



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF
THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

"A Good Road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound"



NELS MONSON IS TRAILMAN OF THE YEAR

To show appreciation for the work that Trailmen do, your officers of the Yellowstone Trail Association decided to establish a Trailman of the Year award. Nels Monson of South Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is Trailman of the Year for 2004. The award was made at a meeting of the South Milwaukee Historical Society. The presentation read, in part:



"Those bright yellow signs around town reminding us that we are now on the Yellowstone Trail are there largely through the hard work of Nels Monson, Trailman for the new Yellowstone Trail Association. Because of this accomplishment and many others, the Yellowstone Trail Association wishes to honor Nels."

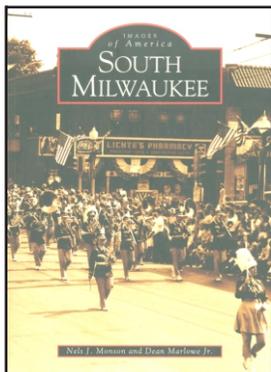
Trailman was to keep the Trail repaired, to report local route changes to the Trail Association, to help travelers in trouble and to gather members.

Today a Trailman is expected only to inform his community and to generate enthusiasm about marking that historic route.

When he became a Trailman a year ago for the new Yellowstone Trail Association, Nels said: "I will do what I can to see if I can get up some interest in the Trail in this neck of the woods." Nels has done a spectacular job of doing just that. He has marked the Trail through South Milwaukee and Cudahy, given presentations about the Trail to several civic groups and written articles about the Trail.

Because Nels is tenacious, curious, dogged, informed, and fearless, the Yellowstone Trail Association presents him with the honor of Trailman of the Year - 2004.

Just previous to this award, Nels' fascinating history book about his hometown came out. Images of America series (Arcadia Press) features a town in the U.S. with each issue. The books are written by local historians. This is the second book in the Images of America series written by a Yellowstone Trail Association member. Doris Whithorn's *Paradise Valley*, the area around the Trail from Livingston, Montana, to the north entrance of the Yellowstone Park, appeared in 2001. 



TRAVEL ALONG THE TRAIL

I love to drive on road trips! I first got the "old road" bug when I took a solo road trip on Route 66 in the summer of 2002, from Chicago to Santa Monica. In *American Road* magazine I read the articles on "The Yellowstone Trail" by Alice & John Ridge, and it's all history from there.

California Trailman Dianne Hunt traveled the Trail last summer and sent us this spirited report.

I began exploring the Yellowstone Trail (YT) on another solo road trip last summer. I started in Seattle and headed east to Yellowstone National Park. It was so much fun going to every little town listed on the original map, going into every museum and visitor center I could find, and meeting the nicest people.

Here are just some of the highlights of my trip:

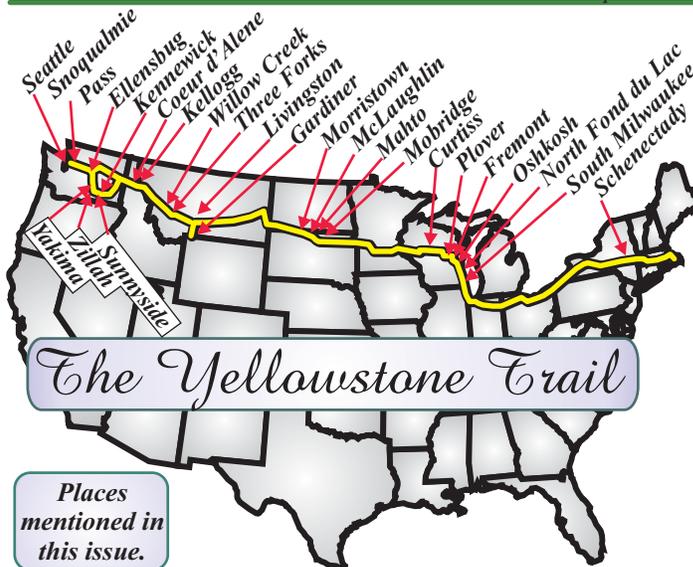
Washington: At the Snoqualmie Pass visitor center, a very nice lady ranger directed me right to the YT and I saw my first YT signs. Then I found that the "43-mile drivable section" from Yakima to Ellensburg had incredible scenery and wildflowers. The Audubon Society had put up over 130 bluebird boxes along the fence and I saw many of the critters using them. The folks at Yakima visitor's center were very helpful and drew me a map to the Grandview Pavement. They sent me on my way with fresh local cherries and apple juice from Selah. The "Grandview Pavement" in Sunnyside is now only a "shrine" of what's left of the original 1915 stamped pavement, but it is nicely put together with a huge YT sign on it, surrounded by fields of hops. In Zillah, I loved the Tea Pot Dome Gas Station. The East Benton County historical museum in Kennewick had tons of information on the YT, including back issues of the YT Association newsletters.



