

Along the Lincoln Highway



**The Newsletter of the Iowa Lincoln Highway Association
 Spring/Summer 2001 Volume 6 Issue 2**

News From Main Street State Center.

*By Catherine Noble, Director
 State Center Main Street Program*

A friendly greeting from Historic State Centre!

I enjoyed addressing your organization in State Center at your spring meeting. I have watched your video and find it inspiring to see how much you have accomplished in a relatively short time. Our mutual goals of preservation and tourism overlap well. We wish to extend our cooperation in enhancing and promoting your events in our area.

As the connection between tourism and prosperity becomes more obvious, an appreciation of our heritage will grow. The uphill battle of preserving treasures viewed as simply “old” is a matter of education.

Often new structures with little or no aesthetic consideration constructed of temporary materials are held in higher esteem, simply because they are new, than authentic stone or masonry beautifully designed to lift the human spirit. These “new” structures are out of place among abandoned originals, bringing out the worst qualities of each—shabby and cheap. In my mind it is a version of “The Emperor’s New Clothes.”

As noted by CINTR (Central Iowa Regional Tourism) short day or weekend car travel is becoming the preferred vacation of Midwesterners, as opposed to the traditional 1-2 weeks involving air travel. This puts us in a good position to further our mutual goals.

Aside from the financial aspect of tourism it enhances our quality of life. It provides valuable amenities as well as a sense of community. Tourism is a way to compete with the superstores in the larger nearby towns. We have the opportunity to offer a level of service with which they cannot compete. They could never even hope to be charming or quaint.

One year ago our Main Street Program was just a dream. With generous support we are realizing a wonderful opportunity. The Main Street Program's goal is economic development through historic preservation. We are discovering we have much to offer historically.

We need to start thinking of our town as a destination, a place with something unique to offer, a place we are proud of. Let's make it worth the drive to come see us.

Keep up the good work, and keep in touch.

* * *

Watson's Grocery: Jewel of Main Street.

Watson's Grocery, 106 West main Street, State Center, was built in 1895 and was a prime grocery shopping spot on Main Street [Lincoln Highway] for more than 60 years. Owned and operated by William Watson, Sr., and his heirs until 1981, the store offered all the necessities of a turn-of-the-20th-century homemaker's kitchen: fresh meat, staples sold in bulk from 45 feet of oak bins, vinegar from 40-gallon barrels, farm-fresh eggs, as well as cleaning supplies and "new" products like boxed cereal.

In 1989, a group of community residents banded together to purchase the landmark and restore Watson's as a community museum. In 1998, Watson's Grocery was officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places after proving its significant role in preserving a piece of history.



Watson's Grocery is open to the public between Memorial Day and Labor Day on Saturday and Sunday from 1-4 p.m. Tours may be scheduled by calling Dorine Lampkin at 641-483-2110, Wilma Eckhart at 641-483-2458, or Mike Riemenschneider at 641-483-2350. There is no charge. L

July Meeting in Nevada.

Members of the Iowa LHA are invited to **Nevada** for the Summer 2001 Board Meeting. We'll convene at the Nevada Public Library on **Saturday 14 July at 10:00 a.m.** The library is at **631 K Avenue**, a block east of the north/south main drag (to which the LH runs perpendicular).

Participants can lunch at either the local Subway or at Battles BBQ—a friendly little hometown establishment—next door to the library. After the meeting, folks are free to stop at the Starbucks on the east end of town to sit by the Lincoln Highway and enjoy some ice cream on a July afternoon.

From the President's Desk...

The 2001 Lincoln Highway Association National Conference scheduled for June 13-16 is almost upon us, and we hope to see a large contingent of Iowa members in attendance in Grand Island, Nebraska.

A month later on July 14, there will be a meeting of the ILHA Board of Directors at the Public Library in Nevada, Iowa. Beyond that, we will have our general membership meeting scheduled for October 13, which Ron Cory has generously volunteered to host in Tama County. We are requesting your help during the months between now and October. At the April general meeting, we advanced an idea for your consideration.

