

North America 1800 — Journey to the Natural Bridge in Virginia

On Saturday Evening the 19th of July, having dis-
missed the greatest number of our Servants; paid our
debts, & made up our Packages for the different quar-
ters of the Globe where we were likely to go on
some future day, we bid adieu to our House in Sixth Street
Philadelphia, a very handsome one which we had
inhabited from the time of our arrival in the
United States, & with one Footman commenced ^{one}
of the last journeys we expected to make in
America, Mr. Weston having obtained a leave of
absence from Lord Grenville, then Secretary of State.

We had previously disposed of our furniture
& had hired a beautiful little Place called Solitude,
on the Banks of the Schuylkill, to which Lord
Henry Stuart & Mr. Montagu, with our few remain-
ing Servants, retired to wait our return.

We took leave of our young Friends, & at
eight o'clock in the evening of a sultry day set
out, & proceeded by the Lancaster road as far as the
Bunch-head Inn, ten miles. Next morning we
started at six, & breakfasted at the Warren 12 miles.
We reached Downings to dinner 20 miles, & slept
at Oroyds having narrowly escaped a thunder-bolt.

Every heavy rain. Nothing can be ~~more~~ more disagreeable or uncomfortable than ~~than~~ one of the Travelling Carriages of this Country, in bad weather; they are all less or more in the style of Waggon, with a covering at top, & the long leather Curtains which are obliged to be let down in rain - on each side, entirely excluded both light & air. We had ^{procured} one of the best of this kind ~~along~~ on setting out from Philadelphia, yet found it bad enough. ⁺ Monday the 21st. We breakfasted at ~~Winnings~~ 11 miles, & stopped at Lancaster only to water the Horses. The Country from Philadelphia to this Town, (at present the Seat of the State Legislature,) is very fine. - Swelling Hills, profusely wooded, & waving grounds perfectly well cultivated even to the roadside.

— The Farmers Houses generally well built of rough stones whimsically placed, & the road ~~improves~~ improves.

From Lancaster we proceeded to Wright's Ferry across the Susquehanna 11 miles, & dined at Stumps, a very pleasant House where we got a neat little dinner. The Ferry is about three quarters of a mile ^{across} & affords very pretty views both up & down the River. - We

slept at ~~Wards~~ ^{Wards} an old German ~~man~~ who was very civil, all the back part of Pennsylvania (indeed the back part of almost ^{all the} every State) is inhabited by Germans & Dutch, with their Descendants, & these Descendants understand no

no more English than the original ^{allies} ~~Sellers~~ had ~~done~~, Their
Taverns are in general clean & comfortable, & they are
particularly civil to those who speak their language.

Three miles from Beards we passed through
the Town of York, the Inhabitants German without
exception. — We breakfasted at Trekers nine miles. —
This Tavern is kept by a sensible intelligent Woman,
who is always particularly attentive to the English.
Here we discovered that the Spring of our Carriage
was broken, the Son of the family having a Smith's
Shop very near mended it completely well.

We dined at Hanover 9 miles, a small Dutch
Town where we got a good Dutch dinner, & slept
at Piny-Creek 11 miles at one Sanger's. This was a
new-built House which, together with a damped bed,
(though we used our own Sheets) gave me a severe
cold. — Wednesday 23^d breakfasted at Little Pine Creek
10 miles, & reached M^r Gembles at Friedrichsburg,
8 miles to dinner. — This is in every respect one of
the best Houses on the road. —

The Country from Lancaster to this place,
though less cultivated, was picturesque & pretty, &
the road, though not Turnpike, tolerably good. —
But it fell off each step as we proceeded, & we
were obliged to sleep at the Wagon 8 miles in a

a very wretched unfinished room. — Thursday 21st we
 breakfasted at Corns 10 miles. The road from the last
 stage to this had been very hard upon the horses, being
 entirely over stony & rocky ground, but the scenery
 very beautiful. — We now approached that junction
 of the Potomack & the Shannandoah, so romantically
 described by Mr. Jefferson, in his notes on Virginia.
 The three remaining miles to Hagers-Serry ^{where} ~~where~~
 the Rivers meet, & where we enter Virginia, was
 over one continued rock, at the side of the Potomack
 & often between ledges of the *annona triloba*, &
 other beautiful shrubs, with frequent peeps of the river.

