Before there were numbered roads and road maps, there were named roads, usually short in length. Roads, created for horses and wagons, were so bad in most of the nation that private citizen groups formed to “get out of the mud.” Automobile sales burgeoned and owners soon discovered that there were few good places to drive the “new beauty” outside of major cities. Autos were transported to most cities on railroad flatcars to avoid the muddy or dusty rutted wagon roads.

The Yellowstone Trail, formed in South Dakota, became the first transcontinental route through the upper tier of states. The Trail joined local roads into a connected chain from “Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound.”

The Yellowstone Trail Association, founded in 1912, was one of many groups pushing for long-distance roads. As an outgrowth of the Good Roads Movement, the Yellowstone Trail Association established a coast-to-coast route through the northern tier of 13 states and motivated citizens, townships and counties to build or improve the road for the benefit of both local farmers and tourists.

The Trail Association was supported by communities and individuals all along the 3600 mile route, each paying a fee to be advertised to tourists. It was a win-win situation; the Trail Association got its road and communities got fame and tourist fortune.

In 1915, the dustiest, deepest sand, formed the Yellowstone Trail near Plover, Wisconsin, a great potato growing center. Now the Trail is a fine road and it serves a developing 50-acre complex called The Village Park at Plover. Pedestrian-based, it will house a farmers’ market, community-friendly shopping area including a planned Amish furniture store, a clock-tower, a bike path, and hotels.

Most important, the complex hosts the 68-room ultra-comfortable Plover Sleep Inn and Suites which sports a Yellowstone Trail Pub! The Plover Businesspersons Association has long been aware of the Trail in their midst and passed along the Yellowstone Trail “bug” to the developer, who wishes the pub to reflect a sense of local history and cultural heritage. The pub will sport old pictures of life along the Trail, a big map of the Trail, large yellow Trail logos, and other memorabilia. The Trail, the great auto route running “From Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound,” will soon have the huge, yellow “Plover Rock” with the black arrow at the hotel’s front door.

Mark Harris, developer, envisions a place where people can get out of their cars and enjoy time in a “community” space, right near today’s Interstate 39 and County B. In 1915, this spot was an important place on the Trail. It, as the only long-distance route available, channeled travelers from the more populated eastern part of the state to the West as well as Chicago/Milwaukee travelers to Wisconsin’s vacation land.

Harris appreciates the historic roots of this old auto trail and the pub will show it! ©

Ed. Note: In the 1920’s dozens of towns had a “Yellowstone Trail Garage” and a “Yellowstone Trail Hotel,” promoting local economic development. It is easy to visualize the Trail filling the same role now as the Trail is re-marked and promoted.

**The Plover Rock**

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History from page 1, column 1

The idea of encouraging tourism had been associated with railroads. Their sometimes elaborate ads lured the Easterner to the wonders of the West. But auto tourism and camping were new to Americans. The Yellowstone Trail Association provided maps and services of all kinds in their 17 travel bureaus, much like the AAA today. The assurance given by the Yellowstone Trail Association of the availability of camping facilities, gasoline, tourist facilities and passable roads did much to broaden the view of the public beyond the immediate horizon. This transcontinental route served to connect us as Americans.

The Yellowstone Trail Association, along with many other groups, motivated the opening of the Yellowstone National Park to a flood of auto tourists in 1915. The Association also helped persuade Congress, in 1916 and later, that the time had finally come to invest in auto roads. Local and state governments could not do it alone.

Can we see the “original” Trail today? In the 95 years since the Trail was founded much has changed in relation to America’s highways. The original Trail had been smoothed, moved slightly as local roads improved, and has received a better profile. It has also been overlaid by two Interstate roads, 14 US routes, 25 state routes, which the Trail went were persuaded by the Association to put their funds into a road that actually connected with the next county’s road.

The arrival of the Yellowstone Trail meant that the counties through which the Trail went were persuaded by the Association to put their funds into a road that actually connected with the next county’s road. Roads joining roads forwarded the concept of a state highway system.

