



THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF  
THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

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



## THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL WITH AN EASTERN ACCENT – PART ONE



The old trail was “A Good Road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound,” an ambitious logistical and commercial enterprise that antedated the federal highway system by fifteen years and the interstate system by half a century. Its founders knew the value of an attention-getting name: even in 1912, “Yellowstone” had magic, though the great park was only forty years old, few Americans had seen it, and no gasoline-powered vehicles were allowed in it until three years later. So “The Yellowstone Trail” (YT) it was, though most of its miles were far from Old Faithful.

This is a loving look at some of those miles half a continent away in the Northeast, and some of the very American ideas and institutions that flourished along the Trail. Roads like the YT carry goods and people; they also transmit and promote new ideas: the better the roads, the better the transmission. That happened here.

In eastern Massachusetts, the old Trail has been subsumed in major urban centers: Boston and its exurbs, Worcester, Springfield. No portion of the old Trail looks less like it did a century ago than this. Further west there is more of interest: Steve Hamlin gave us (in the *Arrow* of April 2011) a delightful look at the Jacob’s Ladder Byway in the Berkshires, where the Trail was mountainous and difficult. I will take the story westward from there, largely along what is now US route 20, Massachusetts 2, and New York 5.

**Mac Nelson** is a long-time member of the Yellowstone Trail Association and Distinguished Teaching Professor of English Emeritus, State University of New York – Fredonia; and the author of *Twenty West*, *The Great Road Across America*, SUNY Press.

In the eastern states, US Highway 20 more or less follows the route of the old YT. But Mac looks beyond the pavement for stories that surround the route and give more meaning to following the Trail today.



*Dormitory Building,  
Hancock Shaker Village , Massachusetts*

As the old Trail prepares to leave Massachusetts, it passes the remains of one of the most interesting religious experiments in American history. Here lived the Shakers, or Shaking Quakers, or to give them the name they gave themselves, The United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Coming. Founded in England, they moved with their leader, Mother Ann Lee, to the Albany area in 1776, then to two larger sites on the Trail on the Massachusetts-New York border. Just outside of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, is Hancock Shaker Village, a remarkable reminder of a nineteenth century way of life that is now history. Tour the great round barn and the other remaining buildings, thank the Shakers for their practical inventions (like the modern broom) and beautiful music (such as “Simple Gifts”), and wonder how they managed to survive for more than two centuries. They were celibates. As they expected Christ’s imminent return, they preferred to stay ritually pure, to approach “perfection;” they let out their erotic urges in dancing, artistic creativity, and hard farm work.



*Great Round Barn  
Hancock Shaker Village , Massachusetts*

A few miles further west, just across the New York border in New Lebanon, is another Shaker remnant, inhabited by them until 1947, now occupied by a private school and a Sufi religious retreat center. Only the trim buildings are reminders of its past, but the largest building there— now an enormous roofless ruin—is said to have been at the time (1859) the largest stone structure in the world. If you don’t count the pyramids, I believe it. There are a few old buildings near Albany, too, on Albany-Shaker Road, where Mother Ann is buried. And as you travel the YT west, you’ll be reminded of the Shakers once more in a posh suburb of Cleveland: Shaker Heights.

As you cross New York State on the YT, this green and pleasant land looks unremarkable—yet more major religious events happened here, more than I have space to discuss. One that gets more significant every year began just north of the YT, in and near Palmyra, New York, in 1830. Joseph Smith claimed to have been led by an angel to discover golden plates which contained additional

*Con’t next page*

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## THE YT WITH AN EASTERN ACCENT, CON'T.

Shakers  
Great Barn,  
Mt. Lebanon

books of the Bible, telling a marvelous story of Christ's coming to North America. Thus was born the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the fastest growing religion in the world today. The Church soon moved west along the YT with its founder to Kirtland, Ohio, where the first Mormon Temple was built. Its eventual leader, Brigham Young, joined the religion while working in Auburn, New York, also on the YT, and led the faithful to the valley of the Great Salt Lake—"This is the right place." This was one of the truly epic American road trips, but, after northern Ohio, most of it took place well south of the Yellowstone Trail. There is a monument on Hill Cumorah in Palmyra—the place of the angelic visitation--and a small museum nearby. If you drive the YT on a summer evening, you can see a spectacular light show and pageant about the origins of Mormonism. And it's free!



And, just for fun: in 1869, in the tiny Trail hamlet of Cardiff, New York, (current pop. 150), a local promoter "discovered" and dug up a supposed petrified giant, alleged proof of the Genesis story that there were "giants in the earth in those days." Actually, the "Cardiff Giant" is just a very big hunk of pale rock—gypsum, quarried in Iowa, carved into humanoid shape—and its promoter soon cheerfully admitted that it was all a great hoax. But the world refused to believe (disbelieve?) him, and the Cardiff Giant went on very profitable exhibition for half a century. P. T. Barnum offered a huge sum for "him," and when he was turned down, had another one carved for his own shows. You have to go twenty miles south of the old YT to see him today, but he's worth it: since 1947 he has resided in the Farmers' Museum in Cooperstown NY, that beautiful village famous for encouraging and accepting another, longer-lasting hoax: that Abner Doubleday invented baseball there.

More on the Yellowstone Trail with an Eastern accent in the next issue. ▣

## WHAT'S ON MY BOOKSHELF?

Fourth in a series

Its summer vacation time...and baseball season, so I'm featuring a double-header for this Arrow.

But, I am making a reading assignment of the following two books when your vacation is over.

These are both books that you **MUST READ** if you truly want to understand the Yellowstone Trail, and they are both available on our website, [www.yellowstonetrail.org/id20.htm](http://www.yellowstonetrail.org/id20.htm) on-line, or through your local library.

\* "Game One" is the "bible" of the YT:

***Introducing The Yellowstone Trail: A Good Road From Plymouth Rock To Puget Sound, 1912 – 1930***, by Alice A. Ridge and John Wm. Ridge, Yellowstone Trail Publishers, 2000.

