

GABRIEL'S GUIDE TO THE 48 STATES

AS TOLD THROUGH THE FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT OF THE WPA,
AS WELL AS A FRAGMENT HERE OR THERE FROM OTHER PRIMARY SOURCE DOCUMENTS OF THE ERA,
INCLUDING PROSE BY THE ONE AND ONLY
HARRY HOPKINS,
INTREPID NEW DEAL FIGUREHEAD AND HERO,
WHO REALLY THERE OUGHT TO BE A MONUMENT OF SOMEWHERE,
BUT THERE ISN'T.

N.B. 10 point font *signifies spoken text*, all other text is sung.

I. EARLIEST SETTLERS

The first to come were explorers by sea,
venturing northward along the shores
in pygmy galleons on the lookout for fabled
El Dorado, a vaguely imagined treasure trove
of gold and spices somewhere near the Indies.
Finding no riches, they returned.

Once more the fable illumined CALIFORNIA,
more refulgent than before, as gold-seekers
thronged westward by land and sea, risking
hardship in the hope of ease.

And people came.

I A. MOTOR TOUR I

Los Angeles - Tarzana - Calabasas - Thousand Oaks -
Right on this second road to PARAMOUNT MOTION PICTURE SETS

Newbury Park - Camarillo - El Rio - Ventura -
Two Norfolk pines towering above the belfry mark MISSION SAN BUENAVENTURA

Santa Barbara - Santa Maria - San Luis Obispo -
Bradley - King City - Greenfield - Soledad - Salinas -

In 1936, when lettuce workers struck for higher wages and better working conditions, Salinas burst into the Nation's headlines. Red flags proving that a Communist advance was under way were taken from the highway and rushed to Sacramento. Embattled growers prepared to defend life and property. In the meantime, an indignant highway commission requested that the flags placed as markers on roadsides by its workmen be returned to serve their purpose of warning motorists.

Santa Clara - San Carlos - Belmont -

Burlingame - San Bruno - Daly City -

San Francisco

II. SAN FRANCISCANS AT WORK (1930's)

When the first streaks of dawn scatter the night,
When the siren at the Ferry sounds eight o'clock
When longshoremen surge through steel-jawed pier doors,
teamsters and trucks at their heels.
the water front comes suddenly to life.

Here, congregate the crews
Masters, mates and pilots,
cooks and jitney drivers,
stewards join the groups
clambering aboard
the ships at dock.

time has drawn
another circle around the city and its workers.

As the men and women who haunt the silent buildings at night
climb aboard streetcars at dawn and stare sleepily out the windows,
The cars are packed with lawyers,
doctors who line lunch counters
seeking the morning cup of coffee.

time has drawn
another circle 'round the city and its workers.

The morning wears on,
the newsboys shout raucously.
The morning wears on,
shoppers throng Market Street
The morning wears on,
The owners of flower stands
The morning wears on,
pack dripping carnations.

Suddenly the newsboys are silent,
awaiting blacker headlines.
The buildings spew their crowds
to seek a quick lunch
in restaurant and drug store.
Uniformed ushers and doormen stand idly by....

time has drawn
another circle around the city and its workers.

The sun ducks behind the buildings, neon lights flash on.
Cocktail lounges begin to fill; darkness brings a dinner rush.

Life becomes a rising tide,
hidden behind frosted glass,
Life becomes a rising tide,
pulsing to the blare
Life becomes a rising tide,
of nickel phonographs
Life becomes a rising tide,
or the fevered tunes
of swing bands.

Time has drawn...

KNEE PLAY I

A man who, with the depression, found the whole basis of his existence wiped out, did not necessarily look into an empty future with passive resignation. There was still the possibility that over the hill the grass grew greener, opportunity still flourished, and above all, work was still to be done. Those who went over the hill in search of work were the transients. They were not bums, although in many communities they inherited the opprobrium that attaches to bums. Nor were they hoboes or professional migratory laborers, although circumstances threw them into the same labor reserve. They were industrial workers, artisans, laborers, who, after years of settled life, were forced by necessity to seek employment in new places. They were dispossessed farmers, travelling westward with their families as their fathers had done before them. They were young men who had never had a chance to work, and who could no longer remain in dependence on their burdened parents. They were country people looking for work in the city and city people looking for security in the country. They were negroes, following the usual road of opportunity northward. They were the aged, the tuberculous and the otherwise infirm, moving to the widely touted climates of Florida, California and the Southwest in the hope that a favorable climate would somehow mitigate the rigors of poverty.

