

Along the Lincoln Highway



Well-digger Weir worked frantically to slow the flow and one night sneaked out of town – presumably to purchase more supplies. He was never seen in Belle Plaine again. Fourteen months later the well – now known as “Jumbo” - was brought under control, helped by advice from experts as far away as Chicago, but mostly by the hard work of local resident George Palmer. Palmer, with 300 feet of pipe, 40 carloads of stone, 130 barrels of cement and large quantities of sand and clay stemmed the flow. The town’s \$175 initial investment swelled by many thousands of dollars before the well was finally controlled.

The location of the old well is marked today with a brass plate on a modest boulder on the corner of 8th Street and 8th Avenue in Belle Plaine. The “8th Wonder of the World” is now quiet at 8th and 8th.

Where did Weir go? Years later, he was contracted to dig a well in Cherokee, Iowa. It was customary at the time for a well-digger to drink the ceremonial first cup of water to prove the well’s quality. Weir honored the tradition, contracted typhoid fever and died. Back then, the doctor called it “well digger’s disease.” **L**

Website Spotlight

Our first website **in the spotlight** belongs to long-time Lincoln Highway advocate and author of the book that helped start it all (over again), Drake Hokanson.

The Newsletter of the Iowa Lincoln Highway Association

Visitors to www.drakehokanson.com can view his stunning black-and-white photographs as well as publications going back to 1988 when Drake published *The Lincoln Highway*. Drake’s photos are available for purchase, as are his books. The professional and easy-to-navigate site also discusses the art of photography and you can learn about upcoming photo exhibits.

Iowa’s Early Auto Industry.

Our second website offers a break from seeing page after page of “franchise” hotels on Orbitz and Travelocity. As the www.MotelGuide.com website states, “It is our sincere desire to provide this guide as a service to motels and the traveling public for your travel experience.”

By Bill Jepsen

Boone, Iowa.

From the Timber Motel in Clinton to the Starlite in Council Bluffs, MotelGuide.com is “the only motel guide on the web for

'mom and pop'-owned motels." **L**

I read with interest Van and Bev Becker's column in the Winter issue, and am glad to hear that someone is fielding questions about automobiles manufactured in Iowa along the Lincoln Highway. That reaffirms my belief that there is an interest in the subject. I am writing a book about the history of the industry in Iowa and have so far chronicled over 90 automotive "efforts."

We'll See You on the Lincoln Highway!

Steven Cochran, LeClair, Scott County
Jeff LaFollette, Dixon, Scott County
Helen Nolte, State Center, Marshall County
Reed Ocker, Columbus, OH
Cheri Schloerke, Ames, Story County

Ramblings Along the Lincoln Highway.

Clinton's *Lamb*, Marshalltown's *Marshalltown*, and Boone's *Suuderlin* fall into the "dreamer's" category. Despite the best intentions - well intentions anyway - there is no evidence that any of these enterprises ever produced a single car.

Council Bluffs *Keys* is listed in the *Standard Catalog of American Cars 1805-1942* but the Public Library could find no reference to the production of the two "prototypes."

Approximately 30 members and guests attended the January 10 meeting of the Iowa LHA. Coffee, tea, fruit and cookies were provided by our host, **Catherine Noble**.

Mike Kelly called the meeting to order at 9:38am. Minutes of the October 11, 2003 meeting held in Boone were approved as published in the Winter 2003 ILHA Newsletter.

The good people at the Library did come up with information about Mr. L.P. Madsen and his balance of \$243,761 which I pledged for the LH Walking Tour booklet of Ogden. Savings account balance is \$426,231 and I pledged \$1000 (association and personal) made to the State Center Main Street Brick Project. Paul Walker provided pledge information. Joyce absorbed the name of their maker instead of a conventional brand.

Cecil Stewart reported a gain of 10 members in the past 6 months. Thanks to State Center for its membership drive. Approximately 350 newsletters are distributed each quarter.

the manufacturer "rescue people" as Wollman called them, and right there in

Paul Walker reported Ausberger's are organizing a tour from Iowa to the 2004 Annual Conference in Chester, WV, June 16-19.

* Copies of the 2004 Nostalgic Event Calendar available blank with and Wollman log online at www.LHTP.com were circulated as well as California and Illinois Chapter newsletters.

* Jeff LaFollette is the new consul for Clinton County replacing **Bluffs Kates**. Jeff (hjon66@netins.net) lives in Dixon IA and is currently President of the Route 66 Kiwanis. **Madsen** and **Wollman** members. **Elmer** sends his thanks to the ILHA for his experiences as Clinton County Consul. **Madsen** and **Elmer**!