Many of you know Alice and John, as they are the "Godparents" of the modern Yellowstone Trail Association. They have dedicated the past dozen or more years to the YT by researching and writing, mapping and organizing, and generally leading us onward in knowing and understanding the YT. This book tells the story of how a few businessmen in South Dakota met to figure out a way to have a better road to the next town, and how their vision expanded to be coast-to-coast. The history here is meticulously researched and presented, and the period photos are remarkable.

This is the Ridge's finest book...so far. They are working hard on their next one.

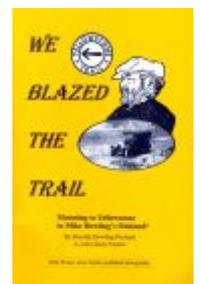
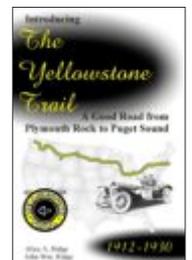
But in the meantime, get this book and read it before the 100th Anniversary next year.

\* "Game Two" is a history lesson and a study in courage titled:

***We Blazed The Trail: Motoring to Yellowstone in Mike Dowling's Oakland*** by Dorothy Dowling Prichard as told to Barry Prichard, Richards Publishing Co., 2008

This is the story of Michael Dowling, an amazing man who lost both of his lower legs, one arm, and most of his other hand by amputation due to frostbite. Before you feel too sorry for him, be aware that his most famous quote is "Thank God I'm not a cripple". He put on his smile when he put on his artificial legs in the morning. He was a teacher, editor, successful businessman, politician, and husband and father of three. He was also instrumental in the success of the Yellowstone Trail's early days as a tireless leader and promoter.

This family remembrance focuses mostly on the 1913 trip the Dowling family took from their home in Olivia, MN to Yellowstone National Park, and the difficulties and joys they encountered. There was mud, dust, rain, breakdowns, flat tires, and driving where there was no road at all! Mike cheerfully led his family and another small family group across prairies and mountains and "blazed the trail" of what would soon become the first transcontinental route across the northern states...Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound. ▣



# BIKING THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL COAST-TO-COAST - PART 4, THE EAST

by Jim Marx  
Peripatetic Correspondent

**The Story** This is the fourth and final part of the story of the bicycle trip Jim Marx took last year over the entire Yellowstone Trail, 3,657 miles in 65 days. See previous *Arrows* for more information about Jim and the trip.

Having already pedaled my bicycle from Puget Sound, over the Rockies, across the High Plains, and through the Midwest, following the Yellowstone Trail (YT), I was expecting the remainder of the journey to Plymouth Rock to be less exciting. But the East also had wonderful experiences.

My first challenge leaving Wisconsin was to get through Chicago. The Trail goes into Illinois on the Sheridan Road, and then wanders through Chicago into Indiana. I have experienced enough problems driving my car through Chicago, so was anticipating a tough ride in traffic on my bike.



My plan was to ride through Chicago on Sunday morning when there would be less traffic. The plan worked well. It was an enjoyable ride through the city on Sunday morning with a lot of other people out biking. There were not hundreds, but thousands of people biking on a beautiful morning. They all had sleek aerodynamic bikes, and were dressed in colorful lycra. I, on the other hand, had a weighted down bike with panniers, and a cotton Yellowstone T-shirt. It was like I was a Clydesdale among a bunch of thoroughbreds getting ready for the derby.

When I applied for the Peace Corps, I put my house on the market in anticipation that I would be gone for 2 ½ years. Now I received a call from my realtor that my house had sold, and the likely closing would be mid August. Until now my bike ride had no urgency, just whatever, whenever. I was pedaling about 60 miles a day which gave me plenty of time to stop and “smell the roses”. I decided to make about 75 miles a day for the rest of the trip to get back in time to move out of my house.



Indiana was easy biking with a lot of flat roads, albeit some hot days. In Indiana, the YT joins for a few miles with the other early transcontinental highway, the Lincoln Highway, a coast to coast highway going from New York City to San Francisco.

Stopping for a drink of water in Cleveland, Ohio, I met Yvonne in front of her shop. She hadn't heard of the YT, but told me that the road here was part of the Underground Railroad network that helped get escaped slaves to freedom in Canada. This part was called Station Hope. A little further down the road in East Cleveland, I stopped at the E&K store and talked with the owner about the YT. He came out to look at my bike and saw that my water bottles were empty, and gave me two cold bottled waters. You meet the nicest people on the Yellowstone Trail.

*Horses, a common sight in YT days, are now a motivation for travel picture.*

When I got through Batavia, New York, I stopped at Blondie's Sip-N-Dip for a root beer float. While at Blondie's, I responded to an e-mail from “Coach,” a guy I hiked with for a while on the Appalachian Trail in 2008. He mentioned that he and his wife were biking along the Erie Canal from Buffalo to Albany, New York, and were in the area. I responded that they must be several days ahead of me, and that unfortunately I would not likely catch-up before they got to Albany.



In Avon, New York I stopped at Duffy's for dinner. I'm sure you are reading Avon with a pronunciation similar to the cosmetic products. But they take pride here in correcting us visitors that the city of Avon is pronounced with a short “A” sound and the accent on the second syllable. I checked my e-mails and found a response already from “Coach” who said he and Sharon would be in Syracuse tomorrow night, only 60 miles away. So I planned to get a room east of Avon, already having 77 miles in for the day, and only needing to go 60 tomorrow.

I got to the motel and called “Coach” and told him I would see him tomorrow night, and called and made reservations at the same hotel in Syracuse where he was staying. How strange is this? Someone I hiked the Appalachian Trail with would cross my path again while biking!



First thing I did in the morning was to Google Map Syracuse to find out where the motel was in Syracuse. The big surprise was that Syracuse is 90 miles away, not 60, a big difference on a bike. I packed up quickly and headed out. In addition to being a longer day than expected, the route became very hilly, slowing me down. I finally arrived in Syracuse a little after 6:00 pm. I called “Coach” and met him and Sharon. We went out to dinner, and caught up on the last two years. “Coach” is a professor at Indiana Wesleyan. I still can't get over the coincidence that our paths crossed here in Syracuse.

