Ask the Rambler: Why Do People Like to Drive for Pleasure?

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U.S. Department of Transportation
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Ask the Rambler

Why Do People Like to Drive for Pleasure?

A student contacted the Federal Highway Administration about a research project on "driving for pleasure," "driving as free time activity," and the "conception of landscape by an eye in motion." He asked:

> *What I'm still looking for and what I now ask you to help me with is more theoretical facts. I would like to know more about when the first scenic roads were established. I'm interested in the psychological reasons of why we regard driving as a pleasure and I wonder what makes our experience of the surrounding landscape so different when we're in motion from when we stand still or walk.*

Our first thought was, "ask the Rambler-he's not doing anything." The Rambler is not known for his travels-he gets most of his travel experience by watching his DVD's of the TV show "Alias"-but he agreed to ponder the subject.

What is a scenic byway?

Although the concept of "scenic byways" has its own history, traveling them is simply a form of sightseeing-the desire to see something interesting, an urge that can be traced to ancient times. With scenic byways, it happens to involve roads, but the same motivation or psychological factors that prompt an interest in scenic byways also apply to seeing important or beautiful cities, major monuments, other cultures, celebrity homes, or places where important events occurred, regardless of how one gets there.

Put another way, sightseeing usually involves going somewhere by air, water, or road to see something, while with a scenic byway, the road is the point, not the means.

The word "scenic" suggests that the pleasure of a byway is in the beauty of the roadside. The Blue Ridge Parkway, CA 1 in California, and the Going to the Sun Road in Glacier National Park, Montana, are outstanding examples in the United States of such roads. However, the concept also embraces roads that possess one or more intrinsic archeological, cultural, historic, natural, or recreational qualities, not just scenic appeal. For example, no one would travel U.S. 80 between Selma and Montgomery, Alabama, for its beauty. It's just a road. However, because this is the route of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s National Voting Rights March in 1965, the Selma-to-Montgomery section of U.S. 80 has become an important site on a southern Civil Rights tour of deep meaning to Americans.

To study sightseeing in history, several publications might be of interest:

Feiffer, Maxine, *Tourism in History: From Imperial Rome to the Present*, Stein and Day, 1985.

Jakle, John A., *The Tourist: Travel in Twentieth-Century North America*, University of Nebraska Press, 1985.

Perrottet, Tony, *Route 66 A.D.: On the Trail of Ancient Roman Tourists*, Random House, 2002.

The Displeasure of the Road

The pleasures of the road were lost on travelers in the United States during the 18th and 19th century. Road travel was too arduous to enjoy-the destination was the thing and the road was something a traveler had to put up with, even endure or suffer, if no better alternative, such as a river, were available.

We have many accounts of travels during the period, all of which testify to the rigors of the country's roads. As the writer Washington Irving put it in *Tales of a Traveller* (1824):

> There is a certain relief in change, even though it be from bad to worse; as I have found in traveling in a stage-coach, that it is often a comfort to shift one's position and be bruised in a new place.

Roads and trails performed the classic transportation function of getting travelers from place to place on their itinerary-from city to city for family or business reasons, to prisons (a common tourist attraction), to natural wonders such as Niagara Falls, to the gold fields, and other destinations. Two items on the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Highway History page discuss the travel experience of the 19th century. One quotes Mark Twain and Charles Dickens on their stagecoach crashes:

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/coach.cfm

The other describes the travels of Alexis de Tocqueville, whose trip from France to the United States in 1831-1832 to gather material on our prison system resulted in his immortal, oft-quoted, and boring classic, *Democracy in America*:

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/alexis.cfm

Or take one of the Rambler's favorite 19th century visitors to these shores, Mrs. Margaret Hall. She, her husband Basil, and their 15-month old daughter Eliza traveled from England to tour the United States for 14 months in 1827 and 1828. Her letters to her sister Jane, compiled by Una Pope-Hennessy in *The Aristocratic Journey* (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1931), make for a good introduction to travel in the early 19th century, particularly for tourists whose itinerary included visits to penitentiaries, asylums, and schools along with landmarks, such as Niagara Falls, famous cities such as New Orleans and Washington, and social outings.