We proposed an office of **President-Elect** which would need to be filled at the October meeting. This office would run for a one-year term ending the following October when the President-Elect would succeed to the office of President. Since this idea met with general approval, we should start thinking now of candidates to nominate in October. Be thinking of persons whom you would like to serve our association in this capacity. Please ask for permission before nominating individuals.

An advantage of creating this office is that the President-Elect would have a year to prepare for assuming the position before actually taking over the responsibilities of President.

Youngville Restoration Nearing Completion.

By Mike Kelly

The cabin court project at Youngville is moving ahead. In May 2000, three cabins from the Watkins corner three miles east of Youngville were relocated to the Youngville site. The Youngville Cafe group is grateful to Bill Karr for donation of the labor to move the cabins and assistance with securing them.

Discussion and research on the placement of the cabins has resulted in focus on the following goals: a) Extend the interpretational site to include period cabins; b) Maintain the Youngville Cafe's integrity as a National Historical Register eligible site; and c) Recreate the environment of a cabin court. Work on new floors, roofing, and the exterior is scheduled for this coming summer

The 2001 Farmer's Market season, hosted at Youngville, is in full swing. The market provides an opportunity for patrons and marketers to see progress on the Youngville Project and purchase locally produced baked goods, locally grown produce, and crafts items. The market is held each Friday from May through October. Youngville had a reputation for outstanding pies, and the market's offerings bridge the availability until the Cafe opens on a regular basis.

We are also busy updating our traveling display, new website and the Youngville video, all of which will debut at the National Conference in Grand Island, Nebraska, June 13-16.



In addition, plans are underway to offer numbered Redwing Youngville Cafe commemorative crocks for sale at \$30 each. Orders are being taken now for the crocks, which measure approximately 5 1/2 inches high (5" diameter). The crock design features a 1930s image of the cafe with the Lincoln Highway in the foreground. Anticipated delivery is later this summer. For more information or to place an order, contact Renae Tharp (Benton Development Group) at (319) 472-5545.

Youngville's section of U.S. Highway 30 has recently been expanded to four lanes. The additional traffic makes it an ideal site for promoting Youngville history as well as other Iowa Lincoln Highway sites east and west. Support is needed to continue to move the Youngville projects ahead.

Youngville is at a bit of a disadvantage in not being claimed by any one town, but we hope the entire Lincoln Highway community agrees that this site is in a key position to serve the entire Iowa Lincoln Highway corridor. L

Greetings Friends!

Please welcome our newest members:

C. Raymond Fisher	Grand Junction
Wayne and Karren Gray	Tama
Roger and Chloe Ann Hill	Tama
Inez McHugh	Jefferson
Robert and Laura Metz	Tama
Warren Rienecke	Grinnell
Mark Rossow	Jefferson
Bob Smith	Jefferson
Bill South	Dennison

Shady Oaks' Tradition Continues.

*By Mary Gift
Owner and Proprietor of Shady Oaks*

The April 2001 ILHA tour of Marshall County came to an appropriate rest at the venerable Shady Oaks RV Camp east of Marshalltown.

“Shady Oaks was begun by Bill and Les Norton in 1924. The following spring a combination filling station, cafe, and grocery was built. This was probably the first ‘quick stop’ in Iowa. A log cabin dayroom was built of oak, for use by the visitors. Later it housed showers, restrooms, and laundry facilities, for the cabin camp. All were in a dense forest of oak trees, which offered respite from the heat of summer to thousands of travelers.” (*The Lincoln Highway: Iowa*, Gregory Franzwa, 1995.)



Also in April, historic Shady Oaks unveiled a new sign, seen in the photo. There have been various signs over the years. The new one was placed in almost the identical location as the 1925 sign.

That original round sign was displayed on the Lincoln Highway to identify the first cabin camp west of the Mississippi River on the Lincoln Highway. Les Norton's vehicle is seen in this photo.