The Yellowstone Trail took a circuitous route between Gary and South Chicago. It was produced in support of a National highway system proposed to be designated and maintained by the Federal government.

Waterville Historic Hotel

This 1903 hotel on the post-1925 route of the Yellowstone Trail features original fixtures, furnishings and period decor. There are twelve unique rooms each having its own ambience, some with private baths. All rooms have a vintage sink, original furniture and a new mattress on the old high metal bed frames.

Guests can mingle with other travelers while experiencing the nostalgic items in the lobby, sitting room, and library, enjoy conversation on the spacious front porch overlooking the city park and national park highway, or slip away to the privacy of your own room and a claw foot tub. And, of course, enjoy the Yellowstone Trail display and read the histories of the Trail.

www.watervillehotel.com

Marktown, Indiana
A Unique Town on the YT

World War I created a pressing need for steel. The Mark Manufacturing Company and steel mills in the Gary/East Chicago area grew rapidly. In 1917 Clayton Mark created a neighborhood within East Chicago to house steelworkers and their families. Built in the English Tudor Revival style, there were detached, semi-detached, row, and boarding houses - planned originally for 8,000 Mark Company employees and their families. It was an oasis of a green English village dropped amid steel mills, oil refineries, blast furnaces and rolling mills. It is now the subject of intense restoration.

Sometimes in such areas the concern for history is lost, but not here. “The Marktown area is an important cultural resource which should be restored to accurately present the intentions of the original design” says Paul Myers, Preservationist. To that end, Myers is leading efforts to stop potential urban decay and to encourage the neighborhood to clean up, repair, preserve, and return buildings to their original design.

Myers contacted the YTA to find out more about Marktown’s relationship with the Trail.

The Yellowstone Trail took a circuitous route between Gary and South Chicago even before the area became so industrialized. Although it weaves like a boxer, it does run down two sides of Marktown, very near Myers’ home. One small section of the original street remains. Now there are plans afoot to mark the Trail there, and perhaps through to Whiting as well.

“Here there is the opportunity to preserve the Marktown community as a living and useful landmark of genuine architectural and cultural significance,” says Myers. The Yellowstone Trail Association looks forward to working with Marktown to celebrate both this unique town and the Trail.

www.marktown.org
John O'Donnell, Director of the Old Prison Museums, has developed a great opportunity for the support of the fantastic museums on the Yellowstone Trail in Deer Lodge, Montana. Their auto museum includes a display about the YT.

Montana artist, Don Greytak, drew a picture of life in the era of the Yellowstone Trail. The picture is to be used as a fund raiser.

We have a copy of the artist’s proof of the picture and heartily recommend it. A limited printing (500 copies) of the 11" x 14" pencil original "Crossing the Clark Fork on the Yellowstone Trail" is offered. It is signed by the artist who is well known for his very accurate Rockwellesque pencil renditions of American life in the rural West (circa 1900 to 1950’s). These prints are offered at $75 each. Funds raised will be committed to relocation of the pictured bridge. The bridge was built in 1912 to cross the Clark Fork River near Garrison, Montana, on the Old Yellowstone Trail. The structure, a Pratt Truss bridge, was scheduled for demolition in 2006 when it was adopted by the Powell County Museum & Arts Foundation. The foundation operates the Montana Territorial Prison, located at nearby Deer Lodge as a museum attraction. It includes the Montana Auto Museum.

The bridge will be relocated some eleven miles south to Deer Lodge City where it will serve as a pedestrian bridge to carry a walking trail across the Clark Fork River near the Old Montana Prison. Plans for relocation include interpretive signage celebrating the bridge and the area’s rich history. Deer Lodge is on a trail, rail and highway transportation corridor which witnessed the Yellowstone Trail passing through town in 1913.