The tremendous Chasm which Mr.
 Jefferson represents as having been made by
 the force of these Rivers through the Mountains,
 appears very striking on reaching the Ferry, &
 the immense wooded rocks which seem to
 hang over your head, render you anxious to
 cross the Water & escape the impending danger;
 which is not lessened in idea from seeing a House
 built about one fourth up, a cleft in the rocks
 making room for it. —

Hagers-Serry has for some time been the
 head quarters of our Army, where a new Arsenal
 & other buildings have been erected. —

The Tavern stands on the brink of a Hill overlooks this formidable junction. — Though the surrounding scenery is very fine, even Magnificent, yet, there are points in which it disappoints those who have perused Mr. Jeffersons Notes on Virginia.

We expected to have had the pleasure of finding Mr. & Mrs. Lyon Pemberton here, or of hearing that we should meet them at Shepherds Town, ^{when we passed} but finding that they had gone to the Federal City we proceeded to Harpers Ferry & Charleston, after having dined at Harpers Ferry & seen Mr. Brown; — a gentleman who had been some time amongst the Indians, & who had passed some months at Philadelphia.

The road continuing back part of it through the Woods — we were obliged to drive very slowly. It was late & the family gone to bed when we got to Charleston where we slept, & went 11 miles next morning to Stone Tavern to breakfast — the extreme heat of the weather & badness of the roads rendered 11 miles to Winchester to dinner a very long & uncomfortable ride. — The Brush Inn at Winchester is more like an excellent English one than any in America, with this difference that the Landlord, a bald republican looking fellow, is civil only for civility. — There is an anecdote

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told of him, which Mr. Ligon mentioned to him &
which he readily confirmed, that about two years
ago he turned the Sons of the Late Duke of Orleans
out of his House for assuming too much. They said
they would complain to Gen: Washington, who had
recommended the Inn to them. - Monk replied that
Gen: Washington ^{dares not to have} behaved in the same manner
in his House ~~he might have met the same treatment.~~
However Monk, & his wife particularly were so very
attentive to us, every thing was so neat & good & we
were so much fatigued, that we determined to
remain all day.

We quitted Winchester at five on Saturday
morning. The ^m ~~24~~ & here our misfortunes seemed
to begin, for taking a wrong direction, in driving
through the Town, we had gone th miles before
we perceived that we were so far out of the road,
& had then the same distance to go to the place
of our destination as when at Winchester. - We
breakfasted at the White Post th miles, & reached
Stephensburgh 8 miles from Winchester, to dinner.
We drove into the Inn at the commencement of a
violent thunder gust & soon after saw the lightning
break upon ~~upon~~ the Chimney of a House not
more than twenty yards from us, - no damage was

done further, than the alarm given by the falling of
the Hursey Stones & Mortar. - The roads, completely matted by
the rain, became intolerable & scarcely allowed us
freedom of mind to observe the many pretty tracts
of Country through which we passed. - We stopt
at Middleton 5 miles to water our Horses, & were sorry
we could not prolong our stay as the Master & W^{ts} of the
Inn were from the old Country. extremely pleased to see us.
We slept at Stevenston in an old fashioned Dutch Inn.

