

The French and American soldiers, women and children ran through the streets arm in arm. At that time I was sure I would be home by Christmas, but have had many disappointments since. I do however expect to be home by June 1st.

We paraded for President Wilson and Gen. Pershing on Xmas day, and on Feb. 4th we paraded again for "Black Jack" Pershing. We were on a large field, there were 25,000 soldiers, so you can imagine how large the field was.

Gen. Pershing passed every man. We were lined up in company front. He spoke to many of the boys asking them what battles they were in.

He started at noon and it took until dark to review the whole division. Well, I suppose there will be more box car riding, you will note my address is a seaport, but I do not expect to get away from here until June. I remain your cousin,

Joe Peiffer

---

## OF MAPS and AMERICA ON WHEELS

By Lida L. Greene  
Librarian of Iowa State Historical Library

Two maps lay on the desk within a few inches of each other. One, the 1968 Iowa Highway map, sprawled open to show the site of Salem in Henry County, and the other, thin, black, hard-bound, and 116 years old, had been printed to guide the argonauts of the 19th Century to their golden treasure in the Far West. "At least," I reminded myself as I watched our visitors leave, "whatever the perils of modern travel, we did not have to warn the young McHenrys about a Skunk River crossing labeled Dangerous quicksand. Beware when stream is in flood!"

The Robert McHenrys live in Maryland just outside the national capitol. Bob is a college professor and knows a great deal about Stalinism and the Cultural Revolution in

China. This year he and his wife decided they would like to become better acquainted with America, make a trip across the continent. In particular, they wanted to find the trail of a great grandfather — of all great grandfathers perhaps — who had followed the lure of riches to California.

There were no family letters, no diary and the trail was cold. The McHenrys found themselves caught in a network of concrete highways with little to tell them where the great rutted track had struggled westward. It was disconcerting. On their way east they stopped at the Historical Museum in Des Moines. That was why they came to be standing at the Library desk on a Thursday afternoon in late August.

"There's a Conestoga here someplace, isn't there?" One of them asked. "How do we find it?" It was mid-afternoon and time for a lift. That question brought it. There are few things a history librarian likes better than Americans discovering America. "In the basement," I told them. "You can't miss it." I watched them walk away, hurrying, hand in hand, as though to some new Eldorado. Twenty minutes later the McHenrys were back.

"Was there any kind of Gold Rush map?" they wanted to know. "The nearest we came to finding a trail was the spring where the Donner party stopped enroute . . ." The pause left us a shattering second of time to remember the people, the winter, the slow engulfing hunger that gave the Donner name to a pass in the Sierra Nevada mountains.

"There is *Horn's Overland Guide*," I told them. Against protestations that they were late, that they should be in Washington right now, I brought them the slim, black book with its folded map. Before I had settled at my desk, two heads were bent over an opened page. I knew they would be reading: "Council Bluffs Agency Ferry, Lat 41° 18' 50" — Wheeling Clark and Co., Proprietors of Ferry. Goodboats and accomodations for crossing . . ."

No one needs to be an authority on early American trails to find excitement in *Horn's Overland Guide* from

*Council Bluffs on the Missouri River to the City of Sacramento, California*, Hosea B. Horn, New York: Published by Colton, 1853.

The Gold Road was a parallel of ruts — sometimes many parallels — made by great, lumbering wheels. Its milestones were mainly geographic, a cottonwood tree, a creek bed, a lone butte. History records other signposts such as an abandoned cherry bureau, a weathering wooden headstone, a scattering of bones beside an alkali sink. We talked about these things when the Robert McHenrys stopped at the desk before their departure. We all agreed that the prairie schooner and the locomotive Mogul, of the railroad age inspired something akin to nostalgia. The feminine two thirds of the interchange admitted they hadn't the stamina of the pioneer when it came to Conestoga housekeeping, even though Mrs. McHenry was kin to the Bing cherry Llewellyns of Salem and points west. Bob continued to marvel at travel the *Horn* route. Then, because our guests were truly in a hurry, we pointed out Salem on the Iowa Highway map and the McHenrys were on their way.

Fifty more years, if you remember, and America was still traveling by natural signposts. No longer by way of Council Grove or Table Rock but by the comfortable symbols of civilization — a school house, a windmill, the house with green shutters. The railroads had been the big road builders of the last half of the 19th Century. Iowa had wagon roads, it is true, laid out in neat geometric lines connecting each township with the county seat. In winter they were often snowed shut. With the spring rains they became quagmires. Summer found them carpeted with the deep brown velvet of dust. The horseless carriage was to change all that.

Things hadn't changed much, however, when the Tripps toured to Colorado in the summer of 1909. First, meet the Tripps. They were Father, Mother, and 11 assorted boys and girls with Grace third from the end. Father was farmer, insurance salesman, self-educated lawyer and partner of James B. Weaver, one time candidate for the American presidency. Grace M. Tripp, 1890-1956, wrote about her

family and her home town of Colfax in a recently published book, *A Home with a View*. Reading it, you know without having met Grace Tripp that she was a sensitive girl with the ability to look at herself and her surroundings with insight and humor. Buifs of America's motor age will welcome Chapter XXX, the story of the Buick and another pioneer journey.

