.

LACKAWANNA AND BLOOMSBURG



RAIL-ROAD.

Summer Arrangement.

TWO DAILY PASSENGER TRAINS
BETWEEN
SCRANTON & NORTHUMBERLAND.

<i>Moving South.</i>		
Leave	Philad's Mail	N. Y. Express.
Scranton,	6 10 a. m.	4 53 p. m.
Arrive at:		
Pittston,	6 38	4 53
Kingston,	7 05	5 20
Shickshinny,	7 50	6 25
Berwick,	8 20	6 55
Bloomsburg,	8 50	7 30
Rupert,	9 00	7 40
Danville,	9 25	8 10
Northumberland,	10 00	8 45
<i>Moving North.</i>		
Leave	N. Y. Express.	Philad's Mail.
Northumberland,	5 10 a. m.	4 45 p. m.
Arrive at:		
Danville,	6 05	5 20
Rupert,	6 35	5 50
Bloomsburg,	6 45	6 00
Berwick,	7 15	6 35
Shickshinny,	7 25	7 05
Kingston,	8 30	7 45
Pittston,	8 57	8 15
Scranton,	9 25	8 45

The Lackawanna and Bloomsburg Rail Road connects with the Delaware, Lackawanna Rail Road at Scranton, for New York and Philadelphia, and intermediate points East; also for Great Bend, Binghamton, Syracuse, Buffalo, Niagara Falls, and all important points West.

At Rupert it connects with the Cattawissa Railroad for points both East and West.

At Northumberland it connects with the Sunbury and Erie Railroad, for points West and South.

M. W. JACKSON,
August 8, 1860. *Superintendent.*