

# Along the Lincoln Highway



The Newsletter of the Iowa Lincoln Highway Association  
 Summer/Autumn 2001 . . . . . Volume 6 Issue 3

## J.E. Moss Markers Come Home to Greene County.

By Butch Heman

Reprinted from the Carroll Daily Times Herald

Local history buffs came face to face with their past on Friday, August 27th. Not only were the restored Abraham Lincoln busts unveiled along the old Lincoln Highway, but Jonathan Fletcher and Susan Thomas Feldner—grandchildren of J.E. Moss, who built the monuments along the country's first transcontinental road 77 years ago—were on hand for the rededication.

It was an informative and entertaining hour for the approximately 50 people on hand. After all, how many times can you meet the grandchildren of a Civil War veteran? Cars lined the "Moss Corner" two miles north of Scranton and sheriff's deputies stopped traffic during the ceremony, held under a tent in what is now a soybean field. Officials from the Greene County Lincoln Highway Association, which organized the event, introduced the 86-year-old Fletcher and his 79-year-old first cousin Feldner.

The two monuments are concrete pedestals topped by concrete busts that Moss placed when the Lincoln Highway was paved in 1924. Fletcher said his paternal grandfather was a "strong supporter" of Lincoln and the highway. As a 17-year-old living in Illinois, Moss enlisted in the Fox River Regiment, the Illinois 36th, which later became part of the Union's Army of the Cumberland.



Left to right: Dennis Meyer of Created in Johnston, Inc.; Bob Owens of the Greene County LHA; you know who; and Jonathan Fletcher.

General Ulysses S. Grant became commander of the Union's western armies, and the 36th was instrumental in breaking the Confederate siege of Chattanooga. It was then that Moss suffered a leg injury, and a couple of days later his left leg was amputated. He was personally decorated by President Lincoln. "The rest of his life he lived with a peg leg," Fletcher told the audience. "Notwithstanding, having moved to Iowa in 1875, he became a very successful farmer and acquired several farms."

"[Moss] was a staunch support of the Union, thought the Civil War was very justified, and all of his life he was a great admirer of Abraham Lincoln," Fletcher added.

Fletcher said his grandfather had been appointed as a highway counsel for the town of Scranton, and when the Iowa Highway Commission was planning to pave the Lincoln Highway, it wanted to make the corner by Moss' farm into a curve.

"They knew they had to get some land from J.E. Moss to do that," Fletcher said. "They approached him, and he said 'I'll give you the land,' a couple of acres, 'if you let me put a couple of monuments to Abraham Lincoln at either end of the curve.' That was done."

The Lincoln busts were originally made by Tom Carlisle, a Jefferson native and collegiate art student at the time.



The route past the Moss farm was paved in 1924. Greene County was the first in Iowa to gravel and then pave its portion, and it now has the longest and most usable stretch of the Lincoln Highway. Fletcher, who grew up in Des Moines, said that he and his sisters were spending the summer of 1924 at the home of their cousin, Susan, who now owns the Moss property.

"I remember it very well," he said of the road paving. "I was 9 years old."

Fletcher also discussed the history of the Lincoln Highway Association, and he praised the Greene County members for "reinvigorating" the national group.

Moss' Lincoln busts were vandalized during the 1950s. One of the heads resurfaced at Jefferson eight years ago, and that was used to create a mold from which new busts were cast. Moss' descendants paid to have the busts recreated. **Created in Johnston Inc.**, a manufacturer of concrete ornaments, was hired to do the work. Owner Dennis Meyer took the podium to explain how he built the Fiberglas and rubber mold.

Fletcher retired in 1980 but still visits Scranton at least once a year, on Memorial Day. His parents, grandparents and great-grandparents are buried there. He and Feldner, who now

resides in Washington, D.C., are Moss' last surviving grandchildren.

Twenty-three descendants of J.E. Moss came from across the country to see the restored markers and take part in the rededication program. "I want to again thank the family for doing this," Fletcher said. "I want to thank the Greene County Lincoln Highway Association for pushing this project through."

The ceremony was conducted under a tent near the north Lincoln bust, which was covered until Fletcher and Feldner were honored by doing the unveiling. Fletcher pulled off the purple velvet cloth, stood eye to eye with Honest Abe, and smiled. "I was really thrilled," he said later. "It was a great occasion."

