The only jeep operated by Georgia's traveling librarians hits the icy waters of a stream on its way to deliver books for back in the hills.

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C. L. MOTT

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LUKE GREENE
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Georgia’s mobile library units, bringing the world of books to rural areas, are stimulating the demand for all-weather country roads.

BOOKMOBILES nosing their way into the back country of Georgia’s mountains and plains, bearing cargoes of knowledge and enlightenment to people who will read by the light of a roasting fire or a kerosene lamp, are leaving another imprint on the red clay hills and the sandy flats—the imprint of better roads.

In many places hard-surfaced roads have replaced rutty, winding trails because rural people have come to expect regular visits from traveling libraries bringing them books that open up enchanting and pleasurable new worlds.

Life is dreary indeed for those of the back country when they are cut off from their bookmobile by the driving winter rains that beat the roads into a thick, muddy mire, halting motor traffic for weeks at a time.

A letter written by a secluded Georgia library patron shows how anxious these lonely people are for their books, and how willing they are to help improve the roads so that the bookmobile can continue its regular journeys into the remote rural regions.

“There are three families,” he wrote, “that live across the creek—back in the

Better Library Service for Rural America

- FORERUNNER of the modern bookmobile in the United States is perhaps a bookwagon used in Washington County, Md., back in 1903; its immediate ancestor is the bookmobile used in Hibbing, Minn., in 1920. Today there are more than 500 bookmobiles in use in various parts of the country, in all but 15 states. Georgia, Ohio and Texas each have more than 25 bookmobiles in operation at the present time. Eight other states have at least 10 in operation.

The types of bookmobiles now in operation vary from a motorcycle used in Missouri to 20-ft. trailer trucks used in several states. Between these extremes can be found station wagons, small panel trucks, small trailers attached to passenger cars, converted school buses, converted army trucks, a city bus and a jeep.

It is a startling fact that approximately 35,000,000 people in the United States have no library service whatsoever; of this total, 32,000,000 live in small villages or in the open country of rural America. Of the 3,000-old counties in the country, only 600 have county-wide library service; more than another 600 are without a single public library within their boundaries.

To provide for the demonstration of public-library service in areas without such service or with inadequate library facilities, a bill has been introduced in the house of representatives by Thomas A. Jenkins of Ohio (H. R. 2465) and in the senate by Lister Hill of Alabama and George D. Aiken of Vermont (S. 48). Federal grants to states would be authorized to assist states in showing how library service can be extended through the use of bookmobiles and library deposits. If the bill passes, rural America will see a great many more bookmobiles running over the roads, bringing the resources of the world and the thought of all ages, past and present, to a better-informed rural population.

Old and young come out to meet the circuit-riding librarians in Whittingfield County, Ga. The traveling-library idea began to take hold in Georgia in about 1940; since then its influence in the back country has been widespread

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woods after you turn off from the main road to Emory School. I asked the bookmobile driver to come back up on this road. She said you had looked at the bridge and found it was not strong enough to hold up the bookmobile.

“Will you ask the county commissioners to fix the bridge? You can tell them we will build the bridge if they will furnish the material.

“There are six other families down further, but you had better not take the bookmobile down there. You will stick in the sand. Those people will come up to our settlement when the bookmobile comes and get their books.

“We will all thank you for helping us get some books, for we do not have anything to read but what we get from the library. And we can’t always get to town.

“Thank you so much for helping us.”

Moved by this sincere and stirring plea, the librarian got busy. She went to the county commissioners and told them the old man’s story. The commissioners were moved, and they agreed to furnish the necessary materials. Together they and the rural citizens built a new bridge.

The rural mail-carrier, the school bus and the bookmobile are three contacts with the outside world that isolated residents do not want severed. And they’ll tell you they’re willing to “move heaven and earth” to keep those three coming.

One regional librarian summed up the situation in these words: “I find that our greatest demand for reading material comes from people who live along the best roads. I believe that the people who most desire and make known their wishes for library service also demand that the roads be worked. When the roads and bridges prevent the mail, school buses and the bookmobile from reaching them, they make immediate demands on the county commissioners. They feel isolated and miss these services.”

Most of the librarians will tell you that there are some roads in their particular areas that are inaccessible for several months during the year, and that roads very largely determine what communities can be reached regularly. But they will also tell you that improvements are being made slowly, so that the area covered by each bookmobile gradually is being expanded.