At the start Pa Tripp was irritated by the horseless carriage. One had arrived to astound visitors at the 1899 State Fair and by 1907 the first automobiles made their appearance in Colfax, "You'll never catch me buying one," Pa announced. "There ought to be a law to keep such infernal machines off the road."

Before the family knew Pa was changing his mind, he arrived home one day with a "resplendent, gleaming new car — a Buick." The young Tripps had to be cautioned against wearing away the maroon paint with possessive fingers.

In the summer of 1909, Pa announced they would be setting out for Colorado next Tuesday. Somehow, room had to be found in the car for five people, a tent, sleeping gear, cooking supplies, tools and enough clothing to last three months. There was no trunk or storage space. Father, logistics officer for the Tripps, managed. Starting day found the three women, heads swathed in flowing chiffon, wedged in the back seat along with the grub box, suit cases, water bottles and the "ubiquitous medicine box" that Ma refused to leave behind.

Brother Dick sounded the honker as they went through town so that well wishers could speed the adventurers on their way. The first night they stopped at Aunt Lib's in Des Moines. The brake was giving trouble. Wednesday evening they camped in a barn lot near Adel. Pa and Ma slept on cots in the tent. The rest borrowed hay for beds. Grace wrote: "I was sick all night" and "had first experience at combing hair sitting on auto step and holding mirror between knees."

Three flat tires and on to Atlantic. Pa located a man there who had gone to Colorado the summer before. He gave the Tripps a guide the Colorado party had compiled. It was to prove helpful. Directions were practical and precise: "Cross bridge. Old mill at left . . . Observe white school house quarter mile up road to left . . ." There was keen rivalry in the family to see who would hold the book next.

Car chains at Atlantic. A block and tackle at Elkhorn. "Pa had heard tales of fantastic amounts some people charged for pulling cars out of the mud. He did not propose to lay himself open to that kind of graft."

Nebraska, hot winds, the Platte River. In a grove outside Duncan they met a mosquito horde that smudges and cigar smoke could not rout. Dry country and stunted corn. Beyond Southerland the roads were bad. The car had to maneuver "down banks almost perpendicular with deep heavy sand at the bottom and just as steep a hill on the other side." They "all got out and walked to make it easier on the car."

The rain began. Once dry creeks could no longer be forded. The Tripps detoured, driving across open prairie until darkness. The men had trouble getting the carbide lamps to work. More than once Pa had to light the lantern and go ahead of the car to see if it was safe to travel. Finally Pa decided they had better camp. The women folks took the cots. No one undressed. Dick found the revolver and vowed he would sit guard until day break. The night was full of sound, the far keen of a coyote, prairie dogs, lonely rustlings in the grass. Sleep was long in coming. Later Grace roused enough to hear gentle snoring. Dick, the valiant, was asleep.

Once in Colorado the trials of the road seemed negligible. Everyone vowed they had made excellent time. "Why it's only ten days since you left Colfax. You made seventy five miles a day. With a team it would have taken twice as long . . ." The Tripps knew a sense of pride. They were pioneers of the new auto age. Only Grace felt a little sad. That detour had kept the Buick from passing the house with the green shutters.

Take a good look at the 1968 Iowa Road Map in the glove compartment of your car. As you see, it isn't far to Des Moines. Interstates 35 and 80 will deliver you in a hurry.

Make it the camper this time. After the children have visited the Conestoga and you have scanned *Horn's Overland Guide*, you may want to drive on to the Missouri slope to see if you can discover the site of the Council Bluffs Agency Ferry.

Make it sleeping bags, too. You will want to bed down under the stars. In another decade your young people may be traveling by radar and rocket to the moon and Mars. This year give them time to become acquainted with the Missouri, the sounds of the night, the stories of men and women of courage who dared the West.

---

## 1906 VOTING MACHINE ADDED TO HISTORICAL MUSEUM

One of the first voting machines used in this state is now on display on the third floor of the State Historical Museum, Des Moines. This machine was purchased from the Automatic Voting Machine Division, Jamestown, New York, by Johnson County in 1906. It was donated to the Department of History and Archives in June, 1968, by the Automatic Voting Machine Division, Jamestown, New York, Mr. L. A. Dixon, Jr., President.

According to the book *Effects of the Use of Voting Machines on Total Votes Cast: Iowa — 1920-1960*, George B. Mather, University of Iowa, 1964, the original act permitting the use of voting machines was adopted in 1900; by 1920, 18 Iowa counties were equipped with voting machines. By 1922, there were 20 Iowa counties using voting machines and by 1960, 37 counties used voting machines in the general election.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.