

Chapter Five

Rich Man, Poor Man

As I headed on that day I felt more content. I let Brownie pick his own pace. Sometimes he'd walk fast, like a house on fire, with his ears and eyes well forward. But even being slow, there was something resolute in my big horse's gait. Working side by side we were building a trust. It took the best part of the day to go twenty miles and I usually went a little less. But that was alright. There was so much more to this slow mode of travel. Getting water from a creek for Brownie or talking to someone along the way was all part of my new life.

I'd grown up out West, so I was well acquainted with America's most sought out kinds of scenery, the snow capped mountains reflected in icy blue lakes and the wide open spaces. Now I learned how beautiful the most ordinary country landscape could be. Fields of corn and tobacco alternated with woods. Wild flowers and various grasses grew in the ditches beside the road. A pasture would open up before us, all shades of green with flicks of bright color mixed in. Simple little wildflowers grew of their own accord for no one but me and the honeybees to enjoy. A flock of birds were aroused by our footsteps and took flight, moving as one to assemble in a nearby treetop.

I had lots of time to think now as I rolled along. I had time to really find out what life was like in rural America. It had always been there, but now I was taking a closer look. I'd been awestruck by the Amish. Out of their area the countryside took on a much different look. Each roof was obscured with gigantic antennas or satellite dishes bigger than my wagon. Power lines cut across the sky. High performance cars, custom vans, huge tractors and other agricultural machinery were parked around the farms. The noise of machinery was everywhere.

People living in the country and working in the city get the best of both worlds, they say. I had to wonder. Why did the comforts, considered so necessary, leave so little room for anything but the newest and fastest? The suburban lifestyle was swallowing up the farm country. I felt a growing desire to defend lost country living.

Going down a country road, a black Trans Am pulled over and a woman jumped out. We started talking by the side of the road. She told me she was born and raised in the area and was a pig farmer's wife. I would never have guessed it. If she had stooped to throw slop to a pig, she'd have split a seam in her hot pink stretch pants. Her hair was perfect, as was her make-up. She asked me about myself, where I was brought up. "Las Vegas, Nevada," I told her. She got a good laugh out of that. "And here you are doing this!" Life certainly has its contradictions.

My first day out of Gettysburg I made 17 miles and camped at a spot pre-arranged by the Hookes. I'd entered my second state of the trip, Maryland, and felt a little exhilarated. But as I looked at the map and noticed the city of Frederick looming closer

and larger than life I began to worry. I sat and consulted my map for quite awhile. A dominant aspect to my life on the road, part of what it took to stay alive, had to do with finding the right route. I dreaded each major highway I had to cross or had the misfortune to travel on.

I did not have a map for Frederick County to help me find the back roads away from the heavy traffic. This was a no man's land to me. My state map showed the main highways in bright colors and just a few lesser traveled grey roads. Sometimes these grey line roads dead ended in the middle of nowhere. They were just a general indication of the road's presence, nothing to plot my course by. So I went to the house and asked my host's advice. "Oh you just take a left, then a right and get on Highway 15. That's all." Their description of Highway 15 left me cold. It was the busy main route into the center of Frederick.

Then they brought out a detailed map of Frederick County. My eyes lit up as they gave it to me. Even with this map to consult they said Highway 15 was the only way south past the city of Frederick. I was determined to do better and like some sort of Civil War General, out flank my perpetual enemy, road hogging cars.

"But wait a minute," I protested. "Aren't there back roads to get around the city and the heavy traffic?" I'd already traveled on quite a few. They insisted that there weren't. That night I went over the map with a fine tooth comb. As it turned out, there were just enough back roads, although I had to zigzag a little. The next day I skirted the city limits and that evening camped on a dairy farm just south of town. The day after this I continued and crossed over the Potomac River Bridge. At quitting time I began thinking again about where to camp for the evening. As usual, my biggest concern was to find pasture space for Brownie.

I passed several possibilities, but then I spotted a man sitting on the front porch of his house up a long driveway. I pulled up the drive and posed my question. It's nerve wracking to approach perfect strangers like this. Trying to sound casual, I said, "Where do you think a good place for my horse and me to camp might be?" The man thought for a minute and before he could say anything, his wife came out. I thought, "Oh no, I'll surely be sent on down the road now."