*Photos courtesy Bev Becker and Margaret Elbert.*

## A's Across Iowa.

*By Al Warren  
President, Central Iowa Model A Ford Club,  
and Paul Walker*

It was on Friday, September 14, at 7:30 a.m. that 50 Model A's from the Central Iowa Model A Club of Iowa and others started on a trip that will live in our hearts and minds forever.

The weather was cloudy and a little chilly. We were only a few miles from our departure from Merle Hay Mall in Des Moines, on our way to the tour starting line in Council Bluffs, when trouble struck in the form of a cranky distributor. Quickly repaired, we were on our way again. In Atlantic we picked up five cars and headed for Walnut—the antique capital of Iowa.

From Walnut, we arrived in Council Bluffs where the Meadowlark Model A Club from Omaha put on a great barbeque for us. What good food and good friends!

That evening over a hundred of us met in front of the hotel where we lit candles and were led in prayer and song by club member Marie Warren, in memory of recent tragedies.

Early Saturday morning we departed the motel, beginning our tour of the Lincoln Highway. Our first stop was the Religious Museum in Logan, and by this time we had 60 automobiles in our caravan. Down the road, we took note of the 1920-era bricks lining the main streets of Woodbine, where we stopped to tour the General Store.

Our next stop was Denison, where we toured the Donna Reed Theater and lunched at Cronk's Cafe located right on the Lincoln Highway. Owner Eric Scooge narrated Cronk's history, which started in the 1920s.

We stopped in Carroll at Wittrock's Chrysler Dealership—another 1920's building on the Lincoln. Formerly a Ford dealership and double-canopy gas station, owner Mike Wittrock moved the new cars out and directed us to park our A's in front, for a great picture!

Going through some of the small towns we were met by residents waving and taking pictures. They were aware that we would be passing through because news releases had been sent to the paper of every small town on the route.

In Jefferson, our A's "circled the square," surrounding the town square with autos. The Lincoln Highway Association served us cookies and coffee and had their little shop open so we could buy some great souvenirs. Our first day ended in Jefferson, and I believe our group filled every hotel and bed and breakfast in town.

Sunday morning brought rain, and some of the cars got a little water inside and some didn't want to start. At times like those I'm glad I own an enclosed car! After drying and working on the autos, we were on our merry way to Ogden.

In Ogden we breakfast'd at the little Chit Chat Cafe, and boy was it good! If you ever visit Ogden, you have to eat there.

Nevada, Iowa, welcomed us with open arms. The local LHA served us rolls, coffee, and milk, and we were each given a free copy of the local newspaper, the *Nevada Journal*, detailing our tour. We really appreciated that. At the Rose Capital of Iowa, also known as State Center, we swarmed Main Street and were greeted by several of the townsfolk, excited to see so many old autos together at once. They introduced us to Watson's Grocery Store, in business for over 90 years. Watson's looks just like it did back in the good ol' days, and has been used in a Hy-Vee commercial and other films.

Just a few blocks from the center of Marshalltown and the end of our tour, the excitement was building. We stopped to wipe off our cars and affix our American flags. At the other end of Main Street was the Hawk A Club of Cedar Rapids, no doubt also anxious to parade down the Lincoln Highway.

The local police escorted both groups to the center of town, where the lead autos of both groups met bumper-to-bumper. In the middle of Main Street in front of the 1885 County Courthouse, Joe Lamb, Bill Ackermann and I put 'em in park, exited our cars, and greeted one another under the new Lincoln Highway banner. Marshalltown Mayor Floyd Harthun was also on hand to greet us and says thanks for helping to celebrate "Lincoln Highway Days."



To conclude the tour, we got back in our cars and led the west and east column of autos past each other, slapping hands as we met [photo]. It was a sentimental moment for us all.

In the procession, the police used a 1960s-era Chevrolet black-and-white which led more than 100 cars to Jensen's Ford Lincoln Mercury Dealership on South Center Street. At Jensen's we parked our A's in the used car lot and enjoyed a terrific lunch sponsored by the Marshalltown Auto Restorers Club.

Words cannot express the feeling of looking back in the mirror and seeing all the A's coming down the street in line. I do believe Henry Ford would have been proud.

I know I was.