**Bookmobiles in Georgia**

There are 26 bookmobiles operating in Georgia, serving 38 of the state’s 159 counties. This number, of course, does not include cars that are used to disseminate books, or one jeep.

The types of roads traversed by the bookmobiles vary greatly. In the extreme northern part of the state are mountains, foothills of the Blue Ridge Range, where the roads thread their ways up steep mountainsides, paralleling fresh streams and passing waterfalls that rush off precipices and crash into pools hundreds of feet below. Often these roads end in little more than cowpaths in the sparsely settled hills. When winter comes, no motor vehicle can travel these winding trails.

And the book customers have to wait for the ice to thaw and the roads to dry.

In south Georgia, of course, the problem is considerably different. There the land is flat and the soil loamy or sandy. But even so, it can become quite sticky after protracted rains. Generally speaking, the roads are more nearly passable the year round than in the northern section of the state.

In an effort to whip the hazards of the problem, one regional library serving mountain counties acquired a jeep, which can go where no other vehicle would dare venture. It evenfacebook swift mountain streams, splashing water around the feet of the “hill ladies” who brave wintry elements to bring books through to cabins in the hills.

Stories told by the librarians and bookmobile operators of this region are typical of the proud, independent people who inhabit the region. One comes in on horseback three times a week as the school is the only library within the area.

Last winter the school principal requested some new textbooks from the county supervisor. But the roads were impassable, and the package of books was too large and heavy to carry in a horseback. So the supervisor wrote a letter telling the principal that the books were ready and would be sent in a smaller package as the roads could be traveled.

A few days later he came to the school on horseback from the principal: “That’s all right about the textbooks. We’re using the library books until they come.”

**Roads to Nowhere**

The rural area around Athens, site of the oldest state-chartered university in nation, the University of Georgia, is as unlike many sections of the state served by bookmobiles. It, too, has its bad roads.

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Contractors Work in Philippines

American contractors may undertake construction work in the Philippines under the rehabilitation act of 1946 on an equal footing with Filipino contractors, Thomas H. MacDonald, commissioner of the Public Roads Administration, announced on March 25. The announcement is based on a recent opinion of the Philippine secretary of justice.

In public works undertaken exclusively at the expense of the Philippine government, Filipino contractors are legally entitled to preferential treatment. However, the secretary of justice has stated that these preferential laws do not apply to public works undertaken under the Philippine rehabilitation act, which will be financed entirely by the United States government, or jointly by it and the Philippine government. For such work, American contractors will have equal status with Filipino contractors in qualification for bidding, determination of the low bidder and award of contract.

On contracts financed entirely by the Philippine government, foreign contractors are required to place a registered Filipino engineer in complete charge of the work. American contractors are released from this requirement when engaged in work under the rehabilitation act.

The Philippine government has advised Frank C. Turner, PRA division engineer in the Philippines, that American contractors will be accepted as qualified for submitting bids on road and bridge construction under the rehabilitation act if they are considered qualified and acceptable in the United States by the PRA.

Ten million dollars has been allocated for highways in the fiscal year 1947 under the Philippine rehabilitation program.

Books

[Continued from page 22]

and its isolated points. One of the difficult roads covered by the bookmobile is "Nowhere Road," a stretch of rut and mudholes that's almost as forsaken as its name implies. But every so often the bookmobile will be seen bounding and lurching along this route.

Fishdam School, where 12 solemn, shy pupils look forward to the bookmobile visits, is located in this section, far off the smooth highways where the cars whip by at mile-a-minute speed. The roads leading to Fishdam lie low and damp along the streams. Sometimes Fishdam can't be reached at all, and books have to be left at Point Peter for the teacher to pick up.

On another back-road in this territory a crippled youth eagerly awaits the visits of the bookmobile. When it's time for the books to come, he starts scanning the horizon to see whether he can detect any sign of the bookmobile bobbing along the rough terrain. On a recent trip the gray mud near his home was slippery and deep, but the bookmobile got through. The boy said a taxi had charged $10 to make a trip out there that week, and he hadn't expected to see the bookmobile.

"That route will not be changed as long as he wants the books and we can manage the roads," commented Mary E. Townes, the library director.

In the northwestern corner of Georgia is Lookout Mountain, and from one part of the mountain a road leads down to Pittsburg, in the coal-mining area. At one stop the librarian was greeted with, "My husband said for me to get lots of books, for you may not get back for several months." That was exactly right; the next month the January rains came and the bookmobile could not make that route.

