

village view

by Andrea Leonard

At this time of year, lots of us think about following the good example of the robins, and heading south for the winter. There are those who can spend only a week, or just a long weekend, in a part of the country where winters are mild. They're the people who help keep airlines and car-rental companies in business.

There are those who spend two or three weeks in Florida and want their own car available, but don't like driving the length of the Eastern Seaboard and back. They take the Auto-Train; it departs daily from Lorton, Virginia, arriving in Sanford, Florida, the following morning. Miles of wear and tear on the family car, a couple of night's motel rentals, and energy can all be saved this way. For the foresighted, sleeping accommodations aboard the train can be reserved. Sitting up all night in a reclining chair may rob you of a night's sleep, but many prefer it to the monotony of highway driving.

A similar arrangement is offered by AutoBus; while the traveler's car is freighted south by train, he boards the bus, and after a night in a motel enroute, is reunited with his car in Florida.

Then there's the south-bound traditionalist with six or more weeks to spend away from New England's icy blasts and who can't be separated from his own set of wheels, even overnight. He loads up his trunk with suitcases full of summer attire, a hot pot for making morning coffee in motel rooms, an assortment of snacks, a stack of road maps, and heads for the land of sunshine and hibiscus.

Even before starting to pack, however, he spends many

an evening pouring over the maps or a good atlas, charting his route. For Cape Codders, two major obstacles lie between us and our destination: New York City and the Baltimore-Washington area where traffic congestion and unfamiliarity with roads pose possible problems. If you're driving from the Cape to any point south of Washington, D.C., these trouble spots can be avoided.

The routes we like best, both because they're easy to follow and offer a lot of attractive scenery, lead around New York City and the Baltimore/Washington traffic.

After leaving the Cape, we follow 95 through Providence, and since we're usually making the trip in the dead of winter, we hug the coastline wherever practical to reduce chances of running into snowstorms or icy roads. While there's no guarantee, of course, a blizzard blanketing inland areas will be nothing but a rainstorm along the shore.

Route 95 becomes the Connecticut Thruway at New London, and we continue on it through New Haven where we take Exit 38 (Milford Parkway northbound), a divided-highway connector about four miles long leading to the Wilber Cross and Merritt Parkways.

We prefer these older parkways not only for their fine scenery but also because they're less heavily-traveled and carry no truck traffic. West of New Haven, the Connecticut Thruway is increasingly loaded with trucks.

The Wilber Cross becomes the Merritt, and the Merritt at the New York State line becomes the Hutchison River Parkway. The "Hutch" narrows down, and slower speeds are recommended.

Four or five miles after entering New York State you'll come to the Cross Westchester Expressway (Route I-287). Follow I-287 to the TappanZee Bridge and cross the Hudson River into New Jersey, well north of New York City.

If you get an early-morning start from the Cape, you should encounter minimal traffic on the southbound Garden State Parkway to its intersection with the New Jersey Turnpike, south of Rahway and Linden. Once you're southbound on the Jersey Pike, there's clear sailing to the Delaware Memorial Bridge at Wilmington.

For toll-savers, a roadmap will show a parallel choice of Route 130 and Interstate 295. A trusting driver with a good navigator co-piloting can save tolls on these alternate routes. Last winter Route 130 was pot-holed, however, and rather than risk tire damage or throwing out our wheel alignment, we chose to return to the Turnpike despite opportunities to buy inexpensive gasoline on 130. Since then, 130 may have been resurfaced.

After crossing into Delaware, continue on 95 South a short distance 'til you come to a large service station, and rest area on your left in the median strip. When you've passed it, you'll approach Exit 1, southbound, Route 896 to Middletown. Follow 896 the several miles to U.S. 301, then take 301 south through the Delaware countryside.

The farms stretch from horizon to horizon; the farmhouses are large and architecturally interesting; you'll enjoy the scenery. Cross the Chesapeake Bay Bridge, skirt Annapolis, Maryland, or take a sidetrip if it's time for a break and rest stop. Back on Route 301, again, cross the Potomac River into Virginia and continue on to Bowling Green.