Take, for example, Mrs. Hall's account of a road she encountered north of Catskill, New York:

> Pine Orchard on the Catskill Mountains, June 3 [1827]:--We jolted up here yesterday at the rate of four hours to thirteen miles and quite fast enough for the sake of one's bones, for such a road for ruts and holes and all manner of conveniences for shaking poor mortals to pieces I have not traveled over since I crossed the Pyrenees. We left the village of Catskill at ten o'clock in a large, lumbering stage with a seat at each side and one in the middle meant to stow eight persons, but as the fashionable season for visiting this place is not yet arrived, and the Stages consequently do not ply regularly, we engaged one of the said machines for our own use, giving a seat also to an old lawyer who had no other way of ascending the mountain. We had four horses to draw this vehicle and required them all [because] some parts of the road were extremely steep and indeed no part of it at all would be agreeable to a nervous lady. There is absolutely nothing to prevent the carriage from rolling down the precipice, but the horses are so well used to the ascent that there is no danger whatever.

On December 29, 1827, the Halls traveled from Baltimore to Washington:

> We left Baltimore this morning soon after nine o'clock and found the road much better than we expected, at least as far as the weather had any effect, but a worse led [sic] road never was seen certainly, up and down hill by the steepest course that could be found, according to the very old plan of making roads in England. Jolts, too, we had in abundance, but, notwithstanding all that, I have traveled many a worse

> road that has been less spoken of. We changed horses twice; at Waterloo and at the "White House". This whole distance was thirty-seven miles through very bleak, poor-looking country, but we were fortunate in as fine a day as we can expect to have at this season, for it neither rained, snowed, nor froze.

On April 5, 1828, on the way to Montgomery, Alabama, Mrs. Hall reported that her coach "proceeded about a half a mile through the very heart of the forest and where none but a thoroughly good driver could have ventured to drive a carriage." Approaching the city in the dark, "we had to creep along very cautiously as neither the driver nor the horses were acquainted with the ruts and other dangers of the road which altho' quite perfect when compared with what we have lately traveled over had still a sufficient number of defects to require careful driving."

Near the end of their stay in the United States, the family reached Louisville, Kentucky, on May 30, after a journey from Vincennes, Indiana. (They had arrived in Vincennes "over a road, whose character you may guess from its appellation of Purgatory.") The "roughing" continued on the road to Louisville:

> The road from Vincennes to Louisville is even worse than what preceded it . . . . The style of driving on that road we found augments its natural evils. The drivers universally drive smack along through holes, over stumps and stones, up hills, and across long pieces of corduroy [road] in a manner that it is as impossible for me to describe as it is for you to imagine.

(In soft or marshy areas, road-makers put logs along the path, side by side, to create a ribbed surface that gave it the name "corduroy road.")

Writing from Louisville, Mrs. Hall told her sister that "tired as we were with the jolting we had experienced from St. Louis and our bones still aching," the family decided to proceed to Lexington by steamboat after hearing "such discouraging accounts" of the road ahead.

Although the Halls, like other travelers, encountered roads and coaches that were less remarkable than those cited here, all travelers had much to endure for the sake of the sights and sounds of America-or simply the need to get from point A to point B. On these journeys, travelers did not consider the roads "scenic," but rather nuisances, dangers, or necessary evils.

In general, travelers did not enjoy one of the things we most like to see along our scenic roads, namely trees. They were viewed, especially by Americans, as the enemy of farms, settlements, and roads, many of which retained low tree stumps in the traveled-way. Abigail Adams, whose husband John was the first President of the United States to serve in the new city of Washington, shared the common experience of forests when she traveled to the city for the first time in November 1801. As David McCullough explained in *John Adams* (Simon and Schuster, 2001), the last leg of the trip from Baltimore to Washington was even more difficult than the Hall family would encounter nearly 30 years later:

> In Maryland, as she later described it to Mary Cranch, there was only forest, the roads so rough and uncertain that she and her party were lost for two hours. "But woods are all you see from Baltimore until you reach *the city*, which is only so in name."

When time came to return to her Massachusetts home, she dreaded the trip, fearing "so many horrid rivers to cross and such roads to traverse."

The best, perhaps, that could be said of the roads was that they provided amusing, and sometimes horrifying, anecdotes for travel books such as Dickens' *American Notes* (1842) and Twain's *Roughing It* (1872).

