

# LCM

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS MAGAZINE  
JULY/AUGUST 2021

## ROAD TRIP!

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### Inside

Finding America  
Out on the Road

Taking a Full-Length  
Portrait of the U.S.

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### Plus

10 Seconds to Glory  
Parks for the People  
Whitman's Journeys



SEE AMERICA





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Photographer Carol M. Highsmith is taking a full-length portrait of the U.S.

■ A neon sign in Amarillo, Texas, marks the path of historic Route 66 through town. *Carol M. Highsmith Archive/ Prints and Photographs Division*

## Mission of the Library of Congress

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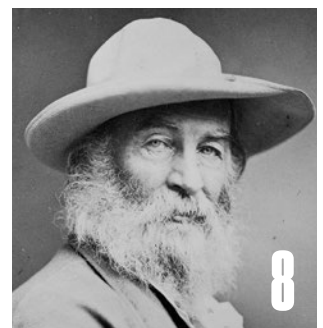
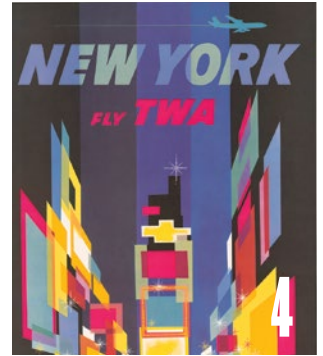
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■ On the cover: This poster for the United States Travel Bureau, created by Alexander Dux in the 1930s under the auspices of the federal Works Progress Administration, promoted tourism across America. *Prints and Photographs Division*

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## CONNECT ON

[loc.gov/connect](http://loc.gov/connect)







## 10 SECONDS TO GLORY

■ Top: William Harrison Dillard won the 100 meters sprint in this photo finish at the 1948 Olympics in London. Above: Dillard, a World War II veteran, as he appeared around the time he donated service-related material to the Veterans History Project. *Smith Archive/Alamy Stock Photo, Veterans History Project*

### A WWII veteran won gold at the London Olympics in the first photo finish.

London, summer 1948. All eyes are on the first Olympic Games held since 1936. After years of war, countries from around the world meet not on the battlefield, but on the track, in the swimming pool, inside the boxing ring.

At Wembley Stadium, six sprinters crouch on the track for the finals of the 100-meter dash. The gun sounds, and in 10 seconds it's over. The race is so close that, for the first time in history, a photograph is used to declare the winner.

But the photo makes it clear: William Harrison Dillard won the gold; he is the "fastest man alive."

The feat is all the more stirring because, three years earlier, Dillard had been dodging mortar fire in Italy as part of the U.S. Army's 92nd Infantry Division, a segregated unit known as the "Buffalo Soldiers."

Today, Dillard's story, told in his own words, is preserved at the Library in the collections of the Veterans History Project.

Born in Cleveland, Dillard attended the same high school as legendary Olympian

Jesse Owens and went to Baldwin Wallace College on a track scholarship. During his sophomore year, he was drafted and later assigned to the 92nd.

By 1944, he was in combat in Italy. For six months, the 92nd slowly advanced, liberating towns as they went. In his Veterans History Project interview, Dillard recalls mortar fire, minefields, the bravery of his comrades, and Italian civilians, their villages destroyed, begging U.S. servicemen for food.

With the end of the war, Dillard's focus turned from survival to running. While stationed in Europe during the occupation, he won four gold medals at the GI Olympics. At the London Games, he won the 100-meter dash and the 4x100 relay. Four years later, at the Helsinki Games, he won the 110-meter hurdles and another relay – making him a four-time Olympic gold medalist, just like his idol, Owens.

Grit and resilience are among the qualities that make Olympic athletes great – many overcome formidable challenges just to reach the games. Few survive the rigors, deprivation and dangers of combat only to arrive, like Dillard, at the medals podium a mere three years later.

—Megan Harris is a reference specialist in the Veterans History Project.

### MORE INFORMATION

Veterans History Project  
[loc.gov/vets/](http://loc.gov/vets/)



## THE GREEN BOOK

This guide helped Black travelers navigate the country in safety and with dignity.

For African American travelers of the mid-20th century, discrimination had no borders.

At that time, open and often legal discrimination made it difficult for Blacks to travel around not just the South but much of the United States because they couldn't eat, sleep or buy gas at most white-owned businesses.

The Negro Motorist Green Book helped them do so in safety and with dignity: The book identified businesses – lodgings, restaurants, gas stations and others – friendly to Black travelers so they could get service along the road.

"The gift of the Green Book was that it really did show the communities where Black culture was happening, where there were Black-owned businesses where you knew you could get services," said Candacy Taylor, author of "Overground Railroad: The Green Book and the Roots of Black Travel in America," in an interview with the Library's American Folklife Center. "It was literally a lifesaver."

Taylor's research for the book was funded in part by an Archie Green fellowship from

the Folklife Center, and interviews she conducted with owners of businesses listed in the Green Book are available on the Library's website.

The Green Book was founded by Harlem postal worker Victor Hugo Green in 1936 and over the next three decades became so indispensable that it earned the nickname "the Bible of Black travel." The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, however, made the book less necessary, and in 1967 it ceased publication.

Today, historical copies of the Green Book provide a record of places that played an important role in the lives of both ordinary people and great figures in African American history. Martin Luther King Jr. previewed his "I Have a Dream" speech for associates at the Hampton House in Miami and got haircuts at the Ben Moore Hotel in Montgomery, Alabama. Cassius Clay celebrated his upset of Sonny Liston – and met with Malcolm X – at the Hampton's café.

Five decades after it ceased publication, the Green Book still stands as a milestone for African Americans along the road to freedom.



■ African American patrons fill the Dew Drop Inn, a nightclub listed in the New Orleans section of the Green Book. The club hosted such great musicians as Ray Charles, James Brown, Etta James and Little Richard, who wrote a song about the place. American Folklife Center

### MORE INFORMATION

The Green Book: Documenting African American Entrepreneurs  
[go.usa.gov/xHXND](http://go.usa.gov/xHXND)

Podcast with Candacy Taylor  
[go.usa.gov/xHnxY](http://go.usa.gov/xHnxY)



# ONLINE OFFERINGS



■ Clockwise from top left: Vintage travel posters present an abstract view of Times Square; provide a look across the bay in San Juan, Puerto Rico; and show Yellowstone's Old Faithful geyser in mid-eruption. *Prints and Photographs Division*

## THEY'RE A TRIP

Travel posters from the golden age still inspire viewers to explore.

Great travel art takes you places, even when you haven't left home. Just by looking, one can feel the color and excitement of Times Square, the sea air in a lush garden in Puerto Rico, the spray from an eruption of Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park.

The Library holds thousands of travel posters designed to inspire viewers to visit points of interest, to revel in holiday activities and to enjoy the journey itself through various modes of transportation.