On Sunday 24th we breakfasted at Woodstock 12 miles,
the road very dreadful, indeed. - We stopt at Pennes 8
miles, the Tavern kept by a German ^{Smith}. - Sunday is -
every where a pleasant day to travel on, you find every one clean &
in good humors. - The Smiths family exhibited much
happiness. He was himself a jocular Fellow. - but though
they had food for the Horses & Servants the old Woman
said she had none for us, - at last however she was
prevailed upon to lay a clean cloth & produce some
Bread Butter Cheese & milk; on which we made a
very hearty dinner, & in the evening reached Newmarket
12 miles. - This days ride had been extremely pleasant,
through beautiful Woods with now & then a glance
of the Sharnandoah, several branches of which
we crossed. - Monday the 25th we breakfasted at Brights
15 miles, a reputable Farmer who had many

like others entertained company ^{that travelled} in Carriages. —

Our Horses though good had gone through a great deal of bad road, & both Animals & Vehicle had suffered considerably. — Within three miles of Brighton one of the Horses fell, with apparently some disorder in his head. — We had sent the Servant forward to order breakfast so could have no relief from him, Mr. Dixon & I therefore got out & walked the three miles, exposed to a very hot Sun, & sent back the Servant with a Horse while we breakfasted. — but on their arrival We found it quite impossible that these poor creatures should in such weather go through the journey we had before us, without at least a few days rest, & as we had not time for this, Mr. Dixon being anxious to reach the Federal City by a certain day. He consulted our Landlord on the subject, — who he found had always six Ploughs employed on his Plantation, & after a great deal of talking & a pretty good bargain, on the part of our Dutch Man, it was agreed that he should give us a pair of his best Draught Horses, & agreeably to his own proposal, drove us himself to the natural Bridge, — which he wished much to see, our Horses & Driver remaining at his House till called for.

After a few tears from his Wife, (who seemed to be a good creature,) & a little shaving, washing, & bustling;

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all was arranged & we set out in the afternoon to go 10 miles

Our Landlord, though a big clumsy Fellow, drove admirably. Mr. Dixon & I were observing the singularity that a Man, possessing four hundred acres of land in village, & living at the head of a large family in a sort of opulence, should keep an inn & become occasionally a Postillion,—when down came one of our wheels.— We were three miles from his House, & the difficulty was how to get the Carriage back.— Our active Driver borrowed a Hatchet from a Farm-House near, & with the aid of the Footman cut & dragged from a neighbouring Wood, two Trees forming with them a kind of Slay. This cost much labour & it was two hours, at least, before we were in a condition to set out.— The Driver resumed his seat, Mr. Dixon & the Servant walked on each side of the Carriage & I ventured, at their united intreaties to sit in it & we returned in solemn procession to Mr. Bright's House, the Moon favoured the Driver knew the road.— a Smith on Bright's own Plantation undertook to repair all damages, & after breakfast next morning we again set forth, truly in search of adventures, & slept at Harris's 10 miles, a good new House where we were well accommodated though the Landlord seemed to have made rather free with the Mettle.

+ From hence we proceeded, on Wednesday the 20th to Hangers
 to breakfast 11 miles, we found every thing here in good
 order, & the Landlord intelligent enough to give us par-
 ticulars concerning our road - by his advice we dis-
 patched a Messenger to Knight's with orders, where
 where our Driver ^{& Horses} should meet us.

+ The Country during these stages appeared well
 cultivated, the Indian Corn was in flower & made
 a noble appearance. Except a field of Sugar-Cane,
 nothing can exceed the beauty & magnificence of
 a large field of Indian-Corn in full blow. - From
 Hangers we went 8 miles to Stanton, a small but
 prettily built Town, & situated in a charming Valley.
 We were agreeably surprised on arriving at the inn
 to find it, in this hot weather, cool & pleasant. We
 dined at one Richardson's, & were ushered into a
 publick ordinary a scene of confusion any where,
 affording always an uncomfortable meal. Stanton
 though of no importance in itself is a central sta-
 tion for Inns & Stores, it being the Improvium for
 Travellers to the Sweet-Springs, to Bentonsburg, & to
 the Tennessee Country, & for a very few like us, to the
 Natural Bridge. - No European can travel
 in America without remarking the familiarity
 of Inns & Tavern keepers, - but even an American

must remark at Edmonstons the happy consequential
manners of mine Host. His Wife, who was a well
behaved Woman, sat at the head of the publick Table
& did the honors with perfect ease. — We quitted this
happy pair, satisfied, that on our return, we should
strike off at another point of the road & see no more
of them. As our intention is to cross the back-fish
gap, in the blue Mountains, & proceed to Washington
on the East-side of the Mountain, hitherto we
have travelled on the West-side between the Blue
the North Mountain. —

