

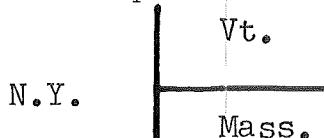
Four Corners

We are at Four Corners, the only spot in the United States where four states meet: Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona. I am a Hadji. I am on a Pilgrimage. Our trip is the culmination of a twenty year desire. In coming West, I had only two geographical desires, the first to visit Four Corners, and the second, to visit Medicine Bow, Wyoming. How often does one get one's desire?

Let me explain. In 1959, we spent a summer in Williamstown, Massachusetts. One afternoon, wanting a bit of a stretch, I suggested to my friend David that we try to discover the common boundary point of the States of Massachusetts, Vermont, and New York. We got out the quadrangle maps and found that the common point was up the Taconic Trail and off a poorly maintained hiking path. We took our maps and our compass and Lady Luck was with us. We discovered a not very impressive pillar with the magic tri-state point

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scratched into its top surface thus:



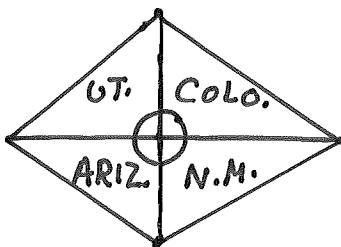
At such moments, in such places, one should do something to allow the magic the infuse into one's being. I once stood at the very spot in Canterbury Cathedral where Thomas a Becket was murdered and I felt an overwhelming desire to eat something. I once stood in Concord, Massachusetts by "the rude bridge that arched the flood" , by the graves of British soldiers killed in the Battle of Lexington and Concord. How does one assuage the furies of history, I asked myself. The earth is the sepulchre of brave men, and you do it, in the view of the Gift Shoppe, by offering for sale little Yankee Kewpie Dolls made in Hong Kong.

So there, by the rude scratch that separated the states, David and I formed a Club of two members, the Tri-State Club, and swore eternal faithfulness to its principles as yet unexpounded. Over the years, David has done much travelling. He has seen the wonders of Ceylon and of Machu Picchu. He has spoken to the Stone Faces on Easter Island, while I have chalked up a few more tri-state points. I have seen the rocket

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shaped monument on the banks of the Rhine that separates France, Germany, and Switzerland. I have seen the unmarked spot on the bank of the Connecticut River that separates Massachusetts, Vermont and New Hampshire. Now, after two decades, Four Corners.

The states have constructed a little park and picnic grounds at the point. The boundary lines are in tile forming a patio of about five feet square:



The four-state point itself is designated by a well worn scratch on a brass Coast and Geodetic Survey bench mark sunk into concrete. The Four Corners park lies in the middle of a Navaho Indian Reservation in a land of mountains and mesas. The Utah quadrant, about ten miles from Four Corners, is rich in newly discovered oil, and the landscape is dotted with oil pumps bobbing up and down and looking at a distance like a flock of black iron magpies. The pumps are run by electricity which presumably is derived from oil, and I wondered how much oil it takes to pump up a barrel of oil.

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Initially we had Four Corners to ourselves. Hawks were soaring in the sky. A coyote ran across the range. Then, a flashy car with a New Mexico tag pulled up to the spot. A man and woman got out. The man went up to the bench mark and performed the ritual act of stepping on it. When he stepped off, I went up to him, friendly like, and told him that according to an old legend, any person who stepped on the four-state point was required to fill out four state income tax returns. This was a legend I invented on the spur of the moment. The man looked at me as though he had met up with one of the Great Nuts . He swept up the woman into the car and vroomed off.

We were left with the soaring hawks and the nagging question of what cartographical singularities were left to conquer.