\* \* \*

The East Tour of the Hawk-A Model A Club of Cedar Rapids enjoyed a level of fun and good motoring equal to Al Warren's gang in the west. The phrase "need a new condenser" was heard more than once, but overall spirits were high and a few raindrops in Chelsea weren't about to darken anyone's day.

We started the journey in Clinton at the site of the old Fulton-Lyons Bridge - the Lincoln Highway entrance to Iowa from the Illinois side of the wide Mississippi. A collection of photos from the tour can be found on the following two pages, including the group shot taken just before Clinton County Consul Elmer Ketelsen shouted "Gentlemen, start your engines!"

Highlights included the enthusiastic groups we encountered in some of the smaller towns, including Wheatland, Lowden, and Clarence. From Clinton, the tour drove the later LH through Elvira, avoiding U.S. 30 traffic. We stopped in Lowden where Brad and Liz Norton played the gracious hosts, opening their renovated Lincoln Hotel and Bed & Breakfast to all 20 drivers and their guests. The townfolk of Clarence welcomed us warmly, as the treasure of Red Oak Antiques drew lots of interest.

After lunch in Stanwood, the long line of A's enjoyed occasional bursts of sunlight amid mostly cloudy September skies. Unfortunately Mt. Vernon's Cornell College was in the thick of a gridiron battle that afternoon, so there was no access to the refurbished 1912 wooden LH bridge alongside the field. But everyone enjoyed seeing the Seeding Mile and Van Becker's handmade sign to mark the spot. Day one ended in Cedar Rapids, home to most participants, but drivers and spouses gathered that evening at the Lighthouse Restaurant on Mt. Vernon Road for dinner and fellowship.

We started Sunday with a visit to Youngville Station, seeing up close how the building is coming back to its 1930's glory, including a growing collection of cabins. It was strange, but with all those Model A's crowded around the building like so many ducklings swarming their mother, I could have sworn I saw a tear in the eye of the pleasing face of the Youngville facade.

Belle Plaine is a car lover's dream, of course, and we split our time chatting with Ron Preston and visiting his father's garage, and driving up the street to tour Bill Sankot's equally historic shop. With storm clouds threatening, however, we had to hasten our exit from town. Fortunately by the Lincoln Highway Bridge in Tama, the storm was beginning to pass, though Tama County Consul Ron Cory had a difficult time coaxing drivers from their dry autos.

Pausing briefly at Shady Oaks east of Marshalltown, the group pushed on to our staging area at East Main Street. Al Warren has described the Lincoln Highway parade and auto show, so let's use this space to say thanks to the many people who contributed to this terrific event: Hawk-A MAFCA, Central Iowa MAFCA, Marshalltown Auto Restorers Club, M'town Police Department and Mayor Floyd Harthun, Jensen's Ford Lincoln Mercury, and the people and communities of the Lincoln Highway Association. L

## Youngville Station Crock Series Begins.



It has been a busy summer at Youngville preparing for the Model A Ford Club's visit in September. Youngville was the first stop on the last day of the 2001 tour. Both Model A Clubs that participated in the east leg of the tour were instrumental in obtaining our original ISTE A grant. As a small token of our appreciation, volunteers served homemade cinnamon rolls and gave a tour of the progress since their last visit several years ago. In addition, freshly painted booths and the first of three vintage gas pumps have been installed.

On October 14th, we will be hosting our fall festival. This year's theme is "Apple Daze" and we will feature apple pie, fritters, and fresh pressed cider. Local musicians Todd and Kim Frank will be on hand to perform their "Youngville" song.

The commemorative crocks have been ordered, and as you read this, the Red Wing craftsmen are busy preparing our order which should be in by mid-November. The price of the crocks is \$30.00 plus shipping. Orders can be placed with **Renee Tharp** at the Benton Development Group (319) 472-5545. To see a full color rendition of the crocks see our website at:

[www.videoportraits.com/yv/yv1.html](http://www.videoportraits.com/yv/yv1.html). L

## Iowa LHA Announces Fall Tour

The Iowa LHA Fall 2001 tour will be held in Tama County on **Saturday, October 13th**. The schedule begins with a **9:30** morning meeting at Rube's in Montour, and will include displays of memorabilia for sale and a program with a slide show by historian Lyell Henry of Iowa City entitled "Along the Lincoln Highway in Tama County."

