



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF  
THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

*"A Good Road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound"*



## OLIVIA CELEBRATES CORN DAYS AND THE YTA IS THERE

It was hotter than Hades July 28-30 when Olivia, Minnesota, held its Corn Capital Days. 100° in the shade! Olivia advertises itself as the "Corn Capital of the US" and celebrates that fact each summer with a festive parade, carnival, and, of course, corn on the cob.



There were two new features this year which rendered the celebration special for this small town right on the Yellowstone Trail (U.S. 212) in south central Minnesota.

First, the new Olivia area car club, named appropriately Yellowstone Trail Car Club, was featured with a Jim-dandy car show, trophies, and a presence in the 104 unit(!) parade.



1927 Chevy ready for the parade.

Alice Ridge with Michael Prichard and Barry Prichard, grandsons of Michael Dowling, in front of the 1913 Pierce Arrow driven by Member Lance Sorenson and owned by Curtis A. Sampson, both of Hector, Minnesota. The auto, festooned with YTA pennants and decoration was the hit of the parade.

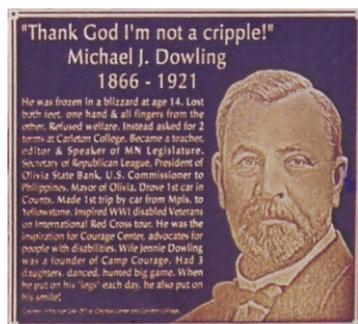


Dowling's grandsons, Barry and Michael Prichard, were on hand for the plaque unveiling and to serve as parade marshals.

The YTA was there in full regalia, informing all who stopped by the table about the Trail which they were featuring this year. It took many, many citizens to put this successful event together. The crowds who came surely outnumbered the town's population.

Three cheers for Olivia. ☺

Plaque in honor of an early YTA Association President.



## ON THE TRAIL: BUICKS HITCH UP AND RIDE EAST



Rosalee and Gene Lander of Edmonds, Washington, report about a great run on the Yellowstone Trail.

There's nothing members of a car club love more than driving their automobiles on less-traveled roads through historic small towns and beautiful scenery. So when Gary Cummings, a member of the North Cascade chapter of the Buick Club

of America, came across a book about the Yellowstone Trail, he wanted to share the story. His enthusiasm for this extraordinary American achievement was so contagious, members of the Pacific Northwest club decided to follow the Trail – as much as possible – to a national Buick car meet in Rochester, Minnesota.

On July 7, 2006, 13 cars and 31 members of the club, including a couple from Tasmania (pictured, right) started the journey from North Bend, Washington, a town at the foot of the Cascade Mountains. In Buicks, of course. The oldest was a 1941 coupe; the newest, a 1964 Wildcat convertible.



From I-90, the group took highway 97, across Blewett Pass and then onto U.S. highway 2 up a steep grade to the small town of Waterville, across a high plateau of golden wheat fields, into Spokane and finally, Post Falls, Idaho where they spent the night. Around 1925 the Yellowstone Trail changed its route in Washington from its southern route through Walla Walla to a more northern route, now called U.S. 2.

The journey continued the next day through Idaho and into Montana, arriving in Livingston for the night. In those mountains there is not much choice of route. The Yellowstone Trail became I-90 as the new road was built right on top of the YT. It was here in Livingston that the story of the Trail came alive for the group, thanks to YTA member Brian Sparks, Director of the Yellowstone Gateway Museum, who talked about the history of the Yellowstone Trail, accompanied by a power point presentation.



At Petrified Wood Garden in Lemmon, SD

"I knew very little about the Yellowstone Trail until Brian made his presentation," says Linda Eldridge, a member of the group. "It's an amazing story; it made our trip all the more interesting."

On day three the caravan continued across scenic Montana, through Billings, Custer, Forsyth, Rosebud, Plevna, again, the basic route of the YT, now I-90. In the 1919 Route Folder published by the Yellowstone Trail Association, Montana is described this way: "But it is only by contact with the quiet grandeur of her mountains, the enormous length of her rivers, the potentialities of her soil that one may be made to feel the soul of Montana."

