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AUTUMN SUNSHINE AT VIRGINIA WATER

Travellers' Tales

BY PLANE AND CAR ACROSS CANADA

By HAROLD NOCKOLDS

THE JOURNEY I recently made to Canada and the United States is a fair example of the way in which travel has been transformed by regular long-distance air services. In fact, this traveller's tale could not have been written before the war, for in the space of 14 days I travelled nearly 14,000 miles.

I was one of a party of motoring journalists invited by the Austin Motor Company to see for ourselves the scale of their export drive in Canada. The journey began on a Sunday night when we took off from London Airport in a B.O.A.C. " Monarch " Stratocruiser. This is the ideal aeroplane for the first Transatlantic flight (as in my case), for not only is there a comfortable armchair to sit in, but also a full-size berth where you can sleep in pyjamas and—perhaps most reassuring of all—there are two floors, the lower one consisting of a miniature lounge with seats round the walls, concealed lighting, huge bowls of flowers, and a steward serving drinks. As we headed for Iceland, our refueling stop, the three stewards served a seven-course dinner " upstairs " complete with cocktails, champagne and liqueurs.

Landing at Keflavik in the early hours of the morning and rather expecting to see fur-clad Esquimos, we found the airport building full of American negroes returning to the United States from some meeting in Paris. Twenty minutes later we were on our way again, this time to fly non-stop to Montreal at an altitude of 20,000 feet. After a good sleep I was woken by the stewardess with a breakfast tray of bacon and eggs and coffee. The Stratocruiser wash-room, by the way, is equipped with sockets for electric razors, as well as plenty of hot water and a selection of lotions, brilliantines and other masculine cosmetics. And for the really modern traveller there is an electric razor socket in the arms of each chair.

Before landing we had to complete a Canadian immigration form which caused some amusement. After filling in our names, addresses, and other details, we were asked in question 9 : " Can you read ? " Then, after some more questions, came number 17 : " Are you mentally defective ? "

First impressions of Montreal were that most notices were in French (or French and English) ; there was a Bible in each bedroom of our hotel ; and that the clocks showed standard time, although the daily life of the people was run one hour later.

Our stay in Montreal was enlivened by the commentary of the coach driver who told us through a microphone, while dealing with the innumerable contingencies of Canadian traffic, an assortment of facts about Montreal and its people. Without referring to a note, he produced endless statistics, occasionally introducing such pleasantries as " These old houses have modern conveniences like hot and cold water—hot in summer, cold in winter."

The next day we were on our way to Ottawa, stopping at the Seigniory Club for lunch. This remarkable building, made in the form of a great log cabin with what must be the largest central chimney in the world, was constructed in four months. It is set in a vast estate of 200 square miles where the members go on fishing and hunting expeditions. The entry fee is £100 with an annual subscription of £50.

We arrived in Ottawa in time for a quick tour of the Houses of Parliament, which are set impressively on the banks of the River Ottawa. A feature which impressed me particularly was the huge relief model of Ottawa and its environs, showing the development plans for the city, permanently on view in one of the ante-rooms.

That night was a tiring one, for after flying for half an hour to Toronto, we had to change and wait until 1.30 a.m. for the night plane to Vancouver.

The Canadair North Star, although fast and reliable, is not as quiet as the Stratocruiser, nor has it any separate berths. Nevertheless, the plane had barely left the ground before your Correspondent was fast asleep in his tilting armchair. He awoke several hours later to be told to fasten his safety belt for the descent to Winnipeg. By now it was daylight, and as far as the eye could see stretched the endless prairie. Immediately below were the neat suburban roads and the streets of the city, with its 230,000 population, where but 65 years ago were only a few shacks. In the centre of the panorama was the great marshalling yard of the railway which has meant so much in the development of Canada.