Featured will be the Lincoln Highway Bridge and Park in Tama as well as a history of the LH through Tama, Montour, and Chelsea. LHA members should remember that the first Field Secretary of the Lincoln Highway Association, Henry C. Ostermann, died in his Packard in an accident just east of Montour in 1920. A vintage car will be on display in front of Rube's.

A noon buffet at Rube's will follow the program with the LHA tour to follow. The tour will begin in Montour and follow the LH through Tama with stops at the Lincoln Highway mural, and Bridge Park. The tour continues to Chelsea with various stops and discussions along the way.

Association members and the public are invited. For more information contact Tama County board member Ron Cory at 641-484-2761.

### ***From the President's Desk...***

It is once again time for our fall general membership meeting. One of our activities at this meeting will be choosing a President Elect/Vice President in accordance with the by-laws of the ILHA.

We know there are several enthusiastic and qualified members who would fill this office admirably, so we are seeking candidates for the office of President Elect. If you know someone whom you would like to see move into the office of President at the end of our term in October 2002, please obtain that person's permission to nominate him, her or them and put the name(s) in nomination when we meet in Montour.

The Model A Ford Club of America Tour across America via the Lincoln Highway was a big success. Thank you to all who helped with that event. Most of all, a great big thank you to Paul Walker, our State Director and Webmaster, who gave countless hours of assistance and support to this major event.

We hope to see you all in Montour! Happy motoring.

# Welcome to the LHA!

This issue's new members include descendants of J.E. Moss.

William L. Karr

Jason Gesy

Gregory Heitman

Ann Grace Kreiger

Lincoln Hotel, Brad and Elizabeth Norton, Owners

Rubes, Inc.

Tama/Toledo Chamber of Commerce

Duane Paulsen

Susan and Louis Feldner

Bill and Carrol Warrell

Susan Moss Webster

Robert and Betsy McCarville

...Vinton

...Denison

...Ames

...Jefferson

...Lowden

...Montour

...Tama/Toledo

...Dixon IL

...Lansdowne VA

...Bethesda MD

...Austin TX

...Redding CA

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## Landscape Architecture Project Underway

*By David Pyles  
Iowa State University  
Landscape Architecture Department*

The Iowa State University Department of Landscape Architecture, through the College of Design Institute for Design, Research and Outreach (IDRO), is currently working on a two-year research project involving the U.S. Highway 30/Lincoln Highway corridor within the state of Iowa.

The project is being funded by the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT), and the goals of the project are:

to *inform* and *advise* the thoughtful placement of potential new roadway alignments, and the sensitive design of new engineering and landscape elements along the corridor, and

to develop mechanisms to protect and enhance existing natural, cultural, historic, and visual resources within the U.S. Route 30/Lincoln Highway corridor. Work began on the research project this past spring.

As this research relates to the Lincoln Highway, the project recognizes the routes' historic significance and continued importance as America's first transcontinental highway, as well as the interrelationship between the Lincoln Highway and the modern Route 30. Past, present, and future development pressures; demand for highway transportation safety; and, respect for the historic, cultural, and scenic importance of these highway corridors creates an opportunity for valuable research to address and inform future impacts to one of Iowa's best known and celebrated historic resources.

It is expected that the corridor management plan will be used by a diverse array of individuals and groups. As a resource for alternative development strategies in the context of the historical highway, the management plan will address issues and concerns of county engineers, local and county planners, Iowa Department of Transportation planners and engineers, private citizen groups, owners of historic properties and commercial and residential developers. With such a diverse audience, the corridor management plan seeks to inform planning and design at many levels. Providing developed case studies of context sensitive design practices serves to inform development and maintain and enhance the existing cultural and historic fabric of the Lincoln Highway.

In desiring to build a working relationship with the ILHA, respectful of the invaluable knowledge and historical resources within the organization and its membership, the ISU Project Team introduced the research project to the ILHA Executive Board at the July 14, 2001 board meeting held in Nevada, Iowa. Further contact with the ILHA and its members is desired to fully inform the project's research. To this end, the ISU Project Team plans on attending the October 13th annual meeting of the ILHA membership in Tama County. The quality of research conducted by the Team will be made better via the ILHA and its members' knowledge and expertise.

