



Along The Lincoln Highway



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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IOWA LINCOLN HIGHWAY ASSOCIATION

President's Corner

By Cathie Nichols, President of ILHA

In the spirit of Halloween, here is the Legend of Wapsi Willy:

In the mid-1800s, many people came west to find a new life, land, and fortune. Willy and his family came from the east to Iowa and bought a parcel of land along the Wapsipinicon River in Clinton County, where the Lincoln Highway would be laid out in the future. The land was green, lush, and wooded, and there was plenty of water beside the river. It seemed like the perfect place to homestead. He and his wife erected a small cabin beside the Wapsi. The children played in the water, but also helped their parents work the farmland. There were lots of birds and animals, and the family never went hungry.

All was well until one night, when there was a terrible storm. Willy, who had been in the woods hunting deer, was caught in the torrential rain and wind. He headed for home amidst hail, thunder, lightning, and the heaviest rain he'd ever seen. It took him several hours to work his way back to the cabin on the river bank. In the meantime, the river had risen past flood stage. When Willy arrived home everything was gone; cabin, family, horses, and wagon. The river was a torrent far out of its banks and he could see nothing recognizable. With his lantern he searched up and down the river looking for his family, but he never found any trace of them. For the rest of his life, Willy walked up and down the river asking people if they'd seen his family. He never stopped searching, and finally died of exhaustion. But even after his death, people saw his lantern bobbing up and down the river banks at dusk, and heard him calling for his lost loved ones. You can still see his light in the woods sometimes today, as he continues to search

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Creepy or Haunted: The Squirrel Jail of Pottawattamie County

By Jan Gammon, LHHB Coordinator
Prairie Rivers of Iowa

The Squirrel Jail in Council Bluffs was built in 1885 and was in continuous use until 1969. The design and size of the Historic Pottawattamie County Squirrel Cage Jail make it a one-of-a-kind structure. It was one of 18 revolving ("squirrel cage," "human rotary," or "lazy Susan") jails built. It is the only three-story one ever built. Built at a cost of about \$30,000, our unique jail has three floors of revolving pie-shaped cells inside a cage. The front part of the building had offices for the jailer, kitchen, trustee cells, and quarters for women.

The signatures and dates of many of its' infamous prisoners remain scratched in the cell walls. It remains a well restored snapshot of an interesting era of our society. Today, only 3 revolving jails remain: a one-story structure in Gallatin, Missouri; a two-story structure in Crawfordsville, Indiana; and the unique three-story jail in Council Bluffs. All three are preserved as museums. The Historical Society of Pottawattamie County today owns and operates the facility today.

*From the Historical Society's website:
"Historical Society tour guides routinely tell visitors*

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Mission Statement

The Lincoln Highway Association shall identify, preserve, interpret and improve access to the Lincoln Highway and its associated sites, pursue the appropriate measures to prevent further deterioration, destruction or alteration of the remaining sections, publicize and seek public awareness of its goals and activities for preserving and developing the LH, facilitate research about the LH, and publish a magazine for articles and news of activity relevant to the LH, work with local communities and businesses to promote the LH as a tourism destination, and be exclusively charitable and educational within the meaning of the Internal Revenue Code.

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along the Wapsi for his wife and children, and if you're quiet you may hear him calling.

Now for the news part of this letter: I just returned from the Lincoln Highway Auto Tour. Bryan and Caron Osberg went to a lot of work to make this tour fun. About 20 of us toured the John Wayne Birthplace and Museum, one of the Bridges of Madison County, the Winterset Historical Museum and complex, and dinner at the Iowa Machine Shed—and that was just the pre-tour! We stopped at Reed-Niland corner for some of Sandii's homemade cinnamon rolls, visited historic State Center, had lunch in a mansion in Marshalltown amid the tornado damage, saw an historic blacksmith shop where nothing had been touched or changed since 1940, and many other places. My regret was that only three classic cars were on the tour. If you have a classic car and enjoy road trips, please put the Auto Tour on your calendar for next summer—you won't be sorry. Did I mention there were lots of cool door prizes?

Good news: The Tama Lincoln Highway Bridge has received several grants (including one from the LHA) to restore the bridge. It will not be moved or altered, but restored to its original plan.

In Montour, the owner of an historic gas station has offered to give it to the ILHA if we will preserve it. He even offered to mow the lawn for free! There are still some questions, such as are the underground gas storage tanks still there? We will consider our options, but this might make a nice tie-in with the Henry Ostermann memorial plaque.

