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## **ON FOOT IN AMERICA**

(A look at hobo literature)

A few months ago, I was delighted to learn from the New York Times that the last of the remaining genuine railroad-riding, bindle-packing, chicken-stealing hoboes in America are planning to meet this August at their annual reunion in Britt, Iowa, a village of a couple of thousand up near the Minnesota border.

The local sponsors call this event the National Hobo Convention. About eighty self-described followers of the open road march or limp down Main Street, past half a dozen grain elevators along a side track of an abandoned railway line. There are about as many women as there are men, and the range of age is elderly to very old. Along to join the fun there are as many as twenty-thousand visitors, ten times the local population. Most of them are families from Iowa and Minnesota. They come into town to watch the march and eat corn dogs and Sno-Kones and candied apples and such.

The hobo parade pauses in front of an abandoned movie theater called The Chief, which is now the National Hobo Museum., a collection of tramp artifacts and paintings based on blown-up photographs of historic tramps.

Welcoming remarks and photo-opportunities ensue. Then the assembled tramps trudge out to their hobo jungle, a park on the edge of town. It's set up as a campground, ringed by trucks and RV's and Weber barbecue grills Porta-Potties. During

the afternoon the delegates put on demonstrations of hobo arts and crafts such as hoeing weeds and cooking mulligan stew in a big pot over an open fire. It resembles a Scout Camporee for senior citizens. The climax of the day is the election of a new Hobo King.

What a happy occasion this is for the world community of vagrants! What a rare resurrection of the classic American hobo! I thought the classic American hobo had disappeared long ago, after the end of the Great Depression of the 1930's. The hobo in those glory days was the elite among wanderers. "The tramp dreams and wanders; the bum drinks and wanders. The hobo works and wanders,"

To me the classic hobo has always belonged to the railroads. He apparently originated as a persona with the coming of the railroads in England and America in the first half of the Nineteenth Century. He was a part of the romance of the rails as much as a section-hand or a Pullman porter or Casey Jones the Brave Engineer. His dangerous form of transportation was called beating the railroad – that is, sneaking into a freight car or onto the outside of a train for a free ride. Jack London, in his short, well-documented period as a tramp, even sneaked once inside a Pullman parlor car, past an indignant porter, and made a pitch for a quarter from a man London figured must be a millionaire

But, perhaps that is putting too narrow a limit on what constitutes a hobo. There are many tramps nowadays among the homeless who have never ridden on any part of a train. They are permanently homeless and accept it. They make their way begging, stealing, sleeping outdoors, feeding on the local economy, riding whatever transportation offers, and following their off-leash path. To simply call them homeless is to discount their special status in the community of wanderers --- but they are not true hoboes.

In popular usage, the word hobo has come to describe the whole underclass of drifters also known by numerous, disrespectful names: such as tramps, rambler,

vagrants, vagabonds, itinerants, transients, idlers, loafers, beach-combers, wanderers, bindle-stiffs, beatniks, gypsies, pan-handlers., bums, yeggs. Clearly, the hobo is only one of the players in the social problem politely called “the homeless.” As a seasonal field worker, collecting produce by the bucket or the basket, he has been called a fruit tramp, harvest gypsy, floater, almond knocker, apple glommer, sugar tramp. Even the biographers of the historic hobo put him in the lower drawers of society with the winos and junkies, --- the Bottom Dogs, the Beggars of Life.

Over the years, the chief and temporary occupation of the moveable tramp, the working hobo --- was agriculture – shucking corn, picking fruit, digging potatoes, topping beets, picking cotton, hoeing pastures. He moved to and fro with the railroad through the great spaces of the Midwest. Mexicans have taken his job in the fields and in the orchards and vineyards and strawberry and broccoli farms of California.

Every genuine hobo has a road name. It is not the name his parents gave him, if he had any parents. He is called Pocatello Pete or Hood River Blackie, Portland Gray, Sparky Smith, Guitar Whitey. Modern hoboese make up names for themselves to use at the Britt, Iowa, hobo party and in interviews with news reporters and sociologists. Like Gypsy Moon, queen of the hoboese, otherwise a professor at Indiana University.

