

try to look out a situation, had agreed to meet his wife and children at Portsmouth on the Ohio. She not finding him there preferred proceeding on with her six children than to wait longer for him on expense."

Probably the Adamses or the Lewises themselves were also a part of the tide of emigration that swept westward over the canals at that period. The accounts for the two families present an amusing medley of items, some of which suggest permanence in the new country. Mr. Lewis seems to have bought two calves, a full blooded Durham bull, and a heifer, half Durham and half Ayrshire, for \$40.00. Other items are an umbrella, for a dollar; "cloth for N's. Pantaloons; Worcester's third book; Barnes' Notes on the Gospels; Bronze Snuffers; Hat Tree; 2 Bl. Covers & a Chair; Book Shelves & Rocking Chair; China tea set; pants at Newmans; and Subscribed for the *Missionary Herald*."

Cake and lemonade, and gingerbread and lemonade appear frequently among the travelling expenses. A map of Ohio is one entry, and "oranges and shaving," aggregating nineteen cents, is another.

The casual little record leaves the travellers keeping the Sabbath at Utica by attending the Presbyterian Meeting House. If the rest of their history is left in obscurity, we can at least be sure that they could face whatever difficulties were in store for them with a good conscience.

The Mail Stage in Massachusetts

THE thought of how short a time we have been modern is brought to mind by remembering that less than a century ago mail stages were running in Massachusetts. The Indian Tavern, Bromfield Street, was the starting point for lines to Newport, New Bedford and Bristol, and until 1840 they furnished the regular mode of conveying mail to those towns and intermediate points. The mail was still carried by private contractors, and the elements of chance and whim on the part of drivers still entered into its delivery, on time and in good order.

One of a bundle of old letters, written to Nathaniel Blake, stage owner, between 1824 and 1845, attests this state of affairs. It is a communication from the Assistant Post Master General, in regard to the fact that the "Boston Mail, Route 2971, was in a very wet and injured condition on its arrival at Taunton on the 6th inst. — This injury was sustained, it is said, in consequence of the careless-

ness of some of your drivers, carrying the Portmanteau on the Top of the Coach instead of in a secure dry Boot under their feet, or in the Body of the Coach as your contract directs — A Penalty of \$10 is charged against you and your explanation desired.”

These letters, two account books and an oil painting of Mr. Blake, a senatorial-looking gentleman in a stock, have been given to the Society by Mr. Blake's granddaughter, now living in Milford, Massachusetts. They cover the last and most flourishing period of coaching in New England.

A few years before the coming of the railroad sounded the knell of the stage coach as a practical institution, there were a hundred and six lines running from Boston. In 1818, all those in eastern Massachusetts and New Hampshire, and others in Maine and Rhode Island, had been formed into a syndicate, the Eastern Stage Company.

“Profits were enormous,” says Alice Morse Earle in her *Stage Coach and Tavern Days*. “The directors' meetings were symposiums of satisfaction, and stockholders gloated over their incomes.”

Before that, the rivalry between competitors was intense. Israel Hatch, an early stage-owner, announced that he was “determined, at the expiration of his contract for carrying the mail from Providence to Boston, to carry it gratis, which will undoubtedly prevent further underbiddings of the Envious.”

“The Envious” seems to have been Thomas Beal, whose rival carriages were pronounced “genteel and easy.” His price was nine shillings “and less if any other person will carry them for that sum.”

This rivalry gave the editor of the *Providence Gazette* occasion to write:

“We are rattled from Providence to Boston in four hours and fifty minutes — If any one wants to go faster he may send to Kentucky and charter a streak of Lightning.”

Price lowering went to the point of an offer by a line, which was being undercut by a new comer in the field, to carry the first booked applicants for nothing. The rival retorted by advertising a free dinner at the end of the journey, whereupon the old line added this inducement plus a bottle of wine. Mrs. Earle describes the amusing result of the competition:

“Mr. Shaffer, a fashionable teacher of dancing and deportment in Boston, an arbiter in social life, and man about town, had a gay ride on Monday to Providence, a good dinner, and the promised



NATHANIEL BLAKE, STAGE OWNER DURING THE LAST OF THE COACHING DAYS IN MASSACHUSETTS, FROM AN OIL PAINTING PRESENTED TO THE SOCIETY. AS LATE AS 1840, THE STAGE COACH WAS THE REGULAR MEANS OF CONVEYING MAIL, GOODS, AND PASSENGERS BETWEEN BOSTON AND NEWPORT, NEW BEDFORD, AND BRISTOL.

bottle of wine, and on Wednesday started to Providence again. With a crowd of gay young sparks this frolic continued till Saturday, when the rival coach lines compromised and signed a contract to charge thereafter two dollars a trip."

