

Charlotte was the county seat, a much bigger town than Vermontville, so I had to think fast to answer the disparaging, (even if good-natured), remarks aimed at my little village.

At the height of the repartee, one of the lads lifted up my "telescope" to carry it across the barn floor. Baggage, in those days, consisted of large wooden boxes, wire bound; or funny little trunks with a rounding top; carpet bags or telescopes: bags of telescopes.

Telescopes were large and nearly square, made of stiff dark grey canvas. The top fitted completely over the under section when the case was empty; but it lifted higher and higher as the bag was filled until finally the cover overlapped the bottom by barely an inch or so. Leather straps held the parts together and a handle was riveted into the top section.

The young boy who started across the barn floor was strong and sturdy. He gave the telescope handle a strong pull which lifted it high off the floor--and then it happened: the top remained upheld in the boy's hand, but the heavily laden bottom fell down, spilling its contents all over the barn (not too clean) floor.

There were instantly three different reactions to this spectacle: complete astonishment, registered with bulging eyes and dropped jaw on the part of the baggage carrier, holding high the top section of the big telescope and apparently wondering why it had suddenly become so light; utter dismay on the part of the owner, who could only gasp, frozen with embarrassment; and ribald laughter from the stable boys who looked gleefully at the most secret garments of a "lady's"