

# Along the Lincoln Highway

The Newsletter of the Iowa Lincoln Highway Association  
August 1997 ..... Volume 2 Issue 3

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## OHIO CONFERENCE A WINNER

Each year we say that "this" conference was the best that we've had. The 5th annual event in Mansfield, Ohio was no exception. It was a terrific time and, by far, the best attended.

From the bus tours and educational presentations to the thoughtful table decorations, the Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday functions were timely, well planned, and well executed. It was exciting and refreshing to learn of all the different activity going on in all of the Lincoln Highway states, and participation in the planned activities was enthusiastic.

## FRIENDS and MEMBERS!!

Next year the Conference will be held in Salt Lake City, Utah. State LHA president Jess Peterson and the Utah chapter will have another blockbuster four-day (June 17-20) educational and entertaining event planned. Please consider attending. Let's have a great Iowa turn-out in Salt Lake City! Watch the newsletter for more information. L

## Ghost Town Fans Conclude Iowa Trek

The "Ghost Town Club," a friendly group of Colorado history buffs and adventurers, started their tour of the Iowa Lincoln Highway in Clinton on June 16, and ended in Council Bluffs on June 27. The "Club" takes a major trip every year, and this year members chose to explore the Lincoln Highway in Iowa. Members are from the greater Denver area.

All reports received indicated that they had a great time in Iowa. Following is a summary of Lila Lawton's account in *The Ogden Reporter*:

"They spent Sunday and Monday nights in Boone, finishing their stay with a visit to the Historical Museum Tuesday morning and then it was on to Ogden on old U.S. 30. The group spent the night in Jefferson.

Stops in Ogden for the 70 travelers included a visit to the site of the footprints in the concrete on Ogden's main street. Many of them ate at local restaurants. Some stopped at *The Ogden Reporter* to purchase a newspaper with an article about the tour.

Another stop was at the Iowa LHA office in downtown Ogden where they saw the large Lincoln Highway murals, and other items of interest.

Many were impressed with the appearance of the town of Ogden and its main street, and were delighted to find a place to buy the loose-meat Maid-Rite sandwiches." L

## Sauerkraut Days to Feature Lincoln Highway Art Fair

Lisbon's **Sauerkraut Days** will have a new attraction this year - the Lincoln Highway Art Fair.

For the past several years, Lisbon residents Becky Hess and Mary Colee had been talking about organizing an art fair for Sauerkraut Days. Hess said they wanted a forum for artists to show and sell their handcrafted works, but there was never any room at Sauerkraut Days to accommodate an art fair.

At least there wasn't any room until last year, when the traditional layout for Sauerkraut Days' attractions was re-arranged to create more open space. Hess said the Sauerkraut Days committee was immediately receptive to the art fair idea when she pitched it to them last fall.

This summer the Lincoln Highway Art Fair will start on Main Street and extend down Washington Street between the Southeast Linn Community Center and the Lisbon Bank and Trust Co.

Hess said the art fair organizers played around with several ideas before naming the fair after the historic highway.

"We like being identified with something as significant as the Lincoln Highway," said Hess.

Hess and other organizers are currently in the process of collecting the names of artists and craftspeople interested in showing and selling their work at the Lincoln Highway Art Fair. Hess said the artisans do not have to be local. In fact, Hess said that she has artists from Iowa City and Bettendorf who may be part of the art fair. Hess, who has been creating stained glass art for thirteen years, will also have her work displayed at the fair.

Artists interested in displaying their hand-crafted works may contact Hess during the day at (319)455-0141 or M.E. Levsen in the evenings at 455-2627. L

## The LINCOLN HIGHWAY in LOWDEN

*by Jan Olive Nash*

(Reprinted by permission from *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*, Spring 1997 issue)

*Iowa Heritage Illustrated is a history magazine published by the State Historical Society of Iowa. The Spring 1997 issue includes an article on the Lincoln Hotel, a National Register of Historic Places property in Lowden. Located on a Main Street of the Lincoln Highway, the hotel was among the first of several downtown Lowden businesses established to serve the automobile trade and traveler. Iowa Heritage Illustrated can be ordered by calling Publications Sales, SHSI, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, IA 52240-1806, (319)335-3916. The article is serialized beginning with this issue.*

Celia Daehn Clemmens saw a golden opportunity in a jog in the road. Clemmens worked in the Railroad Hotel in Lowden, Iowa, halfway between Clinton and Cedar Rapids. Well aware that railroad travelers needed food and lodging, she realized that the new kind of traveler of the 20th century - the automobile tourist - would need the same.