*The Erie Canal was the predecessor to both long-distance wagon roads and auto roads, such as the YT. The older version of the Canal is often a pleasant nearby side trip from the YT*

In Massachusetts, I followed Hwy 20 to Pittsfield, and then down to Lee and across to Westfield. I know this area because I lived in Pittsfield in 1974 when I worked for General Electric. I recall driving my 1973 VW orange Beetle on Hwy 20 in the fall to see the beautiful fall colors in the valleys. At the time I did not know I was driving the Yellowstone Trail. Nor do I recall it being so hilly. I'm surprised my little

VW made it up those hills, especially the hill that goes up and up and up for miles. I'm also surprised my Trek 520 made it up, my legs were getting sore.

## BIKING THE AUTO ROAD, CONTINUED

The Appalachian Trail (AT) crosses the YT on Hwy 20 east of Lee. In Lee, I stopped and bought a bunch of Gatorade, M&M's and hard candy. When I got to the AT, I took the treats down the trail a bit and hung them on a tree. It is a tradition on the AT to provide "Trail Magic" for hikers. It was late when I headed back on the road, and I still had not gone very far for the day. I'm recalling stories from when I hiked the AT, about hikers that really slow down when they approach the end because they don't want to stop. This is not the case with me. It is the Berkshire Mountains slowing me down, not a desire to keep the ride going. I'm having a great time, but have to get home to close on my house.



*The Destination – Plymouth Rock  
Plymouth, Massachusetts*

On July 26, 2010 at 6:30 PM I arrived in Plymouth, Mass. I rode down to the waterfront, and the Plymouth Rock memorial, terminus of the Yellowstone Trail. The rock is nothing more than a large stone, down in a pit, with a memorial built above. The rock has even been cracked in half and cemented back together. It was exhilarating for me to have arrived at this end point of the Yellowstone Trail, "A good road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound". I had traveled 3,657 miles across the USA from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean in 65 days. I was feeling really good about this accomplishment. And a lot of people there where taking an interest in it. One woman mentioned that the Pilgrims were on the Mayflower for 66 days, just one day more than I was on the Trail.



*Now that's the way to travel the  
Yellowstone Trail!*

As I write this, it has been exactly a year since my ride across the country following the corridor of the Yellowstone Trail. It was challenging, but not as difficult as I thought it would be. It was easier than hiking the Appalachian Trail. While it would be fun to bike across the USA on any route, following the Yellowstone Trail added another element of interest in the journey, and I learned a lot about its history, and history of the regions along the route. And following the Yellowstone Trail provided an opportunity to meet some wonderful people along the way that I otherwise would not have met. but it also made it more challenging as I was spending a lot of time on undeveloped roads and gravel roads. ▣

## THE THINGS WE KNOW BEST

**H.J. Robertson:** Oh, yes, I resurrected an ol' car that was in the shed back on the farm. I got it running again, but it didn't have any brakes. So I came on the ol' Yellowstone Trail coming into Olivia from the north, and I saw a sign: "Ley 'n' Goulet Garage." So I drove in, an' the gentleman came up, an' asked if he could help me in any way.

"Yes, I want you to put a brake lining in my car. I have no Brakes."

So I started for the door, an' he got in the car to drive it to the back of the garage, and pretty soon: BANG! BOOM! GRUG! He hit one automobile and grazed another one, and then he hit the wall."

He jumps outa the car, an' he hollered at me, "Hey, the doggone car hasn't got any brakes."

"Well," I said, "I'm sorry, I told you I wanted you to put brake linings on."

**Clarice Heglund Hughes:** My father went to buy a car from Melhouse's Garage. That was where probably the liquor store is now. And my dad was ashamed to tell Mr. Melhouse that he didn't know how to drive. Well, he lost control of the car and backed straight across the street into what was then Ben Mamer's Drugstore. Then he got control and drove off down the sidewalk.

Lance Sorenson, local historian of Hector, Minnesota, came upon an oral history of Olivia, Minnesota, printed in 1976 by Joe Paddock. It is a charming picture of life almost 100 years ago as remembered by the interviewees. We selected three of the interviews here. Will print more next time. Enjoy!

He didn't hurt anything too much. He just went down the sidewalk in front of the Yellowstone Café and off that high curb.

**Stanley Schnelle:** You know, we had a sheriff here by the name of Sunde, and he had a deputy name of Glenn, and another by the name of Converse, and they heard there was a load of booze comin' in on what they called the Yellowstone Trail at that time. And Sunde and his two deputies went out there and hid, and when they heard the car coming up, they went and stopped them. And the fella that was drivin' got out of the car. But the other fellow, his guard, didn't. When they ordered him out and he came out with a gun. And he says to Converse and Sunde and them, "Now, you fellas throw them guns you got in the ditch, and then crawl under the bridge. We're going through." And Sunde started to say something, and the man says, "Don't open your mouth or you're a dead duck."

And Sunde didn't say anymore. And he and these two deputies crawled under the bridge. Well, Johnny Glenn told it; he says, "My God, I was scared. I thought that old fool, Sunde, was going to do something that'd make that guy shoot the works of us."

Not all travelers on the Yellowstone Trail were tourists! ▣

# HOTELS ALONG THE YT: NOT EVERYONE CAMPED EVERY NIGHT!



Early auto travelers along the Yellowstone Trail had a variety of travel guides at their disposal and almost all featured paid advertising for hotels and garages. The Mohawk-Hobbs Guides were an exception, assuring the user that they offered objective judgments on the best places to stay, and the best garages. The 1926 Hobbs Guide for the Yellowstone Trail between Chicago and Seattle contains a wealth of useful information, which even today enlightens the autoist.



*Waterville Hotel*

Several of the recommended hotels still serve travelers in renovated facilities ranging from very pleasant to luxurious. Others have been converted to other uses, often as professional offices, condominiums, apartments, or restaurants.

If you want to get away from it all, and immerse yourself in a feeling of the past, follow the Trail to Waterville, Washington. You will seldom find a town more authentically representative of the best of the days past. The nicely renovated Waterville Hotel, built in 1903 provides the modern amenities. The 1920's garage across the street is unchanged, the city park

sports the old time playground equipment, and the grocery store in town has creaky wooden floors. The courthouse represents a day when a community was proud to be the seat of government, and the old town theater still plays movies.

