Among many old family letters I have been privileged to read is one that interested me greatly. It was written in 1840 by my grandfather's first wife and concerns their wedding trip from the hills of New England to the swamps of Indiana. They used various modes of travel—the stage, cars, river-boats, canal packets, and the inclines of the Portage Railroad in Pennsylvania.

She was evidently an alert girl and kept meticulous notes. For that reason her letter should prove enjoyable for people who are interested in the transportation of that era. The writer had been tenderly reared. The discomforts of days and nights on a canal, and a stage-ride over boggy roads must have called for patience and fortitude. Those graces were stimulated, no doubt, by youth and love, plus a saving sense of humor.

A bit of family lore may make the epistle more understandable. After Rawson Vaile was graduated from Amherst in 1839, he taught for awhile in Spencer, Massachusetts. Among his pupils was Anne Eliza Pope whom he loved and married April 13, 1840. (Vital Records. Spencer, Mass. Page 210.) Immediately after the wedding, they made a brief visit with his parents in Vermont. Then they headed for Richmond, Indiana to open a school. Rawson's brother, a physician, was already established there and knew the educational need. They had heeded the admonition, "Go west, young man, and grow up with the country."

The original letter is in the possession of Mrs. Willde A. Ingalls (Anne Pope Vaile) in Richmond, Virginia. She is the granddaughter and namesake of the young bride.

That is the setting. O tempora, O mores! This is the letter.

Mrs. Thurman, a resident of St. Petersburg, Florida, is the granddaughter of Rebecca Robinson, the second wife of Rawson Vaile. She is, through this grandmother, a descendant of George Robinson, described in "Pioneers of Pittsburgh—The Robinsons" in the March 1959 number of this magazine.—Ed.

The Society is indebted to Mrs. Ingalls for a photostat of her grandmother's letter.—Ed.
City of Richmond, Ind. May 8th.

My dear Father, Safely arrived at our wished-for destination in health. Our first mission shall now be to acquaint you & all dear friends at home with the events of our journey continuing my description from the time I left Newark. I believe I described our progress from Winhall to that place in the letter I wrote on board the canal packet, & which I hope you have e'er this received. Oh, you cannot imagine the pleasure I felt when I received your letter of April 25th the night we reached Richmond.

We left Newark the day it arrived there, but Cousin forwarded it immediately & it arrived here the day before we came. Was surprised you had not received two papers which we forwarded from Vermont, & in which I had informed you of our journey to the Green Mountains. Mr. Vaile's father did meet us in Townsend, and we reached Winhall at ten o'clock Sat. Evening. It rained a little that eve—but that excepting—we have had delightful weather through the whole of our journey. Whenever we have had a shower or unpleasant weather, it has been while we were on board a steamboat or Canal packet where we were little incommmoded. But I must turn to my note-book to tell you the occurrences of each day.

I believe I described our visit at Dr. Pennington's. I was delighted with Newark tho' I did not go out much to see it. But I think it must be a delightful place in summer—or indeed in any season. I like my cousin, the Dr. very much, & much better than I had expected. Anna Jane has a good husband, an elegantly furnished house & beautiful children, & I see not why she should not be happy, if earthly blessings only can confer happiness. The house is situated in one of the broadest & most pleasant streets in Newark, quite near the Park House, & nearly opposite the Academy where she used to teach; it is in a brick block. The front rooms are furnished very handsomely. Marble fire-places, marble center & dressing tables, pier and mantle glasses, lamps, ottomans, sofas etc., in every room above the basement. Dr. was very polite & kind to us during our stay and they both urged us to tarry longer with them but Mr. Vaile—and indeed both—felt the haste to proceed & rest from our fatigue at leisure in the Hoosier State. We did not return again to New York but took passage Monday 27th in the Philadelphia cars from Newark.

The scenery between the two places was rather pleasant, passed
through Elizabethtown, Trenton, the capital—that however is not a remarkably pretty city. Reached the City of Brotherly Love about three o'clock the same day. I was quite fatigued, but I wished much to see this Quaker City, so—after ten—we took a long walk around Chestnut Street, through the gardens—looked at the mint, etc & returned to our hotel—passed the night.

Philadelphia is a beautiful city—it is laid out so regularly—there are so many public squares, shaded by large & noble trees of all kinds, intersected by nice, even gravel walks with seats here & there on the green—& then the tastefully dressed ladies, tripping over them added not a little to the interest of the place. Everything here was green & fresh—& looked quite summerlike. The Quaker dames have donned their white summer hats & dresses. I felt as if I had suddenly been introduced into a different country when I thought how cold & backward everything looked in Spencer.

