

The morning of October 11, 1998 dawned bright and beautiful with just a touch of fall in the air. Eleven Model-T enthusiasts in six cars gathered at a Nashville landmark , The Loveless Cafe. Four members of the newly formed Chapter Tennessee T's , Lynn and Sue Cook of New Johnsonville, Tn. driving a 1923 Touring car and Larry and Carolyn Williams of Waverly, Tn. driving a 1926 Touring car had chosen for their first great adventure as a Chapter to drive the Natchez Trace Parkway from Nashville, Tn. to Natchez, Ms.

Joining us on this undertaking were Bill and Isabelle Guiney in a 1910 Touring, Sandy Lynch in a 1914 Touring and Jane Larson of Hendersonville, NC. Jane, Sandy, Bill and Isabelle are all members of the Blue Ridge Riders. Joining us and riding with Jane was her brother Max Larson from Miami, Fla. in a 1926 Coupe. We were also joined by Bill Cummings and Brenda Floyd of Atlanta, Ga. in a 1923 Roadster.

We enjoyed a hearty southern breakfast of grits, ham & eggs, biscuits & gravy and homemade jelly at the Loveless Cafe. We were joined for breakfast by Herman and Ouiese Claxton who had hosted the early arrivals of our group the afternoon before.

After breakfast we entered the northern end of the Trace. Our goal for the first day was to reach Tupelo, Ms. before nightfall. We had one hundred and seventy five miles to go.

Thoughts of the ghosts of bandits, thieves and highwaymen of old quickly vanished as the beautiful sunbathed landscape of southern middle Tennessee unfolded. Breathtaking overlooks, waterfalls, and glimpses of

the old original trail made our morning most enjoyable. At the site of Meriweither Lewis's grave (of Lewis and Clark fame) a craft fair was in progress. The huge crowd made us quickly decide to forgo this stop and try again on our return trip. Some of us picnicked, others enjoyed snacks, while others stopped for barbecue. We crossed the Tennessee River and the Tombigby waterway and on to Tupelo. Day one a trouble free and beautiful drive.

Day two dawned with sunshine and blue skies. After breakfast we headed for our next destination, Jackson, Ms. one hundred and sixty miles away. We lunched and had a midday rest at French Camp, a rustic restaurant at the site of an old Inn. Sorghum is still made here each year. During the day we stopped at historic sites, such as Bynum Mounds, Kosciusko Visitors Center. The town of Kosciusko is the birthplace of Oprah Winfrey. Just before arriving in Jackson we drove along the banks of the Ross Barnett Reservoir. In Jackson we were all invited to the home of Randy and Lou Harding for a dinner. Lou and Randy were most gracious host. Randy and Lou have been avid T enthusiast for many years. The men all discussed T's and toured Randy's shop while the ladies visited and copied some of Lou's wonderful recipes.

Day three our destination was Natchez. After a twenty mile drive across Jackson to return to the Trace we were on our way. Jackson is the only place the Trace is not completed. This day was a short one hundred miles. We detoured into the town of Port Gibson, a town that General Grant said was too beautiful to burn. Port Gibson has not only been known as "too beautiful to burn" but also claims fame as a City of Churches. One of the most famous structures is the First Presbyterian Church with a gilded hand that tops the steeple. Eleven miles south of Port Gibson on Highway 61 the group lunched at the

“Old Country Story” in Lorman, Ms. The store was built in 1835 and had been closed for several months for renovations. They were having their grand reopening on the day we arrived. From here it was back to the Trace and on to Natchez. We arrived early afternoon, went to the Visitor Center, viewed a film on Natchez history and toured Longwood. This home is unfinished and is the largest octagonal house remaining in America. The home was under construction by Dr. Haller Nutt before the Civil War and never completed after the War. His family lived in the nine room basement for many years and today it is still furnished with family heirlooms. Just for the fun of it part of the group drove across the river bridge into Louisiana. Later we had dinner at Natchez Under the Hill. We ate on the patio and watched the busy river traffic while the sun sank over the mighty Mississippi. Later part of the group elected to donate a portion of their vacation funds to the Lady Luck River Boat Caniso. We soon decided that we were not Mississippi gamblers and returned to our hotel for a good nights rest.

Day four more touring and shopping in Natchez antique stores, then back to the Trace and on to Vicksburg. On the way back up the Trace we stopped to visit Emerald Mound, a large ceremonial mound built by ancestors of the Natchez. It is the second largest mound of its type existing today and covers eight acres. A climb to the top was a rewarding effort. Our next stop was Mount Locust, one of the first stands (Inns) in Mississippi. Our tour was conducted by Park Ranger Eric Chamberlin, the great-great-grandson of Paulina Chamberlain who operated Mount Locust back in the early 1800's. Ranger Chamberlain was born in this house before his grandmother donated it to the National Park Service. Upon arrival in Vicksburg we went to their visitor center and took a late afternoon drive

through the Vicksburg National Military Park with a short visit to the battleship Cairo.

In the morning of day five we took a more detailed tour of the Military Park and revisited the Cairo and the museum containing artifacts from the battleship. We toured the Old Courthouse Museum and downtown Vicksburg. The drive back to Jackson was a short two and a half hours. On the way the air from the right rear tire on the Williams car mysteriously disappeared. Help from all got the spare wheel in place and on the road again. Upon arrival in Jackson we all stopped at a gas station.

Just as we stopped a lady drove up and exclaimed, "I saw you all in the paper yesterday!" "Wait here, I'll be right back!"

Ten minutes later she was back with a copy of the paper for us. (We had been interviewed on the way down by a passing reporter at the Mississippi Craft Center) Another example of the super nice people we met along the way.

Day six we left Jackson bound for Tupelo. We stopped at French Camp for lunch and a rest. In Tupelo we were met by Billy and Laura Roth. They had planned to make the trip with us in their 1927 Roadster but Billy had to have open heart surgery. Since the surgery was over three weeks prior to the trip we really didn't understand why he did not go with us. After all the doctor had recommended exercise, rest and relaxation as part of his recuperation program. What better way to get all three than to drive a T.

Day seven the weather is still gorgeous. We started on the last leg of our journey. Billy and Laura followed us a few miles before turning off to return home. While stopped at the Pharr Mounds we met twin brothers on their way to a Dulcimer festival. We were serenaded in the parking lot with dulcimer music and song. When we reached the

Tenn-Tom Waterway we stopped to watch a large river boat tow being ferried through the lock. We crossed the Tennessee River homeward bound. After lunch at the Old Depot Cafe in Collinwood, Tn. Several local residents were taken for rides. During the afternoon some of us drove sections of the old original trace and stopped at Meriwether Lewis. We continued to see the abundant wild life along the way, including numerous deer, ducks, geese and flocks of turkey, one person reported seeing a coyote near the Tennessee River. Late in the day (33 miles from the end of the Trace) one car developed a sinister sound. Some people might call it a rod knocking. The expert opinion was it could be repaired and driven the remaining thirty-three miles. Being late in the afternoon and this close to home the decision was made to be safe rather than sorry and trailer it the remainder of the way. Back home safe and sound we give thanks. We had driven over one thousand miles. Not single drop of rain, just beautiful blue skies and sunshine each day with temperatures ranging from mid 50's in the morning to mid 80's during the day. good-bye's were said with handshakes, hugs and promises to keep in touch and tour together again soon. Life is good in a Model-T.