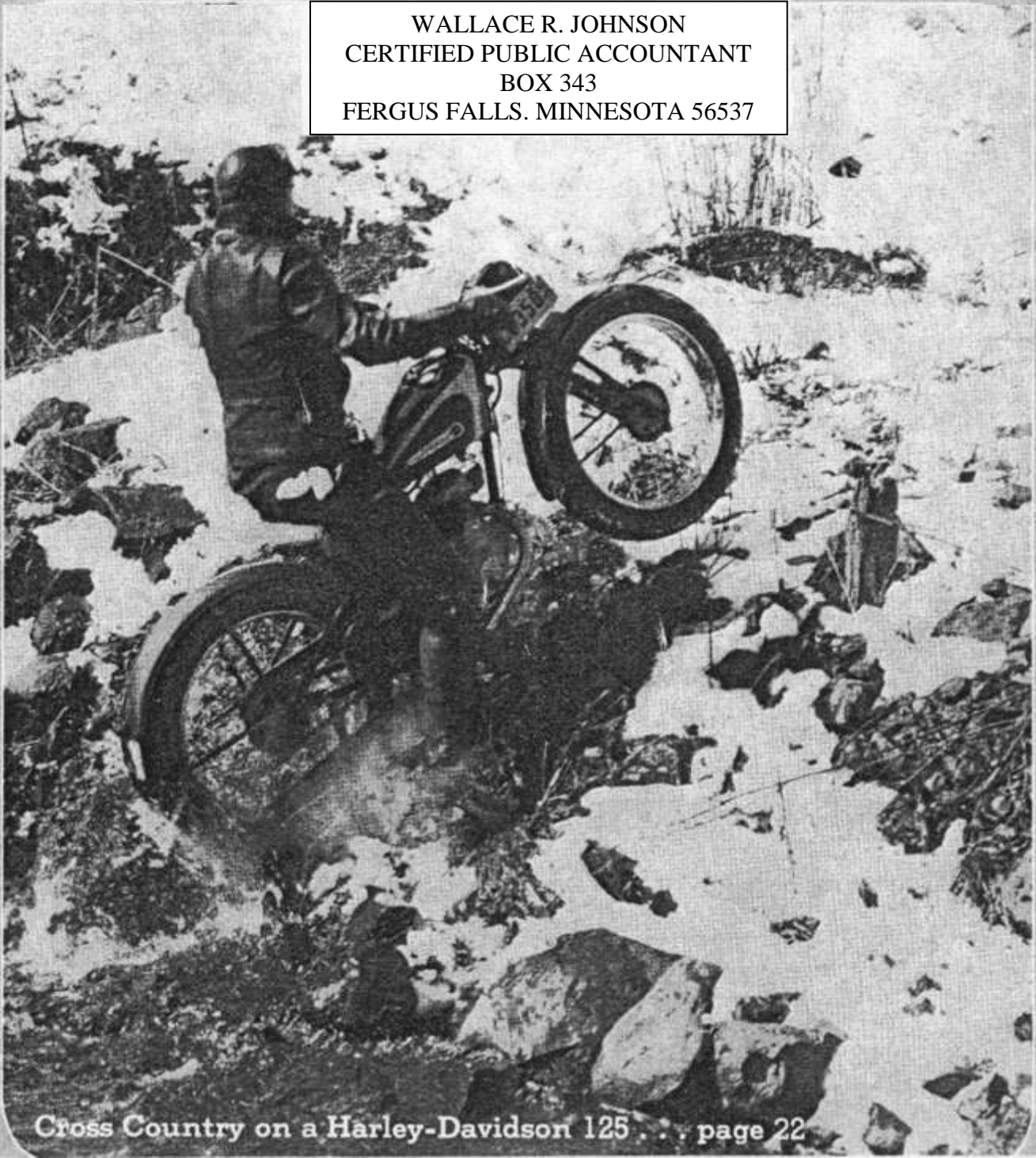


FEBRUARY: 1950

The Enthusiast

A MAGAZINE FOR MOTORCYCLISTS

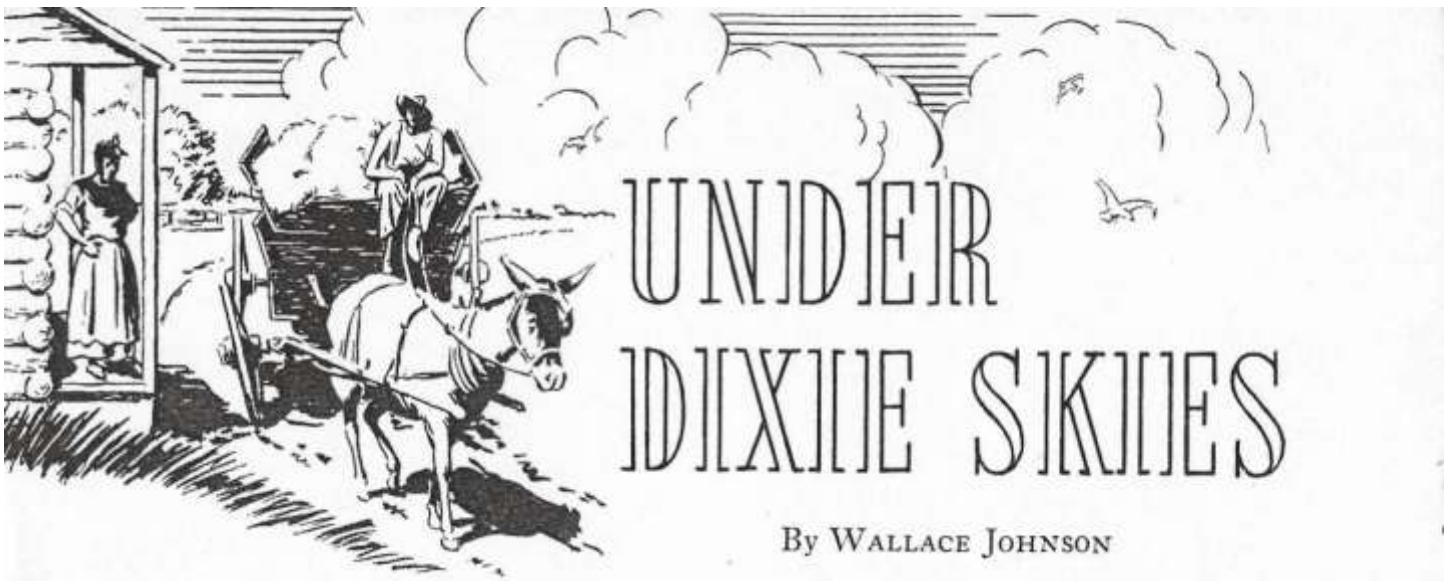
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Cross Country on a Harley-Davidson 125 . . . page 22

CYRUS NATIVE WALLACE JOHNSON, SON OF ART & ANNA JOHNSON, BROTHER OF LESTER, MADE A MOTORCYCLE TRIP ACROSS 13 STATES, MOSTLY SOUTHERN, IN JULY, 1949. HIS STORY OF HIS JOURNEY WAS PUBLISHED IN "THE ENTHUSIAST" MOTORCYCLIST MAGAZINE.