Sarah E. Maret, director of the Cherokee Regional Library, serving this area, provided proof that roads used by the bookmobile are being improved.

"Several roads have been treated with tar and gravel," she pointed out. "Two new roads, which are badly needed, are now under construction. One, a state highway leading to the Whitley County line and impassable during the past winter, is being made ready for paving. Another road, leading to Cloudland, on Lookout Mountain, is nearing completion. The bookmobile was unable to make this route all last summer."

As to other roads in her area, the librarian added smilingly that she didn't know "whether the roads are so much better or whether we have learned to stay out of the bad places better."

Roads a Determining Factor

In the flat lands of south Georgia, Mrs. Ray Bryant, bookmobile librarian at Moultrie, finds that roads are a determining factor in the rural library service. Without the cooperation of the county commissioners, she says, many rural readers would not receive their books.

"During the war the county commissioners and roadbuilders were handicapped by a shortage of road machinery, materials and labor," she continues. "However, they now have some new equipment and are making great headway in providing better roads. By improving the roads they are certainly helping to improve the bookmobile service for rural readers."

"For instance, broken-down bridges have kept the bookmobile from making its complete rounds on numerous occasions. Sometimes it has meant a tour of at least 20 miles. Near Trenton School it meant not getting through for the school and readers at all. Construction workers have taken the place of many wooden bridges, permitting the bookmobile to maintain contact with patrons."

Mrs. Bryant admits there's still to be done in road improvement, pointing out that "cattle-gaps" and other road troubles to schoolgrounds have proved to be some of the principal obstacles in Georgia. There the cattle in cotton that have fence laws are discomfited from wandering into the road by so-called "cattle-gaps," which really are substitutes for gates. A broken "cattle-gap" or an entrance washed in deep holes often causes the books to lie on the floor of the bookmobile.

Dirt roads on one Georgia route proved so physically wearing on a bookmobile driver that the county board of education hired two assistants to alternate on the driving job.

Librarians into Advisers

Georgia's itinerant librarians find that traveling hundreds of miles on country roads every month, stopping at humble plantation homes and in humble dwellings of tenant farmers, supplying the book needs of every age and taste, they tend to become not only literary guides to their patrons but warm friends as well. Their experiences are varied as the developments in Georgia politics.

The librarian has to be a real diplomat, especially when an elderly man, somewhat embarrassed, selects his book from the primer collection, saying, "Just pick one of these, please." When she discovers that he is learning to read and teaching his wife from the simple picture-and-word books.

So appreciative are rural people of the service they receive from the bookmobiles that they frequently load the librarians down with turnip greens, peanuts, watermelons, flowers and other products of the farm. The "soror lady" holds somewhat the same relationship to her patrons as the country newspaper editor does to his readers.

Wherever possible these circuit riders try to improve the reading habits of the people. There was, for example, a middle-aged mill worker who started reading nothing but western stories. With the help of the librarian he was introduced to more select authors. Now he is an avid reader of the more difficult books. She likes historical novels as biographies, and the longer the book the better she likes it.

The bookmobile idea first began to take hold in Georgia about 1940, and...
influence has been widespread. It is helping the people who perhaps need help most. Generally speaking, the rural reader is a person of intelligence who is seeking to improve his education through better reading.

If county commissioners could be present when a bookmobile drives up in a country schoolyard and see the happy faces of boys and girls as they come running out to greet the driver and help carry the books, the commissioners would go away with a firm resolve to make it possible for the bookmobile to reach every hamlet in the county. This is how one of the rural librarians puts it: "The upbuilding of the roads means, along with many other things, the upbuilding of the education of our rural America. Without rural America, the rest of it couldn't exist. Better roads can make better books available to the rural public."

California Plans a New Bay Bridge

Construction of a second San Francisco-Oakland Bay bridge was recommended in a recent report of the California Department of Public Works. The report stated that "another bridge spanning San Francisco Bay is necessary and is economically and physically feasible."

Crowded conditions on the present bridge were responsible for the study, which was authorized in October, 1945. The report shows that present traffic is twice the originally anticipated amount, flowing now at a rate not predicted until 1970. In 1946 the bridge traffic was 69,000 vehicles daily; the maximum limit for reasonable safety and tolerable delay is estimated at 85,000 vehicles per day, which would mean an average of not more than 75,000 vehicles per day.

The department's report recommends that the second crossing be located just north of and generally parallel to the existing bridge. Construction cost is estimated at $99,300,000.

