

LESSON L

HIT THE ROAD JACK (OR JILL)

Standards: Geography Standard One: Students will develop a personal geographic framework, or "mental map," and understand the uses and other geographics.

Geography Standard Three: Students will develop an understanding of the diversity of human culture and the unique nature of places [PLACES].

History Standard Two: Students will gather, examine, and analyze historical data.

- Objectives:**
- 1) Students will find the approximate area of the court order on a current map of Delaware.
 - 2) Students will draw a layout of their school and decide where a new hallway or outside pathway would be most needed.

- Materials:**
- 1) *Lesson L, Delaware Public Archives, Road Plot, Series Number 2805.27*
[back to back with]
Lesson L, Delaware Public Archives, Court Order, Series Number 2805.27
 - 2) *1796 Delaware Map, Delaware Public Archives, Vertical File VI, (Image Gallery)*
 - 3) *Lesson S, 2008 Road Map of Delaware (Courtesy of Delaware Department of Transportation)*
 - 4) Drawing paper
 - 5) Crayons

- Procedures:**
- 1) Begin a discussion with the class concerning transportation in Delaware during the 18th century. See background information. What forms of transportation existed during these times? Cars (No) Airplanes? (No) Trains? (No) Horses? (Yes) Boats? (Yes). What was the most popular type of transportation among Delawareans? (Water transportation - roads were in poor shape and held numerous hazards. Most navigable waterways in Delaware had landings where farmers could bring their produce for shipment.)
 - 2) Project the 1796 Delaware map. Point out the roadways that existed in the late 18th century. Point out how the waterways travel deep into the interior of Delaware. However, many Delawareans saw the need to

build more roads and improve the transportation system in the state. Much of the land along the water was already owned and occupied. Farmers without access to a waterway had a much tougher time getting their goods to market.

- 3) How did Delawareans get a road built? (They had to get a petition drawn up describing where and why the road should be built and present the petition to the government. A petition is a formal request made to someone in authority.) The state government, in turn, would appoint several individuals to verify that this road was necessary and appropriate.
- 4) Divide the class into groups of two and hand out a road plot/court order and a 2008 map to each group.
- 5) Read the court order aloud and ask questions pertaining to it. Why did the road need to be built? Instruct the students to examine the map of the proposed road. Each group should then attempt to find the road on the modern road map. Monitor the activity by moving among the groups and providing guidance when needed. Although this may seem like a tough assignment there are several landmark clues within the map of the proposed road. If a group is having difficulty finding the road point out Reedy Island and the Delaware River. The road is now part of Route 9. It is located in New Castle County - south of Port Penn.
- 6) With this completed, each group of students should draw a layout of their school and decide where a new hallway, stairway or outside pathway would be most needed to reach destinations such as the cafeteria, playground, bus platform or other important area. The new "road" should be marked by a different color crayon to highlight its route. In addition, the group should write a petition describing where the "road" should be built and why it should be built. Each group should get five classmates to sign below their petition to show that they agree with this "road". To conclude the lesson, each group will give an oral presentation to show their new "road" and discuss the reasons for building it. Assign each group one of the other groups to evaluate using a PMI. P = One positive comment about the new road location/rationale; M = One improvement that should be made; I = One interesting thing about the new road location/rationale. This PMI will serve as the summarizing strategy for the lesson.

DOCUMENT TRANSCRIPTION

In the Court of General Sessions of the Peace, held at New Castle, for the County of New Castle, of the May Sessions A.D. 1799 -

Upon the Petition of divers Inhabitants of Reedy Island and Port Penn Necks, St. Georges Hundred and County of New Castle, Setting Forth, that they have hitherto been subjected to great Inconvenience the former part of them is carrying their produce to market and both in their mutual commerce and Intercourse with each other, and being Sensible that convenient road, contribute to the public as well as private Emolument; and praying the court to appoint Commissioners to examine their grievances, and if they should think them real to proceed and lay out a Road from Reedy Island Neck, to the Piers near Port-Penn, in such place as may least injure private Property and accommodate the public in general. Whereupon It is ordered by the Court that William Frazier, David Wilson, Doctr. Nathan Thomas, John Hirons, and John Janvier Gentlemen, Do go upon the premises aforesaid and if upon Viewing the same they or a majority of them Do think such a road necessary and convenient then they are hereby Ordered to lay out the same and that they or any three of them agreeing make return there of to the next Court of General Sessions of the Peace.

I do certify that the above is true copy of the Record thereof, given under my Hand and Seal of said Court at
New Castle, June 11, 1799
Abel Glasford, Clk of the Peace

BACKGROUND

During the colonial era in Delaware the transportation system was based on the water routes that ran through the colony. Early colonists settled near the water in order to use that source to transport their goods to market. Although roads were being built, they were often extremely hazardous to use. Many of the roads had dangerous bumps and hills. In addition, the roads could also contain numerous ruts or swampy sections that frustrated many travelers. During dry periods dust became a problem while rainy weather produced mud covered roads.

Water travel was cheaper, faster, and safer. All the navigable rivers in Delaware had landings where farmers could bring their produce for shipment to the marketplace. Goods could be easily brought into the state through this same source. Since Delaware was not located between large communities where a fast land transportation system was required, the need for road improvement through most of the 18th century was not viewed as a priority.

Although the water transportation system worked well for Delawareans throughout the colonial era, many people saw the need to improve and expand the state's road system. With much of the land near water sources already owned and occupied, Delawareans begin settling land that was further and further away from navigable creeks and rivers. Because of this increasing distance to the water as well as other necessary destinations such as storehouses and mills, there was the need to build more roads and make them safer to travel upon.

The county governments were responsible for maintaining the roads. To carry out this task an overseer of highways was appointed for the different areas of the each county. Citizens would petition the county to request a road be built in a certain area. The petitioners would offer reasons, generally economic ones, that would state why the road

should be built. Many times the road would be required to transport farm products to a mill or a landing. All taxpayers had to pay a road tax that would fund the maintenance of the roads. Individuals could avoid this tax by agreeing to physically help maintain the road. However, there were no standards in road building and many viewed the tax as unfair because a poor person would be required to pay the same as a wealthier individual who probably used the road with more frequency.

With so many complaints concerning the roads, reforms began to develop toward the end of the 18th century. New legislation set clear guidelines concerning the size and maintenance of the roads in Kent County and Sussex County. In New Castle County turnpikes became popular. Turnpikes were improved roads where a person would need to pay a toll before traveling on the road. The name derives from a pike or pole being raised or turned so a paid individual could travel on the road. A number of these turnpikes still exist today. The Philadelphia Pike and the Concord Pike are two examples.

DOCUMENT BACKGROUND

The court order and road plot are part of the New Castle County Court of General Sessions Road Papers Collection (Series Number 2805.27). Both documents are located in a folder entitled "Layout to Road to Port Penn, 1799". The collection consist of petitions, orders, and returns for the purpose of building or altering roads. In some instances, surveyor's plots are also included.