CONTRIBUTED BY WALLY'S NIECE CAROL JOHNSON TAYLOR, DIGITIZED BY GIB AHLSTRAND, JULY, 2013

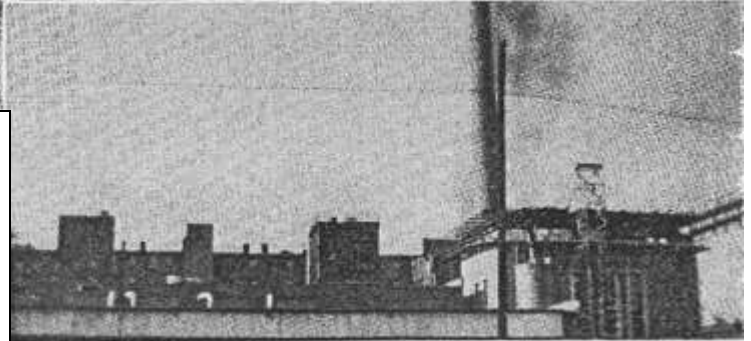


T

o "listen to the chant of the tobacco auctioneer" was part of the urge I had often felt to travel through the Old South. I was determined to satisfy my curiosity regarding tobacco auctions, so I found myself packed and ready for some lazy days under Dixie skies.

Every throttle-twister has known the anxiety of the last days before a long planned excursion and I was no exception! Having made it a practice during the past few years to make vacation trips astride my Harley-Davidson, I planned this tour well in advance. Previously, I shared my travels with two or three other enthusiasts but this year my steel steed and I would be exploring thirteen states by ourselves. My buddies and I had made several trips West but now, with the decision entirely my own, I settled on a tour of the South. I had a fairly good idea of what route I would follow, but I was going to be free to stop wherever I wanted to and see whatever interested me. When time ran short, I'd head for home.

The much-awaited Sunday in July arrived and my 1946 Harley-Davidson 74 O.H.V. was in tip-top shape. I arose at 4:30 A. M., planning an early start on the first leg from Cyrus, Minnesota, to Chicago. But a downpour delayed my departure for three hours.

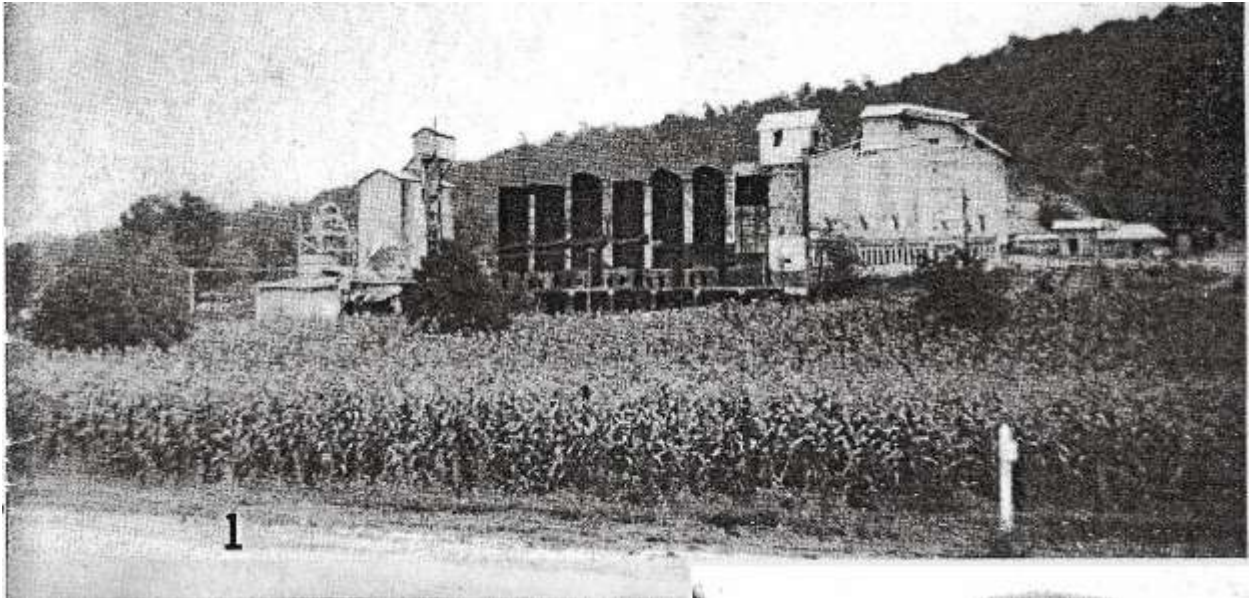


1. The entrance to Mammoth Cave National Park - the beginning of a fascinating trip Wallace took into another world." 2. The author and his 1946 Harley-Davidson 74 O.H. V. 3. A huge tobacco factory located at Louisville, Kentucky.

