

*Darienite*

*News for Darien*

<http://darienite.com>

---

## **Connecticut: Getting There and Back for Ages: Cameron on Transportation**

**Author :** David Gurliacci

**Categories :** [Transportation](#)

**Tagged as :** [Cameron on Transportation](#), [Cameron on Transportation 2017](#), [Jim Cameron 2017](#)[Jim Cameron's Transportation Column](#)

**Date :** July 14, 2017

You think commuting is a modern phenomenon? Guess again. “Getting there” (to work) is as old as our state.

As early as 1699, Connecticut had roads laid out on routes we still use today. While the roads are now lined with trees, most of southern Fairfield County was cleared during the mid-1700s for farming.

During the 1770s, the locals were responsible for maintaining Country Road — now known as Old Kings Highway. Every able-bodied man could be enlisted for two days each year to keep the roads in good shape. But traffic then consisted mostly of farm carts, horses and pedestrians.

## *Darienite*

### *News for Darien*

<http://darienite.com>

---

By 1785, there was only one privately owned “pleasure” vehicle in all of Stamford — a two-wheeled chaise owned by the affluent [Maj. John Davenport](#).

It was clear by the end of the 18th century that additional roads were needed and the state authorized more than a hundred privately-funded toll roads to be built.

The plan was to turn the roads back over to the state once the tolls reimbursed investors. However, none of the 121 toll-road franchises reached the goal.

One of the first of these roads was the original Connecticut Turnpike, now Route 1. Another was the Norwalk to Danbury Pike, now Route 7.

Four toll gates were erected: Greenwich, Stamford, the Saugatuck River Bridge and Fairfield. No tolls were collected for those going to church, militia muster or farmers heading to the mills. Everyone else paid 15 cents at each toll barrier.

The locals quickly found roads to bypass the tolls, which earned them the nickname “shun-pikes.”

Regular horse-drawn coaches carried passengers from Boston to New York. Three days a week, a local coach to Stamford connected to a steamboat to New York.

The last tolls were collected in 1854, shortly after service began on the New York & New Haven Railroad. An 1850 timetable showed three trains a day from Stamford to New York City, each averaging two hours and 10 minutes. Metro-North now makes the run in just less than an hour. The one-way fare was 70 cents (about \$21 in today’s money) vs. the current fare of \$15.25 at rush hour.

The one-track railroad was replaced in the 1890s with four tracks, above grade and without street crossings.

The trolleys then arrived during the 1890s. The Stamford Street Railroad ran up the Post Road connecting with the Norwalk Tramway. The Tramway also offered open-air excursion cars to the Roton Point amusement park in the summer.

Riders could catch a trolley every 40 minutes for a nickel a ride. There were so many trolley lines in Connecticut that many people said you could go from New York to Boston — connecting from line to line — for just five cents a ride.

The trolleys were replaced by buses in 1933.

Fast forward to the present where we are again debating tolls on our roads, possible trolley service in some cities and transit-oriented development is all the rage. Has “getting there” really changed that much over 200 years?

**More of Jim Cameron's Columns**

- [Cruising — Dreamy Boats & Garbage Dumping](#) (Jan. 6)
- [Testifying on a Bill in Hartford: 'Not Any More. It's a Waste of Time.'](#) (Feb. 16)
- [Less Driving, More Walking — Better Downtown Economies](#) (March 16)
- [The Enormous, Beautiful, Amazing George Washington Bridge](#) (March 23)
- [State Should Regulate Uber, Lyft, Limo Services & Taxis Uniformly](#) (March 31)
- [The Great 10-Hour, New York-to-Chicago Railroad That Never Was](#) (April 21)
- [Cramming Passengers on Planes Is Not Just Uncomfortable, It's Also Unsafe](#) (May 19)

---

*Jim Cameron has been a Darien resident for 25 years. He is the founder of the Commuter Action Group and also serves on the Darien RTM and as program director for Darien TV79. The opinions expressed in this column are only his own. You can reach him at [CommuterActionGroup@gmail.com](mailto:CommuterActionGroup@gmail.com)*

*Republished with permission of Hearst CT Media.*