Many date from the golden age of the travel poster, which began in the 1920s, when travel by land or sea was more common than travel by air. The golden age ended in the 1960s, when photographic imagery and other forms of advertising began to be used more than graphically designed posters.

A selection of the Library's collection of travel posters are available online in the Free to Use and Reuse set; most of these were produced by the Work Projects Administration between 1936 and 1943.

These posters, some created for the United States Travel Bureau, celebrated national parks and encouraged all to "See America" – the catchphrase on a number of them. The bureau was established in 1937 to promote travel within the United States.

Gifts, purchases and copyright deposit have added to the variety of travel posters in the broader collection. Eye-catching examples made in the U.S. and in other countries encourage exploration of places near and far – still today, an inspiration to pack a bag and go explore.

*—Jan Grenci is a reference specialist in the Prints and Photographs Division.*

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### MORE INFORMATION

Free to Use and Reuse: Travel Posters  
[loc.gov/free-to-use/travel-posters/](https://www.loc.gov/free-to-use/travel-posters/)

DISCOVER

# Puerto Rico

U.S.A.

WHERE THE *Americas* MEET





■ Trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie (right) watches Ella Fitzgerald perform at a nightclub in 1947 in this classic photo from the William P. Gottlieb Collection. *Music Division*



## TREASURES IN THE PALM OF A HAND

Mobile app makes access to collections easy.

For years, mobile libraries built in buses and RVs have expanded the reach and accessibility of library resources beyond the confines of brick and mortar buildings.

In today's age of apps for everything, the Library has imagined an even more convenient way to put its many treasures in the hands of patrons – and it's available 24 hours a day.

The LOC Collections mobile app for iOS and Android allows users to read complete books, explore presidential papers, view iconic photos and maps and save and share more than a million unique items from the Library's rich digital collections.

Created by the Library's own software development experts, the LOC Collections app was designed to give users a distinctly personal experience with Library materials. The app's intuitive interface allows readers to easily browse through thousands of collections, explore descriptive notes composed by librarians and archivists and even curate their favorite items into personalized galleries.

Library designers and developers worked closely with patrons to test and release a number of enhancements to improve the user experience of the app and make it even simpler to discover historical gems from the Library's collections. In addition to a full-screen image and PDF viewer that enables easier reading on smaller devices, the LOC Collections app includes landscape reading options and a variety of accessibility updates to support all users.

Curious users can uncover even more with easy-access links that jump straight from the app to the Library's website to surface related collections, citation details and rights and access information.

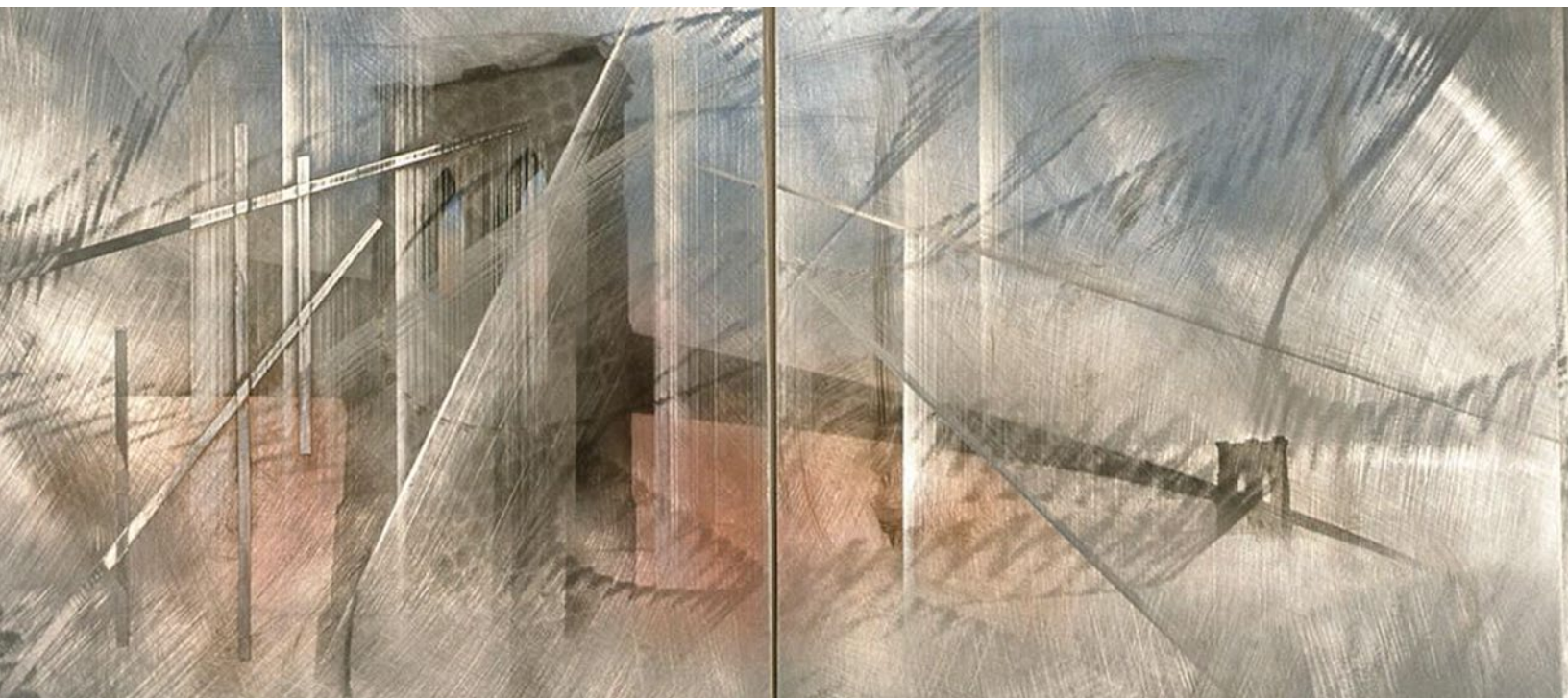
—Sahar Kazmi is a writer-editor in the Office of the Chief Information Officer.

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### MORE INFORMATION

LOC Collections App  
[loc.gov/apps](https://loc.gov/apps)





## HEAVY METAL

A deeply felt tribute to a bridge in a book made of aluminum.

The iconic suspension bridge that connects Brooklyn and Manhattan has inspired great art and artists since the day it opened nearly 140 years ago.

Frank Sinatra sang about the Brooklyn Bridge. Georgia O’Keeffe and Andy Warhol painted it. Walker Evans photographed it, and Hart Crane wrote an epic poem about it. The bridge makes countless cameos in film – “It Happened in Brooklyn,” “Moonstruck,” “Spider-Man” and many others.