But she was as kind as could be. "This is wonderful," she exclaimed after she'd heard me explain myself. She didn't even run for her camera and start taking pictures as others so often did. She was very concerned that Brownie and I get situated for the night. Mr. George directed me to park the wagon by the house and showed me the gate to the pasture where Brownie could stay and graze with their little herd of beef cattle. I didn't unload the wagon that night as I would have were I sleeping in it. I ate dinner with the George family and even slept in the house in their guest room. The Georges had made plans for the evening and had to go out for awhile. Without a second thought they trusted me to stay in the house by myself.

The next morning I enjoyed a hot breakfast with my hosts. They all went off to work and school and left me there again, with the house unlocked. I took advantage of

the indoor plumbing and after a late and leisurely start went on my way.

One of the George's parents lived just down the road. The old man stopped me as I went past and kindly offered to donate a hundred pound bag of dry ear corn for Brownie. He had the sack beside him. Brownie was looking back at us hungrily. But I decided it was too much to bring along. The old farmer insisted, so I settled on taking about a third of the bag's contents. We talked a bit about the old days and with fond farewells parted company. In Florida, my style of living was more self-contained and insulated by the securities of my job, car and condo. What a difference people were making in my life now.

The Georges had encouraged me to go to Harper's Ferry. The town is well known for its flamboyant history. John Brown's famous raid in the late 1850's took place there. It was also the scene of many Civil War period raids and served as an arsenal. I knew it would be interesting and possibly as good a business spot as Gettysburg had been.

I took the usual back roads nearly all the way, but had to cross the Potomac River back north on a major highway. The bridge was high, long and narrow. Brownie did well but we backed up a lot of traffic. When I got to the other side of the bridge, I edged off to the side of the road as far as I could to let the traffic pass. Just ahead of me was a large sign saying Welcome to West Virginia, Almost Heaven. Cars slowly streamed past. Some people stuck their cameras out the window for a quick snapshot of me and my rig. A few more cars passed, and a man on the passenger side of a pickup with a scowl on his face screamed out the window at me, "You Jackass!"

It was a steep decline near the river's bank going down into the old part of Harper's Ferry. I discovered that this part was controlled by the National Park Service. "Oh boy, could be trouble like I had in Gettysburg," I thought. I decided to take the bull by the horns and headed for the park service headquarters and information center. But it was a few minutes past five and everything was closed. Then I drove around town to see what there was to see from my wagon seat. I seemed to attract not much attention.

It got to be near dusk and time I settle in for the evening. I chose a grassy spot by a large oak tree along the road on the way out of town. With darkness closing in, it was the only place I could find. Nearby was a park service sign saying, NO CAMPING. I thought to myself, "What the heck. No one seemed to notice me anyway. Maybe I can get through the night. Besides, we fit right in with the historical theme here." The terrain close at hand was rough and hilly. It would have been a good many miles back out the way I came and there was that bridge to cross again as well.

I ate a cold supper and tied Brownie to a tree on a long rope. I bedded down for the night, as usual, on the floor of the wagon. My boxes were covered by a canvas tarp just behind the wagon. It was about 2:00 in the morning when I heard the sound of an engine idling just outside of the wagon. I lifted the back flap and was blinded by high beam head lights. A park ranger soon made my acquaintance.

"I got orders to run you out of here!" he said.

"I don't travel at night," I told him. "And besides, the nearest other place to camp

would be miles away.” I tried to explain my historical mission and how far I’d come already. That seemed to soften him up a bit.

“Well O.K. A few more hours won’t make a difference I guess. But you’ve got to be gone at the first morning light.”

I agreed and he left. Before I went back to bed, I had to unwrap Brownie from around the tree. He’d wound himself up so tightly he couldn’t move. I thought, “Those guys have a lot of nerve if they think I’m imposing on them.” I was packed and moving bright and early. I rambled around town to generate some interest, still hopeful I would find a good spot to camp and set up for business. But this tour proved to be only for my own pleasure and education. The town was beautifully restored with its brick streets and fine old buildings.

