



An American Tour: 32



Pennsylvania's *Chester-Bridgeport Ferry*

The Chester-Bridgeport Ferry made its first crossings of the Delaware River on July 1, 1930 but was not formally dedicated by Chester Mayor Samuel Turner until July 9. The ferry began operations with two boats, their crews and owners, from the Tacony-Palmyra company which had ceased operations in Philadelphia in 1929 when replaced by the bridge of that name. These first two were renamed the "Chester", with a capacity of 60 cars, and the "Bridgeport" with a capacity of 48. The "Delaware", with a capacity of 75 vehicles was added in 1935, and the "Lackawanna", a refitted old railroad ferry, was added in 1949. In that same year the ferries were equipped with radar for safer crossings in fog and such.

The crossing took about 6 minutes and was seen as a definite advantage over having to endure the congestion of Philadelphia traffic in order to cross one of the few bridges there to New Jersey. It greatly shortened the trip to the resort and agricultural areas of south Jersey and encouraged the growth of many local businesses on both shores. On opening day the fares were 75 cents for passenger cars or 50 cents for daily commuters, and 10 cents for walking passengers or 5 cents for commuters. On that day, over 1000 cars, plus several thousand passengers, made the crossing both ways.

During the summer months the Chester-Bridgeport offered 24-hour service with boats docking on both shores as often as every 5 minutes. In winter, the boats still made the crossings regardless of weather.

Louis Kapelski, one of the first investors and for many years the ferry's general manager, foresaw and quite accurately predicted its demise. Although business was still good in 1956, he predicted that the ferry would be replaced by a bridge by 1975. Sure enough, the ferry made its last crossing and the Commodore Barry Bridge opened on February 1, 1974. Two of the ferries were immediately sold, the "Bridgeport" for the James River at Jamestown, VA, and the "Delaware" for use in the Gulf of Nicoya in Costa Rica.

[http://www.oldchesterpa.com/chester_bridgeport_ferry.htm]

