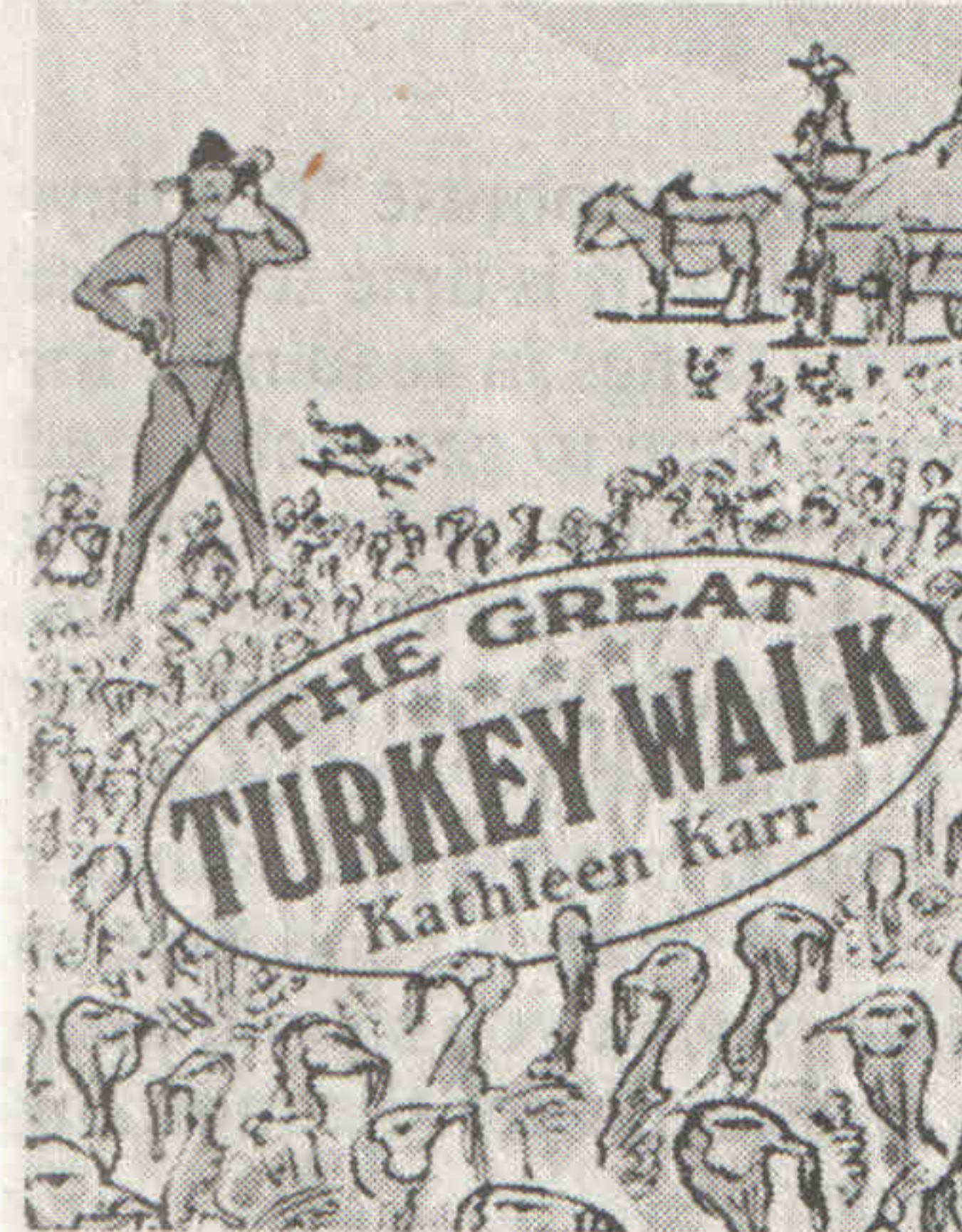




The Village School's Children's Book of the Month



Book reviewed by
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'The Great Turkey Walk'
By Kathleen Karr

You've heard of cattle drives in the 1860s, but have you ever heard of turkey drives? It all begins with Simon Green, when his beloved teacher, Miss Rogers, tells him that he has "plumbed the depths of third grade" (having completed it four times) and that it is time for him to "spread his wings... and move on."

As Simon cogitates what spreading his wings means, he comes across his grumpy neighbor, Mr. Buffey, who complains that his turkey flock has tripled in size with no good market to sell them in. Out of that encounter hatches Simon's seemingly feather-brained plan to walk 1,000 turkeys from Missouri to Denver, where the gold rush is in full swing and food prices are high. Backed by Miss Rogers' life savings, he sets about gathering material and a crew — namely an old drunk mule driver, Mr. Peece, and his dog, Emmet. Simon sobers Mr. Peece up and they and 1,000 turkeys set out on their adventure.

Along the way, Simon and his mule driver are joined by several characters, such as Jabeth, an escaped slave, who is seeking his freedom by heading to Kentucky territory and Lizzie, the only survivor of her family's encounter with the influenza. This troop forms an unlikely family, proving Miss Rogers' theory that everybody has gifts to share — it is just a matter of putting them to good use. The troop is forced to use their gifts as they face many adventures, such as Simon's long lost father who wants to swindle him out of his turkeys and the U.S. Calvary who uses the turkeys for target practice. Together, they face these seemingly impossible situations with cleverness and good will, using quick wit in tricky situations.

"The Great Turkey Walk" gives you a window into the history of the West in the 1860s from a variety of perspectives — an escaped slave, a tribe of displaced Native Americans, and an undisciplined U.S. Calvary troop. As the Civil War is brewing, the Native Americans are being forced onto reservations, and cities like Denver are springing up suddenly, due to the gold rush. All of this is told with wonderful warmth and humor, while also exploring the notion that human intelligence takes many forms. For example, Simon may not have school smarts, but he turns out to be a very good businessman. The U.S. Calvary considers the Native Americans savages, yet Simon and group's experience of them is far more refined than the Calvary's. It also puts forth the idea that family doesn't have to come from blood relations, but can form around a group of people who care for each other and put each other's needs ahead of their own. People who like humor and a little bit of history will love this book. Recommended for ages 9-99.

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