Continuing on U.S. highway 12, the caravan arrived the third night in Bowman, North Dakota. Thanks to a congenial

*Buicks can't on page 2*

## – TRAIL-O-GRAMS –

On September 26 the **MUSEUM OF THE BEARTOOTHs**, Columbus, MT, threw a Yellowstone Trail bash. YTA Member Dorothy Olson was instrumental in inviting guests from afar to learn about the Trail. New YTA members from Billings, David Bernhardt and wife are so enthusiastic it is scary. They have been dispensing YTA materials to friends and family!

YTA Member **TOM SUTTER** at **PICTURE THIS GALLERY**, 2631 N. Meade St., Appleton, WI, has sent his spring 2007 events schedule. He's the same Tom who offered his photographic gallery as the site for our Trailman of the Year presentation last March. He has "open house" evenings with experts who speak about historic or artistic photographic topics. Upcoming events: **Jan 20**, artist Richard Masters; **March 17**, mapmaker Bradford Washburn; **May 19**, the 150th birthday of the city of Appleton is celebrated in historic photographs. And its all free! And he has a YT display.

**BECKY CHWALA**, former project director for the Stevens Point, WI CVB and early supporter of the YTA, now owns a neat shop/nursery near Stanley that sells plants and miscellaneous rural Wisconsin items such as jams, home decor, cook books and cheeses (of course). Her shop is located very near the YT and the 7 small towns we reported on in the last Arrow which jointly marked the YT. Here is her large outdoor sign with the YT logo at the top right.



Ever heard of **"GEOCACHING?"** It's sort of like the old treasure hunt game on steroids. The geocacher places clues to the "treasure" on the geocaching web site, [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com). There are many, many geocaching sites across the country. It is very popular. It is a challenge, a puzzle that people enjoy unraveling. The "prize," when found, is usually a small, cheap object, placed only to identify to the geocaching searcher that "this is the place and you have succeeded." "Prizes" are buried in boxes or hidden behind bushes or stashed in corners of little-used buildings. There is first a general geographic clue, say, Springfield, MA. The clues then become quite challenging. For instance, the final digits in the GPS location of the hidden object could refer to the numbers of windows in an entirely unrelated building. So, the obscure clues must first be deciphered. Those clues could be small lessons in history. YTA Member **RALPH EDWARDS**, Eau Claire, is a geocacher with a historic bent and has about 60 geocaches in Wisconsin. His clues usually involve descriptions of historic buildings or events. Guess what he is burying as the "prize." It is YTA membership brochures! ☺



Ralph Edwards plotting his next geocache.

town resident, Chuck Whitney, the group was allowed an after-hours visit to the Pioneer Trails Regional Museum, rich with artifacts and descriptions of the area. YTA Member Dorothy Pearson is Collections Director there. To the delight of the group, Chuck also arranged a private showing of a rare car collection owned by a local farmer.

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The next day, U.S. highway 12 led the group into South Dakota and a stop at Ipswich, where Joseph W. Parmley conceived the idea of "a good road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound." Members of the car club stood beneath the Welcome Arch, which once spanned the Yellowstone Trail.



The Rochester car show was interesting and fun, but for most members of the Northwest group, it was the drive to the meet that captured their imagination.

## THE YTA GOES TO THE MONTANA HISTORY CONFERENCE

Your YTA had a presence at the Montana Historical Society Conference, September 28-30 at Billings. The new YTA banner (which you can borrow for presentations) was put up and an information table was loaded with YT information, brochures, and pennants. Alice and John Ridge held forth for three days, visiting with the uninitiated about the Trail at the YTA table.



Member Brian Sparks visits the YTA display.

About 200 historians attended the convention which featured tours of historic Billings sites and presentations about topics as diverse as "women of the West," "prevention of rabies," and "Crow Indian ethnobotany." And a presentation about the Yellowstone Trail.

