

RETRACING THE ADVENTURES OF THE "FOUR VAGABONDS"

by Bill Ramsey
Bruceton Mills, West Virginia

100th Anniversary Vagabond Commemorative Tour

This fourth article in the series provides highlights of the 100th Anniversary Vagabond Commemorative Tour hosted August 19-23, 2018, by the Mason Dixon T's chapter of the MTFCL. This progressive tour retraced a portion of the 1918 vacation trip of Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, Harvey Firestone, and John Burroughs (see article in the March/April 2018 issue of the *Model T Times*). Exactly 100 years later, about sixty "modern day vagabonds", from ten states, rendezvoused at the Historic Summit Inn, near Uniontown, Pennsylvania to relive a part of history. They embarked on a modern day adventure to retrace a portion of the route taken by the Four Vagabonds in August 1918. There were twenty-three Model T's, one Model A, and, as in 1918, one 1917 Packard Twin Six Touring. In 1918, the Packard was owned and operated by T. Edison (Tom) but in 2018 the Packard was owned and operated by T. Bunnell (Ted).

These "present day vagabond" adventurers stayed overnight at the Historic Summit Inn on the exact night the Four Vagabonds stayed there 100 years before. Although the original Four Vagabonds have long since passed, their names were alive around the Summit Inn as participants arrived and checked in at registration in the Henry Ford Room. The tour group dined in the Thomas Edison Banquet Hall for breakfasts and the opening and closing banquets. They gathered in the lobby to drink morning coffee and view the framed hotel register bearing the signatures of Henry Ford, Harvey Firestone, Thomas Edison, and John Burroughs when they stayed overnight on August 19, 2018. They spent evenings relaxing and socializing in front



Vagabond Commemorative Tour participants at the Historic Summit Inn near Uniontown, Pennsylvania. The tour began and ended at the Summit Inn, where the original Four Vagabonds stayed on their 1918 vacation trip.

of the same stone fireplace where Edison had kicked cigars off the mantle to show his agility. They climbed the stairs from the lobby to their rooms - the same steps on which Ford and Edison had conducted their stair-jumping contests one hundred years before.

The tour departed from the Summit Inn and traveled the historic National Road through Pennsylvania, Maryland, and West Virginia to Elkins, West Virginia. Certainly traveling the same route and visiting many of the same locations as the 1918



Just like Thomas Edison, Ted Bunnell drove his 1917 Packard Twin Six on the tour. Jim and Edna Cross pose with Ted at the Historic Summit Inn.

trip added excitement and nostalgia to the band of reenactors. It was also the 200th anniversary of the National Road and the rich history of the road and the sound of Model T's again clicking along on the historic highway brought back memories of a time now past. It was in this historic setting, high atop the summit overlooking the town of Uniontown, Pennsylvania, that this modern "Vacation Days of 2018" trip began...

Saturday / Sunday - August 18/19, 2018

As participants arrived, they parked their trailers in the secure area and checked in at registration in the Henry Ford Room at the Historic Summit Inn. At registration they were given several commemorative items related to the tour. The items included a tour book, custom Vagabond Tour canvas briefcase, the traditional banner with the tour logo, and a Vagabond Tour magnetic sign for their cars. They also received a personalized limited edition reprint of the *Vacation Days of 1918* manuscript that was published by Ford, Edison, and Firestone after the death of John Burroughs. This book was dedicated to Burroughs and contains his written journal and pictures of the 1918 trip.

Retired Maryland Department of Natural Resources forester and author, Champ Zumbrun, was the guest speaker at the opening banquet at the Historic Summit Inn. Champ was dressed as a 1930's era forest ranger.



For those who arrived early, the Sunday morning warm-up tour took the group to visit *Kentuck Knob*, a house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and built for the Hagans of Hagan Ice Cream fame. Mary Ann Perkins, Director of Operations, welcomed the group and presented a brief history of the house and grounds. The house is currently owned by Lord Peter Palumbo of Great Britain. The attendees were divided into three groups and shuttled up the long driveway to the house for a detailed tour. Afterwards, the group viewed several antique cars from Lord Palumbo's collection, thanks to fellow vagabond Skip Seaton, who maintains the cars and brought them out of storage specifically for the group. Everyone was treated to Hagan ice cream, then departed for lunch and touring on their own.