* Paul's request to the LHA to be relieved of the Executive Advisory position was granted. Upon request, Paul agreed to stay on until the summer of 2004 for transition.

* **Rollin Southwell** of the Utah LHA was introduced and reported on plans underway for the 2005 Annual LH Conference in Ely, Nevada. Although the *Desert Flyer* is sometimes attributed to Council Bluffs, it's likely that this "one-off" was *Meeting Update* and then

- * April 10 ILHA Meeting: Walker to check with Cedar County on Bluffs regarding plans underway for this meeting. Motion made and carried to have Colo/Joe Harris on stand by as Alt. Bertzchy is credited with producing a quantity of tractor/truck combinations as well as automobiles that bore his name.
- * October 9 meeting in Des Moines will be hosted by **Bob Stinson** and will include a tour of Des Moines-area Jefferson Highway road and sites.

Mike Kelly to follow up on the joint Illinois/Iowa meeting in the Summer of 2004 as noted in the IL newsletter.

The **Bertzchy** may have been a predecessor of that Minneapolis-Moline model from the late 1930s, though I am skeptical. The Council Bluffs Library has nothing on this venture and more research is needed.

Noble asked the ILHA members to provide LH appropriate site ideas for display in the center when restoration is complete. Center's goal is as regional resource for visitor information on area tourist sites. **Donna Sampson**, Main Street Project director, was introduced to the group.

There is one auto you can actually see. In 1904 NPS Study Supp. By **Ward Appert**.

Maxen Electric were built by Roy McCarty. One was restored by Jerry and

Kelly reported that he, **Lyell Henry**, and members of the Youngville Association met with the DOT in Cedar Rapids to discuss safety issues at Youngville. One option is to widen the driveway, making it more visible to traffic. Jeanne Newport in the 1970s and donated by its owner Dale Newport to the Cedar Rapids History Center, where it resides today at 615 First Avenue SE.

* **Jeff Benson** to draft letter for ILHA review regarding preservation of the enhancement funds (which have benefited many LH projects) in the Federal Transportation bill. The **Welch & Michie** was fully chronicled in an 1892(!) issue of the *Boone Weekly News*.

* A draft report of the NPS Study has not yet been released. Benson working with a national committee. Historic significance of the LH needs to be re-emphasized with Iowa legislators (Governor Vilsack was raised on the LH in PA). State Senator Daryl Beal from Ft. Dodge is on the Iowa Transportation board and is a member of that it never made it out of Michie's yard. However, one may surmise

Nothing more can be found about it.

* **Benson, Noble and Kuester** will re-visit the Scenic Byway application process. Ten years have passed since Ausbergers tried for this designation. Note that IL leveraged that information in their application efforts and received the designation. There are folks in Carroll who will remember the Litestar. This strange combination of motorcycle/auto looked like

LHA Websites

* Walker has responsibility for keeping Iowa a site current, while latest news letters need to be uploaded as well as updating the list of ILHA officers and County Consuls. There were optimistic announcements, requests for financing...

* The national website needs updating as well. Under 'News', the 2003 Indiana Conference is the highlight! Executive Committee and Board of Director info needs updating. and lots of problems.

Fisher Monument Project.

The Carroll venture came to a grinding halt when the principle players picked up their stakes and moved the operation to Michigan. Success for the Litestar came no easier there. My book comes out in a year, and I hope readers enjoy it. **L**

Southwell estimates \$20,000 to build the monument and has organized committee, has written to individuals and companies with personal or historic interest in Fisher and the LH requesting funding.

Motion made and carried that ILHA would pledge \$700 toward monument and challenge all state associations to pledge equal amount.

I am honored to serve as the new Clinton County Walker to contact national treasurer Jess Peterser to formalize grant escrow account, and promote the challenge

nationwide.

Reed/Niland's Corner Project.

* Niland's Café ribbon cutting was held on December 22, 2003. Café open Tuesdays through Sundays with capacity for 60. Copy of menu was provided by **Joe Harper** to all.

* Reed's Station restoration complete. Landscaping to be completed in the Spring.

* Harper reported that the committee is considering Grand Opening coinciding with Colo Crossroads Festival in July.

Consul for the Iowa LHA. I live three miles from the Clinton County line and am quite familiar with the Lincoln. Elmer Ketelsen served in this position admirably for years, and I hope to fulfill the duties of a Consul as well as he.