Prints may be ordered by contacting the Old Prison Museums at info@pcmaf.org or director@pcmaf.org or by contacting John O'Donnell or Julia Brewer at (406) 846-3111, or FAX (406) 846-3156. Old Prison Museums website is www.pcmaf.org.

The Surface Transportation Policy Project, a nonprofit organization, says that land use must be primary. The Project reported that “in some cities, freeways that separate cities from their rivers or harbors have been torn down for public access and recreation. Some downtown freeways have been converted to boulevards, and the old street grid has been reconnected. Real estate values have risen from the declination suffered by the freeway.”

The Project also observed that public transportation, walking paths, bicycling for mixed-use, etc. are clearly what the public is demanding. Leadership now lies with the movement for smart growth and livable communities that is sweeping the country, not with Washington.

“Existing transportation and development practices have diminished the original purposes of the interstate system,” said the Project.

Think about it, those of us who prefer the slow lane. And enjoy the Yellowstone Trail.
THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL GOES TO AN
ELDERHOSTEL. In February, Alice and John Ridge attended a
service Elderhostel at the Yellowstone National Park Heritage and
Research Center in Gardiner, Montana. Attendees were to catalog, inventory, and
shelve some of the Center’s 3.5 million artifacts. Other
Elderhostels will continue the work. Quite unexpectedly, the Ridges
were asked to step in to replace a missing speaker. They showed their
videotape about the history of the Trail and fielded questions from the
surprised but interested group. Created a number of new devotees!

North Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, Historical Society
received funds to move a Canadian National Railroad caboose to the
Yellowstone Trail Park. Sandblasting, repainting and landscaping are
yet to come.

Isn’t this a nice YELLOWSTONE TRAIL DISPLAY?
CUDAHY (Wisconsin) Library is using a space creatively.

Geocaching is the
magic word. We
explained the game in our
last Arrow. We wrote then
of Trail friend Ralph
Edwards, champion
gocacher. Well, it seems
not everyone knows that
gocaching involves
hiding or burying a cheap
treasure and issuing
obscure clues to searchers
who, if they find it, leave
an equally small object.
Police respond to a call
from a “concerned citizen”
who observed someone
(was it member Ralph?)
early in the morning
“placing an object on the
ground” in North Fond du
Lac’s Yellowstone Trail
Park. (Yes, the same
park.) It was a PVC pipe
and a small cylinder. The bomb squad was called, but all was explained
before “someone” hit the slammer.

HETTINGER, South Dakota, 4H is geocaching along the
Yellowstone Trail.

OLIVIA, Minnesota is planning its annual (since 1973) Corn Capital
The car judging takes place July 28. In addition to its unmissable 50-
foot corn monument in the shape of an ear of corn, Olivia is the home to

Floral, nursery, and gift shops in the area. They have designed
placemats for local restaurants with a map of their Trail and appropriate
shops. Is your group looking for a way of advertising an event? You’re
on the Trail so why not incorporate the Trail with your event on a
placemat?

Gascoyn, North Dakota (population 12) is weighing in with a
Yellowstone Trail display with a Trail sign and a tall
“hoodoo” type marker. I’ll bet if you stop in you might
wrangle an invitation to a bar-b-que!

Period music at a Trail Day

Trail Days
Big Doings in Small Trail Towns
The Yellowstone Trail was always a “big deal” in small towns,
especially small towns west of Illinois. One hundred years ago there
were very few connected roads, so long distance auto travel across a
state or even a county was difficult in the West. The YT was treasured as
an economic asset and people fought to get the Trail to their town. Once
a year, citizens in those towns were called upon by the YTA to go out
and fix up their part of the Trail. They called it Trail Day. It was mostly a
promotional move because the county did all the heavy building. All
the townspeople came out. Politicians, the press, games, and picnics
made a celebration out of it. Today, Trail Day is returning, minus the
“road work.” Annual town celebrations may be called Corn Days or
Heritage Days or whatever, but towns are now adding the YT to
festivities with banners, displays, and parades of antique cars.
There are five Trail Day events we know of in 2007:

FREMONT, Wisconsin, held its 125th anniversary April 16-18.
Yellow was the color of town decorations, and three historic buildings
**Trailograms, Continued**

received Trail signs to mark their history along the Trail.