Calling all construction engineers—we need more information on engineering the original Lincoln Highway. The LH is in the running for a civil engineering award, but we need pictures and stories about its construction and why it is an engineering marvel. Anyone with photos, plans, or other info please submit it to the newsletter. Things are stalled on the bridges project in Clinton County—see more in the Clinton County news.

Some of the LH kiosks in Linn County are deteriorating and need maintenance. Van Becker is to contact someone to get them back in shape. Also, since putting in all the roundabouts in Cedar Rapids, one of the LH markers is missing. Van is on the trail to find out what happened.

Fall is one of the best times to get in your car and motor along the Lincoln Highway. Hope you are all out there enjoying it, as I am.

Safe travels!

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Clinton County Update By Cathie Nichols, ILHA President

There's not much to report at the moment. Our project to get a Lincoln Highway themed room at the historic Winsther Motel on the LH in DeWitt fell through. Although the owner's son gave me the green light, when I had all the materials (pillow, framed maps, framed poster, copies of the Forum and some of Mike Kelly's matchbook table decorations) and contacted the owner, she refused to let it happen and said she never agreed to it. So, if anyone knows of another motel on the LH that wants to do a themed room, let me know—I have all the fixin's.

As far as the three bridges project, I spoke with the county engineer and he will try to get an item on next year's budget to seal the cracks in the pavement for us before vacating the road. I got an agreement from two property owners to let the ILHA use their land for our proposed park as long as they got a release of liability. I found a local attorney who drew these releases up for us pro bono, but now there is a question on possible liability for the ILHA so everything has come to a stop. I need more help with this; I'm asking for volunteers. We need to get this legal stuff nailed down so we can plan some work on the road and bridges before they are gone.

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Continued from Squirrel Jail.

nobody has called the Squirrel Cage Jail home since 1969. Some folks may disagree with that wording: 'no BODY' may call it home, but as for spirits, that's a different matter.

The feelings of goings on at the jail that are other than mortal dates back to well before the 1885 structure's use as a museum. Bill Foster, who worked as the jailer in 1950's, opted not to use the fourth floor as his apartment, "because of the strange goings-on up there." He reported hearing people walking around on a floor that had nobody on it, a sensation sufficiently concerning to motivate him to bunk on the second level prisoner floor instead.

The spirit may actually date back to the jail's origin. A former jail tour guide claimed she believed the ghost to be that of J.M. Carter, the man who oversaw the building's construction. Mr. Carter was the first resident of the top floor apartment and, according to her theory, has never left, continuing to watch over the one-of-a-kind building to this day.

There have also been reports of a full body apparition on the fourth floor identified as Otto Gufath, also a former jailer. Museum staff add whatever spirit is present, it is friendly; despite an occasional door that opens by itself, strange lights, or peculiar noises, no one has ever felt frightened or in any danger.

There has been some evidence of a female spirit as well. A few years ago a woman working on a project in the building after hours had been experiencing peculiar sensations. She walked through the building and was shocked to see a little girl with a very mournful expression dressed entirely in gray... inside a cell whose bars were locked with no way in or out. Occasionally, visitors have reported feeling that something was tugging at them, reported a great feeling of sadness in some of the cells, or simply felt that there was a presence there beyond those visible.

The feelings of being watched or followed have been most frequently noted on the third and fourth floors though the voice of a little girl has been picked up in various places throughout the building,

as has the presence of two ghost cats.

In most literature ghosts are associated with grizzly or at least multiple deaths. In its long history only four deaths are known to have occurred in the Squirrel Cage Jail. One prisoner died of a heart attack, one in a three-story fall when trying to carve his name on the ceiling, and one prisoner hanged himself in his cell. The fourth death followed an accident in which an officer shot himself in the confusion of fortifying the facility from an angry mob threatening to storm the jail during the Farmer's Holiday Strike of 1932.

If the deaths aren't enough to justify a haunting, some point to the fact that the building is on the site of the old St. Paul's Episcopal Church morgue. Additionally, though actual prisoner deaths were few, the cold, damp, dark, tiny pie-shaped cells were likely a very depressing place to spend time. That in itself may be worthy of a ghost or two.

But all of this is speculation. Is there any science to support any paranormal activity within our Jail? Several modern investigative teams are trying to do just that. In the summer of 2005, the Paranormal Research and Investigative Studies Midwest (PRISM) group brought sophisticated test gear and cameras to the Jail and spent the night. They captured on film a cabinet door opening by itself three times. Several electromagnetic spikes were recorded on special meters and infrared thermometers noted abnormal temperature fluctuations. More importantly, the team was able to correlate these readings with orbs (tiny balls of light) recorded on video.

