

Along the Lincoln Highway



The Newsletter of the Iowa Lincoln Highway Association
 Spring/Summer 1999 Volume 4 Issue 2

Ground-Breaking Ceremonies Held at Interpretive Site.

Reprinted from The Jefferson Bee.

Groundbreaking ceremonies were held on Wednesday, April 14th at the Lions Club Tree park east of **Grand Junction** for the Greene/Boone County Regional Interpretive Site of the historic Lincoln Highway. About 65 were present.

Development of the site culminates four years of work by Bob and Joyce Ausberger of Hardin Township, Greene County, who spearheaded the project for the Lincoln Highway Association. A federal highway grant of \$300,000 is funding the project, along with some in-kind assistance from the Greene County engineer's office.

About two-thirds of the cost of the project will go for construction. The other one-third was invested in historical research and site design, undertaken by the Iowa State University Department of Landscape Architecture. Troy Seifert of the ISU department and Doug Adamson and March Schulte, landscape architects for the project, were present for the ceremony.

Bob Ausberger served as master of ceremonies for the event, and he asked for remarks from representatives of the project's many partnering organizations: the Grand Junction Lions Club, the city of Grand Junction, Greene County, Boone County, the Lincoln Highway Association, the Iowa Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, the ISU Department of Landscape Architecture, the Greene County Historical Society, and citizens of Greene County.

Several of the spokesmen commended the Grand Junction Lions Club for its beautification work at the site. Some of the trees will be replanted elsewhere on the site this week to permit construction walkways by Greene County crews and an information center. They also praised the Ausbergers for their initiative and determination in seeing the project through to construction.

Ausberger emphasized the appropriateness of the "living history" highway site for historical interpretation. An original Lincoln Highway concrete bridge spans West Beaver Creek just north of the adjacent Union Pacific Railroad, and a "second generation" bridge lies just south of the railroad on Old Highway 30 (now County road E53).

A third, newer bridge spans the creek at the south edge of the site on new Highway 30. With the railroad bridge and the Highway 30 overpass just to the west of the site, then, there are five bridges that mark the history of overland transportation over the past century.



The *real* workhorse of the Grand Junction ground-breaking ceremony, in a pose that would make her Lincoln Highway-building ancestors proud.

A computer class of East Greene Community High School developed a website on the Internet for the historical site. A Lincoln Highway marker for the site has been donated by a woman from Cedar Rapids. Ausberger noted that Grand Junction has more historic old service stations on the Lincoln Highway than any other town in Iowa.

Greene County engineer Wade Weiss explained how some federal highway funds are earmarked for historical and beautification projects like the Lincoln Highway Interpretive Site. He added that the project grew from a relatively small plan budgeted at \$50,000 to its current status as a \$300,000 undertaking.

A letting date for August 17 is planned for the project's construction by the Iowa DOT.

Greene and Boone County individuals, townships, towns and county governments worked with the original Lincoln Highway Association to improve the route from 1913 to 1924. In 1914 a group of Greene County citizens, along with the board of supervisors, donated funds for improvements to the roadway. The highway across the county was graded and graveled, thus giving Greene County the distinction of being the first county in Iowa to complete that project. Later, Greene County became the first county to pave its section, and also the first county to have "first class" bridges built using cement.

In 1925 a group of highway engineers recommended numbering highways with even numbers running east and west and odd numbers running north and south. In Iowa, the Lincoln became U.S. 30. From 1926 until the present, the route has been managed and maintained by the state and federal highway administrations and local county officials. L

THE TEN MILLIONTH: New York to San Francisco.

The following is reprinted from a 1974 article commemorating the 50th anniversary of the ten-millionth Model T.

In 1924 Henry Ford produced his 10 millionth Model T and as a publicity stunt the car was painted with appropriate lettering and Lincoln Highway markers. It was driven on the Lincoln Highway from New York to San Francisco by Frank Kulich, a well-known contemporary racing star.

The car was immortalized and the Lincoln Highway became a legend. For many years it was the major cross-country artery. With the expansion of the Interstate Highway System, the importance of the Lincoln Highway has diminished to the point that much of it has been lost from current road and street maps.

In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Ten Millionth Ford's cross-country tour, the trip is being reenacted, using an identical car painted in the original manner. The car is being driven on the entire original route as far as can be determined by research of old maps. In some cases, where the only road is now high speed freeway, the car will either be driven on an adjacent access road or, if that is not possible, it will be trailered to the next safe portion of the Lincoln Highway.

The trip will start at Battery Park in New York City on Sunday, June 2, 1974, and is expected to terminate at the Ferry Building in San Francisco on Saturday, June 15, 1974.