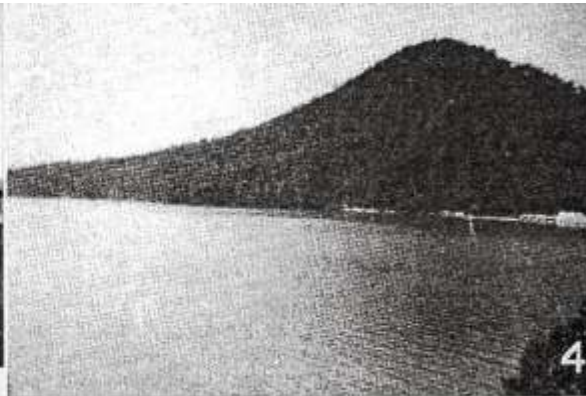
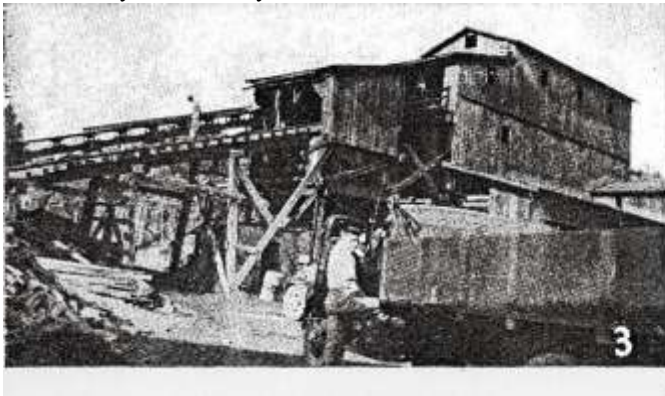
With undaunted spirits, I roared away from Cyrus under threatening clouds which gradually dissolved into pleasant sunshine as I arrived at picturesque Wisconsin Dells. Continuing toward Chicago, I had my first glimpse of tobacco fields east of Wisconsin's attractive capital city, Madison. I arrived in South Chicago just after nine o'clock that night and spent the next day with my brother.

On Tuesday morning, I left Chicago with the weather "frowning" again. But after a hundred miles of flat Indiana countryside, Old Sol decided to smile. By this time, it was the kind of a day we at home only dream about most of the time. My trusty Harley-Davidson fairly ate up the miles of level Indiana highway, and I came breezing into Indianapolis early that afternoon.

Having never been particularly fascinated by large cities, I intended to go right through Indianapolis. However, I had some difficulty finding: the right route out of town. So, when I happened to sight the familiar sign of the Harley Davidson dealer, I stopped in to get straightened out. Here, as in every "pit stop" I made on the trip, I found courtesy and service to be the watchword. everywhere.



1 A limestone plant west of Knoxville, Tennessee, forms an unusual background for this field of corn, 2. Abraham Lincoln National Park near Hodgenville, Ky. The memorial building contains the log cabin in which Lincoln was born. J. Wallace spent some interesting hours looking around this coal mine at Monterey, Tenn. 4. One of the lakes and dams brought about by the Tennessee Valley authority.



Once more I was headed south over wide, smooth highways - with the weather just right for riding with my sleeves rolled up. Before long, I reached the Ohio River and crossed the toll bridge into Louisville, Kentucky, much-heralded capital of the tobacco world. I became aware of Louisville's prominence in the tobacco industry by the definite tobacco odor which was everywhere. When I checked in at a hotel, I discovered a large cigarette plant across the street.