Driving for "Pleasure"

This attitude began to change in the 1880's when America, like countries around the world, embraced the bicycle. The "ordinary" bicycle with its large front wheel and small rear wheel began the craze, which soon became a mania throughout the country and the world. Following introduction of the "safety" bicycle with its equal-sized wheels and easier operation, the craze became even more of a phenomenon. Many bicyclists cited their freedom from the rigid schedules and fees of the railroad companies (one of the most hated but unavoidable institutions of the era) and electric interurban rail lines.

As a result, highway historians refer to the last two decades of the 19th century as the era of "The Bicycle Craze" and "The Good Roads Movement." The two were closely linked because when bicyclists left the good streets of their cities for pleasure trips, they encountered terrible country roads and "pleasure" that was very hard to define. They cited dusty or muddy roads, dangers such as "headers" (being thrown over the handlebar), and abuse by passing farmers who denounced the "peacock joy riders" and "scorchers" (speeders) who had time to waste on such outings.

Here we see the origins of the "Sunday drive" of a later period, the trip as pleasure with no motivation other than a beautiful day, sightseeing, and a picnic lunch. The bicycling magazines of the era were filled with articles about the joys of sightseeing via bicycle, each with commentary on the condition of the roads a bicyclist would encounter along the way. The poor condition of the country roads prompted bicycle advocates, particularly the League of American Wheelmen and its State affiliates, to begin promoting better conditions. Initially, they had to overcome early prejudices by securing changes in county, township, and State laws that infringed on bicyclists, as well as promoting road improvement. They also worked with railroad companies to secure bargain prices for touring trips by bicyclists to remoter regions.

The initial focus was to encourage the States to take on road improvement. However, even more grandiose ideas were conceived to increase the pleasure of bicycling. Bicyclists began speaking of long-distance roads, from city to city, State to State, even transcontinental highways for their use. In 1901, a promoter in Los Angeles, California, built a "freeway" so bicyclists could enjoy their outings without the difficulties of bumping over the area's country roads.

A description in *Good Roads Magazine* said:

> On this splendid track cyclists may now enjoy the very poetry of wheeling. At Pasadena they may mount their cycles and sail down to Los Angeles without so much as touching the pedals, even though the gradient is extremely slight. The way lies for the most part along the east bank of the Arroyo Seco, giving a fine view of this wooded stream, and skirting the foot of the neighboring oak-covered hills. The surface is perfectly free from all dust and mud, and nervous cyclists find the track safer than the widest roads, for there are no horses to avoid, no trains or trolley-cars, no stray dogs or wandering children.

By 1893, bicyclists had generated sufficient interest to prompt two States, Massachusetts and New Jersey, to create the first State highway agencies to help counties improve their roads. The agitation for better roads also prompted the United States Congress to appropriate $10,000 for a road inquiry by the Secretary of Agriculture. The funds were for an inquiry into:

> . . . the systems of road management throughout the United States, to make investigations in regard to the best methods of road making, to prepare publications on this subject suitable for distribution, and to enable him to assist the agricultural colleges and experiment stations in disseminating information on this subject.

As the placement of the inquiry in the Department of Agriculture suggests, bicycle advocates did not rely on "the poetry of wheeling" to secure Federal support. They bolstered their argument by promoting good roads as a way of improving farm production and reducing the cost of shipping farm goods to markets.

To accomplish the $10,000 inquiry, Secretary of Agriculture J. Sterling Morton established the Office of Road Inquiry (ORI), which opened its doors on October 3, 1893, and is the first incarnation of the FHWA. The Highway History page

provides additional background on the early Good Roads Movement in a biography of General Roy Stone, who was the first head of the ORI:

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/stone.cfm
https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/stonesb.cfm

Many books and articles discuss the Bicycle Craze and its link to the Good Roads Movement. The Rambler particularly likes Robert A. Smith's *A Social History of the Bicycle: Its Early Life and Times in America* (American Heritage Press, a Division of McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972). Although the book is out-of-print, it should be available through interlibrary loans or used book services.

A good source of information on the efforts of bicycle activists to promote good roads is:

> Mason, Phillip, The League of American Wheelmen and the Good Roads Movement 1890-1905, M.A. Thesis, The American University, 1957.