The traditional habitat of any tramp in railroad days was a campsite on the outskirts of a farm town or a cardboard box under a railroad bridge, a burrow on the edge of a river, the banks of a canal, the margin of a country road. He is ragged, dirty, bad-smelling, diseased, lousy, crummy (in the original sense.) He is seen as is a loafer who sneers at work. He has only contempt for private property, money, political institutions, schools, churches, states and such restrictive institutions as marriage. In every characteristic, he flaunts easy classification, because he is, above all, an individual. He is a rebel, a dreamer, a social problem. Over the years, his nature is known by his habits, by the company he kept in the wayside inns of England, long

before he took to riding the railroads: *Such as wake on the night and sleep on the day, and haunt customable taverns and ale-houses and routs about, and no man wot from whence they came, nor whither they go.*”

H. L. Mencken, the newspaper editor and public scold, found nothing romantic about the hobo or his life. As Mencken put it: “Between the world of professional criminals and that of honest folk there is a half-world of part-time, in-and-out malefactors, and to it belongs the army of hoboes, beggars, prostitutes, drug addicts and so on. Most juvenile delinquents are part of it, and remain so, for not many of them can ever hope to be promoted from their neighborhood gangs to touring mobs. At the bottom of the pile are the poor wretches, mainly aging, who find road life increasingly insupportable and so gravitate dismally toward the big cities and become beggars and *mission stiffs*.”

During times of economic depression, periods of hardship, unemployment, and the aftermath of great wars, the homeless wanderer and his class grew numerous, invaded cities like Chicago and became a visible social, political and humanitarian problem. He was the most conspicuous member of a rural underclass that had invaded the cities. He smelled bad, had socially transmitted diseases and stole things.

Yet, there was always remained a certain fascination about the compulsive wanderer. The mystery of his restlessness goes way back. He is Ulysses, Marco Polo, Edward Brown among the opium-smokers of Persia, George Borrow wandering Spain among with the Gypsies; Walt Whitman looking westward from the California shore.

Think of John Keats, barely twenty-one years old, inflamed with wanderlust from reading a new translation of Homer. Safe at home in London, Keats imagines “stout **Cortez**, when with eagle eyes he star’d at the Pacific, and all his men look’d at each other with a wild surmise – silent, upon a peak in Darien.” [Keats gave credit

to the wrong Conquistador, but he was right about the spirit of Balboa, a true free-lance explorer, with a tramp's habit of always keeping on the move.]

Consider Lord Byron, another romantic wanderer, with a yen to see Europe. He takes off from England in the 1830's, calling himself Childe Harold, seeking mild, gentlemanly, picturesque adventures, the kind you can immortalize in iambic pentameter:

**Once more upon the waters yet once more!  
And the waves bound beneath me as a steed  
That knows its ride. Welcome to their roar!  
Swift be there guidance whereso'er it lead**

**I stood in Venice on the Bridge of Sighs,  
A palace and a prison on each hand;  
I saw from out the wave her structures rise  
As from the strokes of the enchanter's wand.**

The call of the open road was irresistible, especially to housebound ladies: Consider the reckless Scottish duchess who flung off her wedding gown and took flight, singing merrily:

**What care I for a goose-feather bed?  
With the sheet turned down so bravely, O!  
For tonight I shall sleep in a cold open field  
Along with the raggle-taggle gypsies. O!**

Down in New York, in the reckless Twenties, Edna St Vincent Millay, urban villager, hears the call of the open road while she's otherwise occupied burning candles at both ends.

**The railroad track is miles away,  
 And the days is loud with voices speaking,  
 Yet there isn't a train close by all day  
 But I hear its whistle shrieking.  
 All nights there isn't a train goes by,  
 Though the night is still for sleep and dreaming,  
 But I see the cinders red on the sky,  
 And hear its engine steaming.  
 My heart is warm with the friends I make,  
 And better friends I'll not be knowing,  
 Yet there isn't a train I wouldn't take,  
 No matter where it's going.**

Towards the end of his long walk, the romantic vagabond finds himself as one with Yeats's **Wandering Aengus**, -- "old with wandering through hollow lands and hilly lands." Until he finds at last "**the girl who called him by his name and faded through the brightening air.**"

**" and he will pluck till time and times are done –  
 The silver apples of the moon,  
 The golden apples of the sun."**

The hobo's poetic voice, more than any other, is that of Walt Whitman, who began writing *Leaves of Grass* in 1855'

**Afoot and light hearted I take to the open road,**

**Healthy free, the world before me,  
The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.**

And at the same time, in the characteristic, paradoxical communion of the road tramp, Whitman reaches out:

**Camerado, I give you my hand!  
I give you my love more precise than money,  
I give you myself before preaching or law;  
Will you give me yourself? Will you come travel with me?  
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?**

The romance clings to the classic hobo. George Bernard Shaw, of all snooty cynics, introduced a brand new hobo-poet into world literature. His discovery was a Welshman named William W. Davies, who had made himself known to Shaw by sending him a handful of poems and some pages of a hobo diary. Davies was, at that moment, in a trust home for indigents in East London, limping around the streets selling his poems. His story, called “**THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A SUPER-TRUMP,**” was published in 1907. It became a world success. Shaw wrote a preface:

“He does not tell you that there is honor among tramps: on the contrary; he makes it clear that only by being too destitute to be worth robbing and murdering can a tramp insure himself against being robbed and murdered by his companion of the road. The tramp is fastidious, audacious and self-possessed; but he is free from divine exploitation. ....”

The story of Davies’ adventure in North America is the basic narrative of life as a hobo. Orphaned early, he was raised by his grandparents. He was routinely involved in kid crime – petty theft, truancy, fist fights, that kind of thing --- but he

shaped up after inheriting enough to pay for a steerage passage from Liverpool to New York. He was determined to get around on foot and live on his own. He teamed up with a man called Brum, a professional beggar who took from the rich and gave back to the poor. The poor were mostly himself and his fellow tramps. Brum showed Davies how to ride the rails, how to stay out of jail whenever possible and how to feed off the generous land without taking a conventional job. Davies wrote:

“I was soon initiated into the mysteries of beating my way by train, which is so necessary in parts of that country, seeing the great distances between towns. Sometimes we were fortunate enough to get an empty car; sometimes we had to ride the bumper; [that is, hanging on an outside step] and often, when travelling through a hostile country, we rode on the roof of a car, so as not to give the brakeman an opportunity of striking us off the bumpers ... Sometimes we were desperate enough to ride the narrow iron rods, which were under the car, and only a few feet from the track. This required some nerve, for it was not only uncomfortable...but the train seemed to be running at a reckless and uncontrollable speed, whereas when riding on the car's top, a much faster train seems to be running much slower.... Sometimes we were forced to jump off a moving train at the point of a revolver. At other times the brakemen were friendly, and even offered assistance in the way of food, drink or tobacco.”

Davies avoided danger during his several years of berry picking and potato digging, neighborhood begging, breezy train trips and, finally, a job wrestling loads of cattle onto trans-Atlantic freighters. He made a couple of trips back and forth from Baltimore to Liverpool and Glasgow. He barely touched his home shore. Back in America and down south in Arkansas, he saw the lynching of a terrified Negro. He got beat up and robbed in New Orleans. He teamed up with a new pal called Australian Red; who did the begging while Davies lounged in camp. After five years

of this sort of random existence he shipped back to England with only three pounds cash and small change. At home, he found it hard to sleep in a soft bed. The food of civilization seemed to suffer from lack of good wholesome dirt.

“The fever of restlessness that had governed me in the past broke out afresh.”

He soon developed a yen to join the rush to the Klondike. He made the voyage from England to Newfoundland by ship. En route from there to Winnipeg, he joined up with another new acquaintance appropriately called Three Finger Jack. On a dark night outside Ottawa, the two of them tried to board the baggage car of a westbound passenger train as it was leaving the station.

“I allowed my companion the advantage of being the first to jump, owing to his maimed hand. The train was now going faster and faster, and we were forced to keep pace with it. Making a leap [my companion] caught the handle bar and sprang lightly on the step, after which my hand quickly took possession of this bar, and I ran with the train, prepared to follow his example. To my surprise, instead of at once taking his place on the platform, my companion stood thoughtlessly irresolute on the step, leaving me no room to make the attempt. But I still held to the bar, though the train was now going so fast that I found great difficulty keeping up with it. I shouted to him to clear the step. This he proceeded to do very deliberately, I thought. Taking a firmer grip on the bar, I jumped, but it was too late, for the train was now going at a rapid rate. My foot came short of the step, and I fell, and still clinging to the handlebar was dragged several yards before I relinquished my hold. And there I lay for several minutes, feeling a little shaken, whilst the train passed swiftly on into the darkness.

“Even then I did not know what had happened. I attempted to stand but found that something had happened to prevent me from doing this...I then began to examine myself, and now found that the right foot was severed from the ankle.”