Financing the bridge should present no problem, in the opinion expressed in the report, because "proposed revenue bonds to finance the new span, supported by earnings from the present bridge, which will be entirely paid for by 1953, will be self-liquidating, with such certainty as to attract investors to purchase." Tolls on both structures would be the same.

The proposed new bridge would be a two-deck structure with five 12-ft. lanes on each deck. If desirable, one-way traffic could be directed to each bridge. The new structure would make no provision for steam-train traffic or for additional interurban rail service, since the present interurban rail facilities are capable of handling twice the traffic now using them.

Missouri... [Continued from page 26]

In 1945, 67 per cent of the state's farms were within 1/4 mile of an all-weather road, 13 per cent were from 1/2 to 1 mile away, 11 per cent from 1 to 2 miles away, and 9 per cent 2 miles or more away. Proximity of farms to all-weather roads varies widely among Missouri's 114 counties. In the 7 counties with less than 10 per cent of their county roads surfaced, only 31 per cent of the farms were on or within 1/4 mile of a surfaced road in 1945; this compares with 85 per cent for the 6 counties with 80 per cent or more of their roads surfaced.

The report shows that the counties with poorest roads are not those with relatively sparse population or relatively low farm income. "The taxable wealth per mile of improved road and the cost of maintenance per mile were found to be the most influential factors affecting the extent to which county roads were surfaced. Some counties have so little taxable wealth that they do not have sufficient income even to maintain their road systems, and therefore little or none for new surfacing."

In 1944, five Missouri counties had less than $10,000 of assessed valuation per mile of improved road (inclusive of graded and drained but unsurfaced roads) and three counties had $100,000 or more. In the five least wealthy counties, less than 16 per cent of the county roads had been surfaced, compared with 90 per cent in the three wealthiest counties.

The cost of gravel-road maintenance varies widely throughout the state. In northwest Missouri, the cost of maintaining gravel roads in the state supplementary system was $339 per mile annually over the period 1936-45, compared with $132 per mile in south-central Missouri. This difference is mainly in the cost of gravel replacement.

There is a strong tendency, the report points out, for maintenance costs to be lower in the counties where taxable wealth is relatively low. The cost of gravel replacement is low in the least wealthy counties of south-central Missouri, whereas both gravel-replacement costs and routine maintenance expenditures are high in the wealthier counties of west-central and northwest Missouri. Nevertheless, "it is apparent that even in areas where upkeep costs are low, many counties have too little taxable wealth to provide sufficient funds for proper maintenance, and hence none for new surfacing. It is also apparent that among the counties with average taxable wealth, maintenance may be so costly as to sharply the funds available for new surfacing. Furthermore, in the counties where maintenance costs are high, costs much more much to maintain surfaced roads than dirt roads, so that each new of new surfacing increases the amount of money needed for upkeep of roads."

An analysis of expenditures on county roads by county, township and district roads and costs in 60 counties during the period 1936-40 showed that expenditures were less than $28 per mile annually in counties having less than $10,000 taxable wealth, compared with $138 per mile in the most wealthy of the counties. The average for 58 rural counties was $71 per mile of improved roads.

Increases in kinds of expenditures varied widely as wealth increased. Expenditures for equipment were about twice as large in the wealthier counties as in the poor ones, routine maintenance costs were six times as large, and costs of engineering and administration were also six times as large. The largest increases for gravel or other roadbuilding materials; costs rose from $2.40 per mile in the poorest counties to $37 in the wealthiest ones. Average expenditures in 1944 in the counties studied were distributed as follows: materials, 26.6 per cent; new maintenance, 60.0 per cent; engineering, 8.0 per cent; engineering and maintenance, 17.5 per cent; engineering and specification, 3.9 per cent; other expenditures, 1.0 per cent.

As a basis for forecasting requirements, the research staff concluded that a minimally adequate allowance for maintaining present gravel roads would be one-half of the state's expenditure per mile for maintenance of the state's gravel roads in the same county, and one-fourth of the average cost of routine maintenance which excludes gravel and gravel road state supplementary roads. Using These costs, the annual requirement for maintenance in the 101 rural counties would be $7,161,000 for the mileage of rural roads in their present state of repair and $9,742,000 on completion of surfacing of the present mileag e of improved roads.

