

MEMORANDUM OF
MY NEW RIVER TRIP
BY

GEORGE NEWTON BALLOU

In the year of our Lord, nineteen hundred and one, month of September 12.

AM 8:20 I left home in a boat, "CADETTA", whose dimensions were twelve feet and five inches long, two feet six inches wide, and one foot deep, accompanied by two of my brothers, J. L. and R. L. Ballou.

AM 8:29 Passed successfully over the big shoal just below home, and arrived at the Mouth of Helton Creek.

AM 8:45 S. Sunsford's.

AM 8:52 Healing Springs.

AM 8:55 J & R fire two shots in response to the ones fired by our friend A. M. Jones.

AM 9:11 Past on the left of the island above the falls on North Fork.

AM 9:13 Bad shoal just below the island - use pole.

AM 9:23 Reached the Falls and stopped.

AM 9:45 Carried the boat around and get afloat.

AM 9:50 Passed a small island near Zachariah Parson's. We go to right of island.

AM 10:03 Dixon's Mill

AM 10:14 Carried the boat around the mill and get afloat. It begins to rain.

AM 10:17 Passed two islands. We go on the right of them.

AM 10:21 Another island, we go on the right.

AM 10:48 We stop and make oil cloth shelter - afloat.

Thursday the 12th

Weaversford, North Carolina

AM 10:55 We pass on the left of island

AM 11:28 Reached the junction of the two forks of New River - New River

AM 11:36 Mouth of Grassy Creek

AM 11:51 Beautiful painted rock cliff on the right bank

AM 12:00 Pass on left of island

PM 12:13 Pass a cliff that is almost perpendicular, and on the right bank. Cliff estimated to be about 15 feet.

PM 12:18 Pass on right of island.

PM 12:27 Pass on right of island.

PM 12:47 Mouth of Wilson, Virginia \

PM 12:53 Pass on right of island

PM 1:10 Pass on right of island.

PM 1:25 We pass over a rapids towing boat from the right bank.

PM 1:27 Fox Creek on left.

PM 1:30 We take lunch on our boat without stopping.

PM 2:05 Land on right bank and get grapes and water.

PM 2:22 Pass on left of island.

PM 2:25 Pass on left of two islands.

PM 2:28 Potato Creek on right.

PM 2:40 Stopped and conversed with a Mr. Ishmeal Cox .

PM 2:45 Bridle Creek on right.

PM 3:05 Saddle Creek on the right.

PM 3:20 We reach a falls know as "Nigger Hale". There is two falls near each other with an eddy between. We passed on the right of an island when we should have gone on the left. We undertake to pass over the falls by letting our boat down with the poles. The back end of the boat is in front and we are hurled against rocks forcing me to jump out rather than fall out. I jumped out on the lower side of the boat, braced myself, and hold the boat and catch a paddle that was thrown out, and then I get into the boat. The water was about waist deep and the waves very high. There are several islets about these falls. As we pass over the lower fall, we were all knocked out of our boat, or rather jumped out. The water was not knee deep,

PM 4:10 We are below the falls at Nigger Hale.

PM 4:20 Stop. To redress.

PM 4:45 Get afloat again.

PM 4:50 We pass on right of two islands. A bluff on left bank and people making molasses on the right bank.

PM 5:00 Shoal Creek on right.

PM 5:03 We pass on left of three islands, the middle one being a considerable hill, 50 or 60 feet high, and called "Mountain Island".

PM 5:15 Elk Creek on right.

PM 5:20 Pass on left of four islands.

PM 6:20 Pass on left of island.

PM 6:36 Branch Creek on left. We landed at the mouth of it.

PM 6:45 Stopped for the night at Mr. Spurlin's .

The day has been very pleasant with the exception of a little rain that caused us to make a shelter over our boat. It eased about one o'clock. The evening was cool with a stiff breeze.

We began to pass the night in an interesting conversation with a Mr. Leach but end it in dreams of dangerous water.