I am also serving on the committee that is working to conduct a sesquicentennial event for Dixon, Iowa, where my wife Annette and I now live. We have been in town less than a year but already feel like part of this small community.

County Consul Reports

Clinton: LaFollette unable to attend meeting

Let me give you a brief biography. I am 44 years old, and have been married to my wonderful wife for 12 years. I have a daughter, Diana, who is studying for her Masters degree in at Western Illinois University, and a son-in-law, Greg, employed in the Galesburg, Illinois, school district.

Linn: **Van Becker** reported that LH is getting good press in *Old Car Weekly*. Fate still unknown regarding the LH (now Holland) Orchard. Mortgage for Linn Co. Historical Center is being retired.; LH marker is in basement of that building. Tall Corn Historians brochure still not available but will include Bev's input on the importance of the seedling mile that was replaced in Linn Co.

Benton: **Ron Preston** reported that the building of the Belle Plaine museum is underway with completion scheduled for the end of July. Hwy. 131 into Belle Plaine has been renamed B40. Mike Kelly reported Youngville is closed for the winter. Need more volunteers to increase hours when it reopens in the spring.

Tama: **Ron Cory** reported that the 25th Annual Tama LH Bridge Festival will take place May 14/15.

Maintenance of the bridge and park area is in its 17th year. He solicited for vintage car to be designated as "LH car" for parade. Work continues on King Tower cabin interior. Eight banners line roads into Tama.

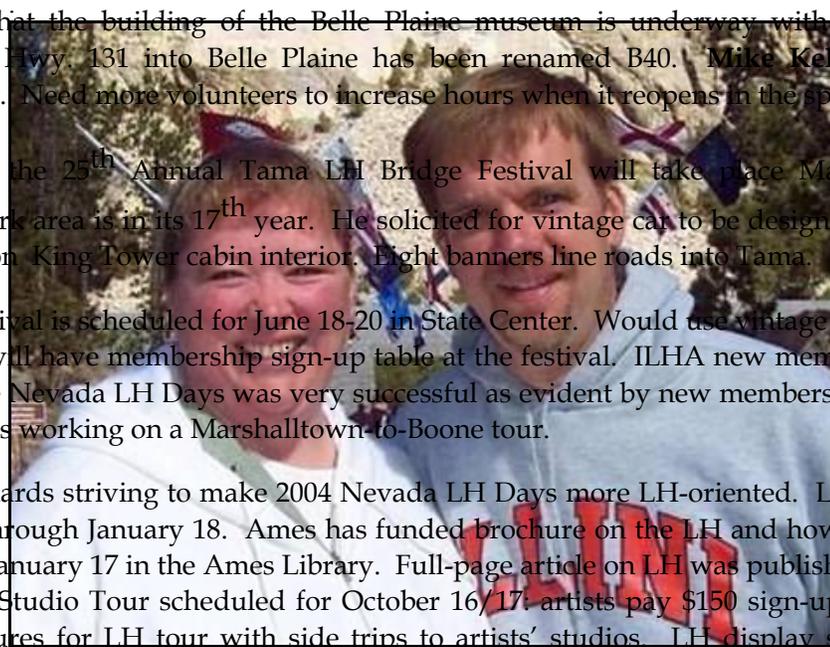
Marshall: **Noble** reports Rose Festival is scheduled for June 18-20 in State Center. Would use vintage car in Tama festival for Rose Festival. ILHA will have membership sign-up table at the festival. ILHA new member sign-up effort held in conjunction with the Nevada LH Days was very successful as evident by new members reported in newsletter. Marshalltown C&VB is working on a Marshalltown-to-Boone tour.

Story: **Benson** reported Tom Richards striving to make 2004 Nevada LH Days more LH-oriented. LH exhibit at Ames Public Library will be up through January 18. Ames has funded brochure on the LH and how it changed Ames. Jeff to give LH lecture on January 17 in the Ames Library. Full-page article on LH was published in Ames paper in December. LH Artists Studio Tour scheduled for October 16/17: artists pay \$150 sign-up fee, partly used to print promotional brochures for LH tour with side trips to artists' studios. LH display sites will be planned along the tour, complete with map packs, membership info and LH items for sale. Sites also available for artists who don't want visitors to their studios. Sponsorships will be available to local businesses. Jeff asked for contact from each tour city: State Center: Noble and Catherine and Sampson; Colo: Scott; Ames: Benson; Boone: John Fitzsimmons or Barb & Joe Moore; Ogden; Joyce to find contact.

