

Dear Friends,

Just back from a circuit of the town on the "accommodation"—the greatest merry-go-round ride in the world. We slipped into the front seat beside Motorman Bill Paige after a couple of good looking women had said their regretful adieus and before others, waiting for the chance in rear seats, were able to move up. What's that guy got, anyway?

It was about dusk, and a half moon stood out in a clear, almost starless sky. Low over the western horizon lay a cloud bank which some said might mean a squall and others, just a sudden change in temperature. It was cool, although Bill said that Boston had been sweltering wickedly earlier in the day when he took his wife up to the city.

After what seemed a three-quarter-wait, the lights of the lumbering bus showed on Commercial Street, dodging cars and people, looking not unlike a merry-go-round going places. In the back seat, as usual, were the youngsters, and last night one of them had a banjo. Wally Adams in gob's whites was collecting the fares and yelling "Swing it" as a signal to get going after every stop—"a hell of a signal," Bill observed.

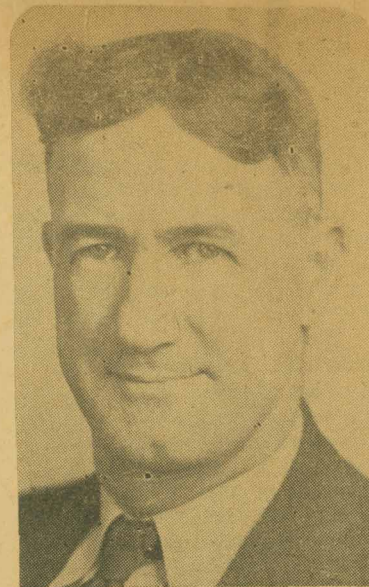
At times the singers and the banjo on the back seat had things their own way, especially with some brand new and snappy World War II verses of "Hinky-Dinky Parlez Vous" but other passengers joined in "You are My Sunshine" and "God Bless America." Usually a lot of hats blow off during a round trip, Bill said, but last night there was only one—a gob's white hat that sailed off as the "accommodation" rounded the bend past Provincetown Inn, and while Wally ran back for it, we saw the deep blue, purple and gold of moon beams reflected in the quiet pools of sea water that dot the lush marsh grass beyond the breakwater.

To one not entirely accustomed to using the "accommodation" it is a pleasantly confusing adventure. You feel at times as though you were riding an old plough horse to a fire, or away from it, and every few blocks there are dogs, lying in wait to complain your passage loudly. Somebody wants to get off and a few yards farther along, someone wants to get on. There are no station stops—it's the "accommodation". Most of the passengers like to ride in the dark, especially the younger ones because they can see the town better and so forth, and Bill always forgets to turn the lights off after people get on. So there are yells, "Lights," until he switches them out.

Although cities were sweltering, it was so cool that the motorman stopped in front of Anybody's Market and put on a sweater and Wally beat it in for a coke. In fact, it was almost cold when we hit the stiff harbor breeze at the East End breakwater which topped each wave with foam, splashing them against the boulders. It was good to look across the harbor and see bright lights shining, undimmed now, from the many Beach Point cottages already filled with vacationers.

Yes, it was good to see, and to look back on the town and its lights glowing again, undimmed. But it was impossible to forget—nor should we ever—the cost of turning on those lights.

Down at Preston's on Mayflower Heights is the turnaround and some kids got on and a couple of ladies who insisted that we wait for Mrs. Beede, so we waited until she got on.



William H. Paige

-- June 1944 --

Last Saturday the "accommodation"—one of Provincetown's famous institutions—appeared on the streets again, making its rounds of the town, taking on shoppers from the East and West Ends, fishermen with festoons of haddock and flounders, and those who ride for the joy of the thing. Bill Paige is at the wheel again and, whatever he may say to the contrary, he seems to enjoy the job. Wally Adams picks up the fares. Bill has been driving the "accommodation" since away back in 1910 when it was horse-drawn and he used to shoe his own horses. He starts out on his first trip at noon and generally puts the big bus in the garage about 11:30 after he has distributed the movie crowds. It makes a long day for him, what with his model truck farm. He makes the 3 mile trip from Provincetown Inn to Preston's at Mayflower Heights in about 20 minutes, but he doesn't do the errands any more that gave the line the name "accommodation", such as turning out the stove for some housewife who suddenly remembered while shopping that she had left it on, or picking up a pound of butter and some salt pork while going through the center of town for another cook.

Stage Coach Days

Travelers came from Boston to Cape Cod a hundred years ago by stage coach or by packet boat. Packet boats, which docked at the old stone dock on Shore street, sailed to Falmouth from New Bedford. From Boston boats sailed to Barnstable and Yarmouth, to Dennis and Truro, and to Brewster and Orleans. The stage came from Boston to Plymouth, Sandwich, Barnstable, and Falmouth, leaving at 4 p. m. and making stops for meals along the way.

Eighty Years Ago
October 4, 1871

The axles of the Coach became heated on its passage from Wellfleet last Thursday and when this side of the Bridge one of the wheels refused to revolve, whereupon the passengers began a walking match to town.

A trumpet blast used to herald arrival of the mail on the stage coach in many Cape Cod towns.

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CAPE END BUSES STOP,
INSURANCE IS REVOKED

Town And Visitors Suddenly Deprived Of Transportation
When Further Coverage Demanded By Law Is Refused

"Accommodation" bus service, for a great many years one of Provincetown's traditional summer institutions, and almost a necessity for the movement of people from one place to another in the narrow, three-mile town, as well as to New Beach, was discontinued at 12:01 this morning when the insurance covering the vehicles was cancelled by the company which had been providing the coverage demanded by State law. It was considered doubtful by Warren Silva of Paige Brothers Garage, owners of the bus line, this morning, that the service would be restored this summer. Paige Brothers asked the Public Utilities Commission for permission to determine themselves the length of their season, and which petition was later denied by the Commission. From available information, the cancellation of insurance was based on the manner in which the buses were operated, the type of vehicles, and because insurance companies, in general, are tightening up drastically on truck and common carrier coverage. Provincetown's familiar "accommodation" will be seriously missed for the remainder of the summer. Its history reaches back beyond the memory of any living natives today who can easily recall the slow, horse-drawn vehicles of early and more leisurely days when the driver would stop to turn down the heat under a simmering clam chowder for an East End woman, pick up a spool of white cotton for a West Ender, or stop and wait with understanding passengers while a purchase was being made in a midtown store. In later years, with the coming of the gas engine, a ride on the cooling "accommodation" of an evening has been a favorite diversion for old and young whose chatter and songs made the trip around the town from the Moors to Mayflower Heights a colorful adventure. The bus, too, has served as the only means of transportation, apart from taxis, bikes and cars, for many hundreds who daily seek the pleasures of New Beach bathing. The present management of Paige Brothers has been operating the bus line for the past eleven years, and the former management had operated continuously before since 1915.

It is understood that the insurance company cancelled the coverage because it had decided that the buses were an unsatisfactory risk, and Mr. Silva said that his efforts during the past ten days to find a company willing to cover the vehicles had been unavailing. He contended that there had been no accidents of any consequence this season and felt that public need might well have extended insurance coverage until the end of the season with cancellation at that time, if necessary.

Members of the Provincetown Board of Selectmen were conferring today in Boston with Henry F. Long, Commissioner of Corporations and Taxation regarding the town's tax rate for the current year and could not be reached for their views on the situation which has arisen here, or possible solution for the traffic tie-up. However, it was learned that the decision of the insurance company was not the outcome, directly or indirectly, of the hearing held a few weeks ago when