Nebraska Historic Highway Survey

Nebraska State Historical Society
Nebraska Department of Roads

Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey
Historic Highways in Nebraska

Prepared for:

Nebraska State Historical Society
and
Nebraska Department of Roads

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Executive Summary

The Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) partnered with the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) in an effort to identify the history and related resources of a selection of Nebraska's historic highways. The NSHS and NDOR contracted with Mead & Hunt as its consultant. Heritage Research is assisting Mead & Hunt with portions of the project.

The Nebraska Historic Highway Survey project has four principle steps:

1. Develop a statewide historic context addressing the history of road and highway development in Nebraska, including the preparation of individual historic contexts for the following six roads:
   Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway
   Lincoln Highway
   Meridian Highway
   Potash Highway
   U.S. Highway 20
   Interstate 80

2. Devise a methodology and conduct a reconnaissance-level survey of the road and road-related resources on five historic highways. Interstate 80 was excluded from the field survey.

3. Prepare a National Register Multiple Property Document for each of the five surveyed highways.

4. Develop the historic context into a publication manuscript addressing the history of road and highway development in Nebraska that will serve as an educational tool for a broad general audience.

This report represents the results of steps 1 and 2 of the project including the historic contexts survey methodology and survey results. The Introduction describes the survey process and its administrators. Chapters 1 through 7 provide a historic overview of road development in Nebraska and the development of six historic highways. Chapter 8 outlines the survey methodology and discusses road-related property types. The last chapter, Chapter 9, provides recommendations for National Register listing and future research and survey considerations. The report concludes with appendices providing a bibliography and a glossary of road and engineering terms.

The five roads surveyed encompassed approximately 3,500 miles of highway. Mead & Hunt conducted the survey in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation* and *Standards for Identification and Evaluation* and NeHBS survey standards.

Architectural historians from Mead & Hunt and Heritage Research documented 921 newly identified and previously surveyed road-related properties including bridges, the road itself, motels, gas stations, waysides, and restaurants. Surveyed properties were evaluated their potential eligibility according to the guidelines of the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). A total of 140 properties are recommended for further research and as potentially eligible for the National Register. For a complete list of surveyed properties please refer to the document entitled: *Nebraska Historic Highways Survey List of Surveyed Properties.*

Project team members from Mead & Hunt include: Christina Slattery, Amy R. Squitieri, Emily Schill, Erin Pogany, Chad Moffett, and Matthew Becker. Project team members from Heritage Research include John N. Vogel and Michael McQuillen.

Introduction

Throughout much of Nebraska's history, historic preservation was the province of dedicated individuals and organizations working alone in their local communities. Since the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, however, the Governor of each state has been required to appoint a State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) to oversee preservation efforts mandated by the 1966 act. In Nebraska, the Director of the Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) serves as SHPO. The staff of the NSHS' Historic Preservation Division forms the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office (NeSHPO).

The NeSHPO administers a wide range of preservation programs. The duties of the NeSHPO relating to programs called for by the National Historic Preservation Act include:

- Conducting and maintaining a statewide historic building survey.
- Administering the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) program.
- Assisting local governments in the development of local historic preservation programs and certification of qualifying governments.
- Administering a federal tax incentives program for the preservation of historic buildings.
- Assisting federal agencies in their responsibility to identify and protect historic properties that may be affected by their projects.
- Providing preservation education, training, and technical assistance to individuals and groups and local, state, and federal agencies.

What follows is a brief description of NeSHPO programs, followed by a staff guide with telephone numbers. Though described separately, it is important to remember that NeSHPO programs often act in concert with other initiatives, and should be considered elements of the NeSHPO mission and a part of the mission of the NSHS.

Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey

The Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey (NeHBS) was begun in 1974. The survey is conducted on a county-by-county basis and currently includes more than 60,000 properties that reflect the rich architectural and historic heritage of Nebraska. The survey is conducted by researchers who drive every rural and urban public road in a county and record each

property that meets certain historic requirements. Surveyors never enter private property without permission. In addition to this fieldwork, surveyors research the history of the area in order to better understand their subject. The NeHBS often includes thematic subjects that may be unique to a certain county such as an historic highway or type of industry.

The purpose of the NeHBS is to help local preservation advocates, elected officials, land-use planners, economic development coordinators, and tourism promoters understand the wealth of historic properties in their community. Properties included in the survey have no use restrictions placed on them, nor does the survey require any level of maintenance or accessibility by property owners. Rather, the survey provides a foundation for identifying properties that may be worthy of preservation, promotion, and recognition within a community.

The NeHBS provides a basis for preservation and planning at all levels of government and for individual groups or citizens. Generally, the NeHBS includes properties that convey a sense of architectural significance. When possible and known, NeHBS also describes properties that have historical significance. The survey is not intended to be a comprehensive history of a county, but a detailed "first look" at historic properties. Additionally, as the NeHBS is in part federally funded, the NeSHPO must use federal guidelines when evaluating and identifying historic properties. In short, the NeHBS is not an end in itself, but a beginning for public planners and individuals who value their community's history.

For more information, please call the NeHBS Program Associate or the Survey Coordinator listed in the Organizational Contacts.

National Register of Historic Places

One of the goals of the NeHBS is to help identify properties that may be eligible for listing on the National Register. The National Register is our nation's official list of significant historic properties. Created by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register includes buildings, structures, districts, objects, and sites that are significant in our history or prehistory. These properties may reflect a historically significant pattern, event, person, architectural style, or archaeological site. National Register properties may be significant at the local, state, or national levels.
Properties need not be as historic as Mt. Vernon or architecturally spectacular as the Nebraska State Capitol to be listed on the National Register. Local properties that retain their physical integrity and convey local historic significance may also be listed.

It is important to note what listing a property on the National Register means or, perhaps more importantly, what it does not mean. The National Register does not:

- Restrict, in any way, a private property owner's ability to alter, manage, or dispose of a property.
- Require that properties be maintained, repaired, or restored.
- Invoke special zoning or local landmark designation.
- Allow the listing of individual private property over an owner's objection.
- Allow the listing of historic districts over a majority of property owners' objections.
- Require public access to private property.

Listing a property on the National Register does:

- Provide prestigious recognition to significant properties.
- Encourage the preservation of historic properties.
- Provide information about historic properties for local and statewide planning purposes.
- Help promote community development, tourism, and economic development.
- Provide basic eligibility for financial incentives, when available.

For more information, please call the National Register Coordinator listed in the Organizational Contacts.

Certified Local Governments

An important goal of the NeSHPO is to translate the federal preservation program, as embodied by the National Historic Preservation Act, to the local level. An important element of this goal is to help link local governments with a nationwide network of federal, state, and local organizations. One of the most effective tools for this purpose is the Certified Local Government (CLG) program. A CLG is a local government, either a county or municipality, that has adopted preservation as a priority. To become a CLG, a local government must:

- Establish a preservation ordinance that includes protection for historic properties at a level the community decides is appropriate.
- Promote preservation education and outreach.
- Conduct and maintain some level of a historic building survey.
- Establish a mechanism to designate local landmarks.
- Create a preservation commission to oversee the preservation ordinance and the CLG program.

There are a number of advantages to achieving CLG status:

- A CLG is eligible to receive matching funds from the NeSHPO that are unavailable to non-CLGs.
- Contributing buildings within local landmark districts may be eligible for preservation tax incentives (see below), without being listed on the National Register.
- CLGs have an additional tool when considering planning, zoning, and land-use issues through their landmarking and survey programs.
- CLGs have the ability to monitor and preserve structures that reflect the community's heritage.
- CLGs have access to a nationwide information network of local, state, federal, and private preservation institutions.
- Finally, but not least, a CLG through its ordinance and commission has a built-in mechanism to promote pride in, and understanding of, a community's history.

Certification of a local government for CLG status comes from the NeSHPO and the National Park Service, and there are general rules to follow. A community considering CLG status, however, is given broad flexibility within those rules when structuring their CLG program. The emphasis of the CLG program is local management of historic properties with technical and economic assistance from the NeSHPO.

Preservation Tax Incentives

Since 1976 the Internal Revenue Code has contained provisions offering tax credits for the certified rehabilitation of income-producing historic properties. Historic properties are defined as those listed on the National Register, or as buildings that contribute to the significance of a National Register or a locally landmarked (by a CLG see above) historic district. An income-producing property may be a rental residential, office, commercial, or industrial property. Historic working barns or other agriculture-related outbuildings may also qualify.

A certified rehabilitation is one that conforms to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*. The standards are a common sense approach to the adaptive reuse of historic buildings. It is important to remember that this program promotes the rehabilitation of historic properties so that they may be used to the benefit and enjoyment of the property owner and a community. The program is not necessarily intended to reconstruct or restore historic buildings to exact, as-built specifications.

The tax incentive program in Nebraska has been responsible for:

- Reinvesting millions of dollars for the preservation of historic buildings.
- Establishing thousands of low- and moderate-income housing units and upper-end units.
- Helping to broaden the tax base.

- Encouraging the adaptive reuse of previously under or unutilized historic properties in older downtown commercial areas.

- Giving real estate developers and city planners a tool to consider projects in older, historic neighborhoods.

- Helping stabilize older, historic neighborhoods.

Certification of the historic character of the income-producing property (usually by listing the property on the National Register) and certification of the historic rehabilitation is made by both the NeSHPO and the National Park Service. Contacting the NeSHPO and a professional tax advisor, legal counsel, or appropriate local Internal Revenue Service office before initiating any activity for a project that anticipates the use of preservation tax incentives is strongly encouraged.

For more information, please call the Review and Preservation Services Program Associate listed in the Organizational Contacts.

Federal Project Review

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires that federal agencies take into account the effect of their undertakings on historic properties; develop and evaluate alternatives that could avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects their projects may have on historic properties; and afford the Federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment on the project and its effects on historic properties. The regulations that govern the Section 106 process, as it is known, also require that the federal agency consult with the NeSHPO to identify historic properties in the project area; assess the effects a project may have on historic properties located in the project area; and develop and evaluate alternatives that could avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects the project may have on historic properties.

For example, if the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), through the Nebraska Department of Roads, contemplates construction of a new highway, FHWA must contact the NeSHPO for assistance in determining whether any sites or structures are listed on, or eligible for listing on, the National Register are located in the project area. If properties that meet this criteria are found, the FHWA must consult with the NeSHPO to avoid or reduce any harm the highway might cause the property. Note that a property need not actually be listed on the National Register, only eligible. This process is to take place early enough in the planning process to allow for alternatives that would avoid adverse effects to historic properties; i.e., in the example above, the modification of a new highway's right-of-way could avoid an archaeological site or historic barn.

It is important to note that public participation in this process is vital. The Section 106 process requires the federal agency to seek views of the public and interested parties if adverse effects to historic properties are discovered through consultation with the NeSHPO. The NeSHPO examines information provided by the federal agency, the NeHBS, and the National Register, but often the most valuable information comes from comments provided by the public. Section 106 was included in the National Historic Preservation Act to protect locally significant historic properties from unwitting federal action. It is truly a law that gives the public a voice in an often unsympathetic bureaucratic system.

For more information about Section 106 review, please a member of the Federal Agency Review staff listed in the Organizational Contacts.

Public Outreach and Education

The primary function of the NeSHPO is to assist communities in preserving significant buildings, sites, and structures that convey a sense of community history. The most powerful tool available to the NeSHPO in this regard is public education. For this reason, NeSHPO staff spends considerable time conducting public meetings and workshops and disseminating information to the public.

The goal is to assist local individuals, groups, and governments understand, promote, and preserve historic properties. The NeSHPO advocates not only the self-evident aesthetic advantages of historic preservation, but also the potential for preservation to help promote economic development, community planning, tourism, environmental sensitivity, and land-use planning.

The above short descriptions are meant to orient the reader to the NeSHPO programs within the larger mission of the NSHS. As all NeSHPO programs originate from a common source, the National Historic Preservation Act, they work best when they work together, either in whole or in part. For the programs to function at all, they require the interest and participation of the people they are meant to serve . . . the public.

For more information about the NeSHPO or the programs described above, please call (402) 471-4787 or 1-800-833-6747. Information is also available at the Nebraska State Historical Society web page at www.nebraskahistory.org.

Nebraska Department of Roads Mission and Programs

In 1895, the State of Nebraska brought into existence an organized transportation agency to enable the development of the economy and increase the quality of life for all Nebraskans. More than one hundred years later, the Nebraska Department of Roads' mission is to provide and maintain, in cooperation with public and private organizations, a safe, efficient, affordable and coordinated statewide transportation system for the movement of people and goods.

The responsibility for surface transportation in Nebraska is centered on the Department of Roads. The Department, along with its many partners, has responsibility for planning, design, construction, maintenance and operation of state highway, rail and statewide public transportation programs.

There are more than 95,944 miles of roads, streets and highways in Nebraska, with more than 16,000 bridges. Seventy-three bridges are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Department is responsible for maintaining about 10,000 miles of road, including 3,489 bridges. These make up the State of Nebraska's highway system.

The Department also has significant responsibilities for rail, with Nebraska having the highest concentration of freight rail traffic in the nation and nearly 7,000 rail-grade crossings. Public transportation is another area of responsibility, with 73 systems operating throughout the state and a ridership of over 6,000,000 annually. The Department is responsible for several other programs and activities, including: Transportation Enhancement, Environmental (including such subjects as threatened and endangered species, wetlands, floodplains, hydrology, history, and archaeology and paleontology), Motorist Assist, and Commercial Vehicle Information Systems and Networks (CVISN). The Department's focus is not only on developing, but operating the best transportation system possible.

As the caretaker of the state highway system, the Department has made safety of its employees and the traveling public its highest priority. One mission of the Department is to reduce injuries, deaths and economic losses from motor vehicle accidents in Nebraska. The Department continues to promote the use of transportation technology to enhance safety on the roadway system. Some examples of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) currently underway: portable and fixed variable message signs, 511 Traveler Information System, Transportation Portal or website, inter-jurisdictional transportation operations centers and a state joint operations center.

Technology is a key element in programs currently underway to optimize the performance of the State's transportation system. Asset management is being utilized to ensure the optimal allocation of limited resources. A pavement management system is in place to build and maintain the highest quality road system possible. Efforts are underway to preserve the investment in Nebraska's highways through a preventive maintenance program. This program is being refined to extend the life of the pavement.

This work also reduces the highway's life-cycle cost. For example, the development of Superpave has reduced the life-cycle costs of asphalt pavement. Life-cycle analysis has also been conducted on the Department's equipment fleet and salt storage capacity, which will allow reallocation of resources to other needs.

These programs highlight the Nebraska Department of Roads efforts to attain its mission and vision as the premier transportation agency in the United States. Because the economy of the state and the nation relies upon an efficient, integrated and well-maintained transportation system, the unified effort and dedication of employees of the Department of Roads not only ensures the attainment of this vision, but the economic prosperity of the state for years to come.

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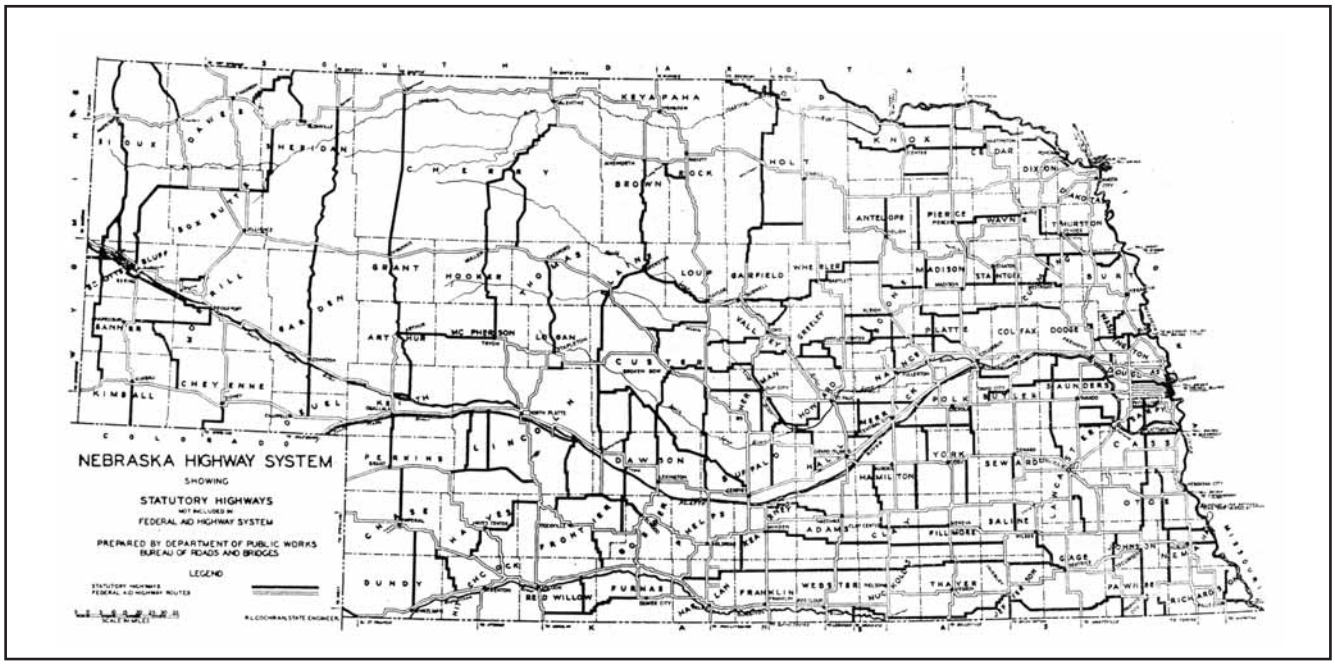
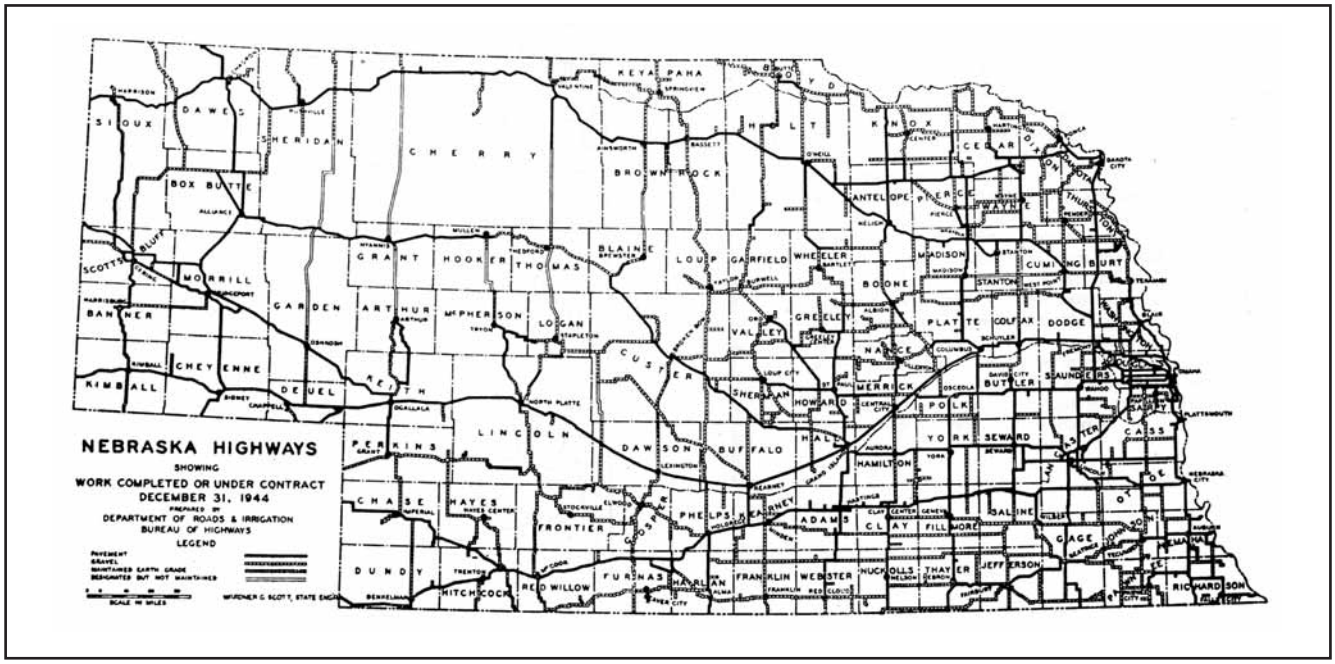


Nebraska Highways in 1930. Statutory or state highways indicated in black line with Federal Aid Highways marked with open line. (Source: Eighteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works, 1929-1930, 12).



Nebraska Highway System in 1944. Road materials indicated by the following: thick black line = pavement, open dash line = gravel, tighter dash line = maintained earth grade, and open line = designated but not maintained. (Source: Twenty-Fifth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation, Vol.1, 1943-44, 12).

Chapter 1
Highway Development in Nebraska

Introduction[1]

Prior to the twentieth century, much of the country, including Nebraska, had largely undeveloped road networks. The railroad dominated in the nineteenth century as the preferred method of transportation and the system of roads developed haphazardly based on routine travel and continuous use. The regular trip of farmers moving crops to market formed pathways from rural areas into communities. With the exception of rutted trails formed by travelers on the Oregon, California, and Mormon Trails and the route of the Pony Express, these local unimproved roads were the only vehicular transportation routes. Through the efforts of citizen groups and local governments, these trails evolved into a regional and national network of highways.

The popularity of the bicycle and the introduction of the automobile in the 1890s raised public awareness of the need for adequate road networks. In response to the poor condition of the nation's road system, the "Good Roads Movement" emerged. By the 1880s, interest groups began pressuring the federal government to reevaluate its role in the development of roads. A group of bicyclists organized the League of American Wheelmen, founding the first of many organizations to promote road improvements as part of the Good Roads Movement. With the motto, "lifting our people out of the mud," they lobbied the federal and state governments for better roads.[2] Advocates of the Good Roads Movement lobbied for federal, state, and local involvement and financial resources in road building and maintenance activities.

Origin of the Term "Highway"

Historically the term highway refers to a "way" in which the public at large has the right of passage. Originally, a highway was not a physical object (like a road), but rather, a right. According to the 1867 edition of Burrill's Law Dictionary a highway is a thoroughfare "common to all the king's subjects, ...whether it be a carriage-way, a horse-way, a foot-way or a navigable river. The word highway is the genus of all public ways." Today, the term highway still refers to a public roadway.

("Highway Rights of Way: The Controversy Over Claims Under R.S.2477,"15 January 1993. <http://www.rs2477roads.com/2crscom.htm> [Accessed 14 March 2002]).

Rural Free Delivery Service (postal delivery), begun in 1896, increased the awareness for an adequate road system and broadened the support for good roads, especially among those in rural areas who did not previously see the need. Mail delivery was required in all conditions and poor road conditions could prohibit this. Additionally, local applications for Rural Free Delivery Service were sometimes denied because of poor road conditions.[3]

Car stuck, showing poor conditions in the early days of road development in Sherman County, c.1922 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

The nation's first state highway department was formed in Massachusetts in 1893 and Massachusetts was the only state to spend any significant amount of money on roads between 1894 and 1903.[4] The federal government formally became involved in roads in 1893 with the formation of the Office of Road Inquiry within the United States Department of Agriculture. The engineers within the Office of Road Inquiry became involved with the "Good Roads" movement and the department evolved into a central source of technical information regarding roads. The Office of Road Inquiry was involved in data collection and released bulletins and circulars addressing road construction and administration issues.[5]

The Office of Road Inquiry was renamed the Office of Public Road Inquiry in 1899 and continued with technical and promotional efforts to improve roads.[6] One effort of the Office of Public Road Inquiry was to develop a materials testing laboratory to test samples and identify suitable road materials. In 1905 the Office of Public Roads was created by the passage of the Agriculture Appropriations Act which terminated the Office of Public Road Inquiry and established a permanent federal road agency with an annual budget of $50,000.[7] Based on continued testing, the Office of Public Roads issued typical material specifications and testing procedures, as well as construction guidelines in 1911 and bridge specifications shortly after. Highway standards were also developed by professional trade organizations, a few states, and even the Lincoln Highway Association, which developed an ideal pavement section.[8]

Chronology of National Highway Agencies

1893-1898	Office of Road Inquiry
1899-1905	Office of Public Road Inquiries
1905-1915	Office of Public Roads
1915-1918	Office of Public Roads and Rural Engineering
1918-1939	Bureau of Public Roads
1939-1949	Public Roads Administration
1949-1967	Bureau of Public Roads
1967-present	Federal Highway Administration

("Names of the Nation's Highway Agency-1893 to the Present," FHWA By Day, n.d., <www.fhwa.dot.gov/byday/acronyms.htm> [Accessed 13 March 2002]).

By 1902 numerous national, state and local groups were involved in road promotion including the National Good Roads Association, 32 affiliates of the Automobile Club of America, and 18 state and 14 local road associations. Despite the early efforts of these groups, only 154,000 miles of the country's over two million miles of road were improved in 1904.[9]

Grand Island Commercial Club advertisement for membership and better roads, 1911 (Photo courtesy of NeSHPO)

During the early twentieth century, which was the height of popularity for named highways, Nebraska had several trails and highways that bisected the state. Three of these highways were established and marked by 1913: the Lincoln Highway, the Meridian Highway, and the Omaha-Lincoln-Denver (O-L-D) Highway. The Blue Pole Highway, Grant Highway, Golden Rod Trail, Sun Flower Trail, Sunshine Highway, and Alfalfa Trail are just a few of the many other named early twentieth-century roads in

Nebraska. As the automobile gained popularity and travelers made their way across the state and the country, these routes became well-traveled thoroughfares.

Named Highways

The success of the Lincoln Highway encouraged others to establish trail organizations and chart their own routes across the country. By 1920, over 250 named trails were designated by various organizations. To promote their named routes, the trail organizations solicited membership and advertised, often publishing guide books and maps that would assist the motorist along the route. Each route was identified by its own symbol, which was painted along the roadside on telephone poles and any other available surface. These markers were placed at regular intervals and key intersections along the route. The abundance of trails bisecting the country and the poor marking system created a nightmare for travelers who found it difficult to navigate the trails, especially when one or more highways intersected. To complicate matters further, many highways had similar names. The Dixie Highway ran from Detroit to Miami, while the Dixie Beeline ran from Chicago to Nashville and the Dixie Overland Highway ran from Atlanta to San Diego. The Jefferson Highway stretched from New Orleans to the Texas State Line, and the Jefferson Davis Highway traveled from Washington D.C. to Mobile, Alabama. In an effort to diminish the confusion surrounding named routes and unify the national highway system, a numbered system was established in 1925.

(William Kaszynski, The American Highway [Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., Inc., 2000], 40).

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, road development was largely initiated by private interests, composed of local, state, or regional associations who cooperated in the designation, promotion and improvements of cross-country routes. Citizen organizations, like the Omaha-Lincoln-Denver Transcontinental-Highway Association and the Meridian Road Association, were formed to designate, promote, and improve regional and cross-country highways. These groups also lobbied state, federal, and local governments to cooperatively plan and construct roads. Local commercial clubs, business associations, automobile clubs, and merchants often contributed labor and funds to bring major roads through their towns and improve local roads. These interest groups were significant in the ultimate development of a national highway system.

Road organizations promoted their routes through published guidebooks. These guidebooks advertised the group's highway by offering route directions and identifying locations of tourist services and sites of interest. Two national guidebook series identifying routes throughout the country, including those in Nebraska, were the Tourist Information Bureau and the Automobile Blue Book. In addition to the published road and route guides, gasoline, oil and tire companies often published state maps identifying early named highways. These state maps provided information on a variety of highways, but also served as a marketing piece and included the location of the sponsoring company's service stations. Companies such as Sinclair, Standard Oil, and Goodrich Tire are known to have published maps of the state of Nebraska.

In Nebraska the Good Roads Association was not officially formed until 1918, offering a forum in which private citizens and organizations could express opinions on highway development matters. The organization's purpose was to encourage the most efficient and economical expenditure of highway monies. It also offered state and local officials accurate information to help guide them in enacting legislation concerning Nebraska's roads.[10]

On the Meridian Road near Hebron. C.C. Fletcher, a booster of the highway, poses in his automobile, c. 1920

Although prior to the turn of the century the automobile was a luxury only for the wealthy, by 1904, there were over 55,000 vehicles in use across the United States and by 1910 this had skyrocketed to

approximately a half-million.[11] Reportedly the first automobile in the state drove down the streets of Lincoln in 1902. The statewide need for roads and state involvement in road construction was spurred by the state's increase in motor vehicle registration. In Nebraska, motor vehicle registration was 1,087 in 1906, but by 1910 it had risen to 11,339.[12] Motor vehicle registration continued to soar in Nebraska with 211,750 autos reported in 1919, and the count nearly doubling to 419,198 in 1929.[13]

Early State Road Legislation

Nebraska's first county road law pre-dates statehood, passed by the Territorial Legislature on January 26, 1856. The Legislature recognized the need to develop roads to connect settlements within the territory and passed the authority for constructing territorial roads to county commissioners. With this permission, commissioners were able to impose taxes and appropriate labor to aid in constructing and maintaining roads.[14] The law stated that construction of roads was the responsibility of the individual counties affected. Therefore, the county was responsible for surveying public roads, maintaining them to standards spelled out in the law, and overseeing construction labor. Despite the legislation, roads throughout Nebraska remained poorly repaired and maintained. The majority of traffic on early roads was local in character; therefore, the condition of the roads was initially only the concern of individual townships.[15] These local roads often remained in poor condition because maintenance meant higher taxes.

An 1862 map prepared by civil engineer Augustus Harvey indicates the first ten territorial routes in Nebraska. They were: Omaha City to Cedar Island, Plattsmouth to Archer and Kansas line, Brownville to Nebraska Center, Tekomah to Pawnee, Florence to Fontanelle, Nebraska City to Grand Island, Bellevue to Catherine, De Soto to Pawnee, a suitable point on the Platte River to Dakotah, and Pawnee to Nebraska Center.[16]

In the following years, the state began to recognize the need for good roads; however, they did not take responsibility for the construction of the roads. In 1879 the Nebraska Legislature passed legislation reserving section lines as public roads and granting individual counties the authority to build and maintain them. The required width of these roads was 66-feet. The law also authorized a tax levy to finance maintenance projects. Where previous legislation made road construction the responsibility of the county, it did not mandate the creation of roads. Because road construction was financed through local taxation, interest in road construction and improvement rarely extended beyond township lines. Men within a community would opt to do road construction work to pay off their tax levy, but expressed little interest in additional taxation or labor to extend or complete the road. As a result, as early highways were delineated in Nebraska, they often followed poorly maintained existing roads that were largely section line roads. The section line roads followed the rectangular township-range system of land survey and, as a result, the highways often had many 90-degree turns where section lines intersected. By 1904 Nebraska had 79,462 miles of roads, most of which were along section lines.[17]

The first state agency with road-related responsibilities was the State Board of Irrigation. Created on April 24, 1895, the State Board of Irrigation was charged with supervising irrigation practices to manage Nebraska's water resources, while preserving the integrity of affected waterways. Included in the board's responsibilities was overseeing the construction of State Aid bridge plans and specifications and it grew into the state agency that dealt with road issues. With the introduction and popularity of the automobile, the board sought legislation regarding motor vehicles in 1905. The legislature passed a motor vehicle registration fee of $1.00 and responded to safety issues regarding speed limits, the operation of a vehicle near horses and the use of brakes, signals, and lights.[18]

Collision between a car and a culvert marker post on Highway 6 possibly in Red Willow County near McCook, c. 1920s (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

As the number of automobiles increased in Nebraska, the legislature recognized the need for improved roads. In 1911 the Nebraska Legislature changed the name of the board to the State Board of Irrigation, Highways and Drainage and increased its responsibilities to include road construction and maintenance.[19] The Board was directed to elect a civil engineer to serve as the "State Engineer." Registration fees for vehicles were raised by the Legislation to $2.00 and the revenue was given to county road funds.[20] The State Aid Bridge Act, which passed the same year, was the first legislative action resulting from this increased interest in roads. The act not only increased the state's authority over local road administrators, but it also resulted in increased local expenditures.[21]

Evolution of Nebraska Road Agencies

Over the years state responsibility for road construction and maintenance was assigned to various agencies.

1895 - State Board of Irrigation formed as the first state agency responsible for roads.

1911 - Renamed the State Board of Irrigation, Highways, and Drainage.

1919 - The Department of Public Works was created with two bureaus and one headquarters division: Bureau of Roads and Bridges, Bureau of Irrigation, Water Power, and Drainage, and Motor Vehicle Records Division

1933 - Renamed the Department of Roads and Irrigation with two bureaus: Bureau of Roads and Bridges and the Bureau of Irrigation, Water Power, and Drainage

1957 - Department of Roads and Irrigation was divided into three agencies: Department of Roads, Department of Motor Vehicles, and Department of Water Resources. The Department of Roads was created with two divisions: Bureau of Highways and Safety Patrol.

(Koster, iv-v).

Federal Funding for Nebraska's Highway Construction

Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1916

Limited federal and state funds were available for road construction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In 1916 Congress passed the first formal highway policy with a regular appropriation of funding to the states. By this time the number of automobile registrations in the country had reached 2.3 million and the auto industry and motorists were heavily lobbying for programs and funds to improve roads.[22] The Federal-Aid Highway Act, signed by Woodrow Wilson on June 11, 1916, was the first time the federal government was directly involved in road building efforts. Approximately, $5 million was appropriated the first year with the funding escalating in annual steps to total $75 million.[23] Funding, managed by the Secretary of Agriculture, was allocated by a formula based on a state's population, land area and road mileage. Under this act the federal government would finance up to 50% of the cost of construction, not to exceed $10,000 per mile.

In order to obtain federal funds, each state's highway commission had to meet the Office of Public Road Inquiry's standards and approval. To participate in the Federal-Aid Program, a state had to:

- maintain a state highway department to administer the Federal-Aid act
- assume responsibility of all roads on which federal funds were spent (this could be delegated to local governments)
- classify eligible mileage in eligible systems based on traffic needs and services rendered
- agree to uniform standards of construction and design
- meet inspection requirements before bills were paid
- agree to further diversion of road funds to non-road purposes after 1935
- match federal funds under mutually acceptable standards.[24]

The passage of the Federal-Aid Road Act of 1916 discouraged the haphazard construction of roads by counties without state supervision. Through the requirement that states establish a highway department that met the Office of Public Roads approval, states now had to have financial resources

and encouraged engineering skills to be used for road design. The state highway commission had the responsibility for the preparation of plans and specifications and all construction and maintenance, while the federal government held the right to inspect all projects.[25]

The Federal-Aid Road Act of 1916 forced Nebraska's State Board of Irrigation, Highways, and Drainage (responsible for road construction) to take on a greater role in road development. Once Nebraska accepted federal funding, the state became responsible for the construction and maintenance of the highway system.[26]

Wartime shortages hindered actual road construction following the passage of the Federal-Aid Road Act of 1916. The first Federal-Aid road project in Nebraska, the Lincoln and Emerald Road (West O Street), began in July of 1918 and was completed the following year. The project was 5.44 miles in length and was estimated to cost over $217,000. Several other Federal-Aid projects in the state were completed by 1920, including: a paved portion of the Lincoln Highway from Dodge Street in Omaha to the Saunders County line, an earthen 12.53-mile stretch of the Geneva-Belvidere Road in Fillmore County, and the 25.87-mile long Seward-York-Aurora Road, an earthen road extending east and west of York, in York County.[27]

Under the Federal-Aid plan, approximately 5,000 miles of highway under a total of 88 route numbers were designated as the state highway system.[28] Maintenance of the state highway system was assigned to the counties. In addition, the legislature created the State-Aid Road Fund, financed by property taxes and appropriated in the same formula as the Federal-Aid. With the establishment of the state highway system, counties were required to form a system of county roads, under the jurisdiction of the County Board, not exceeding 20% of the total mileage in the county.[29]

World War I brought a slow-down in new road construction and the improvement of existing roads due to a construction deferment and limited labor and supplies. Road construction continued at a slower pace but, by 1918, 16 projects comprising 512 miles had been approved, contracts for 200 miles had been let, 1,600 miles had been surveyed, and plans had been prepared for 952 miles. After the war, Congress transferred surplus equipment and materials from the War Department to state highway departments. Nebraska received 407 trucks, 74 touring cars, and miscellaneous equipment and tons of materials and supplies. The state sold surplus trucks, equipment and materials to county road departments to use for road construction and maintenance.[30]

Equipment used to maintain a flat ditch near York, c. 1920s (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

In 1919 the Nebraska Legislature restructured state government, replacing the State Board of Irrigation, Highways and Drainage with the Department of Public Works. The Department consisted of the Bureau of Irrigation, Water Power, and Drainage; the Bureau of Roads and Bridges; and the Division of Motor Vehicle Registration, all under the authority of the State Engineer. The Bureau of Roads and Bridges was responsible for the construction of all state and Federal-Aid roads and the building of all State bridges. It was divided into three sub-divisions: Maps and Plans, Road Construction, and Road Equipment, Repairs, and Maintenance. The Maps and Plans division was responsible for preliminary field investigations and surveys required in planning State and Federal-Aid roads. They also completed special designs for equipment, such as derricks, camp buildings, and wagons. The Division of Road Construction was responsible for all facets of construction, maintenance, and testing for State and Federal-Aid road projects. The Division of Road Equipment, Repairs, and Maintenance was responsible for outfitting counties with equipment, and keeping up with the general maintenance and repair of Department vehicles and equipment. The three divisions worked together to create and maintain Nebraska's earliest roads and highways.[31]

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1921

Federal funding for highway construction was continued by Congress with the passage of the Federal Highway Act of 1921. This act provided states financial aid for the construction of highways under the seven percent system in which each state was eligible for assistance for the construction of seven percent of its highways. Within two years, each state was required to designate three percent of their primary roads and four percent of their secondary roads as part of the federal-aid highway system and as a result, these roads were eligible for assistance.[32] Federal funding was to be matched by state funds on a 50-50 basis. Nebraska's certified mileage at the time was 80,272, allowing for 5,619 miles of post roads to be funded under the seven percent system. Post roads were designated as an important interstate throughway, and were to be developed into an integrated national road system that would allow easy intercommunication throughout the country. Road designs were required to adhere to the federal government's standards for minimum width, grade, and adequacy of roadbed type for the traffic load. States were required to submit their plans to the United States Secretary of Agriculture for approval.[33] The 4,500 miles of Nebraska's state highway system, established in 1919, were included in the 5,619 miles of road designated as post roads in 1921 and included in the seven percent total of roads eligible to receive federal aid.[34]

Old State Capitol building in Lincoln showing engineers at work in the office of the Department of Roads & Irrigation, 1925 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Between 1917 and 1926 Nebraska spent over $27 million on road construction of which just less than half, $12.5 million, was furnished by the federal government.[35] The 1920s were a boom for highway construction and improvements nationwide with over $10 billion invested in roads. Most states financed this significant road construction through increased taxation and bonds; however, Nebraska was not willing to go into debt or dramatically increase taxation to pay for improved roads. Until about 1925, road construction and maintenance in Nebraska was financed largely by federal aid and funds from property taxes levied by state, county, and cities. After 1925 road construction and maintenance funding was supplemented by gasoline tax and vehicle registration fees.

Nebraska's fiscally responsible pay-as-you-go policy challenged the Bureau of Roads and Bridges of the State Board of Irrigation, Highways and Drainage to meet the state's growing highway needs and to keep up with the pace of road development in the rest of the country. This policy also forced the Bureau of Roads and Bridges to continually struggle to meet the financial match for federal funding. In an effort to control costs, Nebraska researched road materials and advocated dirt roads as a sound and economical option.[36]

Survey crew and wagon possibly on Highway 30 in Buffalo County near Kearney, 1929 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

The trend toward a centralized system of highway construction and maintenance, begun with the establishment of the State Board of Irrigation, Highways and Drainage, continued into the 1920s. In 1926 the Nebraska Legislature passed a statute requiring the Department of Public Works to maintain the state highway system, except for state highways within the corporate limits of municipalities with a population over 1,400. Other city and village streets in Nebraska were under the authority of municipal agencies, with no clear pattern of municipal

Nebraska's Pay-As-You-Go Policy

The financing of Nebraska's highway improvements has always been on a pay-as-you-go basis. The development of the state highway system only progressed as revenue was raised annually without going into debt. This method was used as a model for other states and countries, which were interested in highway construction. The following excerpt published in the Financial Post (a Toronto newspaper) in 1938 shows the international perspective on Nebraska's highway funding:

"Motoring through other states en route to Nebraska, where I went to find out how that state does it, and see if there were lessons we could learn in Canada, I was told many times, 'Sure, they have no debt, but have they anything else?'

"If there is a catch I failed to find it. Statistics do not show it. The truth is that Nebraska is not a wealthy state and Nebraskans know it. It does not undertake services it cannot afford. Having no debt, it can control its expenses. When depression comes or drought dries up the taxpayers' sources of income, state expenses are slashed.

"But what about the roads? One of the first persons I met in the strikingly-beautiful capitol building at Lincoln was Senor Podesta of the Argentine Highways Department, who has settled down for the summer to make a complete study of the Nebraska road building system. "They get more roads for less money than any other state in the two Americas,' he told me. 'Nebraska has 8,000 miles of surfaced roads in a $111 million state highway system. Its black top roads are built at a cost of $4,000 a mile on a gravel base.'

"Senor Podesta was only one of a number of foreign visitors. Engineers have come from South Africa, Australia, Brazil, and Cuba to study the economy of Nebraska's road building. The roads are not meant for heavy traffic, such as between Toronto and Niagara Falls. Traffic of 3,000 cars a day would be the Nebraska peak. And economies in maintenance have been developed to keep pace with construction.

"Having no debt, paying for the roads out of income as they are built, has kept Nebraska free from expensive splurges of road building."

(A. T. Lobdell, Nebraska Department of Roads, A History [Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Roads, c. 1964], 24-25; R. A. Farquharson, Financial Post, Toronto, 23 July 1938).

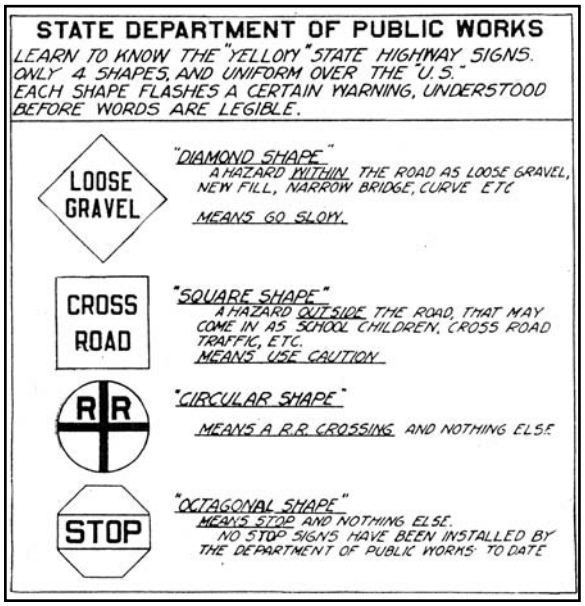
management. Financing for state roads was provided for by setting aside 30 percent of all motor vehicle registration fees, and portions of the gasoline tax, first passed in 1925, as deemed necessary. Prior to this time, counties were responsible for state highway maintenance. The legislation also required highway construction and maintenance contracts, previously let by the counties, to be awarded by the Department of Public Works. The Legislature also gave the Department of Public Works the power to acquire right-of-way directly.[37]

In 1933 the Legislature changed the name of the Department of Public Works to the Department of Roads and Irrigation. The State Engineer was given the additional duties of Director of Motor Vehicles, Chairman of the State Planning Board, and Director of Highway Safety and Patrol.[38]

Automobiles and Land Values in Nebraska

The introduction of the automobile had a profound influence on the citizens of Nebraska. During the early part of the 1920s, there was an unexpected shift in Nebraska's attitudes towards land ownership. It appears that for a time the ownership of an automobile was more important than increased land ownership. The goal of the self-sufficient Nebraska homesteader had always been to hold a quarter section mortgage free. During depressions, the goal had been to curtail expenses and retain ownership of the land. During more prosperous times, one would attempt to expand their holdings by purchasing more land. Expansion of family farms was the trend in Nebraska. However, between 1920 and 1925 the average number of farm acres decreased from 339.4 to 329.0. At the same time, the number of registered vehicles in the state increased from 205,000 to 301,716. Additional uses for the automobile, other than personal transportation, were discovered and the automobile began to replace horses. As automobiles replaced horses, acreage that was used for pasture was freed for crop production. Thus, the introduction of the automobile had a profound effect on land ownership and values in Nebraska.

(Warne, 49).



Uniform marking system developed by the American Association of State Highway Officials in 1924. (Source: Sixteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works, 1925-26, 64).

Marking the Way

Local and national organizations marked named highway routes in the early twentieth century, but there was a need for a uniform system for marking interstate roads and presenting warning signs. In 1918 Wisconsin became the first state to adopt a state highway numerical numbering system to alleviate the haphazard system of named trails. The movement for a nationwide system of highway routes and road signs was proposed at an annual meeting of the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO) in 1922. AASHO, formed in 1914 of senior state and federal highway officials, had a role in shaping many aspects of road policy including building, financing, and maintenance. By 1925 AASHO adopted a national numbering system plan including the standard design for signs a uniform sign to mark roads carrying the same name or number between states. The uniform white shield sign had bold black text and the only variation was the name of the state. The state's name was included in the top portion of the sign, and the highway number appeared in large bold text on the lower portion. Odd numbers were used for north-south routes using numbers that ended in 1 and 5 for principal routes and even numbers were assigned to east-west roads with principal routes designated using multiples of ten.[39]

Several interstate routes were selected for marking in Nebraska including: Lincoln Highway, U.S. Route 30; Grant Highway, U.S. Route 20; D-L-D Highway, U.S. Route 38; Washington Highway, U.S. Route 75; Cornhusker Highway, U.S. Route 77; Meridian Highway, U.S. Route 81; and Platte Valley Highway, U.S. Route 26.[40]

In an effort to diminish the confusion surrounding named routes and unify the national highway system, the Federal Department of Agriculture announced a numbered system of highways in 1925. When this took effect in 1926, the new numbering system affected 145 roads or 76,000 miles of road across the United States. Although the need for a marking system had been apparent for several years, Nebraska held off until a national standard system was adopted. In the spring of 1926, the Nebraska Department of Public Works began placing numbered state highway markers along highways in the state. The State Highway Marker adopted by the state was a diamond shaped sign, 15-inches square, with a covered wagon graphic on the upper half and the route number on the lower half. The sign was black and white, which made it easy to distinguish from the yellow and black danger and warning signs. In addition to placing route signs along highways, the state placed signs along the highways that were designed to inform motorists. Signs were located at various points along the highway that gave the distance to the next town and other important places ahead. The names of streams were marked at crossings with signs on the right side of the road, on either side of the stream. The original route of the Oregon Trail was marked in 24 places across the state.[41] In Nebraska the named routes, such as the Potash Highway and the Lincoln Highway, lost their unique identity to a number. With some rerouting of sections, the Lincoln Highway largely became known as U.S. 30 and the Grant Highway as U.S. 20.

Danger and warning signs, in compliance with the AASHO and the Federal Bureau of Roads, were also placed throughout the state in 1926 to increase safety. These signs came in four shapes and all were yellow. The diamond shape was used to mark a hazard within the road, such as loose gravel, new fill, a narrow bridge, or a curve. The square shaped marked hazards outside the road, such as crossroad traffic or school children. The circular shape was used only to mark railroad crossings. The octagon shape was used only for stop signs. Nebraska was in

line with the rest of the nation in highway marking. Over 50 percent of the states, including Nebraska, had erected the standard signs by the close of 1926; the remaining states were scheduled to comply by the end of 1927. In order for the standardized highway signs to be effective, they had to be seen by the motoring public. All advertising signs had to be removed from the right-of-way and the vicinity of the right-of-way to ensure that they would not conflict with the highway markers.[42]

Dedication of the first uniform highway markers in Nebraska for U.S. Route 38 in Lancaster County on June 5, 1926 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

In 1928 the legislature mandated stop signs to be placed on 6,200 miles of Nebraska roads. Signs were placed at the entry of side roads into main highways. These signs gave highway traffic the right-of-way and required all approaching vehicles to stop and wait for traffic to clear before proceeding across intersections. These early stop signs had black text on a yellow background.[43] Nebraska continued to conform to the national signage standards set by AASHO and all signs purchased in Nebraska after January 1, 1936, met the most recent set of standards recognized by AASHO and the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads.[44]

Paving the Way

Early existing traveled routes in Nebraska often became the delineations for the state's first highways, such as the Lincoln Highway and the Omaha-Lincoln-Denver Highway. These early routes were largely created by linking sections of existing earth roads, although these roads were often primitive and not improved. In 1914, State Engineer Donald D. Price reported that Nebraska had three major highways - the Meridian, the Lincoln, and the Omaha-Lincoln-Denver highways. He also reported that these highways were in fairly decent condition, with the exception of portions in the western part of the state where they were merely deeply rutted trails. At this point in time only one-and-a-half percent of the total number of Nebraska roads had been "improved" (graded).[45]

Road Dragging

Nationwide, farmers who could not afford macadamized roads used the King method to create a graded surface using a King road drag. Songs were used by many to speed their drag work. Outside Owasa, Iowa, farmers sang:

"Dragging the roads, dragging the roads
Dragging the roads with the King road drag;
Hard as a bone, smooth as a hone,
The roads that lead to Owasa."

