



A Motor Trip to California in 1917

By Gilbert Gia

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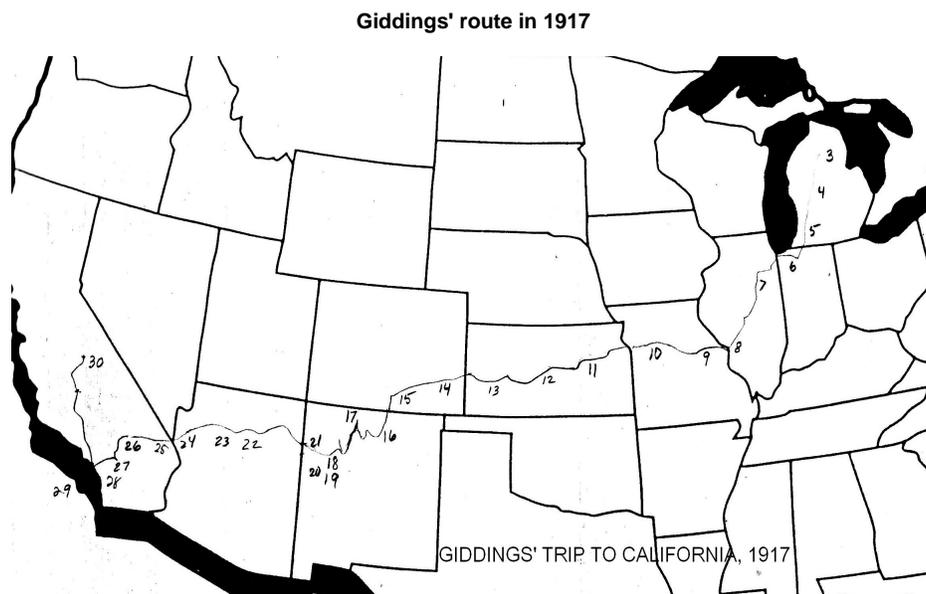
In 1917 my mother's parents drove to California from Michigan. Jesse kept a record of the trip in her 5x8 notebook, the first page of which shows a column of numbers that total 2,117 miles. Behind that page are faint notes such as *gas & oil 38.17; toll 1.65; work done 55.27*. She figured the cost of the trip at \$76.46, which today is about the same as \$1,000.

Mark and Jesse Giddings sold their farm in Boardman, Michigan, and on November 3, 1917 they and their 12 year-old adopted daughter, Sarah Brockman, left for California. About two weeks later they checked into the Pioneer Hotel at Porterville in the San Joaquin Valley.

A little about their 1915 Ford: In 1915 the Ford company made its one millionth vehicle. Customers that year got \$50 back with their new car. Ford had a successful formula. The company paid \$5 for an eight-hour shift while competitors paid \$2.50 or less for a nine-hour shift. By 1916, 500,000 Fords were on the road, and nearly half of all cars were Fords.

A bill of sale from Ford dated November 18, 1915 showed that a "Martin Giddins" of south Boardman bought a 1915 Model-T "tour" car, motor number 903785. The receipt noted he paid \$453 cash, which included its shipping. Ford's "tour" model wasn't the most expensive nor the cheapest. The priciest Ford was the center-door sedan at \$740, and the economy Ford was the runabout two-seater that went for \$390. The cost of the touring model changed over time. In 1910 it sold for \$950; the price bottomed at \$360 in 1916-1917; and it was \$575 in 1920. The 1915 was last of the Model-T models that had brass radiators, brass headlight rims, and brass horns. The 1915 was hand-crank (the electric starter option didn't come until 1919), but 1915 did have electric headlights and was the first

Ford model with demountable spare tires.



The Diary

Sat-Nov 3 1917. reg 610 miles. travel 106 miles -- Left Boardman Nov 3-6:30 am. reached Cadillac 9:30 am. chain fixed 25 C. Left Cadillac 10:30. bad roads to Reed City. Good roads from Reed City to Howard city. Reached H.C. about dark. gasoline at Howard 5 G. at 25 C., \$1.25. Stopped at Paris and viewed fish hatchery. Stayed over Sunday with Mr & Mrs. Abbott. Went to church morning & evening.