Thus was born Lowden's Lincoln Hotel, built in 1915. Today it stands as a significant state and local example of the tremendous impact the automobile had on the culture and physical fabric of small towns in Iowa during the early 20th century. Located on a Main Street corner of the Lincoln Highway, the first coast-to-coast

highway in the nation, this little hotel was among the first of a number of downtown Lowden businesses eventually established to serve the automobile trade and traveler.

When the first transcontinental automobile crossing was made in 1903 - a 63-day trip from San Francisco to New York - most roads in Iowa were unimproved dirt wagon roads running along section lines. Roads to and from Iowa's small towns were intended to serve the local farmers' need of transporting crops and livestock to market by getting them to the nearby towns' railroad stations. Most communities were best linked to each other through their rail connections. If one needed to travel beyond one's hometown, one usually did it by rail rather than by dirt road.

Iowa's sorry roads - dusty in the summer and quagmires of sucking mud in the spring - were particularly daunting for non-local travelers. There were few directional or locational signs, and few guarantees of readily available gasoline or lodging. Yet the demand for good roads and for services geared to auto tourists was growing in response to America's lust for cross-country trips.

What cross-country travelers needed were established routes that identified and linked existing dirt roads. Ambitiously labeled "highways," these routes usually jogged along right-angle section lines and through towns. Years later, some would be paved as main routes, and shortcuts would be devised that ignored Iowa's grid system. But early highway boosters had to look first to existing transportation routes - and they found one through Lowden.

The Yankee Run stream runs past Lowden, cutting a diagonal swath to the southeast as it drains the surrounding floodplain and heads toward the Mississippi. The upland ridges on either side of Yankee Run rise a hundred or more feet, making the low, flat prairie in between a natural transportation corridor. Early wagon roads followed Yankee Run, and so did the Chicago, Iowa and Nebraska Railroad company when it was built in 1857. Renamed the Chicago & North Western (CNW) in 1864, the railroad was able to build double tracks through the county and Lowden by 1891 because of this flat, accommodating terrain.

This natural transportation corridor through Lowden was one of many considered by the leaders of the Lincoln Highway Association as a likely route through Iowa. Henry B. Joy, former president of Packard Motor Car Company, originator of the name for the Lincoln Highway, and first president of the highway association, selected the route. "Joy had traveled back and forth across Iowa at least ten times in five years. He felt that there were as many as fifty possible routes across the state." Drake Hokanson writes in the *The Lincoln Highway: Main Street across America*. "They were all about equal in length... but they also were uniformly unimproved and tended to zigzag all over the map following a haphazard arrangement of section-line roads...."

"The route Joy selected between Chicago and Omaha had little significance as a through road prior to the coming of the automobile," Hokanson continues. "It was by no means a standout among poor options. What pulled Joy to this route was simply that it had grown to be the route of common usage. Long before any Lincoln Highway markers went up, this path had been used by people traveling cross-country in automobiles [including the first auto crossing of the continent in 1903, and the New York-to-Paris Race in 1908]... By the time Henry Joy came looking for his Lincoln Highway route, the Iowa portion had been dubbed the Iowa Official Trans-Continental Route.

The *Lowden News* confirms that the town saw its share of Trans-Continental Route travelers. For example, on September 12, 1913, the paper reported: "Yesterday after filling the tank of a large touring car at the corner of H.L. Deichmann's Store, the chauffeur cranked the engine without setting the brake and the machine started backwards, crossed the street and climbed the two-and-a-half foot embankment just missing the large tree on the C.F. Richmann place. The lady in the back was not injured." **L**

*Jan Olive Nash is an architectural historian and a partner in Tallgrass Historians L.C. in Iowa City.*

## **Fall Meeting Agenda is in the Works**

The tentative date is the weekend of October 10-12. We are going to try to extend the meeting for more than one day because so much is going on that we need to discuss and plan for. The schedule is beginning to take shape and looks like this:

On Friday afternoon, early arrivals can visit the newly-opened Lewis and Clark Trail Center in Council Bluffs on their own. Dinner will be at 5:30 at either Geurney's Restaurant in Missouri Valley or at the Aeroplane Inn at Honey Creek - both on the original Lincoln Highway. There will be a 7:30 Board of Directors meeting to which all ILHA members are invited. The Board meeting will probably be held at the Super 8 motel conference room in Missouri Valley.