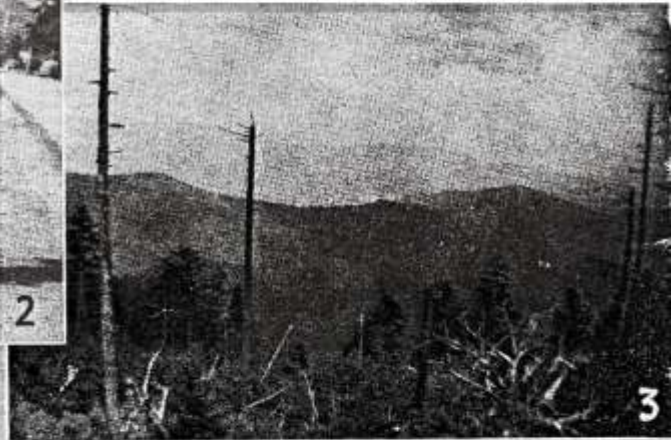


1. A water-carrying bridge, built by the TVA west of Copper Hill, Tenn.

2. Wallace got this "local color" shot at an Indian reservation at Cherokee, N. C.

3 A view from the top of famous Clingman's Dome, Smoky Mountain National Park.

4. Shipyards at' Mobile, Ala.



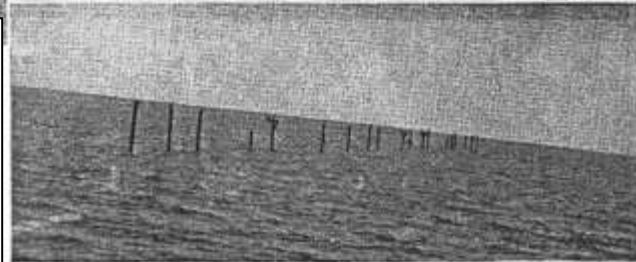
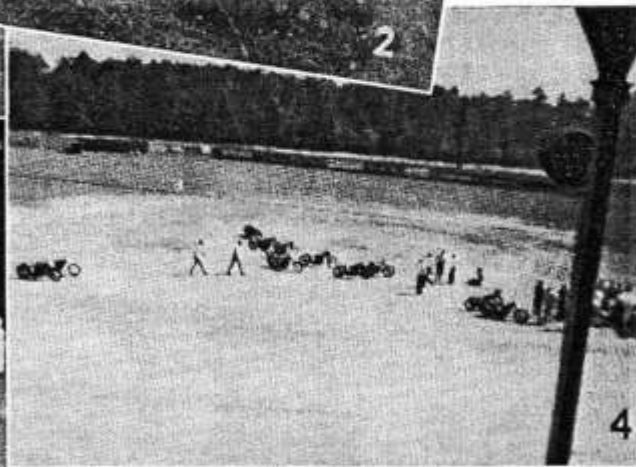
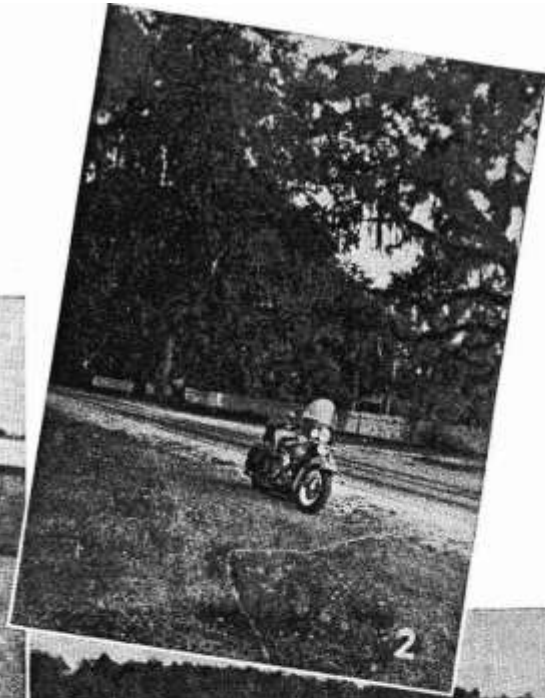
I easily located Dan Cunningham, Harley-Davidson dealer there in Louisville, and he fairly bubbled over with Southern hospitality. I'm afraid I nearly wore out my welcome with the many questions I asked about planting, growing, and harvesting tobacco. But he answered all my inquiries most graciously. Furthermore, he pointed out the places of interest in Louisville and helped me plan a trip through famed Mammoth Cave and over to Smoky Mountain Park.