Friday the 13th

AM 7:00 Start from the bank of river at Mr. Spurlin's. The morning is bright and pleasant. White clouds are floating high. A real autumn day..

AM 7:08 Reeves' Ferry

AM 7:23 Pass on left of a small pebble island.

AM 7:47 Pass on right of a small island Here we pass Mr. Preso Reeves' farm.

AM 7:49 Small creek on right.

AM 7:55 Passed an old millers water wheel on left bank.

AM 8:00 First geese seen on left bank.

AM 8:22 Peach Bottom Creek on left.

AM 8:39 Hailed by men on the left bank. These men are preparing to make molasses. Pass a creek on right.

AM 8:45 "Austin Bottoms" on left bank and Gordon Woolen Mills near mouth of creek.

AM 8:55 Large cliff on right. Unusual slant of most of the stratified rocks on Upper New River, or about 35 degrees.

AM 9:04 Little River on right - bluff below, and bottom opposite.

AM 9:20 Ferry boat

AM 9:44 John's Creek on left. Island at mouth of creek.

AM 10:04 Rock Creek on left.

AM 10:06 Pass on left of island.

AM 10:10 Stephen's Creek on left. We stop and drink from a small brooklet that emerges from cliff on right bank and the brooklet falls into the river.

AM 10:20 We did not leave our places in our boat to drink.

AM 10:39 The people are cutting corn and sowing grain. We now pass a very abrupt place in the river. Here we find a splendid site for a factory. A strong natural abutment on each side.

AM 11:03 We pass on left of an island. A large cliff on right.

AM 11:06 Elk Creek on left.

AM 11:08 Pass on right of island.

AM 11:28 Country is now becoming more even and spread out. Pass a small and large island on the right.

AM 11:39 Pass another island. We go on the right. Small creek on the right.

AM 11:46 Ferry Boat.

AM 11:55 Creek on right.

PM 12:08 We take lunch on board "Cadetta".

PM 12:30 We go to right of island.

PM 12:53 Killed a snake.

PM 1:10 Pass two islands, go between.

PM 1:17 Pass to left of several small islands.

PM 1:20 We now pass over a smooth sheet of water, and arrive at a very dangerous falls.

PM 2:50 We leave this place. For a description see " Notes" in the later part of this book.

PM 3:00 Pass Stephen's Creek right.

PM 3:52 Less then one mile below, after passing over very rough water, we pass "Washington Mills.

PM 6:55 A dam is being constructed at this place which is 40 feet at the base, and 8 feet at the top in width, and to be 40 feet high. Stopped for the night at Mr. Brown's.

A hard night - spent drying baggage etc. The water for several miles above had been very rough.

Saturday the 14th.

AM 10:25 Boarded Cadetta at the R.R. Bridge.

AM 10:47 Reached a shoal. Here we are hailed by Dr. G. W. Kernadle of N. C. Who tells us of the river below, and who reads a description of it written by Wm. Cullen Bryan.

AM 11:15 We pass thru Mill Race to avoid rapids, and arrive at Grayson, VA. Here we visit the Grayson Sulphur Springs. These springs are in an enclosure of stone. These springs are sheltered by an octagon roof supported by four large stone pillars on the side next to the river and by a solid stone wall on the upper side. The enclosure is 21 x 30 feet. An analysis of the water was made in the year 1835, which analysis shows the waters to contain the following properties; There is 4 springs - the north spring contains red sulphur - the west spring is white sulphur; the South spring is alkali and the East spring contains some oil. Near these springs is a good free stone spring.

We take dinner with Dr. Kernadle at the Riverside Inn. On the other side of the

river just opposite this summer resort, the cliffs had been thrown up and lay almost as symmetrical as if it is Mason work. The huge stones are covered with vines and shrubbery - some being colored by the action of the chemical properties of the atmosphere. After dinner, we go to the top of the hill that we may view the surroundings. From the hill top we can see the peaks of the Iron Mountains.