III. A BALLADE OF FORMER TRAMP-DAYS

The cars lay on a siding through the night;
The scattered yard lamps winked in green and red;
I slept upon bare boards with small delight,--
my pillow, my two shoes beneath my head;
As hard as my own conscience was my bed.

I lay and listen'd to my own blood flow;
Outside, I heard the thunder come and go
And glimpsed the golden squares of passing trains,
Or felt the cumbrous freight train rumbling slow,
And yet that life was sweet for all its pains.

Against the tramp the laws are always right,

So often in a cell I broke my bread
Where bar on bar went black across my sight;
On county road or rockpile ill I sped
Leg-chained to leg like man to woman wed.

Brighter, in fine, than anything I know
Like sunset on a distant sea a-glow
My curious memory alone maintains
The richer worth beneath the wretched show
Of vagrant life still sweet for all its pains.

IV. PHYSICAL SETTING

California has climate;
Iowa has corn;
Utah has religion;
and New York has buildings
and money and hustle and congestion;
but that “lovely dappled up-and-down
land called Oregon” has an ever-green
beauty as seductive as the lotus
of ancient myth.

The newcomer may smile
at the attitude of Oregonians
towards their scenery
and their climate.

But before a year has passed,
the splendor of peaks and pines,
the joy of shouting trout-filled streams,
the beauty of roses that bloom at Christmas—

all will have become a part of his daily happiness,
undefined and unrecognized in his consciousness,
but something so vital that he can never again
do without it.

And he will even find merit
in the long winter of dismal skies
and chilling rains,

calling himself a “webfoot”
and proclaiming that he likes it—
when all the while
he means that he considers it

poor sportsmanship to complain, since he knows

that this is the tax he pays
for eternal verdure,
for ferns and hydrangeas
for holly and ivy and grass and trees
and for the privilege of appreciating by contrast
the short bright rainless summer
cooled by the softest northerly winds.

IVA. MOTOR TOUR II

Portland - Troutdale - Corbett - The Samuel Hill Monument
Crown Point - Bridal Veil - Coopey Falls - Mist Falls
Multnomah Falls - Horsetail Falls - Cascade Locks -

Washington Irving, in writing of Robert Stuart's passage of the rapids in 1812, calls the Cascades "the piratical pass of the river," and that "before the commencement of the portage, the greatest precautions were taken to guard against lurking treachery or open attack."

Starvation Creek State Park - Mitchell Point Tunnel - The Columbia Gorge Hotel
Rowena Dell - The Dalles - Arlington - Castle Rock - Boardman
Pendleton - Union - Baker - Olds Ferry at Farewell Bend - Snake River -

Caldwell, IDAHO

V. MYTHMAKING IN THE WEST

After three centuries
of adventurous seeking,
the continent has been settled,
and the last frontier is gone.

The lusty and profane extremes of it
still live in the imbecilities of
newsstand magazines and cheap novels,
wherein to appease the hunger
of human beings for drama and spectacle,
heroines are fought over by villains and heroes
and restored to their rich properties
of mine or cattle ranch;
and the villain,
if left unslain,
passes out of the story sulking darkly;

and the hero, without cracking a smile,

stands up with the heroine clinging to his breast
and addresses the reader with platitudes
that would slay any ordinary man.

But these villains with their
Wild Bill mustaches,
these apple-cheeked heroines
agog with virtue,
and these broad adolescent heroes
who say "gosh ding it" and shoot
with deadly accuracy from either hand
are remote in both temper and character
from the persons who built the West.

They are shoddy sawdust counterfeits
who would have been as much out of place in the old West
as Chief Nampuh with his huge feet would have been
among the theatrical ineptitudes of a Victorian tea.

KNEE PLAY II

I BOYCOTT THE WORLD

I am a student of life,
my contemporary friend,
a scholar of cosmos.
Cosmology, histology, pathology,
neurology, astro-physiology
and the whole tautology of
existence are my fields.
But what have I ascertained,
deduced, induced, produced -
in short, learned? Is there a design,
a scheme, a plan in this world?
No, I declare, no, no and again no.
As it totters toward catastrophe,
the world is suffering endless fluctuations,
alterations, transformations, - in short,
flux.

In order to save and preserve
their rights and privileges -
their front lawns and limousines -
the economic royalist gang of psychopaths,
paranoiacs, neuresthenics and megalomaniacs -
in short, butchers - are plotting to delude, deter,
detract, deceive, extort us with nationalism, patriotism,
aryanism, racialism - in short, LIES.