YT sign on YT Road, Snoqualmie Pass erected by member Helen Witter.

Idaho: In Coeur d'Alene, I followed the very scenic YT above the beautiful Coeur d'Alene Lake; next was the old historic Cataldo Mission. Just outside Kellogg was the "Miner's Hat Realty" building; and the historical town of Wallace had a beautiful old train depot.

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YT GUIDES - WILL THEY BE?

Your officers are working with a South Dakota publisher to make plans to develop state or regional mile-by-mile guides for the Yellowstone Trail. The present proposal is to have 8.5 x 11 newsprint booklets with detailed maps of the Trail, driving instructions, bits of Trail history, lists of related sights and events and, of course, ads. The intent is to have the ads cover the costs so that the guides will be available free to the traveling public. Send us your ideas. And we will need members to help inventory historic and Trail-related sights. Volunteers?

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Kellogg's Miner's Hat

some places, so I was glad no one came the other way. The only other traveler was a cow (she thought I was herding her!). The Yellowstone Gateway Museum in Livingston was where I first found YT souvenirs and, of course, bought a lot. They were very helpful at the Museum and very familiar with the old road and gave me plenty of helpful info. From there I drove to Gardiner, and then explored Yellowstone N.P. for a week.

By the time I returned to the San Francisco Bay Area in California, I had driven 5,200 miles (miles really add up when you get as lost as I do!), and I had shot 25 rolls of slide film. I'm presenting my first slide show on the YT at a local library in May.

Next summer I'll start my trip in Gardiner, Montana, and head north to Livingston, and then I'll see how far east along the YT I can get in 25 days.

Thanks for all everyone does to promote this wonderful old road! ☺



Old YT Road, between Willow and Harrison, Montana

Dianne Hunt lives in the San Francisco Bay Area of California.

She enjoys traveling old historic roads around the United States and is an amateur photographer. Working as a 10-month employee at a local high school, she enjoys her summers off to travel. She is passionate about all things Americana and tacky, including historical byways, funky architecture, off-beat museums, dilapidated barns, road food and gift shops.

A TRAIL LANDMARK DESTROYED

The Olde Saloon in tiny Curtiss, WI, burned down March 2 due to a grease fire in the kitchen. Built in 1889, it began life as a hotel. It passed through the hands of several owners before the hotel closed, but the saloon remained. Yellowstone Trail Association member Les Bowen bought the place in 1982 and added a restaurant to the saloon because he "wanted a place for someone to get a cup of coffee."

Faithful readers may recall that Arrow issue #5 contained a picture of Les who created a large highway sign advertising Curtiss and bearing the legend "On the Yellowstone Trail."



The Saloon saw the Trail arrive in Curtiss in 1915 and survive road numbering until 1930. When Les was a kid he trudged to school along the Trail, never thinking that someday he would own this centerpiece of Curtiss.

The Olde Saloon was a stopping place on the 100 mile antique car "Sociability Run" made along the Trail in 2000. Drivers all raved about the huge hamburgers served.

While Les owned the place he created a unique ambiance by filling it with antiques. Indeed, one could wander around looking at the items and pictures and forget to eat. The antiques alone drew many and its reputation as a "landmark" grew with its age. The next owner kept the antiques and the same historic aire. Unfortunately, everything was lost. ☺



Editor's note: Remember when we wrote with sadness of the death of Trailman Jim Mowbray? Well, his son, Mark, has written a fine memorial to him and his Yellowstone Garage. *The History of the Yellowstone Garage 1920-1966* chronicles the life of a garage, a man, and a town situated on the Trail in North Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Mark recounted for us the effort required to write this slim book and the ultimate satisfaction with the product, encouraging other YT writers.



