

**A RIDE TO
NIAGARA IN 1809**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9781760576271

A ride to Niagara in 1809 by Thomas Cooper

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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By T. C.

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MR. OLDSCHOOL,

Finding myself at Williamsport, in Lycoming county, about the beginning of May, 1809, and having a month to spare, I determined to take a ride to the Falls of Niagara. I had visited the Genesec country and the Falls of Genesec in the year 1796, but notwithstanding the four years' exertions of captain Williamson, the Genesee was at that time almost a wilderness, and I was not tempted to go further westward than the mouth of the river. It is now a very populous and well cultivated country, considering the short period of its settlement, and every year lessens the inconveniences attending so interesting a jaunt. Travellers, who, like myself, ride post through a country, have seldom much accurate information to give: but as I think the tour will yearly become more fashionable, because it deserves to become so, I send you the observations that occurred to me on the route. Even the designation of stages and the names of taverns, will not be without their use to persons in this state, who have leisure and curiosity to visit an object so remarkable as Niagara Falls. At any rate, the following notes will form a tolerable register of the *present* state of the country. I wish we had such, imperfect as it is, of every part of the United States.

T. C.

A Ride to Niagara

ITINERARY

I set out from Williamsport on Saturday the sixth of May, 1809, in the afternoon, and went to (14 miles) Reynolds's, a good tavern. Here the tolerable road ends.

15* Sunday 7th, to Higley's at the block house, along a villainous road, nearly impassable for a pleasure carriage.

10 To Bloss's at Peters's Camp: a very bad road through a very improvable country. Iron ore and bituminous coal found within a mile and a half of his house: the iron ore not rich, nor the vein of coal thick. A miserable habitation, but civil people.

9 To Jenyns's: a house to bait at only.

10 To widow Berry's: tolerable accommodation. The bottom lands of the Tioga* are almost all of them in the incipient stage of improvement. They are as yet chiefly settled by half share intruders, who are gradually becoming tired of their illegal and precarious title. The flats are not wide, but the land is very rich.

8 Monday, may eighth, crossed the Tioga and the Canisteo or Canister, to judge Linby's, about a mile over the state line: at the state line the road, from being execrable through Pennsylvania, from Reynolds's. (I may

*The figures at the beginning of the paragraphs denote the number of miles from the place mentioned in the preceding, to that in the paragraph at which the figure is placed.

*I wish we had preserved more of the old Indian appellations. The head of Tioga was *Cutenticauay*. The Indian name of Delaware was *Mäckerick Kitton*; it is so called in the first purchase deed of fifteenth July, 1682. Schuylkill was *Manaiunk*. In another deed of same date, the islands in the Delaware within that purchase, were *Mactinnicunk*, *Sepasiunks*, and *Ouctons*. The names of *Neshaminck* and *Pemapecta*, are preserved. Chester Creek was *Mackopanackhan*.

Duck Creek, in Chester County, was *Quinquingus*. The Genesee River is the Cheneseo. The gut called in that country *Jerundagut* is *Eutenantoquot*. The Indians of that country lay the emphasis on the last syllable.

indeed say from Williamsport, considering the frequent crossings of Lycoming Creek) to the boundary line of the state, becomes suddenly pleasant and good. I do not now recollect how many times a traveller has to pass Lycoming Creek, and Trout Run, and the Tioga, and the Canister in the last fifty miles; but there cannot be less than between forty and fifty fordings altogether; I believe the latter number is nearest the truth. And yet the greater part of the road passes through or in sight of very good land. Between Reynolds's and judge Linby's, I met with no hay.

12 To Irwin's at the painted post: through a good country, along a good road, to a tolerable tavern.

12 To doctor Falkner's, who keeps tavern at Mud Creek. He is the president judge of the court of common pleas of Steuben county. The judges of common pleas in Newyork state receive no salary: they are allowed some trifling bench fees, not worth their acceptance, and seldom inquired after. The courts sit three times a year. The judges of the supreme court attend (singly) to hold circuit or nisi prius court twice a year. The court of common pleas lasts about six days: probably a lawyer as the president, with a decent salary, would abridge this two days, and save the time, the trouble, and the expense of the suitors, at least to the amount of one-third. The attornies (four at present) usually reside at Bath. There are from forty to fifty suits brought to a term.