Mon- reg 716 miles. travel 120 mi. -- Left Mr. Abbott's at 7.00. roads mostly good. got celery at Rodamaz [?]. stopped at [blank here] for oil. 10 C. ate our dinner just out of Wayland. gas- 6 gal at 24 C. 0.44. passed numerous vineyards, some with grapes still on them. saw a little snow at or near Decatur. stopped for the night at a school house near Decatur. slept in a wood shed. got milk at a farm house.

Tues. near Decatur. reg 836. travel 125 -- started at 7 o'clock- reached Southbend 11 am. Got card from Arthur [*Jesse's sister's husband, Arthur Haskell*] and wrote card home. Gas 4-1/2 gal at 21 c. 0.95 ate dinner 16 miles west of Southbend on L.W. stopped at deep water village on L.W. and got 1 pint

oil-- 8 C. also stopped at dyer. wrote card to Mrs. Abbott. stopped for the night at a friendly farmer's place off L..W. Slept in a hay mow. Fine roads from south bend. concrete roads from south bend, tho somewhat worn and bumpy in places. fair day, but foggy and a chilling wind toward evening.

Wed- Nov 7- reg 961 mi. travel 146. started at break of day without breakfast. reached Joliet about 9 O'clock. I imagined we were in Chicago and asked a policeman to direct us to Michigan aye. was informed that we were in Joliet and directed the way to get started toward troy. ate our breakfast about 5 miles west of Joliet at a bank of a dry river bed. stopped at Minooka for gas. 5 gal at 21 C. speedometer wheel fixed, 30 c. oil at Morris, 10 c. at Morris a man asked us what f\part of Mich. we came from. said he had farm at white cloud. Mich good enough for him. from Dwight we followed Bloomington trail signs (white and orange painted on posts) thru Bloomington. fine roads nearly all the way. camped in an ill. cornfield a few miles out of Bloomington. a nice warm pleasant evening. used our tent for the first.

Thurs- Nov 8. reg 1005 mi (speedometer lost 2 mi) travel 162 miles. started before daylight and rode with lights on. drove 56 miles and ate breakfast at a little school house where we found good water. Got gas a few miles from Litchfield - 5 gal at 24 -\$1.20. At Stanton - 5 gal at 25 C. oil, 1 pint- 10 cents. found all good roads. lots of mules & fat horses. one big herd of Hereford cattle. came through coal mining country. hunted for a place to camp and finally pitched our tent behind an Osage orange grove in a tomato patch. slept fine.

Fri- Nov 9. reg 1267. travel 127. got up early and I wrote a letter to father while mark greased the car. traveled about 12 mi and the fog was so thick we couldn't see. stopped by the side of the road and a woman called for the "lady" to come in where it was warm. Sarah and I went in, but were glad to get out again and travel on. reached e. st. Louis in the densest fog we ever saw. stopped by the side of the bridge and waited a couple of hours until it lifted a little. then followed our trail a long ways and then found we were on the wrong track. finally found bridge and passed over but fog was so thick we could not see the river. paid 40 C. toll. Good roads on the St Charles. Gas 3 gal at 21-4/10 C. 61 C. were ferried across the Missouri river. paid 45 c. met a man from Arizona on the boat and followed up through Missouri to near Williamsburg. camped for the night in a man's yard near this place. (will butlers).

Sat- Nov 10. reg 1394. travel 152. woke up and heard it raining so thought we had better get up (4:00) packed as soon as possible and started out. traveled 37 miles and reached Columbia. nice town.

gas- 6 gal at 25 C. 1.50. oil 10 C. ate our lunch in a farmer's yard. had to be ferried across the river again (\$1). stopped at a big apple orchard and bought some apples. at Lexington. gas- 5 gal at 20-1/10 c. 1.04. oil .25 _went on to wellington and engaged rooms for the night with a private family. nice place. \$1. most of the day we found very hilly roads.

Nov 11. Sundaymorn. about 130 miles -- Left Wellington early and ate breakfast about 25 miles from there. reached independence and hunted up Mr. Friend's address -- LI. Friend R# 3-Independence, Mo. On to Kansas city. roads fine -- National dirt [*an unpaved section of the National Road*]. gas 6 gal at 20-1/10. 1.25. oil 1 pt, .10. stopped the night at a farm near Burlingame, Kans. went to the house and were treated to cider and pears. slept in a fine grove. address: D.C. Wight, Burlingame, Kans.

