

The New Jersey Turnpike
in the Woodbridge area

CHAPTER TWELVE

The First Asphalt Superhighways

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"After careful consideration of all factors involving pavement, such as cost, durability and safety features, the Commissioners of the New Jersey Turnpike Authority have decided to use asphaltic concrete for the pavement of its 118 mile super-highway . . . the Turnpike will be superior to any road in existence."

"AFTER THE WAR THERE WAS A TRAFFIC JAM," recalled Bud Gunderson, who had grown up pumping gas at his father's filling station before World War II. As a returning veteran himself, Bud had a patriotic notion about travel: "One of the things every G.I. had fought for in World War II was to protect his rights as an American. And one of those rights was to be able to get in his car, turn the key and go anywhere he wanted to. There are no boundaries here; highways are not closed in the dark, or at state borders. As long as he had money for a car, he could go anywhere he wanted." And go they did. Topping off their gas tanks, veterans began visiting their buddies, moving to the suburbs, and taking family vacations.

Americans were ready to travel, but their roads weren't ready for them. Road-paving projects that had been envisaged before the war had been put on the back burner when Americans mobilized. The biggest automobile manufacturers stopped making cars and instead began making tanks, trucks, and warplanes. Gasoline was rationed and unnecessary travel was discouraged, even forbidden.