Part of Harper’s Ferry isn’t controlled by the Part Service. On the other side of town I picked up my general delivery mail at the post office. I also talked to some locals about my plans. They recommended I talk to a man who owned the Dixie Hotel and most of the non-government owned land in town. When I located the man, this is what he told me, “I’m confident there’s no place in town for you. Besides, you’d have to get permission from the shop keeper’s association.” I threw in the towel.

But before I left town I wanted to look at the tintype studio a few locals had told me about. I tied up Brownie to a telephone pole behind the shop. The owner was pleased to meet me and we spent a couple hours talking and looking at each other’s work. He told me that he rented his shop space from the Park Service. It turned out that he didn’t make tintypes at all anymore. He’d been using dry plate tintypes but found them too expensive and time consuming. So he’d gone to using brown toned Polaroid pictures. He dressed his customers in cowboy and dance hall girl outfits or civil war style garb. He used a lot of whiskey bottles and fake guns as props. The lighting was all electric.

“I know it’s not the old way,” he said. “I call it ‘geek’ photography. I wish I could pursue the original old civil war era methods. But I’ve got bills to pay, a wife and kid to support and the kind of photography I do now is much more profitable.”

In some ways I was elated by this encounter, but in another way I was terribly disappointed. I would have been thrilled to chat with a photographer doing authentic 19th century photography because there was so much more I wanted to learn.

I bid him farewell and went out to my wagon to leave town. A little group of tourists was examining my wagon. One asked, “Hey, do you do old fashioned photography?” I said, “Yes, but not today. I have to get out of town because it’s illegal for me to do any business here.” They were shocked. I explained my story. Before I pulled out one man, sort of on the sly, handed me a five dollar bill and said, “Here, take this. I like what you’re doing.”

A couple hours later I was back in Virginia on flatter farm country, glad to be away from the hole that Harper’s Ferry sits in. That night I camped with a friendly family who allowed me to use their facilities freely. To top it off they took me out for

steak dinner at a swanky restaurant. It was owned by a local NFL football legend. They were sure that would impress me. I don't know about the football part, but he sure could cook! Brownie shared a pasture of tall green grass with a small herd of sheep.



With the famed Blue Ridge Mountains to the west, I traveled on south the next day. I'd been given another county map. This one was for Fauquier County. I followed serene back roads and began to enter a different kind of country. I passed well kept pastures bordered by wooden fences with stands of trees beyond.

I was a little perplexed when I saw low places, about ten feet wide, at regular intervals in the fences bordering the road. A break in one wall could correspond to a similar one on the opposite side of the road. Some breaks were "A" framed pieces of wood, some were built of logs, some stone, some brick and some were a thick hedge. When I saw a sign, "Equestrian Crossing," I realized this was fox hunting and horse jumping country. I passed grand entrances and long driveways up which no house could be seen. The houses that were visible were quite ritzy.

I had a feeling people in the area would have little time for a simple wanderer like me. By late afternoon I'd gone through the town of Marshall, Virginia, and continued on a gravel road going south. It was getting hot. A new little yellow pickup passed me and a wake of dust blew into my sticky hot face. I thought, "I could sure use a bath and a long cold drink." Brownie was pretty sweaty himself and labored on at that slow pace

I'd learned to expect and live with.

After awhile I glanced out of the back end of the wagon and saw the same little yellow pickup bombing down the road with great plumes of dust behind it. I gritted my teeth and thought, "Here comes that clown again." But as he neared me he slowed up and then stopped just ahead of me. I stopped. A man in his fifties wearing denim pants and shirt strode quickly toward me with a broad smile on his face.

"Hello! Well, you are a fine sight to see coming down our little road. Whatcha up to?"

I explained myself to him as I did to most people who wanted to talk. I appreciated the interest in my activities.

"Well sir," he said, still beaming, "I've got a daughter about your age who'd love to talk to you about your adventure. She's quite a horsewoman. Would you be interested in calling it quits for the day? You could go for a swim in our lake and spend the night in our guest house. We've got plenty of feed and grazing for your horse also."

