

Written by
Alex Farquhar, 1883-19
Winnipeg, Man
about his extensive motor trip

We left Winnipeg on February 20th. It had been very mild here, there was very little snow, and water was lying in the streets. We went practically straight South from here, as far as Wichita, Kansas. We went South through Minnesota, and after about 150 miles, we ran into snow. There had been a big snowstorm the day before, and it had covered a large area. It was not too bad until we got into S. Dakota, where they had had over 11 inches, and there were great drifts everywhere. The snow plows were busy, but we had one day of pretty hard driving. The snow extended from Minnesota right down into Kansas and Oklahoma, although it was not too much in the Southern parts. After we got into Nebraska the roads were good, although there was plenty of snow on the fields. The wheat that is grown in Nebraska and Kansas is practically all winter wheat, and where the fields were bare of snow, they were green with the winter wheat coming through.

The first day we got as far as Watertown, in S. Dakota. The next day we got as far as York, in Nebraska. The next day we went on to Wichita, and spent a little time there. It is quite a good sized city - I should say about 100,000. From there we went West and reached Liberal, Kansas, that evening. There is apparently a good deal of oil through Kansas and Oklahoma, we saw oil wells from time to time, and they all seemed to be busy pumping oil.

The next day we passed through Oklahoma and part of Texas, and on into New Mexico. I was rather amazed at the extent of the desert all through that district. The desert extended all through New Mexico, Arizona, and Eastern California. We drove many hundreds of miles with scarcely anything but sand and cactus and sage bush. There was the odd place where there was irrigation, and where they seemed to produce crops of one sort or another. All through that area the elevation is fairly high, but there are not many mountains except the odd peak here and there.

We reached Albuquerque in the afternoon. There are some mountains just East of Albuquerque that are rather interesting, some of them fairly well treed with juniper. Albuquerque is quite a nice city, and quite a large city. We were very well impressed with it going out, but coming back at that point we were in a sandstorm, and it did not look nearly as attractive.

We went on that day and stayed at a small town called Grants. The next day we went on, and we left our route to go up to the Grand Canyon. This is quite a sight; it apparently extends for many miles, and the colouring on the rocks is very unusual, to say the least. On that day we also went to see what is called the "painted desert", an area of which is near the highway on which we were travelling. It is rather interesting, but it seemed to me that literature concerning it was a little bit over-rated.

We also went through the petrified forest, which was altogether different from what I had expected. There are many trees and parts of trees which are really not petrified wood at all. I understand there is not more than 5% of wood in them. It seems that the trees have been covered at one time for ages, and the wood has naturally disintegrated and disappeared, largely by various chemical processes, and the various minerals which overlaid them gradually took the place of the wood, and assumed the markings of the wood, so that the rings in the trees are quite plainly visible on many of the specimens, but they are actually formed almost entirely of the minerals which have turned to stone through the pressure of the ages.

We stopped at a place called Williams that night. The next day we went up to the Hoover Dam, commonly called the Boulder Dam, on the Colorado River. It was most impressive. It must have been a great headache for the engineers who carried it out. The place is in a regular canyon, and is over 700 feet high. It is some 600 or 700 feet in thickness at the bottom, and about 50 feet at the top. There is a highway that winds down to the top of the dam, and across the dam, and up the other side. It is hard to describe it, but one could spend a whole day there looking at the various aspects, and all the details of the tunnels, etc., which they have as spillways for irrigation, etc. There are elevators which go down to the foot of the dam, and they take tours of people down to the various workings below. We went down, and it was all very impressive.

It seems in building the dam, they first cut two tunnels, one on each side of the river, through the solid rock, in order to carry the flow of the river while the dam was being built. They then built a temporary dam to divert the water in the tunnels, and a further dam lower down the river, just near the exits of the tunnels, to prevent the water flowing back. The two dams so built formed a coffer dam, as it were, then the actual dam was built in the space that was left clear of water. The Colorado at that point is the dividing line between Arizona and Nevada.

We went on across the dam, and turned down to the highway again some 90 miles, and stayed that night at a place called Ambloy. The next day we went on, and that day we had the most mountainous part of our trip, which was quite interesting. The trip all across the desert had been rather monotonous, although it was interesting to see the desert - something different from anything we had ever seen before.