When the tourers arrived back at the Summit Inn, they were joined by the late arrivals. Group and individual pictures were taken in front of the historic porch at the Summit Inn. The modern vagabonds and their cars were then carefully positioned by photographer Jay Best in the field below the Summit Inn for a spectacular old-style panoramic circuit camera picture. Later, George Akin set up a display of his Model T camper on the front lawn for viewing, setting the tone for the start of the expedition.

Spectacular old-style panoramic circuit camera picture of the 100th Anniversary Vagabond Commemorative Tour participants in front of the Historic Summit Inn.



Assembling in the Thomas Edison Banquet Hall for the opening banquet, the vagabonds were welcomed by Tour Director, Bill Ramsey. The guest speaker was retired Maryland State Forester, Champ Zumbrun, who has written extensively on the history and impact of the Four Vagabonds throughout the region. He dressed as a 1930's forest ranger and shared stories and a slide show on the Vagabonds. He closed by playing the guitar and singing several songs and the entire audience joined in on "This Land is Your Land".

The present day vagabonds then spent the night at the Summit Inn on the exact night Ford, Edison, Firestone, and Burroughs had stayed there 100 years ago.

Monday, August 20, 2018

Daybreak revealed a foggy morning. After a fabulous breakfast buffet in the Edison Room, the travelers loaded their bags on the luggage trailer driven by Sheryl Ramsey and the caravan departed from the Summit Inn. The Farmington Volunteer Fire Department provided traffic control to ensure that all Model T's made it safely out of the lot and onto the National Road. Ride-along guests included Donna Holdorf of the National Road Heritage Corridor, Stacey Magda of the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau, and Laura Kutek of the Summit Inn.

Traveling east on the National Road and across the Youghiogheny Lake, the first stop was the Petersburg Toll House in Addison, Pennsylvania, one of only three remaining toll houses



Several of the cars parked by the windmill at the Springs Museum.