I wasn't sure what I'd be getting myself into, especially the daughter part. But the prospect of washing the sweat and dust off and swimming in a cool lake was just what the doctor ordered. "Yes, I'd be glad to meet your daughter and call it a day."

With some humility in his voice he asked, "If I went to get my daughter, could she ride the mile trip on down to the farm with you? She'd really like that."

"Of course," I said. "My pleasure."

He zipped off in his pickup. I continued on, feeling happy. I shouted to Brownie, "We've got it made tonight, Spoon!" I called him "Spoon" sometimes because when he was warm and really relaxed his lower lip would hang down and remind me of a spoon. I did wonder at this man's efforts to get me to rub shoulders with his daughter. "Well." I figured, "probably a real Plain Jane or an air head if he has to drag guys in off the road to meet her."

Soon the pickup was back with the well meaning father and his slim attractive brunette daughter. We introduced ourselves and I warned her that Brownie was a slow mover. No problem with that. Dad quickly departed. She jumped up on the wagon seat and away we went. Soon it became quite evident that she was not an air head but a well meaning, sincere lady in her early twenties. I was kind of flabbergasted with all that was happening. Especially when she told me she stayed in the guest house too.

We could go swimming together and afterwards she'd make a meal using nothing but vegetables from her garden. She told me a little about herself as we went. She was college educated in California and had lived in San Francisco for a couple of years. But she'd had enough of the California scene and had returned to her home a year ago. Now she was trying to decide what to do with her life. Her family was into fox hunting. She said the showy side of it wasn't to her taste. But she love riding and she loved horses. She had eight of them, all jumpers. She came right out and told me how she was a little lonesome on the farm. A lot of the young people in the town of Marshall were just throttle jockeys and boozers and didn't interest her.

Kathy pointed out the boundary to the farm's property and then I saw a couple of old wood frame white buildings.

I said, "Is that where you live?"

"No," she said, "That's the old General Store on our place. It's been there for over a hundred years. But it hasn't been in operation for as long as my parents have owned the farm."

The buildings were in perfect repair with carefully mowed grass around them. I was impressed. But I hadn't seen anything yet.



A little further on we went through the grand entrance to Cresthill Farm. Down a long gravel driveway bordered by a trim white fence, through lush green pastures, sat the brick mansion complete with white fluted columns. We went down the drive a little distance, then turned on down another lane. There was the guest house, large enough to suit any average American family. It was charming, like the rest of the place. Ivy clung to the brick walls accented by white shutters, a grand porch and a beautiful garden alongside, complete with an extensive variety of vegetables.

I parked the wagon near the house and turned Brownie loose into a large grassy pasture where a herd of Herford cattle grazed. He went off a short distance, fell to the

ground and rolled. His big feet waved in the air as he flopped from side to side. He grunted as he rolled. We looked on and laughed. He clumsily got to his feet and violently shook himself. Great clouds of dust rose above and about him. Then he put his head down and proceeded to graze, wandering as he did. He sighted the creek and ambled towards it.

It wasn't long before Kathy and I had our bathing suits on. The lake was much bigger than I expected. It probably covered a couple hundred acres. It was created by a large earth dam. I liked standing in a waterfall created by the spillway. After this refreshing interlude we continued to enjoy each other's company. Kathy made a grand meal as she'd promised she would. It was delicious, even the acorn squash. I was coming a long way from my previous diet in Florida, which was heavy on the burgers and fries. Thanks to wagon traveling my repertoire of foods was expanding all the time.

The whole afternoon we'd seen neither hide nor hair of Kathy's parents. But we didn't need any chaperones. I slept in a bedroom upstairs. Kathy stayed in one downstairs. The next morning she suggested I stay another day and give Brownie a rest. She didn't have to twist my arm. I helped her feed horses in the stables, and Brownie got a half bucket of sweet feed too. By pulling a lever the grain came down from an upstairs bin. The cats sat solemnly near the end of the shoot. As they'd hoped, a mouse came along with the grain. One cat moved like lightening, snatched it up and devoured it on the spot.

That day we rode bicycles to a little town southwest of the farm to get an ice cream cone at the drug store. We'd pedaled quite a ways but were still within the Cresthill Farm.

