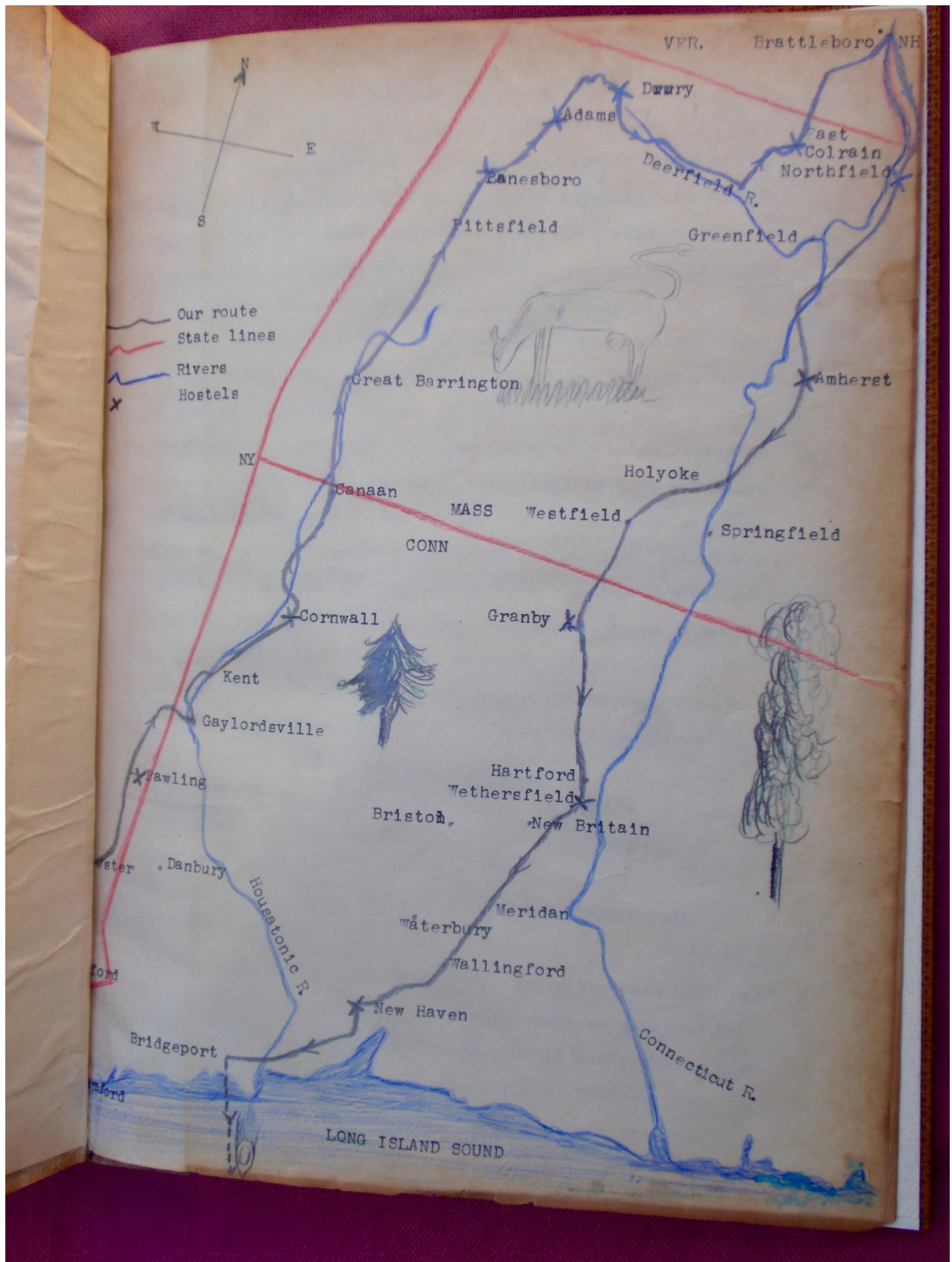


MERRILY WE ROLL ALONG

PHILIP HODGE JR



MERRILY WE ROLL ALONG

By Philip Hodge Jr.

My sister and I have just come back from a Youth Hostel trip. What! you haven't heard of Youth Hostels? There have been hostels in Europe for a long time; they were started in the United States only a few years ago. Membership is \$1.00 a year. For a quarter a night, plus a nickel for fuel, you can stop overnight at any of the seventy-odd hostels located in the United States. Hostels and hostellers are growing in numbers by leaps and bounds.