A glance at your road map will confirm that all the congestion of Baltimore and Washington, like that of New York City, is happily behind you. Leave 301 at Bowling Green and pick up Route 207. It leads to Route 95 again at Carmel Church, Virginia.

Route 95 goes through the heart of Richmond as a super-highway, easily followed; the turnpike between Richmond and Petersburg is a toll road, and before you reach the North Carolina state line, you'll find yourself on Route 301 once more for some long miles before you resume on Route 95. From that point on, Route 95 is complete all the way to Florida.

For the adventuresome and unhurried, there are exciting alternatives. Instead of the New Jersey Turnpike route, you may opt to follow the Garden State Parkway to Cape May, the state's southernmost tip, and take the ferry to Lewes, Delaware. Then follow Route 13 to Cape Charles and cross the mouth of Chesapeake Bay via the bridge tunnel. This is the Route of the Gull and offers the motorist with ample time an opportunity to make sidetrips to Chincoteague, famous for its oysters, and Assateague Island National Seashore.

Here, a few miles from Norfolk, Virginia, you've the option of resuming the faster inland path via Route 58 to Route 95 at Emporia, or continuing along the shore via the Outer Banks, the barrier beach islands enclosing Currituck and Pamlico Sounds, crossing Hatteras Inlet on the free ferry, and arriving at Atlantic, North Carolina, near Beaufort, via the longer ferry ride from Ocracoke. For the latter ferry, call ahead for reservations and plan to arrive in Ocracoke before 2 p.m. or you'll miss the boat.

Continue to follow the shore road to Route 17 at the tiny village of Folkstone. On Route 17 you'll cross Cape Fear River in Wilmington, North Carolina, and continue south to Myrtle Beach and on to Charleston, South Carolina. Before reaching Savannah, Georgia, Route 17 merges with Route 95.

Unless your curiosity prompts you to take another sidetrip to St. Simon's Island (where President Carter often vacations), you'll stay on 95 until you reach the Florida state line. If you do visit St. Simon's, take an additional half-hour to see Jekyll Island State Park, as well. It's worth the time.

Once in Florida, you're on your own. Whether you're bound for Disney World, the Gulf Coast or the East, have a grand vacation. Drive carefully and happy motoring.

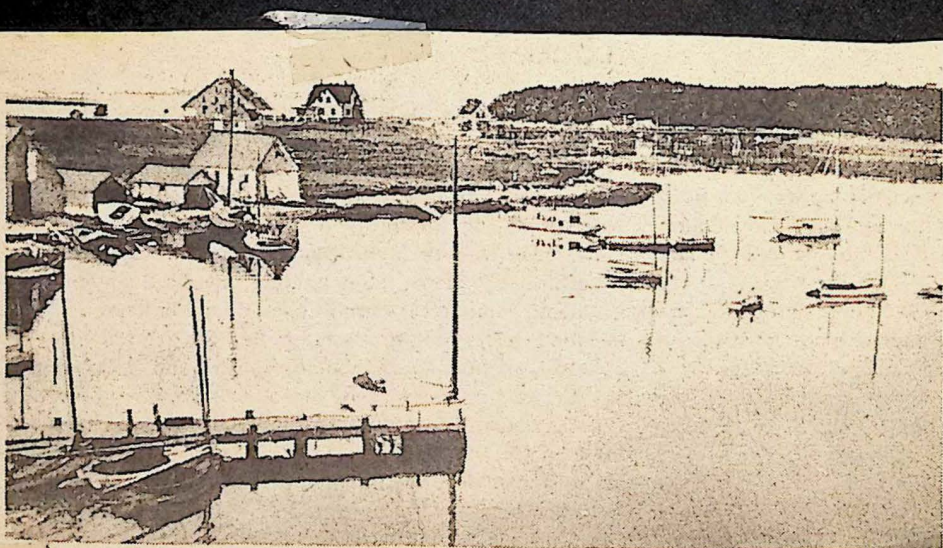


Photo above, taken 1906, shows West Bay, the present location of the Crosby boatyards.