*Old hotel listings are from a 1926 Mohawk-Hobbs guide to the YT*

**HOTEL WATERVILLE (\*)**, thirty rooms, all outside; five with bath and one-half with running water. Sgl. \$1-\$2.50; dbl. \$1.50-\$2.25. With bath \$3.25. Excellent home-cooked meals 50c.

**DAVENPORT HOTEL (\*\*\*)**, is one of the finest in the West. World famed for its appointments, hospitality and luxurious lobby. Single \$2.25-\$3.25; dbl. \$4, with bath \$5-\$7. Formal dining to coffee shop; exceptional service.



*Spokane's Davenport Hotel. Elegant Renovated Interior (above). 1915 Entrance (below left). Modern Entrance (right).*

You can sit on the wide porch that fronts the Hotel and wave to the kids going by on their bikes, or to the occasional farmer driving his tractor through the village. Or walk down main street, with its turn of the last century buildings. Barns near town still sport Mail Pouch Chewing Tobacco ads and massive Dry Falls in the Grand Coulee, formed by the great ice age floods, is nearby.

Follow the Trail further east to reach Spokane. Like most cities and villages it had an auto camp, where you could stay for 50 cents. In fact High Bridge park still exists and many of the old facilities still stand among the pines.

In downtown Spokane, you will find the magnificently renovated Davenport Hotel. It demonstrates that auto travel along the Trail could be luxurious....at times. The Davenport will stun you with its opulence and beauty.

A doctor following the Yellowstone Trail westward in 1921 commented in *The Clinique* magazine: "We found the comforts of the Davenport Hotel well worthy of their fame and rested here for a day before taking the last lap of our journey West."

When the Davenport opened in 1914, it was the first hotel in America to have air conditioning. Yellowstone Trail travelers could enjoy a Crab Louis in the dining room, named after the hotel's founder, Louis Davenport.

Over the years the hotel eventually fell into disrepair, but was beautifully and carefully restored a little over ten years ago. It now provides 4 star accommodations.

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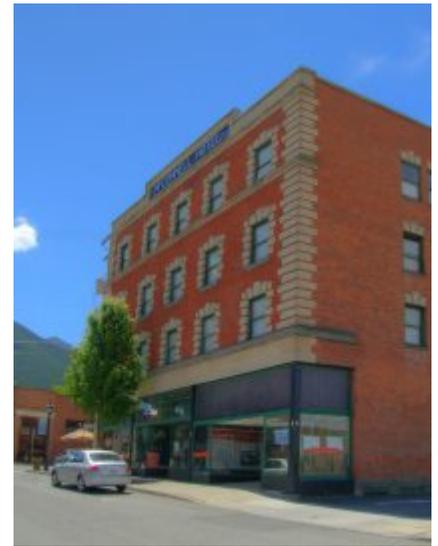


## HOTELS HABURA, CONTINUED

The McConnell in Kellogg, Idaho, is in the process of becoming a condominium, but in the days of the Yellowstone Trail it was a well respected hotel, and it sported an early radio broadcast antenna on its roof for radio station KWAL. If you had one of the very early automobile radios you might have pulled out of the static, "KWAL, broadcasting to you from the rooftop of the McConnell Hotel" as you drove near town.

78.2—11.8: **KELLOGG, IDAHO**; pop. 3,500; a mining town. The McConnell Hotel has rooms with running water. Yellowstone garage is best.

35.2—91.6: **DE BORGIA**; pop. 50; gas, supplies, rooms, garage. Excellent home cooked meals at small hotel.



*The McConnell Hotel in Kellogg*



*De Borgia's Hotel Albert*

Even the smallest towns had hotels. A classic example is the false front Hotel Albert in tiny De Borgia, Montana, west of Missoula. In modern times it was a bed and breakfast, but has recently been sold. There is even a story that Charlie Chaplin stayed here. It has four guest rooms and according to the Hobbs Guide, served good meals.

It was originally the "Hotel de Tousia. The restaurant praised in the Hobbs Guide was in the annex on the right. The hotel was built in 1911 and served both railroad passengers on the Northern Pacific and Milwaukee roads, and autoists on the Yellowstone Trail and National Parks Highway.

Butte, Montana is one of America's most famous and interesting mining towns and in the heyday of the Yellowstone Trail, it was Montana's largest city. The Finlen Hotel in Butte opened its doors in 1924, modeled after the Hotel Astor in New York, and it still provides deluxe accommodations. It has hosted its share of famous people, including Charles Lindbergh and three presidents.

**BROADWAY GARAGE** (□), is best for work on all cars. Open all night for storage and from 8-6 p. m. for repair work. Tel. 5948 for tow car. Storage 50c.

**NEW HOTEL FINLEN** (\*\*), is, without doubt, the finest, thoroughly modern and fireproof. Rates: Sgl. \$2-\$2.50; dbl. \$3, with bath \$4-\$5. Lunch 75c; dinner \$1.25.



*The Broadway Garage (on the YT) with the Finlen Hotel behind.*

Downtown Butte is filled with historic buildings and just down the street from the Finlen is the classic Broadway Garage, also still serving the automobilist, but today as a parking and storage facility. Remove the Hertz rental car signs in your mind's eye and the garage appears the same as it did in Yellowstone Trail days.

Livingston, Montana, was described in the 1926 Hobbs as the "gateway to Yellowstone," and as a great base for big game hunting and fishing. It remains all these things today.

The Grabow Hotel in Livingston was described in Hobbs as giving "value for the money." Today the Hotel has been converted to first class condominiums and is a lovely building.

Not only was it advertised in the Automobile Blue Book of the time, it also received the Hobbs recommendation. When I was through Livingston last year I stopped to take a picture of the former hotel and was greeted by the builder's granddaughter. It was a pleasant surprise, and a delightful experience to talk with her about the history of the hotel, so lovingly restored.

The small town of Three Forks is the location of one of the most beautiful restorations of Yellowstone Trail hotels. The Sacajawea was described in a recent issue of the Arrow.