Mr. Mason's thesis did not become a commercial publication, but may be available through interlibrary loan.

Interest in the bicycle faded in the early 20th century as the automobile came into prominence. Many advances the bicyclists had accomplished by changing State and local law, as well as the Federal road agency, were quickly adapted to the "motor wagon."

Advocates emphasized the transportation value of the new vehicle, particularly its environmental advantages over the horses that "polluted" city streets. For many, however, the pleasures involved recreational activities such as sightseeing, touring, and racing (another adaptation from the Bicycle Craze). Initially, the expensive vehicles were the "plaything" of the wealthy who had time to spend weeks traveling to distant destinations over the poor roads of the era. The vehicles were beyond the reach of the common man. Again, the farmers decried the wealthy "peacocks" who could afford cars and had nothing better to do than drive around scaring the horses!

One of the biggest problems facing the "automobilists" was the absence of the service infrastructure we take for granted-motels, restaurants, rest stops, service stations, even reliable road signs. (In 1924, the Lincoln Highway Association, sponsor of the most famous transcontinental highway of its era, still referred to a cross-country trip as a "sporting proposition," indicating the extensive preparation and purchase of supplies that would be needed.) For more on this aspect of early travel, see:

> Belasco, Warren James, Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945, The MIT Press, 1981.

Early Scenic Roads

When Henry Ford introduced the durable, low-priced Model T in 1908, the automobile became available to most people, including the farmers who had once denounced the innovation.

Throughout the early 20th century, the promotion of automobiles and good roads was based on transportation (the shipment of goods, the movement of people to their destinations) as well as the pleasure of sightseeing. In some respects, the auto advocates were building on typical railroad promotions of the era that emphasized the pleasures of sightseeing. A Highway History page article about the transcontinental National Old Trails Road, conceived in 1912, discusses some of these themes and trends, including the growth of the See America First movement:

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/trails.cfm
https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/not2.cfm
https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/westgard.cfm

The following book is also of considerable interest in tracing the origins of our desire to see the sights:

> Shaffer, Marquerite, See America First: Tourism and National Identify, 1880-1940, Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001.

Early on, the concept of "parkways" became popular. Calvert Vaux, a collaborator of the great landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead, coined the term in 1868. He used the work in a proposal that resulted in creation of the Ocean and Eastern Parkways in Brooklyn, New York. The term came to mean a highway that, like a park, was free of commercial traffic, with access restricted to enhance enjoyment of the surrounding scenery. Much of the early parkway development in the 20th century occurred in the vicinity of New York City, with creation of the Long Island Motor Parkway, Riverside Drive, the Bronx River Parkway, and others. Here are links to information about the New York Parkways.

http://home.att.net/~berliner-ultrasonics/limtrpwy.html
http://www.nycroads.com/roads/pkwy_NYC/
http://www.nycroads.com/roads/pkwy_hudson/
http://www.nycroads.com/roads/pkwy_LI/

A lengthy chapter on "Technological Modernism and the Urban Parkway" can be found in:

> Gandy, Matthew, *Concrete and Clay: Reworking Nature in New York City*, The MIT Press, 2002.

The 38-page chapter includes sections on "Automobilization of the American Landscape," "Robert Moses and the Radiant City," "The Demise of Technological Modernism," and "Fractured Cities."

An adaptation of parkways to incorporate commercial traffic gave rise to the term "freeway." It was coined by Edward Bassett, an attorney in New York City with extensive experience in zoning issues, who saw "freeways" as adapting many of the parkway design concepts to serve transportation instead of recreation:

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/freeway.cfm

Many states developed scenic roads. For example, in March 1903, the New Mexico State Legislature passed legislation authorizing the use of convicts to build the Las Vegas-Santa Fe Scenic Road. Construction of the spectacular Columbia River Highway in Oregon began in 1913.

Meanwhile, the Federal road agency was working with the National Park Service and the Forest Service to build roads through Federal public land. In these settings, the engineers had to build the roads within the constraints of the setting to maintain a scenic experience. The efforts within these national reservations evolved into Federal construction of parkways-roads that served as parks through non-park lands-such as the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and the Natchez Trace Parkway. Some of these trends are discussed in the following articles:

http://www.tfhrc.gov/pubrds/marapr00/landarch.htm
https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/simonson.cfm

A good survey of the Federal role in construction of roads through parks and forests, as well as parkways, can be found in:

> "Construction in the Federal Domain," America's Highways 1776-1976: A History of the Federal-Aid Program, Federal Highway Administration, 1976.