Similar stops for 20 minutes—time for a universally

excellent cup of coffee at the airport snack bar—followed at Saskatoon and Edmonton, where the big aeroplane set out on its last lap of 3½ hours across the Rocky Mountains. At first it was feared that the famous scene would be hidden by clouds, but these soon cleared and the expanse of ranges and peaks—many of them snow-covered—unfolded in brilliant sunshine below. Then the symmetrical peak of Mount Baker came into view on our left and soon the notice " No smoking. Fasten Safety Belts." was illuminated and the plane lost altitude as we approached the airport at Vancouver.

We arrived in Vancouver on the 50th day of a record drought, but thanks to an unlimited water supply the gardens in front of the houses were uniformly green and luxuriant. A water sprinkler played on every lawn and there were English flowers—gladioli, antirrhinums, phlox—in abundance. Indeed, the private gardens in Vancouver and Victoria must be among the best tended in the world. They gain tremendously in appearance by having no dividing fences or hedges.

After visiting the Austin Motor Show, which was the highlight of our expedition, we were entertained at a cocktail party given by one of the Austin distributors in his house on the famous Marine Drive, where there was a beautiful garden of completely English character complete with a terrace, lawns, and many flower beds. The next day there was a formal luncheon attended by the Mayor at the Stanley Park restaurant. Stanley Park is deservedly the pride of Vancouver and consists of a promontory which has been kept more or less in its natural state. It is renowned for its famous trees (including one with a tunnel in the trunk through which you can drive a car) and is altogether a great asset to the flourishing city. Here I had my first swim in the Pacific at English Beach.

The next morning the party flew in two Dakotas the short distance to Victoria, on Vancouver Island. On arrival we were greeted by the Mayor, who told us that he had migrated to Canada from Finchley, and one of the Press photographers (another emigrant) sought me out to give his regards to Bill Horton. We were then handed over to a coach driver, George " Rebel " Mowat, a local " character " and most powerful personality. He entertained us not only with every conceivable item of information about Vancouver Island but also, later in the day, with a string of stories—some of which were new to us. At one place he slowed down to point out the house of Mr. Johnson, whom we had met the previous evening. He hooted three times and the Premier came to the door to wave to us. At Esquimalt, the naval base outside Victoria, he drove boldly up to the gates of the naval dockyard, saying " I guess we shall manage to get in," and pressed past the doorkeeper without stopping. The dry dock at Esquimalt, he told us, is the second largest in the world—" the dry dock at Boston is longer," he said, " but this one is wider ! " In Esquimalt there are a few " licensed premises," some of them quite attractive public houses, but rather spoilt by large notices MEN and WOMEN—referring to the bars.

We did not stop here but drove straight on to Victoria and the big Empress Hotel, which is most beautifully situated but completely " dry." Here, for the second time in our tour, we drank the loyal toast in iced water at a formal luncheon. The Canadian licensing laws, particularly in the Western Provinces, are very strict. Throughout Canada bottles of drink can only be bought at the nationalized liquor stores. In some places, as in Victoria, there are no public houses or bars, even in the hotels, and any drinking is presumably done at home and certainly in hotel bedrooms, where a bottle opener is always a part of the fixtures and fittings attached to the wall. In the beer parlours, where they are found, the drinks must be consumed while you are sitting at tables. Women are not allowed in the men's parlour and over the door of the women's parlour in the luxurious Georgia Hotel, Vancouver, there is a notice " Men unaccompanied by women must not enter the women's parlour."

The next day our programme started with a call at 4.45 a.m. Outside the Georgia Hotel was a line of ten Austin A.40s, each carrying a number and the flags of Great Britain and Canada. Ominously, huge paper bags were provided for our luggage so that it would not be spoiled by dust in the luggage boot. Headed by two " Mounties " in a police car with the siren going full blast, we set off through the deserted streets of Vancouver. The police car ignored the traffic lights, but most of our party were reluctant to follow their example, with the result that the convoy soon spread out. The wide highway to the neighbouring town of New Westminster was almost lined with autocourts or motels, most of them bearing the neon sign " No Vacancy." These autocourts are a feature of the Canadian scene, being widely used by ordinary travellers as well as holidaymakers. Each consists of a series of small brightly painted buildings ranged round a gravel courtyard, often under some trees, the whole scene being pleasantly attractive. Each " cabin " consists of a bed sitting room, a bathroom and a small kitchen ; the cost ranging from a couple of dollars a night during the winter to upwards of five dollars in the summer. This is a development which we felt would be extremely popular in England, but of course the building regulations would not permit it (although I understand that a motel with 32

