

The SCENIC Route

A TRAVEL EXHIBITION

In the spring of 1869, Boston preacher and outdoorsman William H. H. Murray published *Adventures in the Wilderness; or, Camp Life in the Adirondacks*, one of the first guidebooks to a wilderness area. The guide became a surprise bestseller, and—after a disastrous first summer in which a flood of ill-prepared tourists dubbed “Murray’s Rush” overturned canoes, misplaced their camps, and were tormented by black flies, – the American vacation as we know it was born. Replacing the more common British term of “holiday,” the word “vacation” originated from New Yorkers proclaiming their plans to “vacate” their city homes and retreat to the peaceful purity of nature (Perrottet, 2013).

Within the Midwest Genealogy Center archives reside many examples of this American pastime throughout history, from vacation photos to correspondence to travel guides. With this exhibition, we invite the viewer to take “the scenic route” through just a few of these items. Peruse the guidebooks collected by one couple in 30+ years of travel together. Enjoy snapshots of family vacations from decades past. Read one mother’s entertaining and heart-warming postcards home to her young sons. Let the mind boggle at the price of a 1976 rental car.

We hope to inspire viewers as they prepare for their own summer travels, whether near or far. A vacation is not just an opportunity to relax and have fun—it’s a 150+ year national tradition!

Perrottet, Tony. “Where Was the Birthplace of the American Vacation?” *Smithsonian.com*, Smithsonian Institution, Apr. 2013



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