I asked, "Just how many acres is this farm?"

She said, "Twelve-hundred acres."

Then I was sure they were multi-millionaires.

On the way back from town we passed a guy walking along the road wearing a heavy looking back pack. We waved and continued on. I thought, "He's probably taking a little detour off the Appalachian Trail." The Trail wasn't too many miles west of us. I was glad I had a different identity and way of going. After all, look what it was doing for me right now!

We shared a good supper that evening. A girlfriend of hers joined us. The next day I insisted I had to move on. She understood but rode with me a mile or two on the wagon. Her parents were on the front porch of the big house. We waved as we went out the long driveway. When we reached the farthest southern corner of Cresthill Farm, we bade each other a friendly farewell. As I continued on I wondered if I should have made a serious play for this promising young lady. I wasn't blind to the possibilities of the cozy situation. But I knew my heart was elsewhere. I was set on seeing what was over the next hill. And I was set on seeing my old flame Jan, who was yet many more miles south living near Atlanta, Georgia.

As the day wore on, the wind shifted until it came nice and cool from the

Northwest. These breezes made the air much more pleasant. Crossing the peaceful and scenic Rappahannock River I thought about the Civil War history that abounded in northern Virginia. In my mind I could picture the opposing armies camped on either side of the river. I was headed for Culpeper and Brandy Station. Brandy Station had been the scene of the largest cavalry engagement of the war. Maybe it would be a decent place to do some tintype business. It was also my next general delivery mail stop.

Brownie wasn't thinking about anything so abstract. His brain and stomach were united in thought, pondering the many wild and domestic apple trees growing alongside the road and in people's yards. I'd occasionally stop by a tree on a lonely section of road, fill up my wooden bucket and give Brownie a few. I threw the rest of them out to him later when we made camp. Watching Brownie eat was a special pleasure of mine. How much more enjoyable was this free wayside self service apple tree than the self service gas stations I'd spent plenty of money at in my past life.

Coming into Culpeper I was faced with the usual heavy traffic that abounds around towns of any size. I thought about making camp as I skirted the northern edge of town. But the houses were looking very suburban and too neat to pull a horse and wagon into. One had large skylights. The next was like something out of Better Homes and Gardens. As the sun sunk lower in the sky I thought, "Why didn't I make camp before I got myself into this?" But it was getting dark fast and too late to turn back. I passed a little farm finally, but all they had for animals was a muddy looking lot. At times like this I felt like a man in a small airplane flying in the middle of nowhere with his gas gauge on empty.

As I came around a wide curve, I noticed a farm on my left. It was a typical looking place in many regards. It was a tall white wood frame house with Victorian gingerbread trim, the barn and outbuildings behind and all of it surrounded by large oak trees and cultivated fields. But what was really outstanding about this place was the large steam traction engine in the front yard. Its big iron wheels, black boiler and smoke stack beckoned to me as an interesting historic artifact. More importantly, it was a sign that the people here were clearly interested in old fashioned things.

I was right. As I came up the drive, the family poured out of the house. Adults were smiling. The kids came at a run. There was some attempt put forward to be cool. But at the same time frantic orders were being given.

"Get Grandma and Grandpa's camera!" someone shouted.

I explained myself in the usual fashion.

"Hi folks! I'm traveling from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania in my wagon, going south to Florida. About this time of the day I have to find a friendly farmer that might let me park on his ground overnight." I added quickly, "I saw your steam engine and would sure like to find out more about that!"

They thought I'd come to the right place and I was quite welcome. The farm was owned by the Barfields. They were lifelong residents of the place and well established in the area. At the moment the house was bursting at the seams with lots of family and

friends for a Sunday afternoon visit. Parking the wagon, I undid the traces and threw them over Brownie's back.

"Come up!" I commanded him.

Brownie took a few steps forward until he was out of the shafts. Then he stopped as usual and waited for me to take the harness off. The Barfield's children and grandchildren were impressed.

Grandma exclaimed, "What a wonderful, obedient horse!"

Grandpa said, "I knew that was a dandy horse when I first laid eyes on him. Why, you can tell by the shape of his head and the look in his eyes. That flat forehead and eyes with no white showing around the edges is what you look for in a good horse."

