

Primary Source: Jane Caroline North's Traveling Diary ^[1]

Jane Caroline North was born to a wealthy family in Charleston, S.C and later married Charles Lockhart Pettigrew, a member of a prosperous planter family in Washington and Tyrell counties.

In this excerpt from her diary of 1851, North describes her experiences traveling from South Carolina to Virginia to the mineral springs of western Virginia. Part of her route ran through North Carolina, and although she was able to travel part of the way by railroad, the excerpts below from her diary show how complicated travel could be in the 1850s, even for the wealthy after the advent of the Railroad.

Thursday July 31

Uncle Henry Aunt Harriette the two children myself & Betsey as attendant left Charleston on Board the Wilmington Boat Vanderbilt at 4 o'clock p.m. Many persons on board among them several acquaintances—

August 1st

We had a disagreeable night, it rain thundered and lightened the whole time. Fortunately for us we were accommodated with a [State room](#) on deck, the weather was very hot and if we had been moved into the [berths](#) ^[2] below the Saloon, would certainly have been near the end of our days before morning. As it was we suffered sharply -- [Smithville](#) is the most [desolate](#) ^[3] looking spot shabby houses and piles running out into the river giving an appearance of decay & at the same time reminding me of what I read of Old Dutch towns with their defences projecting into the sea. Wilmington is a considerable place, somewhat resembling [Georgetown](#) except it has a prosperous air. We went from the Boat to the [Cars](#), on board which we waited an hour or more, finally set off. The country is a dead level, pine trees, grass and [turpentine](#) ^[4] barrels rolled beside the road ready for export -- certainly this portion of N. Carolina does not make the most favorable impression. We passed over beautiful [Savanna](#) cover'd with grass and wild flowers, bordering the road for ½ mile on each side & only bounded by the horizon one very fine orchard, & one fine field of corn were the only interesting objects I saw in the distance of 166 miles or more! We supped at Weldon where we changed for Petersburg Va -- [There are opposition houses at Weldon much to the advantage of travelers](#) -- we had a nice supper & [capital](#) tea at Greshams. From eight until after 12 o'clock at night we were in the cars going from Weldon to Petersburg. There was a shelf sufficiently wide for a person to be comfortable upon extending around the [illegible] above the seat, on this as many men as could get on it were sleeping while those who could accommodate themselves upon the seat. We had every variety of attitude, some highly ridiculous. At Petersburg we rested 2 hours then took the Cars for Richmond. I was surprised to find this route so good, having always been told that it was the worst in the Union.

Sat 2d

Arrived in Richmond about ½ past six, the morning very cool, a shawl would have been pleasant. The approach to the Town is very pretty, we crossed the James river by a long very high bridge, the houses appear as if built one above another in almost regular lines. The hills are high and with a little fancy one might suppose the buildings, castles perched upon their summits. We stopped first at the American Hotel. Uncle Henry had to return to the Depot for my poor [carpet bag](#) which was reported missing, he was just in time to save the captive from being carried to Washington -- it was a great relief to have it back again. The hotel had been newly painted, it was handsomely furnished but in a state of transition from the "horrors to the decent." The paint was more than Aunt Harrie could bear so after breakfasting (and very nicely too) we changed our quarters and obtained pleasant rooms at the "Powhatan." I feel now as if really in old Virginny the engine that puffed us here was the Pocahantas, & the hotel at which we stay bears the name of the famous old Indian chief! Everything has looked so like home even the bareness of the North Carolina belt, (with the exception of the turpentine barrels) that I did not realize the distance that separated me from home. After resting a short time Uncle Henry the children & myself walked to the capitol, saw [Houdon's statue of Washington](#) & looked at the view from the high portico -- we looked in the Representative & Senate chambers also -- these are not so comfortable as those in Columbia & the floors were excessively dirty. I was disappointed in the statue; the face is quite different from the representations we usually see of Washington it is more full & looks heavy -- the dress is admirable, the large flapped waistcoat, the hair in [cue](#), the old fashioned coat, the whole in excellent keeping & representing the dress of the time 1789 I think -- the usual mode of draping statues of public men does not seem to me a correct one, why should they not be sculpted in the dress of their on time instead of enveloping them in Greek or Roman robes? Our dinner today was not so good as our breakfast -- the bill of fare was defective in as much as there were dishes put down in the catalogue not to be found on the table. Peaches & milk were handed as dessert, the saucer half filled with sliced over peaches covered with lumps of ice to this was add sugar & milk. I did not approve the arrangement. There were but 2 ladies at the table, men enough however -- Since we left S.C. I have been struck by the difference in negroes. Yesterday I thought them the most sturdy saucy looking set, & since entering VA -- every other one is a mulatto. I have never seen so many as [meandered](#) ^[5] around the tables of the "American" this morning & at dinner at this house it is really pleasant to see the true [ebony](#) ^[6] & them to me quite distinguished. We took a charming drive this afternoon through & about the City. It is best seen from two views, one