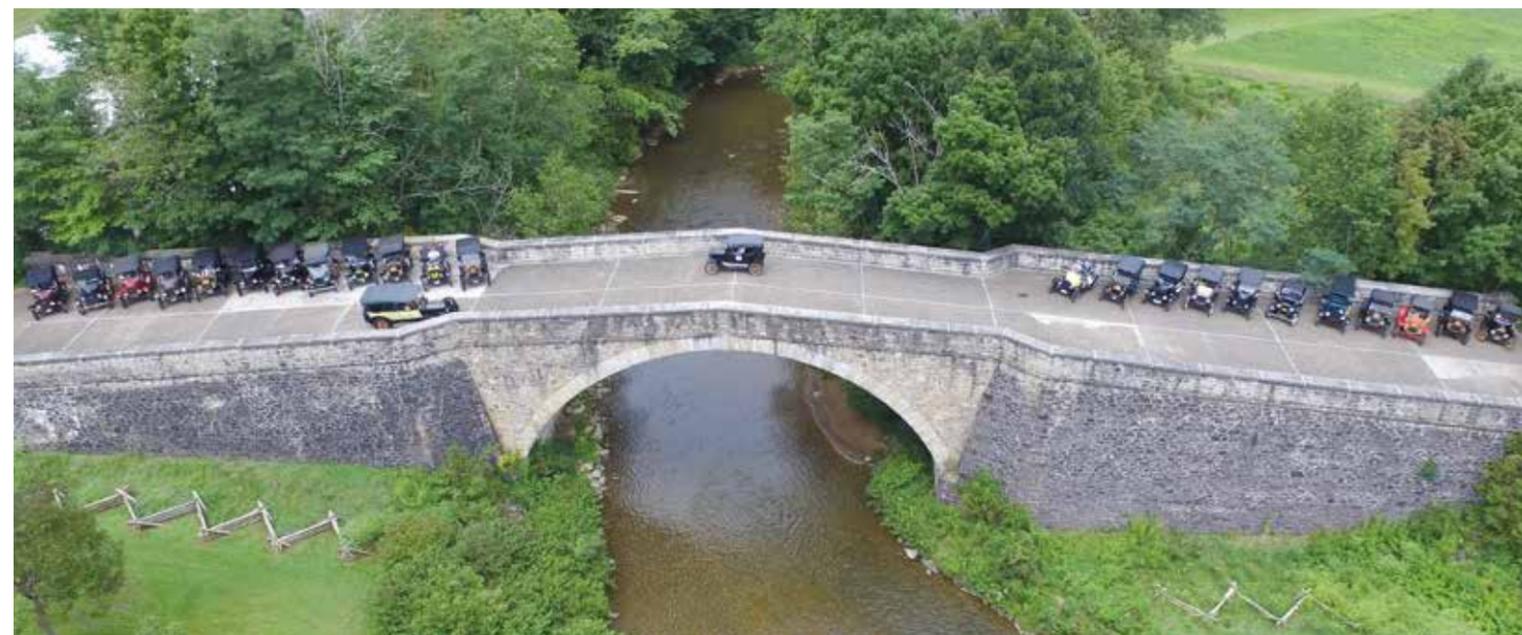


Vagabond Model T vehicles parked on Center Street in downtown Oakland, Maryland, during the car show and visit to the Transportation and Railroad Museums.

on the National Road. From there the group traveled on back roads, up the mountain past High Point Lake to the top of Mount Davis, the highest point in Pennsylvania. Coffee and donuts were provided by Stacey Magda of the Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau. The travelers then proceeded down the back side of Mt. Davis on dirt roads, through the state forest and into the Amish country around Springs, Pennsylvania. Visits were made to Whispering Pines Furniture and Mark's Harness Shop, where several folks found leather goods and hard-to-find "old-time" items. Roy Stone and Bill Ramsey gave rides to several Amish children along the road at the fruit, vegetable, and baked goods stands. There were many smiles and laughter could be heard over the hills and hollers.

One of the next stops before lunch included the Springs Museum which contains many pioneer day artifacts and exhibits. The museum was not normally open on Monday, but thanks to Curator Richard Yoder and his group of volunteers, arrangements were made to open the museum just for the tour. Duty for the luggage trailer was handed off to Rock and Elaine Foster. Many participants ate lunch at Casselman, Penn Alps, and Cornucopia restaurants. The cars then assembled at the

Drone photograph of the cars on Casselman River Bridge along the National Road in Grantsville, Maryland. This bridge was in service from 1813 -1933.



Vince and Janice Altieri pose next to the historic marker commemorating the Vagabonds camping at Muddy Creek Falls and Swallow Falls State Park near Oakland, Maryland.

historic Casselman River Bridge near Grantsville, Maryland. This bridge was the largest single stone arch bridge in the United States at the time of its construction in 1813. Special permission had been obtained from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources allowing the Model T's to drive on the bridge. Many Model T's had crossed this bridge prior to its closing in 1933. The tour caravan crossed the bridge and each car was carefully put in place for an aerial photo taken from a drone hovering high above the bridge.

Leaving the Casselman River Bridge and Spruce Forest Artesian Village, the expedition headed south on New Germany Road, crossing Deep Creek Lake to Swallow Falls State Park. They visited the campsite of the original Vagabonds and viewed Muddy Creek Falls and Swallow Falls before heading into the town of Oakland, Maryland. Thanks to the City of Oakland, the street was blocked off between the Garrett County Transportation Museum and the B&O Railroad Museum. Many local residents attended the car show and the modern day vagabonds enjoyed visiting the museums and local attractions.

Leaving the downtown area, the group traveled to the Manor Steakhouse for a delicious evening meal. This historic mansion was built in 1869 by a federal judge from Washington, DC, as a summer cottage. It became a "speakeasy" during prohibition, and later a restaurant known as The Cornish Manor. The historic structure had been recently reopened and the group was greeted by owner Wayne Thomas, who provided the entire upstairs dining rooms for the vagabonds. Leaving the restaurant, the group traveled about ten miles to Alpine Lake Resort to spend the night.