Mr. Barfield had worked many horses and mules in his day and he quickly pointed this out to me.

In appearance, the Barfields looked like farm people of their generation. They were both fairly stout, not fat, but sturdy. Mr. Barfield was on the tall side and wore plain farmer style work clothes. Mrs. Barfield wore a housedress and an apron.

They had a fenced in barnyard for Brownie with plenty of hay and corn for him to eat. Mr. Barfield started to lead the way. I suggested Brownie could give a few of the kids a ride. So he hoisted a few up. This made little difference to Brownie. He knew his work day was over and had a good idea about what was next. At this point, quite a few people whose places I'd stayed at previously in my journey would say, "There's the water hydrant. If there's anything else you need, just knock on the door." And that would probably be the last we'd see of each other. Not so with the Barfields.

"We're about to eat supper here directly. I'm sure a travelin' man like yourself could use a good home cooked meal," Mr. Barfield said.

About that time a Culpeper newspaper reporter pulled in to interview me. Grandma had put in a quick call while we were taking care of Brownie. She was apologetic about this.

"I hope you don't mind," she said. "But it's not every day something like this comes our way."

"No problem," I assured her.

I got Brownie. With the grandchildren and Grandma around we posed for the reporter's camera. After a quick interview the reporter left.



Barfields greet a traveler and his horse

GARY RHODES PHOTO

Old-time way to make living

By GARY RHODES
Staff Writer

CULPEPER — John Coffey has come up with a way of seeing the country in a very leisurely way while making a few dollars at the same time.

Coffey's profession has been producing tintypes or old-fashion type photographs. He has had shops in Florida and North Carolina. But he struggled financially, and people never appreciated the historic angle of the work that he was doing.

Coffey then tried to pursue his livelihood as he travelled around in a Ford van. This was a rough road too. He "barely kept above water," on this venture.

Getting nowhere, Coffey struck on a novel idea. Since his products were of another time, he would adopt the lifestyle of that phase in history.

Coffey rigged up a buggy-carriage, got a horse, bought the garb of an early nineteenth century man, and went on the road to sell. He might have felt a little strange at first, so he started out on his journey in Pennsylvania Dutch country. The lanky enterpriser probably didn't get a second look from anyone there.

It was six weeks ago he left Lancaster County in Pennsylvania. Yesterday he came through Culpeper with big Brownie pulling his business along. Dinner time for the horse meant yet another friendship for Coffey. Shelton and Dorothy Barfield, who live near Inlet, were happy to let Brownie graze in front of their house. "You just can't say no to a horse," said Mrs. Barfield.

Soon after came an invitation from the Barfields to Coffey

for a place to stay overnight. He has almost come to expect such hospitality.

"About 75 percent of the people ask me to stay for a hot dinner and a hot breakfast and a place to sleep," Coffey said. "They all want to help."

If business is good, Coffey might stay in one place for a few days. Customers can have their tintypes done while they wait. Coffey's carriage has a dark room.

So far interest in what he is doing has been greater than he ever imagined. "It is the horse and buggy," he admits.

Newspapers in Gettysburg, Frederick, Md., Lancaster and some magazines have given him coverage.

The biggest surprise though has been that nothing has gone wrong. The closest thing to a crisis was when Brownie relieved himself in a Pennsylvania town. Police demanded that Coffey clean up the mess, but when they returned to the scene, it was discovered that someone else had performed this duty.

Coffey has an interest in the War Between the States and he has taken a meandering route across Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia in order to see some battlefields. He set up shop in Gettysburg for almost a week. Last week Coffey made a stop at Harpers Ferry.

Brandy Station is on Coffey's itinerary during his stay in Culpeper, which he expects to last for a couple of days. The biggest cavalry battle of the war was fought on the fields outside of the town.

As best he can, Coffey is trying to keep his world early America. No motels so far, and only once did he eat at a

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OLD-TIME

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restaurant. That was only because his host family insisted on it.

Coffey carries with him some of the trinkets and paraphernalia of the old days, such as aged bottles and a feather pen. He shaves his face with a straight razor.