PM 3:00 From the Hotel to 1/8 of a mile below the river has a fall of 8 or 10 feet. Another fall 6 or 8 feet - 300 or 400 yard below.

PM 3:20 Ferry Boat

PM 3:22 Crooked Creek , right.

PM 3:33 Rock Island on the right.

Rapids -- fall 12 or 15 feet. Splendid place for a factory. A hill 50 or 60 feet on the left bank, which could be tunneled placing the machinery on a small brook back from the river. At these falls Mr. F. A. Kernadle of Elon. N.C. takes snap shots of us as we passed over.

PM 4:10 Leave Dr. and Mrs. Kernadle.

PM 4:26 Small island below the falls we pass to the right of another island.

PM 4:32 Ferry Boat

We now reached the Great Falls which William Cullen Bryant describes (for a description as given by Mr. Bryant see "Notes")

Farmers Mt. On right, which rocks form small islets bending the waters now left and right. Further down the stream we passed several small islets.

PM 6:55 Stopped for the night with Mr. James Sisk near Ivanhoe VA.

Sunday the 15th

We go to Ivanhoe and visit the Iron Furnace in the fore noon.

PM 2:00 Rained. We visited the iron Furnace and the Burg in the afternoon.

Spent a very pleasant day with Mr. Sisk, eating peaches, melons, etc. Here we rearranged our baggage and dried everything.

There is a great deal of business being done in this part of the country.

Monday the 16th

AM 7:15 Leave Mr. Sisk's.

AM 7:40 Ferry Boat at Furnace

AM 7:41 Furnace Dumping. Two or three small islands here.

AM 7:55 Old Works.

AM 8:10 Pass to right of island.

AM 8:12 Railroad Bridge.

AM 8:15 Pass to right of island.

AM 8:25 Austinville, VA Here we carry boat around dam. Pass to right of island below dam, and reach ferry boat at 9:20.

AM 10:05 We reach the Mines of Posey Sanders and continue on. These mines are on the hill to the left of the river. The works are on the left bank. Now we pass to the right of an island and come to the splendid home of Mr. Sanders., and we converse with him at the river.

AM 10:10 Here is a ferry boat and on the right side of the river is an old Shot Tower - 100 years old.

AM 10:35 Foster Falls (mines) and near here the railroad bridge is washed out.

AM 11:10 We pass through a mill race and then to the right of an island.

AM 11:15 Over Foster Falls.

AM 11:55 Pass on right of small islands.

AM 12:00 Bertha Zinc Mines.

PM 12:12 Ferry Boat.

PM 12:19 Reed Creek on left.

PM 12:22 Pass large island. Go on left. Fine residence on left. Crane and ducks.

PM 12:32 Pass beautiful rock cliff and a ferry boat.

PM 12:33 Barren Springs.

PM 12:53 Cliff on the right with a high pillar of mason-like work -- distinct from other part of the cliff in upper third - height 100 feet.

PM 12:55 Rock quarry on right.

PM 1:15 Pass to left of island Pine Run Creek .

PM 1:50 Rich Hill (Mines)

PM 2:05 Big Reed Island Creek.

PM 2:08 Ferry Boat

PM 2:20 Allisonia (town).

PM 2:54 Railroad bridge.

PM 2:55 Pass on left of island.

PM 3:09 Pass on right of two islands.

PM 3:12 Delton (Harper, P.O.)

PM 3:30 Here Railroad leaves river. Small Reed Island. Reeds grow up from the bed of the river.

PM 4:00 Pass on left of island.

PM 4:15 Ferry boat . Max Creek on left.

PM 4:30 Islands on right and left. Here we find a considerable fall.

PM 4:43 Island on the right.

PM 5:25 Another ferry boat

PM 5:35 Islands on the right.

PM 6:00 Pete Creek on right.