### **Saturday's Tentative Schedule**

- **8:00 - 9:00 am** Coffee, rolls, and tour of Missouri Valley Welcome Center 3 miles east of town.
- **9:00 - 9:30 am** Meeting at the Welcome Center to discuss the proposed expansion and Lincoln Highway involvement.
- **9:30 am** All aboard a motor coach for a morning tour of the Lincoln east from Missouri Valley to Dunlap. Includes stops at the Quarry Bridge in Logan, abandoned stairstep section, Woodbine brick street, Dunham barn, and lunch about 12:30 near Dunlap.
- **1:30 pm** Back on the bus to tour the Loess Hills in Harrison County. Stops include an apple orchard to view cider-making, a Loess Hills overlook, a Lewis and Clark campsite, and a walk up the Honey Creek Hill on the oldest abandoned section. This being the second week in October, we are hoping to see spectacular color amid some of the most beautiful landscape scenery in Iowa.
- **Evening** A nice dinner will be arranged for attendees. Time and place will be announced.

### **Sunday Schedule**

- **Morning** Meetings will be held as necessary or requested. Visit other Lincoln Highway sites or Loess Hills sites on your own, and return home.

Headquarters for the meeting will be the Super 8 motel in Missouri Valley. Be sure to ask for the Lincoln Highway Association special rate if you make reservations.

We will need to have a \$10 deposit for the tour bus by September 20. If 25 people have not registered by that date we will abandon the bus idea and travel by car caravan. Total cost for the bus and Saturday meals has yet to be determined, but should not exceed \$30 per person. L

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## *In Memoriam*

We are sorry to report the passing of our good friend and Lincoln Highway worker Bill Kupka. He made our wooden Lincoln Highway Market, and created the "Vitame Vas" (Welcome) to Chelsea sign below. Bill always promoted the Lincoln Highway in his area, and always welcomed travelers to this home and his display of wood carvings. We will miss him.

## Clinton-Cedar County Tour

Members of the ILHA from Clinton and Cedar counties organized a one-day westward trek on the Highway on June 21. The group started at the Thomas Oaks Lumber Company near the Mississippi River in Clinton where a progress report was given by Don Ketelsen. The building is the future headquarters of the Clinton County Historical Society.

Stops included the Western Clinton County Historical Society Museum in DeWitt where Ann Soenksin led a tour. The Wapsipinicon Floodplain section that is scheduled to be incorporated into a county park was also visited.

The group arrived at Wheatland in time to meet up with members heading east for the Mansfield, Ohio national conference. The groups enjoyed lunch together at the Lions' Park in Wheatland.

The afternoon stops included the abandoned section west of Lowden, and another at the Merlin Hulse farm where Merlin shared some of his early memories of the Lincoln Highway paving and construction process as well as of his beautiful horses. The group also took time to tour the old restored depot which serves as the Lowden Town Museum.

HiWay Gardens in Stanwood was the next adventure and we enjoyed photos and stories from the present owners Deb and Rich Wagner. Forest Johnson, who still lives on the original road near Mechanicsville, told the group about his section that never got paved (and remains a gravel road today).

More than 75 people attended our most successful tour to date. County members are considering a fall tour. L

### Welcome to our new members!



**Scott and Cathy Potthoff** of Carroll

"We farm and live on the original Highway 30 in Carroll County."  
and



**Robert and Barbara Tomlinson** of Crescent

## LHA Merchants Association Underway

The Lincoln Highway Association is adding another facet to their organization. The Lincoln Highway Merchants Association was developed by the Iowa Department of Tourism and the Lincoln Highway Association. LeeAnna Ausberger of Jefferson is coordinating the pilot program this summer.

The main goal of the Merchants Association is to establish an economic development link of merchants along the Lincoln Highway for the purpose of bringing tourism dollars to their businesses. The other goals are:

- To encourage residents to shop at home and recognize the importance of hometown support;
- To increase consumer awareness of shopping alternatives;
- To combine economic development with tourism by promoting travel along the Lincoln Highway;
- And to develop increased tourism activity by making a trip more enjoyable and meaningful.