When the conversation somehow turned to pizza, Coffey kind of flinched.

It is old things that draw his eye. The Barfield home has an ancient tractor that he inspected carefully. His direction

upon leaving Culpeper will be toward Charlottesville where he expects to find an old mill someone told him about.

Brownie is oblivious to what his owner's plans are. "He is just happy to be eating," Coffey said. "Since we have started, he has eaten with cows, bulls, mules everything. He makes himself at home."

Brownie does not know that after reaching Florida, Coffey might give him a couple months for rest, and then turn him toward the Pacific coast.

The entire tribe came inside and we ate in the large kitchen, seated at a long

wooden table. Mrs. Barfield had nearly covered the whole surface of the table with bowls and platters of food. Someone pointed out that she'd cooked it all on her wood fired cook stove range. I'd noticed it was extra warm in the room, which made sense now. I praised her for her stalwartness. After a prayer of thanks was given and all were engaged in eating, Mrs. Barfield continued to stay on her feet. She put more things on the table and took empty bowls away. After repeated scoldings that she should enjoy the fruits of her labor, she finally sat down. But she was soon on her feet again.

"Oh, we have desert too."

I figured just maybe I could find more room for the pies, cakes, and ice cream placed before me.

With supper over, the children and grandchildren gradually went home until it was just myself and the senior Barfields. They suggested we sit out on the front porch where it was cooler. Grandma was on my left and Grandpa was on my right. We all sat in rocking chairs on the open porch, looking out into the star studded night.

They had their stories to tell. First Grandpa would tell me about the time some Amish men came to him and bought all his horse drawn gear. Then Grandma would tell how they came by the steam tractor. Then there'd be a pause. We'd rock a bit. I'd heard both stories earlier in the kitchen and out in the front yard when I had first arrived. Three times was alright I suppose. But when Grandpa started in again telling me how they got the steam tractor and then Grandma came back with how the Amish men had bought the single trees and horse harness, I figured it was time to turn in.

I mentioned this and they heartily agreed. Grandma, with her unquestionable hospitality said, "You can sleep in my bedroom. I'll sleep with Father in his bedroom."

Upon hearing this, Mr. Barfield looked as though someone had stuck a sharp object up his back.

Mrs. Barfield hopped to her feet and said, "I'll go on up and get things tidy."

As soon as she'd left the room Mr. Barfield leaned over to me and said, "You know son, it gets awful hot upstairs there. It's mighty uncomfortable."

I caught the drift immediately and insisted there was no need for me to sleep inside.

"As a matter of fact, I'd sleep much better in my wagon. It's much cooler in there," I told him with all sincerity.

Mrs. Barfield returned and explained, "If I had a son out traveling the country I'd hope that people would treat him as well." She was going to say more but Mr. Barfield interrupted.

"He wants to sleep in his wagon. You know yourself it would be too hot for him upstairs."

She begrudgingly agreed.

I wished a good night to them both and headed for the wagon. I was glad to sleep in the Photographic Van, my little home on wheels. I unrolled my bedroll, slipped under the covers, and reached up and let down the back flap. It dropped with a thud as it

unrolled itself, to create the only barrier between me and the outside world. As I listened to the crickets chirping I thought about all the times I'd wished I could share my life with the right woman. I contemplated what it would be like to be an old married couple and dread sleeping with my wife. I hoped this would never be my lot. I drifted off to sleep.

Rolling into Brandy Station the next day I passed a mounted plaque identifying the site of the biggest cavalry engagement of the Civil War. At this point in time, one hundred and twenty years later, there was little in the way of excitement in this place. Brandy Station was just a very small town, a couple of streets with modest old houses. Toward the center of town I passed over the railroad tracks that headed west to Culpeper. The only thing I found of interest was the old general store. The building was weather beaten down to the gray wood. It was quite rickety and leaned several degrees to one side.

I pulled up, got out of the wagon and just let Brownie stand. I dared not tie him to any of the posts holding the front porch roof up for fear he'd yank back and pull the whole place down. Upon entering the store I noticed the old squeaky screen door had a metal placard sign on it for a long ago defunct bread company. Inside dark hardwood floors had light recessed trails going here and there like beaten paths. Down one aisle I could see the potbelly stove with a few chairs around it. Up on the counter was an old brass cash register.