Nebraska farmers had their own version of a drag song. In Red Willow County they sang:

"When the smiles of Spring appear,
Drag, drag the roads;
When the summer time is here,
Drag, drag the roads;
When the corn is in the ear,
In the winter cold and drear,
Every season of the year,
Drag, drag the roads.
When you've nothing else to do,
Drag, drag the roads,
If but for an hour or two;
Drag, drag the roads;
It will keep them good and new,
With a purpose firm and true,
Fall in line. It's up to you;
Drag, drag the roads!
-Curtis Hill

(John Stilgoe, "Roads, Highways, and Ecosystems;" *Red Willow County Gazette*, 28 April 1913).

The 1912-1914 Biennial Report stressed the economical benefits of earth roads, with excellent building materials located throughout the state and paved or macadam roads viewed as too costly. Basic road maintenance was outlined in the biennial report as follows:

"An earth road should be properly graded wide enough so that two vehicles can pass easily; that the grade should not be crowded too much but should be left rather flat so that the travel can be over any portion of the road; and that after the grading has been done and the grade has been fixed, that it should be surfaced with clay and gravel, either one of which is nearly always readily obtainable in the vicinity. Then if the road is kept properly dragged, it will remain in a more or less permanent state and this work can be done at a very low cost."[46]

Example of a tractor pulling a road drag in order to grade the surface of a dirt road in Nebraska, location unknown, c. 1920s (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Road grading or dragging was imperative to maintain the state's early dirt roads. D. Ward King, a Missouri farmer, invented the "King road drag" method around 1904, to be used in areas that could not afford macadamized roads.[47] The United States Department of Agriculture printed King's road dragging method in 1908-complete with a description of the materials needed to construct a drag and the proper technique in its use (the drags were constructed of split timbers, since squared timbers would only glide over the surface). The Pierce County Auto Club promoted the use of King's road dragging method. They pointed out that unless the dragging was conducted immediately after a soaking rain, the benefits would be lost. The drag had to be completed while the road was muddy, so "the soft mud is troweled onto the road bed," and allowed to harden in the sun. Road dragging continued to be an issue for the auto club throughout the 1910s and into the 1920s.[48]

Stone, sand, and soil road surfacing materials were found naturally in Nebraska and used in the creation of roads. Deposits of limestone and shale located throughout Nebraska were combined to create cement, the most important material used in some forms of early road construction. Niobrara chalk rock combined with Granerose shale, both occurring naturally in Nebraska, created high-grade cement, much of which was made near the town of Niobrara. Sand was used to create mortar and concrete for construction projects involving curbs, gutters, sidewalks, water pipes, sewers, culverts, bridges, and pavements. The Platte Valley was a large source of quality sand, ideal for road construction. In addition to the quality, high volumes of sand were available. The Platte Valley, stretching across the state, was serviced by railroads, making the resource accessible to many localities. While soil was not frequently used for paving surfaces, it was mixed with sand and used in the construction and grading of roads. Nebraska's varied soil types were ideal for construction purposes.[49]

Dump truck being filled by an elevator in Phelps County, 1926 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

At the federal level the Office of Public Roads and its predecessor the Bureau of Public Roads operated research programs focusing on practical issues of road construction including the construction and performance of various road materials. Concrete and bituminous materials were studied. The Bureau of Public Roads partnered with trade groups and professional organizations such as the Asphalt Institute and the American Society of Civil Engineers, state highway departments and universities on research. The Bureau of Public Roads also established a research journal, *Public Roads*, in 1918 to disseminate information to the states.[50]

Research addressing road construction and materials was also the focus of many state road agencies. In 1915, the Nebraska Legislature provided that the State Highway Engineer work cooperatively with the Nebraska State University on the testing of materials for road construction. A cooperative agreement was

reached with the Department of Public Works and the University of Nebraska in 1920 to test materials. Nebraska highway engineers were continuously looking for inexpensive, yet quality paving materials and this directed much of the material testing research. In 1919-20, 1,208 tests were completed to develop a new hard surface that would be cheaper than concrete pavement.[51]

In 1918 legislation was enacted to provide funding for the maintenance of the state highway system. Prior to formal funding, maintenance had been recommended but often did not occur. The legislation allowed for the maintenance to be conducted state-wide and for skilled crews to grade highways and bring them up to standards. Maintenance crews were responsible for surface maintenance, repairing ditches, opening culverts, maintaining official road signs, snow removal, and the emergency repair of roads, bridges, and guardrails.[52]

As traffic increased, Nebraska highway engineers advocated the use of gravel for surfacing highways. Even 25 years after other state highways had embraced permanent surfacing such as concrete and bituminous asphalt, Nebraska was still promoting gravel. In Nebraska, gravel was promoted because the state's soil conditions provided for a hard and fine gravel, largely taken from the Platte River, and the state's low rainfall made it an economical choice for state highways.[53] A 1928 article in Nebraska Highways described the fine quality of the state's gravel for use as a road material:

"gravel in Nebraska is distinctly different from the class of roads usually referred to as 'gravel roads' or 'sand gravel roads' or 'sand clay roads' in other states. From the standpoint of materials, Nebraska gravel lies between the above classes and has generally been satisfactory. It partakes of the smoothness of the sand clay road and has the wearing and carrying capacity of the best gravel roads of other states. The material is fine enough so that the surface does not ravel and with proper and continuous maintenance, which it must have, can be kept in good condition."[54]

Origin of Road Building Materials

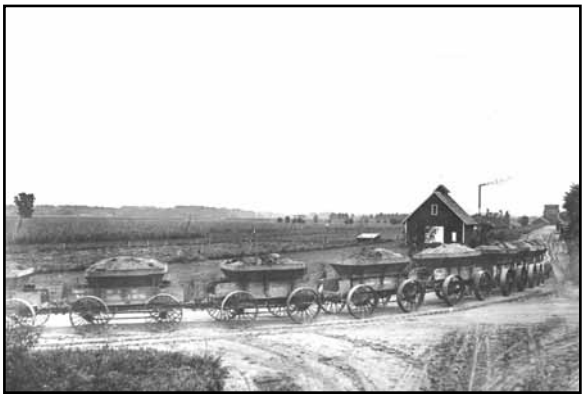
Early dirt roads in the United States were replaced by a variety of road surfaces in the nineteenth and early twentieth century as engineers began testing various hard road surfaces. Urban roads were the first to receive more permanent treatment and were often surfaced with cobblestone, bricks or wooden blocks. Early experiments in the U.S. led to the development of plank roads in the 1830s and 1840s in New York and Michigan. Plank roads were constructed by laying planks of pine or oak across parallel logs. Ditches along the sides of the road provided drainage.

In the early nineteenth century, British engineers began developing methods of paving roads. John Loudon McAdam and Thomas Telford developed one of the first hard road surfaces in the first decades of the nineteenth century. The new roadbed was called macadam, after one of the inventors, and consisted of a stone or rock foundation covered with a layer of brick or broken stones. This road surface had advantages over dirt because the hard surface allowed for better drainage and would withstand the heavy use of wagon wheels and horseshoes. By 1901, the United States had approximately 650 miles of macadam roads.

By the late nineteenth century, engineers in the United States began experimenting with other types of hard road surfacing, such as concrete. In 1891, Bellefontaine, Ohio became the first United States community displaying a city street paved with concrete. The development of this hard surface material dates back to 1824, when English bricklayer, Joseph Aspdin, patented a process for making Portland cement. The process involved mixing heated limestone and clay with rocks for strength. The mixture was hardened with the addition of water. In 1915, sections of the Lincoln Highway in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Nebraska, were paved with concrete. These sections, known as "seedling miles," were made possible in part with donations from the Portland Cement Company.

With the increase in traffic over time, both concrete and macadam roads often crumbled and macadam roads were also rarely in good condition. In the early twentieth century, many communities often resurfaced their roads with asphalt, a heated mixture of refined petroleum, sand and gravel. Also known as bituminous, asphalt became the preferred hard road surface material.

(Kaszynski, 26-27; Koster, 4-5; and Michigan Historical Museum, "Plank Roads," 10 January 2002 <http://www.sos.state.mi.us/history/museum/explore/museums/hismus/prehist/settling/proads.html> [Accessed 15 March 2002]).



Trailers hauling gravel from pit on the Fremont-Ceresco Federal-Aid Road (Hwy 77) in Saunders County near Wahoo, c. 1921 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Despite the limited use of hard surfacing in the state, Nebraska still ranked fourteenth in the nation in 1929 in state highway mileage that was graveled or better.[55] During this period when Nebraska highway engineers were advocating gravel roads, the Bureau of Public Roads was continuing to research and test improved paving materials including asphalt, concrete, and the quality of aggregate.[56]

To lessen overall expenses, the Department of Public Works planned to relocate or shorten the highways when paving was needed. Rather than completing a relocation project, the department would wait until paving or surfacing was needed, then relocate the segment and pave or surface the new section. These route relocations allowed state engineers to create more direct routes and increase safety by eliminating hazardous railroad crossings or sharp curves and were designed to save drivers time and money. By the close of 1928, Nebraska had 8,012 miles of state and federal highways, including 165 miles of paved roads and 3,761 miles of gravel roads. During the late 1920s hard surfacing of roads began to be advocated. Both concrete and asphalt were used for hard surfacing, while gravel was falling out of favor for major roads. By the end of 1930 it was estimated that 368 miles of state highways had been paved, with more paving projects scheduled for the coming years. In 1929, the Nebraska Legislature had provided funds for the approximately 100 miles of paving annually. In order to complete paving projects as efficiently as possible, special attention was given to creating direct routes, curves with long radii, and long sight distances. The Department of Public Works adopted several standards including distances, widths, and smoothness.[57]

During the 1931-1932 biennium, both paved and oiled roads were being completed across the state. By the close of 1932, it was estimated that 663 miles of pavement had been completed in the state. At the same time, progress was being made on the construction of oil-surfaced roads. Prior oil surfacing work had been relatively experimental and was restricted to small projects. By 1932 it was believed that enough experimentation had been completed at that oil-surface work had a proper place in the highway construction program. Oil-sand surfacing was constructed by the application of an asphaltic road oil and a small amount of very fine material to a sand base and thoroughly mixing them with discs or blades to a depth of five inches. When no free oil remained in the mixture it was spread and ready for traffic. In some cases protection work was required on the shoulders and back slopes to prevent sand from blowing or washing away. During the 1931-1932 biennium 292 miles of oil-surface roads were completed and an additional 248.7 miles of oiled roads were completed during the 1933-1934 biennium. [58]

The Department of Roads and Irrigation's road material testing in cooperation with the University of Nebraska continued into the 1930s on hard surface materials. Testing proved that a bituminous surfacing would be durable for traffic and weather conditions in the state. The initial cost of construction was lower than that of concrete paving and local materials could be used, also costing less than concrete. Although Nebraska continued to use gravel for highway surfacing projects, they were beginning to move towards more permanent hard surfacing materials that would require less maintenance. Gravel surfacing projects gradually dwindled in the 1930s and hard surfacing projects became more popular across the state, especially in populated and high traffic areas.

Several large paving projects were awarded in 1935-36 in an attempt to close the remaining five open patches on Nebraska's principal highways.[59] In 1935, U.S. 30 was the first highway to be hard surfaced across the state, including both concrete and bituminous materials. At this time, projects were also completed on U.S. 6 and U.S. 8 resulting in completely paved highways.[60] These projects totaled over $1.5 million, with the state funding approximately one-half and federal matching funds covering the remainder.[61] Asphalt evolved as the material of

choice for highways, although most of Nebraska's lesser used county section line roads remain to this day as well maintained gravel surfaces.

4.6-mile paving project in Scottsbluff County between Bayard and Scottsbluff in 1931 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Road Development through the Depression and World War II

New Deal programs and federal relief of the 1930s provided jobs and funding that contributed to the construction and improvement of roads throughout the country and the state of Nebraska. An ample workforce, lower wages, and lower costs for building materials allowed Nebraska to save money during the period - even though road construction saw a period of "unprecedented progress." Federal funding increased for highway construction in the 1930s. In 1931, $80 million dollars in emergency Federal-Aid was made available to the states to supplement their required matching funds. In 1931-32, Nebraska received $4.25 million in emergency federal-aid. During the hard times of the Depression, this allowed states to continue with highway construction and put unemployed people to work. The following year, a second emergency relief act was passed by Congress with stipulations. States were required to pay a minimum wage rate (30 cents per hour for unskilled labor and 50 cents per hour for skilled labor) and give hiring preferences to locals and ex-servicemen with dependents. To employ as many people as possible, laborers were hired for only a 30-hour workweek.[62]

As the Depression continued, the Nebraska Legislature offered measures to assist taxpayers and the counties. In 1933 motor vehicle registration fees were lowered to lessen the tax burden on individuals and the counties' received an increased share of the gasoline tax. Both of these measures decreased the state funds available for highway construction. Also in 1933 the Department of Public Works became the Department of Roads and Irrigation.[63] A total of 198 Civil Works Administration (CWA) projects were completed under the supervision of the Department of Roads and Irrigation. They included construction of new earth roads, widening cuts and fills, producing and placing gravel surfacing, construction of bridges and drainage structures, widening bridges and culverts, improving railroad crossings, painting bridges and guardrails, removing and relaying brick pavement, slope and ditch protection, landscaping and roadside planting, constructing and repairing patrol sheds and equipment yards, preparing maps and plans, testing and inspecting materials, and other various tasks.[64]

After the suspension of the CWA on March 31, 1934, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) began organizing work divisions. CWA projects that had not been completed prior to March 31, 1934, were transferred to FERA and continued as work relief projects. Over 150 work relief highway projects had been approved under this system by November 1, 1934.[65]

CWA roadside tree planting project on Dodge Street in Omaha, 1933 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Highway beautification projects began in 1934 when the federal government passed the National Recovery Act. Under the act, the Federal Bureau of Public Roads required that at least 1% of total funding to each state be used for "the appropriate landscaping of parkways or roadsides." The act advocated roads that conformed to their natural setting, including sensitive siting, conserving soil, selective tree cutting, and appropriate plantings. The Department of Roads and Irrigation cooperated with

local civic organizations and assisted with several improvement projects by contributing plans, layouts and consultation. In 1934 the department built its first rest area or roadside park on the south side of U.S. Highway 20 near the Bryan Bridge, southeast of Valentine. This rest area remained in use for only five years, closing in 1939 when the state did not renew the lease.[66]

Flooding washes out north portion of Bartley State Aid Bridge on Highway 6 (D-L-D) in Red Willow County near Bartley, 1935 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Weather conditions in the state in the 1930s had a significant effect on road construction activities. Severe flooding in the Republican River Valley in 1935 and heavy snows statewide in the 1930s forced the Department of Roads and Irrigation to allocate financial resources toward cleaning and repairing damaged highways and bridges. Flooding destroyed approximately 341 miles of highway and 307 bridges.[67] During the 1930s, a severe drought hit Nebraska and the rest of the Great Plains. In the Sand Hills region, the dry, sandy soil could not withstand the winds, which triggered dust storms that hindered road construction. The dry conditions also affected materials, forcing workers to use water to compact the grade work. "Concrete would also dry out. If you were doing any paving, you had to keep the surface wet for so many hours in that dry, dusty, windy weather, it took more work."[68]

During the 1930s, Nebraska continued to struggle to match the federal funding for road construction on a 50-50 basis. By the end of the decade, utilizing its "pay as you go" policy, Nebraska was unable to match approximately $2 million of the total federal funds available, which would have totaled approximately $4 million dollars available for construction.[69]

By 1940, Nebraska had a highway system of 11,220 miles of which only 9,000 miles were maintained. Of the 9,000, 4,784 miles were graveled, 3,804 miles were hard-surfaced, and 412 miles had dirt surfacing.[70] After the U.S. became involved in World War II, road construction activities in general stopped, with the exception of roads needed for military purposes. For national security, the War Department and the Public Roads Administration identified a system of roads known as the Strategic Network of Highways to access military bases, defense manufacturing plants, and other strategic sites. In Nebraska three main routes were designated as a top priority for materials and were eligible for federal funds made available in the Defense Highway Act of 1941:

- US-75 from Kansas to Omaha
- US-30 and US-30A (Fremont to Omaha spur) from the Missouri River to Omaha and then the Wyoming state line
- US-81 from the Kansas line north to Norfolk continuing on US-275 from Norfolk to O'Neill, and then on US-281 from O'Neill to the South Dakota line.[71]

The Defense Highway Act of 1941 further restricted the activities of state highway departments. Federal funds were limited to the Strategic Network of Highways, construction of roads to military bases and defense manufacturing plants, construction of air bases, and advanced engineering surveys for projects to be initiated after the war. A major war effort project undertaken in Nebraska was the completion of the state's first four-lane divided highway on December 8, 1941. Highway 73/75 from the south city limits of Omaha to Fort Crook (currently Offutt Air Force Base) consisted of 6-miles of two, 22-foot concrete lanes separated by a 10-foot grass median. The road led to the Glenn L. Martin Bomber Plant at Fort Crook.[72]

During the War, the Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation shifted its efforts to defense-related activities and assisted the Army and Navy engineers with the design and construction of ordnance plants and airfields. The department provided information regarding soil conditions within the defense areas, rented out survey equipment for engineering work, and collected scrap materials. Work was postponed on active highway contracts so that contractors could assist in Army and Navy projects.[73]

Restrictions on critical building materials during the war forced the department to change design and construction standards and reduce or eliminate the use of critical materials in new construction. At first metal was the only critical material that the department had to do without. Later restrictions included lumber, asphalt products, cement, and other materials. The AASHO Committee on Standards suggested changes in design and construction standards to reduce or eliminate the use of critical building materials. These suggestions were used to the fullest extent possible in the design of highway construction in Nebraska and non-critical materials were used whenever possible. In the case of concrete structures it became necessary to remove almost all steel reinforcement because metal was restricted to military use. Several projects had to be postponed until materials were made available, while some designs were deemed adequate without the steel reinforcements, but became more expensive due to the additional amounts of concrete needed.[74]

Near the end of World War II, in 1944, the condition of Nebraska's highway system was similar to its pre-war state with a total of 9,119 state highway miles, with only 4,050 miles paved. Overall the condition of the roads was poor due to their general neglect and deterioration during the War. In a post-war report to the roads committee of the U.S. House of Representatives the Department of Roads and Irrigation stated that over half of the state's 1,200 miles of concrete pavement was over 10 years old and in need of repair and 40% of the state's bituminous surfacing was inadequate.[75]

Post World War II Road Development in Nebraska

In order to address road deficiencies nationwide, a post-war highway program was implemented by the 1944 Federal-Aid Highway Act. Three categories of funding were established: 1) federal-aid primary roads based on the previously used Seven Percent System; 2) feeder or secondary roads, including farm to market roads, rural free delivery routes and public school bus routes; 3) highways in urban areas with a population over 5,000. Within Nebraska's highway system, roads eligible for funding included 5,630 miles of primary roads, 9,800 miles of feeder or secondary roads, and roads within 18 cities with populations over 5,000. Nebraska was initially scheduled to receive approximately $8.5 million in funding annually; however, funding was reduced and the program was cut back in 1946.[76]

As federal funding was limited and roads remained deteriorated following the war, the state of Nebraska reviewed its road system situation. In July 1947, a 35-member Nebraska Highway Advisory Committee, composed of private citizens, was established to assess the state's present and future highway needs. This committee was the predecessor of the State Highway Commission established in 1953. The committee's assessment identified over 6,500 miles of the state highway system that was defective and estimated the cost of repair to exceed $259 million. They recommended the adoption of a 20-year program of highway improvement, which upon completion would result in a completely modern and adequate highway transportation system.[77] To finance the improvements, the gasoline tax and motor vehicle registration fees were raised in 1949 to increase funds available for road construction. Together these taxes would produce $5 million in revenue, with $4.5 million earmarked for matching federal-aid highway funds to provide $9 million for state highway construction. This legislation was repealed in a November 1950 referendum, by voters who were not willing to pay for or did not understand the need for highway financing.[78]

In addition to limited funding, the Department of Roads and Irrigation faced continued material shortages after the war. It was anticipated that steel, used as a reinforcement material, would be readily available in the years immediately following the war for highway construction. However, steel continued to be in short supply into the early 1950s, creating an obstacle in the development of an accelerated highway program. The shortage of skilled engineers also affected the department. Trained engineers who had left the department for the war effort were failing to return to positions in Nebraska's Department of Roads and Irrigation, often taking more lucrative positions elsewhere.[79] By the 1953-1954 Biennium, the required materials were no longer in short supply and delayed highway projects were back on schedule.[80]

The earliest roads or trails in Nebraska began receiving improvements when they were graded and widened to accommodate automobile traffic. Over

the years the routes were relocated and new highways were constructed. Gradual improvements included the widening and paving of roads, the creation of shoulders, the addition of signs and safety measures to the road, the beautification of the highway and its surroundings, and the movement towards creating a pleasurable driving experience. Nebraska was quick to comply with federal standards and although they did not abandon gravel surfacing when much of the nation had moved to hard surfacing, Nebraska was constantly experimenting with new and innovative road surfaces.

By 1950, Nebraska's state highway system included 9,578 miles of road, of which 5,062 were graveled, 4,386 were hard-surfaced and 130 miles were dirt. In addition to maintaining the state highway system, the state by this time was also responsible for maintaining streets and highways in communities with populations under 2,500.[81] In the 1950s converting Nebraska's gravel highways, which still included over half of the system, to hard-surfacing was a priority of the Department of Roads.[82] With funding remaining tight, the need for highway improvements in Nebraska began to be determined through the establishment of a Sufficiency Rating. The rating took into consideration surface conditions, economic factors, safety and service. The rating system process was described by John W. Hossack, former State Engineer, as follows:

"Basically, you drove every mile of highway in the state and analyzed it as to its condition, width, and all the various things that would have to do with the condition, life, and service rating of that particular section. Then, every highway got a grade. Kind of like a report card, it got a grade from 0 to 100."[83]

Roadside improvements, begun in the 1930s, continued in the 1950s to reduce soil erosion and improve the aesthetics of the right-of-way. Trees and shrubs were planted in the right-of-way to improve the appearance and screen properties adjoining the roads. Noxious weeds were removed from the right-of-way through the use of chemicals. Brome grass seed was planted on highway shoulders, slopes, and roadsides to prevent wind and water erosion and the growth of weeds.[84]

In 1953 the State Highway Commission was established by the Nebraska Legislature and replaced the Highway Advisory Commission. The State Highway Commission was formed to promote better relations between the public and the Department of Roads and Irrigation and to act as a liaison between citizens, the agency, and the governor. The State Highway Commission also served as an advisor to the State Engineer, establishing broad policies and forming a trunk highway system to be financed with revenue generated from highway user taxes.[85] In 1957 the Nebraska Legislature divided the Department of Roads and Irrigation into three separate agencies: Department of Roads, Department of Motor Vehicles, and Department of Water Resources. The Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) included the Bureau of Highways and the Safety Patrol (in 1967 renamed the Nebraska State Patrol).[86]

The earliest plans for the national Interstate system were included in a 1939 Federal Bureau of Public Roads report that advocated the construction of a special system of direct interregional highways, with necessary connections through and around cities, that would meet the requirements of the national defense in time of war, as well as the increasing demands of traffic. However, the project was delayed by World War II and the diversion of tax money into military rearmament.[87] Further steps were taken in 1944, when the Federal-Aid Highway Act called upon the states and the Bureau of Public Roads to designate a national system of interstate highways, not to exceed 40,000 miles in total connecting state capitals, principal metropolitan areas, cities, and industrial centers by direct routes. Finally, the 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act authorized construction of the 40,000 miles proposed in 1944. In passing the act, Congress declared it essential to the national interest to provide a national system of interstate highways for early completion, as authorized under the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944.

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 had a significant impact on the development of Nebraska's highways and the volume of traffic they were able to serve. The Bill increased appropriations to states for Primary, Secondary, and Urban Highway construction and made a provision for a 41,000-mile Interstate Highway System. The Legislation authorized a 13-year construction period for the Interstate, which would be extended as states faced routing and funding difficulties. The entire system was anticipated to cost over $27 billion, with the states

responsible for only ten percent of the construction costs and the federal government covering the other 90 percent of costs. The intentions of the Interstate Highway System were described as follows:

"Consisting of routes of highest importance to the Nation, which connect the principal metropolitan areas, cities, and industrial centers, including important routes into, through, and around urban areas, serve the national defense, and connect at suitable border points with routes of continental importance in the Dominion of Canada and the Republic of Mexico."[88]

General road construction and improvements increased in the late 1950s and continued in the 1960s. Over 500 miles of construction was completed on state highways in 1962. Construction projects were generally geared towards modernizing highways that had become inadequate due to increased traffic loads and deterioration. It was a goal of the NDOR to replace gravel surfaces with dustless surfaces in all towns and highway routes across the state. These projects were often overshadowed by the development of Interstate 80 across the state. During these decades, the planning, design and construction of the interstate became the central focus of the NDOR and the State Highway Commission. The NDOR, the State Highway Commission, and the governor were responsible for developing and selecting the actual route within the general corridor outlined by the federal government. Work in Nebraska began almost immediately after the 1956 federal legislation was passed, and the construction was planned for four phases over an anticipated 15-year time line.

View of Interstate 80 spanning the Platte River from Cass County looking into Sarpy County near Ashland in 1961 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Dedication ceremony for the connecting link of Interstate 80 between Omaha and North Platte in Omaha, 1966 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

In Nebraska, it took 17 years to complete the construction of the Interstate across the state's landscape. Despite a slow start in 1956 and 1957 and the struggles over the location of the highway, interstate construction picked up momentum and the majority of the interstate was completed in the 1960s. On October 19, 1974, the interstate was fully opened with the completion of a five-mile section west of Sidney. The final cost of completing I-80 in Nebraska was $390 million, or about $857,000 per mile.[89] Although behind the schedule outlined in the 1956 Highway Act, Nebraska was the first state to complete its main line Interstate system. Nationally, only 28,000 of the 41,000-mile Interstate system outlined in the 1956 Highway Act were completed by the end of the 1960s. Routing controversies and right-of-way acquisition in urban areas delayed the completion of several sections for extended periods in some states.[90]

Conclusion

From a random system of unimproved dirt roads to modern hard surfaced regional and transcontinental highways, to the completion of Interstate 80, automobile routes have been greatly transformed in Nebraska in less than a century. Rutted pathways evolved into the early named highways, promoted by local citizen groups, which in turn developed into a system of state highways that have been continuously improved for safety and efficiency. In Nebraska, as in the rest of the country, road development was influenced by both federal funding and road building standards.

The introduction of the interstate in the 1960s ended the heyday of the earlier transcontinental highways, such as the Lincoln Highway and the D-L-D Highway, which presently serve as regional transportation routes. I-80 across Nebraska serves as a national transportation thoroughfare and the state's major roadway. The NDOR has worked to improve not only the Interstate and Expressway system, but all highways within the state. Increased safety and the addition of modern surface materials have been a major focus of these improvements. By the year 2000, the NDOR had reduced the miles of gravel surfaced highways to only 44 statewide.[91]

The NDOR's eight district offices manage approximately 9,950 miles of state roads. These roads represent the evolution of the Nebraska highway system; gravel roads following township lines, original unimproved segments of the named highways, paved secondary roads connecting communities, the modern Interstate connecting Nebraska with the nation, and the urban freeway express system. All of these roads are vital to the state's transportation system.

Notes

[1] See Glossary in Appendix B for definition of road and engineering terms.

[2] George E. Koster, *A Story of Highway Development in Nebraska* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Department of Roads, 1997), 7, 11.

[3] Bruce E. Seely, *Building the American Highway System: Engineers as Policy Makers* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1987), 27.

[4] Seely 12-13, 22.

[5] Seely, 9.

[6] Seely, 16-17.

[7] William Kaszynski, *The American Highway* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co, Inc., 2000), 30.

[8] Seely, 29.

[9] Seely, 24 and 9.

[10] Nebraska Good Roads Association, *The Nebraska Good Roads Quiz* (n.p., 1940).

[11] Koster, 7.

[12] Koster, 14-15.

[13] Koster, 20-22.

[14] Koster, 11-12.

[15] Clinton Warne, "Some Effects of the Introduction of the Automobile on Highways and Land Values in Nebraska," *Nebraska History* 38, no. 1 (1957): 43-44; Koster, 2.

[16] Wardner G. Scott, "Nebraska Public Highways," *Nebraska History* XXVI, no. 3 (July-Sept. 1945): 164.

[17] Nebraska Highway Advisory Committee, *Nebraska Highway Needs* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Highway Advisory Committee, 1948); Koster, 13.

[18] Koster; iv, 14-15.

[19] Koster, iv.

[20] Koster 16.

[21] Warne, 44.

[22] Seely, 24-25.

[23] Seely, 43.

[24] Nebraska Highway Advisory Committee.

[25] Seely, 42-43.

[26] Nebraska Department of Public Works, *Fifteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1923-1924* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Public Works, 1924),14.

[27] Nebraska Department of Public Works, *Thirteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1919-1920* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Public Works, 1920), 579.

[28] *Thirteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1919-1920*, 755. A description of each numbered highway, including the terminus points, is located on pages 755-759.

[29] *Fifteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1923-1924*, 14; Koster, 19.

[30] Koster; 20, 28.

[31] *Thirteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1919-1920*, 535-539.

[32] Seely, 74.

[33] *Fifteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1923-1924*, 14.

[34] Warne, 46-47.

[35] "Roads and Road Building in Nebraska," *Nebraska Highways* I, no. 3 (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Publishing Company, 1927).

[36] Koster, 26.

[37] Nebraska Department of Public Works, *Sixteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1925-26* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Public Works, 1926), 74; Koster 32.

[38] Bureau of Roads and Bridges, Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Second Biennial Report of the Bureau of Roads*, 1938, 16.

[39] Kaszynski, 60.

[40] *Sixteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1925-26*, 65.

[41] *Sixteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1925-26*, 65; "Highway Markers," *Nebraska Highways* I, no. 6 (Jan/Feb 1928), 10.

[42] *Sixteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1925-26*, 65.

[43] "Highway Markers," 10.

[44] Bureau of Roads and Bridges, Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-First Biennial Report of the Bureau of Roads and Bridges of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1935-36* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Bureau of Roads and Bridges of the Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1936), 103.

[45] Koster, 17; Warne, 45

[46] State Board of Irrigation, Highways and Drainage, *Tenth Biennial Report of the State Board of Irrigation, Highways and Drainage 1912-1914* (Lincoln, Nebr.: State Board of Irrigation, Highways and Drainage, 1914), 221.

[47] John Stilgoe, "Roads, Highways, and Ecosystems," July 2001, <www.nhc.rtp.nc.us:8080/tserve/nattrans/ntuseland/essays/roadsb.htm> (Accessed 6 March 2002).

[48] D. Ward King, *The Use of the Split-log Drag on Earth Roads*, U.S. Department of Agriculture Farmers' Bulletin 321 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1908), 5-8, 9-11; "Road Dragging," *Pierce County Call*, 29 April 1915. Available at the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebr.

[49] State Board of Irrigation, Highways and Drainage, *Eleventh Biennial Report of the State Board or Irrigation, Highways and Drainage 1915-1916* (Lincoln, Nebr.: State Board of Irrigation, Highways and Drainage, 1916), 325-445.

[50] Seely, 107 and 109-110.

[51] Koster 24-25.

[52] *Thirteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1919-1920*, 697-699.

[53] *Fifteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1923-1924*, 31.

[54] "Report of Nebraska Department of Public Works," *Nebraska Highways* I, no. 11 (July 1928), 4.

[55] Koster, 27.

[56] Seely, 101-102.

[57] Nebraska Department of Public Works, *Seventeenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1927-1928* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Public Works, 1928), 13; Nebraska Department of Public Works, *Eighteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1929-1930* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Public Works, 1930), 65.

[58] Nebraska Department of Public Works, Bureau of Roads and Bridges, *Nineteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1931-1932* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Public Works, Bureau of Roads and Bridges, 1932), 41-45; Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, Bureau of Roads and Bridges, *Twentieth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Roads and Bridges 1933-1934* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, Bureau of Roads and Bridges, 1934), 49.

[59] The Biennial Report did not specify the five remaining open patches.

[60] *Twenty-First Biennial Report of the Bureau of Roads and Bridges 1935-36*, 77-78.

[61] "Ask Paving Bids on No. 6 Highway; Opened July 23," *The Morning Spotlight*, 2 July 1936, 1.

[62] *Twentieth Biennial Report for 1933-1934*, 189; Koster 41.

[63] Koster, 44; Scott, 166.

[64] *Twentieth Biennial Report for 1933-1934*, 190-191.

[65] *Twentieth Biennial Report for 1933-1934*, 195.

[66] *Twentieth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Roads and Bridges 1933-1934*, 56; Koster 46-47.

[67] *Twenty-First Biennial Report of the Bureau of Roads and Bridges of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1935-36*, 15, 57; Koster, 48.

[68] Koster, 45-46.

[69] Koster, 49-50.

[70] Koster, 43.

[71] Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1941-1942* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1942), 5.

[72] *Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1941-1942*, 5, 195.

[73] *Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1941-1942*, 6-7.

[74] *Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1941-1942*, 6, 109.

[75] Koster, 49, 57.

[76] Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Sixth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1945-1946* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1946), 1, 4.

[77] Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1947-1948* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1948), 3; Koster, 63.

[78] Koster, 66.

[79] *Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1947-1948*, 3.

[80] Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Thirtieth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1953-1954* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1954), 3.

[81] Nebraska Highway Advisory Committee, 19.

[82] Koster, 57-59.

[83] Koster, 68. The quote was from George Koster's 1985 interview with John W. Hossack, former State Engineer.

[84] Koster, 69.

[85] Koster, 69-70.

[86] In 1981 the Nebraska State Patrol became a separate state agency.

[87] James C. Creigh, "Constructing the Interstate Highway in Nebraska: Route and Funding Controversies," *Nebraska History History* 72, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 44.

[88] Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Thirty-First Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1955-1956* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1956), 1.

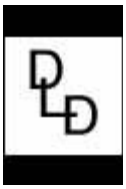
[89] Curt McConnell, "I-80 Changed Car Travel in Nebraska." *Lincoln Journal Star*. 29 March 1999, 14x. The "Golden Link" was meant to symbolize the "Golden Spike" that symbolically completed the first transcontinental railroad.

[90] Kaszynski, 192.

[91] Information provided by Len Sand and Cindy Veys, Nebraska Department of Roads, 29 April 2002.

Chapter 2
Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway

(Today roughly U.S. 6 and U.S. 34 between Hastings and Culbertson)



Beginnings of the O-L-D/D-L-D Highway

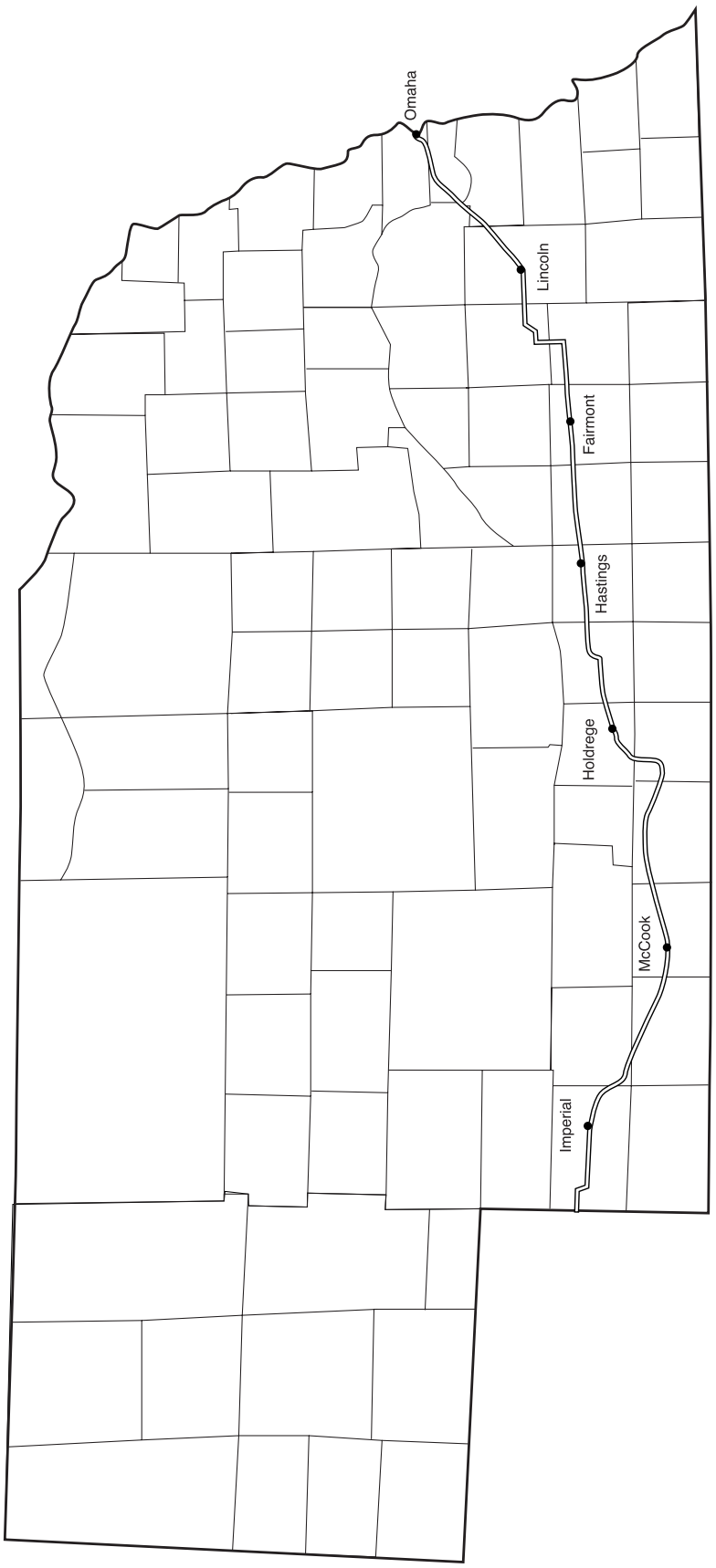
The Omaha-Lincoln-Denver (O-L-D) Highway, later the Detroit-Lincoln-Denver (D-L-D) Highway, formed a portion of one of America's first transcontinental highways. Although the D-L-D only ran from Detroit to Denver, it was a component of a nationwide highway system that stretched from Boston to Los Angeles. The highway began as the O-L-D Transcontinental Highway and, once the link to Detroit was complete, the route became known as the D-L-D. The highway was established by the Omaha-Denver Trans-Continental Route Association in May of 1911, two years before the establishment of the Lincoln Highway Association.

The Omaha-Denver Trans-Continental Route Association was formed when representatives of 17 Nebraska counties located along the Burlington Railroad transportation corridor gathered in Holdrege, Nebraska, to discuss the Good Roads Movement, a national movement organized to improve road conditions. The Omaha-Denver Trans-Continental Route Association was one of several associations organized nationwide to lobby and raise money for improved roads and the creation of new roads. The meeting was initiated by the Holdrege, Hastings, and Minden Commercial Clubs based on their interest in road and highway development. Since the O-L-D terminated in Denver, Colorado's interests were represented by C. P. Allen, Chairman of the Colorado Highway Commission. Members of the Omaha-Denver Trans-Continental Route Association envisioned that "a great permanent road is someday to stretch away across Nebraska and into Colorado." They also claimed "there is only one great road across Nebraska, and this is it."[1]

In February of 1920, several short highways were joined to create a continuous highway from Detroit to Denver. At the same time the highway was consolidated, the Omaha-Denver Trans-Continental Route Association dissolved and merged with the larger Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Association. The larger D-L-D Association was active in Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Colorado, and Nebraska. Over time, the highway lived up to the expectations of the Omaha-Denver Trans-Continental Route Association, and became a permanent and well-traveled transcontinental road within the state.

O-L-D Route Established

The route of the O-L-D Highway was chosen at the first meeting of the Omaha-Denver Trans-Continental Route Association, in May of 1911. C. P. Allen, an experienced and practical road builder, had



The Detroit - Lincoln - Denver Highway
(c. 1911 alignment)

advised the association as to where the route should be located. Prior to making his recommendation, he had examined all the proposed routes. Rather than construct a new road, the association chose to lay the route out on existing roads. The association believed that the O-L-D would be the most efficient route to take to Denver, no matter how one got to Omaha or Lincoln. Although the O-L-D route was pieced together from existing roads, over $400,000 was spent on the physical improvement of the roadbed within the first two years. It is likely that communities along the route donated money and services to the organization, eager for the completed highway to bring economic benefits along with automobile traffic. This money went toward grading and surfacing projects, rail crossings, and the construction of connections between established roads.[2]

Laborers preparing subsoil for Highway 6 in Saunders County, c. 1921 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

In the eastern portion of Nebraska, the original route followed the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad. In the west-central portion, between Oxford (Furnas County) and Culbertson (Hitchcock County), the route followed the Republican River Valley, before turning north to follow the rail line to the Colorado-Nebraska state line. A 54-mile stretch between Hastings and Holdrege was associated with a much earlier transcontinental highway, the Oregon Trail. The earliest O-L-D route ran along section lines and had several jogs and sharp turns between communities. The largest communities on this route included Omaha, Lincoln, Fairmont, Hastings, Holdrege, McCook, and Imperial. Several towns along the highway were originally platted by the railroad and appear at regular intervals. In the eastern portion of Nebraska, some of these towns were named alphabetically: Crete, Dorchester, Exeter, Fairmont, Grafton, Harvard, Inland, and Juniata.[3]

Once the route was determined, association president J. E. Davis was left to officially inspect it and arrange for a travel road guide to be issued. The Omaha-Denver Trans-Continental Route Association coordinated the inspection and mapping with an ambitious publicity event. In July of 1911, just months after the route was laid out on paper, an automobile caravan began the 10-day journey on the O-L-D Highway. J. E. Davis was joined by S. A. Searle of Omaha, representing the Omaha Commercial Club; Joe Long, president of the Blue Grass Road Association; and H. S. Davis of Fremont, Iowa. The official mapping car of the Iowa Publishing Company followed with H. Huebinger, secretary of the company and head of the technical department; publicity agent L. M. Maynard; and expert photographer C. R. Babcock. Other advocates of the O-L-D and the Good Roads Movement made the trip in additional automobiles.[4]

Huebinger and his staff extensively documented the route of the O-L-D. This information was used to create the *Huebinger's Map and Guide for Omaha-Denver Trans-Continental Route* (1911). This guide provided an overview of the Omaha-Denver Trans-Continental Route Association and maps detailing the route through each community. The guide went so far as to document points of interest for the traveler in town, including banks, garages, and hotels, and visual landmarks outside town, including buffalo wallows, groves, barns, and windmills. The guide also included advertisements geared towards the automobile traveler. This 1911 guide was never revised to record changes to the O-L-D/D-L-D route and services within communities along the route.[5]

To create publicity, J. E. Davis was careful to alert communities along the O-L-D route of the inaugural party's arrival. City councils, commercial clubs, and other organizations sponsored public receptions and met the group upon their arrival. In the communities, association members gave speeches about the importance of the Good Roads Movement and the future of the O-L-D, arguing for continued financial support for the road across the state, as well as for other roads in and around the communities.

Communities located along the O-L-D were receptive to the route and appreciative of the benefits that it would bring. In some locations, communities donated cash and labor to complete the O-L-D route. Farmers along the route also saw the benefits of a

maintained highway and pledged to build and maintain the road in front of their respective farms. In some areas, farmers were so receptive that they opened their land and allowed engineers to lay out the new road through their property. In addition to donating property, some farmers also donated money and labor to cut down hills, build bridges, and maintain the road once it was complete.[6]

Since early promoters of the O-L-D were members of the Good Roads Movement, not only were they interested in improving the O-L-D, but improving all roads. The group lobbied for communities and local businesses to improve and maintain highways. Throughout Nebraska commercial clubs and good roads advocates worked together to improve conditions of the O-L-D/D-L-D Highway, as well as other local roads. In 1912 the Holdrege Commercial Club reported that it was able to raise enough money to purchase road drags and distribute them to farmers along the O-L-D Highway. Also in 1912 the McCook Commercial Club reported that its efforts resulted in the O-L-D Highway becoming a finished road and one of the best in the state, with their city streets also being improved.[7]

John Deere tractor pulling a road maintainer in an unknown rural location, 1920s-1930s (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Early Route Markings

During the early development of the O-L-D and other highways, travel was made difficult by poorly marked roads. At the time the road was established, there were no road markings, such as mile markers, direction signs, and identification numbers. As traffic increased on the highway, this lack of signage made navigation challenging and sometimes dangerous. In order to make travel safer and easier, the Omaha-Denver Trans-Continental Route Association worked to mark the O-L-D route. The official marking for the highway was an 18-inch white band painted on telephone poles, trees, and posts, with the letters O-L-D and later D-L-D painted in black. Private citizens would often mark the route in and around their community. During the early 1920s a group from Lincoln stenciled the O-L-D marking on telephone poles and corners where the route would turn between Lincoln and Hastings and possibly as far as McCook. After the mid-1920s a handful of concrete road signs were erected by private groups and organizations. One of these markers remains in Lincoln and another is on the border of Lancaster and Seward counties.[8]

D-L-D Highway marker painted on wooden telephone pole, c. 1925 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

The Goodrich Company, manufacturers of automobile and bicycle tires, began marking the D-L-D route in 1913. The marker, mounted on a 12-foot pole, was a large circle in the form of a bicycle tire with printed directions to the nearest towns of importance and the mileage distance. In July of 1913 a crew was at work installing the signs in Denver, and was moving east with an estimated arrival in Hastings in late August.[9]

By late 1913 several safety concerns had been addressed along the route. Warning signs for railroad crossings, bridges, sharp turns and other dangerous places were placed near approaches. These signs consisted of 18-inch red bands painted on posts, telephone poles, and trees. Another safety precaution was completed by the Burlington Railway, when it placed alarm bells at railroad crossings. In an effort to make the rail crossings even safer, the approaches were well graded.[10]

Tourism Along the D-L-D

In addition to advocating road construction and improvements, promoters of the O-L-D worked to increase tourist traffic on the route. This promotion caused many communities to lobby to be included along the route. Promoters of the highway boasted that 75,000 tourists passed over the O-L-D in 1919 and predicted that over 100,000 would drive the route in 1920. They determined that communities along the route must be profiting from this large increase in traffic. This profit may be evidenced in the amount of tourist-related businesses constructed along the route. Garages, hotels, motels, and eateries were established along the route in and around communities. Many of these establishments advertised in road guides and on maps, trying to lure tourists to their location.

Greenwood, located on the O-L-D between Omaha and Lincoln, was one community that benefited from tourist traffic. With increased travel on the O-L-D, Greenwood became a favorite stopover point for tourists. In order to accommodate tourists, the village board appropriated funds to purchase an outdoor range and to place tables and seating in the city park.[11]

Imperial, located on the O-L-D in the southwest corner of the state, also benefited from the tourist traffic. The Balcony House Hotel (CH04-025) opened as a tourist campground in the early 1920s. The local newspaper, *The Imperial Republican*, frequently commented on the number of visitors at the site and the activities planned. Free band concerts at the campground were advertised in O-L-D/D-L-D maps and the local newspaper. The popularity of the campground and hotel were so great that the owner purchased additional buildings with the intention of making "a modern tourist camp with car booths and all that makes a modern tourist camp."[12]

Automobile camps were popular destinations along the route. The Lincoln Automobile Club Tourist Camp, located at 24th and Randolph Street in Lincoln, advertised in the c. 1920s *Guide Map of the Detroit Lincoln Denver Highway* as a modern facility with much to offer the traveler. The establishment was "modern in every way" with new main buildings, hot and cold showers, electric washers, range stoves, electric lights, gravel roads, with parking space for 400 autos and tents, and plenty of shade with lots of room in the heart of the city.[13]

Linoma Beach

Linoma Beach served as a regional tourist destination along the D-L-D Highway. Linoma Beach is located on the banks of the Platte River, halfway between Lincoln and Omaha. Lawrence Simpson, president of the Chicago Lumber Company, built the complex in 1924 as a public resort. In addition to swimming and boating activities, the complex featured a dance hall and restaurant.

In 1939, the lighthouse and a filling station were added to the complex. The 100 foot tall lighthouse was constructed to serve as an observation tower. Prior to its construction, the filling station was billed to be "the finest between Omaha and Lincoln" and "it will be completely air-conditioned and will be open for year-round service."

Although the interstate carries the bulk of traffic across Nebraska, the Linoma Beach Lighthouse remains as part of the complex and can be seen from the interstate on a clear day.

The Linoma Beach Resort remains open featuring a restaurant, RV park, and beach open to the public and curious passing motorists.

("Linoma Beach is Undergoing Improvements," *Ashland Gazette*, 24 May 1939).

