

Left Eau Claire Aug. 19, 1913.

Started south with Henry Hawley in a row boat. Was towed by launch from Ella, Wis. to Winona, Minn. Left Winona Aug. 27, 1913, with Zalah Hassel at 12:45. Camped first night across the river from Dekota, Minn.

Aug. 28. All is well. Heavy wind and sunshine. We put up a sail and sailed clear to La Cross, Wis. Caught a turtle last night. Visited dead man's island, old fisherman's house deserted. Left LaCross at 10:15. Visited Snake Island, killed two snakes, saw four fish jump over boat.

Arrived at Genoa at 6.P.M. Bought some groceries. Expect to see Iowa tomorrow, looks like rain, have found a camp a mile below Genoa, Wis.

Aug. 29. All is well. Had some rain last night. It is a fine morning. Left camp at 8:45. Sailed nearly all day. Things certainly go fine. We stopped at Lansing, Iowa and wrote some cards, and bought bread and sweet corn, pitched camp across from Frenchville, Wis. This is our first night in Iowa.

Aug. 30. Fine morning. Caught three catfish last night. We are certainly enjoying our trip. No wind so we had to row all day. Passed pontoon bridge and Prairie Du Chien. Pitched camp at Mc Gregor, Iowa. and bought grub. A tramp ate with us. The mosquitoes got so bad we had to go to Wisconsin to sleep. It rained pretty hard and all our bed clothes got wet.

Aug. 31. I am glad we left Mc Gregor last night. Them tramps were laying for us. All is well today. It is cloudy. We had to go back to McGregor this morning to get our dipper we forgot. We have not stayed two nights in the same state yet in succession. We passed Clayton, Iowa at 10:30 and got to Guttenberg at 3:30. My what a town for girls. Every girl on the street spoke to us. I saw the biggest pile of clam shells I ever saw. It was between 50 and 60 feet high. I wonder if Ma is worrying over me? Hope she isn't I am having such a good time. To day is George's birthday. I would like to send him a present, it's Sunday so I can't. Wish Lewis and Willie were here. I know they would like it. We know mosquitoes are all right.

It is now a little past 12:00 at night. I am sitting by the camp fire. Zala is sleeping. He has been sick today. He is sleeping on the ground. There are too many mosquitoes in the boat and it is too hot to sleep in there. It is lightning every little while. We are camping about three miles below Gutenburg, Iowa. I just read three chapters in the Bible about Joshua and the fall of Jerico. All is still except the owls and cranes. I am thinking of home.

Sept. 1, 1913. All is well. Caught a fine eel last night, sold him in Cassville, Wis. for 75\$. There is a funny ferry here. It runs by tread power. It takes two horses to run it. Zala is better today. We done some good wrestling last night.

Sept. 2. All is well. Camped last night across from Specht ferry. Mosquitoes are fierce. Caught a turtle again last night. It is fiercely hot this morning. We just passed the Dubuque high bridge. There is a big quarry on the Iowa side, two wheeled carts and boy drivers. It is a hard life.

Sept. 3. Camped last night just below Dubuque. We went to Union Park yesterday, it certainly was a grand sight. We went through a cave three blocks long. I got some petrified water in the cave. This is a dandy town. They have free vaudeville in the park. It is great. We enjoyed ourselves today too. Ela Morta go tell. Got a trout line and will fish tonight.

Sept. 4. Caught four fish last night, three cat and one sheephead. We had a four legged thief last night. He took my hat and Zalas coat. It was a dog. A man brought them back this morning. They sprinkle the streets with a street car here.

Sept. 5. All is well. I am anxious to go on. Our clothes are in the laundry so we can't. Caught two more fish, one cat, one carp. It is fine weather. Have two trout lines baited with liver. Wish I could get clams.

Sept.6. No fish hard luck.Can't give fish away in Dubuque if you do get them.Left Dubuque this morning.Pulled all day,camped after dark, God only knows where,below Bellview,Iowa some place.Nineteen days from home.

Sept.7. I am kind of tired of this life.Rowed nearly all day.Stopped at Savana,Ill. Camped across the river.