From Stanton we went 11 miles of the most
execrable road I ever saw, & late in the evening
reached a small but merry Tavern in Greenville,
happy that we had escaped alive, having traversed
Woods & rocky Precipices four miles after dark. —
We found that Mr. Steele family had chosen this
evening to give a dance to the youth of the Village,
our arrival interrupted & greatly disconcerted the
Party, but after a little interval one of the Daughters
modestly asked our permission to continue the
Ball, — Mr. Lister & I agreed they might go on as
long as the Fiddlers could hold out, — & it was some-
what strange to see people in extreme heat labour-
ing, — the Men without their Coats, & fatiguing them-

selves to death, then calling it amusement. — after getting tea we went to Bed & slept sound in defiance of the Frodes. —

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in consequence of Driver ate with us. As soon as he quitted his seat he was again a Gentleman Farmer. From Greensville we proceeded next morning 19 miles to the Red House, the road scarcely tolerable, lying often through Woods affording romantic scenery. From the Red House to Lexington 10 miles, in the last of which we crossed a Branch of James River, the Country wild & pretty. Lexington is a small Town situated on a beautiful rising, the position cool airy & healthy. — The Town having been burnt down four years ago the present buildings are new & good. — We took a hasty dinner at a Mr. Sheads, a very civil Man, & proceeded by a road reported very bad & we were not disappointed. —

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The continued danger we were in of oversetting, distracted my attention from the charms of the Scene around us. — At the distance of six miles we reached a poor looking House on the side of a wooded Hill, at Buffalo Creek, but here we found our entertainment as rough as the road we had passed over. — we had received a hint, from our Companion on the Occ, that the Master of the Inn drank hard,

but that this Wife was an industrious civil Woman, - We had however no idea of finding a Mad Man, which he really appeared to be. - Nasty, squaled, half naked, he raged through the room the whole evening, swearing & blaspheming but, like other Mad people, now & then saying (particularly on politics for all American Lin-keepers are Politicians) very good smart things. -

Much persuasion from his Wife & our friend was necessary to make him quit the room when I went to bed, otherwise we could not expect to sleep, as the small bed Chamber we occupied, was adjoining to this common room, & in fact had no door. Mr. Histon contrived to fasten up a Blanket with some gimlets, he always carried with him, & for a little time our Landlord retired, - but some Waggons arriving he soon returned to the charge. - As he however made no attempt to enter the Chamber we slept tolerably, burning a wax candle of sorrow all night.

On Friday 1st August, at half past five in the morning we quitted this House of misery, & drove over a rough road, but through a romantic Country, 7 miles to the House of Capt. Wentworth, within two miles of the natural Bridge. - We reached this small Log House about eight to breakfast, We found our Landlord a stout good tempered Fellow & a met, his Wife very obliging & a Prudge, as every

Woman in her line must be, in this Country, particularly.

We found that a Carriage had broke down that morning, & the ^{two} Gentlemen in it, agreed to walk with us two miles to the Bridge, by the persuasion of Capt. Berkley I was mounted on a quiet Nag of his Wife's, & moved on with the Pedestrians through a Wood, at the termination of which the view opened upon high

broken rocks, & steep wooded hills & the natural bridge appeared,

over which a road proceeded as one irregular arch uniting two mountains. The depth from the level ^{order of the River 21st feet} ~~21st feet~~ to the gulf beneath the arch itself being in ^{thickness} ~~the depth~~ fifty feet of that, — the distance ^{between} the roads

We took some refreshment with Capt. Barkley,
I set out early in the afternoon. The Captain's charges

were so small that Mr. Lister doubled the ^{an amount of the} Bill, & left with him a copy of Mr. Jefferson's Notes on Virginia, observing, that the Person who showed the Bridge to Strangers ought to be enabled to give the most perfect account of it. He seemed much pleased & we returned to Lexington that night.