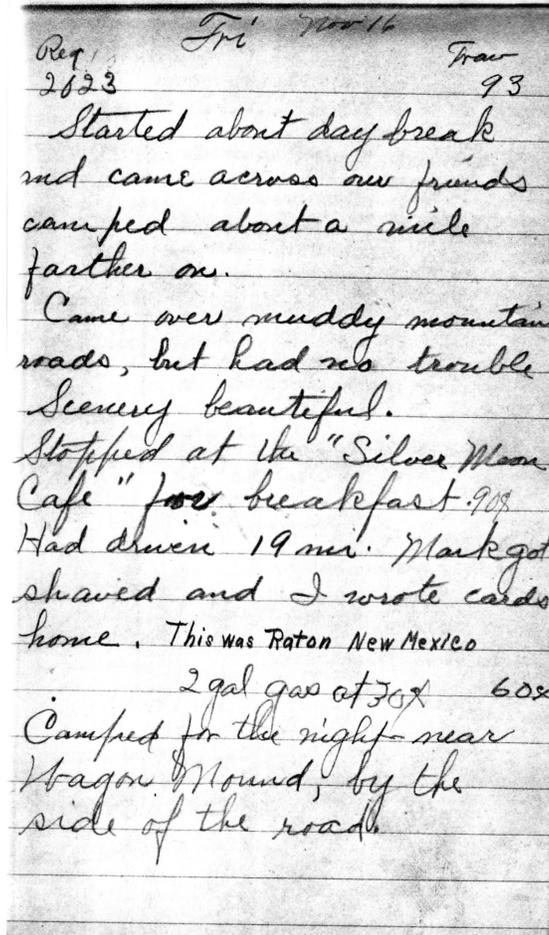
Nov 12. Monday. 177 miles. Burlingame, (115 after noon). Left early. cold and foggy. Stopped at council bluffs and got speedometer fixed, 3.50. oil, 1 pt 10 c. strap, .20. ate our dinner 12 miles out from C.B. best kind of roads. At Marion got pt oil, 10 c. 6 gal gas, 23 C., 1.38. Reached Lyons and got mail from all the folks. So glad to hear from them. Hunt's address: 524 riverside ave, Fort Wayne. Camped for the night in a grove in front of the home of Chas Spaeny, Lyons, Kans.

Tues- Nov 13. reg 590. travel 168 mi. got a late start this morn and fog so thick we could not travel fast. real cold until the fog cleared away and the sun shone. finest kind of roads. stopped in a store at great bend and got warm. ate our breakfast near Larned [?] by the side of some nice woods. stopped at Garfield and got a new part made to our trunk rack. Cost 25 c. At Kinsey stopped for oi, 10 c. At Dodge City got 6 gal gas at 24 c., 1.44. Then on and over some of the wildest kind of prairie. Saw lots of cattle and horses. Counted 60 horses on one ranch. Came to an auto wreck in the road. Camped in a grove at a farm house almost 2 miles east of garden city. got milk at farm house. also got our lantern filled, 10 c.

Weds- Nov 14. reg 1758. travel 128 mi. got a late start and then stopped at garden city to have our spring mended - \$2.80 [was] about 10 O'clock when we left there. roads fairly good. a cold wind and rather cloudy. ate our breakfast-dinner on the prairie by the side of the road. wanted to fry some steak but couldn't find any sticks for fire. saw smarts for the first time. saw the largest herd of cattle we have yet seen. passed into Colorado. a great place for raising sugar beets. also saw a large flock of lambs. got gas & oil at Syracuse. 4 gal gas at 25 C., 1.00. 2-1/2 qts oil. 40 c. fell in with some Iowa people at Lamar

and we all camped at a Jew's farm near Lamar.

Thurs- Nov 15. reg [blank]. travel 147 -- traveled over prairie for a time, then over foot hills. about noon saw mountain peak in distance. at La Junta 5 gal gas at 27 c. about 10 mi north of Trinidad had our 1st puncture. (also the second). stopped at Trinidad and had front spring fixed, \$3.65. 4 gal gas at 27 c., \$1.08. camped about 7 miles out from Trinidad. lost track of our fellow travelers.



Reg. 2023 Fri Nov 16 Trav 93

Started about day break and came across our friends camped about a mile farther on.