Prospect Park (AD04-694), a tourist camp in Hastings, was an extremely popular camp that attracted an estimated 10,000 visitors during the 1923 tourist season alone. In addition to ample camping space, the park offered a two-room bungalow with a kitchen, shower, and laundry facilities; a bulletin board with information regarding the D-L-D and other highway road conditions; two large ovens; and city police patrol in the evenings. For 50-cents each night, travelers could pitch a tent and camp on the grounds. By 1927 the tourist facilities at Prospect Park had been so successful that the city council leased an adjoining two acres to Charles Vernal Lary for the purpose of constructing tourist cabins. Each unit had its own water and sewer facilities, a range stove for cooking, and bunk beds. Hot and cold showers were provided in the bathhouse. A small store offered groceries, gasoline, and supplies to guests. Both the camping and cabin facilities proved to be successful in attracting travelers and generating

income for the city of Hastings. Eventually other motels constructed cabins that were more attractive to travelers and the Prospect Park cabins were torn down.[14]

Former Wigwam Motel Court in Hastings, c.1960
(Photo courtesy of Adams County Historical Society)

Communities and businesses alike advertised in highway road books and guides. The city of Hastings advertised itself as a center of trade, with individual ads for the Osborne Oil Company, "the best gasoline and oils;" The Rose, "America's leading tire pump, manufactured in Hastings;" Western Motor Sales Company, "Buick and Cadillac distributors;" and Hotel Clark, "fireproof, Nebraska's most popular hotel, tourists welcome." Minden advertised itself as "A Live City," with promotions for The Minden Cafe, "special attention given to tourists," and J. S. Pattison Independent Oil Station, "tourist free camp with rest room, shower bath, screened kitchen and dining room, water, light and fuel," among others. Many businesses directly associated themselves with the D-L-D. For example, Milford had a D-L-D Cafe and Hastings and Fairmont each had a D-L-D Garage.[15]

In an effort to stand out among competitors, some business owners used unique architectural creations or gimmicks to lure travelers. A wigwam motel court in Hastings was a popular travel destination. Other wigwam structures were located on the D-L-D Highway, including an extant gift shop in Atlanta, Nebraska. The Showboat complex, located east of Hastings, was modeled after a Mississippi River paddle wheeler, complete with a side wheel moored to the Nebraska prairie. Gasoline, supplies, and lodging were provided for the traveling public. Long strips of tourist cabins were located on three sides of the central "Showboat" structure. The cabins themselves alternated with covered areas for automobile parking. It was eye-catching architecture like this that led to the demise of the Prospect Park cabins, and other earlier lodging ventures on the D-L-D. Eventually the Showboat lost its appeal and it too was torn down.[16] As the popularity of the D-L-D grew, many businesses left the central business district for locations along the highway.

Linoma Beach Lighthouse located on the Platte River between Lincoln and Omaha serves as a popular tourist attraction (SY00-112)

Transformation of the Highway

Federal Numbering System

After 1916, federal and state funding established for road construction and improvements required roads to meet certain design and safety standards, and changes to the D-L-D route and road were inevitable. On April 19, 1919, the D-L-D Highway became part of the state highway system. This change shifted responsibility for improvements and road construction to the state, rather than the Omaha-Denver Trans-Continental Route Association or communities and individuals along the route. By 1924 the highway was officially designated Nebraska State Highway 6, and would remain so until 1926. After the highway became a numbered route, the D-L-D name gradually fell out of favor and the road was known by its numbered route.

In an effort to diminish the confusion surrounding named routes and unify the national highway system, the Federal Department of Agriculture announced a numbered system of highways in 1925.

When this took effect in 1926, the D-L-D became a federal highway. Since this time, the route has had several numbering changes. When Nebraska erected the first official state and U.S. Highway signs conforming to national standards on June 5, 1926, the route was numbered US-38. In 1931 the route was designated U.S.-6/U.S.-38 and two years later was designated U.S.-6. Finally, in 1940, the segment between Hastings and Culbertson was designated as U.S.-6/U.S.-34, with the other sections of road remaining designated as U.S.-6.[17]

Sign showing section of road designated as U.S. Highway 6 in Lancaster County near Lincoln, 1949 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

On June 30, 1937, a congressional action designated U.S.-6 as the national route honoring the Grand Army of the Republic. In 1947 highway markers were placed every 25-miles on the road by the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR). Over the years the GAR signs were removed by theft, vandalism, and routine maintenance requirements, and were never replaced once a supply of extra signs was exhausted. Nationwide, the highway is still recognized as the Grand Army of the Republic Highway, and signs still commemorate it in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Nevada, and Iowa.[18]

Construction and Road Surfaces

Improvements on the D-L-D have been ongoing since the highway was established. Over the years, highway improvements have included eliminating dangerous turns and railroad crossings, constructing culverts and guard rails, constructing and repairing bridges, landscaping the area adjacent to the highway, adding lights and train signals, improving intersections, widening highway lanes, creating and widening shoulders, and creating and/or improving intersections.

Federal aid distributed in 1918 was used for the construction and upgrading of roads across the state of Nebraska. Approximately $43,000 in federal aid was distributed to Adams County where work on the O-L-D near Hastings was a priority. At the time, the O-L-D Association planned to meet in Hastings to demonstrate road building machinery and discuss the status of the highway.[19] In 1919 15 tractors and 14 graders were purchased for $35,000, for use on federal aid roads in Nebraska's District 1.[20] The majority of equipment was intended for use on the O-L-D. In late 1919 in Adams County work had begun east of Juniata and between Hamlet and Imperial. Grading projects had begun in Furnas County at Arapahoe and near McCook. [21]

The Federal Highway Act of 1921 provided federal funding for the construction of highways, which included improvements to the D-L-D Highway. Prior to 1921, improvements and work on the D-L-D was largely limited to grading and privately funded construction. The early and mid-1920s saw an increase in state-sponsored highway projects with grading and gravel projects being the most common.

The early O-L-D/D-L-D route was primarily earthen, however by the 1920s, gravel had become the preferred road surface. An analysis of the NDOR project logs shows that the majority of gravel surfacing projects in the 17 counties along the D-L-D occurred between 1924 and 1927. Some counties, such as Fillmore, began graveling on the D-L-D during 1926, while other counties, such as Furnas, continued graveling into 1934. As traffic continued to increase and road surfacing technology advanced, gravel surfaces fell out of favor and bituminous (asphalt) and pavement surfacing projects began to occur along the D-L-D.[22]

By the late 1920s paving projects had begun in areas where heavy traffic existed. In 1928 it was estimated that 10 to 20 percent of the total gravel surfaced roads had an average traffic load that would require a better surface than gravel. Several towns and counties had already turned to hard surfacing in areas to accommodate traffic loads. NDOR project logs show that concrete pavement projects generally began earlier in the eastern portion of the state and

later moved west. The earliest paved stretch on the D-L-D was west of Lincoln, where it had been paved since about 1917. Other cities had hard surfaced segments of the D-L-D in place, while rural areas continued with gravel surfacing. In 1918 approximately 52 miles of brick surface were constructed between Lincoln and Emerald. Bituminous matting (or asphalt) over concrete pavement was completed in Lincoln during 1919. In 1920 brick pavement was constructed in Fairmont and McCook. During 1922 brick pavement was laid on 70th Street in Lincoln.[23] Concrete paving took place in Gretna in 1927.[24] It was not until 1937 that the highway segment between Funk and Axtell, in Phelps and Kearney Counties, went from gravel surfacing to bituminous or asphalt.

With the exception of concrete or asphalt road surfaces in larger communities, the earliest concrete paving projects noted in the NDOR records occurred in the 1920s. Concrete paving projects listed in the NDOR Biennial Reports include:

- North of Gretna in Douglas County in 1926
- Sarpy County in 1929
- Cass and Lancaster counties initiated in 1930
- Seward County in 1931
- Adams and Red Willow projects in 1930 and 1931 near the large towns of Hastings and McCook
- 12 1/2 miles of highway beginning at the south edge of Hastings completed in October 1931

On October 19, 1931, a grand opening ceremony was held with an automobile caravan officially opening the newly completed concrete-paved highway on the south edge of Hastings.[25] Over 100 miles of concrete paving was completed in Nebraska during the spring and summer of 1934 under the state and federal road building program. On the D-L-D this included two 9-mile projects between Friend and Exeter and Dorchester and Friend. In addition, the federal requirement for the expenditure of one-fourth of available emergency federal funds from depression-era programs was responsible for a number of paving projects within towns and cities along the D-L-D including Minden, Lincoln, and Omaha.[26]

Several large paving projects were awarded in 1936 in an attempt to close the remaining five unpaved patches on Nebraska's principal highways, including sections of the D-L-D. It was anticipated that D-L-D projects underway in Fillmore and Clay County were to be completed during the summer of 1936 and the portion between Harvard and Fairmont was scheduled to be completed by spring of the following year.[27] By 1938 the D-L-D had been hard surfaced across the state of Nebraska with either bituminous matting (asphalt) or concrete. Concrete pavement projects were completed into the 1960s in some counties. These surfaces were later replaced by asphaltic concrete surface courses (asphalt pavement above the existing or reconstructed surfaces), which were ongoing projects that continued into the 1980s.

Concrete finisher on Highway 6 in Saunders County, c. 1921 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Relocation of the D-L-D Highway

In addition to road surface changes, the original route of the D-L-D changed over time. During the late 1920s rerouting and realignment projects began to take place across the state, a trend that would continue into the 1940s. The majority of these relocations included shortening and straightening the route and eliminating unnecessary turns and rail crossings. These changes improved overall safety of the road and diminished traffic issues within towns. For example, an early relocation recorded in the 1929-1930 NDOR biennial report stated: "the new routing of the highway through Greenwood (Cass County) on U.S. 38 eliminated approximately 3.5 miles of road and numerous sharp and hazardous curves."[28]

Relocations of the D-L-D included the following sections: McCook to Indianola (Red Willow County); Holdrege to Funk (Phelps County); Cambridge to

Holbrook (Furnas County); and near Culbertson (Hitchcock County). A 1936 relocation project straightened the route between Funk (Phelps County) and Axtell (Kearney County), eliminating several 90-degree turns and shortening the route. This relocation also shifted the highway into the community of Axtell, which had previously been bypassed. In addition, since portions of the D-L-D were located on railroad right-of-way, when the rail line relocated or ownership of the property changed, the highway route was affected.[29] During 1935-1936, a relocation of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad caused a relocation of the D-L-D Highway. As a result, the road was straightened and shifted north, eliminating eight miles between Arapahoe (Furnas County) and Atlanta (Phelps County), bypassing Edison by two miles and Oxford (both in Furnas County) by four miles.

The 1941-1942 NDOR biennial report gave detailed information about a recently completed project in Sarpy County, describing typical changes made to improve the road's design and safety.

"The heaviest and most important work performed is located on Highway No. 6 between Ashland and Gretna. This route was built during a time when little attention was given to safety standards now regarded as a necessity on all modern highways. Vertical banks of cuts impaired sight distance and threatened drainage elements and roadways by sloughing. Shoulders of heavy fills were too narrow to permit emergency parking and construction scars were so predominant as to present a very displeasing appearance. Deficiencies and hazards were eliminated by the changing of vertical banks to gradual slopes, the excess earth being employed in increasing shoulders to ten feet in width. Final slopes were stabilized against erosion through the medium of topsoil, seeding, mulching and ground cover planting, and the projects received sufficient decorative planting to better environment."[30]

Relocations of the route often eliminated communities from the direct path of the D-L-D. Some communities were in favor of the relocation, which removed traffic congestion from the center of town, but others lobbied for the highway to remain through the central business district. Many of the communities' central business districts along the D-L-D were bypassed by relocations of the highway. Edison and Oxford, small communities located in Furnas County, were two such communities. A route change also eliminated Lamar from the D-L-D route. In 1911 the original highway ran through the center of town. By 1939, a relocation shifted the highway to the east, bypassing Lamar (Chase County). In Minden (Kearney County) the original D-L-D route ran through the central business district. A relocation shifted the highway north, bypassing the center of town. A similar project occurred in Holdrege by 1939, with the highway shifting away from the central business district while remaining in town. In Exeter, the 1911 route turned north and ran through the central business district. By 1939 this route was relocated to the south edge of town. An exception to the trend to bypass was the community of Greenwood. It succeeded in relocating the highway to run through the center of town during 1929-1930.[31]

Example of poor drainage conditions of roadways (possibly in Red Willow County), c. 1925 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Highway 6 sign showing a route through the center of town and a bypass route in Lincoln, 1952 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Within the city of Hastings, the proposal to shift the D-L-D to the south side of town led to a three-year controversy, beginning in the late 1920s. Government and local officials could not agree on a permanent route. Several local businessmen had

wanted the route of the D-L-D to continue through town along Second Street. This was fine with the state, but the federal government would not continue to pave the highway if it ran through the center of town. The federal government had been mapping a system of highways from a military standpoint, which did not allow for highway traffic through the center of major towns. Instead of following Second Street, the federal government proposed to turn the route south on Elm for one mile, then continue west until it rejoined the original D-L-D route west of Juniata (also eliminating Juniata from the route). In order to move ahead with their plans, the state and federal authorities agreed to place markers for an alternative route through the center of town, and relocate the main route along the south side of town.[32]

Conclusion

The original O-L-D/D-L-D route in Nebraska was a patchwork of earthen and graded roads that jogged along section lines of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy right-of-way and the Republican River Valley. As the popularity of the D-L-D grew and traffic increased, changes were gradually made that altered it from a crude road into a modern highway. Over time, the surface went from earth or gravel to concrete and asphalt. Two narrow rough lanes, sometimes no more than tracks, expanded into the present modern highway with two wide traffic lanes with shoulders. The road that once regularly stopped in small communities across Nebraska was relocated to bypass towns and create a more efficient route. Although large portions of the original D-L-D were incorporated into the modern highway, several original portions were abandoned or incorporated into the state and county road system.

Resources of the Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway

Approximately 215 road-related properties were documented along the D-L-D Highway representing a variety of resource types. Twenty-seven properties were identified as potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) and are illustrated below. The counties are organized in accordance with the east-west order of the D-L-D Highway. For a full discussion of recommendations and a list of D-L-D Highway properties already listed in the National Register, see Chapter 9: Survey Results and Recommendations.

Sarpy County

Linoma Beach Lighthouse near Ashland, SY00-113. Lighthouse constructed as part of a resort area that opened in 1923. National Register nomination in progress.

Saunders County

Gas station at west side of Highway 6 near Silver Street in Ashland, SD01-084. Tudor Revival style gas station, National Register nomination in progress.

Lancaster County

O-L-D Highway Marker in the vicinity of Emerald, LC00-129.

D-L-D Highway Marker in Lincoln, LC13:B09-002.

DuTeau Chevrolet at northeast corner of 18th and O Street in Lincoln, LC13:D09-538. Two-story brick auto sales building.

Fillmore County

Gas station at northwest corner of South Boundary and Arapahoe in Exeter, FM03-017. Stucco gas station with canopy.

Adams County

Service station at 1030 West 2nd Street in Hastings, AD04-107. Brick service station completed in 1925 by W.J. Bauer.

Hudson Gas Station and signs at northwest side of Highway 6 south of South Street in curve east of Elm in Hastings, AD04-693. House style gas station with historic painted billboards.

Prospect Park in Hastings, AD04-694. Tourist camp buildings in the park developed by the city for use by automobile tourists.

Kearney County

Pioneer Village Museum and Motel at the north side of Highway 6 between Brown and Colorado Streets in Minden, KN04-153 and KN04-157. Unique museum complex, including motel, founded by Harold Warp in 1953.

Phelps County

AA Motel at the northeast corner of 4th Avenue and Sheridan Street in Holdrege, PP04-035. Motel court on the D-L-D.

Tower Motel at the south side of West 4th Avenue between High and Denver Streets in Holdrege, PP04-260. Motel and restaurant complex.

Furnas County

Service station at 419 Highway 6 in Holbrook, FN06-033. House form station with two-bay addition showing transition of gas station form.

Arapahoe Cabin Court at north side of Chestnut between Nebraska and 7th in Arapahoe, FN01-070. Seven one-story, frame, front gable cabin units. Office is modern.

Hitchcock County

Gas station at northwest corner of Taylor and Warsaw in Culbertson, HK02-041.

Red Willow County

Original paved section of the D-L-D Highway located behind Highway 6 rest area east of McCook, RW00-159. (Approximately 1-mile stretch used as an access road)

Gas station at northeast corner of Main and North Railway Streets in Palisade, HK03-037. Brick station with canopy.

Sage Motel at 1003 B Street in McCook, RW05-273. Motel complex including office and lodging units.

Former Valley Hotel at northeast corner of Main and Smith in Palisade, HK03-045. Two-story brick hotel likely built originally to serve railroad traffic but may have served tourists along the D-L-D.

Chase County

10-mile section of the D-L-D on Old Highway 6 Road between Wauneta and Imperial, c. 1911-57, CH00-076.

Pennington's Garage at southwest corner of Highway 6 and Tecumseh Street in Wauneta, CH06-021. Brick garage building with industrial metal sash windows.

Gas station at southeast corner of Broadway and 5th in Imperial, CH04-035. c. 1920 Spanish Colonial Revival gas station with two-bay stucco addition.

"Chrysler Plymouth" Garage at 218 Tecumseh Street in Wauneta, CH06-076.

Gas station at northeast corner of Pawnee and Arapahoe in Lamar, CH05-003. Gas station with rear concrete block service bay addition.

Garage at the northwest corner of Tecumseh and Vinita Streets in Wauneta, CH06-028.

Jack's Drive-In at the north side of Vinita near the intersection of Tecumseh in Wauneta, CH06-048. One-story, stucco restaurant with ghost sign "Jack's Drive-In."

Notes

[1]*Huebinger's Map and Guide for Omaha-Denver Trans-Continental Route,* (Des Moines, Iowa: Iowa Publishing Co., 1911), 10-11

[2] George E. Parisoe, "Omaha-Lincoln-Denver Highway," *American Motorist* (Nov. 1913), 978.

[3] Carol Ahlgren, "Dry, Long, and Dusty: The Detroit-Lincoln-Denver (D-L-D) Highway in Nebraska," *Society for Commercial Archaeology Journal* 15, no. 2 (Fall 1997), 17.

[4] *Huebinger's Map and Guide for Omaha-Denver Trans-Continental Route*, 6. In addition to the Omaha-Denver Transcontinental Route Guide, Huebinger's published road guides for several Midwest routes during the 1910s. They included: *Iowa Official Trans-Continental Route, North Iowa Pike, Hawkeye Highway, Blue Grass Road, Waubonsie Trail, River-to-River Guide, I-O-A Short-Line, Panora Speedway, and the Inter-State Trail*.

[5] *Huebinger's Map and Guide for Omaha-Denver Trans-Continental Route*.

[6] Samuel H. Lea, "The Proposed Cross State Highway in South Dakota," *Good Roads* III, no. 11 (N.p., n.d.), 190.

[7] State Association of Commercial Clubs, *Report of the Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Session of the Nebraska State Association of Commercial Clubs* (N.p., 8 May 1912), 33.

[8] George E. Koster, *A Story of Highway Development in Nebraska* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Department of Roads, 1986; revised edition, 1997), 33.

[9] "Permanent Markers For Omaha-Denver Highway," *Hastings Daily Tribune*, 22 July 1913, 1.

[10] Parisoe, 978. At the time of publication, 1913, the Burlington Northern was in the process of establishing the alarm bell system.

[11] "Greenwood Now on Two Great Highways," (N.p., n.d.), available at the Cass County Historical Society Files, Plattsmouth, Nebraska.

[12] Greg Miller, "Balcony House," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, March 2000. Available at the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska.

[13] Lincoln Automobile Club, *Guide Map of the Lincoln Automobile Club* (N.p., c.1920s). Available at the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska.

[14] "The Motoring Public," *Historical News* 9, no. 8 (August 1976), 1.

[15] Lincoln Automobile Club.

[16] "The Motoring Public," 5; Ahlgren, 19. The wigwam motel in Hastings survived until c. 1985 as apartments, but has since been demolished. Although the Showboat has been removed, the county road near its location is still called "Showboat Road."

[17] George E. Koster, Misc. Correspondence (N.p., n.d.). Available at the Nebraska Department of Roads Files, Lincoln, Nebraska.

[18] "Nebraska Department, Sons of Union Veterans, GAR Highway Project," n.d., <www.geocities.com/heartland/Oaks/4173/SUV/garhigh.htm> (Accessed 10 August 2001). Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Nevada, and Iowa have road markers on US Route 6, identifying it as the GAR Highway.

[19] "O.L.D. Meet May 14 and 15," *Hastings Daily Tribune*, 16 March 1918, 8.

[20] District 1 was comprised of 12 counties, located in the southeast corner of Nebraska.

[21] Nebraska Department of Roads, Project Database Logs. Available at the Nebraska Department of Roads, Lincoln, Nebr.; "Many Tractors and Graders Bought," *Hastings Daily Tribune*, 21 November 1919.

[22] Nebraska Department of Roads, Project Database Logs.

[23] The D-L-D ran north-south along 70th Street in Lincoln, between Burlington Avenue in the south and the railroad tracks in the north.

[24] Nebraska Department of Roads, Project Database Logs.

[25] "Formally Open New Pavement on State Road," *Hastings Democrat*, 22 October 1921, 1.

[26] "State Completes 100 Miles Paving During Past Summer," *Hastings Democrat*, 20 September 1934, 1.

[27] "Ask Paving Bids On No. 6 Highway; Opened July 23," *The Morning Spotlight*, 2 July 1936, 1.

[28] Nebraska Department of Public Works, *Eighteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1929-1930* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Public Works, 1930).

[29] "Shortening the Highways," *Nebraska Highways* II, no. 9 (June 1929).

[30] Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1941-1942* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1942).

[31] "Taking Highways Out of City Streets," Nebraska Highways II, no. 7 (April 1929), 5.

[32] "Impasse Reached in D.L.D Paving," Hastings Democrat, 21 August 1930, 1; "Highway Will Go Mile South Now," *Hastings Democrat*, 4 September 1930, 1.

Chapter 3
The Lincoln Highway

(Today roughly U.S. 30)

Introduction

The Lincoln Highway, developed and promoted in the early twentieth century, was to be paved, toll free, and direct across the United States. The Lincoln Highway Association and community supporters along its route propelled the highway into national significance as a major east-west transcontinental route. Within the first few years of route designation, thousands of people left Times Square in New York City and set out for the west coast. In Nebraska the 450 mile route, designated in 1913, entered Omaha in the east from Iowa, crossed 13 counties and 47 towns, and exited at Bushnell near the state's western border with Wyoming.

Traveler Tips

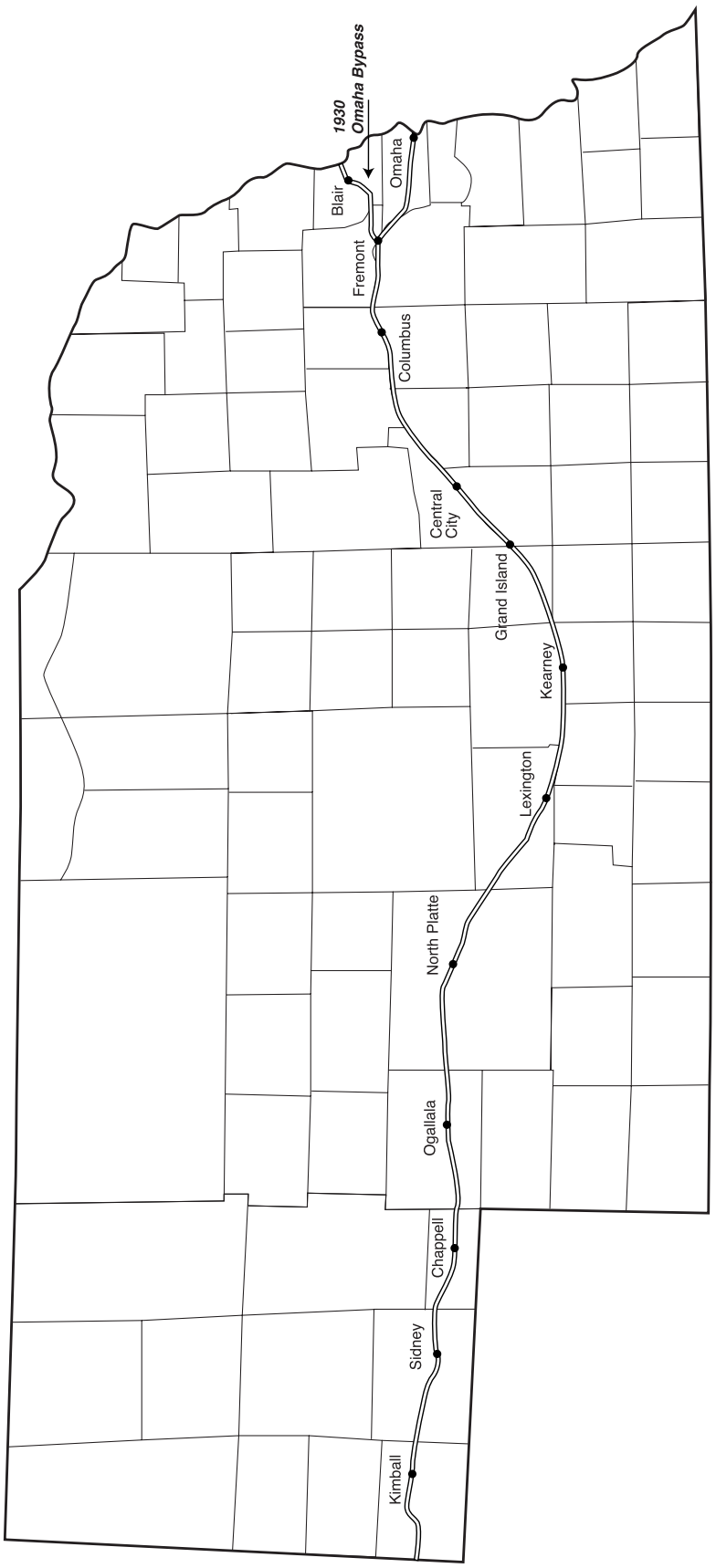
The Complete and Official Lincoln Highway Guide from 1916 included tips for the traveler including the following: "REMEMBER: In Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska, after heavy rains, that if the tourist will remain over in the community in which he is stopping for five or ten hours, it will enable him to proceed in comfort, as the roads are well graded and dry very rapidly. Such a delay will, in the end, save time and will save your car, your tires and your temper, and make your trip more enjoyable."

(Complete and Official Lincoln Highway Guide, 1916, n.p.).

National Development and Promotion

In the early twentieth century few people seriously considered driving an automobile across the country. Although roads existed across the United States, there were no formally designated or direct transportation routes, and the majority of the roads were not paved. In September of 1912, Carl Graham Fisher conceived of a paved and marked transcontinental highway that would be toll free, for use by all who sought the most direct route from the east to the west coast. As an entrepreneur, Fisher was founder of the Prest-O-Lite Company, owner of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and one of the largest promoters of the Miami land boom. In 1911 he received national attention when he paved the Indianapolis Motor Speedway with brick and inaugurated the Indianapolis 500 automobile race.[1] Following this success, Fisher dreamed of developing a paved road across the country for use by travelers.

In the fall of 1912 Fisher presented his plan at a dinner party. With open ears, leaders of Indianapolis automobile manufacturing industry listened to the idea, praised the plan, and began offering their assistance. The businessmen knew, however, that the outcome of the highway depended not only on their own enthusiasm and capital, but also the support of the general public. Due to the overall lack of improved roads, Fisher had no problem gaining interest from the people. Soon after, his dream of building a passable route from one coast to the other became a nationwide initiative to connect the oceans.



The Lincoln Highway (c. 1913 alignment)

"Wooster's Lovers' Lane" between Silver Creek and Clarks in Merrick County, 1920s (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Three months after Fisher's initial announcement, he received a letter from Henry B. Joy, president of the Packard Motor Car Company. The letter not only contained a pledge of money, but it also offered an idea that would further the public's excitement and have profound patriotic appeal.[2] With the 1909 centennial of Abraham Lincoln's birthday in mind, Joy's intention was for the highway to memorialize the past president.[3] Knowing that the original name, the Coast-to-Coast Rock Highway, was not as inspiring, Fisher was quick to adopt the new name of the Lincoln Highway. The following spring Fisher called together several automobile manufacturers and other highway supporters for informal meetings. It was not until the July 1, 1913, meeting, however, that the Lincoln Highway Association was officially organized. After electing officials, the men announced the purpose of their organization. The statement read as follows:

"To procure the establishment of a continuous improved highway from the Atlantic to the Pacific, open to lawful traffic of all description without toll charges: such highway to be known, in memory of Abraham Lincoln, as 'The Lincoln Highway.'"[4]

Although they had announced the highway's establishment, the Lincoln Highway Association still did not have a formal route mapped. The highway was to start at New York City and end at the western terminus of San Francisco, the location of the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition. The Association's goal was to have the route paved in time for the 1915 Exposition. With the termini announced, the organization did not disclose any information about the points through which the route would pass between the two coasts. Knowing that the success of the project depended on contributions of the public on a nationwide level, Fisher first wanted to gain support from the nation in its entirety, not only the towns, counties, and states on the route. The association appointed a team to research and determine the highway's exact route.

Henry Joy, the first president of the Lincoln Highway Association, stated that the most important factor in determining the route was directness. Other factors included the need to take advantage of easy terrain and natural paths while avoiding the congestion of large cities.[5] By August 26, 1913, the route was announced. The coast to coast highway started in Times Square and traveled west for 3,389 miles, ending at Lincoln Park in San Francisco. After going through New Jersey and Pennsylvania, the route traversed the Midwest states of Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa. From there, the route turned southwest to cross the Missouri River and enter the West. The Lincoln Highway crossed Nebraska and went on to California via Wyoming, Utah, and Nevada.

Lincoln Highway in Sidney, c.1910s (Photo courtesy of NeSHPO)

In Nebraska, the Lincoln Highway largely followed the paths of the Platte River route of the California and Oregon Trails, the transcontinental railroad, and historic expeditions of Fremont, Stansbury, and Lander, the Mormon migration, the Pony Express, the "Forty Niners," and the Overland Stage Coach.[6] The Lincoln Highway connected these main

communities across the state: Omaha, Fremont, Columbus, Grand Island, Kearney, North Platte, Ogallala, Sidney, and Kimball. The main route of the Lincoln Highway traveled through western Nebraska going northwest from Big Springs, west of Ogallala, into Wyoming. An optional route or loop, referred to as the "Colorado Lincoln Highway feeder" traveled southwest from Big Springs to Denver and resumed with the Lincoln Highway in Cheyenne, Wyoming. In the mid-1920s the loop from Big Springs to Colorado was abandoned as part of the designated Lincoln Highway route.

On October 8, 1913, Central City, Nebraska, became the first city in the country to ratify the Lincoln Highway Proclamation. Over 200 road proponents met and unanimously chose to support the transcontinental highway in Nebraska.[7] That same month, leaders of the Lincoln Highway Association called for a nationwide celebration to dedicate the highway in the memory of Abraham Lincoln. They asked state executives along the route to proclaim October 31, 1913, as the day of celebration. H. E. Fredrickson, Nebraska's first state counsel of the Lincoln Highway Association, described the preparations underway for Omaha's celebration:

"I have eight large loads of old street car ties and three barrels of good burning oil for our bonfire, $100 worth of fireworks and the mayor and others for short speeches. Most of our retail stores will be decorated in red, white, and blue."[8]

Throughout Nebraska, communities celebrated with symphony performances, luncheons, fireworks, parades, bonfires, and patriotic speeches about the benefits of the highway and its namesake. For example Nebraska's celebrations included: the Symphony Club performing in Ogallala; Fredrickson leading the celebration in Omaha by lighting the bonfire in view of 10,000 spectators; and farmers near Kearney placing torches along 20 miles of the highway.[9] Excitement and celebration of the route, on a smaller scale, was evident well into the following year. In February of 1914, the owner of Kearney's Midway Hotel, L. A. Dennison, erected a sign in the tower of his building. Lighted with electricity, the red, white, and blue "L" kept with the patriotic spirit of the named highway. Furthermore, the entire length of the highway through Kearney was lit with 100 watt bulbs and the road through town was renamed "Lincoln Way."[10]

Although the counties and towns through which the route crossed were celebrating, many communities vying for the highway were left disappointed and withdrew their pledge of financial assistance. As a result of the loss of financial contributions, the Lincoln Highway Association realized that they obtained less than half of the funds needed to meet their goal of a paved road by the 1915 exposition in San Francisco. Since the success of the highway depended on public enthusiasm, the organization was determined to retain community interest and support and quietly postponed their plans to pave the highway in its entirety. To rally support, the Lincoln Highway Association came up with two promotional devices to increase the highway's popularity.

Paving 5.9 miles of the Lincoln Highway between Ames and Fremont in Dodge County, c.1920 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

The first promotional scheme was the development of "Seedling Miles." The Lincoln Highway Association preached that "Great oaks from little acorns will grow; long roads of concrete from 'seedling miles' will spring."[11] The concept of seedling miles was to hard-surface small sections of road through donations which would, in turn, encourage communities and states to continue improvement along the entire route. In 1916 *The Complete Official Road Guide of the Lincoln Highway* described seedling miles as "strips of standard concrete road surface." The road guide further explained that the first seedling miles were constructed with cement donated by the Lincoln Highway Association and cement producers with hopes that the traveler would "appreciate the value of hard-surfaced roads" and encourage similar construction throughout other sections of dirt road through donations.[12]

Although many communities along the Lincoln Highway applied for seedling miles, these applications were delayed and sometimes lapsed because of legal or financial difficulties. Suppliers abandoned or delayed their offer of donated concrete because of mill strikes, congestion on the railroads, or wartime demands. Although it sometimes took months or even years, many communities accepted offers for a seedling mile and waited out the delays. Donations by the Portland Cement Company and local sponsors provided for the construction of a few mile-long stretches of hard surfaced highway in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Nebraska. Generally, the seedling miles were constructed of concrete, one mile in length, and were located on the edge of town. On November 3, 1915, Grand Island, Nebraska celebrated as it became the first city in the state to complete a seedling mile (HL06-696).[13] This stretch of road was located just east of town. District School Number 74 on the road was renamed Seedling Mile School.[14] Two weeks after Grand Island's seedling mile was completed, Kearney exhibited a finished seedling mile, 15 feet in width, 5 feet wider than the recommended 10 feet.[15]

Exceeding all others, both within Nebraska and nationally, the most remarkable seedling "mile" was near Fremont. Throughout the span of the Lincoln Highway, the seedling "mile" near Fremont was the longest measuring six miles. In 1914, the Association's State Consul in Nebraska, George F. Wolz, convinced the Fremont Commercial Club to donate $8,000 dollars to purchase 3,000 barrels of cement.[16] Although the war delayed cement shipment until 1918, the concrete section began at the northern boundary of Fremont and provided a paved road westerly for six miles.

Current view of the Lincoln Highway in Lincoln County, LN06-239

The Fremont seedling mile also was the first section in the state to incorporate new methods of highway construction. New construction methods used for the Fremont seedling mile included the use of a moving concrete mixer, the piping of water to the mixer, and delivery trucks transporting a batch of concrete. The Fremont seedling mile was only the second area of road in Nebraska to be constructed under the 1916 Federal-Aid Road Act.[17]

After this 6-mile section of road was paved with concrete and other seedling miles were completed, the hard surface sections of the Lincoln Highway began to convert skeptics of concrete as a road surface material. In a letter to the Lincoln Highway Association's national headquarters in Detroit, during August of 1919, Wolz outlined the condition of the highway. He expressed that, with several tourists and trucks traveling through Fremont daily, the condition of the road was better than ever before.[18] After months of trucks and other heavy motor vehicles passing over the paved roads, the Lincoln Highway Association had proven the value of a hard-surfaced highway. After 1919 cement manufacturers no longer felt it was necessary to donate materials or labor toward these seedling miles and no other promotional seedling miles were constructed. Nationally, seedling miles had been constructed in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska.[19]

Another promotional device of the Lincoln Highway Association was the concept to mark the highway for easy navigation. Most areas of the route, particularly segments of the Nebraska route, remained a dirt track of land that only grew more apparent with every vehicle that drove the highway and created deeper ruts. To make the route easy to follow and to keep the public's interest, at least initially, the Lincoln Highway Association quickly placed markers to designate the route. The markers consisted of metal signs featuring Lincoln's profile or a 21 inch band around telephone poles painted with the Lincoln Highway insignia-a red, white, and blue stripes and the "L" for Lincoln Highway.[20]

The Lincoln Highway Association did its part to promote the road. Members gave radiator caps bearing the emblem of the Lincoln Highway to anyone who subscribed to the organization and requested car manufacturers who were association members to place the "L" insignia on their products.

They sold lapel buttons, pennants, and stickers with the association's insignia as well as portraits of President Lincoln and framed copies of their proclamation. One of the association's most crafty promotions was to solicit school-aged children for pennies. In return, their affiliated school would receive certificates of membership.[21]

Efforts of the Lincoln Highway Association continued strong until the late 1920s. When the Lincoln Highway nationally became part of the system of federal numbered highways, the road was broken up into several numbered highways. In Nebraska, the Lincoln Highway became Route 30. As the federal designation occurred, numbered route signs replaced Lincoln Highway markers, initiating the demise of the promotion of the named highways. Following the termination of the active Lincoln Highway Association in December 1927, small promotional efforts continued. In 1928, Gael Hoag, the last paid representative of the association, took the final official coast-to-coast tour of the highway. Hoag also arranged for approximately 3,000 concrete directional markers to be constructed with a small bronze bust of Lincoln and a directional arrow. On September 1, 1928, Boy Scout troops across the country erected these concrete markers in one of the last efforts of the Lincoln Highway Association.[22]

Following the Road Across Nebraska

The early route of the Lincoln Highway in Nebraska traveled west from Omaha, generally following the route of the Platte River and the Union Pacific Railroad line across the state. The Lincoln Highway was developed largely by connecting a system of existing local roads, which were largely dirt, and designating them as the Lincoln Highway. The early, east-west road was subject to many route changes over the first 10 to 20 years of its existence as a result of federal and state funding for road improvements, improved road design standards, and the designation of U.S. 30.

Much of the original route of the Lincoln Highway in the state was located on railroad right-of-way. When the Union Pacific Railroad Company developed railroad lines across the state, the federal government granted a 400-foot right-of-way as a subsidy. However, because the railroad did not require this much right-of-way, they leased portions of it to counties to use as public roads. Many of these existing county roads were incorporated into the route of the Lincoln Highway and nearly half of the total 450 miles of the highway was located within the Union Pacific right-of-way.

Early improvements to the Lincoln Highway were hampered in Nebraska because the road was located in the Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way. The expenditure of Nebraska's federal aid on any portion of the Lincoln Highway that followed on the outer 50 feet of the railroad's right-of-way was prohibited.[23] As a result, nearly half of the Lincoln Highway in Nebraska was not eligible for the federal assistance appropriated by the 1916 act. It was not until late 1919 that the Union Pacific, the federal government, the state of Nebraska, and its counties reached an agreement that federal funding could be used on these portions of the Lincoln Highway. After an agreement was reached, federal money, as well as county and state money, was concentrated to improve the Lincoln Highway in Nebraska. The official history of the Lincoln Highway Association states that the agreement with Union Pacific in Nebraska brought about the longest realignment of the Lincoln Highway in the United States.[24]

Cutting back slopes on the Lincoln Highway in Hall County, c.1920 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

In 1920 the state of Nebraska took over the Lincoln Highway as part of the state highway system and continued to improve the route. By the start of 1920 more than $615,000 in state and county money had been used to improve the Lincoln Highway, including relocation of the road in some sections. This money, in addition to a $3,000,000 bond issue, helped pay for new construction of more than 63 miles in Dodge, Hall, Dawson, and Lincoln

counties.[25] The road construction was on completely new routes and the process occurred gradually on a county-by-county basis.[26] The April 1919 issue of Nebraska Highways, the official publication of the Nebraska Good Roads Association, made reference to the upcoming realignment outside of Grand Island. The article read as follows:

"The Nebraska highway department secured the right-of-way for a new route that would parallel the Union Pacific road west of Grand Island. Eight miles could be saved between Grand Island and Gibbon. Improved construction methods will insure a better road."[27]

The Union Pacific paralleled the Platte River, which flowed at an angle. The Lincoln Highway, on the other hand, was bound to the rectangular tracts of road laid out by the township and range survey system. Due to this, the Lincoln Highway made endless 90-degree turns and railroad grade crosses. A series of Lincoln Highway reroutes involved straightening the right angle-turning, known as "stairsteps," by relocating the Lincoln from section roads to new alignments parallel to the railroad. The Union Pacific supported the realignment, which minimized train wrecks caused by cars crossing the tracks. The realignments eliminated grade crossings, while shortening the route. In 1917 the Lincoln Highway in Dawson and Lincoln Counties was relocated to the edge of the Union Pacific right-of-way, bypassing miles of stairsteps. This relocation included the Gothenburg stairstep on the south side of the Platte River, which was eliminated with the opening of the North Platte River Bridge, shortening the Lincoln Highway between Gothenburg and North Platte by 18 miles.[28] By 1928 the stairstep routing was eliminated.

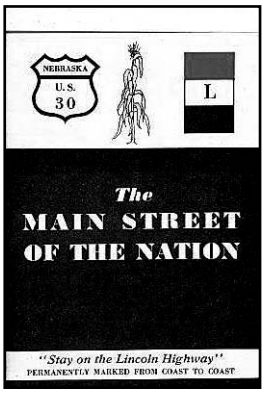
In addition to the Union Pacific Railroad agreement, funding made available by the 1921 Federal-Aid Highway Act also led to improvements and realignments of the Lincoln Highway. Beginning in the late 1920s route changes occurred in Platte County as efforts continued to eliminate railroad crossings. Lincoln Highway Director Hoag, State Consul George Wolz, and State Engineer Roy Cochran traveled the Lincoln Highway across Nebraska to determine which railroad crossings should be eliminated. They met and agreed to eliminate six of the seven crossings between Columbus and Grand Island, shifting the route in this section to the south side of the tracks. In April 1930 State Engineer Cochran reported additional improvements and changes to the Lincoln Highway. Cochran noted that the segment from Columbus to Schuyler had been paved and a viaduct would be built at Columbus. In addition with the upcoming paving of a 2-mile stretch at Schuyler, the highway would be paved from Omaha to Columbus.[29]

Union Pacific Railroad viaduct dedication in Grand Island, 1932
(Photo courtesy of NDOR)

By the mid-1920s the popularity of named highways reached new heights. The large number of named roads, along with an increased use of motor vehicles, caused great confusion regarding the highway system. To improve this situation, the Federal Department of Agriculture announced a plan for a numbered system of highways in the fall of 1925. The department designated 145 roads, or 76,000 miles across the United States as part of a national, uniform system of marking highway routes. Much of the Lincoln Highway route through Nebraska became part of U.S. 30, which extended from New Jersey to Oregon. The new numbered route, however, made several deviations from the original Lincoln Highway.[30] The name, Lincoln Highway, remained associated with the route for many years after its designation as U.S. 30.

By 1930 several new sections of road were constructed for the new numbered route. The most significant route changes occurring during this time was the bypassing of towns. For example, the original Lincoln Highway and its Grand Island seedling mile was bypassed by a new stretch of U.S. 30 by 1930.[31] The community of Big Springs in Deuel County was also bypassed to the north with the new U.S. 30. The greatest bypass change was the relocation of U.S. 30 around Nebraska's largest city, Omaha, and Council Bluffs, Iowa. The route was moved north of Omaha to a small town, Blair, where

the newly constructed Lincoln Memorial Bridge (WN00-083) crossing over the Missouri River was toll free. The Lincoln Highway Association redesignated the route of the Lincoln Highway to follow the new U.S. 30 route through Blair.



After designation as U.S. 30, the name 'Lincoln Highway' remained associated with the route (Image courtesy of NeSHPO)

The July 30, 1930, issue of the *Omaha World-Herald* stated that the rerouting of the highway would have little affect on traffic. However, what outraged local citizens was not entirely the rerouting, but instead the manner in which the Lincoln Highway Association went about redesignating the route.[32] Without notifying Omaha or Council Bluffs officials, the organization ordered several crews of workers to remove the markers from the original route to the new one in the middle of the night.[33] Two days later the *Omaha World-Herald* printed the Lincoln Highway Association's rebuttal. Gael S. Hoag, secretary of the organization, stated that "Lincoln Highway" was a copyrighted name. Therefore, the markers which line the highway are private property, owned by the association, and could be placed where they saw fit. He went on to explain that, because the markers were private property, they only need permission from the towns in which the signs were to be placed and not from the places they were removed.[34]

Dirt to Hard Surface - Driving the Lincoln Highway in Nebraska

Throughout the early history of the Lincoln Highway in Nebraska, road surface upkeep and improvement was an ongoing endeavor. In 1914, a year after the Lincoln Highway was established, the State Board of Irrigation, Highways, and Drainage Biennial Report stated that the route was "in fairly good shape through the state excepting at the western portion, where there is room for a large improvement."[35] The eastern portion of the highway was at least graded, but the west section, having not been graded at this point, was only made up of deeply rutted old trails. For the next couple of years, with the exception of the seedling miles, much of the road surface remained the same.

Laying concrete base for brick street near Elkhorn, Douglas County, c.1920 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

In its description of the Lincoln Highway in Nebraska, the 1916 road guide proclaimed that, "the tourist will find many indications that assure the complete future improvement of this section of the Lincoln Highway." It highlighted the seedling miles at Grand Island and Kearney and made reference to the amount of money spent in this state on improvements.[36] However, the fifth edition of the road guide, published eight years later, explained that permanent improvements were still pending for many of Nebraska's roads.[37]

In the summer of 1919, an army caravan of nearly 100 vehicles crossed the United States by way of the Lincoln Highway. The convoy resulted out of a campaign for better roads and to create a national highway commission to disburse federal funds.[38] One of the caravan members on this trip was Lieutenant Colonel Dwight D. Eisenhower, who later served as 34th President of the United States and was a major proponent of the national interstate highway system.

The purpose of the convoy was two-fold. First, the caravan was to test the motor vehicle for army transportation, but more importantly, the caravan was to test road conditions of the highway and promote improvement. The trip pointed out the poor condition of the highway and the need for a good

transcontinental route, especially in the West. Due to the poor conditions in Nebraska, it took the caravan 10 days to cross the state. On August 5th the convoy was held up for seven hours near North Platte. Their heavy trucks were stuck in quicksand that appeared dry on the surface due to evaporating water. In a telegram sent to Washington, First Lieutenant E.R. Jackson stated that the 200-foot stretch of highway as the "worst stretch of road we have yet encountered."[39] This stretch of the Lincoln Highway would prove to be a problem for the road department for at least another decade. The 1927-28 biennial report of the Nebraska Department of Roads stated:

"On account of the traffic on the Lincoln Highway, particularly east of North Platte, and on account of soil conditions, difficulty was experienced in maintaining this road in good shape. The soil near the Platte River is about 18 inches to 24 inches deep and is underlaid with river sand. During the spring and fall, water rises up to within about 12 inches of the surface causing the surfacing of the road under heavy traffic to become wavy and pitted."[40]

After the caravan crossed Nebraska, the Army reported that the entire length of the highway in the state was dirt, with the exception of some city streets and the three areas of seedling miles-Grand Island, Kearney, and Fremont. West of Dawson County, the road at this time remained no more than a rutted trail.[41]

Current view of the brick section of Lincoln Highway constructed in 1920 near Elkhorn, Douglas County, listed in the National Register, DO00-014

In 1919 there was still more than 1,800 miles of dirt road across the entire length of the Lincoln Highway, or approximately 50 percent of the national highway.[42] Nebraska's Department of Roads biennial report showed that by the mid-1920s many improvements were continuing to be made to the Lincoln Highway. The reports showed a general trend between 1923 and 1926 toward paving, or at least upgrading much of the highway from an earth to a graveled road. Other improvements included constructing and strengthening drainage structures and culverts to help control massive flooding. By the mid-1920s, only 84 miles of the Lincoln Highway in Nebraska was still dirt road.[43] The remainder of the route in the state featured gravel roads, a small number of brick roads, and concrete sections - including seedling miles in Grand Island and Kearney and a 6-mile long seedling mile in Fremont. In the community of Elkhorn, a brick section was laid in 1920 using a technique where bricks are set in sand over a concrete foundation. This section remains today measuring 4,580 feet long, 18 feet wide, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (DO00-014).[44]

By the 1929 and 1930 report, the trend in improvements shifted to paving the highway. By this time, portions of the highway that were not paved were surfaced with oiled gravel. Only small sections of gravel road remained into the early 1930s. As Nebraska's constitution prohibited a state debt of more than $100,000, road improvement projects in Nebraska often had to be constructed on a gradual basis, as state and federal funding became available.[45]

According to the November 6, 1935, issue of the *Omaha World-Herald*, the Lincoln Highway was not formally opened across Nebraska until that year, when paving was complete. Reporting on a celebration, the headline read, "Lincoln Highway Now Hard-Surfaced Across State; North Platte Celebrates." A ribbon-cutting ceremony formally opened a 30-mile stretch of paving west of North Platte and officially finished Nebraska's first cross-state, hard-surfaced highway. Designated by then as U.S. 30, the Lincoln Highway in Nebraska consisted of 323 miles of paving of concrete or brick and 139 miles of bituminous material.[46]

Gateway to the West - Nebraska Lincoln Highway Tourism

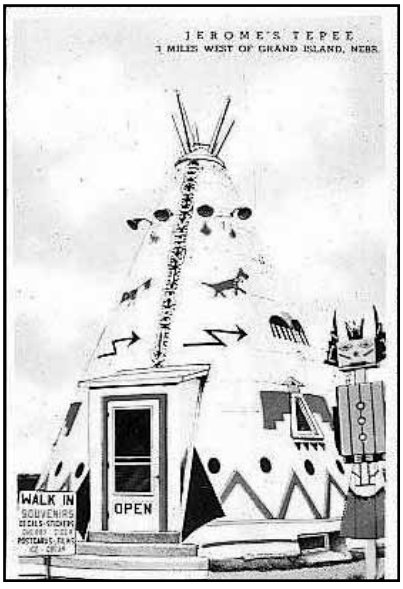
In the first years after the construction of the Lincoln Highway, traffic along the route included locals and individuals traveling across the country. Some of the route's earliest travelers were on their way to the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco in 1915. By this time, the automobile had become a popular way of traveling. Throughout its first years, the

transcontinental highway served as an "outlet for wanderlust" and "another way to span the continent." Tourists such as Effie Gladding and Emily Post were happy to leave the confinements of the railway and travel the open road to connect one coast to another. Prior to World War I, transcontinental travel was primarily for the leisure class.[47] However, as the automobile became available to the working class, and as road conditions improved, the Lincoln Highway not only served the tourist, but it also served as a route from rural areas to town and as an interstate connection.