Mary and I had sent for our membership cards early in January. As Easter approached, we decided to take advantage of the vacation and go hosteling. Our plans were made, our bicycle bag (a converted "Saturday Evening Post" bag) was packed, and we were up bright and early on the morning of Thursday, April 14, aiming for Northfield, Massachusetts, headquarters of the AYH (American Youth Hostels).

The brightly shining sun foretold a fine day when we left a little after seven Thursday morning. The first leg of our journey, al-

though speedy, was ignominious. My bicycle was tied on

the front of the car

and Mary's was in

the car. Mary and I were in the car where the back seat had been. But we soon reached Oyster Bay where we detached our bikes, put the Post bag on fender, loaded our baskets with various odds and ends, and rode a couple of hundred feet on to the ferry. By nine-thirty we had safely crossed the



THOUGH RAPID WAS IGNOMINIOUS

quiet Sound and disembarked at Stamford, Connecticut. Now our trip really began. We found our way out of Stamford with the aid of a friendly policeman and started for Pawling, New York.

We were equipped for cold weather. In the bag were a heavy knitted sweater (which remained there all trip),

a pair of mittens, and a knit-

WE WERE WELL EQUIPPED FOR COLD WEATHER.

ted cap. On my back I had a Byrd Jacket, a light sweater, a shirt, and an undershirt. Within two miles all but the last-mentioned were off. Mary was similarly prepared but didn't strip so completely. We had packed two lunches before leaving home and just after crossing from Connecticut back into New York we stopped and ate the first one. It took great self-control not to eat both. Then on we struggled. We planned to buy a quart bottle of milk to go with our second lunch, which was even more scanty than our first, so at three we started looking for one. By three-thirty as we were still looking, we decided to eat without it. We found a pleasant, grassy little glen by the side of the road, and Mary quickly grabbed the only comfortable spot in it. However, sitting myself down by the stream I managed to dispose of my sandwich and a half with no difficulty whatsoever. Mary, having a comfortable situation wanted us to stay there and rest a little while, and out of pity for her wearied





I STRETCHED OUT ON A LOG.

condition I complied. I stretched myself out on a smooth log, shut my eyes, and the next thing I knew it was about twenty minutes later. We then continued on our way.

About five, we reached Pawling and located the home of Mrs. Thompson where we thought the hostel was. We were mistaken. The hostel was at the Manumit School, back on the road along which we had come. So we went back--we went back about five miles. There was no sign of the hostel. Finally we stopped and asked for the school. "The Manumit School? Oh, yes. You've come too far. It's about three miles back along the road." We felt fine, then. So we retraced our steps again, and this time we saw the little sign bashfully hiding by the side of the road. We rode a short distance along a dirt road and finally reached the hostel. There Mr. Allen, the man in charge, told us that since the school was in session, the hostel was not yet open. That made us feel even better. However, he'd see that we were given some dinner and find out what could be done. There are very few times in my life when food has tasted better. After dinner

he told us that since some of the school-children had left for Easter weekend, there were some extra blankets, and we could sleep on some straw in the loft. The way we felt, a bed of nails would have been welcome, so we accepted.



We slept fine, except that the sound of rats rustling around in the straw made Mary rather nervous. Friday morning dawned very clear so after eating breakfast and settling our bill, we started on.

THERE WERE RATS IN THE STRAW.

As it was even warmer than Thursday, after riding a way we stopped by the side of the deserted dirt road on which we were riding, and I changed into my shorts and alpergatoes and divested myself of everything else while Mary made similar changes in her apparel. We had planned to buy our lunch supplies at Gaylordsville before we came to this road, but we found no stores in Gaylordsville. However, we found such a charming spot beside a little waterfall that we stopped anyhow. It was so hot that after a while I took off all but one of the few articles of clothing I still had on and got under the waterfall. It was cold, to put it mildly, but invigorating. About that time, the sun decided to go under. So again we started on our way.. We



finally bought de-
villed ham and jam
for sandwiches for
lunch at Kent, and
stopped at the state
park at Kent Falls
to eat. Apparently
I hadn't had too much
sleep Thursday night
because I did not
find it at all dif-
ficult to spend a-
bout half an hour on
a hard rock in the
arms of Morpheus (a
Grecian god, purely
figurative). I do
not know whether or
not Mary slept.



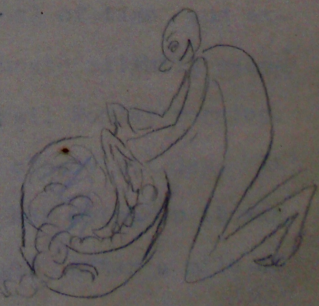
IT WAS COLD, TO FIGURATIVE). I DO
BUT IT MILDLY. not know whether or
not Mary slept. IN THE ARMS
OF MORPHEUS

We found the hostel at Cornwall, with no difficulty and
in good time. There were a couple of little showers after
we got there. Sleeping was fun that night! My six-feet-two



A BED 5' 6"
WITH RIDGES

went in a bed no wi-
der than I and only
five-feet-six long,
with ridges at both
ends. We felt ener-
getic and washed our
clothes in the even-
ing which were still



WASHED CLOTHES

wet in the morning because of the moist weather!