To those works, add Donald Glaister’s 2002 book “Brooklyn Bridge ... A Love Song,” an homage that is as innovative as it is heartfelt. The book, along with other works by Glaister, are held by the Library’s Rare Book and Special Collections Division.

Ordinary materials wouldn’t do for a volume about such an iconic structure. So, Glaister, a master bookbinder, built his book out of stuff more befitting the subject: aluminum, wire, sand, acrylic paint, aluminum tape and

polyester film. The volume itself is housed in a felt-lined aluminum box.

Glaister made the book’s pages out of sanded aluminum, and on them he emblazoned a poem he had written in tribute and his own painted “portraits” of the span. Granite and limestone towers loom against the rose and blue of a morning sky. Shifting colors evoke different times of day, and abstract forms suggest the massive network of cables that holds the deck some 127 feet above the East River.

The Brooklyn Bridge – designed by John Roebling and completed by his son, Washington Roebling in 1883 – was the longest suspension bridge in the world at the time of its opening. It has experienced much since.

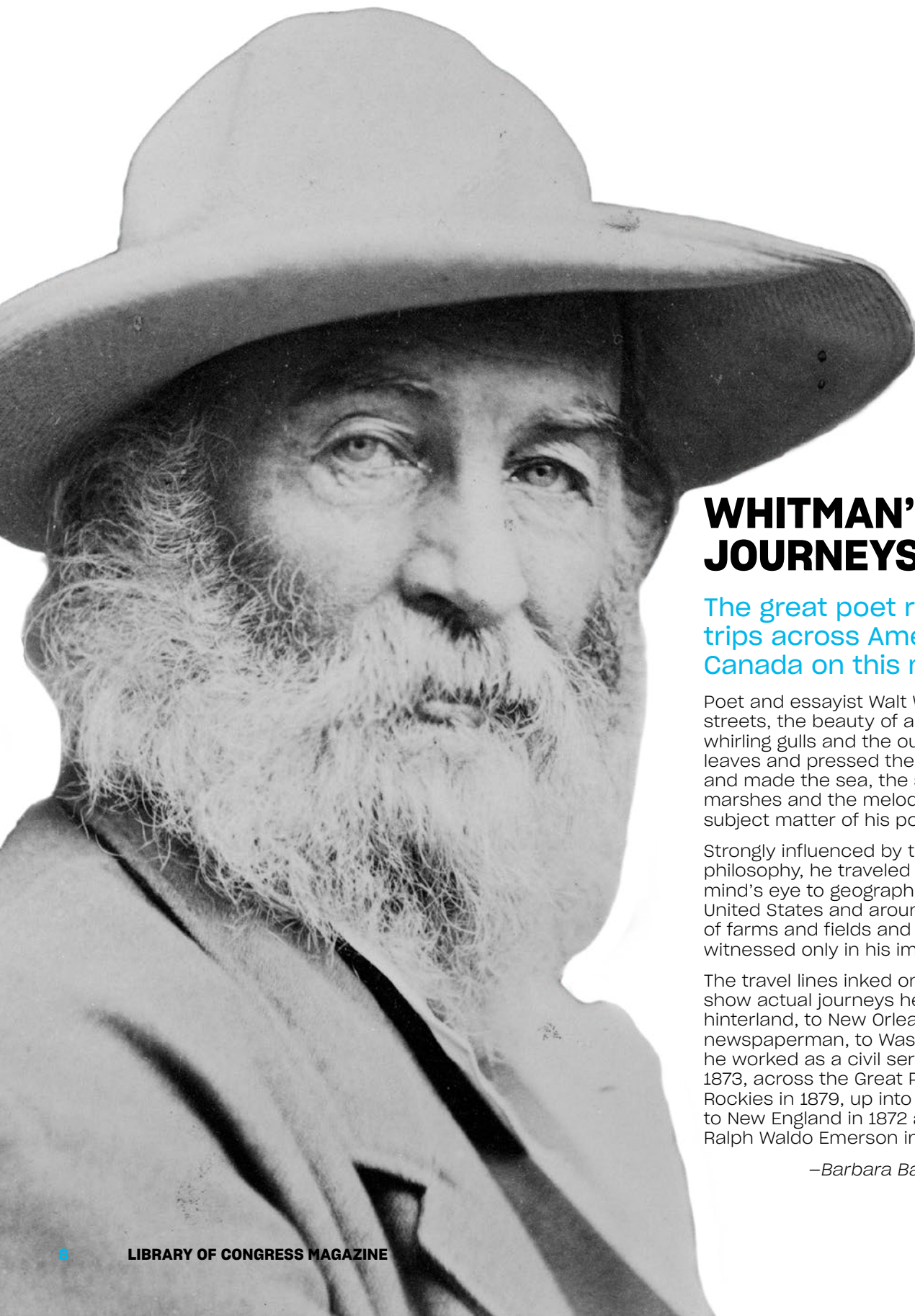
Glaister’s verse – like the materials that carry it – celebrates the bridge’s strength and timeless grace:

*The Bridge endures.  
She has seen it all. Peace and war,  
plenty and need, vice and honor,  
the sublime and the horrific.  
She stands watch and does not yield.  
The gracious lady stands in the river  
and does not yield.*

–Mark Hartsell

■ Master bookbinder Donald Glaister constructed this homage to the Brooklyn Bridge from aluminum, wire, sand, acrylic paint and other materials. Rare Book and Special Collections

■ Walt Whitman traced his journeys around the U.S. and in Canada in red on the map at right. *Prints and Photographs Division, Manuscript Division*



## WHITMAN'S JOURNEYS

The great poet recorded his trips across America and Canada on this map.

Poet and essayist Walt Whitman loved city streets, the beauty of a ferry crossing, whirling gulls and the outdoors. He collected leaves and pressed them into a scrapbook and made the sea, the sky, stars, woods, marshes and the melodic calls of birds the subject matter of his poetry.

Strongly influenced by transcendentalist philosophy, he traveled sweepingly in his mind's eye to geographic regions across the United States and around the globe, writing of farms and fields and redwood groves witnessed only in his imagination.

The travel lines inked on this railroad map show actual journeys he took into the hinterland, to New Orleans in 1848 while a newspaperman, to Washington, D.C., where he worked as a civil servant from 1863 to 1873, across the Great Plains to the Colorado Rockies in 1879, up into Canada in 1880, and to New England in 1872 and again to visit Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1881.

—Barbara Bair is a historian in the Manuscript Division.







# CURATOR'S PICKS

## OUR PICK OF THE PARKS

Lace up your hiking boots for a trip through favorite national parks-related items from Library collections.



### THE FIRST PARK

The Yellowstone region was little explored before Ferdinand Hayden led an expedition into its wilds in 1871. A report by Hayden to Congress revealed an unimaginable land – erupting geysers, boiling hot springs, bubbling mudpots, raging waterfalls – and helped convince Congress to make Yellowstone our first national park, in 1872. In Hayden’s party was artist Thomas Moran, who captured Yellowstone’s wonders in works such as this view of a geyser basin, reproduced in a chromolithograph by L. Prang & Co.