Gottberg Auto Company in Columbus, Platte County, PT01-003

Entrepreneurs across the country realized the potential financial rewards and began constructing highway facilities to aid travelers in their journey from coast to coast. Within the first years of the Lincoln Highway, local Nebraska businesses and towns along the route realized the financial opportunities associated with such a transcontinental route and began to construct highway facilities such as gas stations, garages, and diners. One such extant facility, Gloe Brothers Service Station (HL08-066), is located in Wood River along current U.S. 30. This service station is listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its association with the highway's development and roadside commerce.[48] With widespread use of the automobile and national road development and improvements, travel for pleasure became commonplace.

Business owners sought to take advantage of the Lincoln Highway's promotion and popularity by renaming their businesses to be associated with the road.[49] Other entrepreneurs drew on the concept of Nebraska as the gateway to the west on the Lincoln Highway. Since the construction of the Lincoln Highway, Nebraska's eastern state line has been considered by many as the place where the west begins. Lincoln Highway traveler Frederic Van de Water described his journey across the state as a gradual transition from the Midwest to the "authentic West."[50] For another traveler, Bellamy Partridge, the beginning of the west was a very specific place halfway across the Missouri River Bridge entering Omaha.[51] Many businesses drew on the concept of Nebraska at the gateway to the west to attract tourists. For example, in the 1922 Nebraska Highway Guidebook, an advertisement for the Troup Auto Supply Company stated, "You will find us ready and anxious to serve your best interests and to make your stay in Omaha- 'The Gate City of the West'- as enjoyable as possible."[52] Other businesses used the concept of the "west" directly in their building's design. For example, Jerome's Teepee in Grand Island and the Covered Wagon (BF00-158) in Kearney were both souvenir shops that incorporated icons of the west into their name and structure. Capitalizing on the western theme, the Shady Bend cabin court (HL00-033) outside of Grand Island purchased its first of several bison in 1932 to graze in the fields just east of the complex.[53]



Postcard view of Jerome's Teepee west of Grand Island, Hall County (Image courtesy of NeSHPO)

Service stations, auto dealers, and automobile part suppliers and diners were supported by other tourist-related businesses. Local residents and officials also constructed new hotels, motor courts,

and auto tourist camps to accommodate travelers. At the earliest camps, travelers provided their own tents and cooked their own meals. Although some camps were free, "pay camps" had more conveniences such as on-site gasoline and groceries.[54] For example, the Omaha Tourist Camp offered "fine" rest rooms, kitchens, laundry facilities, and baths. Furthermore, it was "well policed" and had "courteous attendants."[55] However, as tourists demanded more comforts, such as shelter from severe weather, camp owners began to construct individual cabins. These cabin camps, which became very popular in the late 1920s, offered gas, food, and lodging, and aided the motorists in "making good time." As the route changed and the central business district was bypassed, tourist services were gradually extended from the downtown main streets to the highways that connected the towns. For example, the Shady Bend cabin court, previously noted, opened in 1930 with five duplex cabins and a main building with a gas station, grocery store, and living quarters for the owner.[56]

The Lincoln Highway Association published road guides as early as 1915 to promote the route and to provide tourists with travel information. It gave state-by-state descriptions for route navigation and travel accommodations. In addition, it offered tourists helpful notes and suggestions such as sections titled "Don'ts for Tourists," "Cost of the Trip," "The Time Required," and "Facts of Interest to the Transcontinental Tourist." Mileage charts calculated the distance between towns within each state, as well as the distance between Nebraska cities and those in other states. The road guides included photographs and maps of major cities, as well as advertisements for highway resources such as tourist camps, hotels, filling stations and garages.

Postcard view of Welsh Motor Court along US 30 in Ogallala, Keith County (Image courtesy of NeSHPO)

Early on, the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company printed and donated 65,000 copies of "Hints to Tourists," a booklet that mainly outlined a list of needed equipment on the trip. However, demand far exceeded supply, so the Lincoln Highway Association began incorporating this list into its road guide. [57]

Conclusion

The heyday of the Lincoln Highway, and later U.S. 30, as the state's major transcontinental route came to an end with the construction of Interstate 80 across the state in the 1960s and early 1970s. After the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944 authorized the National System of Interstate Highways, controversy on where the new interstate would cross Nebraska ensued. In 1959 five state senators of Nebraska's Unicameral Legislature introduced a plan that would build the interstate adjacent to U.S. 30 and incorporate its two lanes into the new four-lane superhighway.[58] After it received much criticism from the Nebraska Department of Roads the bill failed. Interstate 80 was built paralleling U.S. 30 but did not directly incorporate the highway into the route.

The opening of Interstate 80 in the 1960s eventually led to a decrease in transcontinental travel for the early twentieth-century Lincoln Highway route, later U.S. 30. Although the highway's heyday may have ended with the opening of the interstate, the significance of the Lincoln Highway in Nebraska is evident by the extant cultural resources found within the right-of-way of the original transcontinental road. Former tourist cabin camps, motels, and gas stations, often abandoned, stand as a reminder of the many travelers who ventured west across the Lincoln Highway through Nebraska. The *Shady Bend* cabin court in Grand Island is a resource that demonstrates the changes to the use of the road and was hit hard by the change. Although rising expectations by travelers and competition throughout the years affected the complex, it was not until the opening of the interstate in the late 1960s that *Shady Bend* lost such a large amount of business that it was forced to close in 1977. By the early 1990s several of the buildings were destroyed, others were abandoned. By 2002, only intact portion of the court is the main office building.[59] The evolution of the *Shady Bend* cabin court symbolizes the development and eventual extinction of the Lincoln Highway and its resources in Nebraska.

Resources of the Lincoln Highway

Approximately 368 road-related properties were documented along the Lincoln Highway representing a variety of resource types. Sixty-two properties were identified as potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) and are illustrated below. The counties are organized in accordance with the east-west order of the Lincoln Highway. For a full discussion of recommendations and a list of Lincoln Highway properties already listed in the National Register, see Chapter 9: Survey Results and Recommendations.

Reinecke Motor Company Garage at northeast corner of 11th and A Street in Schuyler, CX06-044. Two-story brick auto dealership.

Douglas County

Service station at the west side of Main Street between Railroad and Center streets in Elkhorn, DO05-004.

Service station at the southeast corner of B Street and Highway 30 in Schuyler, CX06-080. Service station features a central office with canopy and service bays extending on the sides.

Colfax County

Automobile garage at southeast corner of Center Street and Highway 30 in Rogers, CX05-015. Brick garage with garage entrances on both sides of the block.

Platte County

Pratt truss bridge, Duncan vicinity, PT00-145. Single-span, pin-connected structure is an early example of a bridge on the Lincoln Highway.

Service station at east side of Highway 81 between 7th and 8th Streets in Columbus (Also on the route of Meridian Highway), PT01-539. Porcelain enameled oblong box form gas station.

Lincoln Highway Marker in Duncan, PT04-025. Previously identified and recommended as eligible.

Merrick County

Pontiac Auto Dealership at west side of 16th Avenue between 15th and 16th Streets in Central City, MK02-171. Two-story brick auto dealership.

Motel court at the intersection of Green Street and Highway 30 in Clarks, MK04-037.

Hall County

Shady Bend at east side of Shady Bend Road near Grand Island, HL00-033. Former cabin court and tourist complex. Previously determined eligible.

Gas station at 1810 East Highway 30 near Grand Island, HL06-695. Gas station located on Highway 30 and in front of the seedling mile section of highway.

Buffalo County

Covered Wagon Souvenir Shop in the Kearney vicinity, BF00-158. Previously identified and recommended as eligible.

Seedling Mile at Seedling Mile Road between Willow and Stuhr Roads in Grand Island, HL06-696. One of the original concrete sections constructed to promote the use of hard paving along the highway. Previously determined eligible.

Central Auto Electric at north side 25th (Highway 30) between A Avenue and Central in Kearney, BF05-444. Streamline Moderne commercial garage with vintage neon signs.

Wood River Drive-Inn at the southeast corner of Cottonwood and 9th Street in Wood River, HL08-068. Drive-in ice cream stand with ice cream sculpture on roofline as advertisement.

Former hotel at the northwest corner of Highway 30 and D in Shelton, BF14-069. Previously identified and recommended as potentially eligible.

Service station and motel at the north side of Highway 30 between Phelps and Lincoln in Shelton, BF14-074. Previously identified and recommended as potentially eligible.

Motel, filling station and café at the northeast corner of Main and Highway 30 in Brady, LN01-030. Previously identified and recommended as potentially eligible.

Dawson County

Gas station at 801 East 8th Street in Cozad, DS02-055. Frame, front gable gas station with canopy.

Elms Lodge Motel Court at the north side of 4th between Bryan and Belmont Avenues in North Platte, LN06-452. Previously identified and recommended as potentially eligible.

Lincoln County

Commercial garage at the west side of Main Street, just north of Highway 30 in Brady, LN01-029.

Hendy, Ogier Auto Company at 217 East 4th in North Platte, LN06-554. Previously identified and recommended as potentially eligible.

Service station at 1119 North Jeffers Street in North Platte, LN06-656. Oblong box, two-bay service station.

Auto dealership and garage at the southwest corner of 4th and Cottonwood in North Platte, LN06-713. Auto dealership with service bays and vintage Firestone sign.

Log Cabin Café, Gas Station and Motel at the south side of Highway 30 west of Webster Avenue in North Platte, LN06-692. Previously identified and recommended as potentially eligible.

Cedar Lodge Motel Court at 421 Rodeo Road Avenue in North Platte, LN06-703. Previously identified and recommended as potentially eligible.

Lincoln Highway Marker in North Platte, LN06-711.

Service station at the northeast corner of 4th and McCabe Streets in North Platte, LN06-715. Oblong box form station with porcelain enameled steel panels.

Gas station at northeast corner of Highway 30 and Maple in Sutherland, LN08-019. Previously identified and recommended as eligible.

Lincoln Highway Marker in North Platte, LN06-716.

Gas station at south side of Highway 30 between West County Road and Poplar in Sutherland, LN08-041. Brick and stucco house style gas station. Previously identified and recommended as eligible.

Lincoln Highway Marker in North Platte, LN06-717.

Motel at northwest corner of Highway 30 and Oak in Sutherland, LN08-044. Adobe-look motel court with gas station. Previously identified and recommended as eligible.

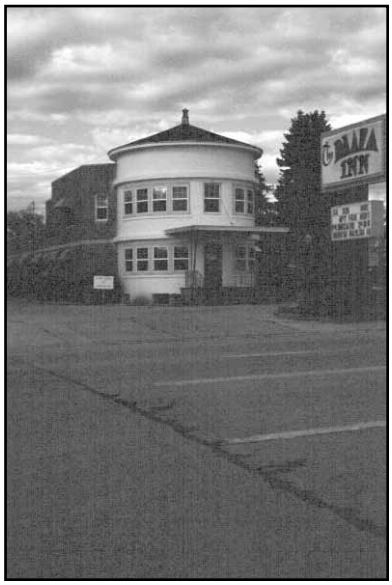
Gas station at northwest corner of Spruce and Highway 30 in Sutherland, LN08-046. Brick, house style gas station. Previously identified and recommended as eligible.

Lincoln Highway Marker in Sutherland, LN08-048. Previously identified and recommended as eligible.

Keith County

Chieftain Motel at 909 West Highway 30 in Ogallala, KH04-063. Abandoned cabin court with concrete block double-units. Integrity may be an issue and further research is recommended.

Front Street Tourist Complex at 519 East 1st Street in Ogallala, KH04-113. This tourist complex including museum, shops, and restaurants was completed in 1964.



Plaza Inn at First Street between East B and East C Streets in Ogallala, KH04-106.

Hokes Café at southeast corner of East 1st and B in Ogallala, KH04-116. Café with rounded corners and band of ribbon windows.

Elms Motel at the northeast corner of Highway 30 and G Street in Ogallala, KH04-122. Motel office building and lodging units.

Lincoln Highway Marker in Paxton, KH05-012.

Lincoln Highway Marker in Paxton, KH05-030.

Gas station with canopy at north side of 1st between Oak and Pine in Paxton, KH05-038.

Deuel County

Hotel at 802 2nd Street in Chappell, DU02-060. Brick hotel probably originally constructed for the railroad.

Motel, Café and Service Station at the north side of Highway 30 between Wheatlands and Ochs Streets in Chappell, DU02-070.

Hurst's Lodgepole Motel at the northwest corner of Simmons and Sheldon (Hwy 30) in Lodgepole, CN05-030. Previously identified and recommended as potentially eligible.

Cheyenne County

Former Mayfair Service Station, Sidney vicinity, CN00-120. Previously identified and recommended as potentially eligible.

Abandoned Rainbow Motel complex at the northwest corner of Sheldon (Hwy 30) and Newman in Lodgepole, CN05-033. Previously identified and recommended as potentially eligible.

Abandoned Bar Q Motel, Sidney vicinity, CN00-122. Previously identified and recommended as potentially eligible.

Former implement dealership at the north side of Sheldon (Hwy 30) between Newman and Ober in Lodgepole, CN05-034. Previously identified and recommended as potentially eligible.

Former service garage at the northwest corner of Sheldon (Hwy 30) and McCall in Lodgepole, CN05-036. Previously identified and recommended as potentially eligible.

Sidney Motor Lodge and Bright Motel at 2031 Illinois (Hwy 30) in Sidney, CN09-091. Previously identified and recommended as potentially eligible.

Former filling station at the southwest corner of Chestnut and Sherman in Potter, CN08-036. Previously identified and recommended as potentially eligible.

Stickney Dealership and Commercial Garage at 1119 Illinois (Hwy 30) in Sidney, CN09-109. Previously identified and recommended as potentially eligible.

El Palomino Hotel at the northeast corner of 23rd Avenue and Illinois (Hwy 30) in Sidney, CN09-088. Previously identified and recommended as potentially eligible.

Lincoln Highway Marker in Sidney, CN09-117. Previously identified and recommended as eligible.

Service station at northwest corner of 9th Avenue and Illinois in Sidney, CN09-135. Porcelain enameled oblong box form gas station.

Highway 30 rest area at the northeast corner of 1st and Henry in Sunol, CN10-011. Previously identified and recommended as potentially eligible.

Kimball County

Jackson Auto Dealership at 644 10th Avenue in Sidney, CN09-343. Previously identified and recommended as potentially eligible

Garage/service station at 504 3rd Street (Highway 30) and 3rd Street in Kimball, KM04-159.

Former motel at northwest corner of 1st and Friend Streets in Sunol, CN10-009. Previously identified and recommended as eligible.

Motel at northeast corner of Highway 30 and County Road 43 in Kimball, KM04-168.

Notes

[1] Drake Hokanson, *The Lincoln Highway: Main Street Across America* (Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1988), 5.

[2] Hokanson, 9.

[3] William Kaszynski, *The American Highway* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co, Inc., 2000), 38.

[4] Hokanson, 11.

[5] "History and Facts," *The Lincoln Way*, n.d., <http://www.paus30.org/history.html> (Accessed 9 August 2001).

[6] *The Complete Official Road Guide of the Lincoln Highway* (Detroit, Mich.: The Lincoln Highway Association, 1916), 6.

[7] Carol Ahlgren and David Anthone, "The Lincoln Highway in Nebraska: The Pioneer Trail of the Automotive Age," *Nebraska History* 73, no. 4 (Winter 1992): 173.

[8] The Lincoln Highway Association, *The Lincoln Highway: The Story of a Crusade that Made Transportation History* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1935), 70.

[9] Ahlgren and Anthone, 173.

[10] "Lincoln Highway Marked in Kearney; Midway Installs Big Sign and City Will Light Street," *The Kearney Daily Hub*, 18 February 1914.

[11] Tom Anderson, "Hall County's Seedling Mile Holds Memories of Nation's First Transcontinental Highway," *Prairie Pioneer Press* 25, no. 10 (October, 1991).

[12] *The Complete Official Road Guide of the Lincoln Highway*, 1916, 30.

[13] Ahlgren and Anthone, 176, and U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey Reconnaissance Survey Final Report of Hall County, Nebraska* (July 1995), 47-48. Available at the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebr.

[14] "History of Our School," *Seedling Mile Elementary School*, 8 November 2000, <http://www.gi.esu10.k12.ne.us/SDGI/smileweb/historyadult.html> (Accessed 3 March 2002).

[15] Ahlgren and Anthone, 176.

[16] The Lincoln Highway Association, *The Lincoln Highway; The Story of a Crusade...*, 134-53; The Lincoln Highway Association, *A Picture of Progress on the Lincoln Way* (Detroit, Mich: The Lincoln Highway Association, 1920), 23, states that the seedling mile was seven miles; Ahlgren and Anthone, 176, states the cost of barrels was $5,000.

[17] The Lincoln Highway Association, *The Lincoln Highway; The Story of a Crusade...*, 135.

[18] "The Forum" (Detroit, Mich.: Lincoln Highway Association, August 15, 1919).

[19] The Lincoln Highway Association, *The Lincoln Highway; The Story of a Crusade...*, 135 and Hokanson, 82.

[20] "History and Facts"; Grant L. Shumway, ed. *History of Western Nebraska and its People*, Vol. 2. (Lincoln, Nebr.: The Western Publishing & Engraving Company, 1921), 323.

[21] The Lincoln Highway Association, *The Lincoln Highway; The Story of a Crusade...*, 119-20.

[22] Chris Lewis, "Ambition Paved the Way," *The Lincoln Highway; An Introduction to America's First Transcontinental Road for the Automobile*, October 7, 1998, <http://www.ugcs.caltech.edu/~jlin/lincoln/papers/tribune/ambition.html> (Accessed 15 August 2001).

[23] Sources conflict as to the date of the agreement with the Union Pacific. "A Picture of Progress on the Lincoln Highway" published by the Lincoln Highway Association in 1920 states that an agreement was reached with the Union Pacific in late 1919, while Ahlgren and Anthone state that the agreement with the Union Pacific was not made until 1922. *A Picture of Progress on the Lincoln Way*, 23; and Ahlgren and Anthone, 177.

[24] Ahlgren and Anthone, 177-78.

[25] *A Picture of Progress on the Lincoln Way*, 23.

[26] Ahlgren and Anthone, 177-78.

[27] Nebraska Good Roads Association, *Nebraska Highways* II, no. 7 (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Publishing Company, April 1929), 5.

[28] Kevin Patrick, "Lincoln Highway in Nebraska" Draft Historic Context, Fall 2002 (Available at the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office, Lincoln, Nebr.)

[29] Carol Ahlgren, "The Lincoln Highway Comes to Platte County," *The Lincoln Highway Forum 5*, no. 3 (Spring 1998): 10-11.

[30] U.S. West Research, Inc., *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey Reconnaissance Survey Final Report of Platte County, Nebraska* (July 1996), 85. Available at the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebr.

[31] Anderson, 3.

[32] "Omaha Protests Lincoln Highway Change in Route," *Omaha World-Herald*, 25 July, 1930.

[33] Ahlgren and Anthone, 178.

[34] "Strong Protests as Omaha Loses Lincoln Highway," *Omaha World-Herald*, July 25, 1930.

[35] State Board of Irrigation, *Tenth Biennial Report of The State Board of Irrigation; Highways and Drainage* 1912-1914 (Lincoln, Nebr.: State Board of Irrigation, Highways and Drainage, 1914).

[36] *The Complete Official Road Guide of the Lincoln Highway*, 1916, 101.

[37] *The Complete Official Road Guide of the Lincoln Highway*, Fifth Edition (Mich. Detroit: The Lincoln Highway Association, 1924), 371.

[38] Bruce E. Seely, *Building the American Highway System; Engineers as Policy Makers* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1987), 52-53.

[39] Tom White, "The Khaki-Colored Caravan," *Nebraskaland* (November 1999): 24-25, 30.

[40] Nebraska Department of Public Works, *Seventeenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1927-1928* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Public Works, 1928).

[41] White, 30.

[42] White, 24.

[43] *The Complete Official Road Guide of the Lincoln Highway*, 1924, 372.

[44] Bob Adwers and Kathleen Fimple, "Lincoln Highway," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, October 1987. Available at the Nebraska State Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, Lincoln, Nebr.

[45] "Lincoln Highway Now Hard-Surfaced Across State; North Platte Celebrates" *Omaha World-Herald*, 6 November 1935.

[46] "Lincoln Highway Now Hard-Surfaced Across State; North Platte Celebrates."

[47] Hokanson, 31-32.

[48] L. Robert Puschendorf, "Gloe Brothers Service Station," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, May 2000. Available at the Nebraska State Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, Lincoln, Nebr.

[49] Ahlgren and Anthone, 176.

[50] Hokanson, 53.

[51] Hokanson, 53.

[52] Nebraska Automobile Association, *Nebraska Highway Guidebook* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Automobile Association, 1922), 8.

[53] Gene Budde, "I-80 Drew Traffic Away from Tourist Stops of Yesteryear," *The Independent.com*, 11 December 2000, <http://www.theindependent.com/stories/121000/fea_80traffic10.html> (Accessed 11 February 2002).

[54] "Nebraska's Changing Auto Culture, 1900-1930," *Nebraska History* 73, no. 4 (Winter 1992): 180.

[55] *The Complete Official Road Guide of the Lincoln Highway*, 1924, 377.

[56] Lyell Henry, "One Stops' on the Lincoln Highway," *The Lincoln Highway Forum 5*, no. 1 (Fall 1997): 4-5.

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[58] James C. Creigh, "Constructing the Interstate Highway in Nebraska: Route and Funding Controversies," *Nebraska History* 72, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 48.

[59] Henry, 5-6.

Chapter 4
The Meridian Highway

(Today roughly U.S. 81)

Introduction

The Meridian Road, renamed the Meridian Highway in 1919, was developed in the early twentieth century to become the primary north-south route through the central United States. Extending from Winnipeg, Canada, to Mexico City, Mexico, the Meridian Highway passed through six states including the eastern portion of Nebraska. The road's initial outline followed the survey of the Sixth Principal Meridian line through the central Great Plains, hence the name Meridian Road.

Prior to the twentieth century, much of the country and Nebraska had largely undeveloped road networks. Citizen organizations were formed to lobby local, state, and federal governments to cooperatively plan and construct roads. Local commercial clubs, business associations, automobile clubs, and merchants often contributed labor and funds to bring major roads through their towns and improve roads in their locale. The Meridian Road developed through one of these grassroots efforts, spurred by a national organization. The Meridian Road in Nebraska was delineated in 1911 through the efforts of local citizens.

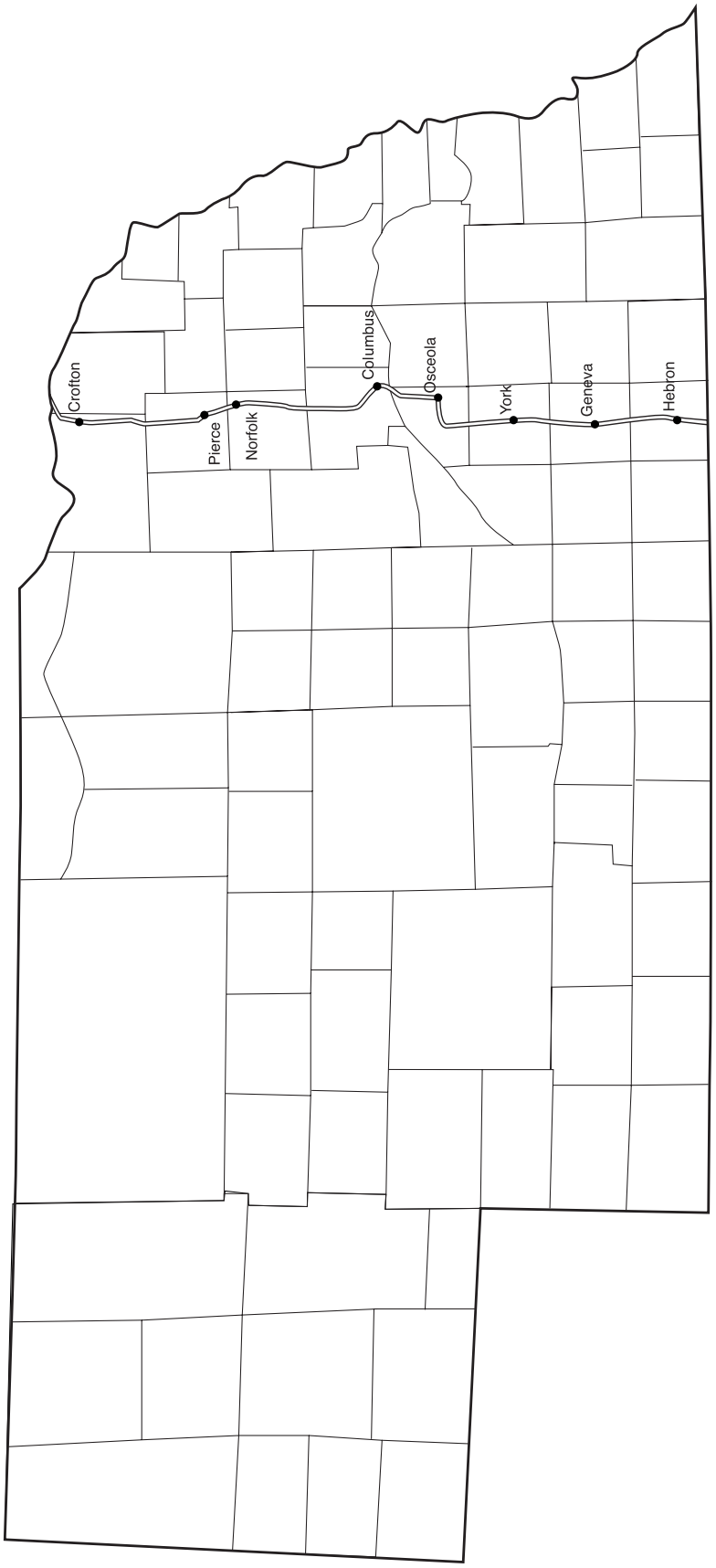
Beginnings of the Meridian Highway

"It touches the great lumber and wheat belts of the north, swings straight into the land of corn and of cotton and carries its route into the tropics of the Mexican republic direct from the snow laden hills of northern and central Canada."

-Description of the Meridian Highway from the Columbus Daily Telegram, 7 May 1924

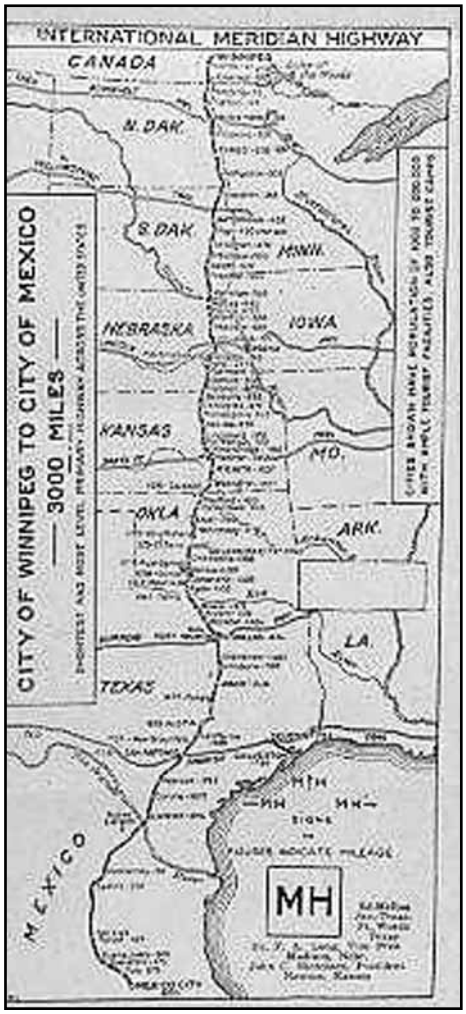
The Meridian Road, promoted by one of the earliest road associations, was organized in Kansas at a meeting of supporters on June 1911 to establish a direct, north-south automobile route. The objective of its promoters, who were led by John C. Nicholson of Newton, Kansas, included the adoption of a sign, mapping of a route through Kansas and instructions for the association to promote the road south to the Gulf of Mexico and north to Canada.[1] The name "Meridian Road" was selected for the proposed road because it would closely follow the Sixth Principal Meridian.

After the Meridian Road Association was formed in Kansas, the group solicited support from other states. South of Kansas into Oklahoma and Texas various other highway organizational efforts were already underway, however most of these organizations had failed to establish a road passable for automobiles. The Meridian Highway Association was formed in Oklahoma and Texas in 1911. In Texas the association was divided into three divisions: North Texas from Burk Burnet to Waco; San Antonio division from Waco to Laredo; and the Gulf division from Waco to Galveston.[2] North of Kansas, the Nebraska division of the Meridian Road Association was organized on



The Meridian Highway
(c. 1911 alignment)

September 4, 1911, in Columbus, Nebraska. Planning of the road continued quickly north from Nebraska as the South Dakota and the North Dakota divisions of the Meridian Road Association planned a route in October 1911 and the Canadian division was organized in November 1911.[3]



Early map showing the route of the Meridian Highway extending from Canada through Mexico (Image courtesy of NeSHPO)

In January of 1912 the International Meridian Road Association was formed, representing Canada, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. The newly formed group adopted a charter and elected officers-Samuel H. Lea, President (state engineer of South Dakota); Sidney Suggs, Vice-President (Oklahoma Highway Commissioner); and John C. Nicholson, Secretary-Treasurer.[4] The objective of the association was to promote the construction, maintenance and improvement of a north-south international highway. The constitution and by-laws of the Meridian Road Association specified that:

"the Meridian Highway shall be well graded, well drained Highway with permanent bridges, substantial culverts and kept in a condition to facilitate travel, and it shall be the aim and object of the Association to secure the construction and maintenance of a hard surfaced road as soon as conditions will warrant the same and is justified."[5]

The International Meridian Road Association adopted official signs for the road consisting of 12-inch wide bands on poles indicating to travel straight ahead. Turns were indicated by a six-inch white band with six-inch red band above painted with the letters "M.R." on three poles before and three poles after each turn.[6] The international Meridian Road organization was involved in advertising, promotional tours and general improvements to the road and was the body responsible for solving any disputes over route location at the state borders.

Each state division of the organization was responsible for activities within the state including the location of the road, maintenance, and signage. The Nebraska division of the Meridian Road Association adopted a uniform sign in January of 1912. The enameled steel sign measured 17" x 22" with a white background and blue lettering. The sign featured the word "Meridian" across the top, the word "Road" across the bottom and in the middle an outline of the state showing the distance between the county seats along the route.[7] In the spring and summer of 1912, the state divisions were assigned to lay out the road, post signage, and get the road in the best condition for travel and advertising.[8] For example, in Norfolk, the Norfolk Commercial Club put up signs and markers on the Meridian Road in and around the city in August 1912.[9]

In 1919, the Meridian Road was renamed the Meridian Highway by the association. Improvements along the national route of the Meridian Highway continued in various stages over the years. In 1924, the completion of the Meridian Highway Bridge at Yankton, South Dakota, marked a major improvement. Previously a seasonal ferry and pontoon bridge carried Meridian Highway traffic across the Missouri River to South Dakota. The International Meridian Highway Association's

brochure in 1927 boasted, "By the end of 1928 the Meridian Highway will be practically surfaced from Winnipeg to Laredo and will be an all-weather road-perhaps the second all-weather road across the United States-the Pacific Highway being the first."[10] In 1926, the Federal Bureau of Roads designated the prospective primary highway system and the Meridian Highway was designated as U.S. 81. This was the only named highway given the same number entirely across the entire United States.[11]

Photo showing the early conditions of the Meridian Road, c. 1912 (Photo courtesy of NeSHPO)

In the 1920s the International Meridian Highway Association worked towards becoming a link in the Pan-American Highway through Mexico to South America. United States Highway 81 (U.S. 81) was promoted as a part of the Pan-American Highway system that extends from Winnipeg, Canada, 17,000 miles to the southern tip of Chile, South America, at Tierra Del Fuego. The Pan-American Highway Association remains active promoting the road as "the longest and fastest Trans-American Highway." In the late 1990s the association promoted the route and lobbied for the closure of the 462-mile "missing link" in the highway that was not four lanes in the United States. The two-lane section extends from Minneapolis, Kansas, to Watertown, South Dakota, including part of the state of Nebraska.[12] Presently only a few portions of U.S. 81 are four-lane in Nebraska, such as the section of road from Columbus to Norfolk, the section from York south to Fairmont, and the section from Bruning south to Chester at the Nebraska-Kansas state line.

Meridian Highway Through Nebraska

"The Meridian Highway in Nebraska is wonderful this fall. I drove from Madison to Osceola 60 miles in two hours five minutes Sunday before last. When you recall that this trip involves the Platte River and Loup River bottoms, you may know that at least a part of the road is good. We have a daily stage line now from York to Norfolk, via the Meridian Highway. People coming from the Dakotas say the Meridian Highway from Yankton down here is the finest road they have traveled."
(Dr. F.A. Long, Madison, to D.E. Colp, San Antonio, 28 October 1921)

In September 1911 John Nicholson of Kansas, organizer of the road, spoke in Columbus to gain support for the development of the Meridian Road through Nebraska. As reported in the *Columbus Telegraph*, Nicholson told local businessmen that the Meridian Road was located and marked in Kansas and was approximately routed in Oklahoma and Texas. Nicholson further explained that the main goal in outlining a route was not to follow the meridian line, but to follow "the main traveled roads leading to the county seat, and the principal towns located close to the line."[13]

At the Columbus meeting local and visiting businessmen from communities along the proposed route organized the Nebraska Meridian Road Association. O.E. Mickey of Osceola was elected president and H.A. Clarke of Columbus was elected secretary-treasurer. The Nebraska organization's objective was to cooperate with other state divisions in locating and marking an improved north-south road between Canada and the Gulf of Mexico.[14]

To coordinate the effort in Nebraska, the Nebraska Association selected representatives from each of the counties on the proposed route to promote interest in the road and identify the most practical route through their county. At the organizational meeting, the group identified a tentative route through the county seat towns from the town of Chester on the Nebraska-Kansas border north to the Missouri River opposite of Yankton, South Dakota.[15] The original route in Nebraska traveled over 200 miles through several towns from south to north connecting Chester, Hebron, Belvidere, Bruning, Strang, Geneva, Fairmont, York, Stromsburg, Osceola, Shelby, Columbus, Platte Center, Humphrey, Madison, Norfolk, Pierce, Wausa, and Crofton.

There was some controversy in the designation of the road in the northern section of Nebraska. The route was originally defined at the 1911 organizational meeting of the Nebraska Meridian Road Association to travel through Knox County, but community boosters in neighboring Cedar County challenged this alignment because they wished the route to travel through their county. The controversy was short lived as the official inspection party of the International Meridian Road Association logged the route in September of 1912 through Knox County, recognizing this alignment which appeared in the *Automobile Blue Book*.[16]

Local promoters in each county often played key roles in the location and development of the highway along existing roads. One promoter was Dr. Francis A. Long of Madison. Long had an extensive country practice, so good road conditions were important to him. He was designated the local representative for the Meridian Highway in Madison County and had helped designate the route. Long's devotion to the Meridian Road continued after the establishment of the route and, in 1923, he was elected as Vice-President of the Meridian Highway Association. He served until 1931.[17]

Another local promoter was Woods Cones, pioneer Pierce banker and automobile enthusiast. Cones served as vice president of the Pierce County Automobile Association, was a supporter of the Pierce Commercial Club, and a member of the good roads committee. Due to his enthusiasm for good roads and automobile transportation, Woods Cones was requested to represent Pierce County in the Nebraska Meridian Highway Association and was chosen to outline the route through Pierce County in 1911.[18]

In 1919 the Nebraska Meridian Highway Association separated into two associations. The South Platte Division of the Nebraska Meridian Highway Association organized in Fairmont for the communities between York and the Kansas border. The North Platte Division served the communities north of York. Woods Cones, of Pierce County, drafted bylaws for the northern division.

Promotion of the Meridian Highway

Promotion of the route was important to the development and success of a highway. The Meridian Road was advocated and promoted by the International Meridian Road Association, state Meridian Road associations, local commercial and civic clubs, and private businessmen. The *Meridian Road*, published monthly for a period of time, served as a marketing tool of the highway and as a guide to travelers. In 1913, the magazine listed official hotels and garages along the Meridian Road. In Nebraska, a number of hotels and garages, one per community, were recognized as official hotels and garages.[19]

On September 10, 1912, an "official party" comprised of the members of the International Meridian Road committee and others, including the editor of *Road Maker* and a representative of the *Automobile Blue Book*, started on a promotional tour along the Meridian Road traveling south to the Gulf of Mexico. The purpose of the trip was to observe progress on the road and to meet with local officials to encourage continued maintenance and improvement of the road. The party traveled over 100 miles a day and were met by large crowds in many cities. The group logged the route as far as Perry, Oklahoma. The party refused to log and post Meridian Road signs beyond this point until road improvements were made.[20]

Each state provided the group with transportation, and the towns furnished hotel and garage facilities free of charge.[21] For example, in Norfolk the Commercial Club hosted a banquet for the party and lodging for the night. Activities in Norfolk surrounding the visit included a postcard campaign. Norfolk residents were encouraged to use postcards showing the Meridian Road and other automobile roads throughout the state for a full month to advertise the international highway association's trip through Nebraska and Norfolk.[22]

Due to the success of the first trip, the Meridian Road Association planned a second booster trip in 1914. A.L. Westgard of the National Highways Association and a group of Texas businessmen traveled from Texas and Oklahoma north to Canada accompanied by a film crew.[23] The travelers were met with enthusiasm in towns along the route. Promotional activities of the International Meridian Highway Association continued including a 1921 tour of Mexican cities to advocate the connection of the Meridian Highway into Mexico.

The International Meridian Highway Association was also involved in the development of promotional literature that was funded by businesses

along the route. For example, in 1923, the association published a campsite manual through the funding of cities and businesses along the route.[24] In 1931 at the annual meeting in Salina, Kansas, the *Meridian Highway (U.S. 81) Guide* was adopted as the official advertising medium for the highway. The tourist guide was used "for the purpose of attracting and directing the traffic over 'The Main Street of North America,' and the only highway entirely completed across the United States north and south, and the only highway reaching from Canada to the Mexican border."[25] The guide served as a directory for lodging, restaurants and gas stations and provided information for the traveler on points of interest along the highway. Publication of the tourist guide was financed through advertisements, and the guide was distributed along the route by chambers of commerce and touring bureaus.[26]

The official guide of U.S. Highway 81 that was adopted at the annual meeting in 1931 (Image courtesy of NeSHPO)

Tourism Along the Meridian Highway

Towns along the Meridian Highway route promoted tourist services available to the traveler including lodging, camping facilities, restaurants, and automobile repair services. Businesses often used the name "Meridian" to promote their services to travelers. The Argo Hotel (KX05-015), constructed in 1912, in Crofton was renamed the "New Meridian Hotel" by new owners in 1924. The name change indicates that the road was a significant transportation route to and from Crofton.[27] Another business promoting its services using the name Meridian was the "Meridian Tourists Cabin Camp," located on North 13th Street in Norfolk and offered "a home away from home."[28]

Towns advertised their tourist-related services in published guidebooks. For example, the town of Chester in southern Nebraska advertised the services it could provide to the traveler in the 1931 Meridian Highway guide. The advertisement included a map identifying the location of tourist services along the Meridian Highway (U.S. 81), presently Thayer Street. Tourist services in Chester included: Barney Google Filling Station and Tourist Camp, Standard Oil Co. Filling Station, Meridian Garage, Mono Motors Filling Station, City Park - "A nice place to stop and where you can get as good drink of water as you will find on Highway 81"- Chester Filling Station and Rest Rooms, J.C. Sell Drugs and Cold Drinks, Café, Frame's Café, and Filling Station. Hebron, Nebraska, with a population of 2,000 in 1931, offered travelers four cafes, three service stations, two motor companies, and one tire shop. [29]

It was common practice for the communities along the route to offer overnight camping in the city park. For example, in 1921, the following towns along the Meridian Highway are known to offer tourist camping grounds - Wausa, Pierce, Norfolk, Madison, Columbus, Osceola, Stromsburg, York, Fairmont, Geneva, Hebron, and Bruning. Both Crofton and Chester had plans for their community's camping grounds to be completed in the spring of 1922.[30] The tourist camp at York provided a number of amenities to the automobile traveler and its offerings were described as follows:

"It is located at the Chautauqua Park, five blocks from the business section on paving. Has many free accommodations, with shelter in case of storm, is electric lighted, has wash rack for cars, tubs for family wash, shower bath with water heater, gas for cooking, open fire for those who prefer it, and a caretaker on the job all day and night to look after the tourist."[31]

Today, many of these community parks along the old Meridian Highway continue to provide camping services. The numerous towns along the route offered convenient stopping points for tourists often in conjunction with services for local residents. The

Meridian was likely a less traveled route than the east-west transcontinental roads such as the Lincoln Highway or the Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway and as a result the number of tourist services offered along the Meridian may have been more limited.

Main Street (Meridian Highway) in Hebron, Nebraska, showing the atmosphere tourists may encounter along their journey, c. 1920 (Photo courtesy of NeSHPO)

Early Road Conditions and Description

Travelers often relied on published route and guide books to navigate across the state or across country. In the early twentieth century two such general road guides were popular- *Touring Information Bureau (TIB) Automobile Route Book* and the *Automobile Blue Book*. The *Automobile Blue Book* was established in 1901 and described itself as "Standard Road Guide of America" and as "a veritable motorist's encyclopedia." By 1920 there were 13 volumes covering the entire United States and Southern Canada and providing travelers with travel directions and recommendations on sites to see and places for automobile repairs and lodging. The 1920 Automobile Blue Book includes descriptions of the route of the Meridian Highway in Nebraska from Columbus, Nebraska, to Belleville, Kansas, and from Columbus, Nebraska, to Yankton, South Dakota, as well as the reverse route for these stretches.[32] In addition to published guides, organized geographically to cover all roads in a region, guidebooks were also compiled for individual roads. In 1931 a tourist guide was published for the Meridian Highway that identified the route and served as an advertisement for tourist services along the highway.

The *1918 Official TIB Automobile Route Book* describes the section of Meridian Road from Hebron to Columbus as a "good dirt road." The guide's map for this section was endorsed and "officially O.K.'d" by the officers of the Meridian Road Association.[33] Three years later, the section from Hebron to Columbus was again described as a "good dirt road."[34] A more detailed description was included in the 1921 guide for the route from Columbus to Yankton: "Dirt road with some sand near the Missouri River. Passes through rich agricultural country with numerous progressive towns en route, and is one of the coming sections of the West. This route is part of the great transcontinental highway north and south from Winnipeg, Canada, to the Gulf of Mexico, and is an excellent connecting link for east and west roads."[35]

By the mid-1920s the Meridian Highway, now a state highway, was a road with earth, gravel, and hard surfaces. Regraveling appears to have occurred on a regular basis in rural sections of road. By the end of the summer of 1928, it was predicted that the Meridian Highway would be the first road in Nebraska to be entirely graveled. Only 19 miles of the Meridian Highway remained earth and these were under contract to be completed with gravel in the summer of 1928.[36]

An Early Trip on the Meridian Road

In November 1913, H.M. Penn and family (wife and two children) embarked from Madison, South Dakota to Galveston, Texas on the Gulf of Mexico along the Meridian Road. The 1,420-mile trip was undertaken in a 1910 Studebaker over 16 days-the trip was delayed for five days in Texas due to rain. Penn described his travels through Nebraska and the road with the following:

"The longest stretch of level road we encountered extends from Columbus to Hebron, Nebraska. This stretch is well marked and is known as the South Platte valley. Further north in Nebraska, as you come out of South Dakota, the country is more rolling, but they have a splendid road also and the sandy spots that used to characterize certain sections of the road north of Columbus have all been clayed and well marked."

(H.M. Penn, "The Graphic Story of a Meridian Road Trip," *Meridian Road Monthly Magazine* 1, no. 5 [March 1914], Collection of the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office, Lincoln, Nebraska).

Hard surfacing between towns on the route of the Meridian Highway was largely begun in the 1930s. Prior to this time, the road had received hard

surfacing largely only within communities. In 1937-38 a section of U.S. 81 between Columbus and the junction south of Platte Center was hard surfaced. A year later, the section from Madison to Columbus was hard surfaced.

A "good dirt road" after construction on Highway 81 in Fillmore-Thayer Counties between Geneva and Belvidere in 1921 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

In some communities brick pavement was used to delineate the Meridian, which often traveled the town's main street. For example, the route of the Meridian Highway in Fairmont received brick pavers in the 1920s. Other communities that used brick along the Meridian Highway included Madison, Humphrey and Hebron.

From Rural Road to U.S. 81[37]

The original route of the Meridian Road, as delineated by the Nebraska Meridian Road Association in 1911, was transformed as the present U.S. 81. In 1922 the Meridian Highway became a state highway. In 1926 the Meridian Highway was designated U.S. 81. Designation as a state and then a federal highway ensured funding and continued maintenance. This designation also led the route to be improved and changed to meet state and federal design standards. Sections of the route were frequently realigned as towns were bypassed, turns and railroad grade crossings were eliminated, the route was shortened, and the road was designed to be more efficient.

Continued improvements along the highway route in the 1930s included several relocation and surfacing projects including:

- relocation and hard surfacing of Highway 81 between the city limits of Columbus and the point where Highway 30 turns west and Highway 81 continues south in 1937-38
- relocation of U.S. 81 from Belvidere to Bruning in 1937-38, which shortened the route by two miles and eliminated 3 railroad grade crossings-two at Belvidere and one at Bruning
- realignment of the route through Osceola to eliminate several bad turns and two bad hills in 1937-38
- rerouting U.S. 81 at Fairmont in 1935-36 to create a direct connection with Highway 6 (earlier known as the Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway).

Overpass crossing between Highway 81 and Highway 6 in Fillmore County near Fairmont, 1941 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

A unique project in York was also completed during this period. A "subway" was erected in 1939-40 to carry railroad traffic over Highway 81 via a steel deck-girder bridge and to carry local vehicular traffic over the highway via two rigid frame concrete bridges.

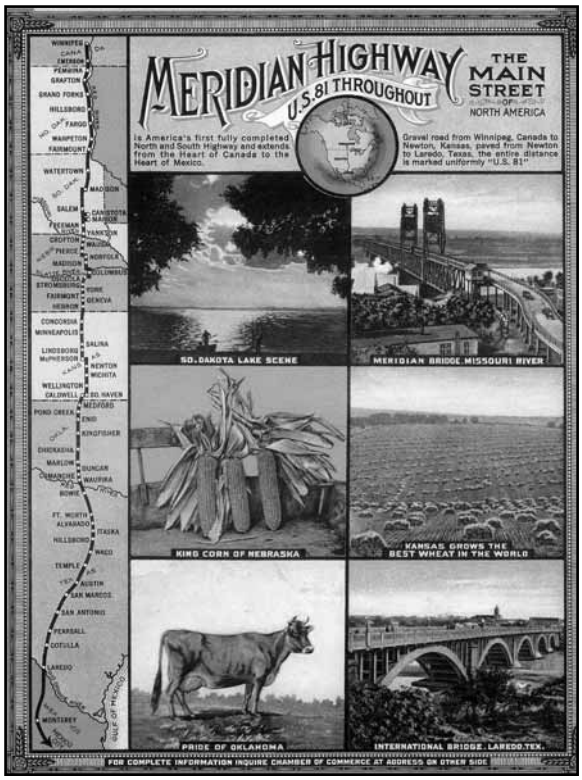
Within communities, the routes were changed to accommodate traffic and safety concerns. For example, at least three routes are known to have been used for the Meridian Highway through Strang. The earliest route traveled through the downtown, the second bypassed the town to the west and the present U.S. 81 route bypasses the town to the northeast. During the late 1930s and early 1940s, significant route changes occurred through several counties as the road was realigned to bypass several communities.

