



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF
THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

"A Good Road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound"



SEVEN SMALL COMMUNITIES, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL

Ed Note: In the last issue of the Arrow there was a report of the effort of seven small communities to mark the Trail and use it as a galvanizing theme for economic development. In this issue we report the grand event of May 5. It seems to us that there are many small communities along the Trail which would benefit by joining with their neighbors in a similar economic development effort. Things can be accomplished together that would be impossible alone. Think about it, friends.

In late April, 26 bright yellow Yellowstone Trail highway signs went up along 40 miles of County Highway X, the original Yellowstone Trail in central Wisconsin (see Arrow #11). On May 5 there was an official re-dedication, or "progressive unveiling party," held for the Trail and those signs, put up by seven small communities. The communities, located on the Trail, are using the Trail as a theme for attracting tourism. At the same time, the city and county of Chippewa Falls joined the effort, putting up 76 additional signs to mark the Trail.

The celebrations moved from the eastern-most town of Curtiss and its festivities through to Owen, Withee, Thorp, Stanley, Boyd, and Cadott. A "Sociability Run" of dignitaries, antique cars, and as many as one hundred people moved from town to town. Student groups, local officials and spectators ignored the unseasonably cold weather at each town to view or participate in YT displays, old auto displays, ribbon-cuttings and presentations by community officials and historical society chieftains. Sitting state representatives and would-be state representatives mixed amiably. The communities had planned the events for a year, and dozens of

people deserve thanks but the heavy lifting fell to Yellowstone Trail Association Member Matt Graettinger who coordinated the movement of participants from town to town ON SCHEDULE.

One highlight of the event was an appearance by Wisconsin Lieutenant Governor Barbara Lawton. Her remarks revealed a remarkable grasp of the importance of the Trail then, and the importance of community cooperation now. Here it is paraphrased:



1. Lieutenant Governor Lawton cuts a symbolic ribbon
2. Thorp re-named its city park Yellowstone Trail Park
3. Stanley celebrated its history
4. Some came costumed

We are here to celebrate a major artery across the north connecting communities from sea to sea. It was the result of a grass roots effort, not a project of government or wealthy benefactors. These seven communities came together with a similar vision to draw visitors here to be introduced to historical significance of this route and then invite them to stay to enjoy the beauty and recreational opportunities. The collaborative work of these citizens has built a larger sense of community, built bridges over partisan differences and through arbitrary village and county lines. This is a creative way to use this well-trodden path as a way to think of and communicate our common ground. This project is a triumph of vision, determination and leadership in moving toward regional cooperation.

Plans are underway for continuing events and economic development activities during the coming months and years. **C**

5. Antique cars abounded
6. YTA Member Matt Graettinger (left) with Owen Mayor Tim Swiggum
7. Even a 1910 Winton!
8. Les Bowen of Curtiss and his 1924 Model T

- TRAILOGRAMS -

TRAIL RESEARCHER DIES The YTA sadly announces the death of Yellowstone Trail researcher and author Hal Meeks. He produced the book *On the Road to Yellowstone*, a very readable history with many pictures and incorporating the broader story of early transportation.

BEST WISHES Let's all wish our YTA Treasurer, Tom Barrett and Member Johnnie Hill well. Seems they both had heart surgery. Rumor has it that they both gave nurses a hard time so got thrown out to recover at home.

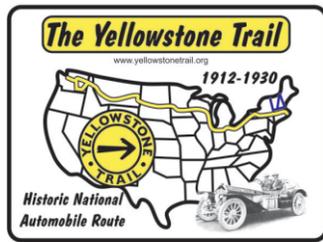
CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITY Hey! Montanans, don't forget. The Montana History Conference will be held in Billings Sept 28-30. The Sheraton Hotel. The Yellowstone Trail Association will be there in the persons of John and Alice Ridge and their presentation 3:00 Sept. 29. Be there!



YT GUIDES As mentioned before, the 42 page guide to the Yellowstone Trail from eastern Montana to Minneapolis, Minnesota is available, **free**, from businesses and information bureaus along that part of the Trail. It has detailed maps and a bit of history of the YT. It is supported by ads. We can send you a copy for \$5 for S & H if you need one for planning. That will also support ongoing research of the Trail. Use the Box 65 address on page 4.

