

Vagabond

From Indiana—Ernie Pyle

Old Swede Gives Ernie the Blues, But Taxi Driver's Friendly Greeting Causes Him to Call Alaska 'Home.'

FAIRBANKS, Alaska, Sept. 10.—We rode the Brill Car from Matanuska to Fairbanks—300 miles, sitting up all night.

The Brill Car is what the Alaska Railroad runs north with the mail as soon as a boat arrives at Seward. It's a high-ball express—run just for the mail, but carrying a few passengers willing to sit up all night to get there in a hurry.

It is a two-car train, run by a gasoline motor generating electricity, which is called the "Brill Car" all over Alaska, and is it called that, I assume, merely because the cars were made by the Brill Co. The train sometimes hits as high as 45 miles an hour.

Walter Pippel and I were the only passengers getting on at Matanuska Junction. He is Matanuska's prize farmer, you know.

Bob Atwood came through the smoker where we were sitting. He is editor of The Anchorage Times. I remembered that I had a letter to him—written by Dr. Ernest Gruening of Washington. So I introduced myself.

He's Not the Doctor

"Oh yes," he said. "I've heard of you." And I thought to myself, "Yeah I know. You think I'm Dr. Pyle of Juneau. Everybody thinks I'm Dr. Pyle of Juneau. But I'm not. I'm Simple John Pyle, of Jackson Hole, Wyo., and you never heard of me in your life. I won't say anything. I'll just sit here and watch you squirm when you read the letter and find I'm not Dr. Pyle of Juneau."

But he carried his mistake off well and never let on, and sat down and we chatted for an hour or so.

About 9:30 p. m. we began to see Mt. McKinley. It is the highest mountain in North America—20,300 feet.

We were within sight of it for nearly two hours. It looked about 10 miles away, but the mail clerk said it was 40. It was covered with snow.

It was 1 o'clock in the morning when we stopped at McKinley Park station. There's nothing there but a little depot, a few white tents of the Alaska Road Commission and a big log arch across the road, saying, "Gateway to Mt. McKinley National Park."

A few people got off the train, carrying heavy bags. One of them was an old man. Suddenly I realized I knew him.

He was the old Swede who had been my fellow-passenger weeks ago in the back end of a truck on that nightmarish ride from Fairbanks to Valdez.

Finally Got Week's Job

I went over and talked with him. He said he had been hunting for work ever since I saw him and had finally got a few weeks' job with the Road Commission, in the park.

For the next hour we tried to sleep. We curled up on the leather seats, with suitcases for pillows. It was like being on a vibrating machine, so we gave it up and sat and watched the already light horizon grow lighter. By 2 a. m. the sun was glaring in our eyes.

It was just a little before 5 a. m. when we rolled into the outskirts of Fairbanks. I saw the University Experimental Farm ahead, and knew Prize Farmer Pippel would want to see it. I shook him awake.

In a few minutes we were at Fairbanks. The taxi drivers were all at the station, and one of them said: "Hello, Mr. Pyle, back again?" And I said: "Yeah, had to come back home."

That's one of the lures of Alaska. Pretty soon, no matter where you go up here, somebody knows you. And some people even get to distinguish you from Dr. Pyle of Juneau.

My Diary

By Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt

Dolls of Children's Museum Here On Exhibit in Hyde Park Library.

HYDE PARK, N. Y., Thursday.—This certainly was a busy morning. I began my breakfast at 7:45 with young Cyril Martineau and a friend of his, Cyril, the son of my husband's first cousin, who married an Englishman. He came over to this country to work for an English oil company on the West Coast and married an American girl. Now he has left her with their two children in his mother's little country home in England.

The company is sending him on a year's trip to South America. He is visiting different stations and could only spend the night with us but it was nice to see him.

It is interesting to watch these youngsters grow up and develop. I feel sorry for him as I thought that, in spite of the interest of the trip, he would be separated from his family for a long time. I am even sorrier for his wife, and yet, England is a good place to live in and Cyril's mother is one of the most charming and capable women to consult if one feels a little lost and lonely.

Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln MacVeagh and my brother, Hall, appeared for breakfast a little later and then went off for their destination by motor. The day gradually planned itself. People had to be brought from Poughkeepsie to the President and his friends to their trains. I thought there were to be 14 people if you turned out there were 15. Several delegations came to call during the morning. While two of the children and two young friends ate a rather late breakfast, I sat at the table and gazed as many plates as I could and gathered what information I could to John's belongings.

