

POTOMAC GORGE



Shooting the Rapids of the Upper Potomac.

Prepared by National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.—WNU Service.

BUSSES, trains, and private automobiles are disgorging gay throngs, and hotels, streets, and public buildings are bulging with enthusiastic humanity as Washington meets the annual massed attack of spring and early summer visitors.

Timid grammar school students, clinging to more worldly adults; high school graduates, who have been saving for a tour of the city throughout their four-year school terms; and adults whose budgets met excursion transportation rates are inspired by the wonders of their Capital.

Handsome new government buildings, museums, art galleries, beautifully landscaped parks; broad, tree-shaded avenues; Mount Vernon, Arlington, the graceful, Gothic limestone bulk of the Washington cathedral where Woodrow Wilson is buried, great churches, and the city's splendid educational and scientific institutions are the chief objects of interest to the brief visitor.

Unfortunately many of this group miss one of the most striking scenic features near the Capital—the Great Falls of the Potomac in nearby Virginia and Maryland, and the river's gorge. The broad, calm stream that flows by Potomac park, separating Washington and Virginia, narrows suddenly above the city. Its shores change from bottom lands and gently rolling hills to take on the sterner aspect of palisades, cut at frequent intervals by deep gullies, through some of which small streams enter the river in tumultuous cascades.

On the Virginia side, where the cliffs rise almost sheer from the water's edge, these ravines are so steep and so numerous that a journey along the bluffs entails more travel vertically than in a horizontal direction.

The Three Sisters.

Just above the handsome Francis Scott Key bridge and the old Aqueduct bridge, which formerly carried a canal across the river, the trio of jagged rocks known as the Three Sisters recall a romantic legend of the Red Men who once roamed these rugged shores.

According to the tradition, these rocks mark the place where the three daughters of an Anasotan chief were caught in a whirlpool and dragged to their watery grave. They were paddling across the river, so the story goes, to a secret tryst with their Powhatan lovers on the Virginia shore; but the river demons intervened and, after accomplishing the destruction of the sisters, caused the three gloomy rocks to rise from the spot where their bodies sank beneath the waves.

The Virginia and Maryland shores converge rapidly as one journey up the river, until a few miles above Washington they are separated by less than 100 feet of water, now swift and turbulent.

Above Little Falls, which is a series of rapids, the river widens again. Numerous islands spangle the Maryland shore, while Virginia's cliffs become wilder and more rugged. The waters pursue a more

leisurely course here, but it is only a temporary calm before the storm, and 15 miles above the Capital they gather for a majestic plunge over a wall of granite which all the Potomac's ages of work has been unable to wear down.

These falls offer a scene of impressive grandeur. Heaps of rocks are scattered about—enormous granite boulders and jagged reefs of gneiss—as if some Titan of long ago had vented his wrath by upheaving the crust of the earth itself. The wilderness of the place, as the waters churn and boil in their never-ending warfare with the rocks, is comparable only to some of the larger mountain canyons of the West, and is hard to conceive as being within a few miles of the Capital city.

The Gorge and Old Canal.

Normally the river here tumbles through a rather narrow channel in its race for the Chesapeake, but when spring melts the mountain snows and deluged valleys pour their overflowing streams into its upper reaches, the falls become a swirling flood that rages from shore to shore with a roar that may be heard for miles.

The old Chesapeake and Ohio canal, which paralleled the Potomac from Georgetown up to and on beyond the falls, was begun about the same time as the Baltimore and Ohio railway, and there was once a keen rivalry between them for the freight traffic between Washington and Cumberland, Md. But the "iron horse" outdistanced the faithful plodding mules of the towpath, and the canal is no longer in operation.

However, transportation's loss has been the gain of thousands who know and love the hike along the towpath, with its great trees and thickets fringing the still waters of the canal, while here and there a moss-encrusted rock, bolder than the rest, juts out like some miniature Lorelei.