One of the offered tours was through neighboring Huntley Project. In 1902 the U.S. government Bureau of Reclamation began the Huntley Project, irrigating 33,000 acres of former Crow Indian land and opening it for



The new museum at the Huntley Project.

European settlement in 1907. Farms of 40 acres each were sold at \$34/acre. Towns sprang up: Huntley, Worden and Ballantine. By 1914 the Yellowstone Trail was routed right through the Project on its way to Billings. Today, you can still drive the YT and farming still happens there. Presentations at an agricultural research station and at a museum offered insights into the future and past of the old Yellowstone Trail.

YTA Member Jon Axline, historian for the Montana DOT and a major figure with the Society, invited the Ridges to speak about the Yellowstone Trail and its economic impact upon eastern Montana. The Ridges were pleased that professional historians wanted to hear about this facet of their history from two out-of-state retired non-history professors. The audience was quite interested and interactive because the topic was new to them.

The economic tale of the Trail in eastern Montana, while similar in nature across the country, was unique in the degree that, in Montana, the Trail was located along the primary transportation route through the state and led, of course, to the Yellowstone National Park from both east and west. "If you build it they will come" seems to have been the unspoken mantra of the early YTA. As the Trail became known and used by tourists, economic success followed. Little towns along the Trail flourished and farmers' land values increased in that area about \$9 per acre on land along the Trail. In 1924 almost \$1 million was spent by tourists along the YT, an estimated \$100,000 in Montana alone.

The goal of the modern YTA is to spread the word about the Yellowstone Trail, not only to support heritage tourism but to encourage its use as a way to understand local and national history. The presentation at the Montana Historical Society Conference helped it spread! ☺

At Waubay, the caravan left the Yellowstone Trail and completed its journey to Rochester on a more southern route. "It was hard to find accommodations for such a large group along the Trail from that point on," explains Gene Lander, who mapped out the journey.

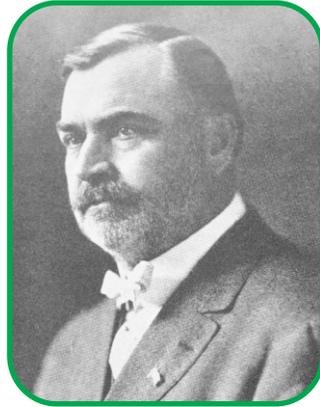
"When you're driving along in a comfortable car on a good highway, it makes you think about the people who built the Yellowstone Trail," says participant Julie Meacham. "How fortunate we are that such enterprising and hard-working citizens saw the need to build roads for automobiles. No one appreciates their efforts more than people – like us -- who are

## HISTORY CORNER

### HE BUILT THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL WITHOUT HANDS OR FEET

When Michael Dowling died in 1921 it mattered to the thousands who paid their respects and it mattered to the old YTA because he had been a robust, recent Association president.

Dowling had also been teacher, newspaper editor, banker, mayor, auto salesman, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Tidewater Commissioner, inspirational speaker for World War I veterans, Speaker of the Minnesota legislature, congressional and gubernatorial candidate and friend of U.S. presidents. And he founded a school for physically handicapped children. These accomplishments were particularly extraordinary because he achieved them as a multiple amputee with two wooden legs, a wooden arm and hand and only a thumb on the other hand.



Michael Dowling

The Blizzard of 1880 At age 14, Dowling was riding in the back of a wagon through the howling Minnesota blizzard of 1880 when the wagon hit a bump and he was thrown out. No one heard his cries over the screaming storm. The boy wandered for hours in the freezing whiteout until he found a hay stack to crawl into. In the morning sunlight he rose to walk, but fell. His legs were frozen. He clapped his hands and they sounded like two chunks of wood. They, too, were frozen. So he crawled to a nearby house. He was taken in, but two weeks later gangrene dictated multiple amputations.

The chloroform lasted through most of the operation, carried out on the kitchen table, and toward the end, Dowling's screams were heard at the next farm. Both legs were cut off six inches below the knees; the left arm and all fingers of the right hand except for part of the thumb were removed.