Came over muddy mountain roads, but had no trouble. Scenery beautiful.

Stopped at the "Silver Moon Cafe" for breakfast .90. Had driven 19 mi. Mark got shaved and I wrote cards home. This was Raton New Mexico

2 gal gas at 30x 60x

Camped for the night near Wagon Mound, by the side of the road.

Fri- Nov 16. reg 2023. trav 93. Started about day break. Came across our friends camped about a mile further on. came over muddy mountain roads, but had no trouble. scenery beautiful. stopped at the "silver moon cafe" for breakfast, .90 C. have driven 19 mi. mark got shaved and I wrote cards home. this was Raton, New Mexico. 2 gal gas at 30 C., 60 C. camped for the night near wagon mound, by the side of the road.

Sat- Nov 17. reg 2116. trav 96 mi. a real cold morning. went to Las Vegas and got our dinner at cafe, \$1.05. Roads from there are very hilly and red. Saw large herd of goats. stopped by side of road

and made bonfire while men fixed cars. passed through a little snow storm on the mountains. Gas at Las Vegas, 5-1/2 gal at 30 C. \$1.65. oil, .35. Stopped for the night in a beautiful sheltered spot a mile from Glorietta pass. Made a bonfire and fried meat for supper.

Sunday- Nov 18. reg 2212. travel 51 mi. Got up late. made toast and coffee over a bon-fire. wrote letters and visited. Started for Santa Fee [sic] about noon. Visited the museum and saw the sites of the town. Left just before dark and couldn't find a camping place. Went over la Bajda pass and got off the road at Domingo. Camped in a lonely, sandy spot. Night very cold. Gas at Santa fee 4-1/2, 30 C., \$1.35.

Monday-Nov 19. reg 2263. 98 mi. Cold morning. ate breakfast before starting. An Indian visited us at camp. said his name was Joe Squash. Dressed in native costume. Saw lots of Indians on our way to Albuquerque. 3-1/2 gal gas at 30 cents. pt oil, .10. Lovely day. Road dry and somewhat rough. Camped on an open prairie, a few miles out of Belen. Had puncture before reaching camping place.

Tues-Nov 20. reg 2361. 91 mi. left camping place before breakfast. Came down two mountains sides. Scenery beautiful. Breakfast at Hoffman cafe, Socorro, N.M., 90 c. Wrote cards home while Mark greased the car. Stopped at Magdalena for gas. 5 gal at 30 c.- 1.50. 1 pt oil .10. Steep uphill grade between Socorro and Magdalena, called Blue Ridge. Overtook our Iowa friends fixing car and a party from Kansas joined us. All camped together on a wooded hillside. Had bonfire and made coffee and toasted weenies.

Wednesday- Nov 21. reg. 2452. 99 mi. cooked breakfast before leaving camp! stopped at Datil for water and gas. Gas 2 gal, at 40 C, 80 C. Trunk-rack bolts 15 c. Just out of Quemado we came on to an Iowa Ford stranded. Stopped and helped them out. Colorado car came along and brought news of our Iowa friends. Saw coyote between Datil and Quemado. Passed thru Datil canon where nice fine trees were growing. Stopped at springs about 8 mi east of Springerville and saw many beautiful birds. Iowa friends caught up with us at Springerville. gas 45 c. so didn't get any. Camped in free camping ground at Springerville and slept in part of Mr Smarts' tent.

Thurs. Nov 22 reg 2551 travel 122 mi -- Cold morning. Kansas folks came after we went to bed. we left camp first. Mr. smarts caught up with us a few miles beyond st. Johns. passed thru petrified forest and got some souvenirs. Saw many beautiful sandstone formations. Roads very red in places and a few miles before reaching Halbrook [they] were in very bad condition. Did some shopping here and

mark got shaved. followed Mr smarts toward Winslow. found them about 24 miles out by the side of a canon, "clear creek canyon", where we camped for the night. gas at Holbrook 7-1/2 gal - .33-1/3 – 2.50. 2 qts oil 40 cents.