Birds frequent the vicinity in countless thousands. Wrens, sparrows, warblers, thrushes, and myriad other varieties haunt the thickets. Kingfishers seek their prey along the water's edge. Mocking birds are permanent residents of the woods, and the cheery whistle of the lordly cardinal may be heard at almost any time of year. Indeed, at certain seasons this magnificently caparisoned songster is encountered in flocks.

Where Cabin John creek comes down to the river, man has carried a road across the precipitous valley on one of the world's largest single spans of masonry. In the springtime, however, this valley itself is of far greater interest than its bridge. Ferns and wild flowers adorn it in profusion, and the delicate pink blossoms of the laurel and notched white flowers of the dogwood dapple the greening hillsides harmoniously.

Good for Biological Study.

One of the many interesting features of the Potomac gorge is its peculiar situation biologically. In the cool shadows of its steep cliffs the fauna and flora of the upland regions impinge upon those of the coastal plain to provide one of the

most engaging and productive fields for biological study in the East.

Plummer Island, in the river above Cabin John, for more than 25 years has been in the possession of the Washington Biologists' Field club and has served as a station for the observation of wild life. An amazing number of new species of plant and insect life has been discovered on this island and every precaution is taken to protect it from depredation and to preserve its value as a natural biological laboratory.

Despite the fact that the river is mostly very swift in this part of its course, there are areas of calm water which are the summer haunts of numberless canoeists and swimmers. The bolder spirits among the devotees of the paddle venture beyond, to shoot the rapids and receive both thrills and spills for their temerity.

The National Capital Park and Planning commission has had a definite program to save this region of truly magnificent scenery as one of the show places of America. It recommended that the federal government acquire the entire gorge from the top of the Virginia bluffs to the hilltops in Maryland and from Georgetown to and including Great Falls. This area would then be supplied with foot and bridle paths, highways, and boat landings to make all of its scenery easily accessible.

The commission's plans excluded power dams from the area, as it states they would "destroy the chief scenic values of the Great falls and Potomac gorge," and, furthermore, are not necessary, because "adequate power may easily be otherwise obtained at a reasonable cost."

The value of this region to the city of Washington and to the whole nation is hardly possible of expression. It is estimated that 15,000 visitors come to Great falls each year on the Virginia side alone, while many more thousands take advantage of the better highway facilities available along the Maryland side.

Best in Its Natural State.

Whether or not the gorge of the Potomac shall become a national park rests with congress, which must authorize its acquisition before the Park and Planning commission can proceed beyond the boundaries of the District of Columbia. Certainly it could in no way be more useful to the nation than in its natural state—a place of rare beauty and a joy forever to the rapidly increasing population of the Washington district and the ever-swelling, never-ending stream of visitors to the national capital from all of the world.

Probably no other capital city in either hemisphere has scenic assets comparable to Washington's Great falls and the Potomac gorge. The late Viscount James Bryce, ambassador of Great Britain to the United States and staunch friend and admirer of America, in writing of the beauties of Washington in the National Geographic Magazine, said: "It is impossible to live in Washington and not be struck by some peculiar features and some peculiar beauties which your city possesses. In the first place, its site has a great deal that is admirable and charming. There is rising ground inclosing on all sides a level space, and so making a beautiful amphitheater between hills that are rich with woods.

"Underneath these hills and running like a silver thread through the middle of the valley is your admirable river.

"The Potomac has two kinds of beauty—the beauty of the upper stream, murmuring over a rocky bed between bold heights crowned with wood, and the beauty of the wide expanse, spread out like a lake below the city into a vast sheet of silver.

"No European city has so noble a cataract in its vicinity as the Great Falls of the Potomac—a magnificent piece of scenery which you will, of course, always preserve."

Ships Serve Many People

Nearly 90 per cent of the people of the United States are located in territories served by ships.

BEDTIME STORY

By THORNTON W. BURGESS

WHAT BOBBY COON AND BILLY MINK DID

BOBBOY COON and Billy Mink sat on an old log on the bank of the Laughing Brook and talked over the traps Billy Mink had discovered and what should be done about them.