The main street of Devon, a new town in the Edmonton oilfields started in 1948 and now comprising 1,200 inhabitants, 230 houses, a hotel, a theatre, a swimming pool and shops. The name is taken from the Devonian geological stratum, not the English county.

villas is now being built at Kenilworth by Mr. John Collins, the showman).

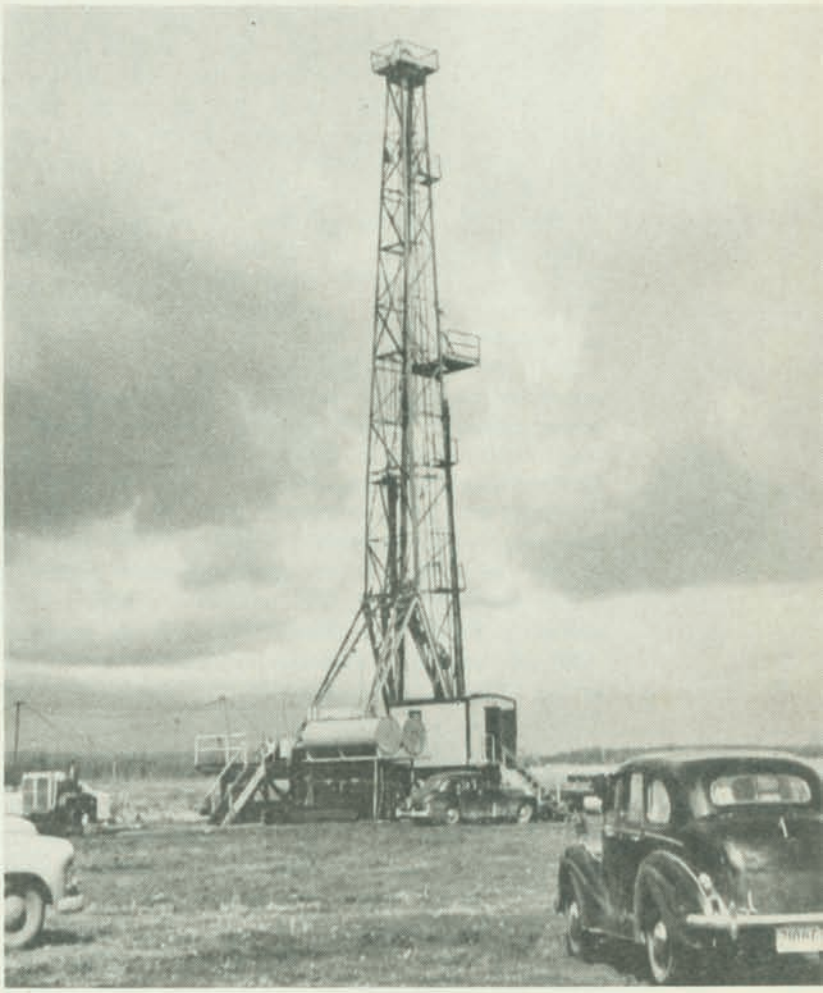
We were now on Canada's Highway Number One. Leaving the beautiful Frazer River valley we went on to Hope, the western entrance to Allison Pass (4,488 feet). Judged by Swiss standards this is a very easy climb, for the gradient is never severe and there are none of the hairpin bends that distinguish the high passes in Europe. Continuing along a superb highway, we entered the Ernest Manning Park, where we passed through an area devasted by a forest fire. At the roadside was an enormous cigarette suspended from a gallows, which carried a notice " The one who dropped it should also be hanged."