Shady Oaks Campground is still a treasure of American travel. This privately owned campground has maintained its class and quiet charm while it has adapted to modern comforts. Guests can experience the nostalgia of the early-day automobile.

Many "road scholars" prefer the byways over the interstates. At Shady Oaks, RVs may park in the shade of the historic oaks yet be within minutes of a vast choice of dining options and the cultural atmosphere of Marshalltown.



The sign above, designed by the Four-Winds Sign Company of Cedar Falls, was unique. It was mounted so the message could swing around and be read from all four directions. We have three of these signs, and the Marshall County Historical Museum has one. Les Norton was personally responsible for displaying these signs in Iowa and across Nebraska on the Lincoln Highway.

The landscape at Shady Oaks tends to keep spirits rooted to the land and a simpler time. A claim was staked on this land in 1848 by John Campbell. It was the first location of Rock Valley School and provided a campground for the Methodist camp meetings and Rock Valley Mill visitors. In 1925, it was developed into Shady Oaks Cabin Camp and provided lodging for transcontinental travelers. It is the oldest established private campground in Iowa. Shady Oaks is celebrating its 76th year in continuous operation.

Shady Oaks' namesake grove of bur oaks were recognized by the DNR in 1996 as one of the 26 Famous and Historical Trees (or groves of trees) of Iowa.

We enjoyed sharing our Shady Oaks with members of the Iowa Lincoln Highway Association on April 14, 2001. L

- Mary Gift, Marshall County ILHA Director
- Judy Jurgensen
- Mick and Liz Jurgensen

Ramblings Along the Lincoln Highway.

Minutes of the Spring 2001

Iowa LHA Meeting

State Center, Iowa.

14 April 2001.

Submitted by Norma Berns, Secretary.

Thirty ILHA members and guests met at Char's Cafe in State Center, Marshall County, Saturday April 14, 2001 at 9:30 a.m. Coffee and home-made rolls were available. The Char's Cafe building was State Center's original Hospital, and Char delighted in pointing out the operating room and other facilities.

President **Van Becker** gaveled the meeting to order at 9:30. He suggested we select a president-elect at the fall meeting to make the transition smoother. We also need an official residence as the Ogden office no longer serves our needs.

MAFCA t-shirts are available for \$10 advertising this September's Iowa Model-A club tour to Marshalltown.

Joyce Ausberger doled out our few remaining Iowa brochures. New brochures will be printed at the end of the year. It was decided to continue with the current design.

Mt. Mercy College in Cedar Rapids discarded the boxes of postcard books commemorating **Lyell Henry's** 1996 LH display.

Membership coordinator **Cecil Stewart** reported 320 members of which 50-60 are Iowa members without national affiliation. This includes 16 new members.

State Director/Newsletter Editor **Paul Walker** asked for newsletter submissions, and then discussed the LHA national budget. We are experiencing a \$16,500 operating loss in 2001 that includes \$29,000 to print the *Forum*. President **Jess Petersen** sent letters asking for donations, and Goodyear donated \$5,000, for which a full-page ad was placed in the *Forum*.

Margaret Elbert detailed the Youngville collector crock which will be a promising fundraiser. The first set will be numbered and sell for \$30.

County Consul Reports

Clinton County: **Elmer Ketelsen** bid on a 1930 Model A at a sale but didn't get it.

Tama County: **Ron Cory** reported Tama is sprucing up the LH Park for the LH Bridge Festival for the May 18-19 Festival full of small-town pleasures like an ice cream social and parade.

Marshall County: **Mary Gift** of Shady Oaks invited us to tour the Tree House today, and showed early photos of the LH and the cabin camp.

Story County: Larry Forney is happy to talk of Niland's Corner progress. \$740,000 has been raised in grants and local matching funds, leaving \$29,000 to their goal.

Crawford County: **Ardith Sporleder** said the restored Park Motel is a nice asset in Denison.