The fifty-year-old car will have to average nearly 300 miles per day to meet the schedule but unless major mechanical difficulties occur, today's Lincoln Highway should provide an easier trip than the one in 1924.



LINCOLN HIGHWAY REDISCOVERY

Dr. Al Hathaway is going to repeat his feat of 1924 this coming June. The same car that covered the route in 1974 will repeat the feat in June of 1999 for the 75th "diamond" anniversary of the tour of the Ten Millionth Ford.

TEN MILLIONTH MODEL T LINCOLN HIGHWAY SCHEDULE

Sunday 6 June Battery Park, New York City

...

Wednesday 9 June Overnight at De Kalb IL

Thursday 10 June To De Witt IA, overnight at Davenport IA

Friday 11 June Overnight at Denison IA (Bob Ausberger will be joining the tour from De Witt to Denison)

Saturday 12 June Overnight at North Platte NE

...

Saturday 19 June Ferry Building, San Francisco CA

Let's give him a great big Lincoln Highway welcome! L

Chasing Lincoln.

Motorcycle Cruiser is a magazine for motorcycling enthusiasts. Two staff writers recently rode the Lincoln highway across the country to promote the new Polaris Victory, (manufactured in Spirit Lake, Iowa) and a Harley-Davidson Dyna Convertible. Their best promotion, however, was for the Lincoln Highway itself.

Jamie Elvidge wrote of their adventures in the article below. Watch for her continuing story in subsequent issues.



Say "Route 66" and Americans bristle with nostalgia. The human adventure gland opens and you immediately picture an empty two-lane road stretching out before you. A tumbleweed rolls across your temporal lobe. It doesn't matter that you've never been on the famous road, you know exactly how it would feel. That's marketing for you. We've been conditioned to think of Route 66 as our country's historic highway – our beloved Mother Road.

There is a road out there that truly deserves the glory though. It's the Lincoln Highway. It was America's first transcontinental road, "The Main Street Across America," made official in 1913. Heard of it? Most haven't. Sadly, Lincoln Highway would be the household name if a historic highway's value were measured in history rather than hype. Instead, the old Lincoln lies abandoned, quiet and without glamour; a tattered thread that connects New York City with San Francisco.

We used the excuse of testing the Harley Convertible and the new [Polaris] Victory to find this old road and the spirit of adventure that inspired it. Since the original plan intended to open a pathway from east to west – with the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco being the destination – we started in Times Square, New York. I would meet editor Art Friedman at 46th and Broadway seven days before we were scheduled to be in San Francisco. About halfway into the trip, he would hand off a bike to Evans Brasfield, who would complete the journey.

FROM POINT A TO POINT B –VIA H, Z, AND C

Thanks to the Internet and AAA we had detailed maps of the Lincoln's route west. Road maps scarcely existed in the 1920s, and what was available was far from accurate. Travelers relied on markers. All 3389 miles of the Lincoln Highway were at one time negotiated by following uppercase letter Ls painted on the telegraph poles. An arrow on the red, white and blue emblem told travelers when to turn.

Even if the markers still existed it would be impossible to follow them through modern-day Manhattan. The scene – and the smell – must have been quite different in 1913. Imagine a sea of Packards and LaSalles.

To leave Manhattan in 1913 one had to take a boat across the Hudson River. A Lincoln journey, in fact, began and ended with a ferry ride – the final one crossing the San Francisco Bay from Oakland. Today the trip begins and ends with tolls. As Art and I inched our way toward the Lincoln Tunnel, our boot soles dripping with grease and antifreeze, I thought the ferry ride must have been a very pleasant way to begin the trip.

Although our map was well-marked, we blew past several key turns. Staring at your gas tank bag-map while riding on the New Jersey Turnpike is not something I'd recommend. We finally got off the turnpike and followed a busy street that began to meander as it faithfully followed the old King's Highway.

This stretch of the Lincoln – between New York and Philadelphia – was used as a coach route for almost a century before the combustion engine was invented. Back then it took five to seven days to complete the 94-mile journey. Before it carried coaches, the old King's Highway is said to have been an ancient footpath. It was on this wooded, residential back road that we found our first Lincoln Highway sign. And although it was green and swung from a stoplight, it brought enormous satisfaction.

Of course, as Art and I sat smirking at the stoplight, we had no idea we would shortly prove ourselves to be an astonishingly poor navigating team. Two people can indeed get lost more efficiently than one. We'd been told the Pennsylvania portion of the historic highway would be the hardest to chase. We didn't understand the weight of that warning until we accidentally crossed into Delaware. L

Ramblings Along the Lincoln Highway.