THE JOYS (AND PAINS) OF LOCAL RESEARCH

by Mark Mowbray

For many years I wondered why the Yellowstone name was used. All I knew was that the Garage was located on the road that tourists used many years before to travel to Yellowstone Park.

By doing Internet searches and by reading the fine book by Alice and John Ridge, I learned the story of the Yellowstone Trail. I then became interested in finding out the story of the Garage itself.

I knew the history of the later years, as I was only three years old when my dad, Jim Mowbray, bought the business in 1949. He operated it until 1966 when he closed the business. I spent a lot of time there during those years.

I started my research by interviewing my dad. I had heard most of his stories many times but I took notes anyway. I am glad I did, as he passed away soon after.

The stories he had been told were great, but I later found out that they were not always reliable or accurate. As an example: he remembered clearly that Joe Braun had told him that the Garage had been built during a railroad strike in 1909. It took about a year to find out that there were no strikes in the early 1900's and another year to find that the building was, in fact, built in 1920.

I began a rather haphazard research project in 2003 that lead to many dead ends and detours. The county library was closed for remodeling. The local real estate tax records were not available due to an upcoming reassessment. I found nothing of help at the county offices.

Finding out the true story became more important to me. I began to realize that I would not settle for a brief story using sketchy information and vague oral history. I needed facts. Because I live and work 100 miles away, it was long distance research, a few hours at a time for two years.

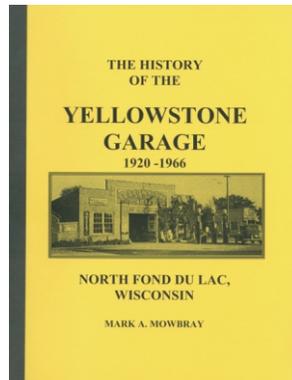
During that time I visited the Village Hall and searched the local libraries. I poured over seventy years of City / County Directories. I read local history books. I inherited some great old photos from my dad. Village plat maps only showed lot numbers, not buildings, or owners. Local newspaper archives were of little help.

I contacted the current owner of the property. After a delay of several months, I was able to view the property abstract at his office. It was confusing and difficult to read, but soon I realized that there were actually two adjoining properties. I then was able to sort out owners and important dates, but, unfortunately, not the date of the actual construction of the building.

When I was finally able to see the tax records, they verified what I already suspected. 1920 was the date. The final piece of the puzzle was in place.

The project was like a treasure hunt, sometimes frustrating but usually rewarding and fun.

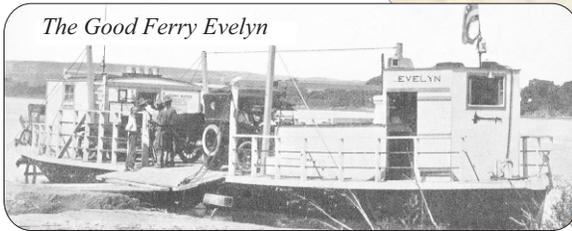
I encourage anyone thinking of doing such a project to go for it. ☺



THE WANDERING ROUTE

Everywhere, it was tough finding roads usable enough to string together to form a national highway. But just west of Mobridge, South Dakota, there were a couple of major problems: how do you reliably get across the Missouri River and then, just across the river, how could the Yellowstone Trail Association (YTA) chart a route across the Standing Rock Indian Reservation? Success for most trail associations lay in cajoling county boards into improving extant roads or building new ones that a trail association could call its "own" and advertise that route. But what do you do when your transcontinental trail is stopped dead by another "nation" and a major river?

The river problem had to wait. A ferry had been operated since 1907 by the Jacobson family, but floods, ice and low water made the trip risky. And, of course, if you were young and foolish, and trusted railroad timetables, you could drive on the ties on the railroad bridge with your fingers crossed.