Sept.8.Had a hard storm last night.Hard rain and thunder.Nearly every thing is soaked.Grub is low so is money.We are nearly to Sebula,Iowa. I heard from Ma,she sent me the wondering boy song.I would like to see them all this morning,Had our mail forwarded to Rock Island,Ill.Zala looks mad,he has not heard from his girl lately.The only ones I wrote to since leaving home are Pa and Ma.We made about thirty eight miles today.We had the best sail I ever had.

Sept.9. All is well.Had a cold night last night.I am glad we are going south.We never put up the top,only when it rains.We like to see the stars when we sleep.It is windy out and the wind is against us.We just passed Princeton,Iowa.There is an intererbin, line running through there.A street car pulls nine freight cars through,it runs from Clinton to Davenport,Iowa We are coming to the Rock Island rapids,They have such funny guides here. We ate dinner on one of the right hand Permids rock guides.I carved my name in the rock steps. We went through ten rapids in about thirty minutes Came safely to Rock Island.There is lots of curious sights here.The old Confederate prison and arsenal.They have fine parks and zoos across the river at Davenport.There are four or five towns all together here.

Sept.10. Slept good.A rat tried to jump in my face.And another jumped on top of Zala,he threw it in the river. They have a big ferry here. We are now headed down stream at fourteen miles per.hour.I talked religion to a man,he is towing us from Rock Island to Burlington,Iowa.That is ninety miles. There is one house boat with a stern wheel and twelve horse power,and another house boat without power,and a launch six horse power and a skiff and our boat.Quite a train.We were going to work in R.I. but got this chance to go,so we went. Wish Ella and Minnie could see us.There is some pretty scenery here.The boat is jumping so I can't write good. We just passed Velie's,Iowa. I wish I could stop but we are getting such a nice pull it would not pay. I knew they would name towns after me.

Sept.11. Slept last night in Muscatine,Iowa.That is where Rulines used to live. We are still in tow by the launch.Passed the funniest bridge at Keithsburg,Ill. It rises in the middle and lets the boats go under it.

Sept.12.Slept last night at Ockwa,Ill.Had a good sail and landed at Burlington,Iowa. I guess we will have to go to work.We have fifty five cents so we think of work now.We are about one quarter of the way to New Orleans now.

Sept.14. Are still at Burlington.Think I will go to work here.Caught one eel last night and a little cat.Zala has found work at the Burlington hotel.I may go to work on the levie Monday night.Had a launch ride today A man wants to sell me the launch.Launches are cheap here.

Sept.15. Started on a trip with five young men last night,twelve miles up the river.We slept last night in a summer resort. This is some launch all right,a speeder.Had a good time all day,got back tonight safely. I have found a good friend here.George Nelson.

Sept.23. Well it has been a week since I wrote in here.Have worked five days on a dredge.It was fine working.I ate and slept in my boat.Thursday every thing was soaked with rain even to the clothes I wore.But I worked just the same.It was pretty cold for a couple of days.I found an arrow head and a claw of some kind.I am going to keep them for relics.

The big dredge pipes broke and fell right over me.Just missed me that all.I never rode such rough water as I did Saturday. The big swede that was with me was scared all right,we could hardly stay in the boat.

I went up the river again Saturday night in the launch. Had quite a time. I slept cold last night. Last Wednesday night some kind of an animal climbed in my boat and ate twenty five cents worth of bacon, a spider full of sweet potatoes and a kettle of oatmeal. It climbed over me when I was sleeping. I'd just like to know what it was? I set traps for it the next night, but it did not come back.

Zala would not talk to a negro when we left Winona, but I saw him sitting by one and talking to him yesterday.

Sept. 29. It has been another week since I looked in my diary. We left Burlington Sept. 26. Rowed hard, reached Fort Madison that night. I shot a duck in the leg, but we could not get it. I never saw so many ducks in my life. Stayed at Fort Madison one night. It is surely some town. We went through the state prison the next morning. I believe if I was in there I could get out. I would try it any how, it is a bad place.