The river runs very swiftly for quite a distance, and we travel with a considerable speed. It is near here that we meet the fisherman, a Mr. Whit, with whom we talked for some time.

6:15 PM Wagon bridge constructed by county. Stop for night with Mr. A. H. Towe.

Tuesday the 17th

Godfrey's looking glass or " The Glass Windows" was viewed by the right side of the river. It continues to rain, and we stay all day with Mr. Towe, and enjoy many nice things.

Wednesday the 18th

7:30 AM Leave Mr Towe's .

7:48 AM Islands on the left.

7:53 AM Ferry Boat.

8:24 AM Islands on right and left.

8:26 AM More islands on both sides.

8:28 AM Ferry Boat.

8:30 AM Island on right.

8:32 AM Nice residence and good farm on left.

8:41 AM Island on left.

8:56 AM Old extinct bloomery.

9:00 AM Little river on right.

9:10 AM Islands on left.

9:30 AM Ferry boat. Here the wagon bridge is washed out. There are several houses (one splendid house) on left.

7:41 AM Islands on left.

7:44 AM Ferry boat and nice residence on right.

9:45 AM Two hundred ton iron furnace on right, one mile above Radford VA.

10:05 AM New River Railroad Bridge at Radford, VA. Double :

10:10 AM Wagon Bridge.

12:30 PM Stop and take in the East and West Towns, and leave Radford.

12:40 PM Set our watches in Radford - moved up 30 minutes. Small creek between East and West Radford. Ferry Boat.

1:00 PM Island on left.

1:02 PM Cave in rock cliff on left bank.

1:07 PM Creek on right.

1:21 PM Creek on right (culvert).

1:22 PM Island on right.

1:45 PM Ferry boat and a very rough catarack above, forming a whirl at lower end: river narrow.

1:55 PM Island on right and cliff on left bank.

2:02 PM Railroad Bridge curving up to the left bank at tunnel.

2:15 PM Island on left.

2:45 PM Island on right

3:05 PM Cave in cliff on right.

3:20 PM Stopped to view a farm on left bank. At this place on the river, we find a number of very fine farms., which grow blue grass and all the cereals common to this section. Among the trees, we notice the sugar maple. These farms are owned by Robert Kent, Henry Flannagan, Henry Ironstein, John Cowan, Mac Webb, and others at Bell Springs, Va. Pulaski County.

3:45 PM Pass island.

3:56 PM Thomas Creek on the right with fine lands on both sides. These farms are opposite the Kent Flannagan, etc. Farms and are in Montgomery County, nine miles from Blacksburg VA.

4:12 PM Small island on the right.

4:13 PM Another ferry boat.

4:50 PM Here the country closes in again and is rough.

4:53 PM Creek on left.

5:20 PM Islands on right. Telephone post on one.

5:21 PM Dry Branch Station Coal Mine.

5:45 PM Cliff on right and wild cataracts in river.

6:15 PM Stopped for night with Mr. Snodgrass. Here we enjoy the hospitality

of the people. We enjoy the cakes, grapes, etc.

Thursday September, 19, 1901

8:06 AM Leave the home of Mr. Snodgrass.

8:10 AM The morning is cool and bright. Ferry Boat.

8:23 AM Good Wind's Ferry. There is a creek on the right. Eggleston, VA

8:48 AM Ferry boat and cliff.

8:50 AM Ferry and tunnel.

9:00 AM Sulphur Springs on right. Just opposite the hotel is a cliff at which we stop. Here we find huge pillars - some of them leaning - long half way from river up the right into the cliff. From this half way the hotel can be seen. We enter the halls of the cliff through a large arch way and climb to the top of some of the columns. From these natural towers we view the huge cliff below and On the opposite side of the river.

This last mentioned cliff consists of perhaps as many as one hundred mason-like columns of various colors, and some of these 200 feet high. In this cliff is to be found tunnels, caves, arches, etc. Many vines and bushes grow among the rocks of the cliffs. A better view is to be had from the river opposite and below the cliff. The water by the cliff is said to be more than 100 feet deep

9:29 AM Islands on right.