*Prints and Photographs Division*

### MAPPING THE CANYON

Geographers knew little about the Grand Canyon until the middle of the 19th century. First published in 1882, “Tertiary History of the Grand Cañon District” summarized what was known in a beautiful way. Illustrations by Thomas Moran and William Holmes capture the canyon’s grandeur, and maps detail its topography and geology. The volume, produced by Clarence Dutton and issued by the U.S. Geological Survey, served as the foundation upon which later mapping of the canyon was based. The Geography and Map Division holds the illustrated atlas that accompanied Dutton’s longer report.

*Geography and Map Division*







## YELLOWSTONE, ON FILM

Only a hardy few made the arduous journey to remote Yellowstone in its first years as a park. That began to change in 1883, when a spur of the Northern Pacific Railroad arrived at the park's northern boundary. From there, eager tourists boarded stagecoaches and rode out to see Yellowstone's wonders. Films made by the Thomas Edison company in the 1890s capture glimpses of this: Tourists arrive by coach at Mammoth Hot Springs and wave to the camera as they head off into the park, ready for adventure.

*Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division*



## CAMPING WITH TEDDY

In 1903, a three-day camping trip in Yosemite led by naturalist John Muir helped change the course of conservation. Muir's backcountry companion was President Theodore Roosevelt, who loved the outdoors and was interested in conservation. The outing made a deep impression on the president: Roosevelt went on to create five new national parks and sign the Antiquities Act, which he used to protect the Grand Canyon and other wilderness areas. Here, Roosevelt and Muir take in Yosemite Falls from Glacier Point – one of the most glorious views in all of the national parks.

*Prints and Photographs Division*



## PARKS IN POSTERS

In the 1930s and '40s, the federal Work Projects Administration (WPA) commissioned posters designed to publicize exhibits, theatrical productions, educational programs – and the beauty of America's national parks. The Library holds the largest collection of WPA posters, some of which capture the parks in their wild glory: iconic Old Faithful geyser erupts in Yellowstone, sandstone cliffs tower over Zion, steam pours from Lassen volcano and, here, bighorn sheep pose against a backdrop of mountain peaks and burnt orange sky.

*Prints and Photographs Division*





# PARKS FOR THE PEOPLE

The Olmsted family created  
an amazing array of outdoor  
spaces across America.

**BY BARBARA BAIR**



Frederick Law Olmsted and his sons had a far-seeing vision for the American landscape, of green spaces made for the masses, of parks and public grounds that would offer natural beauty and spiritual haven in the heart of big, bustling cities.

Over the course of two generations, the Olmsteds helped forge the professions of urban planning and landscape architecture. They were pivotal in the design of a myriad of residential communities, city parks and grounds of public and private buildings that remain in use across the nation. The Olmsted philosophy stressing the importance of shareable green space and the benefits for health, spiritual renewal and democracy through access to the outdoors still abides.

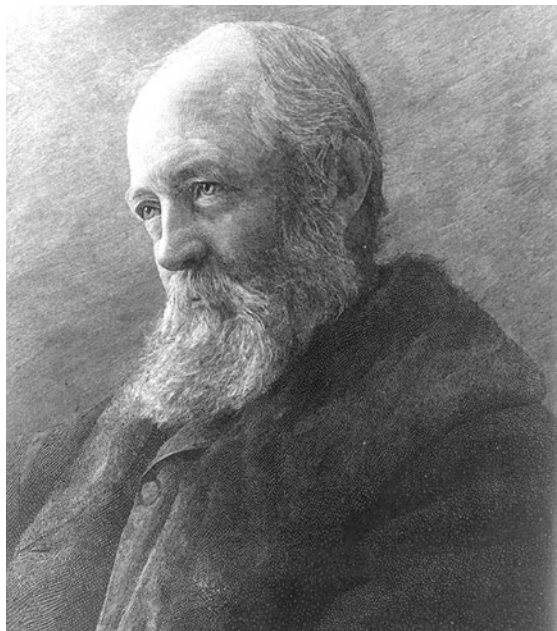
The Library is home to Olmsted's papers and the records of the Olmsted Associates firm. As a young man, Olmsted apprenticed and learned engineering, garden design and horticultural techniques. He traveled abroad and to the Deep South and the West. He worked as an organic farmer, journalist and administrator before embracing landscape architecture as his life's work.

Olmsted is best known for his 1857–1861 design, with Calvert Vaux, of Central Park in New York City. Over the next century, he and his successors shaped an amazing array of public parks and parkways, suburban communities, campuses, cemeteries, estates and grounds for hospitals and government buildings, from the Emerald Necklace of Boston to parks in Seattle, the Biltmore estate of North Carolina, the U.S. Capitol and Mount Royal in Montreal.

Central Park was a visionary prototype crafted and shaped into a variety of landscapes: craggy rocks, meadows, woodlands and ponds, carriage paths, walking trails, arched bridges and a promenade and plaza – all intended to evoke different feelings and uses.

This “Park for the People” was designed, Olmsted said, for working girls, urban residents and tourists of various faiths and classes to experience scenic outdoors in a gregarious way. The park helped visitors forget their workaday worlds, giving them a space to meet friends, play games, walk, find solitude, picnic with toddlers and court lovers along tree-lined lanes.

It would bring the same restorative beauty and benefit to a public citizenry that could



■ Frederick Law Olmsted (left) and Calvert Vaux created the design for Central Park in New York City (opposite) from 1857 to 1861. *Prints and Photographs Division*

otherwise only be enjoyed in rarely visited countryside or reserved to the private privilege of the well-to-do. It provided a way to escape, but also to find oneself, in an environment where everything appeared to be wondrously natural and yet was meticulously planned, civil engineered and planted.

In the 20th century, Olmsted's sons John Charles Olmsted and Frederick (Rick) Law Olmsted Jr. carried on their father's legacy through the Olmsted Brothers/Olmsted Associates firm.

A member of the McMillan Commission and U.S. Commission of Fine Arts in Washington, D.C., Rick Olmsted helped shape the National Mall, East and West Potomac Park, Rock Creek Park, Theodore Roosevelt Island, the U.S. Arboretum and the National Zoo as travel destinations. He went on to consult for the national park and California state parks systems.

The Library is partnering with the National Association for Olmsted Parks and other organizations and conservancies to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Olmsted's birth in 2022 – a tribute to the idea of public spaces in America.