Everywhere trepidation, hallucination, anxiety -
jitters, in short-- prevail.

The poor people may today vacillate,
fluctuate, hesitate and - waver. But,
my contemporary, they will win their revenge.

All the disinherited will have their cosmic revenge.
I promise it. Picture for yourself,
for example, their grave and ours. First, ours.
Look at me. I'm emaciated, dessicated, lacerated,
withered - in short, dried up. Imagine me dead.
It's not hard. I'm lying like a schlemiel in an inexpensive
coffin of warped, bleached, knotty lumber - in short,
a pine box.

Along come the worms -
the round worms, the flat worms,
the earth worms, the tapeworms - in short,
worms. They're wriggling and squirming,
they're searching for something to eat,
something nutritious and nourishing.
They smell here, they smell there,
nibble a piece here, a piece there.
Phooey. Like an old baked apple.
Every bite produces nausea, dizziness,
wind, loss of appetite. I'm left in peace.

Now the scene shifts to J. P. Morgan's grave.
A box of delicate wood, of sensitive fibre,
of finest grain. A corpse that's radiant with
freshness and richness and succulence -
summers in Bar Harbor, winters in Palm Beach.
It's a toothsome bit of zaftig carnivorae.
In short - stuffed kishke.

Now - enter the worm, disgusted and suspicious
from the meal at my grave. A cautious sniff and a nibble and -
HA-HA-A-A-AH! What have we here? Ach du Lieber?
No mere meal or lunch or dinner but a repast, a
banquet rare, a feast. He rings the dinner gong and
they come running in droves - all the ringworms,
the earthworms, the round worms, the flat worms,
the tapeworms and presto! it's a skull and bones.
You see?
The cosmic revenge of the poor.

Meanwhile, shall I wait and let myself slip
into decline, decay, decadence, disuse?
No, my contemporary. I must have economic revenge
now, now, now. But who can trifle with lockouts,
walkouts, walkins, sitdowns, sleeping? My strike
must be universal and absolute. It must be a
one-man boycott of the whole world. By a final
and unconditional refusal to work I have never
committed the indiscretion of being hired and
therefore can never suffer the mortification of being fired
either. You see? I blockade the universe.
Now look into the future. Cast your imagination
into the clairvoyant future. Every day more and more
people out of work, every day more and more

therefore joining my ranks, year by year
more and more and more - millions and billions
throughout the world -.Are you following me?

Do you see as I do the vision, the apparition,
the overpowering apocalyptic panorama?
A whole world, my friend, without a single person at work...
Colossal...
What?...
What keeps me from going mad?

Why, words, my contemporary, just words.

VI. FOLKLORE AND FOLKWAYS (KANSAS)

The hardboiled, devil-may-care attitude of the cowboy shielded a shy brooding nature. His fatalistic philosophy was often a social pose that he upheld publicly but disavowed in private. That the cowboy was deeply concerned with an untimely end, whether it found him booted or abed, is strongly indicated by his songs and ballads. "Sam Bass," "Mustang Grey," "The Cowboy's Dream," and "The Dying Cowboy" evidence a preoccupation with death, which is at direct odds with the generally accepted picture of a swashbuckling 'puncher with two guns on his hip and an "itching trigger finger." That the cowboy was also concerned about an afterlife is illustrated in the following:

THE DIM NARROW TRAIL

Last night as I lay on the prairie
Looking up at the stars in the sky
I wondered if ever a cowboy
Would go to that sweet by and by.

The trail to that fair mystic region
Is narrow and dim all the way,
While the road that leads to perdition
Is posted and blazed all the way.

They say there will be a grand round-up,
Where cowboys like cattle must stand,
To be cut by the riders of judgment
Who are posted and know every brand.

Perhaps there will be a stray cowboy
Unbranded by anyone nigh
Who'll be cut by the riders of judgment
And shipped to the sweet by and by.

VIII. ETYMOLOGIES (MINIATURES)

PORTLAND

Amos. L. Lovejoy wanted "Boston";

Francis W. Pettygrove, "Portland."
They tossed a coin,
Pettygrove won.

CHICAGO

The stream was known
to the Indians as the Checagou,
signifying anything big,
strong, or powerful. But as
the river was ever a small
and sluggish stream, the "strong"
probably referred to
the pungent wild garlic
that grew in profusion
along its banks.

NORWICH

Norwich was chartered
as Norwhich,
but the *h* was dropped.

IX. CHICAGO

Chicago,
vibrant, noisy,
every inch alive,
is the youngest of the world's great cities,
and has the optimism,
the exuberant and often rather
self-assertive pride of youth.

Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders . . .

Toward the blue waters of the lake,
fringed with a green ribbon of parks,
Chicago presents its most impressive front.

in and around the Loop,
rising high above museums
marble piles, shafts and spires and cubes,
rising high above museums

looms a mass
of concrete and glass
stone, steel, jagged
stone, steel, jagged

The long finger of Lake Michigan
pushes deep into the prairie
The long finger of Lake Michigan
pushes deep, the stock farm and the granary

To the south, beyond the docks
are great black mills, factories, and furnaces,
roar and rumble
roar and rumble

gaunt stacks belching black clouds
their gaunt stacks belching red flames

The long finger of Lake Michigan
pushes deep into the prairie
The long finger of Lake Michigan
pushes deep, the stock farm and the granary

MOTOR TOUR III

Hammond - Highland - Gary - Hobart

whose citizens take great pride that the local high school band has won the Class B national band championships for several years.

Wahob Lake - Union Mills - Walkerton

is a shipping point in the heart of one of the Nation's two largest peppermint-growing areas. The mint farmers of this region have formed the Northern Indiana and Southern Michigan Peppermint Growers Association, a co-operative marketing organization, to find markets for their product; the chief market is in New York, where the oil is used to flavor chewing gum.

Bremen - Brimfield - Butler - Bryan

Fayette - Hessville - Fremont - Bellevue - Elyria

Sherwood Anderson, novelist and short story writer, managed a paint factory here before he switched to literature.

Rocky River - Lakewood - Cleveland - Euclid

Willoughby

X. Three Towns in Ohio

WILLOUGHBY

Originally called Chagrin,
Willoughby was named for an instructor
in the Medical College.
The school grew rapidly
after its establishment in 1834.
And had nearly 200 students when,
in 1843,
A Mrs. Tarbell discovered that her newly buried husband
was not where he should have been—
in his grave.

The onus of the blame for Mr. Tarbell's
unseemly disappearance fell on the school.
Virtually the whole town rudely invaded the college,
and turned the room upside down.
Searching for Mister Tarbell's vagrant remains,
bashed in furniture, and tossed fragments of cadavers
through the windows.

Evil days fell upon the college
because of this episode
and in 1847 it closed its doors.

MENTOR

population 1,809
is a country town of muted charm.

DAYTON

THE PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR MUSEUM,
a plain, two-story brick house of nine rooms
has a Dunbar library, the poet's manuscripts,
and many of his personal belongings.

A plaque on it reads:

Home of
Paul Laurence Dunbar
1872-1906

BECAUSE I HAD LOVED SO DEEPLY,
BECAUSE I HAD LOVED SO LONG,
GOD IN HIS GREAT COMPASSION
GAVE ME A GIFT OF SONG.

XI. MUSIC (ALABAMA)

When the Spaniards came to what is now Alabama in the sixteenth century, they found the Creek, Choctaw and Cherokee Indians using reed flutes, earthenware drums and gourd rattles as musical accompaniment for their ceremonial dances.

When the State was opened to general settlement in the early nineteenth century, Anglo-Saxon music from the Eastern seaboard was introduced. Children, then as now, went to sleep to the sound of "Froggie Went a-Courting." Spirituals, "discovered" by the musical world in the first decades of the present century, were beginning to develop in plantation cabins and mountain farmhouses.

The Sacred Harp hymn, popular with the mountain people since the State was settled, gained further favor in 1873 following a convention at Jasper. The early "all day sings" the fa-so-la hymn books were used, which took the place of conventional music notation. Sacred Harp societies were formed throughout the State and are still popular.

ALL (ORCHESTRA AND GK) STAND AND SING SACRED HARP HYMN

XIII. THE NEGRO IN WASHINGTON

The history of Washington so far sketched has been a chronicle of events from the city's distant beginnings to its indelible present, concerning itself mainly with the white population. But the story would remain incomplete without discussion of the Negro in Washington who, from the start, exerted a profound influence upon the city's destiny. Viewing Washington in its early years Thomas Moore found

Even here beside the proud Potowmac's streams . . .
The medley mass of pride and misery
Of whips and charters, manacles and rights
Of slaving blacks and democratic whites . . .