Next morning; I found that tobacco was not the only important industry in Louisville. I passed several liquor distilleries on my way out of town, and I was particularly impressed by the many neat buildings and well-kept grounds of some of these plants. I stopped at one and was invited to view the various processes from mill to bottle. As my 74 and I headed southward again, the countryside became more rolling and timber stands were getting larger.

I visited Abraham Lincoln National Park, near Hodgenville, Kentucky, and learned that the old cabin in the memorial building was the cabin in which "Honest Abe" was born. The

memorial itself is very close to Lincoln's actual birthplace. From here I continued southward to Mammoth Cave National Park.

Given a choice of four trips varying from two hours to an entire day through different parts of the caves, I selected the two-hour tour. Never before had I seen such wonders of nature. The manner in which this part of the cave is electrically lighted added new interest to its already magnificent beauty. That evening, I reached the Cumberlandds and spent the night, serenaded by katy-dids, at a tourist camp near Monterey, Tennessee.



1. Cultivating corn with "mule power" in northern Alabama.
2. The 74 O.H. V. beneath the soft hanging moss between Biloxi and Baton Rouge.
3. Street scene in Thomastown, Alabama.
4. From his grandstand seat, Wallace snapped this shot of the pits at the race meet at Laurel, Mississippi.
5. The Gulf of Mexico at Biloxi, Miss. For many miles, Wallace rode along the shoreline enjoying the view.

Thursday, I swung back on the trail to the Smoky Mountains. I passed several limestone and cement plants along the way, and during the last sixty miles into Monterey, I enjoyed most ideal travel conditions - brilliant sunshine, smooth roads, and refreshing scenery. And my Harley-Davidson performed faultlessly.

At Gatlinburg, Tenn., I entered Smoky Mountain National Park. In short order the elevation rose from about 1,000 to 6,600 feet as I fairly sailed up hills and around curves on my way to Clingman's Dome, highest point in Tennessee.

From there I descended into North Carolina, stopping first at the Cherokee Indian Reservation. The Indians were dressed in colorful, but authentic costumes which, together with the surrounding wilderness, created a most natural picture. Here in western North Carolina, coal and watermelon appeared to be primary commodities, as evidenced by the many truckloads of both which passed by constantly. Frequent signs, announcing furs for sale, indicated that hunting and trapping in this picturesque vicinity were extremely good.

I was now on my way to Chattanooga, Tenn. After lunching and refueling at Andrews, NC. I was clicking off the miles along Highway 19 when, despite bright sunshine, I noticed a slight mist. In almost the next moment, I was in a heavy rainstorm. Although determined to keep going, I was forced to seek refuge from downpours no less than four times that afternoon. Upon reaching Copper Hill, Tenn., I decided to call it a day. I was thankful for the sealed ignition system of my Harley-Davidson, for it never missed a shot during all that rain.

Next morning, I viewed some of the wonders of TVA - dams and storage lakes - along U. S. Highway 11 on the way to Chattanooga. Upon arrival, I went directly to O. L. Pate's motorcycle shop where, after 1,670 miles, my reliable mount received a well-deserved oil change and check-up.

