

## How Did the Garden State Get Its Nickname?

Prior to 1850, schooners loaded with New Jersey grains, fruits, and vegetables sailed the Delaware River towards Philadelphia or up the Atlantic Coast to New York City. Similarly, mules pulled barges loaded with farm commodities to market along canals in the northern part of the state. After the 1850s, however, newly built railroads enabled steam-powered freight trains to deliver New Jersey farm products to urban centers much more rapidly. The new railroads also gave farmers from all parts of the state, not just those near navigable waterways, access to urban markets. An agriculture boom ensued, and the state soon became known as a cornucopia of good tasting, healthy foods.

The state's reputation as a source of quality foods was further enhanced at the nation's 1876 Centennial Exhibition. Held in Philadelphia, the exhibition highlighted a different state each day with August 24 being New Jersey Day. Abraham Browning, a businessman from Camden, was the keynote speaker. He portrayed his state as an "immense barrel filled with good things to eat and opened at both ends with Pennsylvanians drawing from one end and New Yorkers from the other."\* Mr. Browning used the words "Garden State" several times to describe New Jersey, and this apt phrase quickly became the state's widely recognized and enduring nickname.

\* Heston, Alfred M. 1926. *Jersey Waggon [sic] Jaunts*. Camden, NJ: Atlantic County Historical Society.