Soon afterwards we stopped for a most welcome breakfast of bacon and eggs at Pine Wood Lodge, a great log cabin restaurant owned by the British Columbia Government and leased to a private owner. Here we collected a picnic lunch and went on our way to Princetown, pausing only to watch a deer which crossed the road a short distance in front of us. By lunch time the heat was intense and we chose the shade of a tree by a lake for our stopping place. A quick swim and we set off again to catch the ferry to Kelowna, some 40 miles ahead. But first we passed through Penticton, a charming town with a long bathing beach facing the Kelowna Lake.

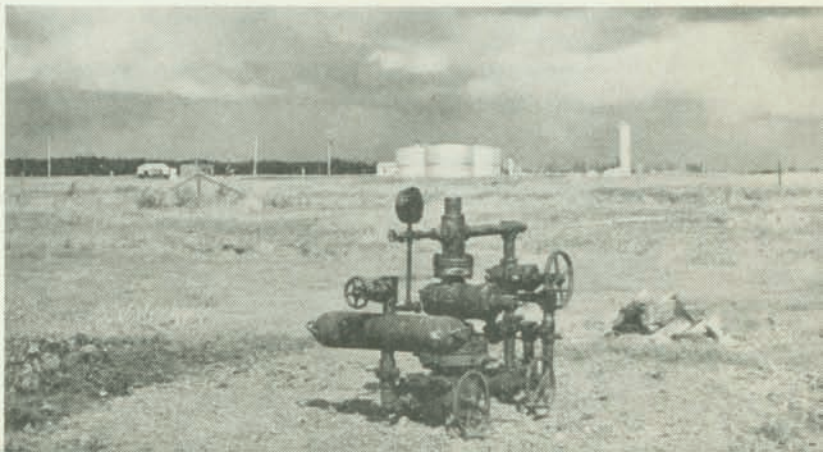
Belting along at high speed to reach the ferry, we suddenly came across a " Mountie " in full dress uniform standing in the road and waving us down. Instead of giving us a ticket, as we expected, he directed us into a side track where the people of Kelowna had staged for us a surprise welcome. They had set up a long table with iced drinks, and each of us was given a box of fruit and a bottle of " champagne." We were also prudently given one of the capsules—widely advertised in Canada and the United States—for removing any trace of alcohol from one's breath. The Mayor, supported by other officials—one of whom held aloft a Union Jack—then welcomed us to Kelowna and followed his welcome with an appeal for us to encourage the resumption of imports of Canadian apples to England. Incidentally, I was told that many of the local fruit farmers had been very upset to hear that the large consignment of apples sent as a gift to the people of Britain last summer were sold and not distributed free—the money being presumably kept by the Government.

This stop took only a few minutes, and we were soon at the side of the lake driving our cars into the ferry. That sunny Saturday afternoon the International Regatta at Kelowna was in full swing, and as the ferry passed the grandstand we were asked to sound the hooters of our cars in unison. The Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, Mr. Clarence Wallace, waved to us in return from his place in the stand. After an all too brief visit to the regatta and aquatic sports, we were at the wheel again heading for the small town of Vernon, where

The tourist's view of the Horseshoe Falls, Niagara.



A steel derrick in the Edmonton oilfields. This is removed when oil is struck and the well is capped with the " Christmas tree " shown in the photograph below. *(see page 163.)*



A " Christmas tree " in the Edmonton oilfields. Oil is drawn from this device and stored in the tanks seen in the distance.

we had dinner before tackling the last stage of the day's run to Revelstoke in darkness. This was a tiring drive over a rough, winding, gravel road, and we were glad to pull in to the King Edward Hotel after a day's journey of 440 miles.

