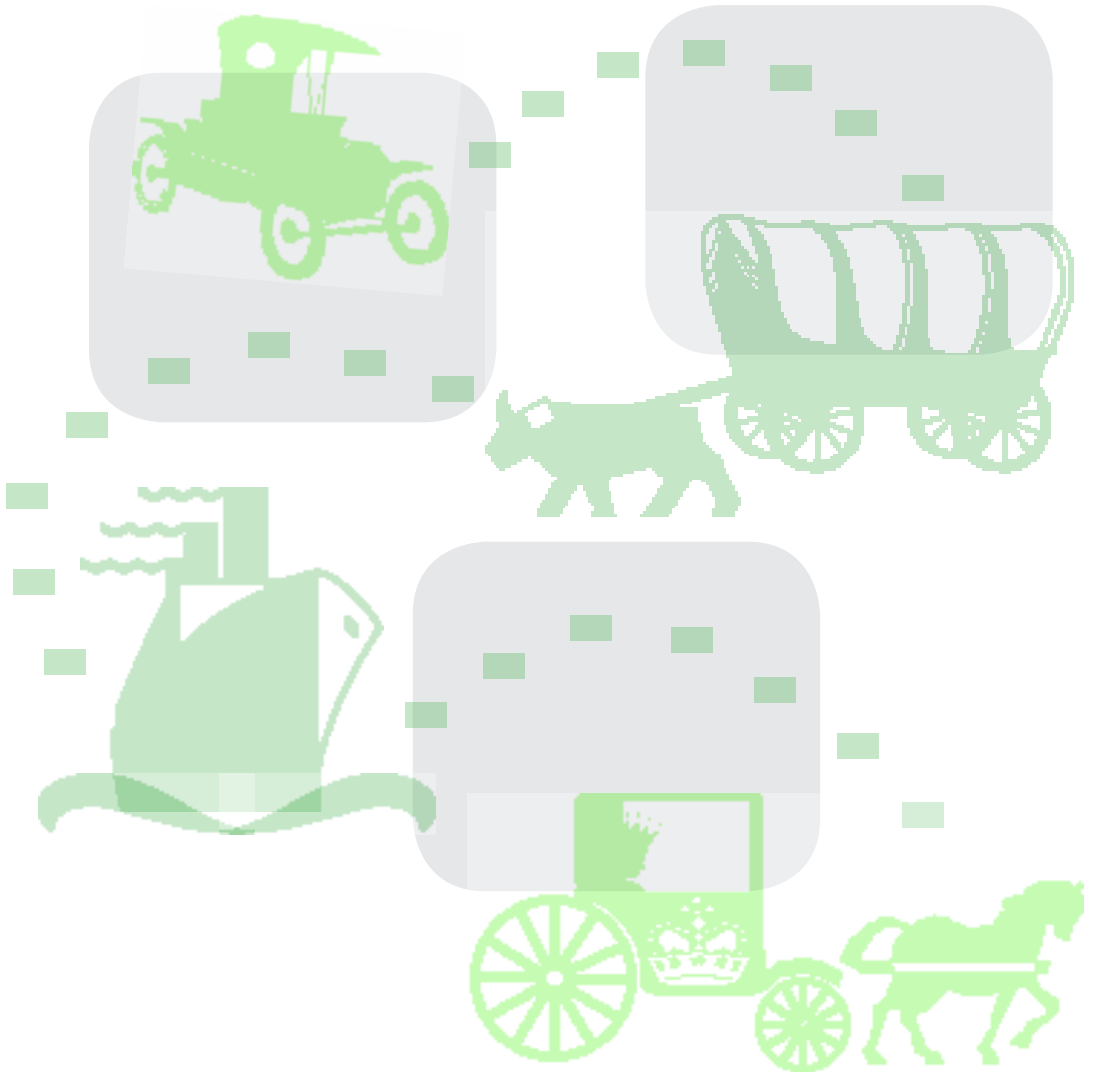


Travels of a Country Woman



By Lera Knox

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Edited by Margaret Knox Morgan
and Carol Knox Ball

Newfound Press

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Dedicated to the Grandchildren
Carol, Nancy, Susy, John Jr.