Mixed into this were the items one would find at any quick food stop and go store such as modern coolers with cans and bottles of cold drinks, hermetically sealed lunch meats, Cool Whip and assorted other junk food. No one was trying to put on a historical impression here. The woman behind the counter was the owner and simply trying to make a modest living. The fact that the building was nearly a hundred years old had little significance to her.

I went to the counter and told the woman I enjoyed seeing the store. I also briefly described my business and asked if it would be all right if I parked outside long enough to shoot a glass plate photograph of the old store.

"Fine, go ahead," she said and she turned to wait on the only customers in the store, a few black folks. Several of them decided to wait around outside as I assembled my old 8x10 camera upon its heavy wooden tripod. One older black gentleman who appeared to be a bit inebriated announced that he was the Mayor of Brandy Station.

"You have my full permission to photograph anything in my town."

"Oh, thank you sir," I said. "Would you mind staying where you are and being in this picture?"

He leaned up against one of the posts on the porch in a dapper fashion. A young black woman and another older black man clapped and laughed at his antics.

After carefully explaining how they had to hold still for several seconds in order for the image to be struck on the plate, I made my exposure.



The lady proprietor came out with a new found interest in what I was doing. She wanted to know how much a picture might cost. After some explaining and showing examples of my work, she decided she wanted a \$9.50, 5x7 tintype of the place. I talked her into being in the photo with a Civil War style hoop dress and bonnet on. She

especially liked having Brownie and the Photographic Van in the picture too.

It took me an hour and a half to prepare and process the tintype as I had to turn the wagon into a darkroom, pour chemicals into trays and get water to rinse the plate off thoroughly. Afterwards I had to put everything away and repack the wagon. Once I was done, the woman marveled at how long it took to make a picture by this old method.

I pointed out, "It's quicker than Photo Mat!"

She agreed I had a point. I waved goodbye to the Mayor and the others and continued south. I figured I had played out the business in this less than booming metropolis.

That evening I found an excellent camp spot on a big dairy farm. The farmer and his hired man had been busy all day harvesting with their big machinery, cutting the corn crop into silage. They were good congenial types, but for the first time in awhile I ate my own supper in the wagon. I enjoyed the solitude for a change. The next morning, answering nature's call out in the nearby cornfield, I noticed that the farmer's machinery had knocked down a good bit of corn.

About that time the hired man showed up. I mentioned to him how some corn seemed to be left in the field on the ground.

He said, "Help yourself if you want it. If you don't get it we'll just plow it under. No one gleans corn fields any more."

This idea was all new to me.

He explained, "The time it takes to glean corn left behind isn't worth it to most people."

I eagerly filled a feed bag half full in about fifteen minutes.

From this point on, harvested corn fields were especially interesting to me. I began to study them like a hawk would search for field mice. The golden ears lying here and there, knocked down corn stalks with ears still in the husk amid the stubble, were my prize. I'd stop nearly every day by some lonely harvested field's corner and pick up a dozen ears for Brownie's supper and breakfast. It only took a few minutes. I could trust Brownie to stand quietly along the road and wait for me.

The next night I camped on a pig farm. At about quitting time I expressed my needs to a young man in a jeep who had stopped to talk.

He told me, "If your horse doesn't mind being in with a bunch of pigs in a big barn yard then you can put up at our place."

It was only a mile down the road. When I reached the farm and had gone up the driveway a short distance, I came upon a cattle guard, which was a sort of a ditch with a metal grate over it to deter livestock from getting out. Brownie did a double take but proceeded over it without a problem.

We were on our own again this night, but not totally to ourselves. The sows and herds of piglets scurried to and fro around the wagon. The slightest provocation caused endless streams of oinks and squeals. The air was also punctuated by their remarkable odor. I didn't mind though. It was all part of my education about life beyond the

interstate. Brownie wished he was elsewhere, not because the pigs bothered him, but because the good grazing was on the other side of the fence. After eating a good breakfast with the pig farmers featuring lots of sausage and bacon, Brownie and I traveled on.