Tuesday, August 21, 2018

After a buffet breakfast at the lodge at Alpine Lake, the travelers headed out across the backroads of West Virginia and Maryland. One could picture the Four Vagabonds traveling these roads and enjoying nature in all its grandeur. The path led down the steep Hogback Road, descending into the valley along Horseshoe Run, to the community of Lead Mine, West Virginia. This is the site of the famous picture of the Four Vagabonds taken beside the waterwheel. The local Community

Emergency Response Team (CERT) treated the modern day vagabonds to an amazing homemade lunch in the fellowship hall of the Lead Mine Methodist Church. A variety of desserts were provided, including a cake decorated with a picture of the original Vagabonds beside the waterwheel. Participants mingled and chatted with the locals and visitors and enjoyed viewing the log museum and half-size replica of the waterwheel constructed by local resident Mark Warner. Many folks also walked along Horseshoe Run, where the Vagabonds camped in 1918. Participants viewed the original grinding wheel from Evan's Mill and the location of the railroad trestle where Shay locomotives moved logging trains through the area during the peak of the timbering industry.



Museum and half scale water wheel at Lead Mine, West Virginia, site of the original waterwheel picture of the Four Vagabonds in 1918.



Four of the "Modern Vagabonds" pose at the same waterwheel location as the original Vagabonds. Left to right: Jim Bowery, Skip Seaton, Vince Altieri, and Wib Caldwell.

The hospitality of the community and the hundreds of people who visited was truly remarkable. Several of the Model T'ers commented that they were "treated like celebrities." These same sentiments were expressed by John Burroughs in his journal nearly a hundred years ago when he wrote: "An added human interest was given to the trip whenever we came in contact with any of the local population...the people...gave us a hospitable welcome and added much to our comfort."

After lunch, the caravan traveled along Horseshoe Run to the town of Parsons, West Virginia. The mayor and one of the county commissioners welcomed the group and provided a cookie and ice cream stop in the parking lot of the historic Tucker County Courthouse. The locals shared the story of the history of the Kingsford Charcoal plant founded by Henry Ford and still in operation in Parsons today. The expedition then drove past the plant on their way across the back road of Pheasant Run and traveled to the town of Elkins, West Virginia. An afternoon rain shower accompanied the present day vagabonds as they trekked to the Stirrup Gallery Museum at Davis & Elkins College. After viewing the numerous interesting and ancient artifacts, including an impressive collection of rifles and powder horns, the group checked in to the Isaac Jackson Hotel. Due to the threat of rain and a late night dinner event, arrangements were made to leave the Model T's parked at the hotel. With the help of the owners and staff of the Isaac Jackson, two local churches provided shuttle buses to take the group to the Gandy Dancer Dinner Theater, where the entire vagabond party was treated to a special private dinner show. The mayor of Elkins welcomed the commemorative travelers. During the show, Jim and Edna Cross showed off their dancing skills by doing the "twist." Returning to the hotel after an exciting and fun evening, the weary travelers retired for the night.

Wednesday, August 22, 2018

After an early breakfast at the Isaac Jackson Hotel and loading the luggage trailer, the travelers were off again. Their first stop was the Bowden Trout Hatchery just outside of Elkins on Old Route 33. As the rain began to fall that morning, the hundred-year-old cars began the climb up and over two major mountains of nearly 3,400 feet in elevation. They successfully crossed Shaver and Rich Mountains in a pelting rain storm. The caravan



Model T's at Blackwater Falls State Park in West Virginia.



Steve Ellis, John Lingle, Al Montenguise, and Barbara Beck enjoy the view from the deck at Alpine Lake Lodge.



Bill Clough attends to items in the front seat of his 1924 Touring as his wife, Betty, enjoys the company of Laurel and Willow during the visit to Old Hemlock. Laurel and Willow are Old Hemlock English Setters.

arrived mid-morning at Canaan Valley Resort State Park, where a coffee stop was provided by the Tucker County Convention and Visitors Bureau. The unique landscape and ecosystem of Canaan Valley was impressive as the rain subsided and beautiful blue skies appeared. The group proceeded through the old logging towns of Davis and Thomas and visited Blackwater Falls State Park. Lunch was on their own and then the group headed across the mountains, passing near the Fairfax Stone Monument. They visited Our Lady of the Pines Chapel, the smallest church in forty-eight states and navigated the country back roads to Terra Alta, West Virginia. Several folks made a stop at the Shorthorn Saloon (formerly the oldest Ford dealership in the area). The Model T's previously on display there had been sold at auction the week before, but several of the group still enjoyed visiting and relaxing amid the historic pictures hanging on the walls.

