

Along the Lincoln Highway



**The Newsletter of the Iowa Lincoln Highway Association
Fall/Winter 2000 Volume 5 Issue 4**

Greetings from the Office of the New Co-Presidents.

By Van & Bev Becker

This is the transition time when the Iowa Chapter of the LHA seats its second co-presidential team. This will be a co-president/husband-wife effort. We have visited with most members who have attended the meetings on a regular basis over the past few years. The rest have read, we hope, the "Have Spare Tire, Will Travel" column in the newsletter.



Bev and I are from the southwest quadrant of Cedar Rapids. We live within walking distance of the original highway (where it jogs from Second Avenue SW over to Johnson Avenue NW) and the current Highway 30 “fog route.” Bev graduated from Parsons College and Drake University with degrees in education and I graduated from St. Ambrose University with a business degree. We are not retired yet, but are close enough to start talking about it. Bev works evenings at the Cedar Rapids Police Department in the Detective Bureau and I work nights at Rockwell-Collins in the HF radio station. We are constantly trying to juggle our work/sleep/weekend schedules to maintain normal lives.

The Iowa Association has some uncompleted projects and commitments upon which we intend to concentrate. These half-completed and committed projects must be priority items. The various county consuls will be called upon to act as our “Kitchen Cabinet.”

As an organization committed to historic preservation, we must be aware that the current generation of young explorers looks to the computer first for information. The intersection of the Lincoln Highway and Information Highway must have a brightly-lighted neon sign that says, “Come join us; we are the Lincoln Highway Association.” We have a few thoughts to expand this Internet presence—hopefully with minimal impact on web developer Paul. The Internet is not a fad. It is the first line of research and information and it grows daily. We must use this device as a means to spread our word to prospective members and current members.

Last, Bev and I have been rather difficult to contact because of an unlisted telephone number. For reasons unrelated to the ILHA, we must retain the unlisted number for the time being. The best way to contact us is by letter at 1212 20th Street SW, Cedar Rapids, IA, 52404 or via email at IowaLHA@mcleodusa.net. How’s that for a nifty new email address?

Now, get out there and drive our highway. Let’s all become familiar with every mile! And, please share your experiences by dropping the newsletter editor a note. Safe driving everyone! L

Greene County LHA Enjoys New Headquarters.

By Bob Owens and Joyce Ausberger

The Greene County Lincoln Highway Association now has its own Headquarters located at 110 West Lincolnway in Jefferson, one half-block west of Mohaney Bell Tower on the north side of the original Lincoln Highway (photo at top).

Renting the building was a topic of discussion at the group’s September meeting. After some discussion regarding cost, members voted unanimously to lease the facility, providing the Greene County LHA with its own meeting hall, museum, and Lincoln Highway travel office.

The structure was built in the 1920s for use as a hamburger cafe, and through the late 20s and early 30s served White Star Hamburgers.



Greene County Director Bob Owens with Co-President Van Becker in front of new County ILHA Headquarters.

From the mid-1930s to the 40s it was known as the “5 Spot Cafe,” so named for its 5-cent hamburgers. The cafe held as many patrons as could squeeze into its counter and three booths.

In the 1940s the owners of the cafe were drafted and the “5 Spot” closed for the duration of the war. Since then the building has served many uses for the Jefferson community.

The organization has gathered its collection of LHA items and has them on display, along with assorted for-sale items. Hours are 1-4 p.m., or you can call Bob Owens at 515-386-3419. L

Greetings Friends!

Please welcome our newest members:

James Cooney	Fort Wayne, IN
Leland Dahlin	Cedar Falls
Gary Frost	Coralville
Steven and Mary Halstead	Bondurant
Theodore Herrick	Grand Junction
Stan Larson	Menomonee Falls, WI
Robert McConkie	Jefferson
Charles Stone	St. Davids, PA
Don Willard	Pottawattamie County
Bill Zeller	Palo

Denison Motel Added to National Register.

By Becky Irvine

Reprinted from The Sioux City Journal.

25 October 2000

The series Lincoln Logs will continue in our next issue.

The Park Motel, located where highways 30, 59 and 141 meet, has been added to the National Register of Historic Places.

The National Register is the federal government’s official list of historic properties worthy of preservation. Listing in the National Register provides recognition and assists in preserving America’s heritage, according to Dorothy Kutchinski, chair of the Crawford County Historical Society.