A video about the Trail was shown and the historic Hotel Fremont, located on the old YT celebrated its reopening.

Three towns along the Trail near the South/North Dakota border are planning **100-year celebrations**.

There’s WAY too much going on in Lemmon, South Dakota, and Hettinger and Bowman, North Dakota, at their centennial celebrations to even begin to mention here. But the YT is sure to make an appearance at the local museums. For those of you living near that 65-mile stretch of US 12 (it’s really the YT!! it’s worth the drive - 17 straight days of heritage fun.

Starting at the west end, **Bowman** begins events on June 29 and runs them through July 4. Among the food and frivolity is the most intriguing event. It is the “Wagon Train” with real wagons! It forms at Amidon, 33 miles to the north and wends its way to Bowman, arriving 1 1/2 days later having camped two nights. What fun.

Then head to **Hettinger** for their doings July 3-8. Their big thing seems to be food. Want to join the chili-cookoff? Concerts,

Then head to **Hettinger** for their doings July 3-8. Their big thing seems to be food. Want to join the chili-cookoff? Concerts,
MY THIRD SUMMER ON THE OLD YT

In the summers of 2004 and 2005 I had wonderful adventures following the old Yellowstone Trail (YT) from Seattle, Washington, to St. Paul, Minnesota. Last summer (2006) I put the pedal to the metal from California on July 5th and arrived on the YT in Butte, Montana on the evening of July 6th, heading east to Cleveland, OH. Here are some of the highlights.

Montana: I headed to Reed Point and met with my friend and Yellowstone Trail Association (YTA) member, Dorothy Olson, at the Ewe Drop Inn where she had arranged for me to present my slides on the YT. We had a small, but interested group of locals. One man recalled walking to school on the old YT. I really enjoyed my stay with Dorothy on her ranch.

Minnesota: In Hector, I visited with YTA members Johnnie & Teri Hill. I went over to Trailman Lance Sorenson’s home and he brought out all of his YT collectibles and gave me a lot of good tips as we went over the Wisconsin YT route I’d be taking.

Wisconsin: Thanks to John Ridge, there’s a wonderful “Wisconsin Yellowstone Trail” map and brochure available. Hudson on the St. Croix River is a very cute, historical town. I walked through the archway of the Hudson Toll Bridge (built in 1913) and halfway across the river on the old causeway to see the pilings that used to hold the rest of the bridge which carried the YT. I took a walk along the St. Croix River through Lakefront Park where the old Beach House is still used.

Baldwin’s (WI) Windmill Park has a classic windmill which houses the visitor center. The volunteer told me that her granddaughter’s college project was to research and write an article for the Baldwin newspaper about the YT. She had interviewed a local 90-year-old Baldwin resident who grew up on the Trail.

Eau Claire was where I met John and Alice Ridge. I showed them my YT slides and John printed me some great street maps of the YT in Wisconsin. Alice arranged an interview with Fred Evans of the Stanley newspaper. He took photos of me at the large yellow YT rock that the local 4th graders had painted. We toured the town and I saw the old Yellowstone Garage.

Withee and Owen had YT signs and rocks their 4th graders had painted. I found the “R” on the side of the “Do Drop In Tavern” (the only original YT marker known to remain in Wisconsin). In Curtis I saw the big sign: “Welcome to Curtis since 1882 on the Old Yellowstone Trail” that YTA member Les Bowen had built and installed. The Community Center (the old 1912 two-room school house) had a terrific sign out front with a map of the whole YT route.