This 550-page publication, prepared for America's Bicentennial in 1976, is out of print, but well worth seeking through interlibrary loan for its wealth of information about the evolution of highway development in the United States.

Planning began in the late 1930's for what is now called the Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways (the Interstate System). Although some work was accomplished in the late 1940's and early 1950's, construction began in earnest following enactment of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956. In justifying this national freeway system, advocates focused on practical considerations. For example, it would support economic development, improve highway safety, serve national defense needs, and help evacuate cities in the event of an atomic bomb attack.

Supporters also cited the recreational value of the Interstate System, with tourist interests favoring construction. The common observation that motorists would be able to travel from coast to coast without stopping at a single traffic light conveys the frustration of all travelers, tourist or commercial, regarding the Nation's existing interstate highway network, but also the sense of easy travel to vacations and other recreational destinations that would be possible with the Interstate System.

In the 1950's, this love of the open road was reflected in one of the most famous advertising jingles on television. "See the USA in Your Chevrolet" was the closing number each week on singer Dinah Shore's popular show, which was sponsored by the automaker. It began:

> See the USA in your Chevrolet,
> America is asking you to call.
> Drive your Chevrolet through the USA,
> America's the greatest land of all.

The jingle expressed the feeling of motorists who wanted to hit the open road, who eagerly embraced the coming freeways. The Rambler realizes that he must note, for younger readers, that the song was not meant to be ironic-that's how people felt at a time when they were not yet aware, as they would be a few years later, of the air pollution, environmental impacts, social costs, sprawl, and other adverse consequences that would be attributed, within a decade, to the central place of the automobile in the American Way of Life.

As the engineers began to work, and the Interstate miles began to accumulate, observers criticized their dedication to function and the lack of aesthetic elements, as well as the damage to the environment. In the backlash to this criticism, Federal and State highway agencies emphasized the blending of function with the national setting. Public recognition of this emphasis came as early as 1961 when *Parade* magazine, a weekly insert in Sunday newspapers, began an annual competition to identify America's most scenic new highways. The first winner was a 24-mile section of I-95 in Maine (Augusta to Waterville and Fairfield). An article in *Parade* on October 15, 1961, commented that the State thought "the interstate route in tourist-conscious Maine should be a delight to drive along, as well as an efficient conveyor."

The idea of beautiful highways would be part of the legacy of the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969). On February 8, 1965, he issued a call for a White House Conference on Natural Beauty (May 24-25, 1965) to be chaired by Laurance Rockefeller, a wealthy businessman and philanthropist who took a special interest in matters involving environmental conservation and outdoor recreation. Highways would be one of the topics to be discussed. The President, in his call for the conference, said:

> I hope that, at all levels of government, our planners and builders will remember that highway beautification is more than a matter of planting trees and setting aside scenic areas. The roads themselves must reflect, in location and design, increased respect for the natural and social integrity and unity of the landscape and communities through which they pass.

At the conference, the panel on Scenic Roads and Parkways, chaired by State Senator Fred S. Farr of California, concluded that "the American motorist deserves the very best view from the road of 'A More Beautiful America.'" The panel recommended "that a national policy and program for scenic roads and parkways must now be formulated." In addition, the panel recommended that the White House issue awards or citations for the "President's Highway of the Year."

The idea of White House awards would be adopted. At a White House reception honoring the Citizens Advisory Committee on Recreation and Natural Beauty, on February 16, 1967, Secretary of Transportation Alan S. Boyd announced an annual awards competition to recognize public agencies and private groups for protecting, restoring, and enhancing highway beauty. The goal was to encourage "the battle against highway uglification," he said. The First Lady, Lady Bird Johnson, presented citations recognizing the best examples of highway beautification by the States. At the same reception, officials announced that State Senator Farr, who had initiated California's scenic highways program, would be the Nation's first Federal Highway Beautification Coordinator, serving as an advisor to the Federal Highway Administrator. (The reception took place before the U.S. Department of Transportation went into operation on April 1, 1967.)