He pointed to a pile of soiled clothes in the middle of his bedroom floor and announced that some day he and Johnny Drayton would get together again and divide these belongings which at the moment were so well mixed he could not possibly distinguish them. Our master is bound to be a carefree and trusting as these youngsters are, but it is a grand period in one's life. We should all be grateful that our children can enjoy it. Troubles and responsibilities come soon enough, no matter how kind fate may seem to be.

Mrs. James Roosevelt Jr. and her two little girls are coming this afternoon to stay with us. It will certainly be a joy to have children in the house again. My son, James, has already warned me that the gate at the top of the stairs must be kept closed constantly. Kate, who is both active and inquisitive, will tell on the girls.

I have given the two dolls which were sent me by the Children's Museum in Indianapolis to the library here in the village of Hyde Park, where they are holding an exhibition of dolls. I was delighted to see how appreciative everybody was of the beautiful way in which these dolls are made and dressed.

I wish so much that other museums might have the advantage of a painter like John Quincy Adams—not, the President, but a direct descendant. He has a great gift for painting backgrounds. I imagine his paintings bring out the various exhibits and attract children more than any other single thing I saw in the museum.

Walter O'Keefe—

THE Chicago Times planted a couple of smart reporters on the trail of the American Nazis and they bring up the fact that the Nazis are planning to seize the U. S. Government.

Well! Well! Well! Those Nazis always seemed crazy, and they prove it. I imagine trying to take over a broken-down business like the U. S. Government!

With gamblers are laying money that if it ever happens they will never get Maine and Vermont.

It's a strain on one's imagination to think of Der Fuehrer Hitler riding triumphantly up Broadway into the Bronx smiling and bowing from Mayor La Guardia's car.

Of course, such a thing never can come to pass, because Americans have too great a sense of humor to worship a guy with a mustache like Adolf's.

The Indianapolis Times

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1937

Entered as Second-Class Matter
at Postoffice, Indianapolis, Ind.

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A Gardener's Dreams Come True

Tray Agriculture' Makes One Acre Do Work of 30—Without Hoeing!

By Morris Gilbert
NEA Staff Correspondent

LAKE SHENAROCK, N. Y., Sept. 10.—In a little sunny patch of ground beside a modest bungalow up here in the country 50 miles north of New York City, Dr. Gould Harrold, associate of the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research, is growing tomatoes in trays, their roots not in the soil but in tanks containing a chemical solution.



Results of the "tray agriculture" tests at Lake Shenarock—Dr. Gould Harrold displays roots of tomato plants (the tray has been tipped up to show how the roots grow down into the chemical tanks).

tight cypress tanks were built, 12 feet long, a foot wide, a foot deep. Above these were placed movable trays, the same dimensions as the tanks except that they were only four inches high, with a bottom of chicken wire.

It is the chicken wire—an essential combination made by the celebrated Prof. W. F. Gerlache of the University of California, pioneer of tray agriculture—which makes this type of water culture practicable. A layer of excelsior an inch deep covers the chicken wire, and above that a layer of shavings 3 inches deep.

Tomato plants meanwhile were grown from seeds in a seed tray by ordinary soil methods, either in a hot house or a cold frame. When the plants had almost reached their blossoming time, they were transplanted to the trays. Their roots were inserted through the chicken wire and soil into the tank, being careful to leave an air space between chicken-wire and liquid surface.

The plants were spaced a foot apart in length down the tray and 6 inches apart in width. That gave 24 plants to each tray. The average space between tomato vines in field cultivation is between 3 and 4 feet.

HERE at Shenarock, Dr. Harrold will not answer those questions. It is too early, and the experiment is too modest. But he and Dr. John M. Arthur, biochemist at the Boyce Thompson Institute, who is supervising the work, are thinking in those terms.

For tomatoes—the produce now growing at Shenarock—"tray agriculture" is a success. Dr. Harrold has 10 tanks in use. They fit into his small "side yard." In two or three of them, they have been making special tests. The plants even in these look as flourishing as ordinary tomato plants. But in the majority of tanks, where a proven chemical formula and technique are in use, the results are extraordinary.

This is the station's first season. While its work is still experimental, perfect tomatoes are already being grown in exceptional abundance for a very low price and without the hard labor, equipment, or expense of ordinary farming.

Vines are sturdy, high, and have a full, velvety look and set much closer together than in ordinary garden culture. The clusters of tomatoes are bountiful, growing definitely more than the normal yield. The tomatoes themselves are vivid in color, firm and meaty in texture, with plenty of juice, but no wateriness. Their flavor is rich, sweet, refreshing, in fact, literally perfect.