Greene County: **Bob Owens** reported the Green Co. "office" on Lincolnway in Jefferson is a success, with a good volunteer staff. The Moss Corner dedication will be July 27, with reception following at the Methodist Church in Scranton. Moss relatives have contributed funds to get the two busts of Lincoln recast for their pedestals, and will be in attendance.

Other Business

John Strong, Craig Pfantz and **Cathy Noble** of State Center's Main Street revitalization project addressed the group. The group is planning new sidewalks, reproductions of street lights, and restoration of period architecture. State Center has been host to several feature films over the years.

Ausberger outlined the National Park Service bill that was passed by Congress in December to study the importance of keeping the Lincoln Highway before the public.

The National Headquarters in Franklin Grove needs help. Should the LHA use it as a consignment shop? Search for a "gratis" locale?

Larry Forney, who works for the DOT design office in Ames, has found the 1950s DOT movie used illustrate the need for a U.S. 30 bypass. Several showings of the time-capsule film amazed one and all.

Al Warren of the Model A Ford Club from Des Moines spoke about the Model A tour in September. 32 cars are currently scheduled to participate driving east from Council Bluffs.

After adjournment, the group enjoyed a delicious lunch at Char's, and toured **Watson's Grocery** next door before starting the afternoon tour.

Eleven autos trekked the gravel, north route from State Center to Marshalltown, stopping to observe landmarks and noting the curve where Henry Joy's Packard stalled and he spent the night in his car. The group walked the grassy slope of the 1914 "4-Mile Hill" that has been realigned several times, stopping to walk inside the hollow tree.



On to Shady Oaks where Mary Gift, her daughter, Judy, and grandson and wife, Mick & Liz Jurgensen provided an update on the grounds and Tree House. L



Have Spare Tire, Will Travel

By Van & Bev Becker

SWEEPING MORE GRAVEL BACK TO THE CENTER OF THE ROAD

Our President, George W. Bush, in his May 17, 2001 speech from St. Paul, Minnesota, referred to a previous president, Dwight Eisenhower, who as a young army officer made a tour along the Lincoln Highway 80 years ago. President George W. claimed, "Our energy supplies today are as bumpy as the roads were 80 years ago." This is from the speech in which he unveiled his new National Energy Plan. You never know when our history will reappear with a contemporary lesson.

☞ What's happening to our Seedling Mile in Linn County? Not a lot. The Model A Ford Club "Seedling Mile" signs have been removed and stored. (Remember these signs were only 8/10 mile apart.) And a team of surveyors has been seen tramping in the weeds on the shoulders. No real work—yet.

☞ Speaking of Mt. Vernon, there is one 1928 concrete marker in town. It is planted in Mt. Vernon's Memorial Park close to the Visitor Center and is very close to the original route. Our research into the whereabouts of all the markers in Iowa has revealed that six unnamed Mt. Vernon residents purchased this marker from an Ames, Iowa construction site in 1982. Although we're curious about the Ames sale, we really would like the names of the six forward-thinking Mt. Vernon residents. Does anyone out there know their names? Please drop Paul Walker or us a note or a short reminiscence of the big event. Your turn.

☞ 75 years ago, in the "Time of Our Lives" column of the June 12, 1925 *Cedar Rapids Gazette*:

"A second section of the Lincoln Highway was set to open from Lisbon to the Cedar County line once shoulder grading was completed. The new section of paved highway would eventually connect to the original 'Seedling Mile' of pavement on old Highway 30 between Cedar Rapids and Mt. Vernon."

☞ Let's keep an eye on Lisbon, or **Yankee Grove** as it was formerly known. The main street, Lincoln Highway, near the Washington Street intersection is due for major changes under a plan to beautify downtown. Changes would include new landscaping, faux brickwork, ornamental lighting fixtures, raised planters and benches. Even a town square is planned with a gazebo for the old gas station site a block west of the Main and Washington intersection.

The City Council has already authorized \$375,000 for the project. Work will begin in late August after the City's annual Sauerkraut Days festival.