9:37 AM Cliff which has a tunnel, and a round tower which is about 100 feet in height.

9:38 AM Creek on right.

9:48 AM Cliff of columnar cones and inverted cones etc. Etc.

9:50 AM Island on left.

10:25 AM Cliff on left with columns etc.

10:30 AM Ferry boat (next station Niagara Etc.).

10:31 AM Island on right.

10:32 AM Very abrupt falls. We pass over tremendous waves 4 to 6 feet high, and 15 or 20 feet long.

10:48 AM Island on left.

10:58 AM Creek on left with railroad bridge over it, and cliff on opposite side.

11:12 AM Ripple Mead Station. A wagon bridge and considerable shoal.

11:20 AM Rock Quarry on right.

11:40 AM Big stony junction, railroad bridge and ferry.

11:54 AM Cliff on left with rock laying flat.

12:00 PM Island on left and cliff on right with part of the rocks dipping one way, and part the other -- a geologic flexure.

12:18 PM Curve, station.

12:35 PM Cliff on left.

1:00 PM Ferry boat.

1:01 PM Island on right.

1:10 PM Pearisburg - Ferry.

2:03 PM Ferry above Narrows.

2:05 PM Narrows station.

2:06 PM Wolf Creek on left.

2:15 PM Narrows Proper.

2:37 PM Leave the shoal.

2:47 PM Islands on right and left.

2:56 PM Ferry boat.

3:00 PM Island on right.

3:15 PM Several other islands and ferry boat.

3:23 PM Zurich Station.

3:45 PM Ferry boat and islands.

3:48 PM East River on left.

3:57 PM Railroad leaves New River here. Falls from the mouth of the East River for about one mile.

4:24 PM Very abrupt falls and narrowest place in the river from the falls on North Fork.

4:40 PM Ferry boat.

5:20 PM Ferry Boat - bad shoal at Old Mill Place. Passed.

5:56 PM Ferry Boat.

6:00 PM Stop for night at Mr. D. A. S. Walker's of Bluff West VA. From here, we see gas rise from river.

Friday, Sept. 20, 1901

9:06 AM Stray ferry boat. Leave Mr. Walkers.

9:35 AM Islands on left.

9:40 AM Ferry Boat. Reach a very bad place in river, and while J.L. is towing the boat, the line is jerked loose from him, and the boat is alone in the river. Bob swims to the boat, and brings it to the bank safely. We get into Cadetta , and start

again at 10:24 AM.

10:40 AM Ferry boat. In this section, the people raft up timber and float it down the river to Hinton, W.V. for sale , a distance of 15 or 18 miles.

11:07 AM Ferry boat.

11:18 AM Islands on left - Creek.

11:30 AM Ferry Boat.

12:00 PM Island on left.

12:07 PM Reach Bull Falls.

12:19 PM Ferry Boat.

12:24 PM Lower end of Bull Falls where a large wave tried to draw the boat into a whirl. We pass successfully but not easily.

12:30 PM Islands on left, one very large one.

1:00 PM Ferry Boat.

1:10 PM Islands on left.

1:20 PM Ferry boat.

1:47 PM Ferry Boat.

1:50 PM Bluestone River on the left.

2:00 PM Island on right.

2:05 PM Ferry Boat.

2:10 PM Boom - Sawmill works being put up.

2:33 PM Greenbrier River on right. - Ferry.

2:38 PM Just past long shoal. Islands on right and left. Dwelling on Island.

3:00 PM Stop at Hinton, W. VA. We had traveled in "Cadetta" a distance of at least two hundred (200) miles, and over the roughest river in the South. It is called by many "The river of death", because so many people have lost their lives in it.

By some geographers , the river at Hinton "or the mouth of the Greenbrier" changes its name to "The Great Kanawha."

Signed "G. Newt Ballou"