

BORDENTOWN TO ROEBLING VIA THE RIVERLINE

- ◆ The tracks for the light rail train you are riding on were laid upon the right of way of the Camden & Amboy Railway Company, chartered in 1830 along with the Delaware & Raritan Canal Company (known as the “Joint Companies”) and laid in the 1830s between Camden and Amboy. Both railroad and canal officially opened in 1834, but sections of the railroad were in service for freight in 1833 with horse-drawn cars.
- ◆ Tied together and pulled by steam tugs, canalboats carrying coal from the Lehigh and Schuylkill Valleys would cross the river from Pennsylvania’s Delaware Canal. A cable ferry (1848-1912) and outlet locks at Lambertville and New Hope made the trip from the Lehigh Valley to Trenton much shorter, via the Feeder of the D & R. Schuylkill Valley coal continued to cross the river from Philadelphia and Bristol, entering the D&R at the Bordentown Lock (#1) at the mouth of Crosswicks Creek.

What to look for

- ◆ Crosswicks Creek where it flows into the Delaware River
- ◆ Bluffs on the left on which Bordentown was built and the narrow strip of land under the bluffs where this train is traveling. Bordentown City is bordered on the south by Black’s Creek.
- ◆ Slips in the river shoreline on the lee side of Newbold Island where canalboats from Pennsylvania transferred their cargo (coal) to waiting trains or waited for entrance into Lock #1.
- ◆ Abandoned canalboats in the channel between Newbold Island and the shore, preserved because they are always wet. We have planned this trip for low tide so they can be seen.
- ◆ Look for eagles! There is a nest on Newbold Island.

Roebling’s Kinkora Works is now a remediated brownfield in the hands of a developer with only three gutted hulks of its many buildings still standing. With no space left to build factories in Trenton, Roebling built this complex in Kinkora in 1905, along with a planned city (Roebling) to house the workers. The factory made steel and from it wire that was then woven into steel rope. The Roebling plant was sold in 1952 and closed down in 1974. A museum dedicated to the history of town and factory now occupies the original gatehouse behind the Light Rail stop.



BORDENTOWN TO TRENTON VIA THE RIVER LINE

- ◆ The tracks for the light rail train you are riding on are on the right of way for the Trenton-to-Kingston branch of the Camden & Amboy RR, laid in the mid-1830s along the east side of the canal. The D&R Canal opened in spring 1834 and was operated for nearly 100 years before being abandoned in favor of the railroads. The canal was an important link for the transportation of coal and other commodities between Philadelphia and New York, much safer and faster than the trip on open waters around Cape May (usually two days, compared with nearly 2 weeks).
- ◆ The canal still exists nearly to the Hamilton-Trenton line (3.5 miles); the last ¼ mile, including Lock 2, is buried under dredge spoils. In 1936, the Trenton section of the main canal was abandoned and filled in; Route 129 and the Route 1 Freeway were constructed on its exact path.

What to look for heading north, from left side of train (see old photos for items in bold face)

- ◆ **Bordentown Outlet Lock** (Lock 1). The lock is still here; the reach of canal to Lock 2 is scheduled to be restored as part of the D&R Canal State Park. A trail paralleling the historic towpath to the west was recently constructed. The east side of the outlet lock can be approached over the Crosswicks Creek RR bridge catwalk, but the path is not yet developed; from the Scenic Outlook on Route 295 you can access the west side of the lock and trail. A bridge across the lock and trail between RR and lock is scheduled for 2011.
- ◆ The indentation next to the RR bridge is for the first outlet lock, a masonry lock that sank in the marshy substrate. The present (second) lock of wood cribbing and stone construction was built in 1848.
- ◆ Upstream of Lock 1 are 3 miles of open canal, cut off from its water supply when the Trenton section of canal was filled in. This section of restored canal will be watered by rainwater and tide water impounded behind Lock 1.

- ♦ If you look down at the tracks you may see the black and green iron pipe railings of a canal spillway.
- ♦ Buried **Lock 2** is directly under power line towers; next is Sturgeon Pond, bisected the River Line and Route 129. After these, the ground rises 23.5 feet in less than a third of a mile; Locks 3-5 were required to accommodate this change in elevation. In 1853 when the locks were lengthened from 110' to 220,' lock 5 was eliminated and lock 4 was deepened to compensate.
- ♦ **Site of Lock 4, Riverside Cemetery and Lalor Street** (2 photos)
- ♦ **Cass Street** (River Line stop).
- ♦ South Broad Street and site of "Prison" Lock #6). Trolleys and cars crossed the canal on the South Broad Street Bridge, tended by the lock tender for nearby Lock #6. When the bridge was open and the lock in use, all traffic on South Broad was halted; this crossing and that at E. State Street were famous for long traffic tie-ups.
- ♦ Hamilton Ave (River Line Stop), site of **Cooper Iron Works**, later US Steel, on the west side of the canal and Roebling & Sons Upper Works on the east. Note the one factory building that remains, dwarfed by the Arena. Attracted by canal and railroad, John Roebling came to Trenton and built his first factory complex in 1848, across the canal from his friend Peter Cooper's iron works to take advantage of Cooper's steel wire which was then twisted by Roebling into wire rope. Cooper, responsible for the invention of modern steel, built a larger complex, the Trenton Iron Works, on the river.
- ♦ Site of Greenwood Ave aqueduct. The canal crossed over the Main Line RR tracks in an aqueduct that bears a curious resemblance to the present concrete RR bridge.
- ♦ Assunpink Creek Culvert, now a double concrete box culvert, replaces a large arched stone culvert that carried the creek under the canal.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR HEADING SOUTH, FROM THE LEFT SIDE OF THE TRAIN

- ♦ **Roebling & Sons Main Works** at Hamilton Ave, and the **Roebling Lower Works** (the old Buckthorn Company complex) between Cass and Lalor Streets. Despite several devastating fires in the company's history, many of the buildings still stand and have been rehabilitated or are scheduled for rehab, while others have been demolished or stand empty, awaiting their fate. Note the smokestacks bellowing smoke of which two remain; in the 19th century that smoke was a sign of progress.
- ♦ Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh is a large freshwater tidal marsh traversed by Watson and Crosswicks Creeks, and incorporating Roebling Park (a Mercer County facility), and the Abbott Farm National Landmark Site where important Native American archaeological artifacts, now in the NJ State Museum, were found. Through the efforts of the D & R Greenway Land Trust, Friends for the Marsh, and other organizations, most of this wetland has been preserved under a mix of state, county, municipal, land trust, and private ownership; a Nature Center to be administered by Mercer County is soon to be opened to the public. Even though one of the largest highway complexes in the state cuts through this marsh, and it is home to two sewer plants and an incinerator, the area is rich in plant and animal wildlife and well worth a visit. Trails run through the marsh and more are planned. An active eagle's nest can be seen from the train.
- ♦ The City of Bordentown, much of which is on the National Register of Historic Places, is on the bluff overlooking the marsh, the RR and Canal. The city was home to important historical figures including Joseph Bonaparte, brother of Napoleon, who built an estate called Point Breeze overlooking Crosswicks Creek and would have witnessed the building of the canal for which he sold part of his land; Clara Barton; Thomas Paine; and Francis Hopkinson, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The John Bull, the first locomotive to be operated in this country (now in the Smithsonian Institution) was assembled and had its maiden run on the C&A tracks near Bordentown. The city maintains its 19th century character and is well worth a visit.

Your tickets are good for two hours in either direction. You may repeat the trip on your own, travel south to explore the historic communities of Roebling and Burlington, or take a walking tour of Bordentown, a city with a number of good restaurants, should you want to stay for lunch.