

TRAVELING THE PAST:

# VERMONTERS ON VACATION

August is traditionally vacation month, but many of us will not be travelling this year. The following article explores how Vermonters of the 19th and early 20th centuries travelled to places far and near and is based on the archival collections found in the Sheldon Museum's Stewart-Swift Research Center.

## BACK WHEN THE LEISURE INDUSTRY WAS YOUNG

“A  
BY LUCINDA COCKRELL

Are your vacation plans complete?” asks the “1929 Guide to Select Hotels and Motor Routes, The Adirondacks, New England and Quebec.” These days, probably not, since few of us will be going anywhere. Fortunately, there are vicarious opportunities “for sight-seeing seldom enjoyed” aplenty to be found in the Sheldon Museum’s Research Center archives.

You might want to travel to better your health. Close to home would be the “Vergennes Electro Chemical Baths, Established 1850.” Or, further afield, there’s the “B.I.B.H. Big Iron Bath House” in Hot Springs, Ark. — “The Largest, Finest and Most Complete Bathing Establishment in the United States.” Or Dr. E.P. Miller’s “Home of Health” in New York City. For \$2.50 per day or \$10 per week you could enjoy “an abundance of farinaceous food,” and “a



Automobile travel, circa 1915

variety of baths, embracing the Turkish Bath, Electric Bath, Needle Bath, the Spray, Shower, Douche, and Plunge, together with Swedish Movements, and Butler’s Health-Lift.”

Perhaps you prefer something scenic. “Dubar’s Official Guide to Niagara Falls and the St. Lawrence River” describes its “awfully majestic plunge into the fearful, seething chasm below.” Or the American Hall in Clarendon Springs, Vt., is situated “in the midst of the finest mountain scenery and combines the most desirable advantages of a summer resort.”

If you are the outdoor type, there’s always the Adirondacks. The St. Regis Lake House in Bloomingdale, N.Y., has “guides, boats, guns, fishing tackle.” And you could bunk at the Loon Lake House in Merrillville for only “\$7.00 to \$10.00 per week.”

Up for an excursion? For 75 cents (in 1876) you could take the “Moonlight Excursion” on Lake Champlain and be entertained by the Vergennes Cornet Band, featuring cornet virtuoso Prof. Will Allen.

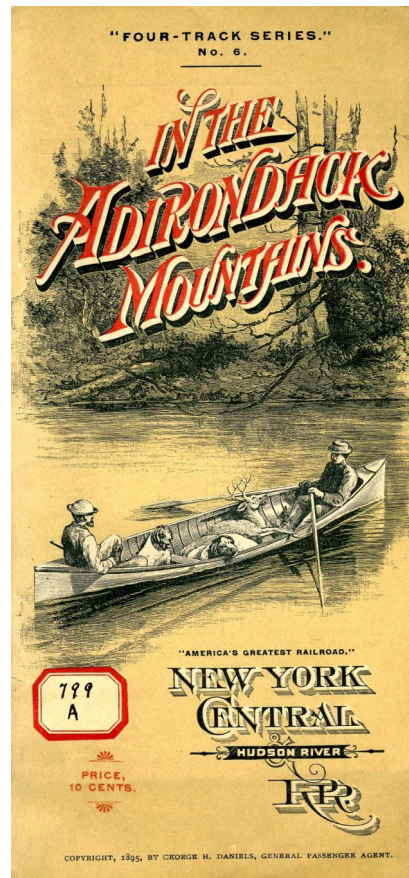
Longing to explore distant lands? There’s the “European Excursion” through “Scotland, England, France, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium or Holland.”

How about panning for gold in the Klondike? The Conner Brothers grocery in Seattle has a convenient “Guide to the Klondyke,” which includes “Estimate of supplies for one man for one year” (to be bought at Conner Brothers, of course).



“THE VICTOR.” VERGENNES, VT.

Steamboat Excursion, ca. 1908



Or, strap on your goggles and head out on a road trip. The 1910 “Automobile Blue Book” gives detailed point-to-point road directions, along with hotels.

There’s plenty more to choose from, but if we must stay here in Vermont, we are the lucky ones as the 1929 Guide says, “Of the many vacation districts in America, none is more ideally perfect than this land of beauty and romance, of culture and history.”

Lucinda Cockrell is a Sheldon Museum’s Research Center Committee member and co-author of “How to Weed Your Attic: Getting Rid of Junk Without Destroying History (2018).”

Photograph, post card, and brochure from the Sheldon Museum’s ephemera collection.

Adirondack Mountains Guide, 1895