*Minutes of the Spring 1999 Iowa LHA
General Membership Meeting.
10 April 1999.
Cronk's Cafe, Denison, Iowa.*

Submitted by Joyce Ausberger, Secretary.

President Margaret Elbert welcomed the LHA members and guests. She reviewed the agenda and asked others to feel free to add information.

Upcoming events were discussed. Ron Cory asked us to remember Tama's Lincoln Highway Bridge Festival May 14 and 15. Saturday the 15th, the Iowa LHA will have a display. John Fitzsimmons mentioned that his Boone County Civil War group would be performing after the parade Saturday afternoon.

Elaine Ehlert and Linda Dickman passed out their invitation to Woodbine's Lincoln Highway program 26 June. Drake Hokanson will be the keynote speaker. Their walking/car tour booklet will be completed and available at that time. Morning and afternoon bus tours will be available.

Ron Preston invited those who were attending the LHA Conference in Rochelle, Illinois, to stop by the Preston station. He will have it open both before and after the Conference.

Utah guest Rollin Southwell suggested that we let other state LHA members know of Iowa activities.

Margaret reported that Colo has applied for a RIG grant to help in the restoration plans of Niland's Corner. They met March 30th with a landscape architect to review their goals.

Ann Schoonover sent a report on Youngville. Late in July she hopes to have the Youngville renovation completed. A stove and refrigerator were donated from Amana.

Bob Ausberger reported that county engineers need to have guidance from federal highway as well as the state DOT representatives in designing historical roads using the flexibility of design criteria available. Crawford

County supervisor Robert Lehrman, after welcoming the Lincoln Highway Association and guests to Crawford County, agreed that it was difficult to know what was the right thing to do.

Bob Owens reported Greene County has located another concrete mile marker and that it would be placed in Scranton. He also reported that the Martin Guess memorial money would be used for several projects this year.

Margaret reminded members that this fall would be the new election of state association members. So far, Paul Walker has expressed interest in the National Directorship, vacated by Bob Ausberger.

Eric Skoog, the owner of Cronks, reviewed the history of the restaurant. It opened in 1929. He passed around old menus. The original owner, Mr. Cronks, understood that the Lincoln Highway moving a block north to its later location would be a boon to businesses there, and bought the café existing on the spot at that time. The early café was torn down to make room for the present structure, which has been expanded and renovated.

Jason Gessy, the owner of the Park Motel across the street from Cronk's, said that the original part of the motel was built in 1939. He and his dad are actively restoring it.

Sandra Scott, the director of the Donna Reed Center in Denison, reviewed the restoration of the old Opera House into the Donna Reed Center. The facility also houses the restored and magnificent Candy Kitchen with authentic soda fountain.

Tour highlights included a new culvert "discovered" behind the Best Western motel west of town. This is the same motel which lost its slabs of original highway two years ago in a widening of the Boyer River. Two rarely seen culverts were investigated near Arion. The buses returned through Charter Oak. L

News of Good Things to Come.

The ILHA has two important announcements to make.

First, Public Relations Chair Jim Ranniger will announce at the national conference that starting in 2000 the AAA will formally recognize the Lincoln Highway in their TourBook series.

In a letter to Jim, they agreed that it would be beneficial and of interest to AAA members to highlight the highway's history and points of interest: "...our Editorial staff will create and add a Lincoln Highway informational sidebar to each state section for which the highway passes through." Congratulations to Jim and his public relations committee for their good work!

Second, U.S. Congressman Ralph Regula of Ohio made a proposal to Congress asking for a \$500,000 appropriation for the "Lincoln Highway Study Act of 1999."