from Gable's Hill where the City seems chiefly to lie to your left hand the fine Railroad bridge before you & James River dotted with patches of little green Islands almost at your feet & sliding & stretching away before you -- the other view is from the top of a very high hill just above the port of the town, called I think Rockets. The view from this point is finer than the other from Gable's Hill, the elevation is greater than any other place, one stands higher than the Capitol which building is conspicuous from every point, crowning a hill on the midst of the new City. What strikes me with surprise is the number & height of the hills. New & old Richmond are situated on & between them so that the effect is very curious & very pretty. Many of the streets are steep & rough as our backcountry roads. The hill on which we last stood I thought inaccessible looking up at it from Main St winding at its foot, several turns & windings brought us to the top -- the river was beneath the beyond & below us. Over the river stretched the richest looking country, the corn of the darkest green & numberless wheat stacks scattered over the fields, the whole seemed "smiling in the lap of Plenty." We passed a church said to be very old; the hill had been cut down at least 30 feet on one side to make a street, the brick wall was built up against it forming a [parapet](#) ^[7] & overhanging the edge in one or two places were some old monuments -- the effect was very curious. After our delightful drive we took an ice cream, very nice & much more than they give in Charleston for the same money.

Monday 4th

We took the Cars for Charlottesville this morning arrived to dinner -- the hotel was a most distracted place; ill furnished, poorly kept -- The dinner was a scene of confusion & discomfort -- the landlord before the bell rang requested anxiously that the ladies would seat themselves at table otherwise they would get no seats after that. Soon as the summons rung out (we being established before hand,) such rushing in of rough looking men I never saw. Oh! They were desperate specimens -- it was Court week & the town was filled with all sorts of queer, hard [visaged](#) ^[8] people -- they ate furiously & everything together. I was amazed at being handed ice-cream after dinner, it was like a gleam of civilization in the midst of barbarism. Uncle Henry engaged an extra with Dr. Holmes, & as soon as possible we set off for Brooksville 20 miles distant. We passed the University a mile from the Town, it is a handsome building. Our party consists of Dr Holmes & wife, Jr John Gadsden who is traveling with them, and ourselves.

Tuesday 5th

Left Brookville (merely a way side hotel) for [Staunton](#) early, we were today fairly among the Blue Ridge, they certainly correspond to the name, tho' I don't know that they looked any more blue than other mountains, the country until we entered the mountainous regions was destitute of any beauty, today we have had several pretty scenes, & glimpses of the more distant ranges, looming through their "[azure](#)" ^[9] hue." Dined at Staunton, the situation of this town is very striking, among steep hills with the Mountains beyond. On each side of the street entering the Town are handsome public buildings on the asylum for the deaf & dumb the Principals of which are a gentleman & his wife both deaf & dumb -- I did not hear what the opposite building was intended for. The hotel was a nice one & the arrangements appeared very comfortable, the dinner well conducted and very good. I saw white waiters for the first time since entering Virginia here at the hotel of this inland Town perched among the high hills bordering the mountain country. This is a flourishing place, & when the rail road is finished connecting it with Charlottesville, it doubtless will be of great importance. We passed today a place where they are tunneling thro' a mountain; the work has been in progress three years, and will be finished it is said in one more, the embanking for the railroad is finished in many places, it was a great work to undertake, filling up sufficiently in the valleys tunneling thro a mountain and overcoming many obstacles they have had to encounter in the route. We changed the stage at Staunton, & left in a rain, the distance to [Cloverdale](#) being 30 miles -- fortunately it soon cleared, we traveled well but it was ten o'clock at night before we reached our resting place. We were very tired -- the children had been asleep two or three hours before we stopped, they have stood the journey very well so far.

Wed 6th

We did not leave Cloverdale until nine o'clock having but 20 miles to the [Warm Springs](#). The road is turnpike it is made over the mountains nearly the whole way, & commanding beautiful points of view & in excellent order. From one height I was reminded of the view of [Caesar Head](#), tho it was neither so fine nor so extensive. After a drive of 15 miles we drove into the "Bath Alum Springs" where the horses were to be watered. These Springs have not been discovered long, this is only the second season. The hotel is of red brick the cottages are pretty little buildings, but must be very hot. The sun was shining his fiercest as we drove up, and the bricks seemed to me really flaming. In a [book on the Virginia Springs by Dr. Burke](#), he describes these of [Bath Alum](#) as very delightful & gives the most refreshing account of the trees & ornamental grounds, the shrubbery &c I looked in vain for any semblance of all this, a row of bare poles & a carriage way comprised every beauty to be seen. He drew from that never failing source an Irish imagination. At length at 4 o'clock in the afternoon we arrived at the Warm Springs, I felt a little scared I must admit when we got out dusty, weary & travel worn and saw people standing about, on the staircase we met a lady dressed in white [bobbinet](#) & looking so nice that I thought it would be a desperate undertaking to prepare for dinner, so weary as we were. This trouble was removed to my satisfaction when I found that the hour for dinner had long passed & we were only with our own party. [Dressed for the evening](#), few people here -- some old gentlemen & ladies chiefly.

Jane Caroline North Diary: Volume 1. [Transcript] Southern Texts Society, Southern Historical Collection # 4716 Unit #1. Original: Pettigrew Family Papers Collection # 592, Southern Historical Collection, UNC-Chapel Hill, Series 3.4 Folder 532.

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Jean-Antoine Houdon's statue of George Washington in the rotunda of the Virginia State Capitol may be the most accurate likeness of the man.

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