

THE ANTIQUE AND THE MODERN

By E. A. JOHNSON¹

We are living in a fast age, literally as well as figuratively. Two and a half generations ago the most rapid means of travel was by railroad train, and forty miles per hour was considered a dangerous rate of speed, yet a few months ago I rode on the Burlington from Ottumwa to Chicago, a distance of 280 miles, in 252 minutes including two or three stops. By airplane the trip is regularly made in 100 minutes, and it is possible to cover the distance in less than 60 minutes. From New York City to San Francisco, a distance of 3,000 miles, has been made between the rising and setting of the sun in a single day.

A little more than half a century ago the speediest means of travel except by train, was only with a good driving team, and sixty miles in ten or twelve hours was exceptional. In horse racing circles the record for one mile in harness was about two and a quarter minutes, slightly less under saddle, but the average man was in no wise benefited, as he owned no race horse, nor would he have had occasion to stop at the mile end.

Until I was about fifteen years old, the only road vehicle on the farm was a heavy two-horse farm wagon. Had my mother a dozen dozen eggs and a dozen pounds of her good home-made butter for the market four miles distant, which manifestly could not be carried horse back, it was carried in the wagon, an hour's time being consumed each way in making the round trip. When my father had business at the county seat town 18 miles distant, of such nature requiring a vehicle, it meant a daylight start in the morning, and his return was not expected until by starlight in the evening. Anticipating your amused, derisive, smiling enquiry if I regarded this as an acceptable and satisfactory way of life, I would say that on his return home, even before beginning his

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evening meal, he would not first insist on scanning the columns of the evening paper to ascertain who of his friends or neighbors, during his absence had been run over and killed, or maimed for life, by a drunken auto driver going 60 or 70 miles an hour on the county highway. Thus, you see, even the moderate pace in that day had its compensations. With our friends and neighbors we were all sailing the sea of life in the same slow boat and I am quite sure enjoyed as much pleasure and far more contentment than is true of today.

PILGRIMAGES TO PARENTAL HOME

During our seven years residence in Warren county, our farm home was about 20 miles west of the city of Knoxville, and my paternal grandfather's home about the same distance southeast of that city. During those years it was the custom of my parents to visit each year for a week or more at the parental home. I well remember two or three of the occasions. Preparation for these annual pilgrimages were provided for with as much care as one now would make for a trip to Europe. These visits were made in the winter in order to not interfere with the farm work in season.

Preceding the day of starting, in the bottom of the wagon box would be placed a lot of hay or straw over-spread with blankets. Then long before daybreak the following morning there would be placed in the hot oven some good sized flat stones and when sufficiently heated these would be wrapped in heavy blankets and placed in the wagon box. When all was ready we children would be loaded in the wagon in close proximity and covered heads and heels with other blankets or comforters. Father and mother were seated on a wide board placed across the box well to the front, and just as the first crimson streaks were appearing in the eastern sky, the journey begun.

If no unlooked for intereference was experienced we would arrive in Knoxville about noon. Stopping somewhere on the square, parents and children would descend

from our coach and mother, lunch box in hand, would herd us into some friendly store, while father unhitched and tied the team at the rear of the wagon to feed on the ample supply of oats provided for the purpose. When he arrived at the store we would eat our prepared lunch, absorb all the heat possible from the kind merchant's old-fashioned hot coal heater, and about one o'clock would resume our journey. Then on and on we would go, and just as the sun was sinking below the western horizon we would arrive, cold, tired, and children invariably hungry.

After a week or ten days, all the while regaling on fine food our good grandmother so well knew how to prepare, regretfully and with loud lamentations by the juvenile members of the family, we retraced the route over which we had so recently driven. In due course reached our home where for many days the sole topic of conversation by the junior members of the household was of the good times had and planning for the next trip.

FORDING SWOLLEN STREAMS

A slight variation of the fixed program on one of these annual pilgrimages was when we went via Gosport for a few days' visit with father's sister and family who lived near that village. I cannot now recall whether this trip was in early spring or during an unusually warm spell in midwinter, but the well-remembered fact is that when we started on the last lap of our journey several of the then unbridged rivulets were running almost full of water. In fact, two or three appeared so threatening that father, before venturing to drive across, unhitched the team and on one of the horses rode into and across to determine the depth of the water.

All were safely crossed until within a few miles of our destination when we reached the big Cedar, that to me looked very like the Pacific ocean did last summer. Interrogated farmers living near by warned that it was dangerous, though if a certain invisible line be followed they thought we might safely cross. Again, father un-

hitched the team, and on one of the horses rode into and across the swollen stream, though the water was high midside the horse. Returning he and mother counselled what course to pursue. It was growing late in the afternoon, was a long and likewise dangerous trek back to sister's home. So, with a few kind neighbors standing by to help in case of trouble very carefully he drove into the stream. Though water ran into the wagon box and wet the blankets in the wagon, the stream was crossed with no greater mishap. Very soon we arrived at grandfather's home and with change to dry clothing and the good hot fire we were soon dried and ready for the bountiful dinner that awaited us.

When I was about fifteen years old father in a trade secured a second-hand spring wagon. This was a two seated affair constructed of much lighter material than the regulation farm wagon. Under the body were three springs, one at the front and two at the rear, which added greatly to the ease of riding and, being of much lighter draft, better time could be made on the road. Soon much better finished vehicles, and of improved design, were on the market, and at about the same time one- and two-seated open and top carriages became available; also, because of the low cost, the two-wheel, two-passenger carts, soon followed the bicycle, so popular with younger people.

INGENUITY BRINGS PROGRESS

But progress once started cannot be checked, the ingenuity of man knows no bounds, and at about the birth of the present century the automobile made its advent into a restless and ambitious world. In its early days much opposition developed and bankers for a time discouraged their purchase and use, even to the extent of refusing loans to well known solvent customers to invest in the thing; but this attitude soon changed and banker enemies fell under the spell and were soon driving their own cars. For a couple of decades it looked as though old Dobbin was doomed, there being no place on the roads

for him, not even in the fields, as tractors multiplied with alarming rapidity. The mind of mortal man is subject to sudden change and there is now accumulating evidence that the horse is not regarded as entirely dispensable. Almost with the last quintet of years the coach and carriage in many big cities have become quite the aristocratic thing in which the idle rich may show off and shine.

The picture of the transition as a whole at times has caused me to question and criticize some of the things I have observed, and my good wife, during her latter years, to goodnatureedly include me in with the "old fogey" species. Appreciating her good sense and sound judgment I will not contend that she may not have been right. I hope I am not averse to progress for any thing that may make for a better world in which to live has value, but when I compare some things that now exist to that of a half century ago, I am not at all sure that in some things we have not progressed backward, or that some of our so-called progress is best for all the people.

MOUNT OF ROSES

The attractive town of Montrose in Lee county, on the Mississippi river between Fort Madison and Keokuk, was one of the first sites permanently settled by the white man in Iowa. A French-Canadian, Louis Honore Tesson, established a trading post at that point in 1799, when the region was still under Spanish rule and control. He planted a grove of apple trees which became the first orchard in Iowa. The site is now under water as the river was backed up and widened there by the Keokuk dam.

This also was the site of the first Fort Des Moines, established in 1834, but abandoned in 1836. The settlement at that time was known as Cut Nose, for a neighboring Indian chief. It later was called Mount of Roses, and Montrose is a contraction of that. The town is just across the river from Nauvoo, Illinois, the old-time Mormon settlement.

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