We were on the road again next morning at 7.30 taking the rough, dusty trail round the Big Bend of the Columbia River through wild and desolate mountain scenery. The Big Bend Highway is nearly 200 miles long and has been constructed to form a link of the Trans-Canada highway. However, its future is in some doubt because there is a plan, at present being investigated, to innundate this area for a vast hydro-electric power scheme. We travelled for more than 100 miles before reaching the first settlement, a small collection of houses—Boat Encampment—so named after the explorer David Thompson, who spent the winter months of 1811 there. This is the northernmost tip of the Big Bend. The road then turns south for an almost equal distance to the small mining town of Golden. Motoring here demanded some care, for our cars had left-hand drive and we were driving on the right. At times the road was cut into a mountain side, but unlike the passes of Switzerland, it had no marking posts or walls on the crumbling outer edge—beyond which was a drop for a greater distance than I cared to estimate.

At Golden we had a picnic lunch—while we in turn were eaten by mosquitos. From this small town in the valley, stuffy and hot in the summer, but deep in snow throughout the winter, the road climbs steeply up the Kicking Horse Trail to the Kicking Horse Pass. The dust we had encountered so far was as nothing compared with the dust of this trail. As we rumbled along, it came up from the floor and wheel arches in a fine powdery cloud, until even our eyebrows and eyelashes were white. Soon we were at the entrance lodge of the Yoho National Park, where the lodge-keeper told us he had been in Piccadilly Circus a few months ago on a visit to England as a seaman.

After passing the timber archway marking the Great Divide—the point where a stream divides, one part flowing towards the Atlantic and the other towards the Pacific—we made a slight detour to the magnificently situated Chateau Lake Louise. This enormous hotel faces a pale green lake, into the far end of which flows the water from a glacier on a snow-covered ridge. The slopes of the adjoining mountains on each side make an almost too symmetrical frame for this superb scene. We had tea here and then continued along a busy, well-surfaced road to our stopping place for the night, the famous Banff Springs Hotel, passing on our left the slopes of Mount Eisenhower. The view from this hotel is of the Bow River racing down a mountain valley. All kinds of diversions are provided here for the vast number of holiday makers who come to Banff Springs from every part of Canada and the United States. Unfortunately, the day we were there, the outdoor heated swimming pool was closed in preparation for a night swimming cabaret. Apart from a nucleus of professional managers, head waiters and chefs, the staff of this great hotel, which is only open for a few months in the summer, consists of students and other young people earning some money during their vacations.

Walking back through the woods from the neighbouring town, Tommy Wisdom of the *Daily Herald* and I saw a large black bear wandering through the trees some way from the road. Having been told that these bears are quite harmless if you do not interfere with them, we followed with our cameras at the ready. After a time we lost him and were returning to the road when we were suddenly confronted with the bear, who was between us and the road. Then a sheep-dog appeared barking madly, and the bear charged straight towards us. We collided violently in our panic, and at that moment the bear decided he was more frightened of us than we were of him. He shinned up the bare trunk of a fir tree at an incredible speed, just like a monkey. We then approached and I took the accompanying photograph.

After a night in Calgary—a city permeated with the atmosphere of enterprise and expanding prosperity—we headed north for a quick visit to the new oilfields on our way to Edmonton. Cruising along the fine, open highway at 60-70 miles an hour, we noticed a police Ford car with a " Mountie " in businesslike

A black bear photographed at Banff after being chased up a tree by a sheep-dog. (See above.)

khaki uniform at the side of the road. Shortly afterwards he passed us and two or three cars of the convoy in front. Then he stopped us all, warning each of us: "Keep your speed down to 55 and watch them lines. You guys are driving altogether too fast."