For example, in 1939 the Meridian Highway was rerouted bypassing all of the communities in Pierce County including Hadar and Pierce. The rerouting was often controversial as communities lobbied and fought for the highway to continue to pass through their town. Similarly, in Madison County, citizens from the towns of Madison, Humphrey and Platte

Center raised concerns about the proposed rerouting of the Meridian Highway 1.5 miles east of Madison and 3 miles east of Humphrey and Platte Center. A compromise was reached where the road would continue through the town of Madison, but bypass the other towns-Humphrey and Platte Center-by 1 mile.[38] The compromise was successful, but since then the community of Madison has also been bypassed to the east by U.S. 81. Other communities, such as Norfolk, experienced the bypassing of the traditional downtown business district as the route was reestablished directly through town, resulting in the creation of a separate commercial "strip" in the years following World War II.

During World War II plans were approved for the relocation of U.S. 81 north of Madison. At a time when little road construction was being undertaken during the war effort, U.S. 81 from the Kansas state line north to Norfolk was designated by the War Department and the Public Roads Administration to be important for military purposes. As part of the Strategic Network of Highways designated by the federal government in the Defense Highway Act of 1941 funds were available for construction and improvement of these critical roads.[39]
Rerouting of U.S. 81 continued into the 1950s. In 1953-54 another significant relocation occurred between Norfolk and Yankton, South Dakota, shortening the distance between these communities by approximately 10 miles. The relocation project included grading, constructing culverts, gravel surfacing, and constructing three bridges. This is likely the third relocation of the section between Norfolk and Yankton. Also in 1953-55 a smaller project in Madison County included the widening and resurfacing of a 7-mile section south of Norfolk.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Department of Roads proposed establishing a freeway-expressway system to link the state's major cities. Four-lane freeways and two-lane expressways were proposed across the state. The plan included sections of U.S. 81, however limited funding prevented its complete construction. Presently U.S. 81 largely serves as a regional corridor linking communities along its route and providing a link to the interstate. Today, U.S. 81 in Nebraska is a combination of a two-lane road and a four-lane road. Sections with higher traffic levels are under construction as four-lane between Norfolk and the Kansas-Nebraska border, which is classified as an expressway. A few sections travel the original route of the 1911 Meridian Road. For example, in Fillmore County, U.S. 81 follows the 1911 route of the highway in most of the county with the exception of a four-mile section north of Fairmont and the bypass of the community of Strang. The Nebraska Department of Roads continues to improve sections of U.S. 81, including the reconstruction of U.S. 81 between York and Fairmont in 2001.



Flyer advertising attributes of the different states traveled through on U.S. Highway 81 from Canada to Mexico (Image courtesy of NSHS)

Conclusion

The Meridian Road, later renamed the Meridian Highway, was initiated by businessmen and local "good roads" promoters in an effort to develop a north-south highway through the United States linking to Canada and Mexico. Presently the road largely serves regional traffic between communities along the route and as a path to Interstate 80. Tourist services including hotels, camping in city parks, gas stations, restaurants and auto services remain in the communities along the route, but are more prevalent in the larger communities such as Columbus, York

and Norfolk. The legacy of the Meridian Highway has remained intact in some areas across the state. Recently, a 4.5 mile section of the 1911 alignment of the Meridian Highway in Pierce County, southwest of Pierce, was recognized for its historical significance by being listed in the National Register.

Resources of the Meridian Highway

Approximately 118 road-related properties were documented along the Meridian Highway representing a variety of resource types. Seventeen properties were identified as potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) and are illustrated below by county. The counties are organized to follow in the north-south order of the Meridian Highway. For a full discussion of recommendations and a list of Meridian Highway related properties already listed in the National Register, see Chapter 9: Survey Results and Recommendations.

Knox County

Garage at the southwest corner of 3rd and Main Street in Crofton, KX05-016. Early brick garage building.

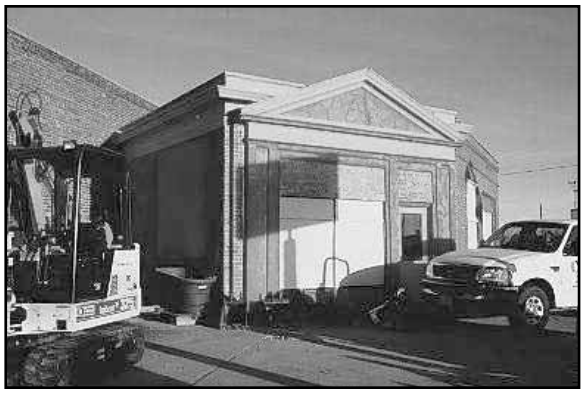
Pierce County

Gas station at 122 Mill Street in Pierce, PC05-047. Former 1914 creamery converted to the Pierce Artificial Ice Plant and Tourist Filling Station in 1925.

Madison County

Voecks Motors Auto Dealership at the northeast corner of Main and 5th in Madison, MD03-086.

Five Star dealership at northwest corner of 3rd and Nebraska Streets in Madison, MD03-123.



Standard Oil Gas Station at northeast corner of Norfolk Avenue and 7th Street in Norfolk, MD06-142. Classical Revival style gas station.

Garage at west side of D Street between 3rd and 4th Streets in Platte Center, PT09-037.

Platte County

Service station at the east side of Highway 81 between 7th and 8th Streets in Columbus, PT01-539.
(Also on the route of the Lincoln Highway)

Polk County

Stromsburg Motors at the southwest corner of 3rd and Main Streets in Stromsburg, PK04-175. Brick auto dealership.

Gas station at southeast corner of Elm and South 3rd Street in Humphrey, PT05-079. House style gas station with service bays added demonstrating a transition of gas station form.

York County

Gas station at 420 East O Street in McCool Junction, YK07-039. Vernacular house type corner gas station.

Fillmore County

Gas station at southwest corner of 8th and G in Geneva (also on the route of the Potash Highway), FM05-060. Front gable frame gas station with canopy.

Shaner Motors at the southeast corner of 13th and H Streets in Geneva, FM05-129. One-story, brick auto dealership.

Thayer County

Oregon Trail Memorial Marker/Meridian Road Marker near Hebron, TY00-076.

Belvidere Filling Station at 400 C Street in Belvidere, TY02-025. House style gas station with canopy constructed in 1925.

Hill Oil Terminal/Café at the northwest corner of Thompson and Highway 8 along abandoned curve of Highway 81 near Chester, TY00-257. Stucco service station and café designed in a southwestern style with projecting decorative roof beams extending through the wall. Also located on the route of the Potash Highway.

Chester Electric Building at the east side of Thayer Street between Huron and Howard in Chester, TY06-054. Brick building with original garage door and painted ghost signs.

Burnett Chevrolet Auto Dealership at the northwest corner of Lincoln Avenue and 2nd Street in Hebron, TY10-108. Also on the route of the Potash Highway.

Notes

[1] "Meridian Highway History," *Texas Oil News* (N.p., c. 1920). Available at the Nebraska State Historical Society, Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office, Lincoln, Nebr.

[2] "Meridian Highway History."

[3] "Meridian Highway History."

[4] Samuel H. Lea, "Inspection Trip Over the Meridian Road," *The Road Maker* II, no. 3 (n.d.), 1-4.

[5] Meridian Highway constitution and by-laws in the collection of the F.A. Long Papers (Manuscript Collection of the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebr.).

[6] "Meridian Highway History."

[7] *Hebron Journal*, 5 January 1912.

[8] "Meridian Highway History."

[9] *Norfolk Daily News* (Local Happenings section), 24 August 1912.

[10] "The International Meridian Highway - U.S. Highway No. 81 Bulletin, June 9, 1927" (F. A. Long Papers, Manuscript collection of the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebr.).

[11] "The International Meridian Highway - U.S. Highway No. 81 Bulletin, June 9, 1927."

[12] "Pan American Highway... Gateway to Southeast Nebraska," (n.d.) Available at the Nebraska State Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, Lincoln, Nebr.

[13] "Improving Meridian Road," *Columbus Telegraph*, 8 September 1911.

[14] "Improving Meridian Road," *Columbus Telegraph*, 8 September 1911.

[15] "Improving Meridian Road," *Columbus Telegraph*, 8 September 1911.

[16] Information compiled from draft paper prepared by L. Robert Puschendorf. Available at the Nebraska State Historical Society , State Historic Preservation Office, Lincoln, Nebr.

[17] Francis A. Long, *A Prairie Doctor of the Eighties* (Norfolk, Nebr.: Huse Publishing Company, 1937), 153-54.

[18] *Pierce County Leader*, 3 November 1910; *Pierce County Call*, 19 October 1911; and "Pierce is On Meridian Road," *Pierce County Call*, 22 February 1912.

[19] *Meridian Road Monthly Magazine* (August 1913). Collection of the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office, Lincoln, Nebraska.

[20] "Meridian Highway History."

[21] Lea, "Inspection Trip Over the Meridian Road," 2.

[22] "Some Big Road Experts Coming," *Norfolk Daily News*, 19 August 1912.

[23] "Gulf to Winnipeg," *Hebron Journal*, 10 July 1914.

[24] Notes in F.A. Long Papers (Manuscript collection of the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebr.).

[25] *Canada to Mexico, Official Guide of the Meridian Highway, Pan American Route, 1931* (Available at the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebr.).

[26] *Canada to Mexico, Official Guide of the Meridian Highway, Pan American Route, 1931*.

[27] Greg Miller and Todd Knispel, "The Argo Hotel," National Register of Historic Places Nomination. March 2000 (Available at the Nebraska State Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, Lincoln, Nebraska).

[28] *Canada to Mexico, Official Guide of the Meridian Highway, Pan American Route, 1931*.

[29] *Canada to Mexico, Official Guide of the Meridian Highway, Pan American Route, 1931*.

[30] Dr. F.A. Long, Madison, to G.A. MacNaughton, San Marco, Texas, 20 December 1921 (F.A. Long Papers, Manuscript collection of the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebr.)

[31] A.W. Ballenger, York to Dr. F.A. Long, Madison, 16 December 1921 (F.A. Long Papers, Manuscript collection of the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebr.).

[32] *Automobile Blue Book 1920*, 10 (New York: The Automobile Blue Book Publishing Co., 1920), Available at the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebr.

[33] *TIB (Touring Information Bureau) Automobile Route Book* (Kansas, City, Mo.: TIB Automobile Book Co., 1919).

[34] *TIB (Touring Information Bureau) Automobile Route Book* (Kansas, City, Mo.: TIB Automobile Book Co., 1921).

[35] *TIB (Touring Information Bureau) Automobile Route Book* (Kansas, City, Mo.: TIB Automobile Book Co., 1921).

[36] *Norfolk Daily News*, 11 June 1928.

[37] Relocations of U.S. 81 were compiled from the *Biennial Reports 1910-1974* of the Nebraska Department of Roads and its predecessors. Collection of the Nebraska Department of Roads, Lincoln, Nebraska.

[38] *Humphrey Democrat*, 30 November 1939.

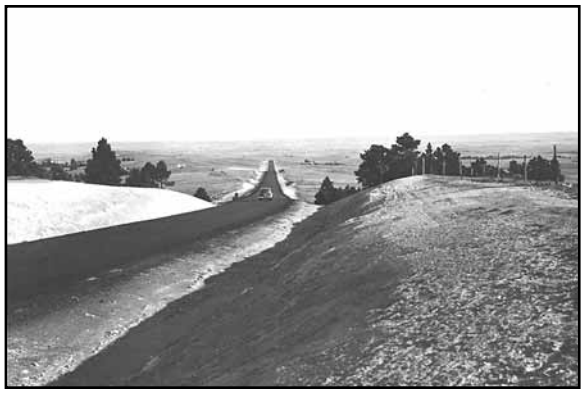
[39] Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1941-1942* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1942), 5.

Chapter 5
The Potash Highway

(Today roughly Nebraska Highway 2)

Introduction

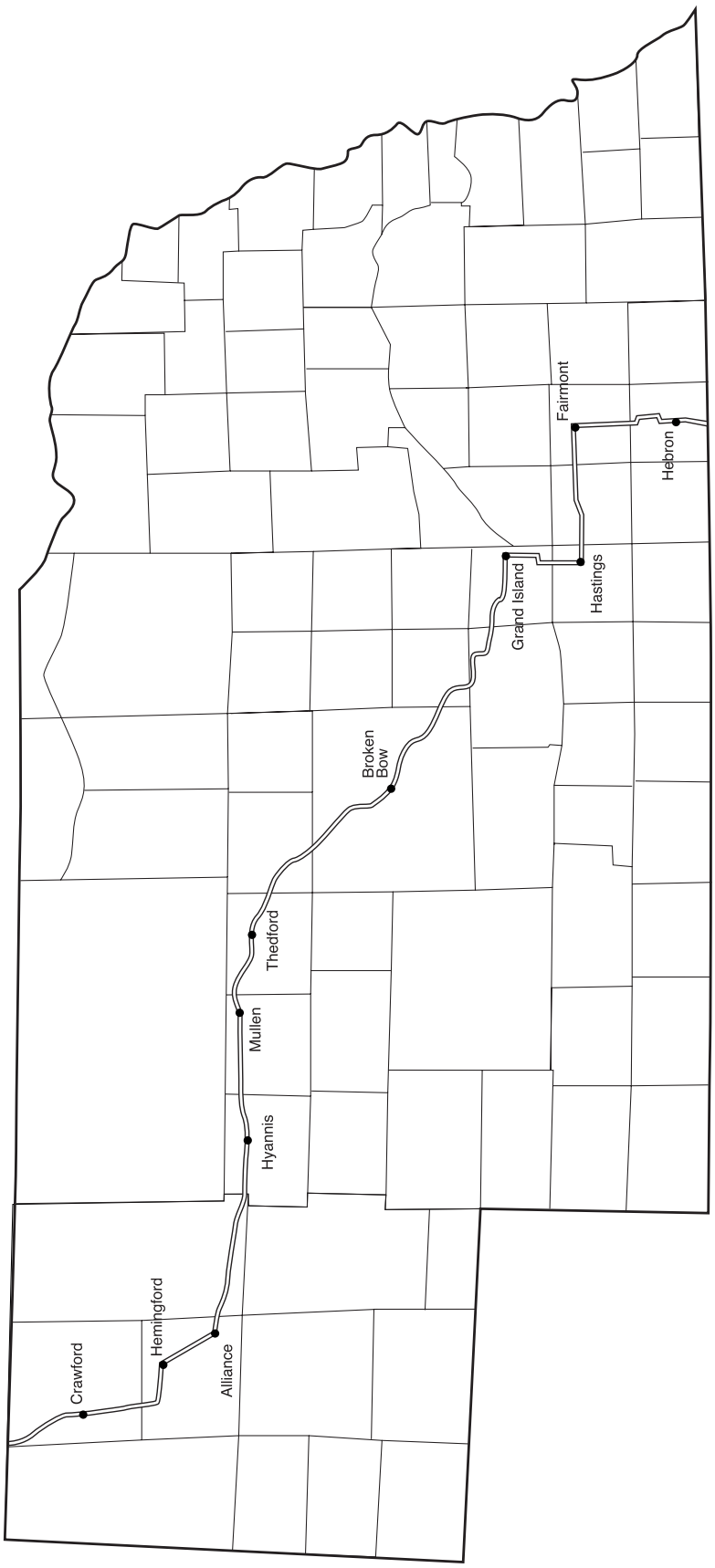
The Potash Highway and Potash Highway Association were important entities for the residents of central and northwest Nebraska as they sought connections to the southeast part of the state. Early efforts to locate and develop the highway, which was to extend initially from Alliance to Grand Island through the state's Sand Hills, began in 1918. Progress was slow, due in part to difficulties associated with building roads in the sandy region. Nevertheless, the goal of the roadway's supporters to tie central and western Nebraska to economic opportunity inspired them in 1923 to transform the route from a state road to one of regional importance. The roadway was extended north from Alliance, through Crawford to the Black Hills of South Dakota. To the south, it ran from Grand Island, to Hastings, from where it existed concurrently with the Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway east to Fairmont, and then extended south with the Meridian Highway to Wichita, Kansas. Shared highways were pursued in the hope that more connections would bring more motorists and greater economic development. The Potash Highway, therefore, extended from Wichita, Kansas, to the Black Hills until 1926 when the original Alliance to Grand Island segment was incorporated into Nebraska Highway 2.



View of bituminous road surface and general landscape view on Highway 2 in Dawes County south of Crawford in 1948 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Early Development

Initial efforts to develop roads between Alliance and Grand Island were haphazard and uncoordinated. For instance, road advocates worked in 1916 to designate a highway between Ravenna and Broken Bow. Similarly, residents in Alliance in 1916 were trying to realign and reconstruct a road northwest to Hemingford (which was included in the Potash Highway in 1923). It was to be shorter and safer than the highway then in use, with fewer dangerous curves. The new route required only 56 acres that would cost $20.00 each, needed $50.00 a mile for grading and was relatively flat so no bridges were



The Potash Highway (c. 1918 alignment)

needed. With the development of the new potash industry, particular attention was paid to the roads east of Alliance. The passage between Hoffland and Antioch, for example, was reportedly in very poor condition.[1] The resulting construction projects all appear to be isolated instances of roadway development and concern. A conveyance between Alliance and Grand Island had apparently not yet been conceived.

A Highway Named After A World War I Nebraska Industry

The term "potash" was not considered by many along the route to be capable of evoking images of romantic or thoughtful automobile journeys across the region. Instead, the word referred to a functional agricultural product generated during World War I in the communities immediately east of Alliance. Potash was a vital ingredient in the production of fertilizer and had been previously imported from Germany. During the war, however, when imports from Germany were unavailable, a domestic potash industry evolved around the communities of Hoffland, Antioch and Lakeside. The alkali lakes that dotted the region contained the material in abundance, which was then refined by using coal-fired furnaces to strain the potash from the briny water. The potash boom period, however, declined sharply following the war. Prices continued to drop and soon the plants were closed. An industry was lost. Yet the name remained due to the highway.

(Nebraska State Highway Advisory Board, Soils of Nebraska as Road Materials and Naming, Routing, Marking of Highways, [1919], 6; "Antioch Potash Plants," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, May 1979).

Perhaps with the inspiration offered by the rapidly developing potash industry, a growing level of attention was paid to the region's roads in 1917. Some of those writing to, and preparing articles for, the area's local newspapers were starting to think of regional roads. In early May 1917 the Alliance newspaper reported that a new east/west road was being considered to run parallel to the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad line from Grand Island, through Hemingford to Crawford. Three days later that idea was given more definition when the route was specifically suggested to parallel the railroad from Grand Island through "...Lakeside, Alliance, Hemingford to Crawford." Such visionary schemes notwithstanding, practical considerations had to be met. Those individuals working in the potash industry at the end of 1917 expected the road between Alliance and Antioch to be in passable condition for the winter.[2]

The Potash Highway Association and the Roadway's Construction

The plans suggested in 1917 for a regional road had apparently been heeded, for 1918 dawned with many Nebraska residents envisioning an Alliance to Grand Island highway. The specific suggestion for a road between Alliance and Broken Bow, which was already connected by road to Grand Island, came from a Mr. Fisher, then secretary of the Alliance Commercial Club. The meeting from which the highway was born was held at the end of February 1918 in Mullen, Nebraska, about one-third of the way between Alliance and Grand Island. Those attending the meeting recommended "a state highway from Alliance to Broken Bow to connect with the present highway from that point to Grand Island."[3] Several votes were taken by the approximately 105 delegates in attendance, who ultimately decided that the roadway should be named the Potash Highway. Further plans called for accepting federal funds for the roadway's development, marking it and making it passable by July 1, 1919, as well as creating a permanent roadway by July 1, 1920. Delegates elected Potash Highway Association Officers, including Frank Kelly of Broken Bow as the president.[4]

The new members of the association left Mullen full of enthusiasm. Soon local meetings of Potash Highway advocates were being held in counties and towns along the proposed facility, including in Hooker, Grant and Thomas Counties. Indeed, Thomas County wanted to complete and mark the roadway within its borders by the first of May 1918. Highway enthusiasts also met at Anselmo, in Custer County. They observed that the route should largely mirror that of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy railroad between Grand Island and Alliance, with a limited number of railroad crossings. They also sought to complete the road quickly. The community of Merna wanted to take advantage of the

enthusiasm created at Mullen. In a meeting held there, W.C. Elliott of Mason City reported that "...this new auto route was the second most important thing that had come to Custer County, the first being the railroad."[5] Enthusiasm for the Potash Highway was high. Hoping to accomplish as much as possible, President Kelly "spoke of the necessity of pushing the highway as rapidly as possible....Now was the time to act and do something definite before enthusiasm was allowed to cool."[6]

Interest in the new roadway was also developing in Sheridan County. Although little enthusiasm for the highway had initially been evident, Secretary Fisher from the Alliance Commercial Club appeared before the County Commissioners to promote the road. He "supplied the magic word that touched the hearts of the commissioners and now...[their support] is to be poured forth like the wealth of Montezuma." The county appropriated 5,000 silver dollars for the project as a result of Fisher's appearance. Shortly thereafter it was learned that Sheridan County was to receive $60,000 in federal highway aid, $20,000 of which the county said would be devoted to the Potash Highway.[7]

Current view of the Potash Highway near Hyannis in Grant County

The Potash Highway appeared to be riding a crest of good news, but its good luck was about to change. Despite Sheridan County's pledge of $20,000, there was more support for a different highway in the northern half of the county where Rushville, the county seat, was located (now U.S. Highway 20, see Chapter 6). Less than two weeks after the $20,000 had been offered, the county reversed itself and decided to spend all of the federal money for the northern road. Potash Highway supporters in the southern part of the county were disappointed and pledged to go to the governor to secure an injunction. They wanted "a fair deal" for their roadway. Adding to the general consternation of some roadway supporters was the fact that Grand Island had never made a strong commitment to the Potash Highway. A suitable alternative terminus, supporters felt, was Kearney, about 42 miles to the west-southwest.[8]

The disappointment in Sheridan County and questions about Grand Island's intention of anchoring the highway on the east notwithstanding, others continued to advocate for the roadway. Individual cities pledged money to the highway. Alliance, for instance, made $2,000 available, while Broken Bow offered $1,500 and Merna, Anselmo and Mason City each provided $1,000. The small community of Bingham even pledged $350. The Potash Highway Association also received letters of congratulations from the Lincoln and Omaha, Nebraska, auto clubs. Additional events occurred in

The Potash Highway and Its Relationship to the Lincoln Highway

Some, perhaps one-sided, competition existed between the supporters of the Potash Highway and those of the Lincoln Highway. As early as 1918 many Potash Highway advocates wanted their facility to be considered a viable alternative to the Lincoln. In bad weather, for instance, the Lincoln Highway was reported to have had "...a stretch of a hundred miles west of North Platte where no amount of work will suffice to make the road passable in wet weather–bog holes are frequent and hundreds of cars are mired every week." While ignoring that the Potash Highway did not exist in several areas at that time (and for the next few years), the article rationalized that one could leave the Lincoln Highway at Grand Island, then follow the Potash to Alliance, after which a driver could return south to the Lincoln. While few, if any, drivers likely ever utilized the Potash as an alternative to the Lincoln Highway, the former supporters consistently argued that travelers from the east could use the Potash as they traveled to Yellowstone National Park, thereby eliminating 200 miles or more from the same trip on the Lincoln Highway.

("$20,000 of Federal Money for Potash Road in Sheridan County," Alliance Semi-Weekly Times, 2 April 1918; "Potash Highway Meeting," Custer County Chief, 28 September 1922).

1918 that confirmed interest in the roadway. The Custer County Chief reported on May 9th that local portions of the route were to be marked. Instructions for marking were very specific: "...put on sixteen inches of white (two coats), then two inches of black at the top and two inches of black at the bottom. Stencil the P.H. in the center. Paint the poles not higher than six feet through a town and not higher in the country than five feet."[9] As well, the route was also marked in Thomas County between Thedford and Halsey by the end of July. Highway supporters were also encouraged by the May arrival in Alliance of three state surveyors that were to delineate the Potash to the east. The year concluded with the highway receiving the attention of Congressman Moses P. Kinkaid. While many hoped his intervention would help move the project forward, he was looking into the prospect of the roadway becoming a mail route.[10]

Although booster activity reported along the Potash Highway appeared to be less than the year before, efforts to develop the roadway remained very much alive in 1919. An indication of the route's anticipated importance was demonstrated when it, along with two other routes, was included in Nebraska's Permanent Road Plans. The highway association's annual meeting in 1919 was held shortly after the Road Plans were released. Many ideas about the road were offered at that gathering. One attendee suggested that the route should be pushed west to Yellowstone Park. Another reported that the roadway was marked for more than half its distance between Grand Island and Alliance and that the number of gates along the road had been reduced by two-thirds, making long-distance much easier. J.C. Moore of Anselmo was also elected president of the association.[11]

Despite the apparent success of the meeting, a renewed effort emerged to remind citizens along the proposed route of the highway's reason for being. The Custer County Chief reported on the 15th of May that "the Potash Highway is an automobile route running from Grand Island to Alliance, through the famous farming, stock raising and Potash district of Nebraska, parallel to the main line of the Burlington Railroad."[12] Boosters at Anselmo made the same report four days later. Soon thereafter a meeting was held at Anselmo to discuss the value of maintaining interest in the highway. The governor attended the meeting, at which reports were made about how farmers benefit from good roads.[13]

Spring of 1919 was also a time when the potash industry started to decline, a fact which meant there were many laid-off workers in Box Butte County. With labor thus available, plans for the Potash Highway evolved. H.H. Lotter, a senior engineer with the Department of Roads, explained that the road was to be a "...dirt grade with a top of alkali lake mud five inches deep–this to be surfaced with limestone rock...which is abundant in all the hills of this section."[14] Sporadic work along the facility continued into 1920 when the Alliance to Antioch road was expected to be graveled. Similarly excavating, grading and surfacing work was planned for the road between Broken Bow and the east county line, all of which was underway in June as was the construction of bridges.[15]

The 1920 annual meeting for the Potash Highway Association was planned by the Alliance Chamber of Commerce and held on October 14th. Both Broken Bow and Grand Island were to send delegations. Extending the highway from Alliance to Hot Springs, South Dakota, and then on to Yellowstone National Park was discussed and unanimously supported by the delegates. Indeed, association members increasingly focused on promoting the highway as a route for tourists that wanted to go to Yellowstone National Park. Also discussed was construction of the roadway through the Sand Hills region between Alliance, Ravenna and Broken Bow. It may have been a matter of bravado, but in order to inspire the completion of the road, John Turner, the association's president for the year, reported that "there are no sand hills or other obstacles too great to over come on the Potash Highway."[16] Similarly, the *Custer County Chief* reported that "your great obstacle is the sand hills which lie between...[Alliance] and Broken Bow, so get together and figure out a plan for the thing you want to do–do it in spite of Hell."[17]

With the completion of the 1920 annual meeting, the fortunes of the roadway began to improve. In 1921 a Community Club was organized in Bingham, about 40 miles east of Alliance, for the specific purpose of finishing and promoting the highway. The community was very much in the middle of an incomplete area along the highway between western Grant and Sheridan counties. Approximately 150 Potash Highway boosters attended the meeting, one of which, a rancher, donated land for the right-of-way. It was also noted that 31 miles of the roadway were complete in Grant County, 22 of which were

considered to be in excellent condition. The roadway continued to evolve and in 1922, Walter Newberg drove from Grand Island to Alliance on the Potash Highway. The segment between Grand Island and Anselmo was said to be in "excellent shape," while that west of Anselmo, through the Sand Hills, still offered "...some difficulty, chiefly from lack of proper marking of the highway, rather than from impassable places." Newberg completed the report of his trip by observing optimistically that "...the Potash Highway when completed will be one of the most traveled and popular highways in the west...."[18] The apparent success of Newberg's trip notwithstanding, the *Custer County Chief* subsequently reported that entire roadway should be "passable by the end of 1923."[19]

Attempts to Rename the Potash Highway

As noted previously, potash was an industrial product that was a vital component in the manufacture of fertilizer. It was argued by many, however, that it was hardly a material to associate with a roadway, much less after which a highway should be named. Thus periodic attempts were made to rename the Potash Highway. An early effort was made barely two years after the roadway's association had been developed. It was argued in the Cherry County News that, with the plants either closed or closing in post-World War I America, the significance of the potash industry was substantially diminished and that the "...name does not mean anything as applied to a public highway." The name was retained at the time, however, simply because it was a known entity and that "...to change it would entail a lot of unnecessary trouble." The issue was again visited at the association's annual meeting in 1923. Suggestions for new names were extensive and included the following: Kinkaid Highway, Kinkaid-Yellowstone Highway, Nebraska-Yellowstone Highway, Hot Springs-Yellowstone Highway, Black Hills-Yellowstone Highway and Northwest Yellowstone Highway. While a committee was appointed to consider the issue for the next years, no subsequent decisions were noted. Thus the name Potash Highway officially remained until Nebraska Highway 2 was designated and was used unofficially for several years thereafter.

("'Potash' Not A Good Name for Highway," Custer County Chief, 9 September 1920. "Potash Highway Annual Meeting," Custer County Chief, 21 October 1920. "P.H. Meeting Draws Crowd," Custer County Chief, 19 July 1923).

The annual meeting of the Potash Highway Association in 1923 was a seminal event in the roadway's history. First, that portion of the facility between Grand Island and Anselmo, as well as that around Alliance, was reported in good condition. The segment through the Sand Hills, however, still needed work. Additionally, although funding problems continued, the fact that $1,142,837 in state and federal monies would be available for use in Nebraska over the next two years assuaged many fears. Perhaps most exciting, however, was the association's decision to officially expand the highway from one that ran exclusively between Alliance and Grand Island in Nebraska, to one with a multi-state draw that extended from the Black Hills, South Dakota, to Wichita, Kansas.[20] While the Black Hills were a tourist destination, and thus a logical point at which to terminate the highway to the north, the decision to extend the Potash to Wichita is a bit more perplexing. It is possible that the Nebraska group wanted to generate as much business as they could with a minimal investment. Thus it made sense to extend the highway south from Grand Island to Hastings, then along the Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway east to Fairmont, and then south on the Meridian Highway through another state (Kansas) and to another major city (Wichita). And so the Potash Highway existed in its Black Hills to Wichita form until its original Grand Island to Alliance alignment was configured into Nebraska Highway 2 in 1926.

Construction of Nebraska Highway 2

Nebraska Highway 2 was developed as part of the state's evolving trunk highway system, incorporating the former Potash Highway from Alliance to Grand Island. Varied methods of construction had been used on segments of the old Potash Highway. An important improvement came during the late 1920s and early 1930s with the development of oil-sand surfacing. This method employed a machine that picked up approximately five inches of surface sand, mixed it with oil, and then laid it back onto the roadway. It provided a surface that was durable, yet economical to construct and maintain. A seven-mile stretch of the former Potash Highway between Mullen and Whitman received one of the first experimental applications of this road material. By 1932 the Department of Public Works determined this was a viable road construction method, and declared in its 1932 report that the "construction of oiled sand surfacing will insure [sic] lower maintenance costs."[21]

The old Potash Highway was freshly oiled in 1933 in Sheridan County near Ellsworth (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

The evolving oil-sand method of road construction was ideal for Nebraska Highway 2, in a region where other road materials were scarce. It allowed for a modern traveling surface to be applied to the highway which, by 1939-40, was largely paved from Hemingford south with the exception of the segments between Mullen and Dunning, and Cairo and Grand Island.[22]

As improved methods of paving were being used, changes were also being made to the route of the old Potash Highway. Road segments were realigned and railroad crossings were eliminated to avoid conflicts between railroad and automobile traffic. During the Great Depression, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) provided funds so that the state could relocate a stretch of Highway 2 through Sherman, Custer and Blaine Counties. Thus the roadbed was moved to the south side of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad tracks, a move which eliminated five railroad crossings.[23]

Projects along Nebraska Highway 2 continued over the years as relocation projects for the highway were pursued. During 1941-42 a section through Hooker and Thomas Counties "was reshaped and a new drainage structure was installed…."[24] Road relocations also bypassed many of the single-span pony truss bridges along the old alignment of the Potash, such as those still extant southeast of Broken Bow. During World War II, the construction of the Cornhusker Ordnance Plant west of Grand Island forced the relocation of Nebraska Highway 2 to a route direct from Grand Island to Cairo, 13 miles to the northwest. In 1949-50 the graveled 11-mile segment of highway between Dunning and Halsey was paved. The final gravel portion to be paved was a section north of Crawford.[25]

Pony truss bridge in Custer County near Ansley, CU00-084

Rest Area, Refueling and Roadside Service Development

Services for travelers were a necessity along the Potash Highway, especially as the road was promoted for use by tourists. As early as 1920, the roadway's association called for camps in towns along the route "...with adequate conveniences for travelers...."[26] Alliance was one of the first cities to have such a camp. Opened in 1921, the community moved a house from Antioch to the campsite in which lavatories and hot and cold water were provided. The structure also provided living quarters for the camp's caretaker and his wife. Auto camping was free. Two years later the city of Broken Bow purchased for $1,400 a lot at L Street and 13th Avenue at which a campsite was developed. The sign outside the camp stated "Free Tourist Park." Described by the local newspaper, it was said that "this camp will no doubt be greatly improved during the coming year, and its close-in location and good shade will, when improvements are completed, make it one of the most attractive tourist camps in this part of the state."[27]

From these early amenities several road-related resources evolved that were used by Potash Highway and Nebraska Highway 2 travelers and remain today. One is a park located in Alliance at Niobrara and 10th Streets (BX01-067) that likely offered auto camping sites in the 1930s and 1940s. It is distinguished by stonework gates and buildings, all of which were built in 1939 by the National Youth Administration. Similarly, a roadside park was developed ca. 1935-36 near Crawford (DW00-191). It is notable for several landscape features of stonework, including a base for a sign and a secluded picnic area accessed by a foot bridge.

Picnic area built as part of a c.1935-1936 roadside park near Crawford in Dawes County, DW00-191

Perhaps the most ubiquitous resources along the road are gas stations, many of which are simple, small structures with prominent canopies. Several of these likely date to the 1920s and are associated with the later years of the Potash Highway or the early years of Nebraska Highway 2. Good examples include the gas station in Hazard which is distinguished by its two-car canopy (SM02-015), as well as a brick gas station in Mason City (CU11-014). This station is notable for its four-over-four-light windows, three-light transom, nine-light door and decorative, wooden columns that support the canopy roof. A Neo-Classical Revival gas station in Broken Bow (CU05-072) features a prominent pediment and colonnettes.

Neoclassical Revival style service station at the northeast corner of 10th & E Streets in Broken Bow, Custer County, CU05-072

The motels along the roadway are generally post-World War II structures that clearly evolved well after the demise of the Potash Highway. Perhaps one hotel likely utilized by Potash Highway travelers is the old, brick structure at Walnut and Railroad Streets in Thedford (TM05-009), although it undoubtedly evolved as a railroad hotel.

The most distinctive resources along the old Potash Highway, however, are the remnants of the roadway itself. Prominent is the area west of Mullen, in which the remains of the original 1920s road through the Sand Hills (north of the railroad tracks) can be seen, as can the ca. 1940s alignment south of the railroad tracks that replaced it. Traffic today is carried by the latest incarnation of Nebraska Highway 2, which is immediately south of the ca. 1940s segment. This method of roadway arrangement suggests how inexpensive land was. It was frequently easier and less expensive to abandon the old road and acquire additional right-of-way for new roads, than to remove the old roads and build new facilities along the same alignment. Complimenting the old alignment are a number of old truss bridges. Examples include one in the Ansley vicinity (CU00-084), and one in the Seneca vicinity (TM00-047).

Current view of multiple alignments of the Potash Highway and Nebraska Highway 2 near Mullen in Hooker County, HO00-025

Conclusion

The Potash Highway, the original Grand Island to Alliance portion of which was integrated into Nebraska Highway 2 in 1926, served recreational and economic interests throughout its history. The highway connected central and northwestern Nebraska to the more populous regions of the state to the southeast. Additions to the Potash Highway in 1923 extended it south from Grand Island to Hastings and then along the Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway to Fairmont, Nebraska, and along the Meridian Highway from Fairmont to Wichita,

Kansas, as well as north from Alliance to the Black Hills of South Dakota. In its extended form, the Potash Highway served as a tourist route to the Black Hills and, less commonly, to Yellowstone National Park. Presently, Nebraska Highway 2 is a modern, two-lane roadway that facilitates timely travel between Alliance and Grand Island, as well as allowing travelers to observe and appreciate the dominant topography of Nebraska's Sand Hills region—a National Natural Landmark through which the highway travels.

Resources of the Potash Highway

Approximately 130 road-related properties were documented along the Potash Highway representing a variety of resource types. Twelve properties were identified as potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) and are illustrated below. The counties are listed following east to west along the Potash Highway. For a full discussion of recommendations and a list of Potash Highway resources already listed in the National Register, see Chapter 9: Survey Results and Recommendations.

Adams County

Gas station at 739 Burlington Avenue in Hastings, AD04-426

Sherman County

Gas station at the southwest corner of Market & Jerold Streets in Hazard, SM02-015

Custer County

Sinclair Service Station and Café at the southeast corner of Main & Division Streets in Ansley, CU02-052

Gas station at the southwest corner of Crawford & Prentiss Streets in Mason City, CU11-014

Neoclassical Revival style service station at the northeast corner of 10th & E Streets in Broken Bow, CU05-072

Hooker County

Spanish Colonial Revival style gas station south of Lincoln & 2nd Streets in Mullen, HO02-053

Blaine County

Service station and café by the intersection of Nebraska Highway 2 and Jewett Street in Dunning, BL02-014

Box Butte County

National Youth Administration structures in Alliance Park, BX01-067

Thomas County

Cowpoke Hotel by Walnut & Railroad Streets in Thedford, TM05-009

Lowry & Henry service garage at the northwest corner of Box Butte & 5th Streets in Alliance, BX01-232

Zesto Drive-In by Platte & 3rd Streets in Alliance, BX01-239

Dawes County

ca. 1935-36 roadside park Crawford vicinity, DW00-191

Notes

[1] "Blaze Auto Line to Grand Island," Custer County Chief, 23 November 1916; "Commissioner Recommends New Road To Hemingford," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 30 June 1916; "Antioch Resembles Hive of Bees with Unusual Building Activities," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 18 August 1916.

[2] "State Engineer Visits Alliance," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 1 May 1917; "$20,000 for Roads," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 4 May 1917; "Good Roads Day November Ninth," Alliance Semi-Weekly Times, 2 November 1917; "Antioch Road to be Given Care," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 13 November 1917.

[3] "Federal Aid for a Proposed New Road," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 22 January 1918; "'Potash Highway' May be Completed by July First," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 26 February 1918. Commercial Clubs were entities developed to promote commerce in and about a community. It appears that many, if not most, communities of any size in western Nebraska claimed a Commercial Club.

[4] "'Potash Highway' May be Completed by July First," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 26 February 1918; "Potash Highway a Possibility," *Custer County Chief*, 28 February 1928. Additionally, it was noted that, of the 105 delegates in attendance at the convention, forty were from Mullen, 14 were from Hyannis, 11 were from Seneca, ten from Whitman, and so on, down to several communities that were only represented by one.

[5] "Added Interest in 'Potash Highway,'" *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 8 March 1918; "Thedford Strong for Potash Route," *Custer County Chief*, 14 March 1918; "County Meeting Potash Highway," *Custer County Chief*, 28 March 1918; "Merna Meeting of Potash Highway," *Custer County Chief*, 25 April 1918.

[6] "Road Meeting in Broken Bow," *Custer County Chief*, 4 April 1918.

[7] "Five Thousand for New Potash Highway," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 19 March 1918; "$20,000 of Federal Money for Potash Road in Sheridan County," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 2 April 1918.

[8] "Keen Interest in 'Potash Highway,'" *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 15 March 1918; "More Delay for the Potash Highway," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 12 April 1918; "Road Meeting in Broken Bow." No evidence was found to suggest that Potash supporters actually secured an injunction.

[9] "Potash Highway to be Finished in June," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 2 April 1918; "Road Meeting in Broken Bow;"; "Mark Potash Highway," *Custer County Chief*, 9 May 1918.

[10] "Another Victory on Potash Highway," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 30 July 1918; "To Survey New Potash Highway," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 7 May 1918; "Kinkaid Aids in Potash Highway," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 22 October 1918. No evidence was found to suggest any type of a resolution regarding transport of mail along the route.

[11] "Three Highways Are Approved in the State Permanent Road Plans," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 7 February 1919; "Alliance Men Instill 'Pep' in Road Plan," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 28 February 1919. It is unknown whether the gates referred to were associated with railroad crossings, or the control of livestock.

[12] "Potash Highway Meet," *Custer County Chief*, 15 May 1919.

[13]" Highway Meeting at Anselmo Soon," Alliance Semi-Weekly Times, 20 May 1919; "The Potash Highway Holds Big Meeting," *Custer County Chief*, 5 June 1919.

[14] "Potash Road Work to Start Before July 1," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 1 April 1919.

[15] "Contractor Here to Finish Roads," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 6 April 1920; "Contract Let for Roadwork," *Custer County Chief*, 26 February 1920; "Road Work Progressing," *Custer County Chief*, 27 May 1920.

[16] "Getting Ready for Good Roads Meeting," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 28 September 1920; "Good Roads Meeting Here Next Thursday," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 12 October 1920; "Potash Highway Convention Here is Big Success," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 15 October 1920.

[17] "Potash Highway Annual Meeting," *Custer County Chief*, 21 October 1920.

[18] "Interest Now Keen in Potash Highway," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 26 July 1921; "Potash Highway is Reported in Good Condition," *Custer County Chief*, 11 May 1922.

[19] "Potash to be Passable by End of 1923," *Custer County Chief*, 7 June 1923. Discrepancies such as this certainly appear from time to time. Specifically in question at this point, however, is how could the highway be driven in 1922, only to have it reported that a passable road should be in place in 1923. Two explanations are immediately apparent. First, it is possible that the timing of Mr. Newberg's trip is such that he experienced optimal conditions throughout his entire trip. The second possibility is that the perceptions of what is considered "passable" can vary from author to author.

[20] "P.H. Meeting Draws Crowd," *Custer County Chief*, 19 July 1923. It should be noted that the additions to the Potash Highway were made only three years prior to the implementation of the federal highway numbering system. They were likely made to broaden the highway's appeal and thus to increase traffic along the core section of the roadway between Alliance and Grand Island.

[21] *Conoco 1931 Official Road Map: Nebraska* (Chicago: H.M. Gousha Company, 1931), map; Nebraska Department of Public Works, *Eighteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1929-30* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Public Works, 1930), 57; Nebraska Department of Public Works, Bureau of Roads and Bridges, *Nineteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works Bureau of Roads and Bridges 1931-1932* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Public Works Bureau of Roads and Bridges, 1932), 33-34.

[22] Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Third Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1939-1940* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1940), v.

[23] George E. Koster, *A Story of Highway Development in Nebraska* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Roads, 1986, revised 1997), 36. District 7 consisted of Blaine, Dawson, Grant, Hooker, Keith, Lincoln, Logan, McPherson and Thomas Counties.

[24] Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1941-1942* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1942), 210.

[25] Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Fifth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1943-1944* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1944), 172; Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Eighth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1949-1950* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1950), 151; Nebraska Department of Roads, *Biennial Report 1971-72* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Roads, 1972), 39.

[26] "Potash Highway Convention Here is Big Success;" "Potash Highway Annual Meeting."

[27] "Alliance Will Have Auto Tourist Park," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 29 April, 1921; "Tourist Camping Ground Now An Assured Fact," *Custer County Chief*, 1 February 1923; "Tourist Park Takes on New Improvements," *Custer County Chief*, 2 August 1923.

Chapter 6
U.S. Highway 20

(including portions of the Grant Highway and the Blue Pole Highway)

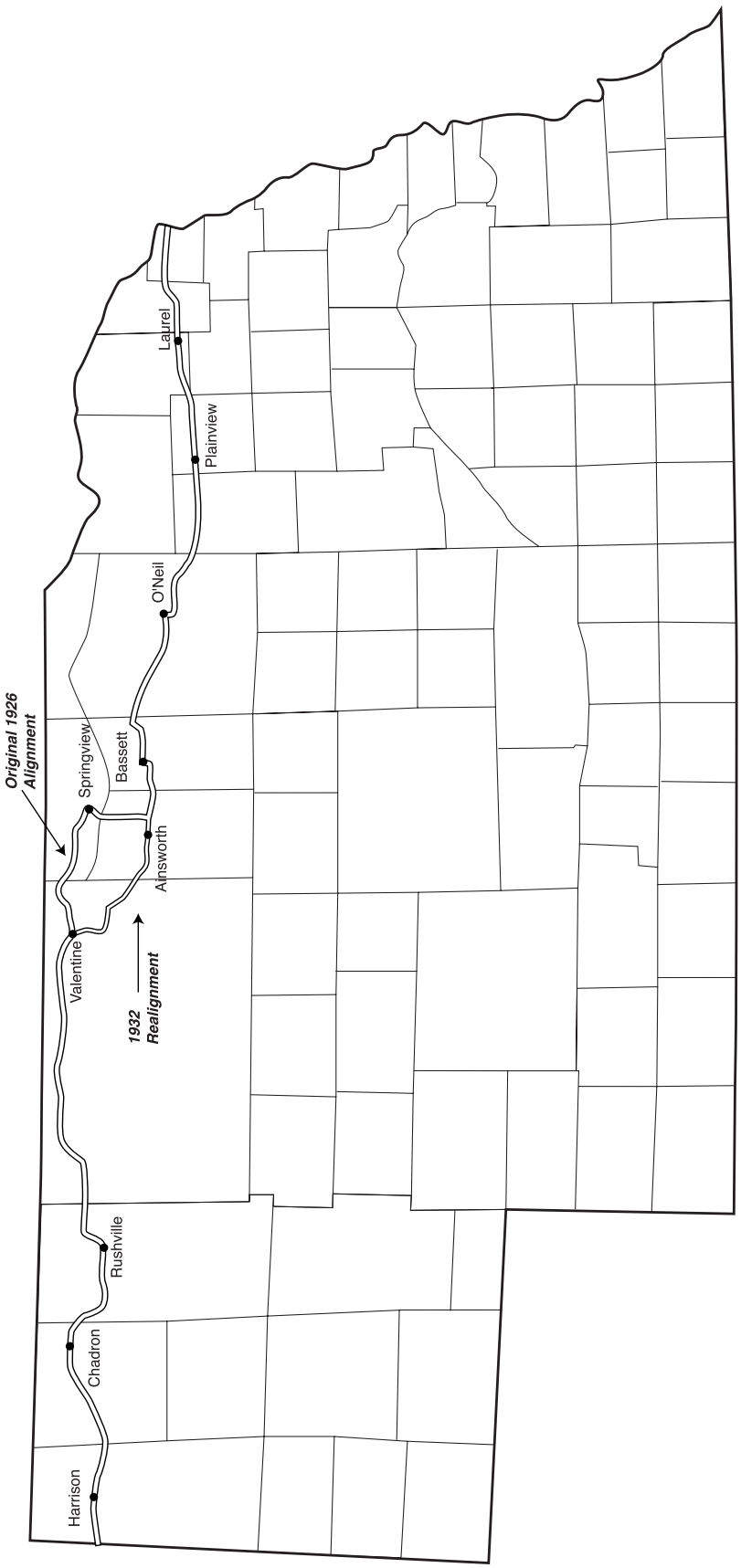
Introduction

U.S. Highway 20, along with its predecessor roads known as the Blue Pole and Grant Highways, was an important route for the people of northern Nebraska because it connected them to shipping, processing and commercial centers. After it was established in 1926 with the founding of the federal route system, the road also served Nebraskans and people in the eastern United States by offering them a convenient route to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. Extending west from Boston, Massachusetts, U.S. Highway 20 passed through New York State, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, where it penetrated the city of Chicago. It continued west through Iowa, Nebraska and Wyoming, to Yellowstone Park. Then, in 1941, U.S. Highway 20 was extended west from the park through a small portion of southwest Montana, to Idaho and Oregon, where it terminated at Newport on the Pacific Ocean. Upon its completion, U.S. Highway 20 tied northern Nebraska into a national transportation route. The Highway 20 Association was then established to promote the route across the country.