Then followed three years of healing, and of being a ward of the county, as he was separated from his family. He begged the county for, and received two terms at Carleton College.

Thus began his rise, in spite of painful prostheses and the slow process of performing everyday tasks. He became a teacher, a banker and a newspaper editor; how did he write with only part of a thumb? He drove and sold cars; how did he crank them? He had three prostheses; how did he put them on? He hunted moose; how could he pull the trigger with his stubby thumb? For these and thousands of other tasks, his creativity, patience and incredible courage were evident.

Putting Adversity to Good Use While president of the YTA (1917-1919), Dowling visited military hospitals here and in Europe after World War I, inspiring wounded veterans to self-reliance. Whether he spoke to one vet alone or to 5700 at New York's Hippodrome, his message was the same: Don't spend your time thinking about the things that are gone. Think of what you have left. He was, unaffectedly, leading by example.

Dowling and the Yellowstone Trail Association. The YTA caught Dowling's imagination. As an auto dealer in Olivia, Minnesota, he had foreseen the role of the auto in the development of early 20th century America. He knew the value of roads as an absolute economic and cultural necessity which the federal government was ignoring.



Dowling's garage with Dowling returning from the 1913 run to Yellowstone National Park along the Trail. Picture courtesy Renville City Museum

Dowling determined to assist the YTA by driving the Trail along the whole of its barely discernable 1913 route from Minnesota to the Yellowstone National Park. He wanted to be the first to "blaze" the route to advertise it and prove it could be done. Only about 120 miles of the Trail were graveled; the rest was dirt.

He led a three-car caravan with his Oakland 660 with right-hand wheel and electric starter. Forging streams, wading through mud, and fixing punctures while parked in the tall prairie grass occupied the party, but they did it!

Anxious to expand the Trail east, in 1914 he shipped his car through the Great Lakes to Buffalo, New York, and began looking for a space to locate the Trail on the popular Rochester-Albany-Boston corridor. He was told that "there was no more room for colored markers on poles on that route." Indeed, eleven different trail colors festooned some poles already. He then blazed a more southern route: Plymouth Rock to Hartford, Connecticut, and southern New York to northern Pennsylvania.

During his tenure as YTA president, Dowling oversaw the establishment of at least ten tourist bureaus; he saw the northern route through the East, which was refused to him in 1914, become a reality; and he spoke at all state and national YTA conventions.

The calamity, which would have diminished lesser men, brought out his strength of character. This remarkable man invigorated the Yellowstone Trail Association as no other had. His very appearance inspired resolve among the membership.

He often said to friends, "Thank God I'm not a cripple!" And he wasn't.

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Barry and Michael Prichard assisted Alice Ridge with the longer version of this article which appeared in *American Road* magazine, Winter 2005.



## TO PRESERVE YT BRIDGE

*Ed. Note: In Arrow #11 we mentioned that Members Lance Sorenson and Butch Schulte of Minnesota had been out investigating an old rainbow bridge in Ortonville, MN. Here is an update supplied by Lance.*

On July 5 and 6 I followed the Yellowstone Trail up to Ortonville, Minnesota to have another look at the rainbow arch bridge and do some research at the Ortonville, Montevideo, and Granite Falls Historical Societies.

A letter dated 6/29/06 from the county engineer had just arrived at the Ortonville Museum. It verified that a new bike trail would be built and it would be going over the Rainbow Arch Bridge! The bike trail will be built next summer, so the details are still sketchy. It will need aesthetic repair and we are anxious to find out what their plans are.



Marsh Rainbow Bridge in Ortonville. Sorenson photo.

The bridge can be located using this small map which shows the YT as a grey background line. Coming from the east through Minnesota on State 7, the YT turned southwest just after meeting US 12. The present road ends before the bridge. From the southwest side of the Rainbow bridge, the YT followed Co. 15 (37 on some maps) and then Mill Road to the west to rejoin US 12. However, there is no sign of the Mill Road bridge over the Whetstone River.