In 1819, a Negro woman, about to be sold South apart from her husband, had leapt in frenzy from an attic window, breaking both arms and injuring her back, but surviving. This focused attention upon the local slave trade. Humanitarian Jesse Torrey came to Washington shortly after the attempted suicide, visited the injured woman, and discovered two kidnaped Negroes in the attic. He began suit in the circuit court for their freedom, the expenses being defrayed by a group of persons headed by Francis Scott Key, who gave his legal services gratis. It is highly probable that the stir attendant upon this celebrated case urged the slave owner John Randolph to that bitter invective in which he said:

You call this the land of liberty,
and every day that passes things are done in it
at which the despotisms of Europe would be horror-struck
and disgusted.
In no part of the earth--
not even excepting the rivers
on the Coast of Africa,

was there so great,
so infamous a slave market,
as in the metropolis,
in the seat of government
of this nation
which prides itself on freedom.

XIV. FOLKLORE (BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT)

The Pixlee Tavern
is a remodeled salt-box house,
dating from 1700,
now covered with yellow stucco.

General Washington is believed
to have stopped en route to Cambridge
in 1775,
thus giving a local habitation
to a well-known apocryphal story.

It concerns a ruse that he employed
to secure his supper at the tavern
when he arrived one night
and found every place
at the table occupied.

The guests failed to recognize
the leader of the Continental troops
and continued to munch
savory fried oysters.

increasing the appetite
of the general.

From his post beside the fireplace,
he casually remarked
'Do any of you gentlemen realize
that horses are very fond of oysters?'
In the excitement of the lively discussion which followed,
one guest offered to wager
that 'no horse ever lived that would eat oysters.'

Immediately Washington suggested,
'Very well. Why not try them on my horse?'
As soon as the excited guests started
for the barn, Washington quietly found

a place at the table.

XV. THE WPA GUIDES.

The Guide is the product of many hands and minds working joyously, without hope of individual reward or recognition, to accomplish something of which by and large they are proud, and diffidently offering it to the public of travelers and scholars and general readers. In contributing this volume to the American Guide Series, the members of the Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration, speak collectively and anonymously. Most of them would rather have had some small part in its creation, working as carpenters of language with words as tools, finding facts and fashioning them into sentences and paragraphs and chapters, than to have built a fast highway or an impressive public building. For, generally, the writer believes that long after the best road of his day has been supplanted by a straighter and wider one, and long after the highest building has crumbled with time or been blown to bits by air bombs, this book will remain. And the makers of this Guide have faith, too, that their book will survive; in the future, when it no longer fills a current need as a handbook for tourists, it will serve as a reference source well-thumbed by school children and cherished by scholars, as a treasure trove of history, a picture of a period, and as a fadeless film of a civilization.

XVI. MANHATTAN

The liner steams through the Narrows
toward the slender island toward the north.
Out of an early morning fog
come brooding, ghostly calls.

The Limited, bearing a sight-seeing family
from Waco, Kansas City, Los Angeles,

the literary genius of Aurora High School,
the prettiest actress in the Burlington dramatic club,
a farm boy hoping to start for Wall Street,
pounds across New Jersey. They cross the meadows,
and dive into the darkness beneath the Hudson.

Slowly the air between the buildings
fills with light, fills with light.
The crowd increases, a million pale faces;
A river pierces the sultry sky, the sultry sky.

A black moving mass, a clicking of heels
that swells to to the city, that swells to the city,
He took me to The Paradise— she said
We came home in a taxi. We came home in a taxi.

The boy who came to be a writer
is waked in his mid-town room
the girl who came to be an actress
launders her stockings.

And the boy who was going to Wall Street
sprawls on his bed, wincing as each cry
cuts into his dream
of the smell of fresh hay and warm milk.

Down Fifth Avenue marches a May Day parade,
sixty thousand strong
Up lower Broadway a car moves slowly through
the yelling throng

and on its pulled-back hood,
laughing, waving sits
a champion chess player
an actor, an aviator
the first man to walk the length of Manhattan backwards.

The sun glitters on windshields,
Parisian gowns, ebony from Africa,
chauffeurs' caps, and furs from Siberia.

The lights go on in a loft on a side street
Here is the greatest city of the Jews.
Irish, Italian, Negro streets littered with papers,
pushcarts, the light leaves the flat roofs.

East Side, West Side, all around the town,
boys and girls giggling in courtyards, in tenement.
whispering together, the city spends the night on doorsteps,
sprawling on sidewalks of broken cement.

With final blast, quivering over the harbor,
a liner moves out of its docks;
past the ghosts of ten thousand vessels;
that brought the Dutch, the English,
Negro slaves.

Night draws to a close.
Bands are still playing.
A taxi tracks the wet paving.
Goodnight darling, goodnight, goodnight.