In 2008, the Carroll Area Paranormal Team (CAPT) investigated the jail, conducting EVP and video tests. The group members, all specialists with trained eyes toward signs of potential paranormal activity, noted unexplained light upon occasion in the infirmary and unusual sounds. Their investigation was preliminary but they felt there was sufficient evidence to suggest the jail is haunted. In recent years interest in the jail amongst paranormal investigators has increased exponentially as word of mysterious findings has

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Continued from Squirrel Jail.

circulated amongst the curious.

There remain skeptics. A jail researcher spent two nights on the fourth floor in the 1980s and reported nothing out of the ordinary. Following the PRISM session, two Historical Society museum guides decided to spend all night in the Squirrel Cage themselves. The night proved a disappointment – they neither heard nor saw anything unusual.

Professional investigators explain this discrepancy by noting many indicators of potential paranormal activity are subtle and could easily escape the attention of someone not trained to notice them. Also, some people are more sensitive to paranormal activity than others. These are the folk most likely to pick up on unusual feelings or see things like full body apparitions. So, it may be some who spend the night simply aren't tuned in enough to have any memorable encounters.

The Jail isn't the only building in Council Bluffs that is a potential haunt for ghosts. Librarians have reported a strange light near the top of the second floor stairway of the old Council Bluffs Library. Patrons had also occasionally reported feeling cold spots in the catalogue room. Interestingly there have been no such reports since the building became the Union Pacific Museum, nor any at the new Council Bluffs Library.

Stories of ghosts have also circulated about the General Dodge House, Bersheim House, and the old City Hall which has since been demolished."

To learn more or to hear recordings of paranormal activity go to www.thehistoricalsociety.org/paranormal/scj-paranormal.html.

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Stay in the Know

Visit our website to read the minutes from our July meeting.

www.iowalincolnhighway.org/latest-news.

Mystery Place

By Mike Kelly

This Issue's Mystery Place



This Main Street entry hardware from the turn of the century is one small piece of the Lincoln Highway puzzle. With enough clues, identifying this Mystery Photo would be elementary, but just in case think of the "Kill Bill" actress also known as "Cottonmouth."

Last Issue's Mystery Place



Congratulations to Van Becker! He correctly submitted an answer of three miles north of the intersection of I-80 and HWY 17, near Colfax, Iowa. Thanks for playing!

If you think you can identify the Mystery Place, send an email to lincolnhighway@prcd.org or call 515-232-0048. Call with the correct information and we will take your name and contact information. We then will hold a random drawing for a winner to receive a 2013 Iowa Lincoln Highway Map Pack! This is to accommodate for the varying time and travel the postal system can take and to give all a fair try.

LHHB Update

By Jan Gammon, LHHB Coordinator Prairie Rivers of Iowa

It certainly has been a busy summer! We started the summer by creating interpretive panels for the Lion's Club Tree Park to tell the story of a girder salvaged from the old overpass over the Lincoln Highway. Kimball Olson, DOT's aesthetic bridge designer, wrote the text about his design for the new overpass and how it contrasts with the old overpass. The Greene County Engineer will create the bases for these signs and do the installation.

Three smaller signs were created to put around an original concrete marker that will be installed at the east entrance of Jefferson. The panels cover the Lincoln Highway connection with Boy Scouts, naming of the Highway, and the importance of the Highway.

Hunter Davis, from Coralville, completed his Eagle Scout project at the Tama Lincoln Highway Bridge Park. He installed an original marker and wrote the text for the interpretive panel, including thanks to the many groups and individuals that helped him with the project. “

The Byway applied for a Historic Resource Development Program grant from the Iowa State Preservation Office for restoration/repair of the Lincoln Highway Bridge in Tama and received \$50,000 to be put towards that project. The City of Tama is about \$8,000 shy of the quoted price, so if you would like to make a personal donation, it can be sent to: City of Tama, 305 Siegel St, Tama, Iowa 52339 and indicate it is for the LH Bridge project.

The Lincoln Highway Heritage Byway and Prairie Rivers of Iowa manned the Iowa Byways booth at the Iowa State Fair for 4 of the 11 days of the fair. The booth was located under the east end of the grandstand. It was hot, but we had lots of people stop by the booth and pick up information. We gave out 323 LH Informational Guides, 191 Recreation and Camping Guides, and 516 of our new “Adventures along the Lincoln Highway” booklet. This kids’ activity booklet has information about the Lincoln Highway, games, puzzles, and a “passport” section

for kids to stamp their books and get a small prize from the Byway. We have 15 locations across Iowa that are participating in this program.