We reached Keokuk that night. We went through dead water all the way. The dam flooded the whole country above. At Mount Rose the water was nearly over the power house. It was clear over the docks there. Stayed at Keokuk over night and went through the worlds biggest locks. The next day they let us down nearly a hundred feet. We went through with a steamer the Black Hawk. The worlds biggest dam is there too. It is a sight to see I don't know where we stayed last night, in Illinois some place. We stopped at Quincy for a little while. I saw a big pelican this morning. It was the biggest wild bird I ever saw. I tried to shoot it but it flew before I shot. I saw black birds thicker than bees, the ground was black with them.

Sept. 30. Slept last night in Missouri for our first time. Found a lot of persimmons and plums this morning. Saw four more pelicans. They are some funny birds. You can almost touch them before they fly. It is fun to see them eat. And such large flocks of geese. Things are certainly pretty here. We stopped at Hannible. It is a dandy town. About 22,000 inhabitants.

Oct. 1. All is fine, dandy weather. Stayed last night about twelve miles above Louisiana, Mo. Zala has six dollars in the bank. I tanned an eel hide it looks pretty good for my first experience.

Oct. 2. Camped last night in Missouri, five miles below Hannible, Ill. Slept well, it is a fine morning. The bats ran all over the top of our canvas last night. This country looks a little like Indiana.

Oct. 3. Camped last night in Missouri, three miles below Grafton, Ill. This is a fine country, lots of quarries here. We are coming to Alton. There is an electric train here. just left it now, it is quite a city. Just passed the Missouri river. It is as muddy as any mud hole I ever saw. It makes us travel a lot faster, we expect to see St. Louis tonight. It is awful smoky today. I wish I owned ten or twenty acres of land in Missouri. Lots of fruit raised here. We are now near St. Louis. We came over the chain of rocks, because we did not know where the channel was. There is a big light house in the middle of the river. And just below us is a drop. You can hear the water roar three quarters of a mile.

It certainly was some drop all right. It made me kind of nervous, but I would go back. It made Zala shake awful, and made him weak. The water flows swift all along here. I can see two bridges.

Oct. 5. Skipped yesterday because I was looking at St. Louis. There is four bridges crossing the Mississippi here. We are camping on the Ill. side. There are six or eight ferry boats here and such wide ones. I saw my first battle ship yesterday, it was a small one, but awful pretty. I bought a watch and fob and fountain pen. Had my fortune told yesterday. It is a humbug, but she certainly makes money. I am to be a railroad man, should not make a trip on water. I am going to get some money from a distance. I hope I don't have to send home for it. I am going to hurt my hand soon. Going to be in love in four months with a girl. Going to be married twice and die at eighty four or eighty five years of age.

Then she wanted five dollars and she would go into a trance, and tell my name, age and occupation, how to get rich, so on and so forth, but she still wanted the five, I only had a five in my pocket. She only got ten cents of my money. She would not have got that if she had not been so pretty. Nearly broke now. This is some city. They unload a car of coal in about ten seconds, they run it out on the water and the tracks tip up and it all slides out of the end onto the barge. I don't know where Zala is, so I will have to look him up. He didn't come home last night. I skipped another day, I was looking for work yesterday, did not find any. Now I am dead broke, not a penny in my pocket, as poor as I began and as hungry as a bear. Just ate half a can of syrup, it didn't fill up very well. I never bummed anything to eat yet, but today I have too.

All is fine. Our stuff is wet. I lived on apples yesterday. A barrel broke open where they were loading them on a steamer and I got some to eat. I got a nickel last night and had a dish of hash. You get a fine lunch for five cents, hash potatoes, bread, catsup and gravy. I was hungry. I saw the valed prophet parade last night. Zala got fifteen cents and I found a dime last night, so we expect to run one hundred eighty four miles on that to Cairo, Ill. They transfer trains here from one road to another by boat. St. Louis is a dandy town, if you got money, if not keep away.

Oct. 9. All is fine, slept last night in Ill. The bluffs are awful pretty here. I just saw two eagles, I could have shot one with a shot gun. We have fifteen cents together, but we don't worry.