Davies howled into the darkness until a man came out of the station to help carry him inside. Lying there on a cot, surrounded by curious travelers: “I could see no other way of keeping a calm face...than by taking out my pipe and smoking, an action which, I am told, caused much sensation in the local press.”

Davies’ story became the gospel of life on the road in England and America. It was widely read and possibly imitated. But the word “hobo” never appears in his book. Surely, the word existed. Was it less appealing to read about a super-tramp than a grubby old hobo?

A new novel-like, memoir called **BEGGARS OF LIFE: A Hobo Biography** appeared in the very-good year 1924, almost simultaneously as book and a movie script. Both were written by Jim Tully, a former boxer, vagrant and Hollywood gossip-peddler. The book is dedicated to the film director and writer Rupert Hughes and to Charlie Chaplin, described as A Mighty Vagabond. The Little Tramp – never a hobo.

The book has a sense of reality about it you’re willing to accept the dialogue. One of the tramps tells a story by a campfire:

“I was runnin’ for a freight in Pittsy, an’ I fell over a switch light and got knocked out. She was rainin’ cats wi’ blue feathers an’ green tails, an’ I never woke up till mornin’, an’ I was wetter than the river. Well, sir, I lays right between the tracks, an’ the trains rolled all around me. If I’d stretched out my arms any they’d o’ been on the rails, and I’d a been a bum wit’out grub-hooks.”

The movie -- Paramount, silent, with added music, 1928, -- differs so much from the book that even its connection with real hoboes was broken. The script was based on a Broadway play by Maxwell Anderson. An Austrian actress, Louise Brooks, plays a woman who is hiding out after killing a would-be rapist. A handsome hobo, Richard Arlen helps her escape in boy’s clothing. Love interest is established.

But Wallace Beery appears as a mean hobo named Oklahoma Red. He sees through Louise's boy-disguise and tries to put the make on her. He fails, reforms, and all ends happily.

Real hoboes denounced the book for its title: Hoboes aren't beggars! Folks who knew Jim Tully denounced him as an arrogant liar and a pervert. The producers so drastically adapted the book that even Tully would not have recognized it, but he still got credits. No actual hoboes were cast. Nowadays, it can be viewed in Blu-ray, DVD and at silent film festivals. Everyone seems to agree that the stunt men riding the blinds and jumping on and off trains were fantastic.

This brings us again to the question of when and where did the classic American hobo appear among the wanderers? H.L. Mencken recorded hundreds of words of tramp vocabulary in his famous dictionary **The American Language**, and he thought he had found its first printed use of hobo in a magazine article by Josiah Flynt in the 1880s. [He was right; the book, **TRAMPING WITH TRAMPS**, was published in 1907, comprised of previous magazine articles.] But Mencken concluded that the linguistic origin of the word hobo was simply unknown. The English etymologist Eric Partridge thought it started as a greeting --- Ho! Beau! -- among seasonal field workers carrying a hoe, Another student of American language guessed it came from Chinese or some Indian language. He thought the term showed up first in the Seattle-Tacoma area, maybe an import from the Klondike gold rush. Improbable. More likely Chicago, 1890's and more likely in the westward drift of homeless men following the Civil War.

As for **vagrant**, the old fashioned view was that poverty drove men into vagrancy and women into prostitution. Whereas being a vagabond was a sentimental apprenticeship for poets -- both words related to vague.

**Bum**, on the other hand, is simply an offensive term for a lazy beggar. Modern hoboes claim that bum applies only to urban types, panhandling on the corner

sidewalk. Bumming as mooching appears to have started in San Francisco in the 1870's, the boom-and-bust days of the Comstock Lode and just after the completion of the great transcontinental railroad. The word was of German ancestry, and it applied to a host of moochers around town, including the celebrated Emperor Norton, and his dogs Bummer and Lazarus.

**Tramp?** Easy to guess that one. Think how much tramping a vagrant must do between opportunities to catch out a train at a railroad yard or to hitch a ride at a truck stop.

Absolutely certain, however, is the first systematic study of the **hobo**, by that name--- It was the work of a University of Chicago graduate student in sociology, funded and eventually published by a whole slew of welfare and religious agencies that were alarmed by the presence of a large neighborhood known a Hobohemia right in the midst of the downtown Loop. The student, Nels Anderson was in his early twenties and had actually been on the road, himself, for about five years. He didn't think hobos, as such, were a problem, but their poor health, physical and mental, needed sympathetic attention. His book, **THE HOBO**, published in 1923, is still in print. He found that there were thirty to seventy thousand homeless men regularly in Chicago, with three-hundred thousand to half-a million passing through during the course of a year. As to housing affordable for the poor, that was scarcely mentioned. Providing shelter in the tough winter months was the task of cheap hotels and boarding houses and settlement houses like Jane Addams' Hull House.