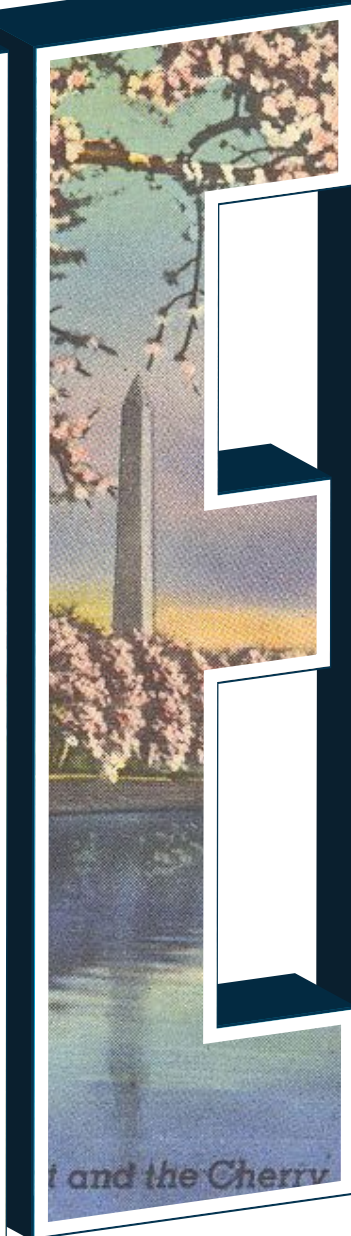
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## MORE INFORMATION

Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted  
[go.usa.gov/xH3pa](https://go.usa.gov/xH3pa)



# FINDING







# ON THE ROAD

A journey through a quintessentially American phenomenon, the family vacation by car.

**BY JOSH LEVY**





Mary Macdonald, and her father, A.B. Macdonald,  
drinking at the spring on the "Den Road"  
hill, between the narrows and Jensen.  
This was on the last day of our vacation,  
after we had said "good bye" to the  
Washademoak and were driving on  
the first stage of the long journey to  
Kansas City.  
As a boy I often drove my father over this  
road, and we always stopped to  
water the horse at this spring, and  
we often drank from it.  
I said "Good Bye" to this spring with  
a sad beating heart.



In 1960, John Steinbeck set out on a monthslong road trip to reacquaint himself with his country. He returned not with clear answers but with his head a “barrel of worms.” The America he saw was too intertwined with how he felt in the moment, and with his own Americanness, to permit an objective account of the journey. “External reality,” he wrote, “has a way of being not so external after all.”

Pandemics aren’t the only reason Americans have found sanctuary in our homes, or the only anxious times we’ve itched to escape them. The American road trip was first popularized during the auto camping craze of the 1920s, with its devotion to freedom and communing with nature, but it was democratized after World War II. The golden age of the American family vacation came during the very height of the Cold War. It was a time when, according to historian Susan Rugh, the family car became a “home on the road... a cocoon of domestic space” in which families could feel safe to explore their country.

The trips 20th-century Americans took, to national parks and resorts and historic sites, generated a wealth of travelogues and other sources that often communicate far more about the traveler than the road taken. They can help us understand our own moment as well. Earlier this year, just 29 percent of Americans felt comfortable taking a commercial flight, but 84 percent were comfortable using their own vehicles for a road trip. During the pandemic, tourism suffered but road trips surged. Driving into the great outdoors again felt like a safe escape.

The Manuscript Division is full of road trip stories, not because it maintains specific road trip collections but because automobile travel has been so central to modern American life. Items in the division range from administrative records mapping out early guidebooks, to breathless

journals recounting shared adventures, to testimonials of discrimination faced at roadside gas stations, restaurants and hotels. Together, they tell the story not of one America, but of many.

Researchers can find in the papers of the Works Progress Administration the records of the American Guide Series, a Depression-era project to create richly textured guidebooks of all of America’s states and major cities and some of its highways and waterways. The series generated 378 books and pamphlets altogether and employed subsequently celebrated authors like Richard Wright, Eudora Welty and Zora Neale Hurston.

The books were needed. Railroads, one of the 19th century’s great symbols of modernity, had run along immovable tracks following set timetables. Rich and poor travelers alike were essentially reduced to pieces of baggage. Early automobiles promised a pathfinding freedom, but motorists found America’s intercity roadways disjointed and virtually unmarked. Colossal early touring guides like the Automobile Blue Book prescribed tedious turn-by-turn directions through the maze, but offered little insight into local communities.

The WPA guides blended an attention to local history, culture and commerce with a literary sensibility. The project’s ambition still startles. An early prospectus promised to advance efforts to “preserve national literacy and historic shrines, to exploit scenic wonders and to develop natural advantages such as mines and quarries.” Steinbeck later called the guides “the most comprehensive account of the United States ever got together.” Staffers, sometimes road-tripping to fact check their work, labored to create a nuanced, encyclopedic account of what mattered about America – one mapped out in routes Americans could drive for themselves.

■ **Opposite:** Journalist A.B. MacDonald put together this scrapbook of a road trip he took in 1938 with daughter Mary, who passed away shortly after their journey. *Manuscript Division*

■ **Preceding pages:** The Apollo theater in Harlem (from left); an Alabama Crimson Tide football game; the Tidal Basin in Washington, D.C.; the beach at Atlantic City; a home in Key West; the New York City skyline; and a food stand at the Colorado state fair. *Prints and Photographs Division*

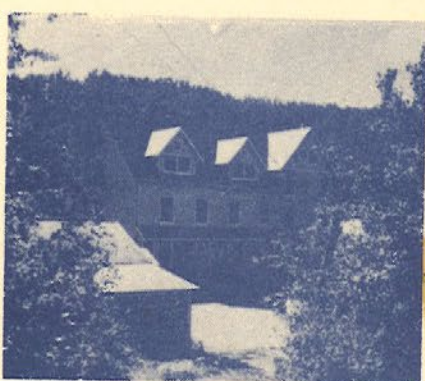


reetings from



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Yet not all Americans traveled those routes with the same ease. The records of the NAACP, held by the Manuscript Division, contain hundreds of testimonials speaking to the uncertainties and humiliations Jim Crow-era African Americans faced when they ventured from home. For these motorists, the automobile's promise of freedom coexisted with segregated buses and trains and a range of limitations on their mobility. Black drivers experienced the open road, according to historian Cotten Seiler, as "both democratic social space and racial minefield." Automobiles seemed to offer a real escape from Jim Crow, but one that always lay just beyond the horizon.

As a result, excursions often turned sour. One letter, submitted in 1947 by a high school science teacher, details an afternoon road trip to a state park near Albany, "for the purpose of sightseeing and enjoying the natural beauty of the State of New York." When a hotel bartender within the park twice refused service to the teacher and a Jewish colleague, he insisted the hotel be "made to pay" for his "humiliation and damage to my pride." Similar testimonials, of injustices on buses and trains and at roadside stops, illustrate the road trip's unfulfilled promise for African American travelers. But they also suggest the allure of commanding one's own vehicle and of sidestepping more communal forms of transit.