The Good Ferry Evelyn

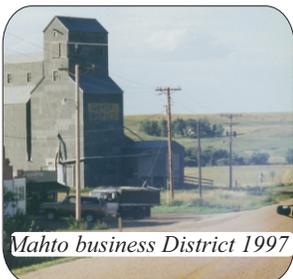


McLaughlin Indian Women 1921

The first problem, though, was getting a road through the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in Corson County that was usable by autos. One 1913 approach was to follow the 66 foot rights-of-way between surveyed sections that federal regulations preserved for roads here as elsewhere in the Northwest. That would mean a 115 mile route made difficult because the contours of the land and the river didn't follow section lines. The other choice was an 87 mile diagonal road that followed the contours, but land ownership complicated that choice. And nineteen miles of that 87 just west of the Missouri River were extremely difficult to build on: soft clay, gumbo, and large hills with 12% grades.

The federal government was mightily involved in Corson County/Reservation administration and, in this era, they had no great interest in road-building anywhere. Indians owned most of the land but did have the right to sell to anyone (1887's Dawes Severalty Act). That opened the way for non-Indians to secure title to reservation lands. Federal aid was barely visible, \$75,000 for the whole of the US post roads in 1912.

In early 1914, the YTA appointed member Rev. George Keniston to the task of raising \$35,000 to buy the rights-of-way from land owners (whites, Indians, railroad companies) across the reservation and build seven or eight bridges. Soon he was in Washington, DC pushing members of the Public Lands Committee and the Indian Bureau for funds. In May 1914 several senators and congressmen placed \$50,000 into the Indian Appropriation bill for the project. They actually got only \$5000. We don't know if the YTA ever raised their promised \$35,000.



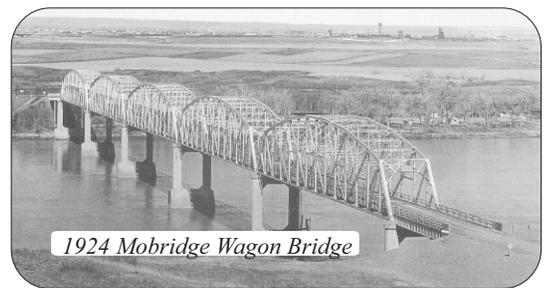
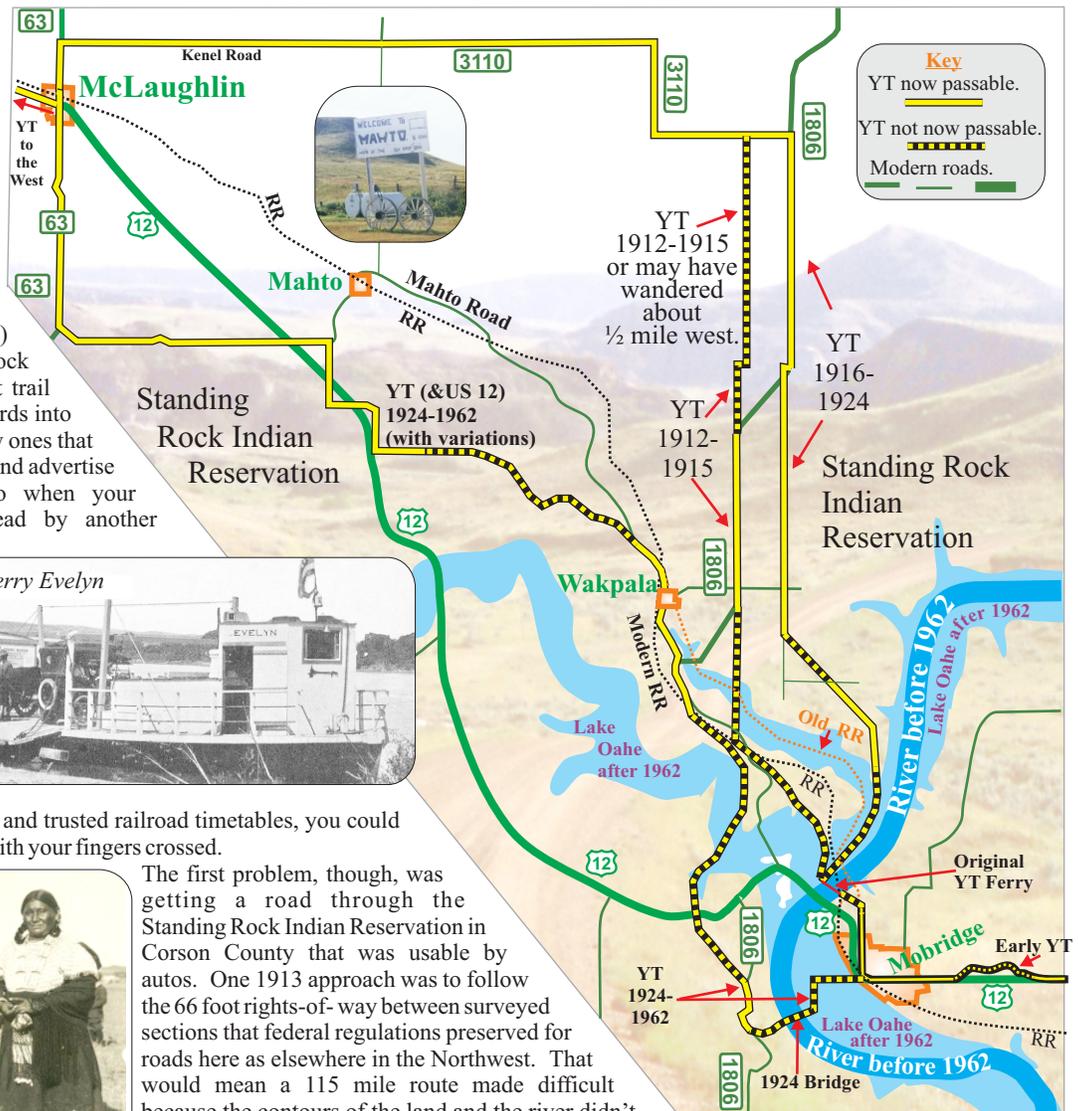
Mahto business District 1997