One of the most conspicuous hoboos ----known to newspaper readers as the King of the Hoboes--- was Doctor Ben Reitman, a physician, abortionist, obstetrician, specialist in sexually transmitted diseases and political anarchist. Reitman said of himself: "I am an American by birth, a Jew by parentage, a Baptist by adoption, a physician and teacher by profession, cosmopolitan by choice, a Socialist by

inclination, a celebrity by accident, a tramp by twenty years' experience, and a reformer by inspiration.”

Twenty years after Anderson's famous survey of Hobohemia, Dr. Reitman was still teaching at the downtown Hobo College he had helped to found, was still a reformer but had become an aristocrat in the eyes of the hoboes. He owned a Ford. Reitman was also, for about eight of those years, the lover and a sort of husband of Emma Goldman, the podium-pounding feminist anarchist who was often arrested several times in the same city on the same day. In her book **MY LIFE**, Goldman shared her first impression of Reitman, shortly before one of her frequent arrests in Chicago.

“He arrived in the afternoon, an exotic, picturesque figure with a large black cowboy hat, flowing silk tie, and huge cane. ‘So this is the little lady Emma Goldman,’ he greeted me; ‘I have always wanted to know you.’

“His voice was deep, soft, and ingratiating. I replied that I also wanted to meet the curiosity who believed enough in free speech to help Emma Goldman. My visitor was a tall man with a finely shaped head, covered with a mass of black curly hair, which evidently had not been washed for some time. His eyes were brown, large, and dreamy. His lips, disclosing beautiful teeth when he smiled, were full and passionate. He looked a handsome brute. His hands, narrow and white, exerted a peculiar fascination. His finger-nails, like his hair, seemed to be on strike against soap and brush. I could not take my eyes off his hands. A strange charm seemed to emanate from them, caressing and stirring.”

Emma, despite her distaste for dirty fingernails, had a soft-spot radical for anarchists with dreamy eyes and caressing hands. She throbbed with true hobo spirit, dreaming of the road, the jungles, the freedom beyond all restraints. She and Doctor Ben gamed together for eight years while Emma built an international reputation for incendiary oratory in behalf of women's rights, union wages, and free-love. She also

raged against marriage as bondage, not only for women but also for men, who were equally victimized by powerful, oppressive, greed-crazed capitalists

Nowadays, readers of fiction can visualize Emma as the novelist E.L.

Doctorow describes her in **RAGTIME**:

“She was not a physically impressive woman, being small, thick-waisted, with a heavy-jawed masculine face. She wore horn-rimmed glasses that enlarged her eyes and suggested the countless outrage to her soul of the sights she saw.”

Reitman wrote one of the last authentic American hobo novels. It's called **SISTER OF THE ROAD: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF BOXCAR BERTHA**. Bertha, an imaginary tramp, has gone through four editions since 1937. Her “autobiography” is easily recognized as the work of a doctor who was also a gynecologist and practitioner of birth control. He never denied he wrote it. As an anarchist, Reitman's empathy for tramps was obvious, but he also sympathized with the Wobblies, the International Workers of the World, who wanted to unionize hoboes. Wobblies were known to throw hoboes off trains on the way to farm work --- Scabs, they were.

The hobo tales of Jack London were trickling out in newspapers and magazines during the period of Chicago's Hobohemia. His first works, it is now believed, were in the 1890's in a student newspaper at Oakland High School, where he was catching up on some neglected education. He had already been on the road in Canada and the United States, picked up tramp lingo and built a thick diary of material for his stories. Taking hold as a journalist, he became a defender of the “profesh” hobo, “the aristocracy of the underworld.”

“They are the lords and masters, the aggressive men, the primordial noble men, the blond beasts of Neitzsche, lustfully roving and conquering through sheer superiority and strength.”

London seems to have picked up some Nazi notions along with his socialist politics and his great material from the road. Some of his stories of the noble hobo persist, but his accounts of suffering in the Klondike are the best.