Travelogues in collections of personal papers offer another dimension still, documenting both cosmopolitan tourism and nostalgic returns home. A travel journal in the papers of sociologist Rilma Oxley Buckman describes a footloose road trip from Indiana to Alaska, taken in 1950 with a Purdue colleague in a late model Nash. The "lady campers" had met in Yokohama just after the war, both working with the U.S. military. Adventuring their way north, they socialized and took snapshots. They noted the "Huckleberry Finn riverscapes" of Illinois and Alaskan roads "wobbly as a wagon trail." But their lives in Asia repeatedly intervened, from birds that resembled Korean magpies to

the Japan-like hot springs of the Canadian Rockies and then to worrying radio reports about the start of the Korean War.

A scrapbook made by journalist A.B. MacDonald recounts a road trip with his daughter Mary in 1938, just four years before he died. From Kansas City to his boyhood home in New Brunswick, father and daughter visit the old "homestead," drink at a roadside spring where the family once watered their horses and catch up with boyhood friends. Captions are written two years later in a shaky hand, from MacDonald's sickbed. By that time, Mary had tragically passed away. Above his recollections of an old schoolmate's home, whose bed of nasturtiums both had admired as a "perfect blanket of gold and crimson," two flowers just received by mail are pressed into the paper. There, MacDonald writes, "Later – I did put two of the flowers on Mary's grave, and there they remained for several weeks. She knew, of course she did."

And there are more. The Library's manuscript collections show suffragists embracing the automobile as a vehicle for women's liberation and activists like Sara Bard Field staging cross-country journeys to gain publicity for the cause. They show Carlos Montezuma, cofounder of the Society of American Indians, defending the rights of indigenous Americans to purchase automobiles without government permission and to travel as they please. We even find political satirist Art Buchwald in a comically overloaded Chrysler Imperial, on a 1958 road trip from Paris to Moscow in order to test whether such a drive can be made "without being arrested."

Road trips appear in unexpected places, and they can be revealing in unexpected ways. And in a nation knitted together with highways, cars long ago became Americans' liberating, frustrating, memory-making homes on the road.

*–Josh Levy is a historian in the Manuscript Division.*

■ **Opposite: In 1950, sociologist Rilma Oxley Buckman and a colleague drove a late model Nash from Indiana to Alaska and recorded their journey in this journal. Manuscript Division**



# ON THE ROAD

## AGAIN AND AGAIN

Over many miles and years, photographer Highsmith is taking a full-length portrait of America.

**BY MARK HARTSELL**





When Carol M. Highsmith first hit the road to photograph America, she couldn't know of the dozens of years, tens of thousands of photos and hundreds of thousands of miles that lay ahead.

For over three decades now, Highsmith has made it her mission to capture this country in all its great, messy, breathtaking, complicated glory – and to make her photos freely available to the public at the Library of Congress.

She owns a home, a nice Victorian just outside of Washington, D.C., that she shares with husband and traveling companion Ted Landphair, two cats and two kittens, Tater and Tot.

But they usually aren't there. As much as they love the place, home for Carol and Ted really is the road.

Some nine months of each year, they load up the SUV and head out there, somewhere – down a moss-draped avenue of oaks in

South Carolina, alongside a streetcar on St. Charles Avenue in New Orleans, up to one of those towns out West where the altitude vastly exceeds the population. Silverton, Colorado: elevation, 9,318; population, 637.

Highsmith first realized the importance of chronicling America's culture and people in 1980, when she photographed the historic Willard Hotel, then in ruins, just blocks from the White House.

A developer was restoring the place by using historical photographs taken by Frances Benjamin Johnston in lieu of architectural drawings that couldn't be found. They had obtained the photos from the Library, so Highsmith went there to examine Johnston's work.

In the 1930s and '40s, Johnston had taken extensive photographs of antebellum architecture across the South for archiving at the Library. Highsmith saw those and knew right then that she wanted – no, had – to do the same thing, and more.

■ Mummers parade down Broad Street in Philadelphia, a tradition dating to 1901. Carol M. Highsmith Archive/ Prints and Photographs Division





■ Above: John Billings polishes one of the Grammy Awards he created in his basement in Ridgway, Colorado; Navajo Eula M. Atene holds her 3-month-old baby in Monument Valley. Carol M. Highsmith Archive/Prints and Photographs Division

"I realized what she had done and how valuable it was," Highsmith says. "I realized what I had to do. I didn't have a choice."

In the 1980s, she photographed states for a series of books published by Random House and, when that project finished, just kept going, traveling the U.S. and photographing what she saw.

Since 2010, she's been carrying out a project in collaboration with the Library and private sponsors to photograph each of the 50 states in depth – one of the largest one-person surveys of the country since the Depression-era work of photographers such as Dorothea Lange and Russell Lee for the Farm Security Administration.

Professional-quality, rights-free photos with sweeping coverage of contemporary life in a single state are difficult to find, despite the proliferation of photography on the internet. The project intends to create a much-needed record of America during the early 21st century, carefully preserved for the ages.

Like Johnston before her, Highsmith is archiving her photographs at the Library – so far, more than 70,000 across the decades. She also waived her rights to them; all are in the public domain, free for anyone to use.

America is always changing and evolving, and Highsmith wants to chronicle what's here now, before it's gone. Older buildings get torn down to make way for the new, lonely spots in the countryside become thriving suburbs, history happens and things change.

Indeed, two weeks after Highsmith photographed Big Tex, the 55-foot cowboy mascot of the Texas State Fair, he burned down. Last year, she went by The Mule trading post, a well-known stop along Route 66 in Missouri, only to find the place had closed permanently – a victim of the pandemic.

People think, "I'm sure things will always be the same," Highsmith says. "Well, they won't."





So, she gets it all: weathered tobacco barns and grand government buildings, kitschy motels and general stores from the heyday of Route 66, the swampy beauty of the Everglades and the stark grandeur of Monument Valley, and countless state fairs, mummers parades, stock shows and Mardi Gras (or, in an age of pandemic and social distancing, “Yardi Gras”).

She also captures the American people, hard-working, funny, quirky, playful.

A Florida dairy farmer strolls into a pasture in the evenings to serenade an audience of cows on his trombone. In tiny Ridgway, Colorado, a silver-haired gent sits in his basement and creates all of the golden statuettes presented to glamorous pop stars each year at the Grammys. In Kentucky, a couple decorates their property with discarded mannequins and dolls, creating their own land-of-misfit-toys roadside attraction, the Home for Wayward Babydolls.

“Because we’re free people, we think fun and interesting thoughts and do interesting

things,” Highsmith says. “Because we can do anything we want, can’t we?”

Highsmith is finishing six states this year, leaving 10 still to photograph.

So, for the next two to three years, she and Ted will pack the SUV with their gear – Highsmith uses an ultra-high-resolution, 151-megapixel camera – and hit the road again.