This fall, a project website will be established providing information on the project, as well as providing a tool for contact and information exchange to the ISU Project Team. The ISU Project Team contacts are as follows: J. Timothy Keller, Principal Investigator; Genevieve P. Keller, Co-Principal Investigator; Tim Borich, Co-Principal Investigator; Chris Seeger, Project Manager; and, Peter Butler, Project Manager. Wai Kin Soo and David Pyles are graduate student researchers. These members of the ISU Project team can be reached through the ISU Department of Landscape Architecture at (515) 294-5676, or at the IDRO research office at (515) 294-7462.

*The board and membership of the Iowa LHA welcome and support the participation of the Iowa State Landscape Architecture Department, and will provide assistance wherever and whenever possible.  
- ed.*

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## Have Spare Tire, Will Travel

By Van & Bev Becker

**SWEEPING MORE GRAVEL BACK  
TO THE CENTER OF THE ROAD**

The Seedling Mile has lately been the center of much attention. In anticipation of the Model A Tour, we contacted the Linn County Engineer about replacing the signs which previously marked each end of the Seedling Mile. They declined—turned us down flat—citing the impending construction and fear of vandalism. The Linn County Engineer did offer the following time table: The widening and improving project is to begin in late September and October 2001 with tree removal and moving of fences, with utilities to follow. The actual grading and paving will take place next spring and summer. The work should be completed by September 2002. The signs are due to be planted again when construction is complete.

Without signs, the Model A Club members had no marking of the historic mile. Figuring that a homemade sign was better than none, I made and installed one on the highway shoulder just minutes before the Model A's came over the hill for a stop and photos on Iowa's only Seedling Mile. The homemade sign was left behind. Any bets on how long it will last?

At this writing, the only evidence of roadwork on the LH between Mt. Vernon and Cedar Rapids are the numerous trees and shrubs marked with bright pink paint foretelling their impending doom.

The plans to have the Iowa LHA participate in the "Adopt-a-Highway" program by adopting the Seedling Mile will not happen in the foreseeable future. Our beloved section, the section where we so wanted to see our name on the road signs, is already taken. We have made our wishes known to the proper authorities, and perhaps we will have the opportunity to adopt this stretch of our highway at some time.

*The Cedar Rapids Gazette* gave us good coverage with the Model A Tour press release, and the good coverage will continue. About the time this newsletter arrives in your mailbox, the *Gazette* plans to run another Lincoln Highway/Seedling Mile article. *Gazette* reporter Chris Owens interviewed me regarding how the Lincoln Highway Association feels about the upcoming reconstruction efforts. I provided some historical background information, including the quantity of Portland cement used to pave the Seedling Mile (do you remember that it required 3000 barrels?).

I stated that our association is interested in history, education and preservation; however, compromises were made on both sides to preserve the route and alignment although the resulting road will be wider and flatter. The color and texture of the Seedling Mile portion will ensure that it will still be distinguishable from the rest of the roadway, and commemorative signage was also agreed upon.

In the end, of course, the LHA also stands for good, safe roads, and hopefully the reporter was left with the impression that we are satisfied with the albeit compromised road improvements.

For you Internet surfers—KMRY radio, a CBS affiliate, 1450 KHz, has a website, [www.kmryradio.com](http://www.kmryradio.com). KMRY is known as the "oldies" station here in the Cedar Rapids market, and for its community involvement. Rick Sampson, Program Director, lives on Johnson Avenue NW, the original route of the Lincoln Highway. If you go to the homepage of KMRY and click on "links." Scroll down until you find a familiar logo. This is a "LINK-OLN" connection. L

## Ramblings Along the Lincoln Highway.

*Minutes of the Summer 2001  
Iowa LHA Meeting  
Nevada, Iowa.  
14 July 2001.  
Submitted by Bev Becker, Co-President.*

Co-President **Van Becker** called the meeting to order at 10:25 in the conference room of the Nevada Public Library following a 25-minute social period. 15 persons were in attendance, 11 members and four guests. Coffee was provided.

Minutes of the April meeting were approved as published and reading of the treasurer's report was dispensed with, due to the absence of **Joyce Ausberger**.

**Cecil Stewart** gave a brief membership update highlighting new members.

State Director **Paul Walker** reported that our National Headquarters will remain in Franklin Grove, IL for the present. National President Jesse Petersen signed a 3-year lease for the building with no rent due from the Association. There will be an increased emphasis on sales of a variety of collectible items in the shop. Paul announced that the National Association has averted a \$15,000 shortfall in the budget for the year 2000, and we will break even. There is however, an anticipated budget shortfall of that same amount for the fiscal year 2001. An increase in membership dues was approved at the 2001 LHA National Conference in Grand Island effective October 2001. For full details, check the next issue of the *Forum*. Locations have been set for the national conference for the next two years. The 2002 meeting will be held in Sacramento, CA, while the 2003 meeting is to be hosted by Indiana.