Hewitt has a “Yellowstone Avenue” which goes to a nice new area called “Yellowstone Recreational Park.” At Stevens Point I was warmly greeted by Tom Barrett, Treasurer of the Yellowstone Trail Association and Director of the Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB). We had a great conversation about the Trail. Oshkosh is where I received another warm welcome at the CVB by Arlene Schmuhle, Vice President of the YTA and CVB Project Manager. We had a nice conversation about the local Trail area. From there I found the original old concrete Trail bridge south of Oshkosh.

The evening before I went to South Milwaukee, I spoke to YTA Trailman, Nels Monson, on the phone and chatted about how to follow the YT route through Cudahy and South Milwaukee. It was good he told me because it was very confusing for someone not familiar with the area. There was a lot of road construction so that made it even more difficult, but I did find the YT signs in South Cudahy and all of South Milwaukee (thank you, Nels!).

Illinois, Indiana and Ohio: I went through some of the YT towns, but didn’t see any YT signs. [Ed. Note: East Chicago (Marktown) and Wanatah, Indiana, are marking the Trail in 2007.] By the time I was in Ohio, there was so much confusion with all of the road construction, I gave up on following the trail and went on the Ohio Turnpike to Cleveland. That was as far as I was planning on going this summer.

I’ve decided that will be the end of my YT adventure. I’ll probably stay closer to home next summer. It’s been wonderful following the old YT for 3 summers and I’ll always have great memories of the places I’ve seen and the really nice people I’ve met along the Old Yellowstone Trail.

Ed Note: The Yellowstone Trail is more difficult to follow in the East today, even without construction detours. Ninety years of realignment, of building, and, more recently, of Interstates have obliterated much of the Trail and the memory of it.

Keep the Association informed of your efforts to mark the Trail and inform the others about this great historic treasure and its role in developing the nation and its communities.

Questions, stories, and news 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

Questions or suggestions about YTA related tourism activities may be directed to: Tom Barrett, The Yellowstone Trail Association, 340 Division Street North, Stevens Point, WI, 54481. Phone: 800-236-4636. tbarrett@spacvb.com
History Corner
The 1916 YT Relay Race

September 1916 - Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound
(for God, Country, and More Tourists)

Anxious to promote to Easterners a newly marked trail to Yellowstone Park and beyond, the Association staged a reprise of the 1915 relay race, but this race was for the full distance of the Trail from “Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound.” This race was not solely run to promote tourism. Things had changed since the last year; war was raging in Europe. This time, to prove that the Yellowstone Trail was an asset to national defense and capable of being designated a military road, a letter from the Secretary of War was carried to the Commander at Fort Lawton in Seattle. The YT was so designated when we entered World War I.

Preparation for the event was probably the equal of a military maneuver: fourteen “managers” were appointed to subdivide the route into manageable portions; 64 cars and drivers and 126 “trailer” cars enlisted; law enforcement, civic groups, and auto clubs offered cooperation; the entire route was dragged smooth.

The press was as enthusiastic about this race as the last. As before, the times of arrival and departure, the time gained or lost and names were dutifully reported in many small town papers - in the West. Other Western papers opined that, “Such a demonstration of the feasibility of this great good road is certain to give it more publicity to Eastern parties than any other possible form of advertising.”

Eastern papers said naught. No police escorts there. After all, the Yellowstone Trail was only one of many local trails and telegraph and telephone poles were already festooned with colors of shorter trails.

Every leg had a story: the remarkable 229 mile run of A. Aubie from Akron, Ohio, to Fort Wayne, Indiana, in one car without stopping; the gallant struggle of E. Whipple who battled storms for 400 miles across Wisconsin to Minneapolis; the citizens of Montevideo, Minnesota, who begged E. Simpson not to start out in the bad weather; the time gained across Montana at night and over the continental divide at dawn; the everywhere crowds and their guiding bonfires; J. Parsons in a Stutz who dashed into Fort Lawton at 10:12 A.M., five days from the start.