History of Scenic Road Programs

In July 1988, the FHWA cosponsored a conference called Scenic Byways '88: A National Conference to Map the Future of America's Scenic Roads and Highways. In preparation for the conference, the FHWA published *Scenic Byways* as a guide and reference for participants. It contained a section on "History of Scenic Road Programs," which can be read as a sidebar to this article. The following is an excerpt:

> ## History of Scenic Road Programs
>
> Since the early 1900s when America came to rely on motorized transportation, the Nation has had increasing examples of outstanding scenic roads and parkways. The first scenic roads did not exist as a result of any organized coordinated program, if a program is defined as a predetermined plan of action or development. In this sense, with a few exceptions, no organized plan of action for scenic roads was adopted in the first half of this century. Rather, these travel corridors were developed in bits and pieces-a segment here and a limited route there. It was not until the 1960s that a coordinated national scenic program effort began to evolve.
>
> ### National Scenic Road Programs
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> As one of the first organized efforts to pinpoint recreational opportunities in America, President John F. Kennedy established the Recreation Advisory Council in 1962. It included the following members:
>
> - Secretary of the Interior.
> - Secretary of Agriculture.
> - Secretary of Defense.
> - Secretary of Commerce.
> - Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare.
> - Administrator of the Housing and Home Finance Agency.
> - Chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority.
>
> In 1964, the Recreation Advisory Council recommended the development of a National program of scenic roads and parkways. The Department of Commerce was commissioned to conduct a study of such a possible program. [At the time the Bureau of Public Roads was under the U.S. Department of Commerce. The U.S. Department of Transportation was authorized in 1966, and opened in April 1967, with the newly named Federal Highway Administration as one of the Modal Administrations.]
>
> The following reasons were cited as the rationale for the study:
>
> - Because driving for pleasure is one of America's most popular outdoor recreational pursuits.
> - Because of the steeply mounting number of families owning automobiles and possessing the leisure time, income, and desire to see and enjoy America's wealth of scenic and natural beauty, both close to home and at far distances.

- Because our rapid urban and metropolitan growth is increasing the need for and decreasing the open-space resources for outdoor recreation.
- Because of substantial economic benefits generated by tourism and sightseeing made possible by attractive roads and parkways.
- Because of the great potential gains in aesthetic and recreational benefits known to be associated with future road planning, design, and construction activities

The interagency study, *A Proposed Program for Scenic Roads and Parkways*, was published in June 1966. This study is perhaps the most exhaustive review of the subject matter. Its principal elements included the following:

- Reasons for a scenic program.
- Benefits of a program.
- Definitions and criteria for scenic roads and corridors
- Engineering and landscape technical considerations.
- Complimentary [sic] facilities and their operation.
- Existing scenic roads (local, State, and Federal).
- Survey and inventory data.
- Recommended minimum program.
- Expanded program.
- Financing, administration, and planning.
- Research and development.
- Signs and markers.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson sent a special message to the U.S. Congress on natural beauty for America. In it the President discussed beauty for America's cities, countrysides, highways, and rivers, as well as issues such as pollution, clean water, clean air, solid wastes, and other environmental concerns.

White House Conference on Natural Beauty

The President called for a White House Conference on Natural Beauty. This conference was held May 24 and 25, 1965, with some 800 delegates and additional observers. Among its important panel discussions was one on scenic roads. The conference proceedings, *Beauty for America* [published by the Library of Congress, 1965], are well worth reviewing.

Highway Beautification Act of 1965

During the same time when much was being said and written on the need to undertake scenic preservation programs, the U.S. Congress enacted the Highway Beautification Act of 1965. It provided for the scenic development and road beautification of the Federal-aid highway systems. Following these efforts, nothing further was done because of competing budgetary and policy demands until 1973.

Feasibility of Developing a National Scenic Highway System

In 1973, the U.S. Congress directed that a study be made to examine the feasibility of developing a national scenic highway system. (Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973, Section 134(a).) The Federal Highway Administration prepared the report to Congress, *An Assessment of the Feasibility of Developing a National Scenic Highway System*. This [1974] report was based upon analysis performed by contract and an interagency advisory committee.

Five major issues were identified:

- National designation of scenic roads.
- Corridor protection and scenic enhancement.
- Complementary facilities.
- Urban emphasis and energy efficiency.
- National connectivity.