Ted drives, and Carol sits in back and edits the thousands of images she takes. They travel about 40,000 miles per year – a lot of miles and a lot of work, but it’s important. Highsmith wants her photographs to help wake people up to what America has, to realize it’s worth saving.

“It’s still just a great place, isn’t it? I burst with pride, knowing I’m an American,” she says. “There’s just something so golden about it that I really can’t put it into words, so I have to show you in photographs. I have to.”

■ Above: a barge moves along a canal near Port Arthur, Texas; and a coyote blends into its surroundings in Yellowstone National Park. *Carol M. Highsmith Archive/Prints and Photographs Division*



## Andrew Davis is a chemist in the Preservation Research and Testing Division.

### Describe your work at the Library.

I typically work in the Preservation Research and Testing Division's (PRTD) labs in the Madison Building. I run physical and chemical experiments to determine things like the tensile strength of reels of audiotape or the size of cellulose molecules in paper, particularly as they relate to preservation needs or treatment efforts. Those tests usually rely on PRTD's collection of reference materials acquired for the purpose of destructive testing, because we obviously don't want to be dissolving collection objects. Since those materials are representative of the Library's collection, we can then use the experiments to inform the preservation of physical collections.

My background in light and oxygen chemistry has also led me to work a lot with the anoxic display encasements for the 1507 Waldseemüller world map and the 1783 Abel Buell U.S. map in the Jefferson Building. I keep a daily eye on sensor data for things like oxygen and pressure levels to ensure the documents are protected during display. I also analyze the interplay between environmental conditions of the building and the display cases to understand how external conditions affect the sealed display enclosures. The encasement technology is nearly as interesting as the maps themselves!

### How did you prepare for your position?

I studied chemistry and materials science at the University of Virginia, then spent five years in Amherst, Massachusetts, getting my Ph.D. in polymer science and engineering from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. After that, I moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, and worked in the central research labs at 3M.

### What are some of your standout projects at the Library?

This last year is obviously noteworthy, since I've been working mostly from home. I've been doing a lot of statistical analyses of our lab's technical data sets. Finding correlations between two variables isn't hard – for example, how paper's tear resistance is affected by acidity (pH). But how does tear resistance change as a



function of lots of variables combined – age, print location, pH, discoloration? The real world is complex, so I've been applying more complicated multivariate models to better capture those complexities. Fortunately, we have plenty of historical and current data to explore.

But I do miss working in the labs. I recently worked with colleagues at the Library's National Audio-Visual Conservation Center to understand the chemical properties of new lubrication treatments to enable the playback of squealing audiotapes in the collection that were challenging to play. I was doing some careful accelerated aging studies of other audiotapes before the pandemic necessitated leaving those on the bench last year.

### What are your most memorable experiences at the Library?

Some lab coworkers and I took our portable instrumentation to the Library's National Audio-visual Conservation Center to run new non-invasive analyses on magnetic tapes. We huddled up in the cold vaults all day, analyzing audio reels from NPR. We weren't listening to audio, but we could see tape chemistry changing across decades. I also helped analyze samples from an NPR colleague, who later gave us a tour of NPR's office, including a Tiny Desk concert!



## AFC Launches New Season Of 'America Works' Podcast

The American Folklife Center (AFC) at the Library is bringing more workers' voices to listeners with the second season of "America Works," a podcast series celebrating the diversity, resilience and creativity of the American workforce during a time of economic challenge and transition.

Each 10-minute episode of "America Works" introduces listeners to an individual worker whose first-person narrative adds to the wealth of our shared national experience. Episodes are available on Apple Podcasts, Stitcher and at [loc.gov/podcasts](https://loc.gov/podcasts).

The episodes are based on longer interviews from the AFC's ongoing Occupational Folklife Project, a multiyear initiative that documents the culture of contemporary American workers. Over the past 12 years, AFC fieldworkers have interviewed over 1,200 working Americans and documented their experiences in more than 100 professions. More than 500 of these full-length interviews are now available online.

**MORE: [loc.gov/item/prn-21-017](https://loc.gov/item/prn-21-017)**

## FEDLINK Awards Recognize Federal Library Trailblazers

The Federal Library and Information Network (FEDLINK) in May announced the winners of its national awards for federal librarianship, which recognize the many innovative ways that federal libraries, librarians and library technicians fulfill the information demands of the government, business and scholarly communities and the American public.

The two winning libraries were the Joint Base Lewis-McChord Library System, Washington, in the large library/information center category and the Barr Memorial Library at Fort Knox, Kentucky, in the small library/information center category.

Mariana Long of the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., was named 2020 federal librarian of the year, and Sharon D. Pemberton of the Cyber Research Center at the Cyber Center of Excellence at Fort Gordon, Georgia, was named 2020 federal library technician of the year.

**MORE: [loc.gov/item/prn-21-022](https://loc.gov/item/prn-21-022)**

## Libraries Honored for Service To Readers with Disabilities

The National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS) at the Library recently honored two of its cooperating libraries for their outstanding service to readers with visual, physical or print disabilities.

The Iowa Library for the Blind and Print Disabled in Des Moines, Iowa, received the 2020-2021 Regional Library of the Year Award. The Bayside Area and Special Services Library in Virginia Beach, Virginia, received the Sub-regional Library/Advisory and Outreach Center of the Year Award.

"These libraries met the challenges of the past year with tenacity and creativity," Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden said. "When the world around them came to a stop, they kept moving forward, finding new ways to expand access and engage their readers and their communities."

**MORE: [loc.gov/item/prn-21-021](https://loc.gov/item/prn-21-021)**

## 'Living Nations, Living Words' Poetry Anthology Released

The Library, in association with W.W. Norton & Company, recently published "Living Nations, Living Words: An Anthology of First Peoples Poetry," a celebration of the breadth of Native American poets writing today. The anthology is edited by Joy Harjo, the first Native American to serve as U.S. poet laureate.

As poet laureate, Harjo has championed the voices of native peoples past and present. Her signature laureate project gathers the work of 47 contemporary native poets into a national, fully digital map of story, sound and space. This companion anthology features each poem and poet from the project, including Natalie Diaz, Ray Young Bear, Craig Santos Perez, Sherwin Bitsui and Layli Long Soldier, among others.

The 222-page book is available in paperback for \$15 from the Library shop and from book retailers worldwide.