The sky was clear, but it was a little cooler Saturday. We had sixtyone miles to ride to Lanesboro, Massachusetts so we didn't do

much but ride on level ground, walk up hill, and coast down.

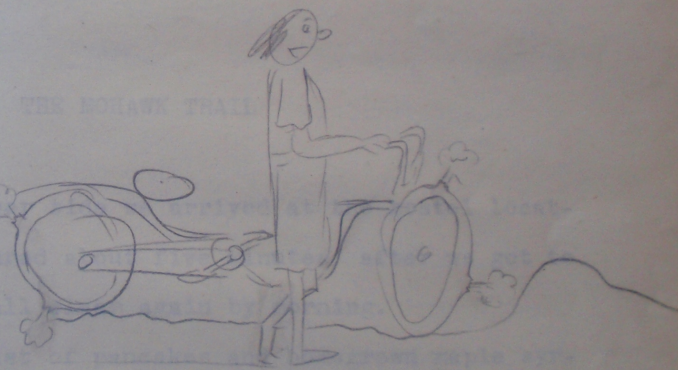
level We had a real treat Easter Sunday! It was only fourteen miles to Adams, our next stop, but after eight of them the valve on Mary's tire

broke and so we had to walk the rest of the way. Even so we got there in early afternoon. The temperature had taken another turn for the worse, so we kept a fire going all afternoon.

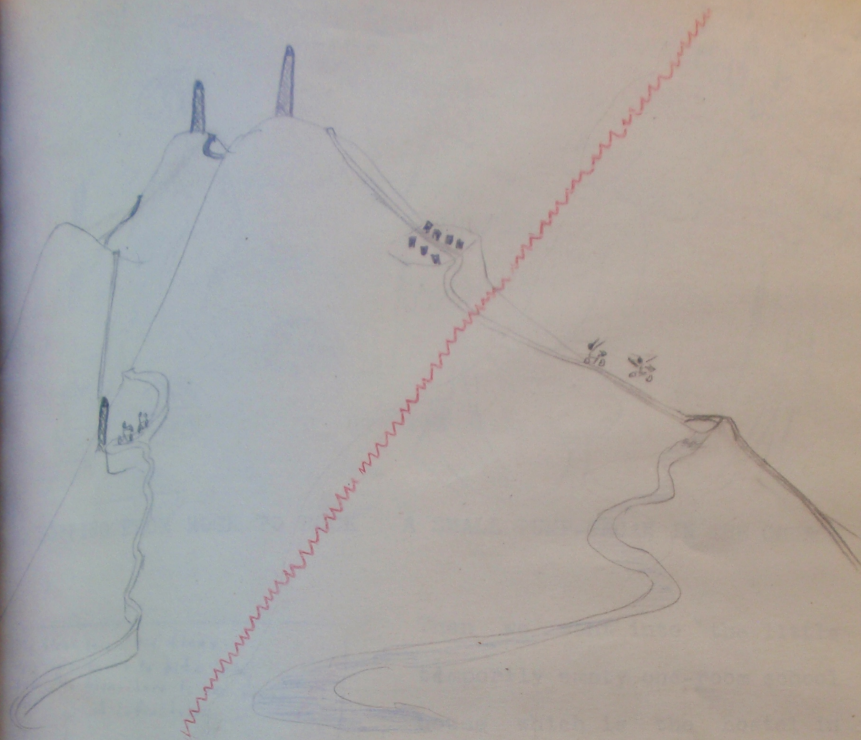
Mary's tire was fixed at a great deal of time and expense, 1½ hours--\$1.00, in Adams, and 'neath slightly weeping skies we set out for the Mohawk Trail Monday morning. The rain soon stopped, but it remained cloudy all day. It didn't take us long to reach the Trail, but going up it was a different matter. But up it we went, and after a mile of



61 MILES TO LANESBORO



MARY'S TIRE BROKE



THE MOHAWK TRAIL

coasting down the other side we arrived at the hostel located in Drury. It poured about five minutes after we got to the hostel, but was all clear again by morning.