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Preface

The former Lera Margaret Ussery, born in post-Victorian Tennessee, began her colorful adventures in 1896. That early portion of her life is described in *Goodness Gracious, Miss Agnes: Patchwork of Country Living*, the first book to be published by the University of Tennessee digital press, the Newfound Press. She described her family background from pioneer days in Middle Tennessee. From her phenomenal memory she recalled the life of a shy, bookish child in a small town, on her grandparents' little farm, through her experiences as a student, then as a teacher. She told of the continuation of her education as she moved from being "a city girl" to being "Mrs. Alex Knox," a farmer's wife and the mother of two.

She described the early years of hers and Alex's life, from the arrival of the newlyweds in the hundred-year-old manor house of a former plantation, to life with their two children, Margaret and Jack. (She said later that was the happiest time of her life when the children were small.)

Little did Lera know at that time that she had many more adventures ahead, many of which she was to describe in newspaper articles in the *Nashville (TN) Banner*, the *Columbia (TN) Daily Herald*, and the *Maury (TN) Democrat*. Described in her own words, the accounts have been collected and put together lovingly here by us, the daughter Margaret, and son Jack's daughter Carol.

Travels of a Country Woman, begins with the family's emergence from the Depression, initially by way of a trip from Columbia, Tennessee, to the Chicago World's Fair in 1933. They traveled by "Elizabeth T," the family Model T Ford and Lera wrote articles about the "Flivver" trip for the *Nashville Banner*.

Those articles marked the beginning of a career as a columnist—a career that she pursued for the rest of her life. She wrote articles about her travels from Hollywood to Copenhagen, from having tea with Eleanor Roosevelt to attending the Coronation of Elizabeth II.

Lera Knox, who had become a farmer's wife in 1918, always maintained that for farmers the Great Depression began, not in 1929, but at the end of World War I. That was particularly true for Middle Tennessee farmers like the Knox family. In the business of breeding, "breaking," and selling mules, they experienced hardship when at the end of the war the bottom fell out of the market for mules.

By the spring of 1933 the family had had about as much Depression as they could take. So when an item appeared in the newspaper that the World's Fair would be held in Chicago that summer the family did not hesitate to say, "Let's go!" The family began putting whatever change we could muster under the living room rug, but by June there was only \$3.81. Everybody knew that would not get us very far. Daddy said he had gone to school with Jimmy Stahlman, who was by that

time publisher of the *Nashville Banner*. Mother had written for several farm magazines. Daddy asked her if she would consider trying articles for the *Banner*. She did. Her account of how she overcame her doubts follows.

*Margaret Knox Morgan, the daughter, and
Carol Knox Ball, Jack's daughter, Editors*

A Note from the Newfound Press

Margaret Knox Morgan and Carol Knox Ball collected, organized, and transcribed these newspaper articles by Lera Knox. In doing so, they have preserved detailed and spirited firsthand accounts of travels and special events during the first half of the twentieth century. Through this collection, they make available to readers and scholars a unique and joyful perspective on life during difficult Post Depression years.

To promote ease of reading for this collection of articles, Newfound Press has made minor changes in punctuation, capitalization, and italicization. For instance, the name of the Model T, which sometimes appears in the newspapers as “Elizabeth T.” has been standardized to “Elizabeth T” for consistency. The name of the Nashville newspaper, which often appeared as BANNER, becomes *Banner* in this collection. Titles of novels and films that originally appeared in quotation marks have been italicized, as have names of ships. In a few cases, we have corrected misspellings of people’s names rather than interrupting the flow of the ideas with notes about spelling.

The content of the articles remains intact. That content belongs completely to the active mind of Lera Knox and to the other writers featured here. The editors have enhanced that content with narration and explanation where appropriate. Newfound Press has adapted the format for present-day

readers. We accept responsibility for typographical errors that may have occurred in that process. Please join us for the lively travel accounts of a Columbia, Tennessee, country woman at home and abroad.



Newfound Press thanks the following newspapers for their permission to reprint the columns by Lera Knox.

The Nashville Banner (Nashville, Tennessee)

The Daily Herald (Columbia, Tennessee)

The Dickson Herald (Dickson, Tennessee)

The Abilene Daily Reporter-News (Abilene, Texas)

The San Jose Mercury-Herald (San Jose, California)

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