The report sketched three alternative potential programs and recommended a preferred approach. In view of national objectives involving the conservation of energy resources (oil embargo), it was found desirable not to establish a new categorical grant program providing funds exclusively for scenic roads. Rather, it was suggested that basic highway construction costs should be funded from existing Federal-aid programs. Finally, the report suggested that Federal legislation provide for the designation of existing high quality scenic highways and for the protection and enhancement of scenic resources on and adjacent to such facilities.

American Outdoors

Outdoor recreation and the scenic road are inextricably interrelated with each other. During the early 1960's, the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC), chaired by Laurance S. Rockefeller, undertook a series of studies on recreation in America and environmental elements. These studies concluded, "that the Nation's recreational patterns were being transformed dramatically by expanding population, increased leisure time, greater mobility, and growing affluence."

To follow up the work of the ORRRC, in 1985 President Ronald W. Reagan, by Executive Order 12503, established the Commission on Americans Outdoors. This commission, chaired by Lamar Alexander, published its findings in 1987, updating the ORRRC reports of the 1960's. The 1987 report includes three recommendations outlined below, that are specifically related to scenic roads:

- Local and State governments should create a network of scenic byways and take action to protect the resources.
- The U.S. Congress should establish an incentive program of matching grants from the Highway Trust Fund to encourage scenic byway designation, development, and protection.
- Private sector and government partnerships should provide information on scenic byways.

National Scenic Byways Program

These trends converged in the conference, Scenic Byways '88, which maintained the momentum leading to the National Scenic Byways Program that was established under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). Under the program, the U.S. Secretary of Transportation designates All-American Roads and National Scenic Byways based on their intrinsic archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. Now known collectively as America's Byways, All-American Roads are byways that are the best of the best, destinations unto themselves whle National Scenic Byways possess outstanding qualities that exemplify the regional characteristics of the Nation. The legislation also authorized discretionary funds to be allocated by the Secretary to help develop scenic byways.

The first round of designations took place in September 1996. The first designated All-American Roads were:

Selma to Montgomery March Byway, Alabama
Route One, Pacific Coast Highway, California
San Juan Skyway, Colorado
Trail Ridge Road/Beaver Meadow Road, Colorado
Natchez Trace Parkway, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama
Blue Ridge Parkway, North Carolina

National Scenic Byways were:

> Tioga Road/Big Oak Flat Road, California
> Grand Mesa Scenic and Historic Byway, Colorado
> Connecticut State Route 169
> Merritt Parkway, Connecticut
> Ohio River Scenic Route, Indiana
> Creole Nature Trail, Louisiana
> Edge of the Wilderness Scenic Byway, Minnesota
> Eastshore Drive, Nevada
> Pyramid Lake Scenic Byway, Nevada
> Kancamagus Scenic Byway, New Hampshire
> Seaway Trail, New York
> Peter Norbeck Scenic Byway
> Cherohola Skyway, Tennessee
> Highland Scenic Highway, West Virginia

At the time, Secretary of Transportation Federico Peña said:

> Unlike most roads, Scenic Byways are about the pleasures along the way and the qualities we treasure most in our country, in our history, and in our lives. With the initial designations under the National Scenic Byways Program, we have recognized the Scenic Byways that best speak to the Heart of America. Now it is up to all of us to preserve the integrity of these roads so they will continue to serve future generations as shining examples of the scenic and historic qualities that we so enjoy today.

His words have remained true through five rounds of biennial designations. Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta announced the seventh round of designations on September 22, 2005. This round brought the total number of All-American Roads to 27, and National Scenic Byways to 98.

The National Scenic Byways Program authorized by ISTEA was retained in the two multi-year laws reauthorizing the Federal-aid highway, transit, and safety programs (the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (1998) and the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (2005)). For information on the National Scenic Byways Program and America's Byways, go to:

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/hep/scenic_byways/

The May/June 2001 issue of the Federal Highway Administration's *Public Roads* magazine contained two articles on scenic byways, "Branding America's Byways" and "Travelers Seek Byway Experiences." The articles are available online at:

http://www.tfhrc.gov/pubrds/mayjun01/home.htm

The Rambler on the Psychology of Seeing

The writer asked for an explanation of "the psychological reasons of why we regard driving as a pleasure," or at least some leads to information on perception of a landscape by a stationary eye compared with an eye in motion. Tempted as the Rambler is to return to college to get a degree in psychology, secure an M.A. degree, and pursue a Ph.D. in the psychology of travel, all of which he could undoubtedly complete in a mere 8 or 10 years, so he could answer this question, he must decline.