& We tracing our steps the following morning, breakfasted at the Red House & slept at Greenville. — Here, on Sunday the 9th, we changed our road turning striking off to the back-fish-gap, in order to cross the Blue Mountain.

The frequent rains ^{had} rendered the road very heavy; & we stopped at a Log House & got a very indifferent breakfast from a Dutch family. — It being Sunday, a day of family visiting in this ^{part of the} Country, all the good things were very carefully reserved for the Sons & Daughters who were either to dine or sup with them. — In consideration however, of Mr. Lister's talking German, the good Woman was prevailed upon to give us a portion of the butter she was saving, & we made a shift with it. About twelve o'clock we reached the Tavern where our Driver was ordered to meet us with the Horses & finding them all well we parted from our friend Mr. Wright, who, though anxious to return to his Wife & Children, professed much sorrow at leaving us. On our sides, though he was a good creature & his Stories often amusing, we were a little tired both of them

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& of a familiarity & a grasp, particularly in his manner of eating; not a little ^{silly} of his type, which was always in his mouth. Mr. Weston paid him handsomely as he had been very attentive.

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We soon, after setting out, began to ascend the mountain though gradually, & at the distance of three or four miles reached the summit. — Our course lay through a continued wood, the road though stony appeared to have been made & at the top of the mountain we found a very good Tavern, kept by one Paul, where we dined with a few gentlemen, travellers like ourselves. — The descent of the mountain, to the East, having been represented as longer & steeper than the ^{ascent to the} West, we set out immediately after dinner ~~going~~

~~the West side~~ had not advanced more than two miles when our axle ~~tree~~

snapped, & we found ourselves in this wilderness, with every prospect of a thunder storm; — As the evening advanced fast upon us it was necessary that something should be done; — The Servant was dispatched to the Bottom of the Hill to borrow a Hatchet, from the first House he saw, He soon returned, & a Tree was cut down & by ^{the} great exertions of Mr. Weston the Driver & Footman, the Carriage was set upon a sort of ~~slay~~ ^{slay} but I had to walk in the procession. At the bottom of the mountain we found a small Town just settled ^{named New York} — The rain now came on with such violence that we were obliged to get into the

Carriage as a shelter from the storm. — after it abated I remained in it alone, & was dragged half a mile further to ~~the Tavern~~, the new settlement of ~~the Tavern~~ not yet possessing one, & we were tolerably accommodated. —

While we were repairing our Carriage in the mountain, in the middle of a gust, several Horsemen passed, they all stop'd with the salutation of, Friend you have been unlucky — looked at our work for some time then rode on, wishing us better luck. Three of the Gentlemen who had dined with us on the Hill came up, & offered their services with much civility.

no good Samaritan
amongst them

As it took some time for the Smith to repair the Damage done to our Machine it was late on the 11th when we set out, & we could only reach, at Charlotte-

ville, one Morgan's that night. He was one of those kind Landlords who think it incumbent upon them

not to let their guests lie alone. ^{an attention} rather new to the English Traveller. But the roads having been rendered heavy by the rains, & finding that though Mr. Morgan gave us too much of his company, his House was a good one, we remained quietly till Tuesday forenoon, intending to pay a visit to Mr. Jefferson at Monticello. — It was the Monthly Court at Charlottesville, & a great crowd of persons. — Mr. Jefferson was so near that the place of his House was pointed