After crossing the mountains, we came down into San Bernardino which is a very nice little city, being some 60 - 65 miles East of Pasadena. From San Bernardino on to Pasadena, it was thickly settled with towns here and there, fruit growing the whole way - mostly citrus fruit, oranges, lemons and grapefruit, and also grapes.

We got to Pasadena on Friday afternoon, the whole trip taking some six days.

Mrs. Anderson, whom I had known at Elm Creek when I first came West more than 50 years ago, and who now lives in Winnipeg, went to Pasadena in November, and stayed for the winter. She went with her sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Halver Gryte, who live at Hoople, N. Dakota. They had the ground floor of a house in Pasadena, and we stayed with them. Mrs. Anderson came home with us on our return trip.

The weather while we were there, was very good, there was no rain at all, although we had "smog" from time to time. It got rather bad occasionally, one day it was bad enough to make the eyes smart. I don't know what all was in it, but there must be certain chemicals as well as ordinary smoke. I understand they are carrying out research work to see if something cannot be done to overcome it.

Pasadena is a fine city, with a population of 100,000 or more, but, of course, the whole Los Angeles district is geographically one city, although there are a great many independent corporations in the area. One thing that impresses one immediately is the way the traffic is handled through the metropolitan district. They have a number of what they call "free-ways", I don't know how many, but I should imagine there must be nearly a dozen of them, and they go right through the whole metropolitan district in various directions. These "free-ways" are practically all 8-lane highways, 4 lanes in each direction, and they are certainly convenient for getting around, if you know beforehand where you want to go. There are no signal or stop-lights at all, you simply go into your lane, and go right on as far as you want. There are only certain places where you can leave the "free-way" and certain places where you can go on to it, but these are marked well ahead, so you have ample time to see where you want to get off. There, are, of course, no left turns. If you want to leave the "free-way" you must go into the right hand lane. There is one point where there are four "free-ways" stacked one above the other, with 8 lanes in each "free-way", making 32 lanes in all at that point.

The cost of these "free-ways" must be stupendous, as there are so many bridges, overheads, and under-passes, and at some points there are over-passes only for pedestrians. I understand even these pedestrian over-passes cost in the neighbourhood of \$80,000.00 each, and "free-ways" run to more than \$2,000,000.00 per mile, and they are continually building more of them. I understand they are paying for them as they go, that is, no bond issue, or borrowed money. The chief source of money for this work is the tax on gasoline, which is .08¢ per gallon, which would be equivalent to .10¢ on our gallon, - the State getting, I think, .06¢, and the Federal Government .01¢. This must bring in a great deal of money, as it appears there are more cars per person in California than anywhere else on earth.

However, it is an easy place to drive in, because if one is going any distance, he takes a "free-way" until he gets near the place where he wants to go, and then takes the ordinary streets for the rest of the way.

The mountains are very close, in fact, at Hollywood and Beverley Hills the buildings are right up to the mountains, and many buildings are way up on the heights. In fact, even right in the metropolitan district there are small mountains, and these are getting built on fairly well. On one of the "free-ways" there are no less than four tunnels, some of them of fairly good length, perhaps 1/5 of a mile. One is continually amazed at the terrific expense of these "free-ways" but without them the traffic would surely be in an awful tangle. I understand there is a penalty of \$25 for running out of gas on a "free-way". I suppose such a thing would tie up traffic in one lane, at any rate, for a considerable time.

Halver Cryte has a married son, who lives in Pasadena, and he also has a brother who lives at Huntington Park, some 15 miles from Pasadena. The son drove us up to the Mt. Wilson Observatory on a Sunday. This was a very scenic drive, right up the mountains, and there is a wonderful view of the whole city, and out to the Pacific. Pasadena, of course, lies right under the mountains, and from there to the Pacific it would be pretty close to 30 miles, being city all the way, except for the odd little mountain that sticks up here and there.