The solution in which the plant roots were placed has as base 62 gallons of water to a tank, practically filling it. The rest of the elements filled a quart mason jar to be poured in each time. Others are added in minute doses with an eyedropper. The chemical compounds used were phosphoric and nitric acid, phosphoric acid (these three in the largest proportions), potassium hydroxide, ammonium hydroxide, calcium oxide, and magnesium oxide.

tiny doses of "tonic" were added to this mixture with the eyedropper—a few drops of manganese, boron, copper, zinc, and iron.

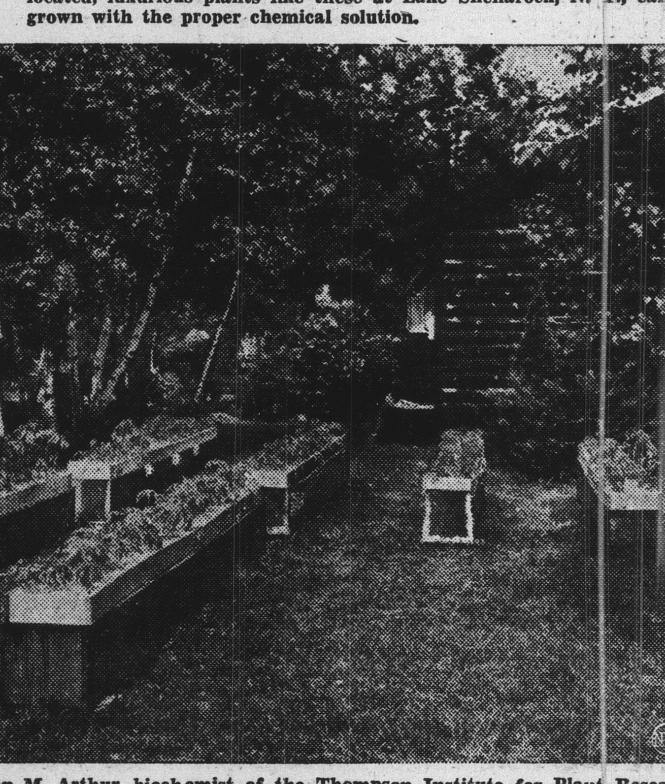
Proportions of this solution are still under experimentation although a satisfactory result has been obtained with a formula by Dr. Arthur and Dr. Harrold. It is understood that next winter a brochure containing the full list and proportions may be compiled at the Boyce Thompson Institute, Yonkers. Perhaps, thereafter, prepared solutions containing not only the principal ingredients but the "eyedropponics" will be made commercially available through chemical firms.

Recently various efforts to supply the necessary nutrition to seeds or roots of flowers and vegetables by artificial means instead of through the soil have been tried. One system surrounded roots with soil in a surrounding pot and furnished the chemical elements by a drip arrangement from a tank. Another system worked by inserting roots into holes bored in wood, floating on the chemical solution. These seemed fairly cumbersome and expensive in practice. Then science hit upon the method now being developed in Shenarock, with excellent prospects of practical success.

SINCE Dr. Harrold is a tomato expert, tomatoes were chosen for the test. For tomatoes, water-



No matter on what kind of soil the "tray agriculture" farm may be located, luxuriant plants like these at Lake Shenarock, N. Y., can be grown with the proper chemical solution.



at the start of the crop—Dr. John M. Arthur, biochemist of the Thompson Institute for Plant Research (at left), with Dr. Harrold, just after planting tomato vines in sawdust, their roots extending down into tanks of chemicals.

less adapted to liquids, dwindled and rotted off. In their place appeared water roots. Transformation of the tomato from a soil-grown to a liquid-growing plant was completed.

Now at full growth, clusters of water roots have spread richly into the tanks and grown far down into the tanks. They even appear in the damp shavings and excelsior. The vines are firmly anchored in the chicken wire, although they require support above as in ordinary cultivation.

The only change in the fruit itself is in its perfection. There were practically no blights or diseases to affect it adversely. And nature has helped it along through a wonderful quality which Dr. Harrold picturesquely calls a "caterpillar idea." This is the faculty of plants, having available all the various elements they want for growing, to select and use exactly what they need in exactly the right proportions.

IN the system in use under the auspices of the Boyce Thompson Institute not only "truck crops" are adaptable, but many flowers, such as begonias, cosmos, the lily family and gardenias. Potatoes also are adapted to this system, although trays and tanks must have a different shape.

Commercially speaking, this indicates that the technique must be different; but under the general principles of "tray agriculture" these, too, can be efficiently grown.