Predecessor Highways

The route followed by U.S. Highway 20 had been previously defined by two early twentieth-century, named highways. The Blue Pole was a state route that ultimately extended from Omaha and passed through Fremont, Norfolk, Clearwater, O'Neill, Ainsworth, Wood Lake, Valentine, Merriman and Hay Springs prior to terminating at Chadron. The Grant Highway was a national route that entered the state at South Sioux City, after which it passed through Laurel, Plainview and Orchard before joining the Blue Pole at O'Neill. It then ran concurrently with the Blue Pole to Chadron, except for an approximately 75 mile deviation where the highway crossed the Niobrara River at Carns. This section extended through Springview and Sparks north of the Blue Pole's route through Wood Lake. The Grant Highway then ran from Chadron, through Crawford and Harrison, and into Wyoming.[1]

The Blue Pole was conceived as early as 1912 when it was mentioned in an article in the *Norfolk Press*. It is clear that the highway reached from Norfolk to Chadron by 1921, and that it had been extended southeast from Norfolk to Omaha by ca. 1925. Efforts to promote travel on the road began as early as the spring of 1922 when the Blue Pole Highway Organization was established. A year later, in the *Valentine Democrat*, roadway boosters reported that the Blue Pole had achieved a prominent level of popularity. The facility was by then a state aid road in Cherry County and was almost graded from Wood Lake to the county line. A plea was also made by roadway boosters that the road be completed from the county line to Johnstown the next year.[2]



The United States Highway 20 (c. 1926 alignment)

Although the Ainsworth-Wood Lake-Valentine alignment is reflected as part of the Blue Pole route on a 1921 map, it had not yet been formally incorporated into the highway. This was apparent because the Blue Pole Association was still promoting a decision regarding the Wood Lake alignment "...which has not been heretofore designated a route" at its 1925 meeting in Chadron.[3] A decision was apparently not made, for the matter was still under consideration when the association met at Valentine in 1926. Delegates attending that meeting argued that the governor should do what was needed to designate the Wood Lake route as part of the Blue Pole Highway and that it should be part of the federal aid system. The 75 men attending the meeting went on to argue that the Blue Pole "...will be one of the most important if not the most important highways in Nebraska when it is completed, because it connects Western Nebraska directly with Omaha, our metropolis."[4]

Current view of former alignment of U.S. Highway 20 through Smiley Canyon in Dawes County near Fort Robinson, SX00-34

In contrast to the Blue Pole, an older state road, the Grant Highway was a national trail that extended to New York in the east and then slowly moved west. By 1921, it had reached Sioux City, Iowa, but had not yet been designated in Nebraska. A 1922 letter from Malcolm MacKinnon, the Secretary of the Grant Highway Improvement Association, to Arthur Bowring, Merriman, Nebraska, revealed that he had recently been traveling through the Nebraska towns of Randolph, Plainview, O'Neill, Valentine, Rushville, Hay Springs and Chadron and expected "...to have the marking complete in Nebraska and Wyoming in a few weeks." The Grant Highway Improvement Association letterhead identified the road as extending from Chicago to the west coast, and described the association as "devoted to the development and advertisement of the most direct and otherwise most practicable route of motor transportation."[5] Entering the state at South Sioux City, the Grant Highway met with the Blue Pole at O'Neill and ran concurrently thereafter, the divergent segment between Ainsworth and Valentine notwithstanding.

Arthur Bowring

Bowring had a strong interest in helping to develop Nebraska's roads, an activity he started pursing around 1911. Although little appears to be known about his early efforts, it is clear that by 1925 he had achieved a significant level of knowledge about road funding, building and repair. He was appointed by the governor to be a Nebraska delegate at the U.S. Good Roads Association meeting in Texas in April 1925. Barely nine months later, he was again appointed by the governor to attend as a representative of Nebraska the Second Conference on State and Highway Accident Prevention to be held in Washington, D.C., that spring. Additionally, Bowring was a member of the Nebraska Good Roads Association in 1925, and the organization's president in 1926. He was subsequently elected a state representative in November 1926. With Bowring in the state legislature, Nebraska's roads–and especially those in the northern part of the state–had a significant friend. As early as January 1927, Representative Bowring supported roads from Ainsworth to Brewster, Spring View to Burton and Valentine to Gandy, for example. A year later, through legislation developed with the Good Roads Association, Bowring introduced a bill that raised the state's gas tax from two cents to four. One cent of the new money was to go to directly to the counties in which it was collected while the other was to go to the highway department for distribution along with federal money. Bowring resigned in 1928 from road appointments not associated with his elected office.

(Governor Adam McMullen to Arthur Bowring, 17 March 1925, Bowring Papers; David F. Meeker, Secretary to the Governor, to Arthur Bowring, 28 January 1926, Bowring Papers; B.A. George, Nebraska Good Roads Association, to Arthur Bowring, 30 March 1925, Bowring Papers; Arthur Bowring to R.L. Cochran, 14 March 1926, Bowring Papers; "Election Proves G.O.P. Victory," Valentine Democrat, 5 November 1926; "Bowring on Road Bill," Valentine Democrat, 28 January 1927; "Bowring Bill Provides for Increased Gas Tax," Valentine Democrat, 17 January 1928; "Bowring Resigns Road Job After Long Term," Valentine Democrat, 7 June 1928).

The designation of the federal highway system in 1925 appears to have been an activity that caught the supporters of the Blue Pole and Grant Highways off guard. In an article detailing the designation of U.S. Highway 20, supporters of the Blue Pole, perhaps wanting to perpetuate its name, observed that their highway had become "...a vital link in an important national highway...."[6] The *Valentine Democrat*, on the other hand, reported enthusiastically that "one of the most important transcontinental highways approved was designated as Route No. 20." Starting at South Sioux City, the new road was then to pass onto O'Neill and "...thence to Chadron and into Wyoming at Lusk."[7]

Regardless of the approach taken when interpreting the designation of the new highway, one man who had invested much time and energy into developing good roads in Nebraska and promoting the Blue Pole Highway, and subsequently devoted a substantial amount of time to the development of U.S. Highway 20, was Arthur Bowring. For instance, he toured parts of U.S. Highway 20 in 1928 with Division Engineer W.H. Bauman, during which time they investigated the condition of and repairs needed along the roadway between Valentine and Gordon. After he won a State Senate race in 1930, his interest in northern Nebraska's roads continued. A 1931 edition of the *Chadron Journal*, for instance, reported that Bowring said U.S. Highway 20 was soon to receive funding for repairs and upgrading. The same article also observed that "Senator Bowring is one of the best informed men in the country on roads."[8]

Early U.S. Highway 20 in Nebraska

Bowring was a prominent force when it came to developing and maintaining U.S. Highway 20 and its predecessors in Nebraska. Despite his support, the change from named route to United States Highway was not immediately accepted by the general public. With the arrival of 1927, when U.S. Highway 20 was in its infancy, the *Valentine Democrat* still wrote about the Grant Highway. Significant, however, is the fact that the Grant Highway was by then associated with U.S. Highway 20. Yellowstone Park was starting to be identified as a logical destination for travelers on U.S. Highway 20, as well. Indeed, the *Valentine Democrat* observed that "...the Grant Highway U.S. (20) [was] the direct route to the Black Hills and central Wyoming and the Yellowstone Park."[10] Further promoting the transcontinental route, the virtues of New York's Finger Lakes region, as well as those of Genesee County west of the Finger Lakes, were all described as attractions to be visited.[11]

Early work on U.S. Highway 20 was much like that pursued on many Nebraska highways. In the Valentine vicinity in 1924, clay was reportedly added to the native soils for road use in order to retard turning the local earth into powder. Similarly, a sand/clay mixture had been laid on the road from Eli to the west county line, a distance of approximately 35 miles. In 1925 a sand/clay mixture was used for the roadway in the Sand Hills region between Valentine and Crookston, as well as between Merriman and Gordon.[12]

As work progressed in 1926, two inches of gravel were laid over the route designated for U.S. Highway 20 between Merriman and Gordon, as well as between Eli and Cody–a distance of just under 50 miles. A year later work on U.S. Highway 20 was progressing between the Sand Hills towns of Cody and Nenzel. Hills were being cut down and low areas filled. Work on the Nenzel to Kilgore segment was due to be the next, while the contract for the Kilgore to Crookston segment was to be let on August 26th of that year.[13]

A completed portion of U.S. Highway 20 in 1927 in Brown County near Long Pine (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Work expanded in 1928 when some of the objectives established for 1927 were finally completed. The *Valentine Democrat* declared on April 26, 1928 that "...we are getting good roads fast."[14] Less than two months later graveling started where it had stopped at the end of the 1927 construction season–immediately west of Eli. A problem with road construction in the Sand Hills area was that gravel was scarce. Accordingly, it had to be delivered to the region by rail, generally from Oral, South Dakota, or

Bridgeport, Nebraska, the latter of which was over 150 miles away. Graveling was likely perceived as a significant road improvement. Thus, as such work was expanded to include the 18-mile segment from O'Neill to Atkinson, it was anticipated that there would soon be a "...graveled surface most of the way from Omaha to Chadron."[15]

Despite hope that the Crookston to Kilgore work would be contracted for in 1927, this segment was finally included in the improvement program for 1929. It was also delayed due to questions about the type of construction to be used. In a letter from State Engineer Cochran to Representative Bowring, he said that the road might be surfaced with a sand and oil mixture. "By this means," Cochran explained to Bowring, "oil is worked deep down into the sand and forms a good surface, one that has been satisfactorily used in experimental sections of road."[16] The Crookston to Kilgore segment of U.S. Highway 20 was finished in December, although the completion of all graveling was to wait until the spring of 1930. The conclusion of this work also eliminated the final segment of sand on U.S. Highway 20 in Nebraska. The construction of two concrete bridges was also to wait until spring, the waterways in question being traversed with temporary structures.[17]

Wood Lake Road and Bryan Bridge

U.S. Highway 20 had been aligned from the time of its founding on the route of the Grant Highway west of Springview to Valentine, via Sparks. But it was soon apparent to state highway experts that the Wood Lake option, the one that followed the Blue Pole Highway route, was more appropriate. It was after all about ten miles shorter. This was a major realignment, indeed, the largest one on U.S. Highway 20 in the state of Nebraska. Work was scheduled to occur in 1930.[18]

The proposed realignment of U.S. Highway 20 generated some debate and was not pursued until 1932. In the interim, some people along the route studied and commented on the proposal. One particularly detailed observation came from M.P. Jordan, who lived in Arabia, which is on the south side of the Niobrara River about half way between Valentine and Wood Lake. His idea was to shorten the road by 3.5 miles and require a high bridge over the Niobrara River. He proposed to follow the state's route from Wood Lake to Arabia, then extend the alignment to the northwest and meet the railroad about two miles east of Thatcher, after which the route would follow the railroad to Valentine. Jordan mapped his proposal, discussed the soils in the area and then presented the plan to state officials. He received favorable reaction from C.C. Burdis, an associate engineer for the state. Regardless of what happened with Jordan's plan, however, the *Cherry County News* reported that "one thing is certain, this section needs a highway east through Wood Lake and this route should stand on its own feet to provide the traveling public with the most direct route between the points in question."[19]

The Bryan Bridge

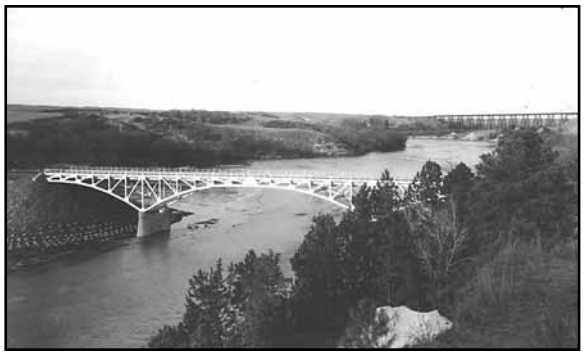
Work on the Bryan Bridge was a substantial undertaking that was described by local newspapers. A temporary structure was built seven feet above the water, which was fully 33 feet lower than the traffic deck of the structure planned. By April, the cuts and fills needed on each of the approaches were well underway. This work was completed by the Beebe Construction Company which used Caterpillar Tractors and Caterpillar "dump wagons" with a capacity of 7.5 cubic yards. Work on the first of the structure's two piers went satisfactorily. The concrete in that pier was poured in the middle of June, two weeks after which it was announced that the steel for the west half of the bridge was being placed. The Cherry County News described the placement of the steel: "This steel work starts at a height of about forty feet above water line and from the floor level the steel structure curved downward toward the first pier. From this point the steel will arch above the channel of the river to the east pier, then arch to the east abutment in a curve identical with that on the west side." It was reported about two weeks later that all of the steel set was being hot riveted and that the heavy construction equipment had been moved to the other side of the bridge. Hot riveting was an interesting activity that was "...accomplished by means of cherry red hot rivets, heated above the bridge, and thrown down to the riveter who with assistant sets these hot steel slugs by means of a compressed air riveting hammer." Following the same process, the east side of the structure was then completed.

("Bridge and Road Work Well Under Way," Cherry County News, 21 April 1932; "Bridge Contract Now Well Under Way," Cherry County News, 19 March 1932; "West End of Highway 20 Now Completed," Cherry County News, 16 June 1932; "First Section of Bridge Nears Completion," Cherry County News, 30 June 1932; "Highway 20, Its Past and Present," Cherry County News, 14 July 1932).

The alignment ultimately selected does not appear to be too different from that proposed by Mr. Jordan. It runs concurrently with the railroad from Wood Lake to Arabia, from which it extends to the northwest, about one mile west from where Jordan's route was likely projected. It then meets the railroad immediately west of Thatcher and continues on to Valentine, deviating from the railroad alignment for the final two miles to Valentine. The deviation facilitates the Niobrara River crossing, which is a high bridge about three-quarters of a mile west of the railroad.

Perhaps the most impressive portion of the work along the new Wood Lake route was the construction of the bridge across the Niobrara River. The bridge itself was an arched, cantilever structure. It was designed by Josef Sorkin, a Russian immigrant who arrived in the United States in 1923 and who graduated in 1929 from the College of Engineering at the University of Nebraska. The structure carries a 24-foot roadway, is 289 feet long and cost $55,564.00.[20]

The Wood Lake route between Ainsworth and Valentine, and the bridge that was named after the former governor, were finished and opened to traffic on November 18, 1932. The bridge itself (CE00-028) was subsequently selected by the American Institute of Steel Construction for its annual Award of Merit for the Most Beautiful Steel Bridge of 1932 (Class C). It was also listed on the National Register in 1988 and designated in 1995 as a State Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.[21]



The Bryan Bridge shortly after its completion near Valentine, c. 1932 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Later Efforts to Complete U.S. Highway 20 In Nebraska

The realignment of U.S. Highway 20 through Wood Lake and the construction of the Bryan Bridge were significant steps in developing the highway's final alignment through Nebraska. Yet work along the rest of the road continued, although much less money was available due to the Depression and the resulting strain on roadway funding sources. This point was made in a 1933 meeting with State Engineer Roy Cochran, and a subsequent meeting with the governor, when Arthur Bowring and others learned that there was simply less money available for roads. Oiling the gravel already on the roadway was about the only activity for which money was available, and even some of that work had was not yet committed to contracts.[22]

Oil and gravel mixer on U.S. Highway 20 in Cherry County near Thatcher in 1931 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Nevertheless, some work did continue. By 1937-1938, U.S. Highway 20 was completely paved from South Sioux City to Stuart and only 83 miles of unpaved road remained between Stuart and the Wyoming state line. Work continued and by 1940, only eight miles of unpaved road near Harrison were found along U.S. Highway 20 in Nebraska. The state's biennial report of 1939-1940 observed that "when the bituminous and concrete pavements which were placed under contract during 1940 are all completed the status of pavement on the State Highway System will be as follows: Highway No. 20 will be paved across the entire State from Sioux City to the Wyoming State line."[23]

Finally, in June 1941, only six months before the United States was to enter the Second World War, the remaining eight miles of U.S. Highway 20 near Harrison were paved. As of June 28, 1941, the

Chadron Journal happily reported that U.S. Highway 20 was an "all weather hard surfaced route" from Boston, Massachusetts, to Yellowstone Park. Extending 2,385 miles, and due to its later period of construction, the road was "...laid out and engineered for fast transcontinental travel, sharp curves being eliminated and towns by-passed where possible." The newspaper also observed that U.S. Highway 20 had been extended only the year before from Yellowstone Park to Albany, Oregon. Occasional roadway segments between those two entities still needed to be paved. But it was reported that U.S. Highway 20, which was subsequently extended to Newport, Oregon, would be "...the shortest and most direct all weather route from coast to coast across the United States for tourists and commercial travel...."[24] The National Highway 20 Association, which included representatives from Chicago, Illinois, to Albany, Oregon, offered congratulations to those who worked on the roadway and called for a three-day celebration in Wyoming or Idaho.[25]

The National Highway 20 Association

The Blue Pole Highway had its promotional organization, as did the Grant Highway. The first effort to establish a Highway 20 Association, however, appears not to have occurred until 1933 when the Kiwanis Club of Gordon, Nebraska, called for one. Representatives of Nebraska towns from O'Neill to Harrison were invited to a meeting, as were delegates from Wyoming.[26]

But the call appears to have been unheeded until 1939 when the National Highway 20 Association was formally established. The group's first convention was in April 1940, a year that coincided with the highway's extension to Albany, Oregon, and then to Newport, Oregon, on the Pacific Ocean. The meeting was held in Lusk, Wyoming, and Nebraska's representatives included several people from Dawes County, among whom were Secretary Hill of the Chadron Chamber of Commerce, Dick Dempster, chairman of the local road committee and Ward Diehl, a Dawes County Commissioner.[27]

Roy Chamberlain, an oilman and hotel owner in Wyoming, established the association. Bert Bell became its secretary. The association developed grand plans. Six offices were to be opened between Wyoming and Boston. Additionally, the association printed 500,000 maps that identified the highway and the various roads that could contribute traffic to it. Also concocted was a five-year development plan, as was an idea to promote the highway as the "covered wagon trail." Radio advertisements were pursued, and a Highway 20 caravan was held in Sioux City, Iowa, in October 1940. About 20 to 50 people stayed in Chadron on Saturday night, October 26th on their way to Sioux City. Several Chadron residents also traveled on Sunday and Monday to Sioux City where the caravan's anticipated parade included 225 cars and 800 people, all of which were led into the community in a procession that included 350 musicians.[28]

Soon after the caravan and the Sioux City celebration, the United States became embroiled in World War II. Roy Chamberlain lost interest in the group as he became more involved in Wyoming politics. The association's headquarters also moved around. First to Sioux City, and then to Chadron. The organization did recover somewhat after the war. A new brochure was printed, likely sometime in the 1950s. But by the mid-1960s, despite having sponsored a car that promoted the highway and supplied information, the organization claimed representatives in only 43 cities in four states. Due to its flagging activities, the association disbanded.[29]

Roadside Parks, Motels and Other Interesting Stopping Places

Efforts to attract tourists along U.S. Highway 20 started almost as soon as the road was designated. One of the first types of amenities offered were campsites, or tourist camps. Valentine, for instance, was said in April 1927 to have "tourist campsites of remarkable beauty and comfort."[30] The combination of available campsites and an improving roadway prompted the *Valentine Democrat* to project a "...radical increase in tourist traffic...next season."[31] Indeed, by September 1928 a local count indicated that 619 cars had registered at the tourist park, while 2,250 guests had registered in the city's hotels. The visitors spent $15,000 at local gas stations, garages, hotels, eating places and others.[32]

Only two roadside parks remain along U.S. Highway 20 today and neither contains campsites. The first dates to 1933-1934, was publicly funded and is

associated with the Bryan Bridge. It was the first roadside park developed in the State of Nebraska and was described as:

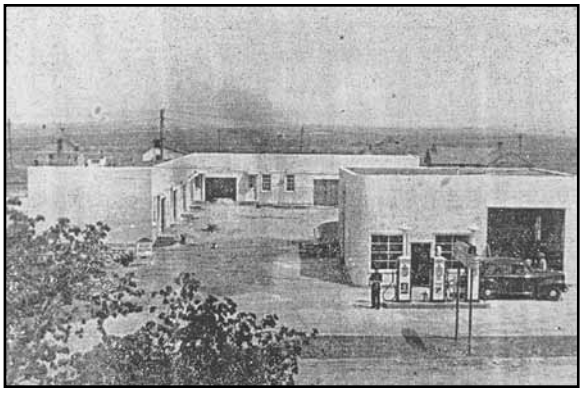
"a small park [that] had been developed on Highway No. 20 near the east end of the Bryan bridge southeast of Valentine. The area has been fenced and provided with benches, trails, a foot-bridge, and a well. Some cedar trees and many native shrubs have been planted in it, making the park a pleasant place for highway travelers to stop for an outdoor meal or for a fine view of the Niobrara River."[33]

Roadside park on Niobrara River by the Bryan Bridge in Cherry County near Valentine in 1933 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

The park remains today and provides an appropriate place from which to observe the Bryan Bridge, although neither the fence nor foot-bridge remain and the benches and picnic tables are modern (CE00-250).

Another extant park was developed privately. In 1938 Vic and Maude Thompson financed and built a two-acre roadside rest area called Spring Valley Park near their home along U.S. Highway 20 in Newport. This early wayside may have been the first created in the state using non-public funds. The Thompsons built the park after witnessing a fatal car accident near Bassett, which occurred due to the driver's fatigue.[34] The park became a convenient stop for travelers, who used the shelter, picnic tables and outhouses to relax after being on the road (RO00-078).

Local hotels seemed to compete with campgrounds for automobile travelers in the 1920s and 1930s. None of the hotels that remain today retain much integrity. Nevertheless, they offer insight into where early travelers along U.S. Highway 20 stayed–when they did not want to camp. Perhaps the best extant examples are the Blaine Hotel in Chadron (DW03-012), a three-story, brick building, and the Hotel Pfister in Rushville (SH08-007), a two-story, brick structure. As lodging facilities evolved, cabin courts replaced hotels and motels later replaced the cabin courts. The Nebraskaland Motel in Rushville (SH08-039) likely dates to the 1950s. Another motel that certainly conveys a sense of character, at least in its log cabin-constructed office, is the Log Cabin Motel in Chadron (DW03-131). The motel room building, however, appears to date to the 1950s or 1960s, and may have been remodeled since.



Historic image of the Nebraskaland Motel and Service Station in Rushville, SH08-039

As with so many highways today, the most frequently found resources are gas stations. Several of those observed along U.S. Highway 20 likely date to the late 1920s, and thus were associated with highway from its earliest years. Most are closed today, or contain businesses that are unrelated to the roadway. Yet the association of those structures with the road is unmistakable. Prominent gas stations are found in both Stuart and Orchard. The station in Stuart, at the northwest corner of Main and 3rd, has a hip roof, the canopy side of which is supported by two columns, while the opposing side is supported by the office. This canopy form was ubiquitous in the late 1920s and early 1930s (HT19-028). Another type of station built in the late 1920s is the Domestic-type which evokes the image of a house. A good example is the former station at the corner of Windom and 2nd in Orchard which is distinguished by a steeply pitched, gabled roof with flared eaves, as well as a small front wall gable (AP06-019). A larger gas station that contained a café, and thus likely serviced truck drivers, can be found in Laurel. A dominant structure along the highway, its integrity is very good although it is vacant and deteriorating (CD08-049).

Conclusion

U.S. Highway 20 was completed in 1941 and characterized as "the last transcontinental."[35] Although the highway was finished immediately before the United States entered World War II, and saw only nominal use during the war, U.S. Highway 20 thrived in the post-war years. Indeed, the Nebraska portion of the roadway did much to accommodate the national traveler of the 1940s and 1950s, both in terms of destinations offered along the route, as well as in the services provided by its adjacent businesses. However, by the late 1950s and 1960s, travel along the noted highway began to decline. The original Highway 20 Association also disbanded in the 1960s. Despite the decrease in usage, the highway still remains and can perhaps thrive once again. In an effort to re-kindle interest in the historic highway, a renewed Nebraska Highway 20 Association, for example, produced a publication entitled "Nebraska's 2001 Highway to Adventure." This publication describes the towns and resources along the road, acknowledges the importance of the historic highway, and recognizes that the Nebraska portion of U.S. Highway 20 can still play a vital transportation role for the state today and in the future.

Resources of U.S. Highway 20

Approximately 155 road-related properties were documented along U.S. Highway 20 representing a variety of resource types. Twenty-three properties were identified as potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) and are illustrated below. The counties are listed following east to west along U.S. Highway 20. For a full discussion of recommendations and a list of U.S. Highway 20 resources already listed in the National Register, see Chapter 9: Survey Results and Recommendations.

Cedar County

Service station and café by the intersection of U.S. Highway 20 & 1st Street in Laurel, CD08-049

Antelope County

Service station at the northeast corner of Windom & 2nd Streets in Orchard, AP06-019

Holt County

Drive-in theater with extant screen and combination projection room/concession stand, O'Neill vicinity, HT00-279.

Auto dealership and service garage at the southeast corner of William & State Streets in Atkinson, HT02-081

Rock County

Spring Valley Park, Newport vicinity, RO00-078

Service station at the northeast corner of William & State Streets in Atkinson, HT02-091

Spanish Colonial Revival style service station at the northeast corner of Clark & Legnard Streets in Bassett, RO01-039

Service station at the southeast corner of Douglas & 5th Streets in O'Neill, HT13-146

Bassett Lodge by Clark & Legnard Streets in Bassett, RO01-041

Brown County

Meadville Bridge, Meadville vicinity, BW00-067

Remington Arms Motel at 4th Street east of Pine Street in Ainsworth, BW01-186

Gas station by Oak & 4th Streets in Ainsworth, BW01-174

Cherry County

ca. 1933-34 roadside park, Valentine vicinity, CE00-250

Service station at the northwest corner of Walnut & 4th Streets in Ainsworth, BW01-175

Bank and service garage at the northeast corner of Nebraska & Cherry Streets in Cody, CE03-029

Service station by U.S. Highway 20 & Cherry Street in Cody, CE03-037

Sheridan County

Service station at the southeast corner of Oak & 2nd Streets in Gordon, SH05-030

Motel by Macomb & 2nd Streets in Valentine, CE14-059

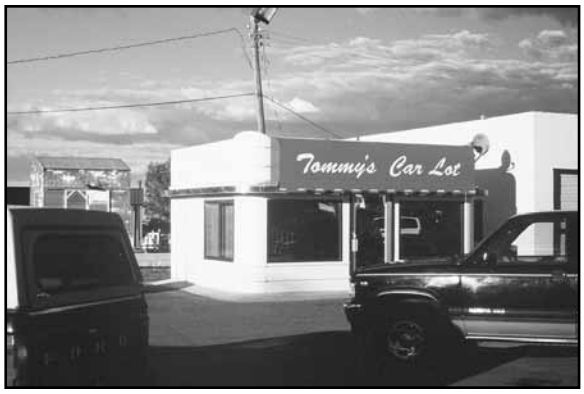
Service station and café at the southeast corner of U.S. Highway 20 & Main Street in Hay Springs, SH06-026

Corey/Ballard Motel by U.S. Highway 20 & Hall Street in Valentine, CE14-062

Gas station on Main Street north of the railroad line in Rushville, SH08-013

Moderne style cafe by U.S. Highway 20 & Conrad Street in Rushville, SH08-037

Dawes County



Moderne style gas station at 920 East 3rd Street in Chadron, DW03-133

Notes

[1] *Commercial Atlas of America* (Chicago, Ill.: Rand McNally & Company, n.d.), 280. Despite the fact that there is no date on the atlas, it is assumed to be c. 1925.

[2] "The Automobile As An Educator," *Norfolk Press*, 19 September 1912; *Auto Trails Map: District No. 11* (Chicago, Ill.: Rand McNally & Company, 1921), n.p; Commercial Atlas of America, 280; President of the Blue Pole Highway Association to George E. Johnson, State Engineer, 16 September 1922, Arthur Bowring Papers, Arthur Bowring Sandhills Ranch State Historical Park, Merriman, Nebr; "Road Boosters Meet," *Valentine Democrat*, 16 November 1923.

[3] *Auto Trails Map*, n.p.; "B.P.H. Meets Here in 1926," *Valentine Democrat*, 30 October 1925.

[4] "B.P.H. Meeting A Huge Success," *Valentine Democrat*, 19 November 1926; "Chadron Men at Blue Pole Highway Meet At Valentine," *Chadron Journal*, 19 November 1926.

[5] *Auto Trails Map*, n.p.; Malcolm MacKinnon to Arthur Bowring, 28 May 1922, Arthur Bowring Papers. It was not unusual in the west to ignore portions of a road that extended east of Chicago.

[6] "Blue Pole Road is Vital Line in National System," *Chadron Journal*, 27 November 1925.

[7] "Highway System is Designated in State of Nebraska," *Valentine Democrat*, 27 November 1925.

[8] "B.P.H. Meets Here in 1926,"; "Division Engineer and Bowring Inspect Roads," *Valentine Democrat*, 9 February 1928; "Bowring Well Received by Chamber of Commerce," *Cherry County News*, 16 October 1930; "Bowring Says No. 20 to Get Attention Soon," *Chadron Journal*, 18 December 1931.

[10] "The Grant Highway," *Valentine Democrat*, 29 April 1927.

[11] "The Grant Highway."

[12] "Eighty Road Projects in the 1924 Program," *Valentine Democrat*, 4 January 1924; "B.P.H. Meets Here in 1926."

[13] "Road Contracts to be Awarded," *Valentine Democrat*, 5 March 1926; "Work on Highway 20 Progressing Rapidly," *Valentine Democrat*, 12 August 1927.

[14] "Roads Improving Wonderfully Each Year," Valentine Democrat, 26 April 1928.

[15] "Road West Nearing Completion, Soon Graveled," *Valentine Democrat*, 14 June 1928; "Graveling Progressing Fine on Highway '20'," *Valentine Democrat*, 21 June 1928.

[16] "Crookston Kilgore Contract to be Let In June," *Valentine Democrat*, 9 May 1929.

[17] "New Road Open For Traffic," *Valentine Democrat*, 12 December 1929; Nebraska Department of Public Works, *Eighteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1929-1930* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Public Works, 1930), 64.

[18] "Federal Highway No. 20 to be Contracted," *Valentine Democrat*, 14 November 1929. The route via Sparks was approximately 59 miles, while that passing through Wood Lake was only 49 miles.

[19] "Propose New Route for Valentine-Wood Lake Road," *Cherry County News*, 15 January 1931; "M.P. Jordan Writes Concerning Highway," *Cherry County News*, 15 January 1931.

[20] "The Bryan Bridge," Nebraska State Historical Marker, Nebraska State Historical Society and the Department of Roads, Lincoln, Nebr.

[21] "Official Opening of New Highway on November 18," *Chadron Journal*, 25 November 1932; "The Bryan Bridge," Nebraska State Historical Marker.

[22] "Highway Twenty Meeting Held At Lincoln Monday," *Chadron Journal*, 30 June 1933.

[23] Bureau of Roads and Bridges, Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, Twenty-Second Biennial Report of the Bureau of Roads (Lincoln, Nebr.: Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1938), iii; Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, Twenty-Third Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1939-1940, (Lincoln, Nebr.: Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1940), 75-76.

[24] "Harrison Gap U.S. Hiway [sic] 20 Is Completed," *Chadron Journal*, 4 July 1941.

[25] "Harrison Gap U.S. Hiway [sic] 20 Is Completed."

[26] "Gordon Kiwanis to Sponsor a Highway Association," *Chadron Journal*, 9 June 1933.

[27] Daryl Norris, "Federal Highway 20: The Last Transcontinental," *The Great Lakes Geographer 2*, no. 1 (1995): 87-89; "Attend Highway 20 Road Meet at Lusk," *Chadron Journal*, 5 April 1940.

[28] Norris, 87-89; "Highway 20 Caravan Will Stop in Chadron," *Chadron Journal*, 25 October 1940.

[29] *US 20: From Coast to Coast U.S. 20 Points the Way to Save a Day* (Chadron, Nebr.: Highway 20 Association), n.p.; Norris, 87-89.

[30] "The Grant Highway."

[31] "Work on Highway 20 Progressing Rapidly."

[32] "Tourist Park Attracts Many Transient Guests," *Valentine Democrat*, 6 September 1928.

[33] Bureau of Roads and Bridges, Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twentieth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Roads and Bridges 1933-1934* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Department of Roads and Irrigation, Bureau of Roads and Bridges, 1934), 41.

[34] Candy Moulton, *Roadside History of Nebraska* (Missoula, Mont.: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1997), 287; Betty Stevens, "Couple Saw Need For First Rest Stop," *Lincoln Star*, 25 April 1988.

[35] Norris, 91.

Chapter 7
Interstate 80

Introduction

Interstate 80 (I-80) was planned and designed to be one of the nation's main transcontinental highways, stretching for 2,904 miles from the George Washington Bridge in New Jersey to the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge in northern California. It crosses 11 states: New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, and California, and spans the Sierra Mountains. The route connects with every major north-south interstate and 17 other interstate highways. Since its completion, I-80 has been considered America's main traffic artery, "America's Aorta," or the spine of America's interstate highway system.[1]

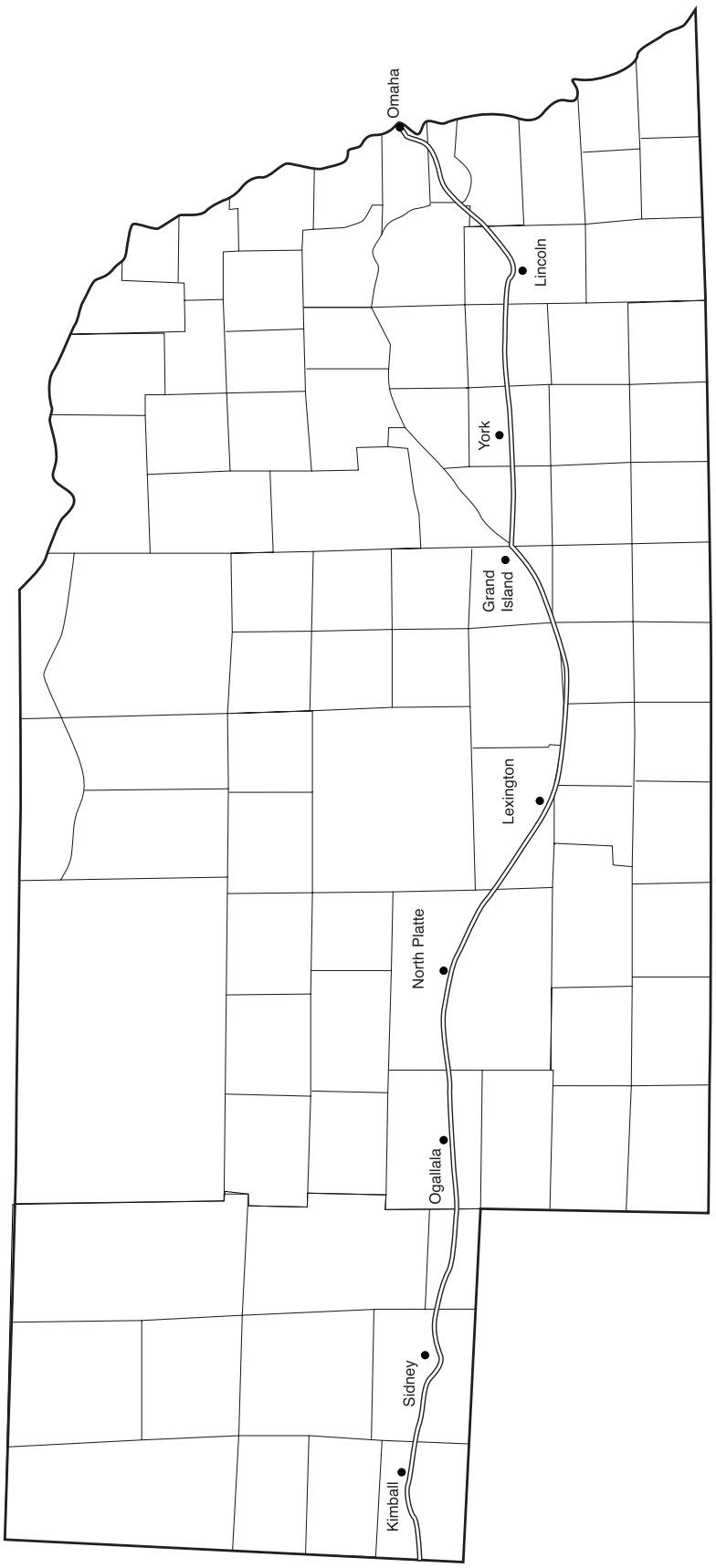
Planning and Development of the Nation's Interstate Highway System

Although the interstate highway system was not completed nationwide until the 1970s, it had been in the planning stages for nearly half a century. In 1922, 52 years before the interstate was complete in Nebraska, Congress instructed General John J. Pershing, Army Chief of Staff, to study the need for, and possible routes of, a nationwide system of express highways. His 1923 report to Congress offered two possible routes. One was a north-south route running approximately parallel to the Mississippi River, from the Canadian border to New Orleans. The second was an east-west highway following the approximate route of present-day Interstate 80. Although Congress did not proceed at this time with appropriate funds for further study or construction, Pershing's report sparked interest in the interstate highway system.[2]

Interest in the interstate system was renewed in 1938, when Congress directed the Federal Bureau of Public Roads to perform a feasibility study of a national superhighway network. The study was to:

"investigate and make a report of findings and recommend to the Congress not later than February 1, 1939, with respect to the feasibility of building, and cost of, superhighways not exceeding 3 in number, running in general direction from the eastern to the western portion of the United States, and not exceeding three in number, running in a general direction from the northern to the southern portion of the United States, including the feasibility of a toll system on such roads."[3]

The 1939 Federal Bureau of Public Roads report advocated the construction of a special system of direct interregional highways, with necessary connections through and around cities, that would meet the requirements of the national defense in time of war, as well as the increasing demands of traffic. However, the project was delayed by World War II and the diversion of tax money into military rearmament.[4]



Interstate 80

Interest in the 1939 report prompted Congress to commission another study in 1943, authorized to investigate national superhighway needs. The Commissioner of Public Roads was assigned to survey the need for a system of express highways, the number of such highways needed, the approximate routes they should follow, and the approximate construction costs. The 1944 report, entitled "Interregional Highways," led Congress to authorize the National System of Interstate Highways as part of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1944.[5]

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944 included three important steps leading to the development of an interstate highway network. The act authorized the first specific funds for federal aid in urban areas, it provided for the selection of a federal-aid secondary system (the farm-to-market roads), and it called upon the states and the Public Roads Administration (PRA), successor to the Bureau of Public Roads, to designate a national system of interstate highways. The system was not to exceed 40,000 miles in total connecting state capitals, principal metropolitan areas, cities, and industrial centers by direct routes. By 1947 the route selection was completed by the states, the PRA, and the military. The route system reported to Congress, as the "National System of Interstate Highways," was a network of roads that crossed each state and carried cross-country traffic north-south and east-west. Control points, major metropolitan cities that the routes would cross, were also identified.[6]

By the 1950s the proposed interstate highway system had been laid out and strict guidelines for road access had been established, but funding was still not available. In the 1952 Federal-Aid Highway Act, small funding provisions were made including the creation of a 50-50 matching plan between state and federal governments. Construction and progress on the superhighway system lagged under this financing and Congress made another attempt to finance the highway system in 1954. The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1954 provided for an increase in the federal share from 50 to 60% that would go into effect after all funds from the 1952 act had been expended. In an attempt to satisfy both the smaller populous eastern states and the larger, less-populated western states, 50% of the federal aid was based on population, and a formula was used to determine the other half of the federal share Bone-third on highway distance, one-third on population, and one-third on land area.

In 1954, efforts were made by President Eisenhower and Congress to address the nation's highway needs.[7] President Eisenhower had very strong feelings about the condition of the nation's highways. In 1919, he traveled from Washington to San Francisco along the Lincoln Highway as a lieutenant colonel on the U.S. Army's first transcontinental convoy of military vehicles. The trip took two months, due mostly to poor road conditions. As Supreme Allied Commander in World War II, Eisenhower witnessed Germany's autobahn system firsthand and became convinced of the need to improve his nation's roads. The long and arduous journey on the Lincoln Highway and the effectiveness of the autobahn had a profound effect on Eisenhower. He was quoted as saying, "The old (1919) convoy had started me thinking about good, two-lane highways, but Germany had made me see the wisdom of broader ribbons across the land."[8]

Car stuck along Lincoln Highway in Nebraska, 1915
(Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Eisenhower and Congress's appeals led to the passing of the 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act, authorizing construction of the 40,000 miles proposed in 1944. The purpose of the act was to carry out the provisions of the Federal-Aid Road Act of 1916 and "all Acts mandatory and supplementary thereto." In passing the act, Congress declared it essential to the national interest to provide a national system of interstate highways for early completion, as authorized under the Federal-Aid highway Act of 1944. The federal share of funding increased to 90%, reducing state funding to 10%. This meant that for every $9 million that the federal government spent on construction, the state of Nebraska was responsible for $1 million. A highway trust fund was established to allocate funds to the states for construction, right-of-way, and planning. These funds

were limited to highway development and construction, but not solely interstate highways. In addition to funding, the 1956 Act changed the name of the super-highway system to "The National System of Interstate and Defense Highways," stressing the importance of national defense.[9]

In order to finance its 90% responsibility for the interstate highway system, the federal government increased existing user taxes and created new taxes under the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, with certain revenues set aside for road-building purposes. Included in these revenues were:

- one cent increase in the gasoline tax and the diesel fuel tax
- raise in tire tax from five cents to eight cents per pound
- 2% increase in the tax on new trucks, truck-trailers and buses
- new tax of three cents per pound on camelback (retread rubber)
- highway-user tax on heavy vehicles of $1.50 per 1,000 pounds of gross weight on vehicles over 26,000 pounds

In order to raise their 10%, the Nebraska Legislature passed a 1957 law raising state motor fuel taxes from six to seven cents. At the time it was believed that this increase would be sufficient for the state and counties to meet their financial obligations and accelerate construction.[10]

In addition to funding, the 1956 legislation provided that the 41,000 mile highway system be completed within 13-15 years, bringing the interstate to a simultaneous completion in all states. Other provisions of the act included a request for uniform design standards to be agreed upon by the Bureau of Public Roads and the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO).[11] The act also suggested several population centers, known as "control points," located along avenues of the greatest travel. The proposed highway was recommended to serve and connect these population centers. Although inclusion of the "control points" was not mandated, federal, state, and local highway engineers mutually agreed that the interstate would connect these points.[12] Nationally, with connection of the control points, the interstate highway system would serve 90% of the cities in the United States with populations over 50,000, 65% of the urban population, and 50% of the rural population. In Nebraska three control points were identified B Omaha, Lincoln, and North Platte. In 1958 it was estimated that the interstate system would carry 20% of all motor vehicle traffic, but would only constitute 1.2 % of the country's total road mileage.[13]

Federal Design Standards

The PRA worked with AASHO on design standards for the proposed superhighways.[14] Rather than creating a strict set of standards for the entire system, a more flexible approach was decided on that took topography, population, and expected traffic patterns into account. Four-lane divided highways would generally be the rule, but two-lane highways with some at-grade crossings would exist in low traffic areas. Access to the highways would be limited and they would be designed to handle projected traffic loads 20 years after completion. These standards were created for safety purposes, but also ensured that motorists traveling across the country would have a uniform driving experience and would not need to familiarize themselves with varying sign types, interchange systems, speeds, and road conditions. In August of 1946 the PRA approved the standards and decided on its preferred routes for the future interstate with suggestions from the states.

I-80 near Milford exit in Seward County, c. 1970
(Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Interstate Design Criteria

The Preliminary Engineering Statement for the interstate highway between Omaha and Lincoln detailed several of the design criteria incorporated into the roadway based on AASHO's Geometric Design Standards for the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. The highway was designed for speeds of 70 miles per hour in rural areas and 60 miles per hour in the urban Omaha section. Cut and fill sections were formulated and alignment followed certain measures, including required distances between curves and minimum curve lengths. Sight distances were designed to be as long as practical, but to always follow AASHO requirements. All crossings and intersecting highways had to be separated by the use of grade separation structures, or overpasses and bridges. Generally, grade separation structures were required to be simple span, deck, slab structures. Through trusses and girders were only to be used when conditions made deck, slab type structures prohibitive. Deck slabs for all structures were required to have a 3/4-inch integral-wearing surface with the provision made for a future 2-inch asphaltic concrete wearing surface. Structures carrying the interstate highway that were 150-feet or less in length were required to have a minimum clear width of 37-feet, with a 3-foot shoulder on the left, a 24-foot roadway, and a 10-foot shoulder on the right. Strict requirements were also established for any structures carrying cross roads above or below the interstate. Interchanges were required to have minimum sight distances and ramps with 12-foot lanes, and to follow established guidelines for ramp grades and alignment. Acceleration and deceleration lanes had requirements for minimum distances and had to be designed to handle certain speeds.

(J. E. Greiner Company, Interstate Highway Omaha to Lincoln [Baltimore, Md.: J.E. Greiner Company for the State of Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, c.1960]).

The interstate system was designed for high-speed travel with maximum safety. The interstate's dimensions called for a wide right-of-way, 180-250 feet. Grades were minimized and sharp curves eliminated. Shoulders and medians were wide with gradual ditches to reduce injuries in the event a vehicle left the roadway. Cloverleaf interchanges were incorporated into freeway design in order to keep traffic moving at a constant speed.[15]

One Mile in Five

Legend has it that the Eisenhower Interstate Highway System required one out of every five miles of highway to be straight, allowing for emergency airplane landing strips in times of war and other emergencies. According to Richard F. Weingroff of the FHWA's Office of Infrastructure, this is not true. The frequent occurrence of overpasses and interchanges would make it impossible for planes to attempt to land on the majority of the interstate system. While the interstate highway system was created to serve as a highway to support defense activities, in actuality the design standards of the overpasses did not have a high enough standard clearance for military vehicles, making the interstate useless for moving troops.

("Is One Mile Out of Every Five on Interstate Highways Straight for Emergency Airplane Landing Strips?" n.d., <http://geography.about.com/library/faq/blqzinterstaterunways.htm> [Accessed 5 November 2001]).

In addition to safety standards, design standards were implemented. AASHO adopted its initial Geometric Design Standards for the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways on July 12, 1956. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in cooperation with AASHO, set highway design standards as mandated by the 1956 act for uniformity and safety. Traffic lanes were required to be at least 12 feet wide and designed for speeds up to 70 miles per hour. Grades were not to exceed 6% and bridges required a minimum 14-foot clearance. The final interstate design standards were the result of decades of planning and design by state and federal engineers, auto clubs, and civil engineers.[16]

Tri-level overpass showing design standards for grade separation structures near Omaha, 1961 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

I-80 in Nebraska: Route Selection and Conflict

The interstate in Nebraska was intended to be the backbone of the state highway system, carrying the bulk of the cross-country traffic safely and quickly. Within Nebraska, it would stretch for approximately 450 miles, from Omaha in the east to the Wyoming state line, west of Kimball. In Nebraska, it took 17 years, from 1957 until 1974, to complete the construction of the interstate across the state's landscape. During this period it was the central focus of the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) and the State Highway Commission.[17]

The 1947 federal route designations presented a general corridor for the interstate across Nebraska. The general route of I-80 would enter Nebraska in the east at Omaha and travel a similar route as U.S. 6 to Lincoln. From Lincoln it would roughly follow U.S. 34 to Grand Island. From Grand Island the route would follow U.S. 30 to the state's western border. Spurs were planned for downtown Omaha and Lincoln, allowing for bypass routes around the central downtown core. Another spur, I-76 (originally numbered I-80S), would connect Big Springs to Denver, Colorado, approximately 170 miles southwest.[18]

The NDOR, the State Highway Commission, and the governor were responsible for developing and selecting the actual route within the general corridor outlined by the federal government. The route selection process began with the study and survey of each possible route assessing all feasible alternatives and studying traffic patterns. Further studies included a cost analysis with economic studies of alternative locations and right-of-way acquisition. This was followed by an extensive engineering and economic study completed in 1955 to determine the final location of the interstate highway in Nebraska. Once the route was selected, public meetings were held by the State Highway Commission.[19]

Once the Nebraska interstate highway system planning began, struggles ensued. As in previous highway selections, for the Lincoln and Detroit-Lincoln-Denver highways in particular, Nebraska communities lobbied to be included on the interstate route. Many groups formed to lobby for their preferred interstate location. These groups represented entire communities, special interest groups, or factions that had a stake in the final location of I-80 across Nebraska.

Which side of the Platte River?

One of the biggest routing controversies had to do with the location of the interstate on either the north or south bank of the Platte River in central Nebraska. Even before the 1954 Federal Aid Highway Act was passed, controversy ensued over the interstate alignment between the Hastings-Grand Island area and North Platte. Earlier that year, Lincoln Star writer Clarke Thomas proposed building the interstate south of the Platte River, arguing that the area had fewer towns and that construction difficulties would be no worse than on the north side. In June of 1955 governor Victor Anderson predicted that the route would be located somewhere between Grand Island and Hastings, a logical assumption since they were two of the largest cities in Nebraska. Thomas' and Anderson's remarks raised hopes among those on the south side of the Platte River that the interstate would be located there.[20]

In 1956 the NDOR announced tentative plans for the interstate route east of North Platte. The portion between Hastings-Grand Island and North Platte would follow the north bank of the Platte River. In response to the announcement, 42 towns south of the Platte River formed the South Platte United Chambers of Commerce (SPUCC) lobbying group. They proposed their own interstate route in August of 1956, located south of the Platte River. The SPUCC route ran between Hastings and Grand Island, then on to Grant in Perkins County, where it would split with one branch running to Denver and the other toward Wyoming. Although state senators from districts south of the Platte supported the route, the NDOR immediately rejected the SPUCC proposal. The route did not service the "control point" of North Platte, one of the provisions of the 1956 congressional plan. The SPUCC responded by arguing that their route would be shorter and less expensive then the route proposed by the NDOR, and implied that North Platte should be dropped as a "control point."