A hearty breakfast of pancakes and homegrown maple syrup put us in a good frame of mind Tuesday morning. Also did a long coast. Starting where we had left off the day before, I coasted a total of 5.7 miles without once turning my pedals. A tail wind aided us in making good time to the hostel at East Colrain. We arrived there in time for lunch. We worked off our meal hopping from rock to rock on a little river nearby. Later we discovered a small pump-organ in the church which we were allowed to play. The keyboard is the same as on a piano, but it gives a much different sound.



HOPPING FROM ROCK TO ROCK



A SMALL PUMP-PRGAN IN THE CHURCH



WROTE POETRY ON THE
SCHOOL BLACKBOARD

Then we went into the little temporarily empty one-room school house which is the hostel in summer and wrote poetry on the blackboard.

The direct way to Northfield wasn't at all far, so we rode up through Brattleboro, Vermont, and across to New Hampshire just for the exercise. Even at that we got to North-

field in time for our second lunch. And just in time, too! There were thunder-showers off and on for the rest of the day. Later in the afternoon a party of sixteen high school girls arrived at the hostel. And me the only boy there! The



16 GIRLS, AND
ME THE ONLY BOY

houseparents at Northfield, Julius and Lee Wahl, are very pleasant. Julius played his zither for us and we all sang in the evening.

Thursday we rode to Amherst. My diary for the day is not very loquacious:

"Today: 31.0 miles	total: 278.5 miles
" \$1.75	" \$15.77

Hot sun ~~Hot sun~~

Some sunburn, not too much--I hope!

Very good dinner."

On Friday bad weather caught up with us. It poured in the morning and we were soaked. Eventually it stopped and we were dry again by the time we reached the hostel at Granby. About six, just as

WE GOT SOAKED

we put the water on to boil for dinner, the door opened and a young boy of 67 walked in and introduced himself as hosteler Bill Saybrook. He was a swell guy and seemed to enjoy hosting as much as anyone else. Friday night was cold. We each had four blankets and didn't feel any too warm.

We had good luck finding the Wethersfield hostel from the complicated directions given us. I guess Pawling had gotten all that kind of bad luck out of our system. Mr.

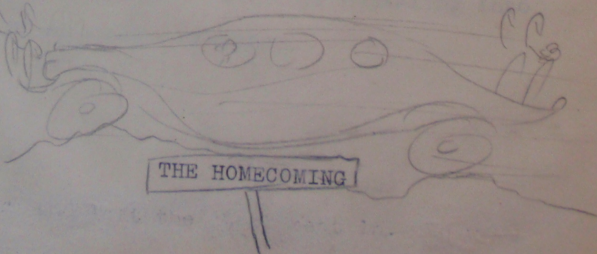


EVENTUALLY IT WILL
BE A BEAUTIFUL PLACE

Haskell, the house-
father, is very much
interested in trees
and has a great many
seedlings planted a-
round the hostel. E-
ventually that will
be an extremely lov-
ely place. The hos-
tel itself is one of
the most attractive
we encountered.

Sunday we hurried. We made the thirty-four and a half
miles to New Haven in three hours. We stayed at our grand-
parents' house and spent the afternoon visiting people and
generally having a good time. For all practical purposes our
hosteling trip was through.

The Bridgeport-Port Jefferson ferry wasn't running Sun-
day so we couldn't have arrived home in time for school Mon-
day even if we had wanted to. Monday morning, while Mary
rested, I went to the Yale gym and had a steam bath and a
swim, both of which felt good. About half-past twelve we
started for Bridgeport and arrived in plenty of time for the
ferry at three. Mother met us at Port Jefferson and we re-
turned in almost the
identical humiliat-
ing style in which
we had left. Except
this time we tied



THE HOMECOMING

both bikes on the car and left the back seat in. We were home in time for dinner.

We were tired, brown (from sun and dirt), and happy. We had not only been in five states, we had really seen the country through which we had been. Four hundred miles is a one or two days' trip in a car--but what have you got when it's over? A large gasoline bill, a blurred impression of rapidly moving scenery, and cramped muscles from sitting in one position. Instead, we had no expense for fuel, the memory of many beautiful scenes of an awakening nature, and a healthy fatigue which made sleep a pleasure but which was gone the next day. In one way it was the most beautiful time of year to be riding. Every day, especially when we were riding south, we could notice the difference in the leaves on the trees.

I'd like to bring out the financial side of the picture a little more. Counting food and hostel fees, our total living expenses for ten days on the road were \$19.61--less than a dollar a day each! It costs almost that much to live at home.

The advantages of hostelting are too numerous to list. One of the greatest is the opportunity of meeting people. Nice people--the kind that you really want to know. No one can go hostelting and not be a better person for it. My only problem now is to fit about three years of hostelting into the two short months of my summer vacation.