These 111 counties would not require $6,382,900 from the maximum rate bridge levy of 35c, per $100 assessed valuation. With the existing status of existing roads, 34 rural counties raise enough funds from local taxation to maintain their roads, but the other 77 counties need an additional $1,521,000. When state roads are improved but unsurfaced or have been surfaced, only 19 rural counties will have enough income income to supply their maximum levy to maintain them, but the other 92 will require assistance in the extent of $3,896,000.

The research staff also made estimates of the cost of graveling present roads. April, 1947 • BETTER ROAD BET
Highways without Money

OUT OF the California senate near the middle of March came a bill providing for a state-wide highway program that appeared to have rather general acceptance. Radical shifts in policy proposed in earlier reports of Senator Randolph Collier’s legislative fact-finding committee, summarized in the January issue of this magazine, had been largely rejected. Among the recommendations shelved was a proposal that total responsibility for the maintenance of county roads and city streets be placed on local general taxpayers, unless the state should provide support from its general fund. The policy adopted, in the language of an analysis of the senate bill prepared for the fact-finding committee, "recognized as a basic responsibility of the state, protection of the existing investment in the entire road plant by providing for adequate maintenance." If the senate measure had many adherents, it likewise had determined opponents, hostile to a 2c gasoline-tax increase and to heavier truck and bus taxes. When the bill came to the assembly, it was dismembered by simply cutting out most of the new revenue-raising provisions. The highway bill had bad Governor Warren’s active support, and apparently the fight is by no means over. It is clear to the governor and to almost everybody else that California will not get new highways without new money. "Evidently," said a Los Angeles Times editorial, "the people of the state need a lobby in Sacramento."

Winter of Fury

UTTER DEPENDENCE of the nation’s rural regions on their highway systems is brought home forcefully when storms strike with such fury they did over widespread areas this past winter. Blizzard may howl, but people must eat, stock must be fed, babies must be born. Entire communities are helpless when communication breaks down. Highway maintenance forces performed creditably, and often heroically, in opening blocked roads during the past 6 months. Men worked continuously without rest or sleep. This year the odds were against them from the very start; over a large part of the country they were fighting the heaviest snows in years with old and worn-out equipment. It will very likely turn out to have been a costly winter. Michigan alone ran up a snow-fighting bill exceeding $11,000,000. The winter’s experience probably left maintenance organizations with two strong convictions: that it is very comfortable feeling to have power to meet any emergency that may come, and that plowing operations would be expedited enormously if radio equipment were in more general use. C. E. Shumate, Colorado maintenance superintendent at Pueblo, went up in a plane in a November storm to dispatch equipment, but he had to drop messages to the operators.

Books on Wheels

TO THE school-bus route, the rural mail route and the milk route, add a fourth— the book route. If Georgia’s experience, as described by Luke Greene in this issue, is typical, people in remote regions who have been reached by traveling libraries count on this service as much as on the other ties that link them with the world outside. Books traveling over the roads are bringing worlds from which their isolation has hitherto barred them. Rural library service is nothing new, of course. Some 500 traveling libraries are on the roads here and there throughout the United States. But only 600 counties in the United States have county-wide library service. More than 600 counties at the other extreme are without library service entirely. Books will reach more rural library patrons if a bill now in Congress is passed. The bill provides for federal grants to the states to establish demonstration library services. If the idea catches on the way it did in Georgia, traveling libraries should soon become welcome callers on new millions of country people. The cost of mobile library service has been figured out at about 5c per volume circulated. That’s little enough to pay for all the things that come between the covers of books.

Miscellany

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS, including long-range highway-planning schemes, have been offered in eight states. National Highway Users Conference reports. . . . The Automotive Safety Foundation warns against a trend toward the establishment of highway funds financed by tolls. Evidence indicates in Congress of a national toll highway plan and toll legislation in at least 14 states. . . . "No tolls!" asks Henry F. Pringle in an article in the April 5 issue of the Sunday Evening Post that is a tale forebodings in spots. . . . Connecticut was state grand-award winner in the National Traffic Safety Contest. Joseph P. Cairnes, retiring chairman of the Massachusetts State Department of Public Works, has joined up with management of the Boston Braves farm-club business representative. A correspondent of the San Francisco Chronicle is lukewarm over the proposed plan to construct a second San Francisco-Oakland bridge. "Nobody was told when a ferryboat during their last 10 years of operation," he points out. . . . Captain E. L. Marley is the new president of the County Road Association of Maine. . . . The Texas Highway Department put 595 miles of road contracts on contract during the first 2 months of 1945. — C. M. N. 

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