This is just a small sample of the heritage accommodations along the western Yellowstone Trail. It would be entirely possible to travel that part of the Trail, and stay each night in delightfully restored facilities that also served the automobilists of an earlier day. And not incidentally, many have fine restaurants to add to your travel experience. ■



*Livingston's Grabow Hotel  
Right: Grabow Interior.*

**GRABOW HOTEL** (\*\*), modern and well managed. A desire to give value for the money is evident throughout. Sgl. \$1.25-\$3; dbl. \$2.25-\$2.50, with bath \$3-\$4. Excellent, reasonably priced meals.



# YT TRAVEL REPORT

## CLYDE, AND THE “WIND TURBINE CEMETERY”

by Carl & Janet Roehl  
Wisconsin Correspondents

This is the third in a series of articles in which the Roehls reflect upon their auto trip along the Yellowstone Trail from Wisconsin to Yellowstone National Park and back.

A huge wind turbine carves a breeze in the sky next to a hayfield, guarding the cemetery at Brownton, Minnesota. It's fenced in, powering the adjacent municipal wastewater plant. Rather irreverent? For those buried here, does it matter? Curious, we stopped, and walking among the tombstones, we discovered Clyde.



We were on an odyssey from Wisconsin to Yellowstone National Park via the Old Yellowstone Trail. The cemetery isn't far from Downtown Brownton... (that's down-town brown-ton...). Janet points out that the AAA TripTik has no clue this is here! Reading the AAA guidebook, you'd never know that “Noah's Arc Preschool” is located in the modern Brownton Lutheran Church or that older homes line the roads where green banners say—“Welcome to BROWNton...”

Lives were harsher, shorter, a century ago, Janet reminds me as we stand next to a small tombstone: “Clyde” died September 9, 1884. What were his home and family like, did they have kerosene lamps, an ice box and pot-bellied stove? Did the family pray much? Smile a lot or argue? Did they have enough beans and cured ham and goat's milk? He's apparently still remembered, as hostas adorn his grave--some of the few flowers in this cemetery. Much history is buried in the cemeteries along the Yellowstone Trail, as elsewhere.

The horses' hooves and braying heard alongside Clyde's grave for nearly three decades after he died were replaced by the sputtering motorcars of the Yellowstone Trail.



Little Clyde's Gravestone

We've come full circle this trip photographically--old Dutch wooden windmill at cattle watering-trough, then this electricity-generating wind turbine.

The literally deathly silence shrouding the tombstones is cracked by a dog barking across the road, perhaps at the caretaker's house? Like a perpetual clock, the windmill slices the air, while on the other side of the plots, a few trucks and cars noisily, obviously zoom past, rushing along US Hy. 212 in McLeod County. The smell of recently mown hay reminds us that we're in a rural area.



Carl & Janet Roehl

The irreverent wind turbine blades continuously mock the quiet with their perpetual background whispered chorus: “From dust... to dust...”

One set of tombstones—each style dating its era—celebrates generations of Canfields:

- Lucia M. died in 1868 at 63
- Elva M. “asleep in Jesus Aug. 22, 1895 at age 22”
- CW, a veteran, 1857-1930.
- Francis died in 1866...Arnold, 1871...George...no date...

On a single stone—“Mutter... Vater = Bertha and Carl Sommerdorf,” both born in “Geb. 1846.” He lived 10 years after she died at 76.

But back to Clyde's gravestone, on top of which rests a pair of “bronzed” in concrete baby booties.

Clyde lived just 5 months, 9 days. ▣

The Roehls will continue west and visit the ghost in the Olive Hotel in the next Arrow.



## FOR YOUNG READERS: THE ORIGINAL AUTOMOBILE ADVENTURE



Gloves on. Engine cranked. Goggles down. Tent strapped to the side of the car.



The year was 1912, almost 100 years ago, and your adventure on the Yellowstone Trail had just begun. The Yellowstone Trail was the first car route across the upper United States. The word “trail” meant auto highway in those days. At completion, the Trail stretched from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound (Seattle, Washington). Since there were no road signs, the trail was marked by a yellow circle with a big black arrow pointing the way. This symbol was painted on town buildings, telephone poles, posts, and even on rocks.

With the introduction of Henry Ford's Model T car, driving became America's favorite hobby. For the first time, car drivers were in control. They could go at their own pace, stay where they wanted to stay, go where the railroad did not dare to go. Trains were the usual way to travel, but they had to stay on the tracks. What was really out there? Only the most adventurous would find out.

What made car travel so daring and adventurous? In 1912, the United States had no defined road system. There were roads in cities and towns, but these were meant for bicycles and horses. Travel between states was accomplished by the smooth and sleek railroad. Automobile drivers wanted roads to be just as smooth and sleek. Outside of towns, roads were merely ruts with no names. Maps were of no help; very few existed.

What would you do if you had a car, but no road to drive it on? Would you build your own road? That's what a group of businessmen decided to do, but not with pick and shovel.



They formed the Yellowstone Trail Association which persuaded towns along the proposed Trail to connect a single road to the road in the next county and, bit by bit, they formed a coast-to-coast route. They named the route “Yellowstone” in honor of the famous national park. The formation of this association and route opened the possibility of seeing Yellowstone National Park to any American. And there were so many other things to see along the way!

Towns hurried to be included on the Trail because of the hope of business and more importantly, an end to the feeling of isolation. For example, by 1922, the newspaper in Butte, Montana, reported that the Yellowstone Trail had brought visitors from every state to Butte. They spent more than \$90,000 in that town during the summer travel season. Towns hosted annual Trail Days to build and maintain their section of road. Schools and businesses were closed during Trail Days so everyone could participate. Sometimes even prisoners were used to help in road building.

Setting out on the Trail meant starting your Model T with the hand crank located at the front of the car. Having extra gas was also important since gas stations did not exist as we know them today. Sometimes gas was sold from drug stores or in front of stores. Some drivers used a dipper from a barrel of gasoline and a funnel. Dangerous work. No pumps before 1913 and after that, only a few existed. Basic repair tools also came in handy as one bumped up and down along the Trail. Tires had “blowouts” very often.

Did travelers stay in comfy hotels? No, most adventurers camped. "Small town hotels served the traveling salesman primarily, I believe. Well-to-do auto travelers (the minority) camped for fun or stayed in big town hotels," says John Ridge, current president of the Yellowstone Trail Association. It was not a luxurious journey, but it was an adventure.