Kutchinski met with the Crawford County Board of Supervisors and gave a presentation on the Park Motel. In her recommendation to the board, Kutchinski said, “The property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. The current owner, **Jason Gesy**, is undertaking a major restoration with the intent that it remain as authentic and true to the original design as possible. This nomination to the National Register would recognize the significance of this unique, early highway motel to Denison.”

The Park Motel was built in 1940. Ted Port, the owner, had the motel built with the idea that tourists were beginning to travel by automobile across the country and would need affordable shelter for the night, with food and car care nearby. These would be supplied by the cafe and gas station across the road, which he had built earlier, when Highway 30 was still a mud road, according to Kutchinski. The gas station was built in 1926, with the cafe added in 1929, as well as a house for the owner. All these were built in the same style as the later motel. By the time the motel was built, the cafe was owned and operated by L.J. Cronk, and the motel and cafe were, though separately owned, always advertised together.

While not built along the original Lincoln Highway, the Park Motel is situated along the right-of-way for the original Lincoln Highway route through Denison. In 1926, when Ted Port had his service station built, U.S. 30 had just come into existence. Prior to that, the Lincoln was the main east-west highway route through Denison.

Notable exterior features of the Park Motel are the two gable-roofed vestibules, a second-floor bay window; two long rows of casement windows, and a scalloped crenellation-type detail around the base. Other noteworthy features are the round-arched doorways, the terra cotta tile roofs on the projecting vestibules and porch hoods on both the front and rear of the building.

The overall architectural style of the Park Motel is Spanish Colonial Revival, popular between 1915-1940. Related to the earlier Mission style of architecture. Spanish Colonial Revival is a simple style distinguished by red tile roofs, stucco walls, heavy wooden doors in round-arch openings, and low horizontal emphasis.

The drive-through of the Park Motel imparts some of the true hacienda effect, leading the visitor through the building and into the rear parking lot of the motel.

It is not known if Ted Port selected the Park Motel's design from an existing motel along the West Coast, or from some type of standardized set of plans.

Modifications to the Park have been few, which is rather unusual in this type of structure, leaving the integrity of the building intact. In 1965, two wings were added, but instead of attaching them to the older building, the wings were added as detached units set at angles to either side of the original building. Thus, motel room space was more than doubled without affecting the motel building.

The park Motel was also unusual in its design as a two-story structure. Most of the early motels were one-story structures that reflected the evolution from the attached cabins of the tourist camp, or court, pattern to connected rooms of the motel.

The Park has been continuously operated as a motel since it was built in 1940. The list of well-known people who have stayed over the years include Denison native Donna Reed, Ethel Kennedy, Elizabeth Dole, and former Iowa Governor Terry Branstad. L

Ramblings Along the Lincoln Highway.

*Minutes of the Fall 2000
Iowa LHA Meeting
Honey Creek, Iowa.
7 October 2000.
Submitted by Norma Berns, Secretary.*

Twenty-one ILHA members met at the Hitchcock Nature Center north of the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area for the quarterly meeting, with **Co-Presidents Jeff Benson & Margaret Elbert** presiding.

The director of the Center gave a brief history. The YMCA owned it from 1967-1986, and in 1991, the Pottawattamie County Conservation Board became the new owner with assistance from a grant through the REAP program. They maintain the stunning 806 acres as a Loess Hills Nature Preserve. The lodge is available for meetings.

The proposed Model A Ford Club of America's trip was discussed, with Tama, Marshall, Story and Boone counties to be considered as hosts. Proposed date for the caravan is 14-16 September 2001. **Joyce Ausberger** moved to accept the challenge. The County directors of said counties will discuss it and submit their decisions for the 2001 "Main Street Across America" Tour.

Projects reports:

A new steel span bridge west of Nevada will be dedicated Oct. 25 at 11 a.m.

Another bridge will be replaced one mile east of Colo.

Our group is seeking money or grants for a park project east of Belle Plaine for an interpretive site.

Greene Co. needs volunteers: structural & manual labor for decade markers, which need approval by the County Engineer.

Bob Owens spearheaded the LH Headquarters project in Jefferson. Formerly the Five Spot, it sold hamburgers for 5 cents. The building is a half-block west of the city square. It will be open 1-4.