YT BANNER FOR LOAN

We have acquired a banner for use at presentations or displays about the Trail. It is vinyl with solid grommets for hanging it up. It measures three by four feet. If you would like to borrow it for your presentation it is available if you will pay postage coming and going. Call the Ridges.



MEMBER DIANNE

HUNT completed driving her third segment of the Trail, traveling from her California home to Cleveland. We shall print her report in the next *Arrow*. Note the YT "seat covers!"



BUICK SOCIABILITY RUN



Organizer Gene & Rosalee Lander, with 1963 Buick.

Thirteen old Buicks toting 31 adventurers traveled the Trail this summer from The Seattle Buick Club to Rochester, Minnesota, for the National Buick Car Club meeting. As soon as we receive their pictures we will share their tale. We do know they were treated royally by Member Dorothy Pearson in Bowman, ND and Member Brian Sparks in Livingston, MT.

YELLOWSTONE TRAIL CAR CLUB AT THE OLIVIA, MINNESOTA, CORN CAPITAL DAYS

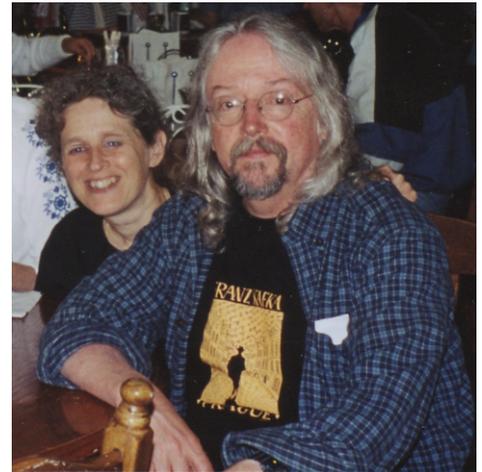
Great fun and lots of publicity for the Yellowstone Trail and one of its first presidents, Michael Dowling. We will have a full report in the next *Arrow*. **C**

TO YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK ALONG THE YT

Ed note: Member Kristin Johannsen of Berea, KY is a free-lance writer who is currently gathering information about old roads for a book. This summer she, along with husband Kevin, drove from Plymouth Rock to Yellowstone National Park. As we all know, finding remnants of the Trail east of Chicago is difficult, but the intrepid travelers did their best to follow present YTA maps. Following is a letter she sent to the Arrow editors.

We headed west across Minnesota in bad weather, and by the time we got to Hector it was pouring, but we had a great visit with Teri Hill in the gift shop (Kevin wouldn't let me get the triceratops snow-globe that played "Born Free" when you wind it up, though...) From there on in, we had perfect weather every day for two weeks, and camped in some really beautiful, atmospheric campgrounds, including a couple of places that we had all to ourselves where we could pretend it was 1920! Ipswich was absolutely fascinating. Member Phyllis Herrick took us around both the land office and the Parmley home museums. To me, that house gave such a vivid impression of the man-- the weird, muffled sound of the concrete floors, that peculiar concrete bathtub-- he seems to me like he was really obsessed with permanence and solidity. We even had bison burgers at the Yellowstone Trail Cafe! Lemmon was also a lot of fun, especially the Petrified Wood Park. I was very glad that you'd given us a heads-up about the Grand River Museum.

We found the drive across eastern MT very atmospheric-- we stuck very closely to the Trail, though I was somewhat worried about my Grandma's poor car on all that gravel! But it was so worthwhile. This really must have been what early auto travel was like-- the faintest tinge of anxiety: Are we going to get there? What if the car breaks down? It's so beautiful here, and we're so far from



Kristin and Kevin Johannsen discussing their travel.

everyone and everything. We camped at a campground near Plevna that was so remote that we had the whole place to ourselves, and it was the first time in many years that I've heard utter silence at night. No wind, too dry for crickets, no traffic, nothing.

Then after four full days at the magnificent Yellowstone Park, oohing and ahhhing at the geothermal features, we met with Brian Sparks of the Yellowstone Gateway Museum, and he gave us the historical perspective. And in one odd throwback to the 1920s, when we stayed in the cheapest private campground in Livingston, it turned out that the four people in the two huge, cheap tents at the next site were living there indefinitely-- because they couldn't find work and couldn't afford an apartment. Just like the old municipal campgrounds that had to charge money to keep "undesirables" from living there. So much of what I see around me reminds me strongly of what I've read and heard about the late 1920s-- the huge disconnect between the well-off and the rest of the world, just before the bottom fell out.