The attractions are: Felix Adler Children's Discovery Center, Bloomsbury Farm, Linn County Conservation (Wickiup Learning Center), Belle Plaine Area Museum, Let's Play Bounce, Perfect Games, Seven Oaks, Spinning Wheels, Lucky Pig, ILHA Greene County Museum, Carroll County Conservation (Swan Lake), Donna Reed Museum, Harrison County Historical Village and Welcome Center, Loess Hills Lavender Farm, and Union Pacific Railroad Museum.

We tried to find a sample of kid-friendly attractions from across the Lincoln Highway route and with different areas of interest.

Another grant that was successful is to do work in the oil room at Youngville. We were not given the full amount requested, but funds should go a long way towards new concrete, re-installing the original door, and doing some painting. It was hoped that the garage in the back could be straightened as part of this project, but that might prove to be a project unto itself.

We have several other grants and projects in the works and will share them with you as they progress.

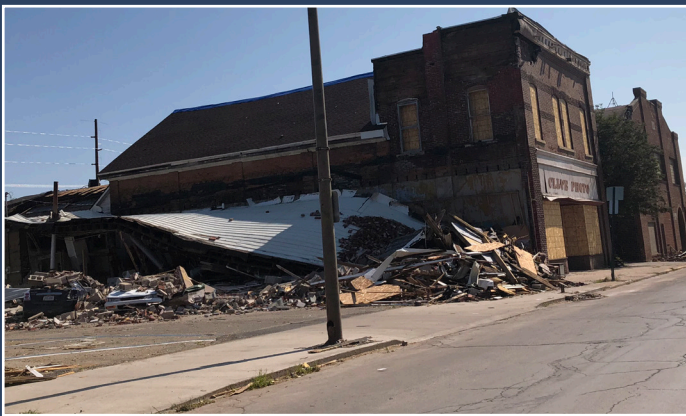
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Hunter Davis (far left), and fellow Scouts from the Coralville area, helped with marker installation.

Marshalltown Tornado **By Jan Gammon, LHHB Coordinator** **Prairie Rivers of Iowa**

On July 19, 2018 a tornado developed near the town of Marietta, Iowa in Marshall County and traveled southeast along the western edge of the Iowa River. It entered Marshalltown as an EF-1 and EF-2. It went through the business district in downtown, creating EF-2 and EF-3 damage to many of the buildings including the county courthouse, built in 1886, which lost the spire off the clock tower. (The Lincoln Highway is Main Street in Marshalltown for about 22 blocks, before the Lincoln Highway turns south to the fairgrounds.) The tornado continued east from



downtown, through a residential area before producing EF-3 damage at the Lenox plant on the east end of town. It began to weaken rapidly and dissipated east of the power plant.

Damage in the community was extensive and repair to the courthouse alone is estimated to be \$15.5 million. The 16-foot cupola crumbling to the ground was captured on video and replayed on newscasts around the country. Shards of glass, bricks, stone and shingles littered the courthouse square in the



aftermath. Clean up around town began immediately. County offices have temporarily been relocated within the community and court cases are being heard at neighboring Story County Courthouse.

In the Marshalltown Times-Republican, Lucas

Baedke, Marshall County Buildings and Grounds director talks about the Marshall County Courthouse, “Almost everything above the gutter line has taken damage at this point. We’re talking 75 feet and above. Below that, as far as windows and stones, there’s minimal damage. We had three cracked windows, which is actually pretty surprising. The only issues we’ve had structurally that could be a danger is being in the attic. The east side of the building has water damage.”

Plans are to save as much historic pieces, including the “three ladies” statue which faced the north side of the courthouse and is in now in storage. It was made from tin and patched with fiberglass in a 1970’s courthouse renovation. The statue now will either be repaired or replaced.

Residents have adopted the motto “Marshalltown Strong” and are slowly getting back to normalcy, although many roofs and structures remain unrepaired at this time and cleanup continues.

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**The next ILHA meeting will be
October 13, 2018 in Carroll, Iowa at Family Table Restaurant.
Refreshments at 9:00 AM with general meeting to follow.**

The next meeting will be in Carroll, Iowa at the Family Table Restaurant (1525 Radiant Rd). When traveling from either the east or west on Highway 30, the restaurant is on the west side of town—just west of the Hwy 71/Hwy 30 intersection. It is on the south side of Highway 30 as the highway gently curves. Radiant Road is a quasi-service road to the businesses on the south side of the road.

Upcoming Iowa LHA Meetings

October 13, 2018: Carroll, General

January 2019: Ames, Business

April 2019: Location TBD, General

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