As a form of compromise, in 1957 the Hastings Chamber of Commerce proposed an interstate route that ran between the routes sought by the SPUCC and the NDOR, but also bypassed North Platte. Supporters of this route argued that it would cost $100 million less than the NDOR route, since it was shorter and could be built on less costly land, with fewer bridges required for crossing rivers, railroads and roads. In addition, it was argued that the route was less likely to be interrupted or damaged during

wartime, and could be easily diverted to U.S. Route 30 or U.S. Route 6. The Hastings group also stated that the interstate would have no direct benefit to their community and only wanted to see Nebraska build and maintain a road that would cost taxpayers less.[21]

Other lobbying groups included proponents of a north bank route. During the 1959 state legislature session, five state senators introduced a bill that would mandate the NDOR to build the interstate on land adjacent to U.S. 30 on the north bank of the Platte River. This plan called for the incorporation of U.S. 30 into two-lanes of interstate traffic, with two additional lanes constructed alongside for traffic bound in the opposite direction. This plan was met by strong opposition from NDOR and AASHO and was vetoed the following month.[22]

In the spring of 1959 the NDOR began estimating the cost of building the interstate on both the north and the south banks of the Platte River. On February 8, 1959, the State Highway Advisory Commission announced that the north bank route was projected to cost $46,911,000 while the southern route would cost $55,761,000. Although the southern route was more expensive, the SPUCC continued the fight for their proposed route.

In an effort to solve the routing controversy, the State Highway Advisory Commission scheduled public hearings in Kearney and Cozad. At the hearings, the north bank supporters argued that because more people lived within five miles of the north bank than the south bank, a northern route was justified. They also argued that the northern route would favor industrial development that was already located north of the Platte River. The NDOR spoke out in favor of the north route, which was shorter and would require fewer bridges and county road crossings than a southern route. Proponents of the southern route argued that the north bank route would "squeeze" industrial development between the interstate, U.S. 30, and the Union Pacific Railroad, limiting the amount of industrial development to be located south of the Platte River. The south bank proponents also argued that possible wartime damage to the Kingsley Dam, located north of Ogallala between Lake McConaughy and Ogallala Lake, would flood the interstate if it were located north of the Platte River. They also argued that local traffic would likely congest the interstate regularly if it were located north of the Platte River.[23]

In March of 1959 the NDOR announced their approval of the north bank route, citing arguments they presented at the previous hearings, as well as the support of the Federal Bureau of Public Roads. Although the NDOR made recommendations, Governor Ralph G. Brooks had the final decision. He was lobbied by the SPUCC, which cited lower construction costs south of the river despite the NDOR study. In response, the North-of-the-Platte Highway Association was formed to oppose SPUCC attempts to move the route south of the river. Despite the lobbying efforts of SPUCC, Governor Brooks affirmed the north bank route on January 28, 1960.[24]

Location of I-80 West of North Platte

After construction on the section east of North Platte began, controversy arose over the location of the interstate west of the community. When it was announced in late 1957 that the North Platte exit would be located on U.S. 83 south of the city, few people understood the significance. In order for the exit to be located south of the city, which is located at the confluence of the North and South Platte Rivers, the exit would be located south of the South Platte River. This indication that the entire route would be located south of the South Platte River spurred local controversy. In an effort to solve the issue, hearings for public comment began in Ogallala and North Platte in 1961. The president of the Greater Nebraska Interstate (GNI) lobbying organization argued that the route should be located north of the South Platte River to serve the population concentration. This route was also seen as providing the best access to the recreation areas of northwest Nebraska. The North Platte Motel Association also spoke in favor of this route, believing it would create economic benefits and spur local tourism. Chambers of Commerce in northern communities banded together and lobbied for a route north of the South Platte River. The Keith County News, an Ogallala newspaper, editorially endorsed the route north of the South Platte River. To support this opinion they used statistics estimating the population of Nebraska north of the South Platte River at 149,137 and 47,729 south of the South Platte River. They claimed that on a per capita basis the higher estimated cost of the north route, about $60 million, was offset by the higher population. They also claimed that Colorado would be the primary beneficiary of a southern route. Although the majority of northerners supported a northern route, some opposed the idea citing possible negative effects, including interrupting ranches and disrupting the economy.[25]

In December of 1961 the NDOR announced its backing of a route south of the South Platte River. As with the previous route controversies, the northern route backers continued to appeal their case, stating that the department was "making a big mistake and turning their back on all of northwestern Nebraska." They felt that the southern route would make it difficult for northern Nebraskans to travel east, and would divert trade from Lincoln and Omaha into Denver.[26]

The route controversy moved on to the Nebraska Highway Advisory Commission, a seven member group appointed by the Governor to advise highway planning and routing in Nebraska.[27] Governor Frank B. Morrison held the final decision, but had stated that he would support any decision the commission made. In attempts to sway opinions, proponents of both routes lobbied commissioners for their support. In January of 1962, the Nebraska Highway Advisory Commission voted in favor of a northern route west of North Platte and recommended that Governor Morrison select a route on the north bank of the South Platte River. The recommendation of the commission went against the NDOR recommendations made the previous month.

The Governor, siding with the Nebraska Highway Advisory Commission, did not end the controversy. In February of 1962 the Federal Bureau of Public Roads, the agency responsible for allocating 90% of federal funds for highway development and construction, ruled that they would not support the north interstate route. Although the Bureau had no authority to determine the route, they had the power to withhold the finances needed to proceed with the project. The Bureau saw no justification for the higher cost of a route north of the river. After the Bureau's ruling, the state engineer announced that the interstate would follow the south route originally recommended by the NDOR, and approved by the Federal Bureau of Public Roads in 1957. After continued lobbying by proponents of a northern route, the Bureau reaffirmed its decision in March. Governor Morrison, with the support of the Highway Commission, ordered the NDOR to begin construction on the southern route to follow the southern bank of the South Platte River.[28]

In addition to siting the actual route of the interstate, another problem facing the NDOR was the relationship of the interstate to Nebraska's county roads. Under federal guidelines, each road that the interstate passed had to be closed or diverted over or under the interstate. Officials at the NDOR believed that existing state laws would prevent the closing of any county roads, requiring more expensive overpass structures than had been previously estimated, perhaps as many as one per mile in some areas. Through a loose interpretation of the state law, some county roads were closed at the intersection of the interstate and individual accommodations were made with people affected by such closings.[29]

A county road crossing over I-80 in Cass County near Greenwood, 1961 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Financing I-80 in Nebraska

Controversy in Nebraska was not limited to the routing of the interstate highway. As early as the 1940s there was controversy regarding the possibility of a toll highway system in Nebraska. During the 1940s, Nebraska formed a turnpike authority to study the feasibility of constructing a state toll road network. Federal Bureau of Public Roads members expressed that the development of an interstate would likely eliminate the possibility of Nebraska building a turnpike. In 1954, the Nebraska State Engineer validated this fear when he announced that the state would support whichever system was constructed first, but could not support both. General support for toll road construction began to wane in 1957 when interstate construction began in earnest.[30]

One of the largest funding controversies began in 1960 when representatives of several panhandle communities met to discuss their opposition to the construction priorities and funding established for the new interstate. Along with the SPUCC and the Western Nebraska United Chambers of Commerce

(WNUCC), the panhandle representatives formed the Greater Nebraska Interstate (GNI) organization. The group argued that construction of rural, trunk-line interstate routes should receive higher priority in spending terms than urban spur routes. The NDOR planned to build first in Omaha and then move west to lower construction costs across the state. However, GNI felt that state funds should not be used for a route through Omaha that would serve primarily local traffic. Since the interstate's purpose was to facilitate long-haul traffic, GNI felt that any routes in downtown Omaha should be constructed after the main trunk-line was completed. The group also worried that projects in Omaha would expend all funds and leave greater Nebraska without an interstate. In January of 1960, a Lincoln Star editorial criticized construction of a downtown Omaha route that would serve local traffic and contradict the goal of moving long-haul traffic. At the request of U.S. Representative Don McGinley, public hearings were convened to resolve the controversy. At the hearings the state and representatives of GNI compromised and adopted a funding ratio of 23% urban construction and 77% rural construction. This compromise was intended to appease rural construction proponents by funding rural interstate construction, while continuing to fund urban construction. The compromise solved the funding controversy until 1970 when state officials readjusted the ratio in favor of urban construction with public support.[31]

Construction of I-80 in Nebraska

Although work in Nebraska began almost immediately after the 1956 legislation was passed, neighboring states had the distinction of completing the first national interstate highway projects. Missouri became the first state to award an interstate highway construction contract under the 1956 federal act. Kansas, which had awarded an interstate contract before the legislation passed, finished the first interstate project in the United States under provisions of the 1956 act.[32]

In Nebraska, interstate construction was planned for four phases over an anticipated 15-year time line. The first construction phase was between Omaha and Lincoln. This was chosen as a priority because it was the most heavily traveled traffic corridor along the proposed interstate. The existing route was on a poor alignment, in bad physical condition, and was unable to handle the current traffic load. Work on this section was begun in 1957. Projects included spurs, or access routes, that routed traffic around the cities of Lincoln and Omaha rather than directly through. Difficulties were encountered in planning and designing the route, including the location of the bridge spanning the Missouri River and the acquisition of right-of-way.

I-480 in Omaha, 1960-70s (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

The first interstate project in Nebraska was the 6.4 miles near Gretna in Sarpy County, southwest of Omaha. The contractors were the Western Contracting Corporation of Sioux City; Booth and Olson, Inc. of Sioux City; Capitol Bridge Company of Lincoln; Wren and Taylor of Grand Island; and the Platte Valley Construction Company of Grand Island. In November of 1959 it became the first segment of Nebraska's interstate to be completed and open to traffic.

The second construction phase was the 195-mile section between Grand Island and North Platte. Like the Lincoln to Omaha section, it carried a heavy amount of traffic and was in poor condition. The completed interstate was intended to relieve the existing U.S. 30 of heavy amounts of traffic, allowing it to become a service road between towns. The presence of U.S. 30 allowed for a minimum of traffic delays caused by construction activities, except at the locations of interchanges. Contracts for this section were awarded between 1960 and 1964.

The third construction phase was the section between Lincoln and Grand Island. Although this area carried heavy traffic loads, there were already four existing paved alternate routes in the area B U.S. 30, U.S. 30-A, U.S. 34, and U.S. 6. Contracts for this phase were awarded between 1964 and 1967.

The last phase was the portion between North Platte and the Big Springs junction near the Colorado state line. Traffic volumes in this area were considerably less than those east of North Platte. Work in this section was also dependent on plans for connections in Wyoming and Colorado. Construction on the section west of North Platte commenced in 1967.[33]

I-480 showing entrance/exit ramps and local traffic diverted under highway in Omaha, 1960-70s (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

In 1957 plans were developed for the entire route across Nebraska to be a four-lane divided highway with sufficient right-of-way to build additional lanes as necessary.[34] In accordance with design standards, the interstate would be designed to handle fast-moving vehicles at speeds up to 70 miles per hour. A wide median would divide the opposing traffic lanes and provide safety features, including prevention of head-on collisions. Strict access control was called for in interstate standards and this was accomplished by entrance/exit ramps and acceleration/ deceleration lanes. The lanes would allow for vehicles to accelerate and safely merge with fast-moving traffic, or decelerate while approaching a non-interstate highway or road. Access to the interstate would be denied to local roads where traffic loads were not heavy enough to warrant it. In places where the interstate crossed local highways or county roads, the local traffic would be carried over or under the highway on grade separation structures, varying in size and capacity depending on the traffic load and terrain. The interstate would also go above or below railroad tracks.[35]

In western Nebraska, the section between Sidney and Big Springs was projected to carry a smaller amount of traffic, and the FHWA proposed to narrow the interstate from four-lanes to two-lanes. When the additional lanes were warranted, the section would be expanded to four-lanes. The NDOR opposed the two-lane proposal, citing the dangers of high-speed traffic and the absence of a passing lane. This would have been the only two-lane section of I-80 across the country. For approximately 1,800 miles to the east and 1,600 miles to the west, vehicles had lanes for passing. NDOR officials were certain that a narrower stretch would cause more accidents and that the wider route was justified. The NDOR won out and the route between Sidney and Big Springs was constructed as four-lanes.[36]

Because the interstate followed a level riverbed and soil conditions were good, construction on some rural portions of the Nebraska route was swift. The availability of aggregate materials was also a factor in construction speed. Limestone was available in the eastern portion of the state and used as aggregate between Lincoln and Omaha. Limestone was also used in the western section of the interstate, near Wyoming. Where limestone wasn't readily available in the Platte River Valley gravel was used as aggregate. Gravel was readily available in the Grand Island, Kearney, and North Platte areas, but supplies dwindled west of North Platte. In order to have enough for construction, contractors had to set up months in advance in some locations in order to produce the gravel needed for the project.[37]

The ease of acquiring right-of-way expedited the construction process in rural areas. In the urban areas, construction was slowed by right-of-way acquisition and the logistics of routing a highway through settled neighborhoods. This was an expensive and time-consuming task that required the NDOR to gain ownership of the property, relocate occupants, and remove buildings.

Despite a slow start in 1956 and 1957 and the struggles over the location of the highway, interstate construction picked up momentum and much of the highway was completed in the 1960s. At the time of publication of the NDOR's 1961-1962 Biennial Report, 75 miles of interstate highway had been completed and opened, with 25 more miles expected to be complete soon after. By 1962 the stretch between Omaha and Lincoln was opened for traffic. Work was progressing on the stretch west of Grand Island (Hall County), and contracts had been let for the portion between Elm Creek (Buffalo County), and North Platte (Lincoln County). By 1964 the stretch between Gothenburg (Dawson County) and

Grand Island was completed and opened, as well as the access route to the city of Lincoln. The year 1966 saw the completion of the entire Omaha-Grand Island route. Limited funding during the 1967-1968 biennium of the Nebraska legislature meant less construction on the interstate. The stretch between Big Springs (Deuel County) and Hershey (Lincoln County) was opened for traffic in late 1967, as well as a small portion east of the Wyoming state line, and construction had begun on the 15-mile stretch between Big Springs and Chappell (Deuel County).[38]

Stretch of I-80 that runs parallel to U.S. Highway 30 and the Union Pacific Railroad in Lincoln County near Brady, 1969 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Construction progressed across the state and by 1972 the interstate was open to Sunol (Cheyenne County) from the east and Kimball (Kimball County) from the west. A 60-mile gap was left between the two western Nebraska communities, representing a break in the interstate system. The final section of interstate was scheduled to be complete by the end of the 1973 construction season.

Celebration of Completion of Nebraska Interstate

On October 19, 1974, a "Golden Link" ceremony was held five miles west of Sidney (Cheyenne County) to mark the opening of the final mainline segment of the Nebraska section of the I-80 interstate. This "Golden Link" was an embedded brass-top section of channel-iron across all four-lanes of traffic at rest areas west of Sidney. The final cost of completing I-80 in Nebraska was $390 million, or about $857,000 per mile.[39]

Nebraska became the first state in the nation to complete its mainline interstate system.[40] This was due in part to the state's low population density and vast rural areas. Although many states had large portions of I-80 completed during the 1960s, problem areas held up final completion for several years. Omaha routing complications and difficulty in negotiating right-of-way held up completion in Nebraska. In Reno, Nevada, residents were angry that the planned highway would divide the city in half. Residents of Salt Lake City, Utah, had concerns about the interstate's effects on their lake. Smaller communities across the country were concerned about the location of the interstate would lead to possible economic decline. In some cases it would take years for the issues to be dealt with and construction to be completed.[41]

Nebraska Interstate Completion Dates

County	*Completion and Open to Traffic Date*
Douglas	December 15, 1972
Sarpy	November 8, 1961
Cass	August 11, 1961
Lancaster	December 11, 1962
Seward	October 15, 1966
York	December 3, 1966
Hamilton	December 3, 1966
Hall	December 10, 1965
Buffalo	November 27, 1963
Dawson	September 6, 1965
Lincoln	November 11, 1968
Keith	November 11, 1968
Deuel	November 4, 1971
Cheyenne	October 19, 1974
Kimball	December 7, 1973

Continuous Improvement of I-80

Since construction of the Nebraska interstate was a lengthy process, improvements were often made to interstate sections that were open before the entire system was complete. In 1962, the NDOR began making improvements in Sarpy and Cass Counties, the first Nebraska counties to have the interstate complete and open to traffic. These improvements included a weigh station, sodding right-of-way, improving rest areas, and sign modification.

The "Golden Link" dedication marker commemorating the completion of the final stretch of Nebraska I-80, October 19, 1974 (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

An analysis of the NDOR database logs shows that unspecified roadside improvements occurred on I-80 across Nebraska, often only one year after interstate completion. Popular projects in the late 1960s and 1970s included improving rest areas, adding picnic areas, modifying signs, plantings and landscaping, adding tower lighting, modifying guard rails, and installing interchange lighting.

During the 1980s and 1990s roadside improvements and rest area modifications continued, along with bridge repair, ramp revisions, pavement markings, and joint and crack repairs. Protective sealants were added to the majority of Nebraska's I-80 during this period. Other improvements included noise barriers constructed in Douglas County during the 1990s and milled rumble strip shields, a shoulder safety measure, added in several counties during the late 1990s and 2000. A major improvement along I-80 was the construction of additional lanes in Omaha. The reconstructed portion of I-80 carries a heavy amount of traffic and traffic volumes projected during construction have already been exceeded.

I-80 Waysides in Nebraska

The interstate was built to serve long distance travel. It frequently bypassed towns and crossed vast rural areas. Therefore, rest areas were seen as necessary and the NDOR began constructing areas along the route to accommodate travelers. At the same time that interstate right-of-way was being acquired, additional property was acquired for rest stop locations. Two goals were established for the I-80 rest stops. Travel safety was a top priority, and each was to be an "Oasis on the Plains." These structures were constructed along the interstate at 50-60 mile intervals. The earliest facilities were constructed for long-term use and to be appealing to the traveler. Where previous rest stops had a small picnic area and an outhouse, the new versions offered ample parking, fresh water, flush toilets, space for children and pets to play, and tourist information.

I-80 rest area showing picnic shelters and other amenities for the traveler in Seward County near Goehner, late 1970s (Photo courtesy of NDOR)

Bob Jacobson, landscape architect for the NDOR, chose durable materials for the rest stops. Jacobson's picnic shelter designs were open, yet offered shade and wind protection. Each small concrete shelter included separate picnic areas, offering shade and wind protection. The landscape featured lush lawns, sturdy shrubs, trees, and open spaces for children to play. The first two rest areas were opened in 1963, located at the Greenwood interchange between Lincoln and Omaha. Six more rest areas were planned to be ready for the 1965 tourist season at the Alda interchange, the Gibbon interchange, and two near Kearney and Cozad.

During the 1970s modifications were made to the standard Nebraska rest stops. Tables were added to open picnic areas where trees were large enough to provide shade. Tourist information booths were provided once the Nebraska tour guide program was started. Concrete sculpture pieces, designed for small children to play on, were added and maintenance storage areas were expanded.[42] The Nebraska I-80 Bicentennial Sculpture Project, begun in 1973 and completed in 1976, created outdoor sculptures commemorating America's Bicentennial, located at rest areas interspersed along the interstate.[43]

Effects of I-80

Once I-80 was complete and operational, the benefits and detriments of the Nebraska interstate system were visible. With reduced long-distance and commercial traffic in cities, benefits included: increased business activity due to improved traffic conditions, an increase in property values in areas traversed by the bypass, fewer traffic accidents and delays on city streets, reduced wear and tear on city streets due to less heavy truck movement, reduced noise and fumes in business districts, reduced fire and gas hazards in urban areas with reduced truck travel, expedited through traffic, simplified local traffic, and increased urban pedestrian safety and convenience. In addition to these benefits, goods became available to consumers at more reasonable prices because of unhampered distribution, and savings in time and depreciation on equipment were also passed on to the consumer.[44]

The opening of the interstate also had negative economic effects for communities and businesses that were not on the interstate route. Traffic shifted away from several east-west highways, such as U.S. 30 and U.S. 6. Small businesses located along U.S. 6 in Waverly, Ashland, and Gretna that relied on passing traffic to stop lost business as travel shifted to the interstate. The Covered Wagon Souvenir Shop outside Kearney was a popular tourist attraction along U.S. 30 prior to the interstate. Unable to compete with the interstate, it closed the day the interstate opened. In addition to the effect on businesses, the interstate also had negative effects on communities and local farms. Where the previous roads had followed section lines, the interstate followed half-sections in rural areas to preserve existing section-line roads. As a result, the interstate often split up farms and neighborhoods. Within the city of Omaha, the interstate disturbed an established older neighborhood primarily occupied by elderly immigrants. The NDOR acquired right-of-way and relocated displaced residents, but the neighborhood was permanently divided when the interstate was routed directly through the center.[45] One engineer summed up the problem by stating:

"the Interstate takes a wider strip of land than an ordinary road would. People just didn't want you cutting across their place. The alignment of the Interstate is very important and you want it as straight a road as you can get. Often, that meant that you would isolate one part of a farm from the rest of it and there would be no way to cross it like an ordinary road. So, you can't blame the farmer for fighting a situation like that. The judgement that was handed down, when you finally got one, would be to compensate him for his loss of access. The only way you can cross the Interstate, of course, is where you have a bridge. For a farmer with 40 acres on the other side of the road, who has to drive 10 miles to get to it, that's pretty rough."[46]

Tourism on the Interstate

The basic function of the interstate was to get people from point A to point B, with little concern for scenery. Where motels, filling stations, and other stopping-off points for the passing motorist were scattered up and down the interstate predecessors (the Lincoln and D-L-D Highways in Nebraska), the interstate had little or no roadside attractions. Some called it the "blanding of America" and remarked that you could drive the interstate from coast to coast and not see anything.[47]

Business such as restaurants, gas stations, and motels rushed to acquire property at interstate interchanges. Competition became fierce and national franchises won out as the dominant force along the interstate. Fast-food restaurants, large hotel chains, and large self-serve gas stations/convenience stores could be found at a typical interchange. The majority of franchises followed standardized designs and were immediately recognizable to the passing motorist. The Howard Johnson Motor Lodge utilized an orange-colored gabled roof as the franchise trademark. The McDonald's fast-food chain used the recognizable "golden arches" in the early restaurant designs and signage. This new "tourism" along the interstate stressed speed and convenience. Gone were the local drive-in restaurants, service stations, and souvenir shops. The interstate, and the businesses located along it, catered to a nation on the move and reflected little of the local or regional character.

Conclusion

I-80 encompasses only a fraction of America's present interstate highway system. In addition to I-80, several major interstate highway routes cross the nation. These include, among others:[48]

- I-10 from Los Angeles, California, to Jacksonville, Florida
- I-90 from Seattle, Washington, to Boston, Massachusetts

- I-70 from Cove Fort, Utah, to Baltimore, Maryland
- I-5 from San Diego, California, to Blaine, Washington (the only interstate to stretch from Mexico to Canada)
- I-15 from San Diego, California, to Sweetgrass, Montana
- I-35 from Laredo, Texas, to Duluth, Minnesota
- I-55 from New Orleans, Louisiana, to Chicago, Illinois
- I-65 from Mobile, Alabama, to Gary, Indiana
- I-75 from Miami, Florida, to Sault St. Marie, Michigan
- I-95 from Miami, Florida, to Houlton, Maine.
- H-3 Hawaii's own interstate system

By 1990 the interstate system included a total of 45,530 miles, with a few small projects remaining in areas with special needs, such as Hawaii. In addition to adding more mileage to the interstate, the FHWA, along with states, is researching new surface materials and road types for future interstate construction. These changes will insure that the interstate grows with transportation demands and will be adequate in the years to come.

Notes

[1] Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways* (New York, N.Y.: Viking, 1997), 156.

[2] James C. Creigh, "Constructing the Interstate Highway in Nebraska: Route and Funding Controversies," *Nebraska History* 27, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 44.

[3] *State Engineer's Report on Nebraska's Interstate Highway*, (Lincoln, Nebr., 2 February 1960), 3. The Bureau of Public Roads was a predecessor to the Federal Highway Administration, operating from 1918 to 1939, and 1949 to 1967. See the general context for a list of the names of the national highway agency and the dates of operation.

[4] Creigh, 44.

[5] *State Engineer's Report on Nebraska's Interstate Highway*, 3.

[6] *State Engineer's Report on Nebraska's Interstate Highway*, 3.

[7] William Kaszynski, *The American Highway* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co, Inc., 2000), 163.

[8] Bruce Kennedy, "Getting Out of a Rut," *The Twentieth Century*, n.d., <www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/1999/century/episodes/01/currents> (Accessed 27 February 2002) and Tom White, "The Khaki-Colored Caravan," *Nebraskaland* (November 1999): 24.

[9] Creigh, 46.

[10] *Nebraska's Interstate Highway*, (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Roads), 16.

[11] In 1974 the name of the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO) was changed to the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO).

[12] *State Engineer's Report on Nebraska's Interstate Highway*, 4.

[13] *Nebraska's Interstate Highway*, 4.

[14] The PRA was a predecessor to the Federal Highway Administration, operating between 1939 and 1949.

[15] Kaszynski, 170-171.

[16] Kaszynski, 167.

[17] George E. Koster, *A Story of Highway Development in Nebraska* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Department of Roads, 1986; revised edition, 1997), 78.

[18] Creigh, 47.

[19] *State Engineer's Report on Nebraska's Interstate Highway*, 16.

[20] Creigh, 48. T*he Nebraska Department of Roads* Biennial Reports made reference to controversies involving the location of the interstate across Nebraska, but did not include any detailed information. Creigh is one of the few sources that detail the interstate routing controversy.

[21] Creigh, 48.

[22] Creigh, 48. Had this plan passed, the Lincoln Highway would have been absorbed by I-80.

[23] Creigh, 49.

[24] Creigh, 50.

[25] Creigh, 51.

[26] Creigh, 51. The GNI was formed in 1960 to lobby against urban interstate spending.

[27] Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Thirty-First Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1955-1956* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1956).

[28] Creigh, 52.

[29] Creigh, 47.

[30] Creigh, 51.

[31] Creigh, 52.

[32] Kaszynski, 170.

[33] *State Engineer's Report on Nebraska's Interstate Highway*, 30-32.

[34] Plans are underway to expand the current I-80 between Lincoln and Omaha from four-lanes to six-lanes on existing right-of-way.

[35] *Nebraska's Interstate Highway*, 10; *The Plan Ahead: A Highway Report* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation), c. 1957.

[36] Jack Rosecrans, *Personal Interview With Ken Gottula*, 4 June 1986.

[37] Koster, 81.

[38] Nebraska Department of Roads, *Third Biennial Report of the Department of Roads 1961-1962* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Roads, 1962); Nebraska Department of Roads, *Fourth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads 1963-1964* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Roads, 1964); Nebraska Department of Roads, *Fifth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads 1965-1966* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Roads, 1966); Nebraska Department of Roads, *Sixth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads 1967-1968* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Nebraska Department of Roads, 1968).

[39] Curt McConnell, "I-80 Changed Car Travel in Nebraska." *Lincoln Journal Star*, 29 March 1999, 14x. The "Golden Link" was meant to echo the "Golden Spike" that connected the first transcontinental railroad.

[40] McConnell, 16x.

[41] Lewis, 174. Controversies such as this helped to pass Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966.

[42] Gene Kelly, "Nebraska Rest Areas Offer Travelers Highway Oasis," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 29 March 1999, 16x.

[43] Mary A. Lierley, *Nebraska Interstate 80 Bicentennial Sculpture Project* (Ph. D. diss., North Texas State University, 1982) iii.

[44] *Nebraska's Interstate Highway*, 14.

[45] Jack Rosecrans; Curt McConnell, "Construction Had Both Good, Bad Consequences," *Lincoln Journal Star*, 29 March 1999, 14x.

[46] Koster, 77.

[47] Kaszynski, 192.

[48] "Major Transcontinental Routes," *The Interstate*, n.d., <www.bmwworld.com/driving/interstate.htm> (Accessed 5 November 2001).

Chapter 8
Historic Highway Survey Project Approach

Objectives

The Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) and the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) have teamed to identify and evaluate historic roads and road-related resources in Nebraska through the Historic Highway Survey project. The project includes four components:

1. historic contexts addressing road development and the history of five historic highways and Interstate 80
2. reconnaissance field survey of five historic highways (Interstate 80 was not surveyed)
3. development of National Register Multiple Property Cover Documents for five historic highways
4. preparation of a publication manuscript based on the historic contexts

The project's results and products will be used by both the NSHS and NDOR in future project planning activities and public information efforts. NDOR has initiated the project to facilitate project planning and development by proactively identifying and evaluating historic resources. NSHS will update the state's historic buildings survey and gain a better understanding of the state's historic highways and related resources. Both agencies have roles in highway project planning and compliance with state and federal cultural resource regulations. The statewide context of highway development and the reconnaissance survey results will assist the NSHS, NDOR, and the Federal Highway Administration in determining what road-related properties may be eligible for the National Register.

Both agencies also have the desire to raise public awareness of the history of highway development in the state and the significance of road-related resources. The project's products, including the survey report and the publication manuscript, will serve as educational materials for the general public advancing the knowledge of Nebraska's highways and related historic resources.

Survey Methodology

Research and Historic Context Development

Research and historic context development served as an important first step for this project. To explain the evolution of Nebraska's historic highways, we prepared an overall historic context. This context addresses the history of road development in Nebraska placing it within a national perspective. This overarching historic context encompasses the slow beginnings of formalized road development in the state at the turn of the century through 1974 to include the completion of the construction of Interstate 80 across Nebraska. The overall historic context addresses the following topics: Nebraska's

major road development efforts from the turn-of the-twentieth century through post-World War II, state and federal road legislation and funding, road signage, and statewide trends in road improvements and pavement.

Historic contexts were also prepared for six individual roads to explain their evolution and history:

- Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway
- Lincoln Highway
- Meridian Highway
- Potash Highway
- U.S. Highway 20
- Interstate 80

The historic context for each road discusses the organizational beginnings of the road and establishment of the route, promotion and tourism, and the evolution and changes of the route. The historic contexts also outline a time line of development and significant events related to each roadway.

Research efforts to develop the overall and highway-specific historic contexts relied heavily on materials in the collection of the NSHS and the NDOR. Research items included NDOR annual reports and project log records, historic maps, automobile guidebooks, period newspaper articles, county and local histories, and historic photographs.

Survey Route Selection

Survey efforts for this project focused on the five highways as representatives of well known, early automobile routes, established from c.1911 to 1925. For each of the five roads, multiple alignments were identified spanning from the road's earliest alignment through subsequent changes dating to approximately 1940.

The project budget and time frame limited the number of alignments that could be field surveyed for each roadway. Based on an understanding of the historic context for each road, a peak period for development and use of the road was identified. For all the roads, the time chosen for study included the road's inception and its earliest alignment. The first alignments often remained largely intact until the federal numbering system and subsequent road improvements were made possible through federal funding assistance in the 1920s. For each road a specific alignment was chosen for field survey.

Historic route alignments were compiled from a number of sources including the following:

- Nebraska State Automobile Association Official Road Book - 1913
- State of Nebraska, Department of Roads & Irrigation, Bureau of Roads and Bridges State-wide Highway Planning Survey Highway and Transportation Maps – 1939
- Automobile Blue Book Guides (1917, 1918, 1920)
- Travel Information Bureau Guides (1919, 1920)
- Individual highway guide books, including: Huebinger's Map and Guide For Omaha-Denver Transcontinental Route (1911), The Complete Official Road Guide of the Lincoln Highway (1916 and 1924), Canada to Mexico, Official Guide of the Meridian Highway, Pan American Route (1931).
- Period promotional state travel maps distributed by oil and gasoline companies
- NDOR project database logs identifying road improvements and realignments
- Federal Aid Highway Systems Progress Maps (1927-1939)

Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway

The alignment of the D-L-D chosen for survey is the 1911-1925 route and represents the highway's early development and popularity as a named route. In May of 1911, proponents of improved highways and representatives from towns and counties along the Burlington Railroad in Nebraska met in Holdrege and formed the Omaha-Denver Transcontinental Route Association. By July of 1911 the association had laid out a route between Omaha and Denver, spanning 632 miles across Nebraska and paralleling the Chicago Burlington & Quincy Railroad. The route was originally known as the Omaha-Lincoln-Denver, or O-L-D, but after the extension to Detroit was completed it was referred to as the Detroit-Lincoln-Denver, or D-L-D. In 1919 the route became part of the state highway system.

Much of the alignment of the D-L-D Highway was designated as U.S. 38 (now U.S. 6 and U.S. 34) and incorporated into the federal highway system in 1926. In addition to becoming a numbered route, other significant changes to the highway began to take place, including rerouting and realignment. After becoming part of the federal highway system in 1926, the highway entered a second phase of development.

Lincoln Highway

The alignment surveyed for the Lincoln Highway is the 1913-1921 route. This route represents the highway's early development and popularity as a named route. In October of 1913 the road was officially designated as the first transcontinental highway and named in honor of Abraham Lincoln. The early highway route was selected and pieced together from existing roads, rather than being newly constructed. The Lincoln Highway existed as a patchwork road for over a decade while the Lincoln Highway Association raised money and matched funds for paving and improvements.

In 1921 relocation and realignment projects began to significantly change the original route of the Lincoln Highway. Complete realignment was a gradual process occurring county by county, beginning in 1921 and lasting through the 1940s. During this time the highway was rerouted to create a more efficient transportation facility. To accomplish this towns were bypassed, the route strayed from section lines, and longer rail sections were paralleled with less crossings. By the time significant portions of the Lincoln Highway were designated as U.S. Highway 30 in 1925, it had already begun a new phase of development.

Meridian Highway

The alignment of the Meridian Highway chosen for is the 1911-1925 route. This route includes the Meridian Highway's early development and promotion and represents its early height of popularity as a named route. In 1911 the Nebraska Meridian Road Association was established and the route was delineated through ten Nebraska counties. During this time local road advocates and county delegates to the Nebraska Meridian Highway Association promoted the route to encourage economic activity in the area and improve local road conditions. The Meridian Road was developed with little state or federal involvement at a time when road building was a local issue. The International Meridian Highway Association conducted promotional booster tours along the entire route, including in Nebraska in 1912 and 1914, and Nebraska counties participated in promotion of the route. In 1919 the Meridian Road was named part of the state highway system and was renamed the Meridian Highway. After 1926 and especially in the late 1930s, various sections of the Meridian Highway were rerouted to bypass towns to create an efficient transportation route. The Meridian Highway was transformed to U.S. Highway 81.

Potash Highway

The alignment surveyed for the Potash Highway was the route from 1918 to 1926. The Potash Highway was conceptualized in 1918 as a way to facilitate travel to the more populous southeast portion of Nebraska by those in the central and northwest parts of the state, and was to extend between Alliance and Grand Island. The route generally followed the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad line between the two cities, much of which had to be constructed through the state's Sand Hills region. So named for the voluminous amounts of sand in the vicinity, building a roadway through the Sand Hills was a difficult endeavor. Finally, residents were able to drive the entire facility between Grand Island and Alliance by 1922. In 1923, very likely hoping to take advantage of an increasing number of motor tourists, the Potash Highway supporters extended the road from Alliance, north to the Black Hills of South Dakota. The highway was also extended south from Grand Island to Hastings, then east along the D-L-D Highway to Fairmont, and then south along the Meridian Highway to Wichita, Kansas. This was the formal route of the Potash Highway in 1926.

The original portion of the Potash Highway between Alliance and Grand Island was incorporated into Nebraska Highway 2 in 1926. In subsequent years, much of the road's original alignment through the Sand Hills, which was built along the north side of the railroad, was realigned to the south of the tracks. Efforts to pave the entire road were also made, an endeavor that was largely complete between Alliance and Grand Island by 1950.

U.S. Highway 20

Selected for the survey was the general alignments that carried U.S. Highway 20 across the State of Nebraska from its implementation in 1926 to its transcontinental completion in 1941. The route U.S.

Highway 20 generally followed in Nebraska was largely developed along the routes previously established in whole or in part for the Grant and Blue Pole Highways. A major change in the U.S. Highway 20 alignment occurred in 1932. Originally the highway followed a route from Ainsworth to Valentine, generally via Norden and Sparks. It was determined by state highway officials, however, that a route between Ainsworth and Valentine via Wood Lake would be a better long-term alternative. This was a significant change. It shortened the travel distance between Ainsworth and Valentine by at least ten miles, and it led to the construction of the Bryan Bridge–a National Register property that has also received several engineering awards. By 1941, the final eight miles of U.S. Highway 20 to be paved between the east coast and Yellowstone National Park was completed near Crawford, Nebraska.

When U.S. Highway 20 was completed in 1941, it was characterized as "the last transcontinental." Travel along the highway diminished significantly during World War II, but it recovered significantly in the post-War years. Although its alignment through Nebraska has received minor shifts in the succeeding years, U.S. Highway 20 continues to serve the transcontinental traveler today. It provides access to the northern-most counties in the state, a region without any Interstate Highways.

Reconnaissance Survey Documentation

Following the identification of a route alignment, Mead & Hunt and Heritage Research conducted a reconnaissance level survey of each highway (Interstate 80 was not surveyed). Survey methodology was based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Identification and Evaluation and the NeHBS Survey Manual and in consultation with NSHS and NDOR staff. Identified route alignments for each of the highways, spanning from the road's conception to c.1940, were mapped on current NDOR county maps and available current and historic community maps. Chosen alignments were driven to identify and document the roadway itself and road-related resources.

In the rural areas, between communities, the survey focused on the alignment that represented the time period of significant early development. In rural areas where known alternate later alignments were known to have had a significant impact on the history of the road multiple routes were surveyed. These alternate rural alignment surveys included:

- Relocation of the Lincoln Highway bypassing the cities of Omaha, Nebraska and Council Bluffs, Iowa. Following the construction of the Lincoln Memorial Bridge in 1930, the Lincoln Highway Association directed transcontinental travelers to bypass Omaha to follow an alternate route north of Omaha through the community of Blair.

- The original route of the Lincoln Highway in Dawson and Lincoln Counties, which followed a series of "stairsteps" between North Platte and Gothenburg. Known as the Gothenburg stairsteps, the route of the Lincoln Highway was rerouted only four years after its designation to eliminate railroad crossings and followed a new route north of the stairsteps through the towns of Maxwell and Brady.

- U.S. Highway 20, when originally aligned in 1926, followed a route directly north from Ainsworth to a point three miles west of Springview. Thereafter, it proceeded in a generally westerly direction, through Norden and Sparks, to Valentine. In 1932, that alignment was abandoned by U.S. Highway 20 when the Wood Lake route was developed as a more direct alternative between Ainsworth and Valentine.

In communities and urban areas, a broader survey methodology was applied and multiple alignments were surveyed. Small to medium size communities dot the landscape across the state of Nebraska. These communities served as stopping points for travelers and offered necessary amenities where travelers could get a meal, spend the night, and gas and service their vehicles. With the understanding that these communities would include a concentration of road-related resources, such as motels, gas stations, and auto dealerships, the survey methodology was broadened to survey each known and identified alignments within the communities. In the largest communities across the state-Lincoln, Grand Island, Columbus, and Hastings-the survey was limited to two alignments: the earliest identifiable alignment and the current business alignment that often bypasses the traditional downtown commercial area. In Omaha, only the early alignment was surveyed for the Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway and the Lincoln Highway. The previously noted Lincoln

Highway (U.S. 30) bypass of Omaha through Blair served as the alternate route bypassing the city of Omaha.

Along the survey alignments in both rural and urban areas, the reconnaissance survey focused on road-related resources that had an association with the highway, automobiles, and/or tourist services. Surveyed properties were generally constructed prior to 1960 and were located within a quarter mile of the right-of-way. Identified property types included gas stations, motels and hotels, restaurants, auto garages and dealerships, neon signs, bridges, distinctive culverts, and the roadbed itself. More unusual properties surveyed included waysides, drive-in theaters, souvenir shops, and tourist attractions. If the association of the property was not clearly identifiable, but the property, such as an early railroad hotel, had the potential to serve automobile tourist along the route the property was documented. Although the "experience" of driving historic highways and roads includes the surrounding landscape, including farmsteads, commercial and residential areas, and viewsheds, as a significant component, these ephemeral and difficult to characterize features were not surveyed as part of this project.

This comprehensive survey and evaluation of five of Nebraska's historic highways builds upon previous intensive survey efforts focused on the Meridian and Lincoln Highways completed during Nebraska Historic Buildings reconnaissance surveys of selected counties. In 2001 the Meridian Highway was subject to an intensive survey in Madison and Pierce Counties. The Lincoln Highway was an intensive survey and study within Buffalo, Cheyenne, Dodge, Hall, Lincoln, and Platte Counties from 1993 to 1996. Properties previously identified and documented during these intensive surveys and county surveys were reevaluated. Road-related previously surveyed properties identified during the NeHBS county surveys were reevaluated when they were located along the survey alignment or within a community.

Surveyed properties retained a minimal degree of integrity and continued to convey a sense of function as road-related resources. Alterations to a property completed prior to 1960 were accepted as potentially contributing to the property's history. Properties that displayed a severe loss of integrity through major physical changes were not resurveyed. Partial complexes or features not were surveyed when alterations have diminished the historic integrity. For example a vintage neon sign was documented individually if the remaining motel complex had undergone too many modern alterations to warrant inclusion in the survey.

Documentation for each property included black-and-white photographs, descriptive and locational information to create a NeHBS database record. Color slides and digital images were taken of representative resources and properties that have the potential to be eligible for the National Register.

Road-Related Property Types

The survey focused on identifying historic roads and bridges but also included road-related properties types. Road-related property types provided services to the automobile traveling public, and include gas stations, motels, and auto garages and dealerships. These services and identified property types were used not only by regional and transcontinental travelers, but also by residents of the local community and the surrounding agricultural area. A brief overview of the history and evolution of the four main surveyed property categories-gas stations and service stations, motels and cabin courts, automobile dealerships and garages, and restaurants- follows.

Gas Stations and Service Stations

The gas station, also called the filling or service station, developed in the early twentieth century to provide fuel and other automobile products at a location convenient to the growing number of car owners. The gas station also became a marketing tool in the fierce competition between independent producers and the companies of the former Standard Oil Trust, which monopolized about 85 percent of the total petroleum market before it was forced to split up in 1911.[1]

House type gas station at the northeast corner of Highway 30 and Maple in Sutherland, LN08-019

House with canopy type gas station at the southeast corner of Broadway and 5th in Imperial, CH04-035

The earliest gas station was the "curbside" type, which appeared at the edge of the street in front of a hardware or grocery store. Developed around 1915, it consisted of pumps and underground storage tanks. This was more efficient and much less of a fire hazard than the earlier method of gas deliveries by tank wagons pulled by horses had been. Even so, fire safety and zoning ordinances enacted in larger cities during the early 1920s eliminated curbside stations in urban areas and often limited where other types of gas stations could be located.[2] The second type of gas station, known as the "shed," was widely built during the late 1910s. The shed was utilitarian and had a dirt or gravel drive. It looked like a lumber or coal yard building.

During the 1920s, oil companies began constructing gas stations in neighborhoods, where aesthetics were important and the appearance of the shed station was objectionable. In order to reduce the objections to locating service stations in neighborhoods, the "house" and "house with canopy" type of gas stations were developed.[3] As the name suggests, the house type gas station looked like a small residence, except that it had a large front window or group of windows for displaying auto products. Reflecting the popular residential architectural styles of the period, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and the cottage variant of Tudor Revival were favored for exterior detailing. The typical house station plan consisted of an office, a storage room, and public restrooms. The "house with canopy" was similar to the house type, but had a canopy that extended over the pumps to shelter customers and employees in inclement weather.[4]

Many house gas stations were prefabricated, of a standardized design chosen by the oil company. The standardized house gas station quickly became a marketing tool because the public could easily identify the oil franchise by the features of its gas stations.[5]

By the mid-1920s, the "house with bays" gas station type had evolved. Service bays were included in the design or added to the side or the rear of the existing house station. At first, the bays were equipped with grease pits for lubricating and washing automobiles. By the late 1920s, air compressors with rotary lifts were installed in the bays so that repair services could be provided.[6] The house and, less commonly, the house with canopy and house with bays, were erected into the mid-1930s.

House with bay type service station at the southeast corner of Oak and 2nd in Gordon, SH05-030

During the Depression, gas sales sagged. In an effort to attract customers, oil companies expanded their product line and built a new and very different type

of gas station building: the "oblong box." In contrast to the house type, which was intended to blend in with its surroundings, the oblong box was designed to attract attention. Drawing inspiration from the International Style, the oblong box featured a streamlined, functional, rectangular form with a flat roof, and was finished with glazed terra cotta (1930s) or porcelain enamel (1940s and 1950s). The oblong box often was painted with the oil company's trademark colors. The interior space integrated office, storage, and service bays.[7]

Around 1960, the exterior details of the oblong box fell out of favor. Elements such as cedar shakes, brick, broad eaves, wood siding, and darker colors were used to present a ranch style or Colonial Revival exterior appearance while retaining or expanding the oblong box form. During the 1970s, a new station type was introduced, composed of a large canopy sheltering the pumps and a booth for the attendant. Today, the oblong box (which includes a convenience store) with a monumental, free-standing canopy is typical.[8]

Oblong box gas station at 1119 Jeffers Street in North Platte, LN06-656

Cabin Courts and Motels

At the beginning of the century, pioneering auto tourists had few places along the open road where they could rent a room after a day's drive. The majority of established hotels were located downtown and were located for easy access to the railroad. This was not an ideal situation for motorists, who were unwilling to leave their automobiles in the livery stable and did not want to enter the hotel lobby after a day of dusty travel.[9] A growing number of motorists began to exercise the freedom to stop the car and get out and stay along the route. These new tourists brought their own gear and created makeshift camps along the roadside at convenient and attractive locations. This solution worked until the popularity of automobile tourism swelled after World War I, when the flood of travelers camping on private property upset landowners. Although upset about trespassing, some community leaders and landowners saw the potential for profit and began to establish restaurants, stores, and campsites.[10]

In an effort to entice tourists, many communities began building municipal tourist camps in city parks. Neighboring towns soon began competing for tourists and strived to build the most popular motor camp. Extra conveniences, including picnic tables, fireplaces, flush toilets, showers, sheltered eating areas and recreation areas, and electrical hookups, were added. Communities would then advertise these comforts on signs placed along roads leading into town. The heyday of free municipal camps was short lived. In an effort to discourage use by lower classes and unlawful vagrants, campsite owners required users to pay a rental fee. This provided incentive for private competition, which created the downfall of municipal camps.[11]

Arapahoe Motel located at the north side of Chestnut between Nebraska and 7th in Arapahoe, FN01-070

Once owners discovered travelers were willing to pay for more permanent and completely private accommodations, they began renting cabins as an alternative to tent sites. These were called "cabin camps" or "motor courts." The popularity of the cabins and the opportunity for travelers return for more than one season led to the abandonment of the campsite. By the late 1920s, many operators stopped providing tent sites and began offering motorists accommodations exclusively in cabins.

Motel court and service station at Main Street in Ainsworth, BW01-081

Most cabin camps in Nebraska consisted of one-room or two-room cabins arranged in rows or right angle "courts." The cabins were often vernacular in form with frame construction and gable roof. Individual cabins were sometimes connected by a covered auto shelter. Common washroom buildings, picnic shelters, and perhaps a store, and gas station may have also been a part of the complex. The cabin camp grounds were often park-like surroundings with picnic benches and trees.