☞ Did you know...King's Tower in Tama has a "Lincoln Highway Burger?" Are you hungry? It is topped with cheese and green olives. The price is only \$2.95 with fries. Check it out!

☞ Sometimes it pays to keep an eye on the competition. That young upstart—Route 66—has many features and challenges similar to those of our organization. They have found a high-tech way to assist highway historians in their research. These clever people are using satellites linked to the Terraserver Website (www.terraserver.com) to trace old paths that are overgrown, fenced or just forgotten. Surprisingly, these old routes are easily visible from space. This is a website that can be used by the public without charge. Check it out; it may help our group research or settle conflicts in old maps. In fact, you can see Terraserver in action on page 7 of this newsletter.

☞ You road warriors are an adventurous lot. Comments in this column of the previous issue about the disappearing drive-in theaters prompted quite a few comments and reminiscences. It seems as if there are still some with interest in visiting an outdoor drive-in theater before they all disappear. Maybe the charm and appeal is just one more trip to the concession stand for popcorn.

Drive-in theaters in Iowa—on and off the LH—peaked in 1954 with 68 screens. There were only 22 drive-ins in 1987. Today, if you move fast, these *three* are still active in Iowa:

- 1) 61 Drive-In Theater, Highway 61 South, Maquoketa, Phone (319) 674-4367.
- 2) Council Bluffs Drive-In, 1130 West South Omaha Bridge Road, Council Bluffs, Phone (712) 366—0422.
- 3) Valle Drive-In, Rural Newton (Hwy 6 west of town) Phone (515) 792-3558.

And check out www.driveintheater.com on the internet for more information including listings of what is showing. L

GREAT GRADES.

In April, the ILHA toured the Lincoln Highway between State Center and Marshalltown. On the west side of Marshalltown, members pulled off Lincolnway to hike Marshall County's infamous "Four-Mile Hill," so named because of its distance from the Courthouse Square at Center and Main Streets in downtown Marshalltown. Now well within the city limits, the incline has been repeatedly leveled off and the curve graduated .



Fortunately, the current DOT-approved grade exists alongside its more immoderate ancestor, the original 1913 grade of the Lincoln Highway, shown here.

This 1990s satellite image illustrates both grades.



The current roadbed is obvious. The dirt Lincoln Highway, however, is hiding under the canopy of trees in the north-south swath of dark foliage. At the edge of the farm field, the Lincoln turned west—still visible here—and aligned with the current grade.

* * *

The State Center Main Street group has been kind to furnish two LH period photos of their namesake. Our cover photo's view is to the east, and readers will be sure to note the "L Garage."



The photo above is the opposite view, with Watkins Grocery clearly visible on the left side of the street. 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

Lincoln Hotel Now Hosting Overnight Guests.

The Lincoln Hotel, 408 Main Street, Lowden, was built in 1915, and is one of the first hotels built to serve travelers coming in automobiles rather than by train. Built by Emil Mahlstedt, it is a two-story frame stucco building in Prairie School architecture.



Tucked away at the junction of historic Old Lincoln and Herbert Hoover highways lies this quiet place of repose. This restored hotel is one of the few remaining original Lincoln Highway hotels and is on The National Historic Registry. Located in east-central Iowa, thirty minutes off Interstate 80, you will find yourself within easy driving distance of great antiques, local artist shops, an award-winning winery, and the gentle rolling hills that Grant Wood made Iowa famous for. Spacious suites comfortably furnished with queen-size beds, full kitchens and private baths offer you warm midwestern hospitality in a quiet small-town setting.

Double Occupancy.....\$75.00

- * All rooms have air-conditioning, alarm clocks, and televisions.
- * Dishes, silverware, microwave, toasters and coffee-maker in room.
- * Coffee furnished.
- * Local and credit card calls
- * Smoking and pets are prohibited.
- * Extra occupants (with permission) are \$10.00 extra per night.
- * Rates may change without notice.
- * Check-in time: 4:00—6:00 p.m.
- * Check-out time: 12:00 noon.

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