### *County Reports*

**Mike Kelly** of Benton County indicates that the cabins behind Youngville Station will receive new wood floors instead of being put on concrete slabs.

**Ron Preston** reports that he has bought out his brother's share of his father's (George Preston) station in Belle Plaine. Ron plans to remove some of the rarer advertising signs from the exterior of the building to prevent their further deterioration. These signs will be stored for safekeeping and will be replaced with newer, more common signs. He looks forward to speaking to members of the Model A Tour on their trip through his city.

**Ron Cory** of Tama County advises that the Tama Historical Society has been given permission to restore the one cabin remaining behind King Tower and possibly move it to the Lincoln Highway Bridge Park once the park has been further developed. Ron Cory also reported that an original LH marker has been placed in front of the new Tama Public Library.

**Jeff Benson** regretfully reports Story County has lost another original Lincoln Highway bridge west of Colo. It no longer met DOT standards for public transportation. Although offered to interested parties, the size, weight and transportation costs were prohibitive.

**Elaine Ehlert** provided information from Harrison County via telephone that efforts are ongoing to raise the funds to restore the original brick of the Lincoln Highway, Main Street, through Woodbine. The IDOT plans to have a drive-by on August 14. Hopefully, this will lead to future funding. Elaine's team has repainted five LH signs of the 10 poles they have targeted for fresh paint.

**Margaret Elbert** reported that Pottawattamie County news indicates that the viaduct over the brick section of the LH is to be removed. We are uncertain if this project will affect the LH brick. Margaret and Jeff will follow this development.

### *Discussion Topics*

Benson and **Al Warren** discussed the western leg of the Model A Club's Tour across Iowa. Al proudly displayed an article printed in the *Restorer* covering the Iowa tour. Walker joined the discussion to outline plans for the eastern half of the tour. Paul reported that 26 to 28 of the vintage Fords have registered for this part of the tour. The eastern and western tours will meet in Marshalltown. Walker moved that the ILHA put out an extra issue of the newsletter in August detailing the Model A/Lincoln Highway tour. The motion was seconded by Benson. Motion carried.

Van and **Bev Becker** addressed the subject of the election of a president elect/vice president to occur at the October membership meeting. The official bylaws of our association require such an officer. Official nominations and the election will take place at the Fall 2001 meeting.

Benson introduced representatives from ISU who are working on the Iowa Corridor Management Plan. **David Pyles** presented an explanation of the plan and asked for our cooperation in putting together a plan that will be beneficial to both the IDOT and the Lincoln Highway Association. There was an exchange of names and ideas and tentative plans are for further regional meetings along the Highway.

Attention was called to the annual Lincoln Highway Days parade/festival in Nevada planned for August 24 and 25. Bev Becker and **Margaret Elbert** plan to staff an LHA booth at the fairgrounds after the parade.

Van Becker reported he has been approached by the Cedar Rapids History Center to participate in their brown bag lunch programs. He was asked to speak about the Lincoln Highway in Linn County. As they firm up plans for the program, Van will prepare his presentation.

Jeff Benson moved for adjournment and Margaret Elbert seconded the motion.

ILHA members moved on to Battle's Bar-B-Que next door to the Library for lunch. L

## GREAT GRADES.



The April tour of the Lincoln Highway in Marshall County continues to reveal treasures six months after the fact.

Tour participants noticed the culvert in the photo below as they drove the original LH route between State Center and Marshalltown—now county road E41—just west of the intersection with Iowa 330. The locals had assumed that this mass of concrete, south of the current roadway and on private land, was built long ago as a field access road. Not even folks who've lived there long enough to remember the one-room schoolhouse site could recall there ever being a highway there.



But there was! The culvert is at the west end of a grade that runs up a short hill to level ground and down the other side. The level ground is seen in this photo. Shot in April, the image reveals the scooped out roadway, lined with a dirt "curb." After a quarter-mile, the abandoned road joins up again with the county road, which is a large dirt fill over marshland that early road builders avoided.