Exterior imagery and layout became important aspects in attracting guests. Court owners utilized fashionable and domestic architecture along with exotic and fanciful themes for the building exterior. Regional themes, including teepees, adobe huts, or log cabins, were popular sights along the highways. Other court owners preferred to disregard cozy cottages and regional stereotypes for a variety of themes designed purely to attract attention, including miniature windmills, dwarf size villages, and an assortment of fantasy motifs. By the 1930s, motor-court owners were barraged with the same campaign to modernize that was launched for other wayside businesses from the auto showrooms and gas stations to supermarkets. In an effort to attract customers in an industry that relied on modern conveniences, original exteriors were replaced with streamlined and Moderne styles.[12]

During World War II, motor courts did not fair well as gasoline was rationed and automobile production was curtailed. After the war, roadside lodging quickly revived and "motel" took over as the favorable term. The first use of the word motel occurred in 1926, on the sign for Arthur Heineman's Milestone Mo-tel in San Luis Obispo, California. It was a contraction of motor and hotel. The word became a generic label for a wide variety of highway-oriented accommodations.[13]

Motel Court at U.S. Highway 20 and B in Valentine, CE14-062

During the post-war period, individual cabins slipped from fashion and single buildings with a string of rooms gained in favor. The single building with multiple rooms was also less expensive to construct than individual cabin buildings. By the 1950s, the roadside-lodging field was ripe for an invasion by corporate chains. It was not long before the national chain motel dominated the lodging industry, replacing independently owned cabin courts and motels.[14]

Automobile Dealerships and Garages

The earliest auto showrooms were converted blacksmith shops, livery stables, and bicycle shops. When the first auto showrooms were constructed they were similar in design to commercial building blocks, with conservative modification. While the showrooms had the standard storefront, upper-story, and cornice format, they typically had larger storefronts to display automobiles. Buildings without side or rear access had large front doorways to drive vehicles in and out.[15]

Showrooms were built to be large, fashionable, and elegant. Architectural imagery was used to give credibility to fledgling companies and to symbolize the power of established companies, but also to one-up the competition. Dealers in small communities across the county built scaled-down versions of the elaborate big city auto showrooms.[16]

Reinecke Motor Company at the northwest corner of 11th and A Streets in Schuyler, CX06-044

During and shortly after the Depression, many auto showrooms were updated with modern renovations. Porcelain-enameled metal and structural glass facades were used to streamline the buildings. Showrooms became smaller as more attention was paid to used-car sales. World War II hampered this modernization, as well as automobile production. The lack of new automobiles meant increased business for service stations, but few new automobile related buildings were constructed until after the war.[17]

Shaner Motors at the southwest corner of 13th and 8th Streets in Geneva, FM05-129

After World War II, demand for new automobiles increased and new showrooms were constructed in eye-catching designs to keep a competitive edge. The smaller buildings of the previous decade were replaced with larger, more modern showrooms. After World War II the newest showrooms displayed the rounded corners and oval windows of the Streamline Moderne. By the late 1940s the utilitarian buildings with flat roofs, visual fronts, and ribbon windows had become popular. In these post-World War II buildings, the new-car display in a large glare-free window was the focal point. A predominant service bay with a wide driveway and a used auto lot covered by a canopy, to give the illusion of being included in the building, were other dominant features of this new showroom design.[18]

A new type of commercial district, known as "automobile row," was created when dealers, motivated by lower rents and taxes as well as less cramped locations, left the central city for a location on a main road, further out of town. Soon other dealers followed and smaller operations filled the gaps between the larger operations. By the early 1960s auto dealers began to leave automobile row for larger roadside lots further in the suburbs. The showroom was removed from the curb-line and rows of autos were placed between the roadside and the building. Rather than buildings selling the cars, the cars began to sell themselves.[19]

Historic automobile row along Farnam Street in Omaha, DO09:0209-016, 017, 018

Restaurants and Drive-ins

Before the 1920s, the automobile tourist had few dining options, especially places that were appropriate for women and children.[20] The first family restaurant chain was Howard Johnson's begun in the 1930s. Rather than being a pioneer, the Howard Johnson's chain borrowed its format from other successful restaurant types. Under the recognizable orange roof, each restaurant had two sections. A homey dining area that provided tearoom ambience and a dining counter rimmed with stools where customers ordered hot dogs, ice cream, and other simple, fast fare, were located in each restaurant. By merging the respectability of the

full-service meal and the convenience of the lunch-eonette, Howard Johnson addressed everyone's needs in a single stop. In the years immediately following World War II, rival companies in the family-restaurant market began to pose a threat to Johnson's preeminently successful formula.[21]

Wood River Drive-Inn at the southeast corner of Cottonwood and 9th Street in Wood River, HL08-068

The food stand developed at approximately the same time as the family restaurant. The food stand began as a modest spot for highway travelers to pause for a quick meal. After World War I, an assortment of entrepreneurs began setting up shop, selling food to travelers along the nation's highways. In an effort to stand out amongst the competition, some operators created stands that mimed the name or function of the restaurant, such as a hot dog stand shaped as a hot dog. Others used creative roadside architecture to attract attention and customers. Still others followed the lead of the tearooms and adopted the quaint little house format. Eventually the food stand developed into a multibillion-dollar corporate extravaganza: the fast-food restaurant.[22]

Jack's Drive-In located at the north side of Vinita near the intersection with Tecumseh in Wauneta, CH06-048

The development of the drive-in was another important milestone in the evolution of the fast-food restaurant and the design of roadside food stands. Curb service dining, where customers pulled up in their car and food brought out by a waiter, led to the development of a distinctive drive-in-restaurant building type. The building type consisted of a rectangular or circular building around which customers parked their cars. A large illuminated pylon or sign was centrally located on the peaked roof. One of the most noticeable architectural improvements to the postwar drive-in was the awning addition that provided shelter for cars.[23]

Drive-In at 1407 2nd Street in Grand Island, HL06-713

The most recent step in the evolution of roadside dining is the development of the modern fast-food restaurant. Maurice and Richard McDonald, proprietors of a drive-in restaurant in San Bernardino, California, dismissed the waiters in an effort to speed customer turnover rate and increase profits. They pared down both service and menu to the absolute minimum and created the prototype for the dozens of fast-food companies that emerged in the following decades.[24] These modern fast-food restaurants typically follow a standard floor plan and exterior design. These standard designs allow for a chain restaurant to be easily recognized in any location across the country.

Limitations and Biases of the Survey

This survey was limited in scope and scale, in consultation with the NSHS and NDOR, to focus on the agencies' objectives within the project budget and schedule. The field survey of each highway was limited in the number of alignments driven and resources documented, as described above. In rural areas, the original alignment was primarily chosen

for field survey. In urban areas, multiple alignments, often including the original alignment and a later downtown bypass alignment c.1930s, were surveyed. Post-1940 alignments in both urban and rural areas can continue to tell the story and evolution of road development and may hold significance in their own right. Because early alignments were chosen to capture the early history and evolution of the early twentieth century roadways, eligibility assessments focused only on selected routes.

The historic highway survey was a reconnaissance level survey. Research focused on the overall history of the road and property types, including limited historic research on individual properties. Field survey efforts focused on the visual identification that a property has a potential connection to the road, automobile or tourism. Further research on individual properties may identify historic associations that are not readily apparent from the physical shape, form or style of a building. For example, the headquarters of an important local or regional road association may not be identifiable from an architectural review, but could be identified through continued research efforts. Additional related properties may remain to be identified and documented based on further historic research conducted.

Another limitation of reconnaissance level survey and limited site-specific research is the challenge of identifying the historic association of a property and understanding its relationship to the highway. For example, a hotel may have been constructed prior to the designation of the highway and have originally served railroad traffic. Without completing site-specific research it is unknown what role, if any, the hotel played in servicing automobile travelers.

For many surveyed resources it is unknown if the business was established as a direct result of the transcontinental highway through town or if the business was established to serve local and regional patrons and the tourist trade was a supplement to the business. This scenario may apply particularly to automobile services, such auto dealerships and auto garages, in county-seat communities that served as regional commercial centers for the surrounding agricultural landscape. Additional research focused on individual resources could identify the property's history, level of association, and significance to a particular highway.

Notes

[1] John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle, *The Gas Station in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 131.

[2] Jakle and Sculle, 135.

[3] Jakle and Sculle, 137.

[4] Jakle and Sculle, 137-141.

[5] Jakle and Sculle, 138.

[6] Jakle and Sculle, 142.

[7] Jakle and Sculle, 144-150.

[8] Jakle and Sculle, 150-152.

[9] Chester H. Liebs, Main Street to Miracle Mile (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 169.

[10] Liebs, 170.

[11] Liebs, 172.

[12] Liebs, 174-179.

[13] John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle & Jefferson S. Rogers, The Motel In America (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 18.

[14] Liebs, 184-191.

[15] Liebs, 76.

[16] Liebs, 79.

[17] Liebs, 86-87.

[18] Liebs, 89-90.

[19] Liebs, 83-93.

[20] Liebs, 197.

[21] Liebs, 202-204.

[22] Liebs, 204-205.

[23] Liebs, 208-211.

[24] Liebs, 212-213.

Chapter 9
Survey Results and Recommendations

Numerical Summary of Survey Results

The Historic Highway Survey evaluated approximately 1,048 properties related to five historic highways including 428 previously surveyed in the NeHBS and 620 newly identified properties. Previously surveyed properties were reevaluated to identify if they were extant and if they retained sufficient integrity to convey the historic function and features of their property type. Of the total 428 previously surveyed sites, 61 previously surveyed properties were found to be nonextant and 66 previously surveyed properties were not resurveyed because they have undergone significant alterations diminishing their historic integrity. As a result 301 previously surveyed properties were documented for the Historic Highway Survey. In addition to reviewing previously surveyed sites, the survey identified and documented 620 new properties.

A total of 921 properties were documented for the Historic Highway Survey. These properties were associated with one or more of the following highways. Resources located along the route of two concurrent highways are included in the total properties documented for each highway.

Properties Evaluated for the Historic Highway Survey	
Total previously surveyed properties	428
Nonextant properties	61
Properties not resurveyed that have lost integrity	66
Resurveyed properties that retain integrity	301
Newly surveyed properties	620
Total properties evaluated	***1,048***
Properties Documented for the Historic Highway Survey	
Newly surveyed properties	620
Resurveyed properties	301
Total properties documented	***921***
Properties Documented on Each Highway	
Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway	215 properties
Meridian Highway	118 properties
Lincoln Highway	368 properties
Potash Highway	130 properties
U.S. Highway 20	155 properties

Previous Survey Efforts of the Lincoln Highway

From 1993 to 1996, the Lincoln Highway and its resources was an intensive survey study during the NeHBS reconnaissance survey of the following counties:

Buffalo County - 1993
Cheyenne County - 1994
Dodge County - 1994
Hall County - 1995
Lincoln County - 1993
Platte County - 1996

These previous survey efforts recommended a total of 51 individual properties and related resources of the proposed Columbus Historic District as potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (National Register). Previously identified properties were reevaluated for integrity and eligibility as part of the Historic Highway Survey. Of the total 51 properties previously identified, 30 properties previously identified retain historic integrity and are recommended as potentially eligible for the National Register. Six previously surveyed properties were found to be nonextant. Fourteen properties have lost sufficient historic integrity and are no longer recommended their eligibility for the National Register and one property was unable to be located. The Columbus Historic District, including 11 garages and a hotel related to the Lincoln Highway, was listed on the National Register in 1996 and these properties were not reevaluated. The following table identifies the current status of these previously surveyed and identified properties.

Lincoln Highway Previously Recommended Properties

Property Name	Location	Status	NeHBS Site No.
Dodge County			
Motel Court	Fremont	Not resurveyed because of altered sense of place. Privacy fence divides the property.	DD05:A-305
Former Motel Court	Fremont	Not resurveyed, office and some cabins demolished.	DD05:A-311
Downtown Motel	Fremont	Not resurveyed, loss of integrity due to alterations to building and setting.	DD05:A-312
Former Texaco Service Station	Fremont	Not resurveyed, loss of integrity, altered garage doors and turrets.	DD05:E-008
Commercial Building	North Bend	Not resurveyed, loss of integrity.	DD09-031
Platte County			
Lincoln Highway Marker	Duncan	Potentially eligible	PT04-025
Eleven garages and a hotel	Columbus	Listed in Columbus Commercial Historic District.	(various)

Property Name	Location	Status	NeHBS Site No.
Hall County			
Shady Bend	Grand Island vicinity	Potentially eligible	HL00-033
Seedling Mile	Grand Island	Potentially eligible	HL06-696
Buffalo County			
Covered Wagon Souvenir Shop	west of Kearney	Potentially eligible	BF00-158
Former Motel	west of Kearney	Nonextant	BF00-162
Bico's Café, Garage, and Gas Station	west of Kearney	Not resurveyed, loss of integrity, altered fenestration and sign removed.	BF00-163
Former Motel	Elm Creek	Not resurveyed, loss of integrity due to altered fenestration.	BF02-036
Filling Station	Elm Creek	Nonextant	BF02-051
Former Motel Court	Gibbon	Not resurveyed, loss of integrity due to residing.	BF03-042
Filling Station	Shelton	Nonextant	BF14-015
Former Hotel	Shelton	Potentially eligible	BF14-069
Filling Station	Shelton	Nonextant	BF14-072
Service station and motel	Shelton	Potentially eligible	BF14-074
Lincoln County			
Pawnee Drive-In Theatre	North Platte vicinity	Not resurveyed, screen and signs nonextant.	LN00-056
Motel, filling station, and café	Brady	Potentially eligible	LN01-030
Former White Horse Motel	Brady	Not resurveyed, only one cabin remains.	LN01-033
Abandoned Motel Court	Hershey	Nonextant	LN03-015
Elms Lodge Motel Court	North Platte	Further research is needed to determine the age of the present buildings. Property is potentially eligible if it is 50 years old or may be eligible in the future.	LN06-452
Hendy, Ogier Auto Company	North Platte	Potentially eligible	LN06-554

Property Name	Location	Status	NeHBS Site No.
Commercial building/ auto dealership	North Platte	Not resurveyed, loss of integrity due to enclosed transom and replacement windows.	LN06-558
Log Cabin Café, Gas Station, and Motel	North Platte	Motel largely nonextant. Café and Gas Station building is potentially eligible.	LN06-692
Campbell Motor Court (now Cedar Lodge)	North Platte	Further research is needed to determine the age of the present buildings. Property is potentially eligible if it is 50 years old or may be eligible in the future.	LN06-703
Lincoln Highway Marker	North Platte	Unable to locate	LN06-704
Filling Station	Sutherland	Potentially eligible	LN08-019
Filling Station	Sutherland	Potentially eligible	LN08-041
Former Motel Court	Sutherland	Potentially eligible	LN08-044
Filling Station	Sutherland	Potentially eligible	LN08-046
Lincoln Highway Marker	Sutherland	Potentially eligible	LN08-048
Cheyenne County			
Former Lincoln Highway Roadbed	Sidney vicinity	Based on the statewide survey and the development of a broader context, this roadbed is not believed to meet National Register criteria.	CN00-086
Former Mayfair Service Station	Sidney vicinity	Potentially eligible	CN00-120
Abandoned Bar Q Motel	Sidney vicinity	Potentially eligible	CN00-122
Abandoned Motel	Potter vicinity	Not resurveyed, loss of integrity.	CN00-152
Hurst's Lodgepole Motel	Lodgepole	Potentially eligible	CN05-030
Rainbow Motel/ Service Garage	Lodgepole	Potentially eligible	CN05-033
Former Implement Dealership	Lodgepole	Potentially eligible	CN05-034
Former Service Garage	Lodgepole	Potentially eligible	CN05-036
Former Motel/Service Station	Lodgepole	Not resurveyed, loss of integrity	CN05-038

Property Name	Location	Status	NeHBS Site No.
Former Filling Station	Potter	Potentially eligible	CN08-036
El Palomino Motel	Sidney	Further research is needed to determine the age of the present buildings. Property is potentially eligible if it is 50 years old or may be eligible in the future.	CN09-088
Sidney Motor Lodge and Bright Motel	Sidney	Potentially eligible	CN09-091
Former El Rancho Motel	Sidney	Nonextant	CN09-096
Stickney Dealership/ Commercial Garage	Sidney	Potentially eligible	CN09-109
Lincoln Highway Marker	Sidney	Potentially eligible	CN09-117
Jackson Auto Dealership	Sidney	Potentially eligible	CN09-343
Abandoned Motel Cabin	Sunol	Potentially eligible	CN10-009
Highway #30 Rest Area	Sunol	Potentially eligible, further research is needed to document the history and change to the property.	CN10-011

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register is the official federal list of buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. A property can be significant at the local, state, or national level. To qualify as eligible for the National Register, properties generally must be at least 50 years old and possess historic significance and physical integrity.

To be listed in the National Register, a property's significance must be demonstrated by one or more of the following criteria established by the National Park Service.

Criterion A: Association with events or activities that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

Criterion B: Association with the lives of persons significant in the past.

Criterion C: Association with the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

Criterion D: Potential to provide important information about prehistory or history.

Generally cemeteries, birthplaces, grave sites, religious properties, moved buildings, reconstructed properties, commemorative properties, and properties that have achieved significance within the last 50 years are considered ineligible for listing in the National Register. However, road-related property types identified during this survey many qualify if they fall into one of the following categories:

- Moved properties that are significant for architectural value.
- Reconstructed buildings when built in a suitable environment.
- Properties less than 50 years old that are of exceptional importance.

Important in the determination of eligibility of a property is integrity. Integrity is defined as the ability of a property to convey its significance. A property's integrity must be evident through historic qualities, including:

- location
- design
- setting
- material
- workmanship
- feeling
- association

Roads and related resources identified in the Historic Highway Survey will need to meet at least one of the National Register criteria and retain the seven features of historic integrity. Surveyed properties will most likely be potentially eligible for the National Register applying *Criterion A* for their association with an early historic highway. Resources such as gas stations, motels, and auto garages served the traveling public as the transcontinental and regional road network was developed across Nebraska. Individual buildings or structures may also be potentially eligible for the National Register applying *Criterion C* as distinctive architectural or engineering properties.

The Historic Highway Survey identified several resource types that were once prevalent on Nebraska's highways but are disappearing from the highway landscape. Most service facilities, such as gas stations and restaurants, were not constructed to be long-term, permanent structures, but rather were built to provide a needed service to the public until demand changed. Thus property types related to the automobile often underwent a variety of changes to "keep-up with the times" and the services that were expected by the traveling public. As a result the rarity of the resource type often relates to the period of development, with the earliest forms of gas and lodging facilities being the most rare. For example, cabin courts and house type gas stations are becoming increasingly rare property types. The relative scarcity and availability of comparison properties should be used to inform decisions regarding eligibility and the degree that alterations affect a property's historic integrity. Many highway resources are vacant or no longer in use; however, this does not affect their historical association and may not affect the historic integrity of these resources.

Road segments are the key element of a historic highway. To meet National Register criteria the road segment should largely remain in vehicular use and be long enough to provide the experience of a historic road. Road segments need to retain enough characteristic features of the road from the historic period to convey a sense of time and place as an early highway route.

National Register Listed Properties

In Nebraska, individual road-related properties, including two sections of roadway and two hotels, have already been recognized and listed in the National Register for their historic significance and association with a historic highway. Several other resources have also been listed in the National Register, including bridges and commercial historic districts not specifically recognized for their association with a historic highway.

For example, three downtown commercial historic districts - Columbus, Sidney and Fremont - have been listed on the National Register and these areas included individual road-related property types. The Columbus Commercial Historic District includes several auto dealerships and garages, the Evans Hotel (PT01-131) and the Gottberg Garage (PT01-003). It is likely that these resources have an association to Nebraska's highway development and further research could determine their association and significance.

Property Name	Location	County	NeHBS Site No.
Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway			
Balcony House*- listed in 2000	106 Court St., Imperial	Chase	CH04-025
Lincoln Highway			
Sidney Business Historic District- listed in 1994	downtown Sidney	Cheyenne	CN09 (multiple)
Lincoln Highway* (.87 mile brick section)- listed in 1987	County Road 120, east of Elkhorn	Douglas	DO00-014
Fremont Commercial District - listed in 1995	Downtown Fremont	Dodge	DD05 (multiple)
Gloe Brothers Service Station*- listed in 2000	US 30 and 11th St., Wood River	Hall	HL08-066
Hotel Yancey (Yancey Motor Hotel)– listed in 1984	123 North Locust St., Grand Island	Hall	HL06-014
Roscoe State Aid Bridge* – listed in 1992	.5 miles south of Roscoe over the South Platte River	Keith	KH00-092
Wheat Growers Hotel – listed in 2002	102 South Oak St., Kimball	Kimball	KM04-068
Columbus Commercial Historic District – listed in 1996	Downtown Columbus	Platte	PTO1 (multiple)
Columbus Loup River Bridge – listed in 1992	US 30 and US 81 over the Loup River, Columbus	Platte	PT00-068

Property Name	Location	County	NeHBS Site No.
Columbus Hotel Yancey (Hotel Pawnee) – listed in 1985	221 East 5th St., North Platte	Lincoln	LN06-045
Meridian Highway			
Meridian Bridge* - listed in 1993	US 81 Over the Missouri River (between S. Dakota & Nebraska)	Cedar	CD00-256
Argo Hotel* (New Meridian Hotel) – listed in 1999	211 Kansas St., Crofton	Knox	KX05-015
Meridian Highway* (4.5 mile section on 1911 route) – listed in 2002	551 Avenue, County Road 853, and 552 Avenue, SE of Pierce.	Pierce	PC00-187
Columbus Loup River Bridge – listed in 1992	US 30 and US 81, over Loup River, Columbus	Platte	PT00-068
York Subway* (US 81 underpass) – listed in 1992	14th and 15th St. and BNRR over US 81, York	York	YK11-051
Potash Highway			
City of Alliance Central Park Fountain – listed in 1990	10th and Niobrara, Alliance	Box Butte	BX01-067
Arrow Hotel – listed in 1985	509 S. 9th, Broken Bow	Custer	CU05-054
Hotel DeFair – listed in 1976	Southwest corner of 2nd and Main, Hyannis	Grant	GT02-002
U.S. Highway 20			
Miller Hotel – listed in 1989	197 W. 3rd Long Pine	Brown	BW04-001
Bryan Bridge – listed in 1988	Valentine vicinity	Cherry	CE00-028
Berry State Aid Bridge – listed in 1992	Valentine vicinity	Cherry	CE00-225
Golden Hotel – listed in 1989	406 E. Douglas, O'Neill	Holt	HT13-003

* National Register designation at least in part specifically related to historic highway

Properties Recommended as Potentially Eligible for the National Register

The reconnaissance-level survey of five of Nebraska's historic highways identified a number of resources that may be eligible for the National Register for their association with one of Nebraska's early highways. These resources represent a variety of property types, including the roadway itself and buildings that offered services to the automobile traveling public.

As a component of this project, a National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (Multiple Property Document) is being prepared for each of the five surveyed highways–Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway, Meridian Highway, Lincoln Highway, Potash Highway, and U.S. Highway 20. The Multiple Property Document will outline the historic context for each highway, identify associated road-related property types, and outline the evaluation methods and registration requirements for individual resources. The identified properties may be candidates for National Register listing within the context of the individual Multiple Property Documents being prepared. Further research and field review may be required on individual properties to identify if these resources meet the National Register registration requirements outlined in each Multiple Property Document.

Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway

The survey of the D-L-D Highway documented 215 related properties including the following resources:

Bridges and culverts = 16
Hotels, motels and cabins = 28
Restaurants, diners and drive-ins = 12
Gas stations, service stations = 91
Automobile showrooms and lots = 25
Roads and highway = 20
Signs = 12
Other (includes dance halls, rest stops, museums, etc.) = 11
Total D-L-D resources documented = 215

Of the 215 properties identified, 27 are recommended as potentially eligible for the National Register including the following property types:

Hotels, motels, and cabins = 6
Restaurants, diners and drive-ins = 1
Gas stations and service stations = 9
Garages = 3
Automobile showrooms and lots = 1
Roads = 2
Signs = 2
Tourist attractions = 2
Park = 1

The following recommendations are based on the Historic Highway Survey and should not not be considered comprehensive. Potentially eligible properties are illustrated at the end of the historic context chapter, see Chapter 2: The Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway. Properties included in the table are organized by county following the D-L-D Highway from east to west across the state. Properties recommended as potentially eligible are significant under Criterion A for an association with the Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway.

Potentially Eligible Properties - Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway

Property Name	Address	NeHBS Site No.
Sarpy County		
Linoma Beach Lighthouse	Near Ashland	SY00-113
Saunders County		
Gas Station	West side of Highway 6 near Silver Street, Ashland	SD01-084
Lancaster County		
O-L-D Highway Marker	Near Emerald	LC00-129
D-L-D Highway Marker	Lincoln	LC13:B09-002
DuTeau Chevrolet	Northeast corner of 18th and O Street, Lincoln	LC13:D09-538
Fillmore County		
Gas Station	Northwest corner of South Boundary and Arapahoe, Exeter	FM03-017
Adams County		
Service Station	1030 West 2nd Street, Hastings	AD04-107
Hudson Gas Station and Signs	Northwest side of Highway 6 south of South Street in curve east of Elm, Hastings	AD04-693
Prospect Park	Hastings	AD04-694
Kearney County		
Pioneer Village Museum and Motel	North side of Highway 6 between Brown and Colorado Streets, Minden	KN04-153 and KN04-157
Phelps County		
AA Motel	Northeast corner of 4th Avenue and Sheridan Street, Holdrege	PP04-035
Tower Motel	South side of 4th Avenue between High and Denver Streets, Holdrege	PP04-260
Furnas County		
Arapahoe Cabin Court	North side of Chestnut between Nebraska and 7th, Arapahoe	FN01-070
Service Station	419 Highway 6, Holbrook	FN06-033
Red Willow County		
Original section of the D-L-D Highway	Behind Highway 6 rest area east of McCook	RW00-159
Sage Motel	1003 B Street, McCook	RW05-273

Property Name	Address	NeHBS Site No.
Hitchcock County		
Gas Station	Northwest corner of Taylor and Warsaw, Culbertson	HK02-041
Gas Station	Northeast corner of Main and North Railway Streets, Palisade	HK03-037
Former Valley Hotel	Northeast corner of Main and Smith, Palisade	HK03-045
Chase County		
Old D-L-D Highway	Wauneta vicinity	CH00-076
Gas Station	Southeast corner of Broadway and 5th, Imperial	CH04-035
Gas Station	Northeast corner of Pawnee and Arapahoe, Lamar	CH05-003
Pennington's Garage	Southwest corner of U.S. 6 and Tecumseh Street, Wauneta	CH06-021
Garage	218 Tecumseh Street, Wauneta	CH06-026
Garage	Northwest corner of Tecumseh and Vinita Streets, Wauneta	CH06-028
Jack's Drive-In	North side of Vinita near the intersection of Tecumseh, Wauneta	CH06-048

Meridian Highway

The survey of the Meridian Highway documented 118 related properties including the following resources:

Bridges and culverts = 21
Hotels, motels and cabins = 11
Restaurants, diners, and drive-ins = 3
Gas stations and service stations = 40
Automobile showrooms and lots = 19
Roads and highway = 16
Signs = 4
Other (includes commercial properties and residences of highway advocates etc.) = 4
Total Meridian Highway properties documented = 118

Of the 118 properties identified, 17 are recommended as potentially eligible for the National Register including the following property types:

Gas stations and service stations = 8
Garages = 3
Auto dealerships = 5
Marker = 1

Properties are organized by county following the Meridian Highway from north to south. The following recommendations are based on the Historic Highway Survey and should not be considered comprehensive. Potentially eligible properties are illustrated at the end of the historic context chapter, see Chapter 3: The Meridian Highway. Properties recommended as potentially eligible are significant under Criterion A for an association with the Meridian Highway.

Potentially Eligible Properties – Meridian Highway

Property Name	Address	NeHBS Site No.
Knox County		
Garage	Southwest corner of 3rd and Main Street, Crofton	KX05-016
Pierce County		
Gas Station	122 Mill Street, Pierce	PC05-047
Madison County		
Voecks Motors Auto Dealership	Northeast corner of Main and 5th Streets, Madison	MD03-086
Five Star Dealership	Northwest corner of 3rd and Nebraska Streets, Madison	MD03-123
Standard Oil Gas Station	Northeast corner of Norfolk Avenue and 7th Street, Norfolk	MD06-142

Property Name	Address	NeHBS Site No.
Platte County		
Service Station	East side of Highway 81 between 7th and 8th Streets, Columbus	PT01-539
Gas Station	Southeast corner of Elm and South 3rd Street, Humphrey	PT05-079
Garage	West side of D Street between 3rd and 4th Streets, Platte Center	PT09-037
Polk County		
Stromsburg Motors	Southwest corner of 3rd and Main Streets, Stromsburg	PK04-175
York County		
Gas Station	420 East O Street, McCool Junction	YK07-039
Fillmore County		
Gas Station	Southwest corner of 8th and G, Geneva	FM05-060
Shaner Motors	Southeast corner of 13th and H Streets, Geneva	FM05-129
Thayer County		
Oregon Trail Memorial Marker/Meridian Road Marker	Hebron vicinity	TY00-076
Hill Oil and Terminal/Cafe	Northwest corner of Thompson and Highway 8, near Chester	TY00-257
Belvidere Filling Station	400 C Street, Belvidere	TY02-025
Chester Electric Building	East side of Thayer Street between Huron and Howard, Chester	TY06-054
Burnett Chevrolet Auto Dealership	Northwest corner of Lincoln Avenue and 2nd Street, Hebron	TY10-108

Lincoln Highway

The survey of the Lincoln Highway documented 368 related properties including the following resources:

Bridges and culverts = 25
Hotels, motels and cabins = 87
Restaurants, diners, drive-ins = 12
Gas stations and service stations = 160
Automobile showrooms and lots = 25
Roads and highway = 22
Signs = 25
Other (includes drive-in theaters, waysides, etc.) = 12
Total Lincoln Highway properties documented = 368

Of the 368 properties identified, 62 are recommended as potentially eligible for the National Register including the following property types:

Bridges = 1
Hotels, motels, and cabins = 20
Restaurants, diners, and drive-ins = 2
Gas stations and service stations = 16
Garages = 7
Automobile showrooms and lots = 4
Roads = 1
Markers = 8
Tourist/Souvenir sites = 2
Rest area = 1

Properties are organized by county following the Lincoln Highway from east to west across the state. The following recommendations are based on the Historic Highway Survey and should not not be considered comprehensive. Potentially eligible properties are illustrated at the end of the historic context chapter, see Chapter 5: The Lincoln Highway. Properties recommended as potentially eligible are significant under Criterion A for an association with the Lincoln Highway.

Potentially Eligible Properties - Lincoln Highway

Property Name	Address	NeHBS Site No.
Douglas County		
Service Station	West side of Main Street between Railroad and Center Streets, Elkhorn	DO05-004
Colfax County		
Automobile Garage	Southeast corner of Center Street and Highway 30, Rogers	CX05-015
Reinecke Motor Company Garage	Northeast corner of 11th and A Street, Schuyler	CX06-044
Service Station	Southeast corner of B Street and Highway 30, Schuyler	CX06-080

Property Name	Address	NeHBS Site No.
Platte County		
Pratt Truss Bridge	Duncan vicinity	PT00-145
Service Station	East side of Highway 81 between 7th and 8th Streets, Columbus	PT01-539
Lincoln Highway Marker	In Duncan	PT04-025
Merrick County		
Pontiac Auto Dealership	West side of 16th Avenue between 15th and 16th Streets, Central City	MK02-171
Motel Court	Intersection of Green Street and Highway 30, Clarks	MK04-037
Hall County		
Shady Bend	East side of Shady Bend Road, near Grand Island	HL00-033
Hist Stuhr Service Station	1810 East Highway 30, near Grand Island	HL06-695
Seedling Mile	Seedling Mile Road between Willow and Stuhr Roads, Grand Island	HL06-696
Wood River Drive-Inn	Southeast corner of Cottonwood and 9th Street, Wood River	HL08-068
Buffalo County		
Covered Wagon Souvenir Shop	Kearney vicinity	BF00-158
Central Auto Electric	North side of 25th (Highway 30) between A Avenue and Central, Kearney	BF05-444
Former Hotel	Northwest corner of Highway 30 and D, Shelton	BF14-069
Service Station and Motel	North side of Highway 30 between Phelps and Lincoln, Shelton	BF14-074
Dawson County		
Gas Station	801 East 8th Street, Cozad	DS02-055

Property Name	Address	NeHBS Site No.
Lincoln County		
Commercial Garage	West side of Main Street just north of Highway 30, Brady	LN01-029
Motel, Filling Station and Café	Northeast corner of Main and Highway 30, Brady	LN01-030
Elms Lodge Motel Court	North side of 4th between Bryan and Belmont Avenues, North Platte	LN06-452
Hendy, Ogier Auto Company	217 East 4th, North Platte	LN06-554
Service Station	1119 North Jeffers Street, North Platte	LN06-656
Log Cabin Café, Gas Station, and Motel	South side of Highway 30 west of Webster Avenue, North Platte	LN06-692
Cedar Lodge Motel Court	421 Rodeo Road Avenue, North Platte	LN06-703
Lincoln Highway Marker	In North Platte	LN06-711
Auto Dealership and Garage	Southwest corner of 4th and Cottonwood, North Platte	LN06-713
Service Station	Northeast corner of 4th and McCabe Streets, North Platte	LN06-715
Lincoln Highway Marker	In North Platte	LN06-716
Lincoln Highway Marker	In North Platte	LN06-717
Gas Station	Northeast corner of Highway 30 and Maple, Sutherland	LN08-019
Gas Station	South side of Highway 30 between West County Road and Poplar, Sutherland	LN08-041
Motel	Northwest corner of Highway 30 and Oak, Sutherland	LN08-044
Gas Station	Northwest corner of Spruce and Highway 30, Sutherland	LN08-046
Lincoln Highway Marker	In Sutherland	LN08-048
Keith County		
Chieftain Motel	909 West Highway 30, Paxton	KH04-063
Plaza Inn	First Street between East B and East C Streets, Ogallala	KH04-106
Front Street Tourist Complex	519 East 1st Street, Ogallala	KH04-113
Hokes Café	Southeast Corner of East 1st and B, Ogallala	KH04-116

Property Name	Address	NeHBS Site No.
Elms Motel	Northeast Corner of Highway 30 and G Street, Ogallala	KH04-122
Lincoln Highway Marker	In Paxton	KH05-012
Lincoln Highway Marker	In Paxton	KH05-030
Gas Station	North side of 1st between Oak and Pine, Paxton	KH05-038
Deuel County		
Hotel	802 2nd Street, Chappell	DU02-060
Motel, Café, and Service Station	North side of Highway 30 between Wheatlands and Ochs Streets, Chappell	DU02-070
Cheyenne County		
Former Mayfair Service Station	Sidney vicinity	CN00-120
Abandoned Bar Q Motel	Sidney vicinity	CN00-122
Hurst's Lodgepole Motel	Northwest corner of Simmons and Sheldon (Highway 30), Lodgepole	CN05-030
Abandoned Rainbow Motel Complex	Northwest corner of Sheldon (Highway 30) and Newman, Lodgepole	CN05-033
Former Implement Dealership	North side of Sheldon (Highway 30) between Newman and Ober, Lodgepole	CN05-034
Former Service Garage	Northwest corner of Sheldon (Highway 30) and McCall, Lodgepole	CN05-036
Former Filling Station	Southwest corner of Chestnut and Sherman, Potter	CN08-036
El Palamino Motel	Northeast corner 23rd Avenue and Illinois (Hwy. 30), Sidney	CN09-088
Sidney Motor Lodge and Bright Motel	2031 Illinois (Highway 30), Sidney	CN09-091
Stickney Dealership and Commercial Garage	1119 Illinois (Highway 30), Sidney	CN09-109
Lincoln Highway Marker	In Sidney	CN09-117
Service Station	Northwest Corner of 9th Avenue and Illinois, Sidney	CN09-135
Jackson Auto Dealership	644 10th Avenue, Sidney	CN09-343

Property Name	Address	NeHBS Site No.
Former Motel	Northwest corner of 1st and Friend Streets, Sunol	CN10-009
Highway 30 Rest Area	Northeast corner of 1st and Henry, Sunol	CN10-011
Kimball County		
Garage/Service Station	504 Highway 30 and 3rd Street, Kimball	KM04-159
Motel	Northeast corner of Highway 30 and County Road 43, Kimball	KM04-168

Potash Highway Potentially Eligible Properties

The survey of the Potash Highway documented 130 related properties including the following resources:

Bridges and culverts = 15
Hotels, motels and cabins = 19
Restaurants, diners and drive-ins = 8
Gas stations and service stations = 55
Automobile showrooms and lots = 9
Roads and highway = 17
Signs = 3
Other (includes waysides, commercial properties, etc.) = 4
Total Potash Highway properties documented = 130

Of the 130 properties identified, 12 are recommended as potentially eligible for the National Register including the following property types:

Hotels = 1
Drive-in = 1
Gas and service stations = 7
Garages = 1
Parks and waysides = 2

Properties are organized by county following the Potash Highway from east to west across the state. The following recommendations are based on the Historic Highway Survey and should not not be considered comprehensive. Potentially eligible properties are illustrated at the end of the historic context chapter, see Chapter 5: The Potash Highway. Properties recommended as potentially eligible are significant under Criterion A for an association with the Potash Highway.

Potentially Eligible Properties - Potash Highway

Property Name	Address	NeHBS Site No.
Adams County		
Gas Station	739 Burlington Avenue, Hastings	AD04-426
Sherman County		
Gas Station	Southwest corner of Market & Jerold Streets, Hazard	SM02-015
Custer County		
Sinclair Service Station and Café	Southeast corner of Main & Division Streets, Ansley	CU02-052
Service Station	Northeast corner of 10th & "E" Streets, Broken Bow	CU05-072
Gas Station	Southwest corner of Crawford & Prentiss Streets, Mason City	CU11-014

Property Name	Address	NeHBS Site No.
Blaine County		
Service Station and Café	Intersection of Jewett and Highway 2, Dunning	BL02-014
Thomas County		
Cowpoke Hotel	By Walnut & Railroad Streets, Thedford	TM05-009
Hooker County		
Gas Station	South of Lincoln & 2nd Streets, Mullen	HO02-053
Box Butte County		
Alliance Park	Niobrara & 10th Street, Alliance	BX01-067
Lowry & Henry Service Garage	Northwest corner of Box Butte and 5th Street, Alliance	BX01-232
Zesto Drive-In	Near Platte & 3rd Street, Alliance	BX01-239
Dawes County		
Roadside Park	Crawford vicinity	DW00-191

U. S. Highway 20

The survey of U.S. Highway 20 documented 155 related properties including the following resources:

Bridges and culverts = 19
Hotels, motels and cabins = 41
Restaurants, diners, and drive-ins = 9
Gas stations and service stations = 59
Automobile showrooms and lots = 11
Roads and highway = 13
Other (includes rest stops, etc.) = 3
Total U.S. Highway 20 properties documented = 155

Of the 155 properties identified, 23 are recommended as potentially eligible for the National Register including the following property types:

Bridges = 1
Hotels, motels, and cabins = 4
Restaurants, diners, and drive-ins = 1
Gas stations and service stations = 12
Automobile showrooms and lots = 1
Garage = 1
Drive-in theater = 1
Parks and waysides = 2

Properties are organized by county following U. S. Highway 20 from east to west across the state. The following recommendations are based on the Historic Highway Survey and should not not be considered comprehensive. Potentially eligible properties are illustrated at the end of the historic context chapter, see Chapter 6: U. S. Highway 20. Properties recommended as potentially eligible are significant under Criterion A for an association with U. S. Highway 20.

Potentially Eligible Properties - U.S. Highway 20

Property Name	Address	NeHBS Site No.
Cedar County		
Service Station and Café	Intersection of U.S. Highway 20 and 1st Street, Laurel	CD08-049
Antelope County		
Service Station	Northeast corner of Windom and 2nd Streets, Orchard	AP06-019
Holt County		
Drive-In Theater	O'Neill vicinity	HT00-279
Auto Dealership and Service Garage	Southeast corner of William and State Streets, Atkinson	HT02-081
Service Station	Northeast corner of William and State Streets, Atkinson	HT02-091

Property Name	Address	NeHBS Site No.
Service Station	Southeast corner of Douglas and 5th Streets, O'Neill	HT13-146
Rock County		
Spring Valley Park	Newport vicinity	RO00-078
Service Station	Northeast corner of Clark and Legnard Streets, Bassett	RO01-039
Bassett Lodge	By Legnard and Clark Streets, Bassett	RO01-041
Brown County		
Meadville Bridge	Meadville vicinity	BW00-067
Gas Station	By Oak and 4th Streets, Ainsworth	BW01-174
Service Station	Northwest corner of Walnut and 4th Streets, Ainsworth	BW01-175
Remington Arms Motel	4th Street east of Pine Street, Ainsworth	BW01-186
Cherry County		
Roadside Park	Valentine vicinity	CE00-250
Bank and Service Garage	Northeast corner of Nebraska and Cherry Streets, Cody	CE03-029
Service Station	By Cherry Street and U.S. Highway 20, Cody	CE03-037
Motel Corey/Ballard Motel	By Macomb and 2nd Streets, Valentine U.S. Highway 20 and Hall Street, Valentine	CE14-059 CE14-062
Sheridan County		
Service Station	Southeast corner of Oak and 2nd Streets, Gordon	SH05-030
Service Station and Café	Southeast corner of U.S. Highway 20 and Main Street, Hay Springs	SH06-026
Gas Station Main Street	North of the railroad line, Rushville	SH08-013
Café	By U.S. Highway 20 and Conrad Street, Rushville	SH08-037
Dawes County		
Gas Station	920 East 3rd Street, Chadron	DW03-133

Future Survey and Research Needs

National Register Listing

Properties recommended within this report, and additional properties not yet identified, "tell the story" of travel and automobile tourism along Nebraska's highways. These properties should be recognized for their significance by being listed in the National Register. The Multiple Property Documentation Forms provide the historic context for these resources. Potentially eligible properties should be assessed within the parameters of the historic context and registration requirements outlined in the Multiple Property Documents. Further research into these properties can determine if the resources qualify for listing in the National Register.

Intensive Survey of Highways

Current survey efforts provide a comprehensive look at the early period of development for five of Nebraska's highways through the identification of early alignments, preparation of historic contexts, and documentation of road-related resources. The effort to document and evaluate Nebraska's highways should be continued. To identify historic uses and association with the highway, site-specific research should be conducted for individual resources that have been identified as potentially eligible for the National Register. Further survey and research efforts focusing on subsequent alignments and related resources would enhance this study by providing a broader look at each of the highways. Additional research focusing on alignment corridors within communities would also be helpful to identify the development and evolution of "automobile rows." In addition to archival research, oral histories may provide unique insight or perspective on the evolution of the highway and its relationship to services provided within a community. Additional highways in Nebraska should also be considered for investigation and research, such as the Golden Rod Highway, S.Y.A. Trail, and Cornhusker Highway.

Reconnaissance Survey of Interstate 80

A reconnaissance survey of Interstate 80 resources is recommended to expand upon the historic context prepared as a component of this project. Although the interstate has not achieved the 50 year age limit in Nebraska, the eligibility of this transportation system is being discussed by a national task force. The interstate itself is an evolving transportation system that has undergone routine maintenance and improvements. Potential engineering significance and integrity, not withstanding, the interstate has had a profound impact on social history and urban development in the United States. The reconnaissance survey for Interstate 80 should focus primarily on resources and development that resulted from the interstate, including rest areas and original traveler services at interchanges. A limited study of NDOR plans and field review may also assist in understanding if the interstate itself includes significant engineering features.

Oral History Project - Road Development in Nebraska

To date some oral histories have been conducted with NDOR district and departmental personnel. The engineers and administrators of NDOR's programs have valuable first hand experience implementing state and national transportation policies that have changed the landscape of Nebraska's roads. Additional oral histories should be collected. Topics to focus on may include the development of the interstate addressing the unique design and alignment challenges and road building efforts of the 1950s and 1960s.

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Appendix B: Glossary

AASHO
The American Association of State Highway Officials 1914 formed technical committees that had a role in shaping many aspects of road policy including building, financing, and maintenance. AASHO was the forerunner to AASHTO.

AASHTO
AASHO became American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials in 1974. AASHTO advocates transportation policies, provide technical services, demonstrate the contributions of transportation and facilitate institutional change.

Aggregate
Stone and gravel of various sizes which compose the major portion of the surfacing material. The sand or pebbles added to cement in making concrete.

Aggregate Base Course
The layer of material immediately beneath the pavement. It may be composed of crushed stone, crushed or uncrushed sand and gravel, or combinations of these materials. To provide the service intended it must be uniform in strength to support the pavement.

Alignment
The vertical and horizontal location of a road.

Armor Coating
A thin layer of asphalt over a base course of crushed rock and gravel.

Asphalt
A mixture of refined petroleum, sand, and gravel used for paving.

Asphaltic Concrete
A special concrete consisting of a mixture of graded aggregate and heated asphalt.

Bitumen
A natural asphalt or substance found in a natural state or residue by-product from petroleum refinement. Bituminous contains bitumen.

Bituminous Asphalt
See asphalt.

Bituminous Matting
See asphalt.

Bituminous Surfacing
See asphalt.

Bypass Routes
An arterial highway that permits traffic to avoid part or all of an urban area.

Cement
A powdered product made by grinding clinkers of limestone, clay, and other materials, and which reacts with water to form a rock like substance used to bond aggregates together in concrete.

Cloverleaf
See interchange.

Concrete
Concrete is a building material made of sand and gravel bonded together with portland cement into a hard, compact substance.

Department of Roads (NDOR)
Nebraska's state highway agency which has the responsibility for initiating and carrying forward the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of highways on the state and federal highway systems.

Divided Highway
A highway with separated roadways for traffic in opposite directions. Typically separated by a raised concrete or depressed turf median.

Expressway
A divided arterial highway for through traffic with full or partial control of access and generally with grade separations at major intersections.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
A division of the Department of Transportation, formerly the Bureau of Public Roads. The federal agency responsible for supervision and distribution of federal funds to various state highway agencies.

Federal-Aid Highway
Four categories are: Interstate, primary, secondary, and urban. This is the system which is normally eligible to receive federal-aid funds.

Federal-Aid Interstate System
A highway system designed and located to connect by routes, as direct as practicable, the principal metropolitan areas, cities and industrial centers, to serve the national defense and to connect at suitable border points and routes of continental importance. The routes are selected by joint action of the state highway departments of each state and adjoining state subject to approval by the Secretary of Transportation. This system is located in rural and urban areas.

Grade Crossings
Points where a road and railroad cross at the same level.

Graded
To adjust, or level off, the slope of a road.

Grade Separation
A crossing of two highways, or a highway and a railroad, at different levels. The bridge that spans highways or railroad tracks (as in an overpass) is a grade separation structure.

Hard Paving or Hard Surfacing
Hard road surface, such as cement or asphalt, that could carry heavy traffic loads better than gravel.

Highway Commission
In Nebraska, an eight-member appointed board with serves in an advisory capacity to the Governor. The Board serves as a liaison with the public and chairs public hearings. All commission members are appointed for a six-year term by the Governor with the consent of the Legislature. Each represents a highway district and no more than four are from the same political party. Highway Commission meetings are open to the public and generally held the fourth Friday of every month at the central headquarters building of the Nebraska Department of Roads in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Highway
A general term denoting a public way for purposes of vehicular travel, including the entire area within the right-of-way.

Interchange
A system of interconnecting roadways providing for the free movement of traffic between two or more roadways on different levels. For example, three types of interchanges are: cloverleaf, diamond and directional. Variations of these basic types are possible.

Interstate
A divided arterial highway for through traffic with full control of access and ingress and egress only at interchanges. The interstates are a federally designated national system of interstate and defense highways.

Macadam
Hard surfaced road of stone or rock foundation covered with a layer of brick or broken stones. American macadam roads used natural soil for the foundation layer.

National Highway System (NHS)
A system of roads nation-wide that includes the Interstate highway system as well as other roads important to the nation's economy, defense, and mobility. Almost 160,955 miles of road, 3,000 of which are in the state of Nebraska, have been designated as being on the NHS.

Overpass
A grade separation where the highway passes over a highway or railroad. (See grade separation)

Pavement
The part of a roadway having a constructed surface for the facilitation of vehicular movement.

Post road
Federally designated, important interstate throughways, later developed into an integrated national road system that would allow easy intercommunication throughout the country.

Railroad Grade Crossing
The general area where a highway and a railroad cross at the same level, within which are included the railroad, roadway, and roadside facilities for traffic traversing that area.

Ramp
A connecting roadway between two intersecting highways at a highway separation.

Right-of-way
Land acquired by purchase, gift or eminent domain in order to build and maintain a public road.

Road
See highway.

Seedling Mile
Early hard-surfaced sections of road along the Lincoln Highway. Seedling miles were generally concrete, one-mile in length, located on the edge of town, and constructed with donations.

Shoulder
The portion of the roadway adjacent to the traveled way for accommodation of stopped vehicles, for emergency use, and for lateral support of the base and surface courses. On secondary roadways the shoulder usually consists of turf. On heavily traveled roads the shoulder is usually a bituminous mixture or concrete.

Signing
Visual method of providing the vehicle driver with guide, warning and regulatory information along a highway.

Stairsteps
A term used to describe a series of right-angle turns in the road along the Lincoln Highway primarily in Dawson and Lincoln Counties, Nebraska.

Street
See highway.

Surfacing
Material used to construct the roadway. There are four types: Asphalt, Bituminous, Concrete, Gravel.

Underpass
A grade separation where the highway passes under an intersecting highway or railroad. (See grade separation)

Viaduct
A bridge for carrying a road over a valley, another road, or railroad.

Notes

[1] Many of the definitions were taken from the Nebraska Department of Roads, "Glossary of Road Design and Construction Terms" <http://www.dor.state.ne.us/roadway-design/> (Accessed 15 March 2002).