**MORE: [loc.gov/item/prn-21-020](https://loc.gov/item/prn-21-020)**

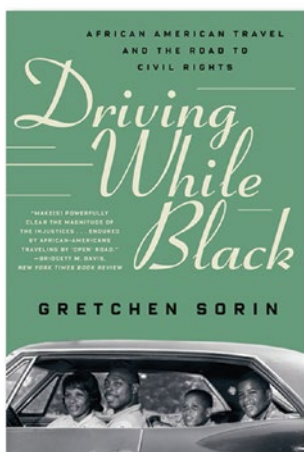


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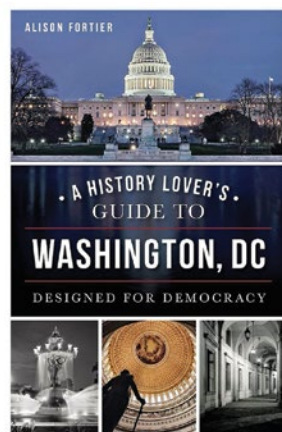
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Price: See website

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## WELCOME TO PLANNED GIVING

Learn how you can make the Library a part of your own legacy.

Including the Library of Congress in your will, trust or other estate plan is a meaningful way to create a lasting legacy that ensures people for generations to come are enriched by the nation's greatest resource of history, culture and imagination.

Many donors to the Library continue their support through legacy gifts – donors such as Marie Tharp, a noted pioneer in oceanography who was a member of the Library's Philip Lee Phillips Map Society.

The Library is enlivened with music and poetry because of supporters like Gertrude Clarke Whittall, Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, Archer M. Huntington and many others who left gifts to continue these programs.

Other patrons who utilize Library resources also leave meaningful gifts, such as William Brown and Mary Carolyn Rabb, who supported the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled.

Current and former employees, such as Library historian John Cole and his wife, Nancy Gwinn, support the institution in this way as well. "Nancy and I are pleased to support the Library through a joint endowment and provisions in each of our wills," Cole said. "After all, it's where we first met in 1969!"

The easiest and most common ways that people include the Library in their plans are:

**A gift in a will or trust:** Designating the Library as a beneficiary in a will or trust is simple, costs you nothing now and creates a lasting legacy for the nation.

**Beneficiary designations:** Retirement plans, life insurance policies and annuities can be used to create a lasting impact on the people who connect to our nation's Library.

Some of the benefits of future gift plans include: retaining control of your assets during your lifetime; providing for loved ones and supporting the Library; executing a gift with little paperwork; changing the beneficiary if circumstances change; designating a gift to benefit a favorite Library program; making a gift in honor or memory of someone special; leaving a gift of any size; and removing assets from your estate, potentially saving on tax in the future.

Contact the Library's Development Office to learn how you can make the Library of Congress a part of your legacy.



■ John Cole and Nancy Gwinn first met at the Library and now support the institution through planned giving.

## MORE INFORMATION

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# LAST WORD

## ROXANA ROBINSON

When you travel, you're on a different plane. Your own life has been put on pause. All the things that hold your attention at home have fallen away. You are now without yourself, floating like mist in someone else's landscape. You are an observer. Everything you see you must absorb.

When I arrived in Sweden I took a cab in from the airport. My driver was a friendly middle-aged Swedish man who spoke good English. When he heard this was my first visit, he appointed himself as my guide and explained what I was seeing. As we approached Stockholm, he pointed out a stone building.

"Here is a castle," he began. I looked at it obediently, but he stopped. "Not a castle." He struggled. "A palace."

Not a castle, a palace. I was fascinated. Many native English-speakers would have trouble explaining the difference between the two. (It's a question of fortification.)

He went on talking, but I stopped listening. I was marveling at his grasp of a foreigner's language, so precise and so sophisticated. Was this what Sweden was like? Was everyone here so well-educated, starting with cabdrivers? Was this socialism? I was dazzled. That was my first glimpse of Sweden, and that moment of graceful elucidation stays with me. Not a castle, a palace.

I went to Mongolia on a three-week riding trip across the steppes, with an English-speaking guide and an equestrian leader who spoke no English. He was an ex-Army general, and a brilliant rider. He knew that my friend Emily and I liked to race, and when we reached a flat space he would turn to us and say, "Nadaam!" That's the name of the national horse race, and this was the signal that we could bolt. He knew we wanted to gallop – all Mongolia loves to gallop. Genghis Khan created his empire with galloping horses. Our general had a beautiful rich voice, and often, as we crested a rise, or broke out of the woods, he would break into haunting, melodious song. Once I asked our guide what his song was about.

"We have only two subjects," he explained. "All our songs are about nature or love."

Mongolians traditionally worship the sky, a presence that is vast in a way that is hardly



BEOWULF SHEEHAN

imaginable elsewhere. You can't know what it's like until you stand beneath it and see how little there is of you. On my brave little horse, under that endless blue arch, I could see why these were the subjects they sang of: what was all around you, and what was inside your heart.

The way you encounter another country is visceral. You see the landscape – the handsome palace, that shocking blue – and you listen to the people. You see what their lives are like in ways you never imagined. I am awed by Swedish education. I am humbled by the Mongolian celebration of nature and the heart.

I can't truly know another culture, but I cherish these encounters. I cherish moments in which I'm brought face to face with another way of understanding the world.

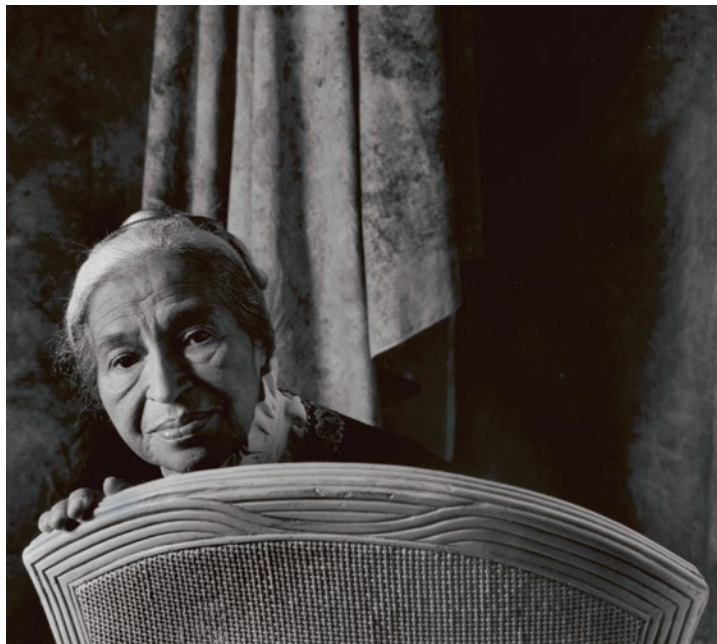
—Roxana Robinson is the author of *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Life* and novels such as *Cost*, *Sparta* and, most recently, *Dawson's Fall*.





■ An airborne pink Cadillac draws travelers to a food and fuel stop on Route 95 at Winchester, Idaho, in this photograph by John Margolies. *Prints and Photographs Division*

# CURRENT EXHIBITIONS



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Exhibitions reopening this summer; tickets for timed entry required

### More information

[loc.gov/exhibits](http://loc.gov/exhibits)