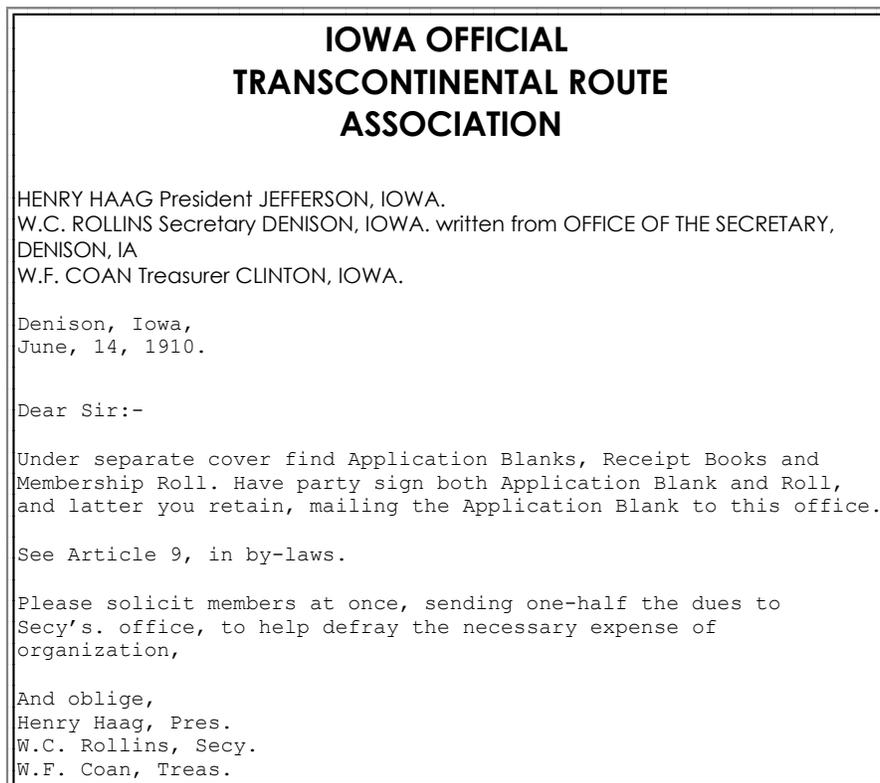
In his bill the National Park Service will do feasibility reports on the Highway and study its historical significance. Benefits of the process include funding for public and private preservation and economic development; state, national and international exposure; and a mechanism for individual and group projects. Stay tuned for more information! L

ILHA Board to Meet in Ogden.

The Iowa LHA Board of Directors will meet in Ogden on Saturday, July 10th, at 9:30 am. Coffee and doughnuts will be provided at 9:00. The meeting is open to the public.

The semi-annual meeting will be held at the Community Center Building on West Walnut Street in downtown Ogden. There will be no follow-up local tour, though attendees are welcome to stay and see the sights. L

Rummaging through their backroom recently, the owners of Wittrock's Garage in Carroll - a car dealership dating from Lincoln Highway days - found this letter addressed from the Iowa state officers of the Transcontinental Route Association, the forerunner of the Lincoln Highway Association. Due primarily to its lack of resources, the Transcontinental Route Association was not as well promoted as the LHA although the route was essentially the same, at least across Iowa. Note that the letter predates the LHA by more than three years, and some of the officers would later hold positions in the Iowa LHA.



Feature Photo.

The Lincoln Highway Association has gone space-age! This issue's mystery photo was taken from a fascinating website that displays actual Earth images captured from an orbiting Russian satellite. While there are gaps in the ground area covered by the satellite, the newsletter staff did manage to trace the Lincoln Highway across most of the state.

In this image, the seasoned Lincoln Highway observer should, without too much difficulty, spot an historic bridge as well as a restaurant serving as a long-time Lincoln Highway landmark. As always, if you wish to identify the location of the highway and see your name up in lights - or at least black ink - you can submit your guess to the *Along the Lincoln Highway* email address at pwalker@inav.net. L

Outside Iowa in the LHA.

*From the NE New Jersey Chapter Newsletter
Spring Issue 99*

Membership in our chapter is increasing. We are now 52 and spread from New England to the land of Dixie. That there is an increasing number in Central New Jersey is very encouraging.

We are getting a handle on this presentation of a national meeting; Jesse Petersen [Utah State Director] sent an outline of tasks. The obvious first chore is the appointment of an able coordinating group, each with an area to handle.

Iowa LHA members should be interested to know that the 2000 national conference will be in New Jersey.

Lots of Upcoming Events - Join Us!

Jefferson's annual Bell Tower Festival takes place on **June 12th** with the parade at 10:00 am. Look for the LHA booth.

Crossroad's Festival in Colo also on **June 12th** with parade on Saturday morning.

Al Hathaway's Transcontinental trip with the "10 Millionth Ford." Leaving DeWitt for Denison the evening of **June 12th**.

The 41st Annual Rose Festival festivities will run Friday through Sunday, **June 18, 19, and 20**. The Grand Parade is on Saturday, **June 19th**, at 10:00 am. The theme of the Festival this year is "A Century of Memories."

Lincoln Highway Association national conference in Rochelle, Illinois **16-19 June**.

Woodbine Lincoln Highway Program and Tour **June 26th**.

LHA Directors Meeting in Boone **July 10th**.

Nevada Lincoln Highway Days **August 28th**.

Fall LHA Meeting in Jefferson **October 9th**.

Can you help us out?

By checking the renewal date on your mailing label and resubscribing well in advance of the date, you will save your ILHA from having to send renewal notice letters.

Thanks!