Now, we know that the fashion and the market place for hobo literature died out with the road tramps in World War Two, the Eisenhower Years, the distracted 1950's. The last time there seemed to be a resurrection of the authentic hobo in American literature was when a group of writers and poets who called themselves The Beats staged a drugged-out version of hobo life in New York and San Francisco and other conspicuous cities. A young member of the Beat group, one of its founders, was the novelist Jack Kerouac. Kerouac was at work creating a new super-hobo called Dean Moriarty. He was based closely on a friend of Kerouac's, a hunk named Neal Cassady, a tramp in his early thirties who wanted to become a writer now that he was out of the reformatory

Kerouac's novel, as published in various forms in the 1950's, was called **ON THE ROAD**. Like Hemingway's novel **THE SUN ALSO RISES**, Kerouac's book purported to be the voice of a new generation. In fact, **ON THE ROAD** wasn't anybody's voice except Kerouac's and it is a difficult read, at that. Kerouac worked on it for years, adding more and more to its length, piling up editorial regrets slips. Finally, spurred by a hunger for publicity, he copied the manuscript down on a roll of teletype paper 120-feet long and offered it around again to book publishers as a fresh-off-the-typewriter, Great American Novel.

The opening lines declare its intent, as well as the proper name for its hero:

"I first met Neal not long after my father died, I had just gotten over a serious illness that I won't bother to talk about except that it really had something to do with my father's death and my awful feeling that everything was dead. With the coming of Neal there really began for me that part of my life that you could call my life on the road. Prior to that I'd always dreamed of

going west, seeing the country, always vaguely planning and never specifically take off and so on. Neal is the perfect guy for the road because he actually was born on the road, when his parents were passing through Salt Lake City in 1926, in a jalopy, on the way to San Francisco.”

Cassady was a perfect hobo hero because he was a wildly crazed junkie, “a nebulous, fast-talking, car-jacking, streetwise womanizer, newly married and fresh out of the reformatory.” (Words of introduction from an old friend to the gang at Columbia.) Allen Ginsberg, the real poet of the Beat group, took him as a pupil. Kerouac fell for Neal and took him as the classic hobo who would be his partner in a book about two guys who journey “in search of something they don’t really find.”

Except for its length, **ON THE ROAD** is not an epic. Innumerable characters float past the wandering eye. Anecdotes form and fade away. It is terribly too long. It reads like the first-draft, first-chapter of the autobiography of a talented, unhappy writer from New York, jotted down while he is wandering the country with no other purpose than to keep up with his crazed friend Neal.

A picture remains from innumerable passing glimpses: Neal on a street in New York, kicked out of his latest shelter, begging Kerouac:

“Please, Sal, look at me. ....I looked at him. He was wearing a T-shirt, torn pants hanging down his belly, tattered shoes; he had not shaved, his hair was wild and bushy, his eyes bloodshot, and that tremendous bandaged thumb stood supported in midair at heart-level (he had to hold it up that way), and on his face was the goofiest grin I ever saw. He stumbled around in a circle and looked everywhere.

“What do my eyeballs see? Ah---the blue sky. Long-fellow....Together with windows---have you ever dug windows? Now let’s talk about windows...”

Kerouac muses: “I was glad I had come, he needed me now.” At the end of the scroll, Kerouac thinks of crossing America again and he senses “all that raw land that rolls in one unbelievable huge bulge over to the West Coast, all that road going, all the people dreaming in the immensity of it [and so on] and I think of Neal Cassady...I think of Neal Cassady.” Last of the hoboes, unless you count the old boys in Britt, Iowa.

Were there hoboes among the Hippies? Maybe a few. The orators of the counterculture in Berkeley in 1968 wanted to be “free from property hang-ups, free from success fixations, free from positions, titles, names, hierarchies, responsibilities, schedules, rules, routines, regular habits...” This sounds like hobo talk, but not many of the new counter-culture took to the road. They clustered in rooming houses off Ashby.

As to the homeless, the displaced migrants, the restless youth of today, they will not gather this summer with the likes of Gypsy Moon, the Queen of the Hoboes and Oklahoma Red, the great story tellers. True hoboes are few.

The novelist William Vollmann, in his splendid book about his own recent experience as a hobo out of his home in Sacramento, recounts a story he heard:

“We found out about this accident which one person we knew was in. They were riding from Sac to Emeryville. I don’t think they knew what they were doing. There were three of ‘m--- an older guy and two girls. One girl lost her legs and the other girl lost a chunk of her ass. They jumped off holding hands.”

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