6 To Bath, to William Spring's tavern. This is the county town of Steuben. It was the scene of the Genesee speculations so much encouraged by captain Williamson. It is situated in a high cold climate; almost surrounded by mountains; on a meagre, barren, siliceous soil. It contains even now, although the first town built by and the favourite residence of captain Wil

Williamson, but thirty houses. Captain Williamson's old house, a mile before you reach Bath, with eight hundred and forty-six acres of land, four hundred of which were cleared and improved, and sixty of them meadow, sold lately to a Mr. Hopkins for nine thousand dollars. The buildings alone cost captain Williamson at least fifteen thousand. Goods are purchased here chiefly from Newyork, which, as a market, is upon the average about one-sixteenth cheaper than Philadelphia. The price of carriage hither is about the same, viz. two dollars and twenty-five cents per hundred weight; but the road to and from New York is much the best. I staid here on business part of Tuesday, May ninth, and in the afternoon went on to Terples's (twenty miles). He is the sheriff of the county, and keeps a tolerable tavern. Very bad road from Bath hither.

Wednesday ninth, rain. In the afternoon to Rice's (eleven and a half miles) at Snell's town, nicknamed Pen Yang, from its being originally settled by Pennamites and Yankees in about equal proportions. This is a poor place and a very middling tavern. It is on the outlet of the Crooked Lake where there is an excellent mill-seat. I heard of limestone about nine miles from Terples's near to the bank of the Seneca Lake, but I saw not a particle of that stone on the whole road from the mouth of Loyalsock till I came here: an extent of ninety-four miles.

Thursday May 11. To Powel's at Geneva (fifteen miles). About one hundred houses; a place of much trade. A delightful street on the bank of the lake: the houses of frame, well painted, clean, cheerful, with a full view of this charming lake in front. Geneva is built on limestone, which I suspect extends all the way up the Seneca Lake to Catharine's Town, if not in a contiguous stratum, in hills and nodules. Powel's tavern was built

by captain Williamson. It might be kept cleaner and neater than it is. I guessed it at fifty feet square withinside. I inquired of Powel, if there had been any appearance of plaster of paris remarked in his neighbourhood, or in any part of the Genesee country: he said he had never heard of any, unless a substance like alabaster which had been suspected for plaster, about nine miles off. Instead, therefore, of going the direct turnpike road to Canandaigua, (pronounced Canadarque) sixteen miles, I went the Sulphur-spring road.

9 To Sterne's tavern: walked to Dickson's mill and house, about half a mile off on the opposite side of the road, and found a well that had been partly dug and abandoned, in which I dug out some specimens of good genuine gypsum, too decidedly marked to be mistaken. I could see none on the surface.

3½ To Powel's at the Sulphur-springs. This is the brother of Powel at Geneva, a civil obliging man. The place is dreary, but the house large, though unfinished. It was intended as a kind of watering place, and no doubt the spring would have an excellent effect in cutaneous disorders, in diabetes mellitus, and, I think, in pthisis. Doctor Beddoes's theory has not been of much service as yet in that terrible disorder, but old Mr. Watt of Birmingham, whose opinions and observations are entitled to very great weight, informed me soon after his daughter's death of that disorder, that she never took a dose of inflammable, mixed with atmospheric air, without manifest alleviation of the symptoms. From whatever species of idiosyncrasy (whether natural or induced by disease) it be, certain it is, that the blood in that disorder is too much oxygenated. Doctor Rolfo's successful practice gives well-founded hope that these springs would be of great use in diabetes. The establishment is too large for the resort.

There are two or three sulphur springs hereabout, but Powel's is the largest and most saturated. He told me that however well corked and secured, the water would not bear transportation. I tried it, by well corking and waxing a vial full, but on opening it a month afterward, its peculiar smell and taste was gone. I gave for a bottle of London porter (so called) at Powel's five shillings York money: probably the people, who would otherwise resort here, find the living somewhat too expensive. An assessor here informed me that the lands of that township were rated one with another in the tax books, at twenty-two shillings and six pence, York currency, per acre.

10 To Taylor's at Catandaigua: a good tavern. Canadarque consists of one street extending from the lake. It contains from ninety to a hundred frame houses, generally speaking, neat and elegant in their external appearance; a meeting house and a court house. It is indeed a very handsome town. There are two potash works here. About eight lawyers, for this is the county town of Ontario. The agriculture of the neighbourhood is probably improving, for I observed in one of the newspapers (there are two published here) forty half blooded Merino lambs to be disposed of at Palmyra by William Howe Cuyler. The house and lot of forty acres in this town formerly owned by Mr. T. Morris, sold to the present occupant, Mr. Clarke, a tanner, for seven thousand dollars. In the time of Mr. Morris it was, in good truth, a hospitable mansion; and then, the only house in the place of genteel appearance. At present there are twenty as good.

10 Friday, twelfth, to Eccleston's.

2 To Hall's; the more frequented of the two.

12 To the widow Berry's, about half a mile on this side the Genesee river. This is in Hartford. From Can-