At the small town of Leduc we turned off the highway into a scene which was more like what one expected of a pioneer district. The road was deep in black mud and a wagon with two horses lurched along, driven by a wild looking character. A sandwich lunch in the Astoria Hotel and a briefing from an oil official, and we set off along rough, bumpy roads to see the oilfields which have transformed this flat agricultural district into one of the most vital areas of Canada. Instead of the forest of wooden derricks we had somehow expected to see, we found a very occasional steel derrick, and here and there some groups of silver-painted storage tanks. Apart from this the countryside seemed little disturbed and all the land was being farmed. The reason for this is that the Government have limited the sinking of wells to one (or two at different levels) every 40 acres. Moreover, instead of leaving wooden derricks in position after drilling, as used to be done in the old days, the modern operators use steel derricks and remove them after striking oil. In their place is erected a small group of pipes and valves called a "Christmas tree." At intervals the oil is drawn from these Christmas trees into bowsers and stored in the batteries of tanks. The landowners are given every inducement to continue farming.

Practically all this development is being carried on by American companies or with American capital, and the Canadians would very much like to see some British participation in the many oil strikes still to be made. Some of the local farmers are making big money. In the slump of 1931 the Provincial Government offered the mineral rights of the land in the Province for nominal payments of ten dollars for every section of 640 acres. Most farmers, lacking funds themselves, decided not to take up the offer, but one man at least paid two dollars 50 for the mineral rights of his quarter section. Now he is said to be cleaning up 11,000 dollars a week.

After a dinner attended by local V.I.P.s, we left Edmonton some time after midnight by North Star for Toronto. A few hours sleep in my tilted armchair and the stewardess was nudging me to put on my safety belt for the descent to Winnipeg. A dash to the coffee shop for bacon and eggs and on we went to Toronto, arriving there in time for lunch at the magnificent Royal York Hotel, which is claimed to be the largest in the British Empire.

The next day we went by coach to Niagara Falls, driving the whole distance along the splendid Queen Elizabeth Highway. The mighty Falls looked even more terrifying than they would have done normally because on the day we saw them (in my case for the first time) the unfortunate "Red" Hill was buried after his crushed body had been taken from the water below the Falls. A police motor-cyclist gave us a detailed and sickening description of Hill's injuries. Apparently his home-made barrel, consisting of the tubes of lorry tyres held together with fish netting—he called it "the thing"—was utterly unsuitable for an attempt to shoot the Falls.

I was interested to learn that most of my companions who had not seen the Falls before shared my surprise at finding the place so highly developed. The town of Niagara Falls is, of course, a popular holiday place, but I somehow had not expected to find a beautifully laid out parkway running round the edge of the river. After putting on gum boots and a huge mackintosh and hood, I went down the lift to see the Falls from below. Galleries leading from a tunnel open on to the narrow space between the rock face and the water at the foot of the Falls. This is a terrible sight, for the water seems to fall in solid slabs with overwhelming force. By night the Falls are vulgarized by being illuminated with coloured searchlights.

Reaching Toronto airport at midnight to catch the plane to New York, we were told that La Guardia was closed because of fog and we would have to return to the Royal York Hotel. On our way back we passed a drive-in cinema still showing a film. One reason for the popularity of these open-air cinemas, in which people watch from the front seats of their cars, is that they enable young married couples to go to the movies without having to employ a baby-sitter, as they would do if they went to an ordinary cinema. The back seat of the car is made up as a bed and the children sleep happily through the performance—at least that is the idea.

After another early call we got to New York the next morning, landing in a heat haze which struck us like a Turkish bath as we descended the gangway from the cool interior of the North Star. Of my 24 hours in New York there is little to say here except that the city, seen for the first time, struck me as being even more fabulous with its skyscrapers than I had imagined (the new United Nations building alone is almost unbelievable), and that this is a city I would not like to work in. I had not realized how effective is the air-conditioning of large buildings like the Waldorf Astoria Hotel and big stores, which are wonderful to enter from the stifling, humid streets.

And so the next day—13 days after leaving Heathrow—we took our seats once more in a Stratocruiser for the return flight. Everything was in our favour, and instead of landing at Shannon for more fuel, we continued non-stop to London—3,000 miles in 12 hours.