

Reporter's Notebook

Opening of the new Northeast Turnpike with its scale of toll charges, brings to the minds of old time residents of the Valley the horse-and-buggy days when highway toll charges were common in this area.

Toll Gates

In the late 90's and early 1900's there were toll gates controlling entrance to and departure from some of the main arteries of travel leading in and out of Wyoming Valley proper.

Chief among these were the toll gates on what is now the East End Boulevard and also on the Narrows Road in upper Luzerne Borough enroute to the Back Mountain region.

During the days of the old covered bridge spanning the river at Market street there was a toll house at the easterly approach to the bridge operated by a Hemstreet family at the time the structure was replaced by a modern bridge in 1892. Edward Everman, Sr., former city executive and prominent contractor, looking back on the old days, said that it cost a penny to enter the bridge from the city side or to enter River street from the westerly approach. Incidentally, Mr. Everman includes among his mementoes a piece of wood taken from the old covered bridge.

Former Mayor Charles N. Loveland recalls a toll gate located on what is now the East End Boulevard. It was situated at a point almost opposite the present Oliver school not far above Florence Gardens and near where the new turnpike passes over the Bear Creek highway.

Mr. Loveland recalls that the toll gate, on the left side of the road, going toward Bear Creek, was operated by a man named Burridge. The latter was employed by Albert Lewis, lumber king, whose land holdings centered about Bear Creek. Lewis owned the road and the land over which it passed and he set up the toll gate to regulate traffic over it. When the automobile made its appearance, Lewis barred motor driven apparatus from the road. A prominent politician, feeling that Albert Lewis was overstepping his authority, decided not to pay the toll and drove his automobile around the road block and onto the privately owned thoroughfare and a court case resulted.

George Bulford, Back Mountain business and political leader, and member of what was the Bulford-Robinson firm, dealers in horses and mules, tells of the toll gate which once bordered the highway near what is now O'Malla's Laundry in upper Luzerne.

Harry Whittman was the last operator of the toll gate. The fact that he had only one leg handicapped him little if any in controlling the flow of traffic at that point. Occasionally a farmer, in the spirit of adventure, would crash the barrier, a long pole lowered across the highway, but this didn't happen often.

The toll fee was five cents, one-way, and the fees went into a general fund maintained by an association which had control of the highway until it was taken over by the county and later by the State.

GILBERT S. MCCLINTOCK
34 SOUTH RIVER STREET
WILKES - BARRE, PA.

original and

Shut State Copy

Wilkes Barre Bridge Co

Toll gate

data
April 1/57

\$3.00 note

Dated Oct 28, 1816

Signed by
Jacob Ciss and
Hess.

M. Hollenback,
Pres.

Valuable
Keep.