

BOOKS



ROUGH TRAVELING IN 1828

A Journey From Charleston to Columbia a Century Ago by the Legislative Delegation From Charleston County—Their Adventurous Navigation of Four Hole Swamp and the Wreck of the Mail Coach.

To those who make the journey from Charleston to Columbia in a pleasant morning, breakfasting unhurriedly in Charleston and lunching at noon in Columbia, who roll smoothly through Four Hole and Indian Swamps at 40 miles an hour, and never bat an eyelash if by chance one's car runs 60, the following graphic account of a journey from the one city to the other by the legislative delegation from Charleston county, about a century ago, will be found to contain enlightening data as to the comforts of travel when today is compared with yesterday.

The writer of the letter, James Adger, should need no introduction to South Carolina. He was one of the great merchants, ranking with Henry Laurens and Manigault, who inaugurated successfully the first coastwise line of steamships trading from New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore southward; who was a representative and correspondent of the great banking house of Alexander Brown of Baltimore, Brown, Shipley and company; who, at the very eve of his sudden death in New York City was preparing to embark upon the venture of a trans-Atlantic line of merchant steamers from Charleston direct to the ports of Europe; and who, as a general gesture, lent a vessel to Cyrus W. Field, when another was needed to assist in the landing of the Atlantic cable in 1858. When he died, he lay in state at the house of one of his great business friends in New York, and was brought home to be buried aboard a vessel which bore his name. When his wife died, such was his position in local commerce that every vessel then lying in Charleston harbor displayed its colors at half-mast in deference, a salute that was never paid there before, and has never been paid since.

His style, like himself, is terse, direct, compact, simple. His times were not ornate as ours; at another occasion, when repeated rains had swollen every stream and roads were bogs, and swamps great quags, there being no seats obtainable in the downward coach at close of the legislative session, James Adger and his intimate friend, William Bones, later one of the founders of the well known Georgia family walked from Columbia to Charleston, and at every running stream or standing swamp, Mr. Bones having an open wound upon one foot, which was under treatment, Mr. Adger, emulating St. Christopher, carried his companion on his back through water and bog, and deposited him dry-shod on the other side. Times change, and men change with them.

Mr. Adger's letter is commended to the earnest attention of the gentlemen of the legislature, both houses, in particular to the members of the Charleston county delegation, how many, one wonders, would wade through Four Hole swamp to attend the sessions of the legislature, or tote a comrade upon their backs through the backwaters of the Congaree, pedestrianizing homeward? Yet one would not like them all to speak at once.

Columbia, S. C.; Tuesday,
Jany., 1828:

Dear S—:

We arrived safe here last night about 12 o'clock, all well, after a singular chain of adventures.

Mr. Willington and myself got safe to Mrs. Vance's a little after 3 o'clock, and as the rain had then nearly ceased, we started Abraham for home, after setting out in a coach, jointed Mr. Duncan, in a sulky, Mr. Toomer, after setting out in a coach, joined us about dusk. We spent a pleasant evening, and got up about daylight and sat down to breakfast, expecting every minute to be joined by the passengers in the stage, who generally got to Mrs. Vance's to breakfast about sunrise. Our companions left us after breakfast and Mr. W. and my-

self waited until about 9 o'clock, when some of the passengers arrived with the stage wanting one of its wheels, supplied by a long pole for a wheel and the passengers on foot, having walked five miles after the stage had broken down.

The others all got up soon, had their breakfasts, and by that time they had got a wagon prepared for us, into which all our trunks were put and we seated on them, viz. Messrs. Desaussure, Willington, Wilson, Legare, Lamb, Ash, Mathews, Adger, all members, a Mr. Johnson of this place, and a Kentucky hog-drover, ten in all. In this way we drove to Blackman's, 14 miles, where there was a stage, but so small that nine could only squeeze into it; the poor Kentuckian, being tough, sat on the baggage behind. Mr. Blackman was not at home, so we could not get any horses from him.

We got up to the lower Hart's where we dined and got a horse and chair from him to take us to Snell's. Mr. Ash and Mr. Mathews took the chair; the others kept the stage and got to Snell's about 10 o'clock, where we were told we could get a fine, large stage that would take us all in; but on our arrival at Snell's we heard the Columbia stage had arrived all broke to pieces, that the driver had got drunk, let the horses run away, broke the stage, and nearly killed a passenger. (In a few minutes I see Robert who can inform you of that night's proceedings.) After supper we all went to bed, to be called when the stage should be ready; but it taking some time to be put in order we were not called till daylight, when we found Robert and the dead man gone.

Our driver seemed sober, and we all started, except the Kentuckian, who had a horse there. We go on to Four Hole swamp; when, after entering a little way, the horses stalled and we could not get them to move the stage.

After trying some time, and part of the harness breaking, the driver got into the water to his middle, loosed the forward horses on which the passengers rode out at different times to the other side of the swamp, nearly a quarter of a mile, Ash, Johnson, Lamb and the driver to bring back the horses, went first; next myself and Willington mounted on one horse and Wilson, being large, took the other to himself, the driver walking after. We got over and started on, the first party being some distance ahead, out of sight.

About three miles from the swamp we stopped at a house and asked for breakfast; the woman said she could give us some boiled rice and bacon; we asked for eggs. After searching about, they found six; that was two for each, which they boiled hard and brought in very soon with the rice and bacon. The rice was nearly raw and the bacon spoil'd. By the time we had eat our eggs Mathews joined us; we ordered the rice to be boiled softer; but before it was done the stage arrived with Legare and Desaussure in it; they had got a wagoner to haul them out after being in the swamp upwards of three hours.

Before we got up to the first party that left us they had walked 13 miles, which was near Mrs. Smith's, one mile below Orangeburg. There we all got breakfast, about 1 o'clock; got to Slappy's about 3 o'clock; where we did not stop to eat but pushed on to Columbia, all in high spirits after being so far safe. The house is now in session; I must conclude. Six o'clock at night. Love to all.

Yours very truly,

J. Adger.

I stopped at Brigg's all night; got breakfast this morning and went up to L. & E. with my trunk; found all well. I think we will spend all this week here. Tell Mr. Black to write me by Saturday's mail; if I leave here before this day week it can be forwarded after me.

J. A.