Prof. Gerlache foresees an age when America's cities will be ringed with vast greenhouses, bearing their crops in wonderful profusion and freshness, coming ripe and cheap to market—initial cost of equipment greatly reduced by the cheapness of production, and selling costs greatly reduced by the elimination of the long railroad or truck haul.

But the approach of Drs. Arthur and Harrold has been very different. The California idea of Prof. Gerlache is civic, and requires considerable initial capital for greenhouses. Drs. Arthur and Harrold have been investigating the problem from the point of view of the individual and for cultivation in the open air.

It's farming without the cost or the sweat. No horse, no cultivator or plow, no weeds, no manure spreader, no hoeing. Best of all—in disease from the soil, such as the blossom-end rot which in tomato country, some years, takes from 20 to 50 per cent of the crop.

The land doesn't even have to be good land. It can be the cheapest, most worthless land on the map. It doesn't even have to be soil, as the tanks can be propped up level. And it can be a tiny estate, for the intensiveness of tray agriculture is remarkable. All that is needed is the sun, and an average New York State summer, such as the present one, has given demonstrably fine results.

Figures on the current Shenandoah experiment break down into interesting numbers. According to Dr. Harrold, season's yield per plant in tanks is estimated at 40 pounds. This would amount to

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Our Town

By Anton Scherer

Founder of 90-Year-Old Tremont Was Ahead of His Time in Providing Modern-Type Service for Guests.

IN the past I've tried to hint that progress, or whatever you want to call our advancement, isn't everything it's cracked up to be. Once, I remember, I went so far as to say there isn't anything new under the sun. I didn't get to first base with the idea, but today I have more facts to offer which, I trust, will indicate more clearly what I mean.

For example, there's the three-story Tremont Hotel on the southeast corner of Washington and New Jersey Sts. It's almost 90 years old, which makes it the oldest hotel in Indianapolis.

Well, what I'm getting at today is that practically every guest room in the Tremont has a little opening next to the door through which refreshments or anything else, for that matter, can be passed to the occupant. That proves that, however built, the hotel anticipated the need for something like almost 75 years before Mr. Staller equipped his hotels with what he called "servitors." That's what I mean when I keep harping on the lack of something new under the sun.

Little's Tavern Prospered

It was in 1834 that John Little opened a two-story frame tavern on the site of the present Tremont Hotel. He made a go of it right from the start. So much so that sometime around 1850, Mr. Little and his sons, Matthew and Ingram, took down the old shack and put up what you see today.

The Tremont doesn't look like Little's Tavern, however. That's because somebody in the meantime went modern and decorated the outside with cement blocks. On the inside, however, the Tremont retains some of its pristine glory. The original staircase is still there, and so are the hand-hewn timbers, even if you can't see all of them.

Almost as old as the Tremont is the hotel on the northeast corner of Illinois and Georgia Sts. It was built in 1856 by Henry Buehrig, a gregarious German whom everybody called "Lieber Bruder." Mr. Buehrig started out calling his place the Farmer's Hotel and later changed it to the Commercial. Now it's Stubbins Hotel.

The Spencer House (originally called the Tremont) was built in 1857, but with all the additions since then, it doesn't look anything like it did in the beginning.

Old Hotels Near Depot

A couple of hotels south of the Union Station around Illinois and South Sts. are pretty old, too, I guess. One is the Sexon which still houses the "Old Tunnel Bar." Next to it is the Inn operated by Mr. Surber which somehow tickles me because of an anachronistic door labeled "Ladies' Entrance."

Outside of that, there aren't many of the old places left. Remarkable, however, is the fact that most of the early hotel sites still are doing business at the old stands. The Old Bates House (1852), for instance, is now the Claypool; the old Oriental (1856) is now the Warren, and what was once the Morris House (1853) is now the Sherman House. I'm told, too, that the present Washington Hotel is mighty close to where the old Union Hotel (1826) used to be. The Union, if you please, was the successor of John Hawkin's "Eagle" (1833), the second oldest tavern on record around here.

The exception to the rule is, of course, the southeast corner of Washington and Illinois Sts. Back in the old days, it was a great hotel corner—first the Palmer House (1840) and later the Occidental. Boy, that was the place to buy a mint julep.

A Woman's View

By Mrs. Walter Ferguson

Impressions of Unbroken Family Remains as Memory of San Diego.

VACATION NOTES: In San Diego I lunched with the editor of the Sun, Maguire White, and his wife. Their attractive home has an unequalled view of sea and sky. That, coupled with the interesting conversation with them and their Chicago guest, Father Maguire, fixed the event in mind as an especially pleasant memory. It made me homesick for something I have lost forever to