1930 bridge west of Boone is now gone, with scraps taken to Ames by Rose Destruction. The new bridge to be done by middle of December.

Larry Forney of Colo reported on the Niland Project.

Phase 1 - completion of gas station

Phase 2 - the one-stop's cabins. Sent letters to Colo Alumni and are selling "Niland Corner" t-shirts for \$10; will raise \$190,000 for the 2 phases to acquire grants.

* * *

Annual election results:

Bev & Van Becker of Cedar Rapids elected Co-Presidents; **Norma Berns** elected Secretary.

Paul Walker made motion with **Ardith Sporleder** second. Passed by acclamation.

Bev, who works in the Cedar Rapids Police Department, and Van, who works for Rockwell Collins, were introduced.

Lincoln Highway copyright was discussed. The Lincoln Highway logo was registered for educational material by Howard Stoval of Chicago, but is being used in violation of that copyright by many outside LHA.

Concrete markers are being found and sold for high prices, up to \$1000. Seventy-seven markers found so far in Iowa by Beckers.

Stan Ring, Lincoln Highway advocate in Story Co. Museum, died on 28 September.

* * *

Business portion ended early, so walking tour rescheduled for before lunch. Members hiked the abandoned three-quarter-mile-long grade (photo) at Honey Creek north of Council Bluffs. Sights included the original transcontinental telegraph poles with insulators. Also viewed was the garbage-strewn and impassable upper grade section. Tour host announced that EPA plans to clean up area. Members agreed ILHA should consider way to take advantage of rejuvenation.

Lunch served at the Aeroplane Inn in Honey Creek, so named because it formerly resembled a bi-plane, though the propeller and tail are long gone.



Afternoon tour included visiting the oldest remaining operating Dairy Queen on Broadway in Council Bluffs and enjoyed ice

cream. Then ventured to the Broadway Street viaduct over the Council Bluffs train yard. Running underneath the viaduct is an ancient brick street where the LH used to cross the tracks at grade.

A block north of the overpass was a large, unique square brick building with "O & C.B. St. Ry. Co." etched in the cement over the door. It was apparently the control house for street cars and trolleys between Omaha & Council Bluffs.

The car caravan rode to the Council Bluffs Trail Center and viewed the tables of historical displays and the prairie grasses along the sidewalks and parking lot. L



Have Spare Tire, Will Travel

By Van & Bev Becker

*Information for this column came from the
June 2000 issue of the magazine Popular Communications.*

*The article is entitled "Early
Broadcasting Fizzles," pp. 19-20.*

ONCE UPON A TIME, RADIO WAS AN AMAZING FAD

Regular newsletter readers will recall my reminiscing about the three episodes of "The Lincoln Highway" radio show circa 1941. But the Lincoln has a connection to radio broadcasting that goes much farther back in time.

Come with me to those thrilling days of – early broadcast radio. (Bet you thought I was going to say "thrilling days of yesteryear" didn't you?) Adjust the cat whisker and snug down the headphones; we are going way back.

Broadcasting (on today's AM broadcast band 450-1600 KC) officially began in 1921 and within a few years, the band was flooded with start-up stations. Some of these ran several kilowatts of power and other "one-lung peanut whistles" of only 100 watts or less. Many grew and prospered. Many went dark as they went broke or lost interest.

In 1924, with only 50 watts and a dream, the Coppotelli Brothers Music House of Chicago Heights, Illinois, put a modest station on the air. Typical of the time, many music and phonograph stores thought they should cover all bases with a radio station to attract neighborhood customers. A license was applied for and issued May 1 of 1924. The store call sign was WCBZ operating with a whopping 50 watts on frequency 1210 KC.

Using the catchy slogan "Where the Lincoln and Dixie Highways meet," WCBZ operated only twice a week. They played records, naturally, at 8:30 p.m. each Monday and Friday evening. By late April 1925 after only a year of part-time broadcasting, the station had spun their last wax platter over WCBZ.

The little station was sold to Neutrowound Radio Manufacturing Company and the new owner moved it to Homewood, Illinois and dropped the slogan. So ends radio's earliest link to the Lincoln Highway. It was used only as a landmark to sell phonograph records and radios.

But wait, there is more! Leaving the Highway now—what happened to the radio station?