There is a Planetarium at Glendale, up on the mountain, and we went there one afternoon. I was rather disappointed in it, as the lecturer was not of the best. He tried to be funny, which I did not think was in keeping with the subject. He spent a great deal of the time giving us an experimental trip to the moon, on a rocket ship, which certainly was not interesting to me, as it was all fantasy, and one could have got the same result by reading the comics. However, the rest of the time was very interesting. There is a great dome to the building, and the planets and a great many of the stars are shown on the dome, and the movements of the planets and stars from the evening to the next morning takes place in the course of an hour or so, and eventually the stars begin to fade out, and the sun rises in the morning. It was all quite interesting, but I was disappointed in the lecturer - I thought he could have given us a talk that would have been more interesting.

One day we went to Forest Lawn cemetery, of which you have no doubt heard. It is a tremendous place - I imagine there must be 400 - 500 acres. I had imagined Forest Lawn as being more or less of a rolling landscape, but it is very mountainous, and in places it is quite precipitous, with the graves all up the steep slopes. There are three churches at various places in the cemetery, one called "The Little Kirk of the Heather" is said to be a replica of the church which Annie Laurie attended in Scotland. It is very pretty, and surrounded with beautiful trees and shrubbery, as are all the buildings.

There is one building which is built like a theatre, which houses a picture of the Crucifixion. This painting is 195 ft. long and about 45 ft. high. It is a magnificent painting, and you sit in the theatre while a lecture is given on the painting. It is a marvelous picture; seems it was painted by a Pole, and was eventually purchased from Paderewski, who was then Premier of Poland, by the Forest Lawn Company.

There is one place in the cemetery where there is a great collection of statuary that is very interesting, and with which one might spend a long time. At the entrance of this place there is a great statue of David, done in marble; it must be about 20 ft. high. The other statues are very well done, and illustrate various phases of life. There is one group particularly to illustrate the mystery of life, with a great many figures in it, all of which represent various phases of the Mystery. There is, for instance, Mother and Child, the Philosopher, the Atheist, the Young Lovers, and the Old Man, etc. etc.

None of the graves in the cemetery have headstones, but simply a little tablet set in the earth. There is only one small part, being the older part of the cemetery, where there are any headstones at all.

One day we went down to Long Beach, which is about 30 miles from Pasadena, and not so very far from the coast there are oil wells - thousands of them, some of the derricks are only the matter of a few feet apart, and there are some actually out in the sea. The City is built all around them, even in amongst them. Apparently the oil was discovered after the place had been pretty well built up.

Another day we drove to Santa Monica. It is on the coast, a bit further North than Long Beach. It is a very nice drive out there, we go through Glendale, Hollywood, and not far from the coast, up in the hills, is the old home of Will Rogers, which we visited. It is a very lovely place, and the house is kept as a sort of museum, where all sorts of things which Rogers had during his lifetime are kept, including a statue of his famous horse.

Santa Monica is very pretty, one part of the town is down at the sea level, but the remaining part of the town is high up above it. The cliffs rise precipitously from the lower town, and this is called the Palisades. It is all very interesting, and scenic.

Another day we drove to San Diego. It is about 100 miles South along the coast. It was a lovely drive, and on the way we drove through La Jolla (pronounced La Hoya). It is quite a resort, and a very beautiful little place, right on the coast. San Diego is a lovely city too. We really should have stayed over a day or so there, but we had not planned it that way, and we returned the same night.

Among other things, they have a remarkable zoo at San Diego, in what is called Balboa Park. It is said to be one of the finest zoos on the continent, and I daresay that is correct. One could spend a whole day or two at the zoo. There was practically every sort of animal imaginable. One thing that particularly impressed me was a bird, - I think they call it the "miner bird". It is a dark and rather attractive bird, about the size of a magpie, but it speaks as clearly as any human being can speak. It is not a parrot, nor of the parrot family at all, but the clear, distinct way it speaks is really surprising.

I went to the races at Santa Anita one day with Halver Cryte - he used to go every day. It is a wonderful place, of stupendous size, and everything about the grounds is up to the minute. They had great many panes planted in the infield, and others along the lawns at the front and back of the buildings. They have, I think, 160 acres of parking grounds for cars, so you can imagine the crowds that go there.