Boone: **John Fitzsimmons** saw genuine interest in the LH after weekend at Scenic Valley RR where LH brochures have been gobbled up. John suggested that an insert to the brochure list paved and gravel "hot spots" on the LH.

Greene: **Bob Owens** is working on the preservation of the old Deep Rock station on the east edge of Jefferson. County supervisors are involved and supporting this effort. **Ralph Miller**, owner and leading the restoration of the "old" Camp Cozy south of Grand Junction on old LH, introduced.

Carroll: **Norma Berns** reports Wittrock's showroom and canopied station still for sale. New curator at the Carroll Co. Historical museum has asked for a LH display. Norma and Rollin spent 3 days doing research along Hwy. 6 (River to River Road) which was one of two routes considered for LH through IA.



Crawford: no report

Zoning Board.I applied for a Riverboat

Harrison: Dedication of the Lincoln Highway Memorial was held on October 27, 2003 with approx. 100 people attending. Elaine Ehlert reported that the person they had in mind for the dedication was selected by drawing a name out of the box; drawing cost of \$50,000. The Waukegan Historical Commission will save the canopyed ("eyebrow") gas station there. Elaine hopes to have a possible Lincoln Highway Festival held on September 27/28; a brick-throwing contest fundraiser will be held which generated good proceeds.

Pottawattamie: Brett Ford's written report on the project is moving forward. \$26K bid received for deck construction and two more people for those who provided input for funding ideas.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

With my experience in presentation and special events and leading the Route 66 Association for the past 4 1/2 years, I hope to bring valuable experience to the Lincoln Highway Association.

Lunch was served at Bailey's Pizza followed by a tour of Watson's Grocery Store. Original shelving, bins, cash register, display cases, scales, coolers, fans, lights, and other valuable items make this a "must see" for visitors. Watson's is open from May to September on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Restoration has begun on 104 Main Street which will become the Rural Heritage Center with displays planned for the LH as well as Barn Restorer's organization. Last, the group visited Shepherd's Barber Shop, left as is by its previous owner - as if he closed one day at 5 p.m. and never returned. L

I will work hard in Clinton County and throughout Iowa for the common good of the Lincoln Highway and its properties. Thank you again for the opportunity to stay at Clinton County Consul. I look forward to meeting all of you soon. L

Respectfully submitted,

Springtime Means Tama Bridge Festival Time

ILHA Officers by Ron Cory, Tama County Consul Board of Directors (County Consuls), and Staff



OFFICERS

- President
Mike Kelly (319) 472-5183
- Vice President
Bob Stinson (515) 287-5199
- Secretary
Su Ellen Aros (712) 792-9523
- Treasurer
Joyce Ausberger (515) 386-4521
- State Director
Paul Walker (563) 554-5202

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (County Consuls)

The 25th Annual Lincoln Highway Bridge Friday evening activities include the Bill I is kicked off with a 5K run at 8:00 a.m. do

The bigger-than-ever parade starts at 10 Montezuma High School Band, the Issis participated.

A beef barbeque follows the parade and presented directly in front of the Tama C children's show from Estes Park, Colorado his brothers who have performed in Nas

Especially for kids will be the popular \$2 food court will be in operation both Frida

Join us for the celebration under the L information contact Ron Cory at 641-484-

Clinton County
Jeff LaFollette (563) 843-3066

Cedar County
Brad & Liz Norton (319) 941-7583

Linn County

sites is representative of not just a highway, but
 Van & Bev Becker. IowaLHA@McLeodUSA.net
 of an era. The primary focus of this organization

is The Lincoln Highway. It is in our best interest
 to promote all of the historic routes in the state.
Benton County
 Arde Schoonover (319) 477-6191

While The Lincoln is our most recognized and
 best documented historic highway, the

Tama County
 color-coded HDOT map of Iowa's "registered"
 Ron Cory (515) 484-2761

highway routes shows there are 63 others that
Marshall County
 cross the state. This map, which is
 part of the historic display at Nijand's Café,

helps visitors from across the state connect their
Story County
 with the Lincoln Highway corridor.

Margaret Elbert (515) 233-1445

Speaking of other highways, I'd like to

Boone County
 LaFollette, our new Clinton
 County Consul. Jeff (515) 432-3697

John Fitzsimmons (515) 432-3697
 Route 66 Association of Illinois! There has

always been a bit of friendly competition
Greene County
 between the routes. For example, they had a

Bob Owens (515) 386-3419
 television series named for them but we had

a very memorable evening when George
Carroll County
 Preston stole the show from Johnny Carson.