To complete this story—WCBZ call letters became WOK in May 1925 with power up to 500 watts. In 1927, the WOK license was acquired by Trianon Ballroom which already owned a radio station, WMBB (World's Most Beautiful Ballroom). In August of 1927, the Federal Radio Commission authorized WMBB and WOK to merge and the call letters were an unusual hyphenated WOK-WMBB. Not all the newsletter readers are so young that they cannot remember the radio broadcasts from the beautiful Trianon Ballroom, are they? For a brief glorious period—with twin towers, high atop the Trianon Ballroom (1925) you could hear the Ted Weems Orchestra play the Charleston.

In late 1928, the Federal Radio Commission denied a routine renewal for WOK-WMBB and the station was forced to fade into darkness. Presumably the FRC must have assumed that the radio receivers of the time, with poor selectivity, could not separate the many local stations that clogged the local frequencies. L

GREAT GRADES.

At the Fall 2000 ILHA meeting in Pottawattamie County, attendees received a hot tip on the existence of perhaps the oldest exposed piece of original Lincoln Highway in Council Bluffs.

During the afternoon tour through the busy streets of Council Bluffs, and after visiting the oldest working Dairy Queen in America, the car caravan drove over the Broadway Street east-west viaduct only a mile or so from the Missouri River.

At the west end of the structure, we made a 180-degree turn and drove underneath in search of our hope-for treasure.



The group “discovered” brick streets running exactly parallel to the viaduct—the old Lincoln Highway back when traffic crossed the tracks at grade. Note in the lower photo the iron streetcar rails at left.



The underbelly of an urban viaduct is not where one usually seeks objects of historical importance, but visitors should not let the isolated locale keep them from “hittin’ the bricks.”

So you can still ply the original highway in Council Bluffs, but you’ll have to settle for driving 40 feet above the road surface. L

New Banners Ready.

A fresh batch of red, white, and blue Lincoln Highway banners have been manufactured and are now for sale. Made of a more durable grade of tough vinyl, the new set of lamppost banners should last longer and be more colorfast than the last issue—which are five years old and still “hanging in there” on city squares and roadways across the state.

Cost of a banner and bracket pack is \$100, while the banner alone is \$60 (used with your existing bracket). Shipping and handling is \$10. Direct your order to Joyce Ausberger. L

Outside Iowa Along the Lincoln Highway.

The Elkhorn City Council took a first step Tuesday toward preserving the brick Old Lincoln Highway [just east of Omaha].

At a special meeting, the council voted unanimously to apply to the Nebraska Department of Roads for \$500,000 in federal transportation enhancement dollars. The funds would go toward a \$1.5 million project to extend Blondo Street. Extending Blondo would be the city’s first step in preserving the Old Lincoln Highway.

City officials had worried that motorists facing major scheduled roads projects would turn to alternate routes, such as the narrow, bumpy Old Lincoln Highway. The council last year budgeted \$150,000 to cover part of the 80-year-old brick highway with asphalt. That plan alarmed preservationists and some residents who wanted to keep the historic brick highway.

- from the *Omaha World Herald*
26 October 2000

The Mid-Ohio Chapter of the LHA is pleased to announce that replica versions of the original Lincoln Highway radiator emblems are now available. This is the same emblem pictured in *Buckeye Ramblings* #20, and includes the words “Sustaining Member” along with the standard Lincoln Highway symbols and colors. To order, send a check for \$53 (includes shipping) to **Richard Taylor, 1543 No. Stewart Rd., Mansfield OH 44903**.

- from *Buckeye Ramblings*
Newsletter of the Ohio LHA.

The Fremont Chamber of Commerce held the Grand Opening of its restored Post Office Building. This historic building, built in 1893 at 6th and Broad Streets, was located on the Lincoln Highway in downtown Fremont. On the National Register since 1995, the Fremont Area C. of C. Foundation purchased the building in 1998. Over the past months extensive renovation was done. The lobby area features the original oak staircase leading to the second floor and the beautiful original marble floor. This will be a stop on a bus tour during next year’s National Conference in Grand Island.

- from *Linc Across Nebraska*
Newsletter of the Nebraska LHA

Chapter member Jack Duncan is writing a book about the Lincoln Highway and Victory Highway in California. This publication will also have stories of the early wagon roads over the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The planned title is *To Donner Pass from the Pacific*.

- from *The Traveler*
Newsletter of the California LHA.

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