Another day we went to the Huntington library. This was originally an estate of a man called Huntington, who was a multi-millionaire - a railroad man. The main building was his residence - a tremendous place, which is now a museum, most of which is taken up with paintings, all originals, which are really something. Most of them are by English artists, a great many by Joshua Reynolds, some by Gainsborough, Constable, and various other well known artists. Among other things there was the "Blue Boy" by Gainsborough, and also "Pinky". Then there is a large library, which contains, among other things, many original manuscripts, maps, etc., and original copies of the Bible. The grounds of the place are extensive - I should imagine they cover possibly 40 acres, and it is really a beautiful park, with statuary and fountains, and a great many Camillias, Azaleas, roses, etc. One part is like a sunken Oriental garden, and then there is a large area which is a cactus garden, where they have every variety of cactus.

One day we drove through a part of Arcadia, where there were peacocks which live in a certain district, and they seem to confine themselves to this particular district. There were dozens of them, and they ignored the traffic, which has to stop for them to cross the street, and they walk about the lawns. It seems they have been there for a long time, and I suppose the people feed them, but they seem to keep to the one district, and do not go far from that place. I understand that many people object to them, and want to do away with them, but the majority of the residents insist on having the peacocks and there they remain. It is a residential district where they are, and the traffic, of course, is not particularly heavy.

One Sunday we drove out to San Fernando, which is about 30 miles from Pasadena, to see Walter Dill. He is a Veterinary Surgeon, and has been there for about 35 years. He has done remarkably well. He has a pet hospital, a very nice building, with everything that could be imagined for a pet hospital. He has an operating room, X-ray machines, etc., and there were quite a few "patients" in the hospital, mostly dogs, with some cats, each in their little cage. He also has a building at the rear where he keeps dogs as boarders, and cats as well.

He has three Veterinary Surgeons working for him, as well as an X-ray man, and two other men. He himself does mostly outside work. He looks after a good many dairy herds, and he also looks after some of the pets and horses of the movie stars, and others. He apparently has a very wide practice, as he goes as far south as San Diego, which would be 150 miles, and as far as Bakersfield, considerably more than 100 miles to the North. He has a very lovely home at San Fernando.

He took us on quite a long drive that day up through the mountains, and about the countryside. We arranged then to go to see Maurice Dill, his brother, who is a farmer some 200 miles North. We arranged to go the next Friday. It seems that Walter had to be at Bakersfield to attend to some dairy herd on the following Monday, so we drove as far as Bakersfield, and Walter and his wife joined us there, and we left our car there, and the four of us drove in his car the rest of the way to Maurice's.

On Sunday we came back, and left Walter and his wife at Bakersfield, and we picked up our car and came back to Pasadena. Maurice Dill farms about 400 acres in the San Joaquin Valley. This is quite a large valley, nearly 200 miles wide, and some 300 miles long. It is all very flat, and, of course, everything is irrigated. It is irrigated from wells, apparently the rain and snow from the mountains flow down into the valley, and they are lost in the sand below, and raise the water table throughout the whole valley. Maurice has several wells operated by electric motor, and whenever he wishes to irrigate he simply turns on the motor at the well, and the water is run into a small concrete tank beside the well, and then flows by gravity through the pipeline. There are valves on the pipeline from time to time, and any valve can be turned on independent of the others, to irrigate that portion of the field opposite the valve.

He grows all his own feed, and sells some as well. The feed is mostly Alfalfa, and the fields for this are arranged in strips, some 50 feet wide, with a little dike, perhaps a foot high running, to separate the fields at each 50 ft. or so, so that any 50 foot section can be irrigated independent of the others. He grows cotton as well; they are on a quota, his quota is about 80 acres. He milks 90 cows, and he has a number of young cattle as well, I suppose about 90 or 100. The cattle are not housed at all. He has a milk barn, which accommodates 20 cows. Outside this milk barn, there is a very large corral, with concrete floor, where the cattle are brought in at milking time.

It takes three hours to milk the cows, from 3 to 6 in the afternoon, and 3 to 6 in the morning, and the cows know their turn when to come in. The milkman calls out "First-timers" and the first 20 come in, and take their places. Then they are sprayed and wiped, and the milking machines put on. He has five milking machines, and the milk goes into a pipe which carries it into another room, where it flows down into the cooler, and into cans. Everything is right up to the minute.