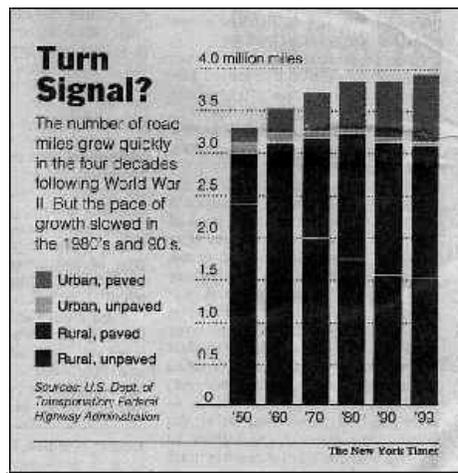
An original alignment of the Lincoln Highway? More research needs to be done but the topography would indicate that it was. Members who want to explore the alignment should contact Paul Walker. L

## Is There Anything Left to Say?

The paparazzi weren't there. But in the annals of highly public break-ups, the recent news that California - hallowed birthplace of the four-level stacked highway interchange - would stop building freeways may represent the busted romance of the century.

The magnetic attraction between Americans and their automobiles was consummated in California, terminus of Route 66 [and another famous highway], site of the original McDonald's and the slab-loving home of 15,243 miles of freeway. When Governor Gray Davis announced last week that a newly dedicated stretch of freeway outside Los Angeles would be the state's last for the foreseeable future, some saw a tectonic shift, the end of a 60-year construction epic that began in 1938 with the building of the Pasadena Freeway. The "white line on the holy road" of Jack Kerouac's "On the Road" has lost some of its luster, with Governor Davis now promoting mass transit and improving existing freeways.

Nevertheless, as Americans indulge in their final flings with summer, most will do it in their cars. Alternatives to the highway—trains, bicycles, car pools - can't yet compete with the individualistic ethos of the open road, even a baking, fume-ridden gridlocked one, and the beckoning promise of movement along an infinite ribbon of highway may die hard



Americans have long regarded the highway as sacred space, a place of romance, solitude and self-discovery, and the healing, redemptive power of the road has spawned a genre of literature - not to mention television shows, films and pop music.

Like moving to California, hitting the road has been an act of self-transformation, the highway a haven for renegades and nonconformists from Bonnie and Clyde to Thelma and Louise. Highways appeal to the restlessness of the American spirit. While trains have schedules, car pools involve small-talk and bumping knees and bikes require exercise and sweating under a helmet, the road requires just us.

"The big highways give that feeling of expanse - the need to cover distance," said Ronald Primeau, a professor at Central Michigan University and the author of "Romance of the Road: The Literature of the American Highway." "When it all gets bottled up, we just try for short bursts of speed, like Kerouac."

The dark side of highway culture arrived with all the subtlety of a 24-hour mini-mart. The destruction of historic urban neighborhoods, the relentless franchising of the American landscape, the rise of road rage and vast empty commutes. The very idea that California - where preservationists now campaign to save vintage Cadillac dealerships and triumphal car washes—would put the brakes on freeway-building seems the final symbol of lost innocence, as if George Maharis and Martin Milner had totaled their late-model Corvette on "Route 66."

Today, after more than 60 years of superhighway building, nearly four million miles of public roadway crisscross the country, accommodating more than 200 million cars, trucks and motorcycles. To Tom Lewis, a professor of English at Skidmore College and the author of "Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life," the freeway is now something of a historical artifact.

"They are monuments to a time in our nation's history when we thought we could do any thing," he said. The current wave of nostalgia for more intimate roads like Route 66 and the **Lincoln Highway** is arguably a rebellion against the florescent-lit anonymity of the Interstate and the freeway.

The growing reverence for spinning chicken buckets and other artifacts of roadside culture is not likely to end soon. "Today's highway symbols are tomorrow's fascinating relics," noted historian Douglas Brinkley.

In fact, it's a pretty good bet that the rosy, air-brushed glow of history seen through the rearview mirror will, perhaps 20 or 30 years from now, cast its aura on freeways and Interstates as well. There are already inklings of Interstate nostalgia; one day, middle schoolers may yearn for I-70 label jeans the way they now do the Route 66 brand. L

*[I'll believe it when I see it. -ed]  
Reprinted from the 9 September 2001 edition of The New York Times.*

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