Tales of daring-do emerged. A. Clements was four miles from his transfer point at Marshfield, WI, when he blew a tire clear off the rim. He kept going, limping along on three tires and a rim. One racer skidded downhill into a gravel bank to avoid an elderly Idaho lady slowly driving a team on the Trail. Brakes on autos had to be readjusted, mid-race, for the steep mountainous grades. Tires got changed in under three minutes. Brave men fought through 1000 miles of rain and mud, and 300 miles of deep dust in eastern Montana farm country.

And when Dr. Ewbank hit the crosswalks on Main Street of Marmarth, North Dakota, all four wheels left the ground, bouncing passenger Frank DeKlenhans so high you could see daylight between the car and Frank. He came down, but the car had moved on.

Did they do it in 120 hours? Not quite. They were 72 minutes late. But they still had set a record for cross-country travel, averaging 30.3 mph over 3808 miles!

So, should the Yellowstone Trail Association get a prize for its performance? Probably. It pulled off a speed record remarkable for that era, both in 1915 and 1916. Drivers on the Lincoln Highway had crossed the nation in 138 ½ hours covering 300 fewer miles. Were the Association’s purposes borne out? Mostly. The Yellowstone Trail was declared a military road and tourism increased dramatically over the Trail, even though the East displayed but mild awareness.

A prize should go to the brave but foolhardy men who drove out in bad weather just for the challenge with carburetor problems, high puncture potential, and with poor headlights. It was a wonder that no one was killed. In spite of one observer’s comment, “Why go to all this trouble when you can send the d—d letter for two cents?” the Yellowstone Trail Association was proud of the fact that they ushered in a new epoch in transcontinental travel.
The most important thing that the Yellowstone Trail Association (YTA) has accomplished is that of interesting people from across the country in this old national treasure, the Yellowstone Trail. Members of the YTA have given 48 presentations (that we know of) about the Trail to audiences in 10 states. The national American Road Magazine has carried articles and references to the YT in each of its issues. Dozens of newspapers have carried stories about the Trail.

As people learn about the Trail in their area, many wish to see it marked. Two hundred and sixty-five large, reflective signs now grace the Trail, with 32 “confirming” reflective signs marking straightaways. Seventy-seven smaller non-reflective signs mark buildings, and we don’t know how many stones have been painted yellow across the nation.

Many museums and libraries from Wanatah and Plymouth in Indiana to North Idaho Museum in Coeur d’Alene have produced Yellowstone Trail displays where there were none before.

One of the most ambitious of endeavors involves seven small towns along the Trail in central Wisconsin who banded together for economic promotion. They had a collective Trail Day last May unveiling many YT highway signs with the lieutenant governor as speaker. This year springtime nurseries, florists and gardening along the Trail is the theme.

Interactive and attracting to people are the “Trail Days” held in conjunction with other annual community “Days.” In addition to those five mentioned in this Arrow on page 5, others come to mind: Plover, Fremont, Thorp, and Waupaca in Wisconsin; Benton City, WA; Hector, MN.

About 750 miles of Trail from Terry, MT to Minneapolis, MN are covered in a “Guide” to the area and its YT history, museums and commercial establishments. It is published by the Mobridge (South Dakota) Tribune. The latest is the 2007 version.

Two community parks have been renamed Yellowstone Trail Park in honor of their location and history.

The number of links from others’ web sites to the Yellowstone Trail web site on the Internet have gone from very few to hundreds.

Four brochures about parts of the Trail have been created and distributed by friends of the Trail to thousands of potential visitors and travelers.

Members have mapped the old route on modern maps. This is a difficult and time-consuming, but rewarding, effort. All of these Trail events, involving hundreds of people, did not happen before the Yellowstone Trail Association existed. The Association will not be asking for dues or membership for awhile, but these activities will not cease. The Association will still assist in keeping the name Yellowstone Trail alive.

Two official highway signs are available to mark the Trail. The larger 18” x 24” regular sign (up to the left) and the 12” x 12” confirming sign (to the right.)