Oct. 10. Slept near St. Geneveve, Mo. We spent ten cents for potatoes last night, now have five cents, but all is all right, we are happy any how. I just got awful hungry, so I went up to a house after a jug of water, and a man gave me a lot of apples, and we found a lot by the river. I know what it is to eat dry bread and enjoy it, and be hungry too. I just cooked some rice we bought in Winona. So we ate rice and I spent my last five cents to get a loaf of bread, so we ate rice and bread. We ain't got any sugar to eat on it, but it was fine. A person can enjoy any food when they get real hungry. I'll never kick on my food as long as it is fit to eat. We have had some rough water, the waves roll over the end of the boat. I like the river though, I am more at home on the water than on land. I am sorry I Ain't got one cent to write home with. Suppose Ma. will worry? There is lots of Francis Grays here.

Oct. 11. Well I guess we are still here. We had a bad storm last night. They had some heavy wind near us. I heard when the storm went by, it blew the rain right through our canvases. I traded my fountain pen for a pail of sorghum last night, so all we ate is mush. We have some cornmeal and a little flour left, but not a cent of money. Zala sunk in the mud so deep I had to pull him out. We used our overcoats today.

Oct. 12. It is a nice morning but a little chilly. It was kind of chilly last night. The wind is against us today. We are still dead broke. I found some persimmons last night, they were fine. I have learned to stop eating when I am still hungry, we haven't any more to eat. Gee how I long for a good meal. I haven't had one for a month. We just came to a crowd of people having a baptism. They were having a good time. Nine were Baptized, eight women and one man. It is three quarters of a mile above Thebes, Ill. on the Missouri side above the bridge. I wish Pa was here?

Oct. 13. All is fine. Such nice weather. Slept two miles below Commerce, Mo. I think we will see Cairo today. The current is awful swift. We didn't leave camp till a quarter past nine. All I had for breakfast was a little rice. Oh, how I wish for a good meal. I just got within twenty feet of a nice duck before it flew. I haven't slept in a bed for two months.

Oct. 15. All is well. I skipped another day writing in here. We are now at Cairo, Ill. Came here night before last. This is a great town. Over half colored people, seven colored churches here, lots of boats here. This town is on the Ohio, river.

The water is clear and lots of fish in the river. We are surly having fine weather. Women and children are going bare footed. We caught an eel last night. So all we have to eat is eel. We are boiling it. I don't know whether it will be good or not. I shipped My gun to George yesterday.

Oct. 27. Well it is a long time since I wrote in here. The eel was good all right. It was all we had to eat that day, except we had two dozen bananas. They are five cents a dozen. I took my Columbian half dollar to the bank and have him keep it for me until I could earn some money to redeem it. I found a good friend. His name is Tom Meehan. I ate a fine meal there. It certainly was good. It was my first square meal in a long time. He has a pretty daughter. I struck every place in town for work, but could not get any. So after a few days we decided to try and make Memphis. Not a cent in our pockets and our grub box empty. But the night before we started we found another friend, Albert Wallas. He gave us something to eat and we went to work with him in the morning pumping fleets. I worked all day then all night. I was anxious to make money. I stuck to it a few nights till I got sick and went to sleep three or four times that. Next morning I was fired. Morning after that he came and hired me back again. I put in some tough nights and days. Sometimes soaked to the hide, work any how. Finally Zala and I got in a jangle and he decided to go back home. He had a girl on the brain. So I rigs up and buys groceries enough to last two weeks, and started on with three dollars, and I need a pair of shoes. First night alone I got soaked. The frame was too big and my canvas would not cover it, so every thing is soaked now. Poor progress today, rain and wind against me. Piles of ducks and geese here.

Oct. 28. The weather is fine today. It was pretty cold last night, but I slept warm. I shot a duck today and broke it's wing and a shot went in it's gizzard, but it would not die. I had to chase it a mile before I could shoot again, finally it got tired and I got near it, and shot it's head off.