Friday- Nov 23. reg 2673. 102 mi -- Cooked breakfast before leaving camp. got our mail at Winslow. could see the town before leaving camp (13mi). came over rough and rocky road. went to see meteor mt. crater 600 ft deep. saw a piece of the meteor which weighed 1800 lb. Came across canon Diablo. Beautiful cement bridge. stopped about 11 miles before reaching flagstaff and visited the cliff dwellers ruins. wonderful sight. Parted from Mr Smarts at Flagstaff, they going to the Grand Canon. Gas at Flagstaff 4 gal at 33-3/4 c. 1.35. On thru pine forests and camped on the edge of a forest. Had a nice fire and cooked supper.

Sat -Nov 24.reg 2775. travel 158 mi. -- Got up early and passed Williams before eating breakfast. Made fire by the edge of pine forest. Good road most of the way, but cut up in places. Gas at Seligman 3 gal at 35 c. - 1.05. Broke trunk rack and stopped at Hackbury for repairs. after dark and had to hunt up the old blacksmith. charged us \$1.00. Gas at Hackbury, 4 gal at 30c- 1.20. 1 pt oil at Kingman, .15c. Passed thru three canons today. The Truxton canon was the most beautiful and the Truxton Indian school was in the midst of it. Camped just out of Kingman in a canon. Night quite warm and did not make any fire.



Lft to Rt: Jesse's sister Mildred, Jesse, Mark, Sarah --Easter, 1920, Bakersfeld, CA

Sunday-Nov 25. reg 2933. travel 103. -- Got up at day break, found we had a flat tire. Traveled about 15 mi before breakfast, across the Mohave dessert. a coyote stood beside the road and looked at us. we stopped, but he was not afraid of us. also saw an eagle. saw our first palm trees and many varieties of cactus. very rough road to Topock. stopped there for water. Saw first real palms. Crossed Colorado river into California. Found the roads good, but very hilly. At needles we saw lovely green trees, palms and rhododendrons in full bloom. Gas at needles 4 gal at 27-1/2, 1.10. On to Goffs where we got water and a little farther on camped for the night. Cooked our supper over campfire and wrote letters home.

Monday-Nov 26. reg 3036. travel 123. -- A beautiful warm morning. Got breakfast before leaving camp. across the dessert to Amboy where Mr smarts caught up with us. got gas at Ludlow, 4 gal at .25, \$1.00. caught up with Colorado car where they had run out of gas. Waited at Dagget for Mr smarts, but they didn't come so went back across the railroad to camp. Smarts came after we were thru supper.

Tue- Nov 27. reg 3159. travel 52. --Got up rather late and cooked breakfast. on to Barstow where we met Mr and Mrs Chris Rrossmeir of Nebraska.. also parted from our Iowa friends here, they going to Taft.. we went on to within 8 miles of Victorville, and stopped by the side of the road where we did our washing and hung it on the railroad fence to dry. Gas at Victorville 5 gal at 24 c., \$1.20. Oil at Barstow, 85 c. We camped on the desert about 4 mi out of Victorville.

Weds- Nov 28. reg 3211. travel 61. -- Left camp without eating breakfast. traveled over Cajon pass. From the summit the roads were beautiful, also the scenery. Reached San Bernardino. We got our mail. Saw our first orange trees here. Lots of oranges, also roses and other flowers. Ate our lunch in an olive orchard. Don't like olives. On leaving orchard we noticed that the car was making an extra noise. Stopped at first garage we came to and had it fixed. cost \$6.30. We camped in a pretty grove a couple of miles farther on. Owls kept us company all night.

Nov 29. Thurs—Thanksgiving. reg 3272. travel 198. *[198 struck through with two slashes]* -- Didn't get up until sun shone warm & bright. Mark went out and got milk for breakfast. We drove thru beautiful orchards to Los Angeles. Some town. Then on to long beach and saw the pacific ocean. Sarah and I picked up some shells on the beach. Camped under a tree back of a small store about 20 mi from Los Ang. on I.a. and s.f. highway. *[Jesse did not describe their route into the San Joaquin valley]*

[Nov 30] ---Arrived at Porterville Friday night about 8.00. stopped at pioneer hotel and drove out to cousin gene's the next morning.

DEC 1st. --Went to Darr's.

DEC 4th. -Went to Bonar's.

DEC 10th. --Mark began work at SP [*southern pacific railroad*] machine shop [*in Bakersfield, CA*]

DEC 15,1917-- Went to 1104 Beale Avenue.



Jesse and her children Bernice and Mildred, abt 1924. Jesse Giddings died in 1927.