In the corral there is a long feeder barn. Along the sides of the barn there are stanchions, and the cows reach into these and feed. He also has some sheep, I think about 50, and a number of pigs, geese, ducks, and even some rabbits. He has apparently done very well there.

He has twelve children, all married but two. One son has a farm quite near him. We met four of the children. There was one daughter who is living with him just now, and the two unmarried ones were there, a boy and girl. The boy was there over the weekend; he is Supervisor of Music at some High School a considerable distance from there. The girl, who is the youngest of the family, is going to a University about 100 miles from there. She and a pal came there on the Friday night, but left again the same night, as they had some game they wanted to go to the following day.

Maurice smokes his own hams, and makes his own bacon, and we had some of it while we were there, and it was really good. One night they showed slides - pictures that were taken in Nova Scotia when they went to visit his sister, Fanny. Among others was a picture of Mary and Andrew Harvey. I think it was taken about Mary's 90th birthday, and Andrew Harvey would then be 96. Mary, of course, is an aunt of Maurice and Walter, being a sister of their mother's, and they are, therefore, cousins of Hiram.

On the way back from Maurice's, we went into a small town (I cannot remember the name of it now) where their half sister lives, and we just stopped for a few minutes to see them, and it so happened that their half brother was there as well. He is Supervisor of Roads at Barstow, California, but had come to visit them on that day.

One very interesting thing which we saw in California, was Cinerama. I suppose you have read, or heard of Cinerama. I had thought there was only the one theatre in existence so far, but apparently there are several. There is one in New York, which was the first, but apparently it is the same company that has the one in California. It is in Warner Bros. theatre on Hollywood Boulevard. A friend of ours from Winnipeg saw the one in New York just about a year ago, and apparently they have only the one film so far, as what we saw in Hollywood was the same thing as they saw in New York. It has been running in Warner Bros. theatre now for 11 months, and you still have to get tickets in advance. The screen is almost a half circle, 145°, and I understand it is made something on the same idea as a Venetian blind, with the strips being perpendicular. There are three projectors, one projects the centre of the picture, the one at the left projects that portion of the picture to the right of the screen, and the projector to the right projects that portion of the picture to the left of the screen, but the whole is synchronized to form one picture.

It is the most realistic thing one could imagine; you get depth in the picture, and you get practically the whole view of the scene that your eyes would see, that is, your eyes taking in approximately 150° and the screen is nearly the same. At the start it appears you are on a roller coaster, and it is amazing how lifelike it is. You simply swoop down the inclines exactly the same way as if you were on the coaster itself, and you get the same sensation, no matter how you try to prevent it - you feel your stomach going the wrong way, and people all through the theatre scream out, and others, who cannot stand the idea cover their eyes, and do not look. It is hard to imagine you are sitting perfectly still in your seat.

They next took us to Edinburgh, on the parade ground of the castle there, where it showed a tremendous number of pipers piping. There were big crowds, and apparently some pipers' contest, but you felt as though you were right at the edge of the crowd, and it was certainly a very colourful scene.

Next they took us to Austria, and a boys' choir there sang wonderfully well, out in the open.

Next we went to Venice, where we sailed up the canals, the most realistic venture, it seemed just as real as the real thing.

Next they took us to La Scala Theatre, in Milan, Italy, where we appeared to be right in the theatre. It is a tremendous place, with six tiers of boxes. There were over 600 people on stage, and they gave one act of the opera, Aida.

Next they took us to Spain, where we saw a bullfight.

Then they took us back to the States, where we saw water sports, water ski-ing, and speed boat racing, and other water sports, in Florida. Next we appeared to be on a plane, and you could feel the sensation of the plane banking, and all that sort of thing. We passed over Washington, Niagara Falls, Pittsburgh, Chicago, and over the grain fields of the Middle West, where you could look down and see the combines working; then over the Grand Canyon, where we had a far better view of it than we did when we saw the actual Canyon.

There was one place where we appeared to be in a church, and the Salt Lake City choir marched in, in two files at each side of the church, appearing to come in from the rear, singing as they came, and the singing seemed to come from the back of the theatre, and gradually come up to the choir loft, just in the same way as it would in an actual church.

I suppose eventually this will supersede the present moving pictures, but it must be very expensive, and, of course, the theatres will all have to be re-built to accommodate the screen and the projectors.