I landed at Hickman, Ky. It is some town. A carnival and a water show were both there. Everybody rides horse back, or on mules mostly. They all carry guns. They won't allow you to talk to a negro. They treat them like dogs. Still will hire one, quick as a white. They are pretty lazy here at Hickman, I pumped out twelve barges while a negro pumped three. I can hear millions of wild geese. I could shoot a lot, but I can't sell them. I can shoot all I want to eat, but none to sell. I would like to own a farm here. I could soon get rich raising chickens. I suppose it is cold in Wisconsin now? It is awful nice here. I would like to see my folks tonight. If I had Lewis or Willie to sleep with me I'd like it. It's kind of lonesome. I have a muzzle loading shot gun, I think Christopher Columbus had it. But I like it fine. I traded my poorest watch for it. I ate the whole duck at one meal. I boiled it and then fried it. I made bean soup from the broth. I have pancakes every day. I surely am some cook.

Oct. 30. Well this is a fine day all right. It is like summer. We had a little frost last night. It blew hard yesterday so I landed at a shanty boat to warm. The lady wanted some whisky and store tobacco, she thought I was a boot-legger. She called me honey all the time. They told me a man stopped yesterday, he had a boat named John 3:16. It was three feet wide and sixteen feet long. I told them I knew him. He had a head start on me, but I said I would not sleep till I had caught him. I started right out, I was surely glad when I found him. I slept with him last night, his boat is warmer than mine. We had a good run today. We passed New Madrid, Mo. and Tiptonville, Tenn. I found lots of big hickory nuts, they were fine.

Nov. 2. Well I've seen some new sights since I last wrote in here. We stopped at Cruthersville, Mo. I saw the nicest Government dredge. It was all made of steel.

It had three smoke stacks. Then I went through my first cotton gin. The cotton is sucked up from the wagons through a big pipe. I saw some big cotton fields. We stopped at Barefield, Ark. It was the funniest place I ever visited. We bought some grub there. The people all travel on mule back. Once in a while you see a horse. There are mostly negroes here. I shot a nice duck this morning, I broke it's wing and then caught it. Bro. Hawley cooked it. It certainly was fine. I gave a man some fish hooks this morning in Tenn. He had a wench for a wife and one little boy and it was so black. I see some great sights and new things. I can't remember half of them and ain't got half the room to wright them all down. I ain't had any hardships since I found Bro. Hawley. We almost ran over two geese yesterday. They were so tame I thought they were tame ones. Anyhow we did not shoot any.

Nov. 3. We got up this morning before daylight. We are in a hurry to reach Memphis. I have had the malaria kind of bad for a few days. It makes a fellow kind of dead. He can't enjoy himself and keeps him tired all the time. I took two doses of compound powder of Jalp and it certainly made me feel better. Compound powder of Jalp and subnitrate of bismuth in five grain capsules and soda will cure malaria every time. They are catching lots of fish here. We take every cut off we come to, it saves a good many miles.

Nov. 7. We are now in Memphis, have been here a couple of days. It is quite a city, almost as big as Minneapolis. They have some nice parks here. The doves, squirrels, and sparrows will come and eat out of your hand. The doves will sit on your shoulders. There is lots of malaria chills and fever here. It is a wonder we ain't sick? But the hardships have toughened us up. We have drank river water for a good long time. I believe it is healthier than pump water here. Bro. Hawley came near leaving me. He was going to Fla. by railroad. He had his lunch and all ready, but changed his mind. We have a cabin boat now. About seven by eighteen feet, we took the cabin off and are going to put a canvas top on. This is a tough town. Piles of robbery and murders committed here. We are surely having fine weather here.

Now something--I have lost all track of dates. All I know is, I am still living. We left Memphis a week ago. Lived in our cabin boat a few days. It was quite a nuisance. It was nice to live in, but no good to travel in, when the wind blew. So we traded it to a man for a mink and a fish. He was a christian man living alone with three dogs. So we are now in Helena, Ark. You only see one white man to about five or six negroes. All white men carry guns. My it is warm here just like summer. I was hunting quite a lot this week, not much luck though. There is lots of big game here back from the river. Bear, deer, bobcat, wild hogs, panther, catamount, wolf, fox, wild turkeys and lots more. Some of each kind. I have been in several cane breaks, some are so thick you can't get through. If I had what's on one acre in Wis. I surely would have a fortune in fish poles. I have been pretty sick since I left Memphis. Have had malaria pretty bad. I could not get any medicine along the way. I am some better, but Bro. Hawley is still sick. I have not written home for a week, and today is Sunday, so I can't. We met a colored man by a lake. He was seining with his boys, he gave us some fish for bait. Bro. Hawley said Praise the Lord and the colored man said Praise the Lord too. But before we left he wanted to give us something to drink. They are very good hearted. Awful lot of cotton raised here.