What happened to the Yellowstone Trail? In 1916, the federal government started funding long-distance roads and then worked with the states to establish a network of numbered routes. In the 1930s the Great Depression gripped our nation and the Yellowstone Trail faded from sight. Some sections of the original Trail became part of county or state highway systems and, after 1965, some parts became Interstate highways.

Today, the faint Yellowstone Trail symbol can still be seen on old buildings, and a new Yellowstone Trail Association exists. Now, it is made up of travelers looking for adventure off of our Interstate highways. Why would you bother looking for an old road? Ridge explains, "The most interesting part is the search for the old route and searching for information about the times."

If you ever have the opportunity to visit Yellowstone National Park, chances are you might travel part of the original Yellowstone Trail to get there. Thanks to those early automobile drivers, and the townspeople who worked to improve roads, your trip today will be smooth and sleek, just as they had originally intended.

"Life is either a daring adventure or nothing."—Helen Keller ☐

Heather Bode, of Helena, Montana, became interested in the Yellowstone Trail when she found information about it in the Montana State Library Archives. Believing that the Trail was a valuable part of history for current students, she wrote this overview of the Trail for the young reader.

We hope the parents and grandparents reading this *Arrow* share this story with their kids and grandkids.

# YT TRAVEL REPORT

## PART 2: THROUGH THE MIDWEST



When we left New York state we followed the Yellowstone Trail (YT) west on Hwy 20 but didn't find any signs about the YT.

We motored to Hicksville, Ohio, looking for YT towns and signs. Hicksville was a town on the YT (now state hwy 2) but there weren't any signs or roads named after the Trail that we could find. We had a laugh at the name of the town, though. (Hicksville had a Yellowstone Trail Restaurant in the YT days. eds.)



In many states we have seen Amish communities. We have seen them driving their carriages along the Yellowstone Trail, and in their gardens near their homes.

### Wisconsin

We had heard that Wisconsin has led the way in preserving the Trail's history. Our efforts were rewarded.

To the right is a sign we found while traveling to Hewitt, near Marshfield in central Wisconsin.



Moving north and west, we found tiny Curtiss. The Old Curtiss Hotel built in 1912 is now called Our Place Bar and Hotel and still has a YT sign on it.

There is a yellow "R" located in Owen on the side of the Do Drop In which is still open for business. The "R" indicated to YT tourists that you need to turn right. The owners keep the "R" painted brightly so it doesn't go unnoticed. (Ed note: The bar is now called Pippens Pub & Grub.) We had lunch in the city of Thorp's Yellowstone Park where we found this sign. The Yellowstone Garage in Stanley was there in 1915 and still stands today with YT namesake signs.



We continued heading west to Hudson, Wisconsin. We even followed a gravel road for a while feeling like we were actually traveling along the original trail.

We were happy to see more signs through the town of Hudson. This was the archway to what was once the Hudson Toll Bridge built in 1913 and used by YT travelers to cross the St. Croix River to Minnesota.

### Minnesota

The original route of the YT was to run only from the Twin Cities (Minneapolis-St. Paul) to Yellowstone Nat'l Park and the association chose St. Anthony Falls on the Mississippi River near Minneapolis (in the background) for the starting point. The falls have been modified and barely resemble the falls of the YT era.

Our move toward South Dakota took us west through Minnesota on the Trail, now US highway 212 and state highway 7, past many grain elevators to "Corn Capital" Olivia. In Olivia we found the law office with a tie to the YT. The building was originally Michael Dowling's bank. (Ed note: see page 2, Mark's Book Shelf article, for more about Dowling.)

We visited very good museums in Ortonville and Montevideo. Both had moved old area buildings onto the museum grounds for preservation, with related displays in each building representing the histories of their towns.

The YT rests on huge deposits of granite in western Minnesota. Huge slabs were visible at railroad freight stations. The railroad has not been completely overshadowed by the trucking industry. When the Yellowstone Trail was abuilding, railroads welcomed it and other auto trails, never dreaming that the auto would someday outpace the train as the major mode of transportation. □



In the next and last episode, the Sherwoods visit the home of the YT founder in South Dakota, learn to love the space of Montana, and arrive home in Washington.

## ON THE TRAIL WITH MARK



This summer I took an extended road trip of 34 days and almost 6,000 miles to explore the Yellowstone Trail through Eastern Washington, Idaho, Montana, the Dakotas, and Minnesota. I followed the maps available on our website, ([www.yellowstonetrail.org](http://www.yellowstonetrail.org)), and made notes, took photos, and made corrections where I found changes or errors. And, I had a great time!

I headed west from Wisconsin to Wyoming - a route not following the YT - to Yellowstone National Park's East Entrance. I spent only one long day exploring the park, as I had been there a number of times in the past. I left the park's north entrance at Gardiner, MT and explored both the original YT 'spur' through Yankee Jim Canyon and the later route along the east side of the Yellowstone River, then eventually up to Livingston, MT. From there I highballed west to Spokane, WA, where I then followed the 1912 - 1930 routes of the YT mile-by-mile, as best I could, for about 2,000 miles, not counting side trips. It was slow and unscheduled touring. I was on a tight budget so I camped some nights, stayed in a few low priced motels, and ate frugal meals. No YTA funds were used for this trip; I was on my own. With some backtracking, getting lost, and finding dead ends, I estimate that I drove 1,000 miles on gravel or dirt - and sometimes mud - roads. I visited some of our very interesting members and friends along the way. I will report on some of the more outstanding places, people, and cool adventures in future Arrows.

I also visited some great places not on the YT, including Glacier National Park, Beartooth Pass, and the Lolo wilderness. I wrote a daily trip log and posted it with photos on the web. If you wish, you can review it. [CLICK HERE](#) and then click on **ARCHIVE** on the left column below my intro for the earlier posts.

It was the longest and most enjoyable road trip I've ever had in 49 years of driving.

\* This Arrow again features articles about the YT in the Eastern states, the far West, local and long distance road trips, and historical tidbits...many written by our members! If you would like to contribute, please contact us.

\* 2012 will be the **100th birthday of the YTA**. Why not organize an event in your area? Keep us informed of your plans so we can help promote them.