In July of 1916 *The Morristown World* (Corson County) reported that Joe Parmley of the YTA, county board members and surveyor, and the superintendent of the reservation were all out tramping on "unbeaten paths," looking for a "permanent route" for the Yellowstone Trail. Indeed, 1916 maps show a new route, probably little improved dirt, still following section lines. Purchase of rights-of-way apparently was dropped in favor of following "free" section lines.

Parmley pushed for an auto bridge at Mobridge which was finally built in 1924. A major shift in the road location was made over a period of a few years, now with federal aid.

Parmley had also pushed for dams along the Missouri. In 1962 the dam forming Lake Oahe was complete and sections of the Trail, along with the railroad, were flooded out. The present alignment then developed and this route of the Trail was designated US 12 when the US route numbers were adopted.

Study the map to see the wandering route of the Trail over the years. ☺



1924 Mobridge Wagon Bridge

Yellowstone Trail Association

Attn: Tom Barrett, 340 Division Street North, Stevens Point, WI 54481



THE ARROW

The Arrow is designed in the tradition of *The Arrow*, the newsletter of the original Yellowstone Trail Association early in the 20th century. *The Arrow* is now published sporadically as time and resources permit. Only members of the Yellowstone Trail Association are receiving it in printed format.

Questions, stories and news items may be directed to: The YTA, John or Alice Ridge, 7000 South Shore Drive, Altoona, WI, 54720, **Phone** 715-834-5992. **E-mail:** jridge@yellowstonetrail.org **Web site response:** www.yellowstonetrail.org using the Response Form.

Questions or suggestions about the YTA or about opportunities for tourism agencies may be directed to: Tom Barrett, The Yellowstone Trail Association, 340 Division Street North, Stevens Point, WI 54481. **Phone:** 715-344-2556 or 800-236-4636 ext. 13

E-mail: tbarrett@spacvb.com

--TRAILOGRAMS--

NEW YTA VICE-PRESIDENT

Arlene Schmuhl, Regional and Group Project Manager at the Oshkosh, Wisconsin, CVB is our new vice-president, replacing the unexpected relocation of Glenn Brill to non-Trail state South Carolina. Arlene has been part of the Yellowstone Trail Project in Wisconsin for years, assuming a pivotal role in the production of 65,000 YT tourist maps for the state. As vice-president she is organizing all newspaper addresses to send out news releases as appropriate. She is active in many civic and cultural organizations including the Winnebago County Historical Society Board, the Oshkosh Landmarks Commission, and the Oshkosh Arts Board.