For many, many miles I had been reading about the merits of Garden City, atop Lookout Mountain, so I decided to "see seven states." After a stimulating ride along park trails, I reached the famed high spot and gazed out over Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama.

After brief difficulty finding the highway, the miles were again whizzing by, and I was heading into Alabama. Here I glimpsed the first cotton fields I'd seen thus far, and large fields of watermelons were almost everywhere. By evening, I arrived in Birmingham and spent the night there.

Saturday I left Birmingham for Mobile, Alabama. The countryside became heavily wooded as I sped southward and cattle freely roamed the highways. In Mobile, I proceeded to the Mobile Harley-Davidson Co., where I was royally welcomed by Otis Lee. With the help of some pointers from Mr. Lee, I made my own tour of Mobile, which included the waterfront, shipyards and paper mills.

Sunday morning, I rode over to Laurel, Miss., with Johnny Adams, mechanic at the Mobile Harley-Davidson Co., and took in the motorcycle races. There was real competition riding at Laurel, part of which might be chalked up to the extra months each year the boys in the South spend on their mounts. We returned to Mobile the same night together with several other Mobile enthusiasts. Next morning, after fond farewells to the gang at Mobile, I headed westward on U. S. 90 toward Biloxi, Miss. Along this route, I saw great numbers of pecan trees. In Biloxi, I visited the Jefferson Davis memorial which contains many items of historical significance.

From Biloxi westward into Louisiana I looked forward to a long, smooth ride along the Gulf. But the highway suddenly detoured inland. The Gulf Highway was still suffering from the effects of a typhoon that devastated the area the year before. Following a session of rough gravel roads, I was again on smooth pavement - just leaning back, opening the throttle and watching the miles roll by.

I felt I hadn't much time left of my allotted two weeks, so I hurried on to Baton Rouge. From Louisiana's capital city, I followed U. S. 71 to Alexandria, where I found splendid quarters for the night.

Tuesday found me back in the saddle with my course set for Little Rock, Arkansas. Moving northward, timber became more dense and livestock on the road made riding more hazardous. The countryside here was quite level, but the woods were so thick that the cows and hogs were only able to graze on the narrow strip alongside the highway. There were few houses along this route, and the road was narrow and rough. Little Rock was indeed a welcome sight!

I had planned to go west from Little Rock into Oklahoma, but the fellows at Richards' Harley-Davidson Co. talked me out of the idea. They said the highways westward were extremely poor and, recalling the roads I'd just "battled," I proceeded northwest on Highway 64. This proved to be a wise move as the road was smooth and I really began clicking off the miles again.

Near Clarkesville, I found myself in the heart of Arkansas' peach country, so I stopped briefly for a few "samples." I continued on through the Ozarks and it was just about sunset as I crossed the state line into Missouri. Near midnight, I arrived in Joplin where I spent the night.

Wednesday morning at eight, with Kansas City as my next major objective, the steady speed of my Harley-Davidson rolled up the miles in a hurry. The pleasant Missouri countryside sped by, bringing cooler and cooler breezes. For the first time since I started on this jaunt, I had to roll down my sleeves and don a light jacket.

At Omaha, I paused for a brief spell to adjust my rear chain and refuel. After a sturdy lunch, I sped northward through the famous corn country of Iowa. In northern Iowa, I had to change my light jacket for a heavy one. In southern Minnesota, I put on gloves and extra

clothing.

It was getting late, but I was only 35 miles from home - Wadena, Minn. I arrived in Wadena at two o'clock that morning, winding up ten days of pleasant riding in which I traveled 4,162 miles through thirteen states. Fuel and oil expenses for the entire trip were less than \$29.00.

Although I never did actually witness a tobacco auction, I returned to Minnesota greatly impressed by the, commercial importance and industrial prominence of the New South. Also, the generous hospitality offered me, particularly by the boys in Mobile, was most gratifying. I look forward to my next trip South.