The Marsh Rainbow Bridge #3398 was built in 1920. It has an arch span of 50 feet and the roadway is 22 feet wide. I took this picture from the new highway bridge. As you can see, this is a very attractive bridge and a must see when touring in the area. ☺



# Yellowstone Trail Association

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## Happy Holidays

### 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](mailto:jridge@yellowstonetrail.org) Web site response: [www.yellowstonetrail.org](http://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: [tom@stevenspointarea.com](mailto:tom@stevenspointarea.com)

**QUIZ:** Can you identify the common name and location of this Church of the Sacred Heart, a prominent landmark somewhere along the Yellowstone Trail between Plymouth Rock and Puget sound?



The church was completed in 1852 as part of a presumptuous effort "to bring the light of the Gospel to the Indian and to teach him the much-needed lesson of industry." "Only those Indians who were exemplary in conduct were permitted to help in the building of the House of The Great Spirit. With great earnestness they worked on felling

trees, and carrying rocks from the hills on either side of the valley. Many a squaw could have been seen, side by side with the braves, struggling along with her burden of wood or stone to be used in the building of the church.

"Plans for a church some ninety feet long, forty feet wide and thirty feet high were drawn by Ravalli and they were faithfully followed. Uprights about eighteen inches square and rafters about ten inches square were cut from the mighty pines which grew in abundance on the hillsides nearby. The sawing was done in an improvised saw-pit with an improvised whipsaw, and the planing and shaping were done by hand with a broad axe. Nails were not available, so holes were bored in the uprights and rafters and they were then joined with wooden pegs.



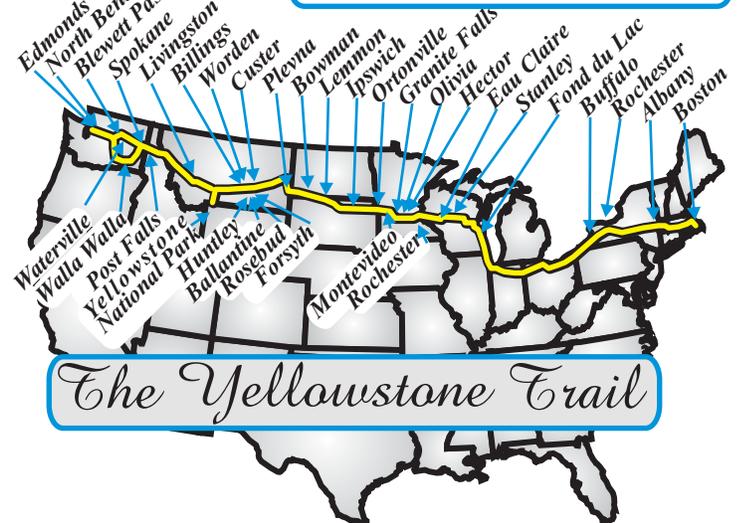
The roof and walls were made by boring holes in the uprights and rafters and interlacing willow saplings between them. Around the saplings wild grass was closely woven and over the whole was spread adobe mud from the river bank.

It was made a state park in 1975. The church is an unexpected attraction of driving the Yellowstone Trail. Answer is in next column.

### — ONE MORE TRAILOGRAM —

A lucky omen?? **MICHAEL KOERNER**, last year's Trailman of the Year, passed along this fun bit of news. The only winning ticket in the August 8 big \$280 million **POWERBALL** lottery drawing was sold at Ma and Pa's Grocery Express store/gas station on south Main St. in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. This street, a section of the Yellowstone Trail and dubbed the "Miracle Mile" by the locals, has seen numerous other very large winners since Wisconsin joined the lottery in the 1980's.

#### PLACES MENTIONED IN THIS ISSUE.



### The Yellowstone Trail

**QUIZ ANSWER:** Coeur d'Alene Mission of the Sacred Heart (Cataldo Mission) is 20 miles east of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, I-90 exit 39, and just off Canyon Road which carried the Yellowstone Trail.