out to us peeping ^{over the top of} over the top of a wooded Mountain,
 We set out for Monticello & began the ascent about a
 mile from ^{the} town. — We wound round this Hill for more
 than three miles, no part of the road steep or bad but
 rather narrow; — no cultivation appeared till we
 reached the Gardens & Negro Houses of Mr. Jefferson, —
 but on attaining the summit, the scene was truly
 magnificent. The top of the Hill is flat, & the New
 Building, stands in the centre of a very pretty
 little lawn. — of the ^{comfortable apartments of the} House little can at present be
 said. None of the chambers are finished except a very
 small suite for his immediate use, consisting of a
 Bed chamber Library &c. — I had never before seen
 fine Pictures & Mirrors placed upon bare brick
 walls; but Mr. Jefferson changes so often the ^{ceilings} ~~walls~~
 the floors, or partitions that it cannot be otherwise.
 Nothing is wanting ^{to the magnet} ^{to move} but rather, cultivated Country
 to overlook, & a fine River to wind round in order
 to render Monticello, not only the finest place in
 America, but almost in the World.

(the architecture is
 esteemed fine)

Nothing could be more kind than the
 reception given to us by Mr. Jefferson, or more
 agreeable than our whole entertainment. We
 found there his married Daughter, a pretty Woman
 & a group of Ladies, together with the then

Governor of Virginia, - Mr. Munro, & our old acquaintance
 Mr. Madison. - We were most earnestly pressed to pass
 the night, which the lateness of the dinner almost
 obliged us to do, but our time being limited the Moon
 shining bright we resisted, & Mr. Jefferson provided us
 with a guide to conduct us through a rapid run
 of water, & we proposed to sleep at an Inn ten miles
 distant, but by the mistake of our Driver we past
 this House & at twelve o'clock at night, were glad
 to stop at a little Tavern on the road. -

I was much shocked at entering to find in
 this sequestered spot half a dozen ferocious looking
 Fellows sitting at a card Table, which was covered
 with dollars. - This, in the State of Virginia was
 more alarming, & yet more natural than it could
 have been in any other part of the United States;
 on entering we were conducted to a very sorry chamber up
 stairs, & for some time I felt a good deal of alarm. -
 in almost any other Country I could not have been
 prevailed upon to go to bed, but I recollected that
 America is, as yet comparatively an innocent one.

Next morning the 6.th we proceeded 7 miles
 to breakfast at one Gardens, a very good House &
 hurried as we were, we were tempted to go two
 or three miles out of our road to perform our

promise of dining at Mr. Maddison's, & were so kindly
 welcomed by him & his wife that it was with difficulty
 we could quit them, in time to sleep at Orange Court-
 House, 6 miles. Thursday the 7th of August we breakfasted
 at Paris 12 miles, & dined at Culpeper Court House 8 miles.
 slept at Greens 9 miles, & passing some road so bad & so
 intricate as to require a guide, we reached Elk run
 Church Court House 12 miles. On Friday the 8th, we dined at Lanadours
12 long miles, - from thence to Dumfries 12 miles that night,
 breakfasted at Colchester 10 miles on Saturday the 9th, &
 in a heavy shower & through dreadful roads we
 reached Mount Vernon to dinner.

Mr. Washington received us with her usual
 kindness, & not without tears, ^{one of} our last visit there
 had been in the October, ^{of the} preceding ^{year} 1799, when the
 General was perfectly well. - our spirits were much
 damped, & I listened ^{with tender interest} to a sorrow which she said truly
 was breaking her heart, & it was really doing so.
 We staid all night & took ^{leave of} her with much regret
 next morning. - Mr. Dixon had appointed to meet
 the Secretary of State & some others on business at
 the City of Washington. - Mr. Washington very kind-
 ly offered to send & invite them to Mount Vernon,
 but Mr. Dixon thought this too much & refused it. -
~~through~~ Alexandria & the Federal City we proceeded
 home, having still a journey to make immediately.