Norma J. Berns (712) 792-5880
 Not only do people still talk about that

Crawford County
 actually mimic his
 Arnie Spiesden (712) 679-2710

show. Enough of the differences – this looks
Harrison County
 like an opportunity to celebrate our

Elaine Ehler (712) 647-2779
 similarities.

Pottawattamie County
 Finally we wish the best to Ron Corey who
 Brett Ford (712) 545-3283
 will continue as an active member but will

be stepping down as Consul. Time and
 space do not permit me to adequately thank
 OFFICE VOLUNTEERS

Members all that have done for Iowa LHA.

Clail Stewart

Newsletter Editor

Paul Walker
 Rural Heritage Center

Celebrates Grand Opening .

Noble Sojourner
 Lyell Henry
 Marshall County Consul Catherine Noble

reports that on May 14th **State Center Main**

Street will host a celebration for the
 restoration of the structure at 104 W. Main.
 This is the dilapidated building next door to
 famous Watsons Grocery on the Lincoln
 Highway in State Center.



From 5 to 10 p.m. there will be tours of the building, musical entertainment, and the State Center Farmers' Market. Everyone is welcome.

For more information, contact **Jeff Merrill** at 641-485-3959.

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bytes)

Have Spare Tire, Will Travel

By Van & Bev Becker

Let's look back six months to our Autumn 2003 column in which we referred to a boathouse north of Detroit, Michigan on Lake St. Charles, a small lake connecting Great Lakes Huron and Erie.

The boathouse had belonged to first LHA President Henry Joy who was also President

of the Packard Motor Company. This boathouse was later donated by the widow of Henry Joy to what is now the Gross Pointe Sailing Club; a generous gift indeed. As time passed, the building aged and the trendy City of Gross Pointe raised taxes. Recently I spoke with a member of the sailing club's Grounds Committee and unfortunately, Henry Joy's beloved boathouse will probably be torn down before year's end. They blame the tax situation.

In the same article, I wrote of young Abe Lincoln's involvement in a prominent Davenport/Rock Island lawsuit. In his legal capacity as a railroad president, James F. Joy, Henry Joy's father, was the first to enlist and hire Abe Lincoln in legal work for the railroads.

On May 6, 1856, the new side-wheel steamer, *Effie Afton*, veered to the left (Iowa side) and struck the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad bridge, the first railroad bridge that crossed the Mississippi River at Davenport/Rock Island. Research reveals that after the collision, the steamer stalled and the river wedged the boat in below the bridge decking, breaking the smokestacks and showering both bridge and boat with sparks. Newspaper accounts use the word "spectacular" to describe the resulting conflagration. The passengers escaped, but the livestock aboard were destroyed. In the end, the draw span was inoperable, the bridge was impassable and the *Effie Afton* was a charred sunken hull.

The boat owners sued the railroad/bridge company, claiming the bridge was a hazard to navigation. Intervening was a young Mr. Lincoln who reviewed the logbook of a local ferryboat that had been struck earlier in the day by the *Effie Afton* as it departed Rock Island for St. Paul. Lincoln walked to the damaged center draw span of the bridge, asked a few questions about the river's current, looked over the edge at the water, then nodded and left the bridge. Many years later, the U.S. Supreme Court finally settled the trial in favor of the railroad and bridge company.

The original railroad bridge was repaired and replacement bridges were constructed in 1865, 1872 and 1896. The 1896 bridge steel bridge is still in use today.

The *Effie Afton* never sailed again. Years later, a dredging crew discovered the ship's bell, which can be seen today on display in the Rock Island Arsenal Museum.

But I digress.

Bumping along the Lincoln Highway into the town of Belle Plaine, an early traveler could visit the site of the Jumbo Well, "Eighth Wonder of the World!" The well is celebrated each September by townsfolk with a carnival and 3-day celebration named - what else? - Jumbo Well Days.

Back in the summer of 1886, the town of Belle Plaine contracted for an artesian well for water and fire protection. The well-digger, William Weir, was paid \$175 to dig it. Why the site south of the railroad station was selected is unknown other than it was in the middle of the street.

The Weir family's cup ranneth over. The Belle Plaine artesian well erupted into a monster, spewing more than 3,000 gallons of water per minute into the street.



This made the news, not just in Belle Plaine, but coast-to-coast and beyond. A Paris, France, newspaper carried a photo with the story. The (doctored) Paris photo showed the main downtown street flooded with 2-3 feet of water. The water threatened homes

and businesses.