Arriving mid-afternoon back at Alpine Lake Lodge, the group set up for the evening car show. A large crowd of local residents showed up to view the cars and socialize with the modern day vagabonds. Multiple stories were exchanged and the main topics of discussion were history and cars. Old time country music entertainment was provided by the group *Mountain Sugar*. A barbecue buffet dinner was served in the dining room at the lodge and, after a long day, folks retired for a much needed rest.

Thursday, August 23, 2018

Departing Alpine Lake after breakfast, the group traveled across the Brandonville Pike to visit Old Hemlock, the historic home of George Bird and Kay Evans. The group was treated to a donut and coffee break as well as a tour of the log house built in 1816. A presentation was given in the museum conference room telling the story of Old Hemlock and the breed of English Setter bird dogs bearing the same name. Hosted by LeJay and Helen Ann Graffious, the visit at Old Hemlock was a highlight for many on the tour. Lee Crenshaw was elated when he saw the original composer's manuscript of the song *Dixieland*. LeJay, who is an avid "birder", gave a bird banding demonstration and allowed several participants to handle the birds and assist in releasing them after banding.

Leaving Old Hemlock, the tour headed to Coopers Rock State Forest on the top of Chestnut Ridge and enjoyed the impressive overlook into the Cheat River Canyon with the city



During the "bird banding" demonstration at Old Hemlock, LeJay Graffious instructs Cassel Adamson IV on the proper technique to hold and release a bird after banding as the other vagabonds look on. Left to right: "Grandpa" Cassel Adamson II, Pennie Terry, Bill Clough, George Akin, Skip Seaton, Ramona Akin, and Kathy Kemper.

of Morgantown, West Virginia, in the background. Box lunches were provided at the picnic shelter and included homemade sandwiches, baked beans, and coleslaw made by Sheryl Ramsey. Dessert was local Amish-made cookies.

From Cooper's Rock, the group traveled through Bruceton Mills and across Skyline Drive, experiencing spectacular views of three states and a sprawling vista of wind turbines. Arriving back at the Summit Inn for the closing banquet, another superb meal was served in the Thomas Edison Hall. Hotel owner, Karen Harris, was on hand to greet the modern day vagabonds and she received a personalized copy of the limited edition *Vacation Days of 1918* book. She thanked the group for holding the event at the hotel and welcomed us back anytime. Bill thanked her and her excellent staff for being such great hosts.

A few special recognitions were announced during the closing banquet. Milt Roorda and George Akin received the "Thomas Edison Innovation Award" for their "wire tie" repair of Milt's broken distributor rotor. Dale and Margo Rogers were recipients of the "Pioneer Award" for being the only car to complete the tour without a Ruckstell or Warford; this was their first tour



Several members of the tour group at the Cheat Canyon overlook at Coopers Rock State Forest with the town of Morgantown, West Virginia, in the back ground. A delicious homemade box lunch was served in the picnic shelter near the overlook.



Banner showing the official logo, dates, and location of the historic 100th Anniversary Vagabond Commemorative Tour. The magnetic car sign is partially visible on the right.

in their 1924 Touring. Jim Atha was recognized as the oldest participant on the tour at eighty-three years old. Cassel Adamson IV was recognized as the youngest participant at age five.

Several participants shared what they considered the most memorable moments of the tour. Bill Ramsey thanked the vagabonds for their attendance, great camaraderie, and family culture which had developed over the week. On behalf of the entire group, Edna Cross presented a "thank you" gift to Bill and Sheryl Ramsey for their work on coordinating the tour. Edna then recited a special blessing she had written for the evening meal.

Many hugs and accolades were exchanged as the banquet came to a close. Several folks asked about details of the next Vagabond Tour. Bill and company said after some rest and relaxation, thought would be given to "what", "where" and "if"!

The "Modern Day Vagabonds" departed Friday morning after breakfast with their hearts and minds filled with memories of this historic commemorative tour. The Four Vagabonds called the 1918 adventure their "best trip ever". Many of the departing 2018 Vagabonds called this 100th anniversary commemorative tour their "best tour ever".

Bill would like to thank all of the fabulous participants, hosts, helpers, and friends who helped make this tour possible.

Acknowledgments:

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