\* **RENEW MEMBERSHIPS NOW**: We sent out renewal notices recently and contacted many others on our e-mail list who may be interested in joining. We welcome any donation you can spare and we are seeking corporate sponsorships. Tell your friends about our group...encourage them to join...and share this Arrow with them. [CLICK HERE](#)

\* Our 200<sup>th</sup> fan recently joined us on our **Facebook** page. It's interesting and fun to follow the posts and interact with us, and each other. [CLICK HERE](#)

Happy Trails,  
Mark Mowbray, Executive Director  
[mmowbray@yellowstonetrail.org](mailto:mmowbray@yellowstonetrail.org) / 608-436-3978 

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## DINOSAUR BONES ON THE TRAIL

Phyllis Schmidt of Lemmon, SD, her husband Ed, and son Stuart, along with volunteers have operated and expanded the spacious and very well organized Grand River Museum since 1998.

The Grand River Museum came into being as a result of Ed Schmidt discovering Dinosaur bones on a river bank on their ranch, a few miles out of Lemmon. They continued to find many more and decided that they should be on display for the public to enjoy and appreciate.

From the Museum's website: *The area is a fertile source of dinosaurs and fossils: Anemones, Edmontosaurus, Pachycephalosaur, Triceratops, Tyrannosaurus Rex, and more. Many are displayed here in one place, our Museum. Visitors are welcome to touch and feel real dinosaur bones.* To visit the website [CLICK HERE](#).

The museum, which has continued to grow, has an almost unbelievable display of the dinosaur bones and fossils, and also features large displays of ranch life, Native Americans in the area, and homesteading. They are adding a theater room and it should be complete this summer.

During a visit to the Museum this summer by our Executive Director, Mark Mowbray, Phyllis asked "what would I need to do to become a Trailman?" He replied that a person would need to be familiar with the YT in their local area and be willing to promote it locally.

In the early days of the YTA, a local man in each town of any size was identified as a Trailman, and he could be contacted for assistance in routing, reliable auto repairs, reasonable lodging, and other concerns of a traveller. Many towns along the route had a Trailman and we continue to have Trailmen today, although it is somewhat of an honorary appointment.

Mark, who is well aware of our modern attitudes, told Phyllis that she would probably be more comfortable as a "Trail-Woman".

We are proud to appoint Phyllis as our Trailwoman in Lemmon, and are confident that she will be a good representative for the Yellowstone Trail. 



# TRAIL-O-GRAMS

The name Trail-O-Grams comes from the original *Arrow newsletter* published during the days of the original Yellowstone Trail Association. That was when THE method of sending quick short messages was the telegram!

☉ We are very sad to report that YTA member and friend Dave Bernhardt of **Billings, Montana**, passed away suddenly recently. Dave was a friend of the Yellowstone Trail for some years. Alice and John Ridge had the privilege of meeting with Dave and Carol several times over the years. Energetic, congenial Dave was actively engaged in getting Billings marked with Yellowstone Trail signs. We will miss you, Dave, and we send the sympathy of the YTA to Carol. ▣

☉ It was a cold and rainy day May 14, but that didn't stop folks from attending **Hudson's (Wis.)** "Yellowstone Trail Heritage Days," May 13-15. There were vintage cars and tractors for the old duffers and hot rods for the kids. Dick's Bar was once the Yellowstone Trail Buffet and that's where the geocachers gathered. Vintage high wheeled bikes plied the streets. Was that a juggler there, too?



*John Ridge, YTA President; Barry Prichard, Grandson of a President of the original YTA; Bill Dirnberger, Executive of Various Antique Auto Clubs.*

Visiting author Barry Prichard, grandson of YT Association president, Michael Dowling, spoke and held a book signing. Kids painted rocks yellow, a guest "fiddler" fiddled, and a Sociability Run of cars ran to Hammond 15 miles away for a Retro Menu lunch. And more. They are already planning for next year, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the YT. ▣

☉ **Hamlet, Indiana** held its Yellowstone Trail Fest featuring a great flea market, clogging on stage, crowning a Miss Yellowstone Trail, a Sociability Cruise, parade August 19-21. ▣

☉ The **Dairyland Tin Lizzies** of east-central Wisconsin ran on the Yellowstone Trail in June. Replicating the era of early auto tourism, they each brought their own picnic lunch as travelers on the Yellowstone Trail might have done. With stops at a park, an ice cream parlor and Widmer's Cheese in Theresa, Lamm's Gardens in Jackson and pioneer Solomon Juneau's home, it was a good day.



☉ Bruce Wicks of **DeKalb, Illinois**, has kindly donated a 1914 Yellowstone Trail Association watch fob to the present YTA. On one side is inscribed "Yellowstone Trail" with its famous arrow. On the obverse is the arch over the north entrance to the Yellowstone National Park, the

entrance used by Yellowstone Trail travelers with the saying "We Want In."

The Park was still closed to automobiles in 1914, partly to insure the railroad's lucrative passenger business, and protect the hotel and tour concession's cash cows in the Park.



The Yellowstone Trail Association was instrumental in changing that by applying major political pressure to open it up for the "Benefit and Enjoyment of the People," as is carved on the arch. The YTA lobbied locally and in Washington DC and used a motto in 1914 that was finally heard by the bureaucrats and politicians: "WE WANT IN"!



And it worked – verified by the millions of folks who have visited in their automobiles since 1915. ▣

☉ Hammond, Wisconsin, held its second annual **Yellowstone Trail Fathers Day Social** on –what else?? Fathers Day! Featured were car shows, weaving/spinning demo, sidewalk art, a Retro Menu at Hammond Hotel (still standing from Trail days), a vintage fashion show. Good on ya! ▣

☉ Did you know that 2013 marks another 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary? In **1913, Michael Dowling** (grandfather of Barry Prichard – see left column) jumped into his Oakland 6 with his family, and another carload of friends following, and headed west from Minnesota to Yellowstone National Park, charting and mapping a way for the brand new Yellowstone Trail Association to adopt. Well, he didn't actually *jump*. His two prosthetic legs and prosthetic left arm slowed him down a bit, but he drove the whole way and back! ▣

# NOTES FROM THE YTA

## Several people are owed a serious Thank You:

**First, to the writers of the several fine articles in the Arrow**, we express our collective thanks for your ability and effort. All are volunteers, helping the YTA promote knowledge of and enthusiasm for the YT. Now we would like to know what you think about the articles. Are the topics appropriate and of interest? Did you learn anything? Share your thoughts with us by sending an email to [info@yellowstonetrail.org](mailto:info@yellowstonetrail.org) or write to PO Box 65, Altoona, WI 54720. We will share your thoughts with the writers.