We left Philadelphia at six o'clock in the cars for Harrisburg, Penna, a distance of 108 miles. Everything between these two cities was delightful. Immediately after leaving Philadelphia, we entered Fairmount where are the celebrated waterworks which supply the whole city with pure water. We regretted much that we could not stop to view them, but were obliged to be contented with gazing at the structure while moving at railway speed. We could see enough however, to know that Fairmount was a charming place, & my imaginary castle which I had before erected on the Hudson Highlands was found to give place to a Cottage embosomed in the trees of Mount Fair.

At New Jersey, we found the trees in full blossom, the grass quite high in Pennsylvania & Ohio. The grain was a foot to a foot & a half high, & the wheat headed, the trees out of blossom and the cherries half grown. We arrived in Harrisburg at three o'clock & went immediately on board a canal-boat for Pittsburg. I do not like a canal-boat so well as any other mode of travelling—however with pleasant company with which one is well acquainted, interesting books, and with a viewing of the really fine scenery one might travel even there pleasantly. But it is very slow—we proceeded not more than three miles an hour and were on board from Tuesday till Saturday noon, excepting a ride of 5 hours on Thursday in the railroad that crosses the Alleghany Mts. & so high, [that] we again left for a canal-boat. There were a great many passengers on board
the boat, and the berths and cabins were crowded at night by women & babies, the babies rendering most delightful music. In a room about as big as our pantry were stored 17 women and children, berths and all, & in the dressing-room, a place not a whit bigger than our kitchen closet, were some half dozen more, with heads at as many points of compass as Lucretia's "jackstraws" might point after a "throw." And this in a place where not a bit of fresh air could be obtained lest the babies should suffer thereby. I usually managed to get into my shelf or box and to sleep before the snoring, lullabys, & baby songs commenced, and woke only when passing through a lock. But the whole scene was rather amusing after all. I wish I could describe it just as it was.

By daylight, all would be hurry & bustle, & she was best who found both shoes in the same part of the cabin, & could get dressed & washed, & on deck first. I was sorry I had no books to read but I borrowed some & formed some acquaintances, very pleasant ones, & when it was pleasant sat on deck on the trunks with my husband by me, gazing at the log cabins with their stone and mud chimneys, built on the outside, their one-paned window each side the unhinged door, and et cetera, and the mountains rising behind them and all around covered with trees of every shade and very beautiful, while all along we followed some river—from H. to Pittsburg, it was the Juniata and the Susquehanna I think. But even I, at last, became tired of seeing nothing but mountains, rivers and log huts, and longed to reach Pittsburg. The romantic ideas I have formerly entertained of a log hut are considerably lowered by a view of the reality in the interior of Penn. They are miserable looking dwellings. I hope there is a great deal of love there to balance the want of comfort. Some had not even a stone chimney but had merely an outlet for the smoke composed of sticks placed "cob-house" fashion and the interstices filled with dried mud. In such buildings resided some large land-holders, I should judge by the fine grain-fields around their dwellings, and the large stone barns—four times the size of the house itself. Once in a great while, we would hail a village and some were very pretty towns & looked quite "business-like"—but they were not at all like our Eastern villages—they were not as airy and neat, but all compact and dirty (perhaps I judge harshly but this, it must be remembered, is not the best part of Penn) looking as if one or two blocks from a city
had been transplanted to the West, & put here and there.

But I must leave the canal route—tho’ I could say much more. Our passage over the mountains in the cars, I must describe as, to me, that was the most interesting part of this route.

I will merely say the Canal from Harrisburg to Hollidaysburg (where it connects with the Alleghany Portage Railroad) is 40 feet wide at top—28 feet at bottom—4 feet deep, has 18 dams, 33 aqueducts and 111 locks, whole length from Columbia where it commences, 171 miles.

At Hollidaysburg we left the boat and went directly to the cars for Johnstown the other side of the mountains. The distance of the railroad is 37 miles—and has an ascent of 1398 feet on the eastern, & descent of 1172 feet on the western side—2007 feet are overcome by inclined planes and pulleys, and 563 by grading. I can not describe this to you, dear father, but the method is curious & interesting. Iron pulleys are fixed in the road at regular and short spaces and a rope fastened at the top—passing over them & round the other side, & by means of machinery at the top of the ascent, draws cars up very quickly. Should the rope break—& no safety car behind—death and the destruction of the whole train would be the inevitable result. The ascent to one Mt. is 3300* feet and the rope passing twice the distance, & being 0.50 a foot cost therefore $3300. This was the cost of the rope alone. On this line were four extensive viaducts, a tunnel 870 feet long and 20 high—cut through solid rock. The cost of the road was $1,526,029.

At Johnstown we left the cars & again took the canal which here commences on the Conemaugh river, & pursues the course of that stream, and also the Kiskiminitas and Alleghany Rivers till it terminates in Pittsburg.