Instead, the Rambler offers the following "insights."

The Rambler prefers to do his sightseeing via television, movies, and books. Why, for example, should the Rambler go to St. Louis to see the Gateway Arch when he can watch Jack Nicholson tour the arch in "About Schmidt" (2002)? Similarly, why visit Mount Rushmore when Cary Grant did so, quite memorably, in "North by Northwest" (1959)? Golden Gate Bridge? Brooklyn Bridge? CA 1? The Pyramids? The Grand Canyon? Elaine's in Manhattan? You name it-the Rambler has seen it on television or in movies.

In this respect, the Rambler is undoubtedly subject to deep-seated psychological strains that go back to his thankfully forgotten childhood as well as to the as-yet-undiscovered couch potato gene. Still, as the Rambler once put it, "Why should I visit southern California when I can watch 'The Rockford Files' at home?"

On his rare trips to the American Visionary Art Museum, the Walters Art Gallery, Fort McHenry, and other attractions in Baltimore or the Smithsonian Museums in Washington, usually as a result of coercion by a well-meaning if misguided friend, his primary thought is "I wonder if the hot dogs are overpriced here." Others, free of the Rambler's encumbrances, want to see things in person. The Rambler has no idea why. Still, he can't help but notice that other visitors, including his friend, seem to be looking at and enjoying the artifacts, buildings, or paintings.

Perhaps that elusive gene holds the answer to this mystery.

(In the interest of full disclosure, the Rambler admits that in the mid-1970's, he traveled to Buffalo, New York, where the friends he was visiting took him into Canada to see Niagara Falls. There were the Falls. Right in front of him. *I guess*, the Rambler thought, *I should do or say something about this!* He was going to say, "Boy, that's loud," but before he could, he noticed that his friends, who took all visiting friends and relatives to Niagara Falls, were bored with this natural wonder and disinclined to take yet another journey on the Maid of the Mist or even the Falls Incline Funicular to the amusement area. They were checking their watches to see if they had given the Rambler enough time to see the natural wonder, ho hum. Clearly, the Rambler concluded, there is a statute of limitations on whatever neural activity results in a desire to see the sights, whether one's eye is stationery or in motion. On the other hand, the experience greatly heightened the Rambler's pleasure in the Niagara Falls segment of "Superman II" (1980) and the great but short-lived Fox television series "Wonderfalls" (2004), which took place at the tourist attraction. The Rambler's Ph.D. in psychology, were he ever to earn one, might better be used to examine why television networks put great shows in terrible timeslots (Thursdays at 8), move them around the schedule (Friday at 9) so fans can't find them, and then cancel them after showing only 4 of the filmed 13 episodes, because of low ratings. Admittedly, the Rambler is rambling, so he will simply advise readers to get the "Wonderfalls" DVD and see why he believes that the psychologist who gets to the bottom of this mystery will be doing all sufferers of the couch potato gene a big favor. Now, back to the subject.)

Rather than figure out the psychology of perception, the Rambler will simply invite readers to enjoy America's Byways. While traveling them, feel free to attach electrodes to your head and send electronic pulses via OnStar to computers in university labs that can detect the changes in your brain waves. (Safety Tip: The driver should not have the electrodes attached to his or her head; a passenger must volunteer to be the designated electrode wearer.) If you do this, you will probably be in a better position than the Rambler to answer the writer's question.

All the rest of you-have a great time on America's Byways!

Footnote: As the Rambler drives his car (strictly for transportation purposes), he often notices people out for a pleasure drive in their convertible. There they are, the wind and bugs blowing through their hair, dodging road debris kicked up by the 18-wheelers ahead of them, silent amid the road noise, unable to hear the radio or a recorded book, with the woman in the passenger seat propping one bare foot over the door to catch the breeze between her toes. Ah, the joys of the Open Road, no doubt! The Rambler just has a little safety tip for these people: Hey, lady, your foot is blocking the sideview mirror!