If you have information about the YT and its history – or about attractions along the Trail – share it by writing an article for consideration for the Arrow.

**Second**, other individuals of considerable importance to the YTA, need a heartfelt Thank You. **A number of you provided gifts to the Organization in amounts from \$3 to \$1000** and to you we send our real appreciation. Those gifts are used for actual expenses that are beyond the ability of our volunteers to support. For example, most of the web site costs are born voluntarily by members, but now and again help is needed for domain renewals and computer program costs. We try to conduct business over our personal phones, but sometimes, to get things done, we need to meet with others face-to-face and your gifts provide a small part of those costs. And your gifts help with those nagging postage costs that serve to get information about the YT out to what we hope are receptive ears. And there are some unavoidable printing costs such as the membership brochure.

## **Founded in 1912, the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is Nearly Upon Us. Lets Make Use of It!**

As we explained in January's Arrow, The YT will be 100 in 1912. That is, the Yellowstone Trail Association first met as a loose group of men, some members of the Good Roads movement, in Ipswich, South Dakota, on the rainy night of April 23, 1912, about eight days after the Titanic went down. They became a formal group on October 10 in Lemmon, South Dakota with the odd name of The Twin Cities-Aberdeen-Yellowstone Park Trail Association. Quite a mouthful!

As you know, the YT quickly spread to become "a good road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound." But that spreading still took time. In spring of 1913, Montana's eastern side laid out a route; in November of 1913 the governor of Minnesota and others selected the route that the YT would take through that state. 1914 saw the Trail speed through the rest of Montana to the Bitterroots. In 1915 another spurt carried the Trail to Puget Sound and across Wisconsin to Chicago. From 1916 to about 1918 the Trail took a route in the East through Connecticut and lower Pennsylvania. Then it was officially moved north to a more favorable route along Lake Erie to the East and Plymouth Rock.

So far we have heard from nine communities in five states which are starting their planning for events in 2012. Additional events might be planned on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the YT's establishment in other areas.

Over the last 10 years or so, interest in the YT has moved from little to "a fair amount." We have learned that to move that interest to "a great deal" we must partner with businesses and tourism agencies like convention and visitors bureaus, economic development agencies, chambers of commerce, historical societies, and businesses. Many, many seeds of partnerships have been planted, and a few have grown to productive relationships. What is needed for burgeoning growth is "master partnerships" within states or

regions to promote the YT in a "big way." For instance, several CVBs, historical societies, and individuals in Montana would like to see a state-wide tourism program to bring heritage travelers to their doors. Perhaps the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the YTA can motivate some "big projects."

## **Ideas for Your Community's YT 100<sup>th</sup> Celebration**

**Micro ideas** We gave you a heads-up in last January's *Arrow* suggesting that communities could mark their portion of the Trail with road signs. See [www.yellowstonetrail.org](http://www.yellowstonetrail.org) for a suggested sign. Or make your own, but let's make them similar so they can be recognized by travelers. Other micro ideas for community events are:

1. get school kids to paint rocks yellow along the Trail
2. attach a "Yellowstone Trail" flair to your regularly scheduled community "days" such as Olivia's Corn Days, or Chippewa Falls' Pure Water Days, etc. by putting YT banners on antique cars in your usual parade
3. have an antique car show and Sociability Run on your part of the YT; a foot race
4. read the Trail-O-Gram column for more ideas from others
5. businesses can put YT stickers inside their windows to show support. Design your own; but see [www.yellowstonetrail.org](http://www.yellowstonetrail.org) for an idea
6. serve yellow and black foods (the YT colors) such as banana cream pie with chocolate drizzle, etc.
7. ask restaurants to re-name regular menu items (Flapper flapjacks; Al Capone Burgers; Charleston Cheesburgers; Speakeasy beverages, etc.)
8. have a chalkfest on sidewalks w/YT or 1920's theme
9. 1920's dress contest or fashion show
10. create a walking map to your town's historic homes; a treasure hunt for kids using historical sites on the Trail
11. Coordinate thrift sales along the Trail. "Sales on the Trail?"

## **Macro ideas**

1. work with your local tourism department to advertise the Trail
2. get the Trail on local/ regional/ state historic lists of historic sites
3. ask your city/county to buy ads in local or state tourism literature advertising your community as being on the YT. We're talking about "branding" and publicity here.

You know what to do and you know that you have the tools to do it. SO DO IT!

**We may have something started in Wisconsin.** During September there will be a meeting of people living on the Trail from all across the state establishing ways to work together and with the Wisconsin Department of Tourism.

AND, a revised and improved guide to driving the YT in Wisconsin is underway. The original guide has proven to be most successful and would be a great model for other states. See the original at [www.yellowstonetrail.org/ytw\\_guide.htm](http://www.yellowstonetrail.org/ytw_guide.htm)

Keep in touch and maybe we will have a model for a guide for other regions to follow to tell you about. Send us a note if you are interested in more information: [info@yellowstonetrail.org](mailto:info@yellowstonetrail.org). The YTA Executive Director and officers will receive your note.

**Web Site Improvements Coming.** Two members of the YTA have volunteered to redo [www.yellowstonetrail.org](http://www.yellowstonetrail.org) to improve both its appearance and utility. If you have requests or suggestions send them to [info@yellowstonetrail.org](mailto:info@yellowstonetrail.org) and we will let Christine and Michael Martens know.

Contact Mark Mowbray, our Executive Director, to ask anything about YTA. Membership, donations, ways to get involved, project ideas – or just to introduce yourself! [Click to e-mail Mark](mailto:info@yellowstonetrail.org) ([info@yellowstonetrail.org](mailto:info@yellowstonetrail.org))