Nov. 21. Well we are now camped on a sand bar about fifteen miles below Rose Dale, Miss.. Only on the Ark. side. I have put in a few pretty hard days since I wrote in here last, I have been sick with malaria chills and fever all the same time. Yesterday I was in bed nearly all day. I am so weak I could not walk. I don't believe I could have lifted twenty five pounds. But today I rowed nearly all day. The towns here are all levied in to keep from flooding.

There is some of the best pecans here I ever tasted, and persimmons too. I climbed a tall persimmon tree the other day. I never will tackle such a tall one again til I get a lot stronger than I am now. I caught a five pound cat fish the other night.

Jan.27,1914. Well praise the Lord that I am alive yet. We arrived at Greenville, Miss. On Nov.24, and I went to the hospital the same day. Bro. Hawley pulled me down here and got a cab and took me to the King's Daughters Hospital. I was glad to go, though I didn't have any pain. They put me to bed and that's the last thing I remember till the Nurse told me my Pa was there. That was six days after, I just knew him and that's all. I think the next I remember was about twenty days or more after Pa had come. I can remember the Nurse sticking a sharp thing in my arm seven times. A little girl brought me some oranges. I was pretty near gone then so I could not remember much. It has all been a dream to me. It was about thirty three days that all I got was a glass of milk every three hours. I sucked it through a glass tube. I had strange dreams and saw queer things while I was the worst. They never gave me a bit of medicine, but all the water I could drink. Eight to ten pitchers a day. Pa and Bro. Hawley took turns sitting up with me. The first I asked the Doctor for was an egg in my milk and got it. The next was lemonade and I got that and orange juice and honey. I ate a quart of honey, a little at a time. Then I got toast and milk, oh, that was good. I was pretty near starved. Then soft egg, and oatmeal, soup, and crackers and jello, baked apples, and rice, and corn and a few other things. But always all the milk I wanted. Buttermilk and sweet. That is after I got to eating. Buttermilk is the best thing to strengthen a person I know of. I had three sores on my back, and my lips were covered with fever sores. I had a nose bleed two or three times, pretty bad.

I had one back set after I started to set up and eat a little, my fever came again, it only lasted five hours. But milk was all I got for two days, so I was pretty careful after that. When I was well I weighed one hundred twenty five pounds. But when I got over the fever I weighed eighty pounds. It scared me to look at myself in the glass. But I never saw a person gain so fast as I did. I had awful good care. I had about the best room on the floor. I was in the hospital just two months. I left the twenty fourth of Jan. 1914. It was just like spring here. I haven't seen a snow flake this year. I picked violets the twenty third day of Jan....

In wee long lonely hours of the night, when troubles press me sore,
And it seems that hope has vanished, no more joy as days of yore.
Then I cry in tears and anguish to my father up above,
And I plead for tender mercy, "Father help me, show thy love."
Then he opens Heavens window, and His light breaks through again.
And He moves his hand of mercy, Saviour of discouraged men.
And my heart He fills with rapture, In my mouth He puts a song,
Though one time I could not see Him, and the dark night seemed so long.
Yet He's near despite the darkness, though my eyes may fail to see,
"Do not doubt" I hear Him whisper, "It's my hand that's guiding thee."
Let me come Lord, one step closed, to thy precious riven side.
Let me feel thine arm beneath me, in thy shadow let me hide.
Till these storms of life are ended, and I reach that heavenly shore,
Saviour hold my hand more firmly, help me trust thee more and more.
Oh renew my faith dear Jesus, just know Thou art always near.
Get thee hence, Lord say to Satan, when my heart he'd fill with fear.
Smile upon me with Thy presence, whisper Lord words from above.
Then my heart would sing more sweetly, as I rest on wings of love...

By Oscar A. Velie..
1965..