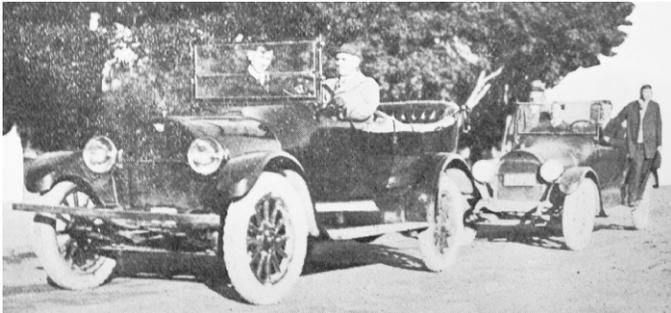
It was a wonderful trip-- largely thanks to the great people you put us in touch with. And the best thing of all is, I get to relive the trip while I write about it, and think that maybe I'll be able to inspire a lot of other people to drive the Trail themselves! **C**

HISTORY CORNER

CHICAGO TO SEATTLE IN RECORD TIME

Ed note: J.W. Parmley, founder of the Yellowstone Trail, always had ideas to publicize the Trail. This is the story of the June 15-19, 1915, highly publicized relay race. In another issue of the Arrow we will describe the 1916 coast-to-coast relay race. This article is adapted from article by Alice Ridge in American Road Vol.II, No. 1.

"We soon saw that we were followed by a motorcycle policeman and the jig was up. I said to Boone, 'Turn on the juice and let him know he has to go some if he arrests us.' Up went the speedometer to 40, 45, 50, but the police gained. As he closed up on us I showed him our banner and shouted, 'We have right of way.' He shot by smiling and said, 'Follow me.' He was a special police which Chicago Mayor Thompson, unknown to us, had detailed to escort us out of the city."



John Berkin and a "trailer" (backup) car on the run between Butte and Missoula.

Thus reported J.W. Parmley about the beginning of the breathtaking Chicago-to-Seattle auto relay race of 1915. The Yellowstone Trail Association had mapped the Trail between those two cities and to promote it they planned a relay race against time. In short, they were courting tourists.

Promotional stunts were not new but this race was different, 2445 miles in 100 hours with 21 drivers and cars traveling night and day. Could they do it? The Yellowstone Trail Association relied upon local Trailmen to appoint participants and carry out the arrangements. Each Trail segment of about 150 miles had a "manager," a driver, and a "trailer car" to follow the official car for insurance. Local guide cars could lead the way through difficult places.

To prove that the racers were legitimate, a letter from Chicago Mayor Thompson to Seattle Mayor Gill and a banner from the Chicago Automobile Club to the Automobile Club of Seattle would be quickly passed to each succeeding driver. No errant interloper could intrude. Each driver was to average 25 mph or better.

Police set up blockades in larger cities to keep the route clear, and local auto and commercial clubs volunteered help.

Newspapers along the route excitedly published names of local drivers, race car models, expected times of arrivals, and much "boosterism." The press took poetic license as the race unfolded, with phrases like "he vanished into the lightning-lit night." Action words such as "screched, whizzed, careened" peppered pages, certainly hyperbolic descriptions of a 26 mph pace.



Walter Beck, of Missoula, made "wonderful time" in his part of the relay race.

Telegraph wires hummed as tales of danger, heroism, and frequent breakdowns were reported from the route. Everybody wanted a piece of the action. Local dignitaries plunked themselves into official cars for the ride to the next transfer. Spare Joe Parmley was squashed into the back seat of a Cadillac 8 with three very heavy men. "I emerged half paralyzed from my three-inch space," he said. **3**

Danger lurked in Minnesota when a driver collided with a farmer's rig being pulled onto the Trail. Apparently not everyone was aware of this great race. Besides, farmers had never before had to watch for speeding traffic.

J.W. Harris crossed the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in South Dakota at night. His trailer car failed to follow and Harris lost 50 minutes in a washout and then became helplessly stuck in a mud hole. He walked and ran to McLaughlin, three miles away, and got two cars to go back and pull his out, losing two of the accumulated three-hour gain.