The rivalry between owners and drivers extended to passengers, who became violent partisans of one road or another. In the early days partisanship led, on occasion, to threatening exhibitions of bowie knives and pistols.

Such spectacular incidents were, of course, the exception rather than the rule. The letters concern themselves mainly with the routine of running a stage line. Mr. Blake seems to have lost one mail contract for which he applied, in favor of a certain Silvanus Lazell, through his bid's having gone astray in the post.

Another letter indicates the miscellaneous character of the services performed by the stage proprietor. Charles Cotton writes from Newport:

"Will you procure for Mr. Potter, the keeper of the Bellevue Hotel in this town, a fresh Salmon of 14 or 15 Pounds & send it by the Stage on Monday next, directed to him. It will be wanted for the dinner of the Medical Society on Wednesday."

Another relates to the "prayer of Petitioners" from Randolph, East Stoughton and North Bridgewater for six mails a week. They were receiving only three, but as the stage came through six times a week, the Post Office Department considered that the spirit, if not the letter, of Mr. Blake's contract, and a disposition to oblige the public, should lead him to deliver mail as often as the stages ran. The Department, therefore, gave him the authority to do this, but did not feel able to offer an extra compensation of more than \$100 per annum for the service.

Later he is asked to furnish information on his rates, the distances between towns along his route, what are the usual charges at the hotels, etc., for a gazetteer of the United States, which supplied to travellers the place of the modern automobile Blue Book.

An inventory of property at Stoughton, including "Buffloes skins" reminds us that stage travelling in winter was a cold affair.

A schedule of the Bridgewater mail, time from Boston six hours, with provision for a fine for all failures to convey the mail in the prescribed time, unless satisfactorily explained with proper proof, indicates a mighty improvement in speed and punctuality over the preceding century, when a New Yorker wrote "our Philadelphia post is a week behind, and not yet com'd in."

But for all its improved efficiency and accommodations, the stage coach was nearing its last days.

"No one," says Mrs. Earle, "was shrewd enough to heed the warning which might have been heard through the land, 'Look out for the engine,' and soon the assets of the stage coach company were as dust and ashes. On the prosperous routes of the Eastern Stage Company, during the first ten years, myriads of taverns had sprung up: vast brick stables had been built for the hundreds of horses, scores of blacksmiths' forges had been set up, and some of these shops were very large. These buildings were closed as suddenly as they were built, and rotted unused.

"This period of the brilliant existence of the Eastern Stage Company was also the date of the coaching age of England. . . . The year 1836, which saw the publication of *Pickwick*, wherein is so fine a picture of old coaching days, was the culminating point of the mail-coach system. Just as it was perfected it was rendered useless by the railroad."

Speed and Safety on Early Hudson River Steamboats

THE time when Hudson River steamboating was an experiment and an adventure is brought to mind by an old advertisement of the "splendid safety barges 'Lady Clinton' and 'Lady Van Rensselaer,' towed by steamboats of great power," operating between New York and Albany in 1826. After the Supreme Court decision in 1824 that the New York laws prohibiting vessels licensed according to the laws of the United States from navigating the waters of the State of New York by means of fire and steam, are repugnant to the . . . constitution, [of the United States,] and void," steam vessels had increased and multiplied on the Hudson, and opposition lines sprung up to share the business of Livingston and Fulton's old North River line. The line of safety barges ran in the summer season from 1825 to 1829, and were calculated to allay the fears of those to whom the new mode of travel still seemed too precarious.

The advertisement assures passengers that the boats perform the passage in about the average time of the ordinary steamboat, and goes on to state that the "Commerce" and "Swiftsure," the towing