Merchants can participate in a variety of ways, many of which are at no cost to them. Simply putting a LH sticker in a window and displaying brochures can do a lot to promote the Highway. Other ways include adding a Lincoln Highway logo or slogan to already scheduled newspaper (below) or radio advertisements, naming a sale or special after the Lincoln Highway, and selling Lincoln Highway souvenirs. Souvenirs include mugs, pins, stickers, t-shirts, map-packs, books and other items.

Merchants are encouraged to join the national Lincoln Highway Association at a cost of \$30 per year which includes a subscription to *The Lincoln Highway Forum*. Businesses need not be located directly on the Lincoln Highway to participate, and indeed, whole communities can actively promote the Lincoln Highway.

Merchants interested in more information on the Lincoln Highway Merchants Association should contact LeeAnn Ausberger at (515)386-4694. L

## LHA Adopted by RC&D

The RC&D (Resource Conservation and Development) has adopted the Lincoln Highway as a national project. This U.S. Department of Agriculture program deals with rural development and can help with planning and grant writing as well as with other issues.

The Lincoln Highway qualifies as a cultural resource, and, of course, most of our corridor is rural. Clinton, Cedar, Greene, Carroll, Crawford, Harrison and Pottawattamie counties are currently involved with RC&D. Benton, Tama and Boone may soon be involved. Check with your county soil conservation service or extension director. L

From the menu at the "Wet Goods Bar & Grill" in Jefferson:  
**Lincoln Highway Pork Loin**  
 Grilled .. \$4.50 Breaded .. \$4.80  
 ...and the rest of the menu looks good too!

## Towns Along the Way...

*Please let us know of LH goings-on in your town or county!*

### **Mt. Vernon Road and the Seedling Mile, which are slated for improvement:**

The Linn County, Mt. Vernon and Lisbon preservation groups have begun negotiations with the Linn County Engineer's Office. The State Historic Preservation Office should eventually be involved through a procedure known as the "106" process. We are hopeful we can end up with a reconstructed road that is safer, more visually appealing, and that retains its historical integrity.

**Fun Days in Ogden:**

We participated in this 67-year-old event on July 7-9. The ILHA has a simple but effective float organized and it is available for all celebrations. It consists of a pickup hauling the wooden market with the two Boy Scouts standing beside. A sound system plays the Lincoln Highway Song. Please let us know if you want to drive it in your parade.

**Bell Tower Festival in Jefferson, Water Tower Festival Parade in Scranton:**

The Lincoln Highway Association was represented at the Bell Tower Festival in Jefferson, and at the Scranton Water Tower Festival parade. The new float was in the parade, and we had a booth in Jefferson. L

## LINCOLN HIGHWAY EVENT CALENDAR

**August 16:** Sauerkraut Days and Lincoln Highway Art Festival in Lisbon

**August 22-23:** Lincoln Highway Days in Nevada (VOLUNTEERS NEEDED to STAFF the BOOTH)

**October:** State Tourism meeting in Ames

**October 3-4:** *Motor Iowa*, a 100+ vehicle tour of Iowa, part of it on the Lincoln

**October 10-12:** State Lincoln Highway meeting and tour in western Iowa

**June 17-20, 1998:** National Conference in Salt Lake City - Let's get lots of Iowans there!!

## LINCOLN HIGHWAY CONTACT PERSONS

- Committees:
- Database or list of all Iowa Lincoln Highway markers - call or write John Carver, 2501 Falbrook Drive NE, Cedar Rapids IA, 52402, (319)393-4295.
- Walking Tours of towns: Helen Miller is working on this for the town of Ogden
- Merchants Association information: call LeeAnna Ausberger (515)386-4694
- Parade and Float Committee: call Ty Casotti (515)432-2796, or Bob Owens (515)386-3419
- Interpretive Sites: state, regional or local, contact Bob Ausberger
- National Education and Curriculum Committee: Sue Jacobson, RR 3, Box 347A, Jerico Road, Aurora IL, 60506
- Utah Map Pack available (\$10): Jesse Peterson, 67 Benchview Dr., Tooele UT, 87074
- Newsletter and Web Site: Paul Walker, (319)358-7056, paul-walker@uiowa.edu

## ILHA Officers, Board of Directors, and Staff

### OFFICERS

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**Vice President** Anne Schoonover (319)477-6191

**Secretary** Joyce Ausberger (515)386-4521

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## **OFFICE VOLUNTEERS**

**Office Manager** Lila Lawton, Helen Miller

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