We arrived at Pittsburg Sat. noon. Our company by the way, I must tell you it consisted of Mt. Lanier and two daughters belonging to Madison, Ind. & a Mr. Sanford (and sister-in-law) going to Illinois who were with us in every conveyance from Philadelphia to Cincinnati. He was a gentleman of independent fortune & the young ladies had been two years at school in New Haven, were beautiful and pleasant. Our company did not tarry long in the smoky atmosphere of Pittsburg—but Mr. Lanier & Mr. Vaile went

* There is evidently an error in this figure. All the others are substantially correct.—Ed.
directly in search of a boat, & found a splendid one where we all adjourned to dinner. The fare too, was very low—being only $5.00 from P. to Cincinnati, a distance of nearly 500 miles—and no extra charge for our boxes which Mr. V. found safe and in good order. Our steamboat was very splendid, meals without extra charge—and everything nice and neat. The boat was entirely of iron and consisted of staterooms wholly—for private accommodation. There were three chandeliers in the gentlemen’s saloon much handsomer than your Town Hall can boast, & an elegant cut lamp suspended in the Ladies’ drawing-room. We had a delightful passage down the Ohio River, sometimes indeed, “my wandering would turn behind” but I was not homesick. I was homesick once on the canal—excepting that, I have been cheerful and happy. We reached Cincinnati Monday noon. I had the sick headache very severely the first of the day which prevented me from going out but at two o’clock we took our leave of the “Valley Forge” and went on board a canal packet again for Hamilton. There was but one other passenger besides ourselves as the boat was not to go out until 5. R. and self took a walk of nearly two hours on the high hills and gardens of the Queen City of the West. It is indeed a very fine city. On the north side are numerous hills and on the summit of each is a handsome country house with extensive gardens, & peach & apple orchards. We entered one of these gardens, found the lupins, pinks & roses in bloom—the onion and beet beds quite flourishing. We found a Dutchman & girl in the garden and obtained permission to continue our rambles. On the south is the river and the city looks beautifully with its hundred steamboats crowding its wharves. We started in the canal-boat at 5, and when we awoke Wednes., found ourselves in Hamilton.

From Cincinnati to R, was however, the most unpleasant part of our route. For the fleas had quite a feast during our sojourn on the boat, and from H. to Eaton, 27 miles, we were crowded in a coach more so than any we had yet entered. From Eaton to Richmond, a distance of 16 miles, the roads were worse than anything I had yet seen, or ever saw. Part of the passengers got a lumber wagon, & four of us took the coach and set out. We were obliged to get out and walk no less than six times, and my shoes and stockings were well covered with a thick coat of brown mud. “If this is a specimen of western roads,” thought I, we may be grateful we
are going no farther toward the setting sun. The stage was nearly overturned a number of times, & we could only save ourselves by making our escape from the vehicle. It was very dangerous even in daylight—and I would on no account trust myself there in the night. However, we passed the bogs and quagmires in safety and within three miles of Richmond, we found a good McAdamised road. We were soon whirled into the city and a simple inquiry soon directed us to Dr. Vaile's residence, a new two-story brick house where we were very cordially met and warmly greeted by Dr. V. and wife. They are well as usual—but the Dr. does not enjoy good health. He has good practice. Yesterday (Tues.) he went to an adjoining town to visit some patients there. I have not been out to see this place for I was very much fatigued with my journey—and have besides a very troublesome cold.—I have had a delightful journey—and we have, the most of the time, been found with good health and fine weather and pleasant society. Our prospects here I think good—but we can not decide so soon. The people seemed very glad that Mr. Vaile has arrived.

He will commence school next Monday—you will see more particularly in the paper which I send you today—his plans as in the advertisement. I think, dear father, I may be useful and contented here. I am pleasantly situated and have, thus far, found my dear husband such a friend as I have wished. We often think & speak of you, my dear Papa, and all the dear ones at home, and daily do we remember all in our petitions—our united petitions—at the throne of grace. Tell sisters Lucretia and Sarah I thank them for their addition to your letter. I will write direct to grandma next and then they shall have a long letter, and I can tell them much to interest them about the young Hoosiers. Please to give much love to grandma Stearns and Aunt Bemis, Mr. and Mrs. Packard, Mary Jones & mother & sisters, Harringtons, & indeed to every one who enquires after me. I would like to have a "Spy" quite often, and will, in return, send papers frequently to you, & will someway acquaint you on them of our welfare & success. I shall write again soon & tell you how I like R. & of our School. Love to dear grandmother—Aunt Reed, Joseph, sisters—mother and yourself from your children here. Mr. Vaile will write soon as possible & acquaint you with our expenses here, etc. It takes a long time for a letter to reach you—this I presume will not be received within two weeks. I must now close my letter by adding the love of Dr. Vaile & wife.
Do not forget your Anne—but I need not ask that—May my dear father be blessed and prospered is the prayer of your affectionate children, especially your daughter

Anne E. Vaile.