And there was carelessness. In the hurry of crossing the Missouri River at Mobridge, the banner was left on the ferry. It was put on the train to be taken off at Miles City, Montana. Failing



to overtake the relay car there, and at Billings, it went on to Butte, but racer Barker was

over the crest of the continent toward

Missoula. The last hope was Spokane,

Washington, but the letter in the auto was still ahead of the

banner on the train. The only thing to do was to continue the banner by Express to its destination, the Automobile Club of Seattle. The letter conveyed by human hands in autos kept outdistancing the fastest trains.

And did they do it in 100 hours? They did it in 97 hours and 10 minutes, averaging 26 mph! **C**

MORE ABOUT THAT YT SIGN FOUND IN THERESA, WISCONSIN

Ed note: About a year ago in a "Trailogram" we pictured John Bodden with an original YT sign. The sign had lost all of its paint, and had holes, but it was quite a find. We recently received a new picture and a letter from Jim Widmer, a local historian, telling the story of the sign.

"I thought it would be handy to patch up holes back on the farm," that was John Bodden's first reaction when he and his brother, Oscar, (deceased) found this faded, metal, Yellowstone Trail sign in a pile of rocks. It was 61 years ago when the brothers, who both farmed south of Theresa, rented some land a mile down the road.

To gain access to the field, some rocks had to be moved. This is when the brothers noticed the sign. They put it on their wagon, and John later hung it in his granary and forgot about it. When renewed interest in the Yellowstone Trail began, John donated the sign to the Theresa Historical Society. "As I remember, Yellowstone Trail signs were put on telephone and electric line poles along the road, every two or three miles," said John. "There were a lot of them."



Lester Beck (left) and John Bodden (right) with original YT sign

Lester Beck, who is curator and historian of the Theresa Historical Society, has written a number of articles about the Yellowstone Trail and its passage through Theresa. In the early 20's the trail became State Highway 15. By 1922, the highway was paved through the

village. In the early 1930's State Highway 15 became U.S. Highway 41 and auto traffic increased to where it was almost impossible to cross the street on weekends. On Sept. 14, 1932, The Mayville News reported that a car census taken on Highway 41 in Theresa on Labor Day showed 5,100 cars passing through from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. All this traffic was welcomed by the five restaurants and six gas stations, along with the five tourist cabins, operated by the Louis Beck Garage.

The Widmer Cheese Factory, in which I was involved, had many travelers looking to buy Wisconsin cheese. In 1958, the new U.S. Highway 41 was completed east of Theresa, and the village returned to normal. The rumbling of trucks throughout the day and night was a thing of the past. **C**

Yellowstone Trail Association

P.O. Box 65, Altoona, WI 54720-0065



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. Generally, only members of the Yellowstone Trail Association receive it in printed format. Occasionally it is sent to others with a potential interest in the Yellowstone Trail.

Questions, stories, and news items may be directed to: The YTA, John or Alice Ridge, P. O. Box 65, Altoona, WI, 54720-0065, **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 

GARRISON BRIDGE RELOCATION PROJECT WELL UNDERWAY

Ed note: We recently reported about a Yellowstone Trail bridge near Garrison, Montana, headed for the scrap heap. A museum is now preserving it. Here is a report from Member John O'Donnell.

Adopted by the Powell County Museum & Arts Foundation, the 1912 Pratt Truss structure, one of very few Yellowstone Trail Steel bridges still in place and in use, was lifted off its abutments on July 20th and moved to a safe haven some 100 yards away. The bridge will be moved some 11 miles into Deer Lodge to a site on the Clark Fork River behind the Old Prison Museum Complex. It will be used as a pedestrian bridge at that point, to carry foot traffic on the Community Walking Path across the River and on through Deer Lodge.

Interpretive displays are planned for the new location to tell the Yellowstone Trail story to trail trekkers and passers by.

Lots going on here in Deer Lodge as the YT has become a major focus and investment for us this year! 



The old Garrison, Montana, bridge that carried the YT being removed (left) and (right) being "stored" waiting for moving to Deer Lodge.



The Montana Auto Museum in the Old Prison Complex now features a new YT exhibit. A 1910 Overland carrying a race pennant is depicted in front of a map tracing the YT across the United States.