CHECK THE WEB SITE

Of course, it is still a-building, but there are completed maps of the Trail through several of the 13 states. A new feature is a "mile-by mile" list of all the towns on the Trail. This list will contain historic items and Trail artifacts of interest to travelers and will be added to regularly. You can help. What did Trail-era (1912-1930) tourists see in your area that today's tourists would like to see? Let us know. www.yellowstonetrail.org

FREMONT (WISCONSIN) LIVING HISTORY DAY

May 28, 2005. What a bash this promises to be! Civil War re-enactors, May Pole Dancers! And the centerpiece is the dedication of the old (1901) brick school cum town hall. The site was first surveyed in or before 1848, before Wisconsin was a state, and a log school was built soon after, reports YTA member Elsie Yohr. Descendants of the original surveyor will be there. Application has been made for the building to be on the state Register of Historic Places. And the Yellowstone Trail? It ran right past the front door 1915-1930. The building proudly wears a sign announcing that fact.

NEW YT BROCHURE AVAILABLE

It is being printed while this is being written and is intended to tell people about the Trail and the YTA.. Want some to hand out? Trailmen should have some. No cost. We need you to find new members. Just ask – but tell Tom the number you can use productively. Tom Barrett, Treasurer, Yellowstone Trail Association, 340 Division Street North, Stevens Point, WI 54481. **E-mail is best:** tbarrett@spacvb.com. Phone (800) 236-4636 ext. 13

YT IN THE NEWS

Did you know? The Fall/Winter 2004 issue of *Rediscover MT* has a nice article about the Yellowstone Trail. Dana Pulis raided the Western Heritage Center in Billings for pictures. If you live in Montana, take a look.

YT TO BE AT RENDEZVOUS DAYS

Plover/Portage County (Wisconsin) Rendezvous Days at Heritage Park two blocks from the original Trail. See a video about the Trail history! See the tourist cabin restored from its life on the Yellowstone Trail! Antique cars! Music and goodies! July 16-17, 2005

INTERNET DISCUSSION GROUP

Discuss old highways, travel, and history with like-minded folk. Trailman Rich Rheingold from Schenectady, NY, invites us as individuals to join his discussion group. The topic of the Group has been US 20 but because the Yellowstone Trail was the foundation for Hwy 20 in the East, he is willing to include the Yellowstone Trail. Once you sign up to be part of the Group you will receive e-mails that other members send to the Group and an e-mail you send to the group will go to all of the other members. No cost at all. It's fun to at least "listen in."

The process is simple, but confusing. If you have trouble joining, send your question to Rich at rrheingo@nycap.rr.com.

To join go to <http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/USRRoute20/> and click on "join this group." If you are a member of Yahoo Groups, just sign in. If you are not a member of Yahoo Groups, go to Sign Up and answer a bunch of questions. Once in, send an e-mail to the group at USRRoute20@yahogroups.com and let others know your interests.

MEMBER BENEFIT ADDED

We have been talking about the new magazine, *American Road*, at times in the *Arrows*. It is an award-winning magazine dedicated to "the two-lane highways of yesteryear." It brings you stories of life on the road - the landmarks, roadside attractions, scenic drives, and - best of all - the people they meet along the way. *American Road* visits the mom-and-pop cafes in neon-lit small towns that make each journey worthwhile and brings them all to you with vibrant tales and colorful photography four times a year." AND each issue contains an article about the Yellowstone Trail.

The YTA has negotiated a special subscription rate on your behalf. Order an *American Road* subscription today, and you can save up to 42% off the cover price, just for being a YTA member! For just \$11.96 for one year (4 issues) or \$22.95 for two years (8 issues), *American Road* will amuse and inform you, and you might just possibly find yourself packing up the car before you realize what you are doing. International prices are higher. Visit www.mockturtlepress.com/arsample.html to see a sample issue. Or look for it at your local newsstand; if it's not there, ask them to handle it. To subscribe:

a) Address mail orders to: Mock Turtle Press, PO Box 46519 Mt. Clemens, MI 48046*

b) To order by phone, call 1-877-285-5434*

c) Or visit www.yellowstonetrail.org/id219.htm, and click on the magazine cover to visit subscription site! You can use a charge card to order on-line.*

*You may need the special code for YTA members: S504YTA