When coming home, we took a more southern route for the first part of the trip. We went to Palm Springs, which is right in the desert, at the foot of a mountain. It is a very lovely little place, with beautiful buildings, most of them more or less in the Spanish style, but immediately outside the town, it is absolute desert - nothing but sand and cactus. I don't know if they get much wind there, but if they do, I should think the place would be overwhelmed with sand.

We came on through the Imperial Valley, through Indio, and on to Phoenix. At Indio, and a large district around Phoenix, the land is irrigated, and there were great groves of date palms. They also grow a great deal of grapefruit, oranges, etc. Phoenix is a very nice city, we drove around it for a little while before going on.

East of Phoenix there are mountains nearly all the way for practically 150 miles, and it was quite scenic. There was one place, Salt River Canyon, which we crossed, which was very impressive. In fact, I was more impressed with it than I was with the Grand Canyon. It is very deep - I don't know just how deep, but I should imagine it would be between 2000 and 3000 feet. Across the Canyon, from top to top does not look more than a mile, but in order to go to one side from the other, you must travel about 10 miles. The road winds back and forth, with hairpin turns, where you go way down to the bottom, where you cross a river, and up the other side.

We eventually ran into a sandstorm. We had two days of tough driving, the wind was terrific, and when we got outside the car, it nearly took the door off. The sand was blowing terribly, at times it was so thick that we had to put the lights on. We got to Albuquerque that night, and Albuquerque certainly looked a great deal worse than it did on our first visit. The next day we came East from there, and passing through the mountains just East of there, there had been snow the night before - just a skiff, but the wind blew up, and there was quite a blizzard. We soon drove out of this, but for a little while we even had to put lights on for the snow.

Later in the day we got the real dust storm - it was not sand, it seemed to be soil, and it was blowing from the North very strongly. A good deal of the time we had to have lights on, and along about 4 o'clock the wind went down a little, but the dust set in, and it was as black as the blackest night. I could never have imagined it could be as bad. The lights were on full, but it made no impression whatever on the dust. I stopped the car for a while, and thought of pulling off the road, but I could not see if there was a ditch, or what there was. There were some cars behind, and after a little while I found that by putting my face up against the windshield, I could make out faintly the centre line of the highway, so I started up and merely crawled for what seemed ages, but it could not have been more than three-quarters of an hour, when we got into a small town, Guyman, Oklahoma, where I pulled up by a filling station, and enquired for a motel, where we stayed the night. It was a very nerve-racking, and almost terrifying experience, as we could see nothing whatever on the road. We were told the dust was 12,000 ft. high.

They have had very little rain all through the district for the last four years, and every once in a while they get these terrible dust storms, and the soil is apparently all blowing away.

The next night we got into Emporia, which is a good sized city. We got there fairly early, and I decided to get the car washed, so we could be rid of some of the dust. We took all the stuff out of the car, into the motel, and then I went to get it washed. I went to about half a dozen or more filling stations, but "no dice". Eventually one filling station man said "You cannot get a car washed here, we have not washed a car for over two weeks; we are on a short quota of water." So that was that, and it appeared they are short of water all through the country. In fact, all through Southern California everything is irrigated, and if it were not for irrigation, the whole country there would be a desert. Water is the big problem.

Through Nevada, Colorado and Arizona they get a lot of water from the Colorado River, and I suppose there must be a number of other sources, but it is beginning to be rather critical. There is a scheme now talked of, of bringing water from the Columbia ice cap in Canada, and another scheme of taking the salt from the ocean water, and using it for irrigation.

Well, from Emporia, we came on to Kansas City, Missouri, and then to Kansas City, Kansas, on up to Omaha, Nebraska. We stayed there that night, and then came on up to Moorehead, Minn., where we crossed over into North Dakota, and came on up to Neeche, where Mrs. Anderson's son lives. It is just at the Manitoba border, and then on home.

We left Pasadena on Monday, March 15th, and arrived home on Monday, March 22nd. It was rather a good trip, except those two days of sand and dust, which were certainly very trying, and it was hard driving, as the wind was blowing from the North, a bit of a gale, and one had to keep a firm grip on the wheel all the time, to say nothing of the dust and dirt.