"Of course," said Billy Mink, "you and I are safe enough. We know exactly where those traps are and we are not going to be so foolish as to get caught in one of them. But there are others who travel up and down the Laughing Brook who might not discover the traps until too late."

Bobby Coon nodded. "Just what I was thinking," said he. "But for you, Billy Mink, I would be in that trap down there this very minute. It was stupid of me not to have suspected that the little opening in that fence was left purposely to tempt whoever came along to go through it instead of taking the trouble to climb that steep bank and go around the fence. There may be others just as stupid. We ought to do something about it, but what can we do?"

"Are you afraid to go near that trap?" demanded Billy.

Bobby scratched his head thoughtfully. "How near?" he asked.

"Near enough to get your paw under it," replied Billy.

"I don't know," replied Bobby. "What good will that do?"

"Well, you see," replied Billy, "that trap is set right in the middle of that little opening and it has been covered with wet, dead leaves. Now I know something about traps. I've seen a lot of them in my day. If anyone should step on these wet leaves, two steel jaws would snap up and grab him by the leg. But those steel jaws always snap up. They can't snap the other way. If your paw is underneath the trap there is no danger. By doing this you can lift that trap up so that it will no longer

be covered with those dead leaves, and whoever comes along will see it. It isn't safe to try to pull the leaves off of it because you might get caught doing it. If you will do that to the trap on this side I will do the same thing to the trap on the other side of the Laughing Brook. If you're afraid, just say so, and I'll take care of both traps."

Now Bobby Coon was afraid because, you see, he had never had anything to do with traps. But he wasn't willing to own up that he



"All Right, Let's Get Busy," Cried Billy Mink, Jumping Up.

was afraid. He knew that if he showed that he was afraid he never would hear the end of it, for Billy Mink would be sure to tell everybody he knew. He thought the matter over for a few minutes and then grunted: "I guess if you can do it, I can."

"All right, let's get busy!" cried Billy Mink, jumping up. "I don't want to spend the rest of the night sitting around here."

So Billy Mink swam across the Laughing Brook, and Bobby Coon slowly shuffled along on his side down toward the little fence where the trap was set.

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Through A WOMAN'S EYES

by JEAN NEWTON

ON THE WORKING BRIDE

"DEAR JEAN NEWTON—What do you think of these modern marriages that have to be undertaken on the basis of the girl sticking to her job, often with the strong possibility of hers being the only job in the family? This has got so general now, that I see in a report from the marriage license bureau of a big city that practically all of today's brides are working brides. Along with that goes a whole changed outlook on the home and marriage. One room and kitchenette will encompass all the hopes of 'home' for these young people. I think independence and self-reliance for women is good. But can you build families and family spirit and home life on such a foundation as I refer to?"

The answer is, I believe that it has already been done. Brides holding on to their jobs did not originate with the depression. The idea has been in practice long enough so that almost any suburb can show a crop of couples of the vintage of eight or ten years ago who started out with both working, and then when John made good settled down to the cottage and babies.

As little Tommy says, there's nothing for nothing in this life. And the situation of the working bride is not all to the good. But in many ways it is distinctly a gain in the foundation of lasting marriage. Chiefly, to my mind, is the fact that starting with that kind

of framework gives a girl a healthy realistic viewpoint on what today's breadwinner is up against, and when her young husband becomes able to carry the load of a family, his modest success will not shrink to the contemptible in the eyes of a wife full of illusions as to royal roads to riches and husbands who should come home from work all set to take their wives out for a good time.

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"Magic Pebbles" of Quints' Town Popular

Toronto, Ont. — The "magic pebbles" of Callander, birthplace of the Dionne quintuplets, are in heavy demand by persons who desire children, according to Dr. Allan Roy Dafeo, the quint's physician.

The legend seems to be that any person who obtains a pebble from Callander will have children.

"I do not know the origin of the legend," Dafeo told the Medical Health Officers' convention, "but in some cases it seems to work. In some cases the couples have been without children for as long as fourteen years."

Dafeo said many persons wrote to him, asking for a pebble and inclosing a \$1 bill. He said he always sent back the money.