



Official Publication of The Yellowstone Trail Association  
"A Good Road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound"



## Afloat on the Yellowstone Trail

By Curt Cunningham, YT Washington Correspondent, photos from author's collection

The Yellowstone Trail across Washington State in the early days offered the traveler a wonderful experience with its unique geography. As you headed west toward Seattle you were treated to the breadbasket of the state with its wide open spaces of rich farmland. Next was the climb up and over the Cascade Range and down the steep western slope. After a day of driving, the final hurdle was the four-mile ferry trip across Lake Washington before you reached the City of Seattle.

Lake Washington is 33 square miles and is 22 miles long and about 2 to 3 miles wide. The lake was formed thousands of years ago by the glaciers of the Ice Age. They carved out the valleys and hills. This is why east west travel is so difficult in the Puget Sound area. The route of the YT across the lake by ferry took about 45 minutes of travel time, not counting the time spent waiting and for loading and unloading.



Kirkland Ferry Boarding 1923

People began using boats to cross the lake as early as the 1870's. The lake steamers had been designed closely to their Puget Sound "Mosquito Fleet" counterparts and would carry a mix of passengers and freight, lashing a wagon and team to the deck if necessary. By 1900 the lake was teeming with boats carrying passengers and freight. That same year, King County established a public ferry because the



View from Pilot House 1923

steamers were too small for wagons and horses and made too many stops along the shoreline.

*The King County of Kent* became the first double-ended side-wheeled ferry on the lake in 1901, and offered a direct route between Kirkland and Seattle. When the vessel was first launched it became stuck in the mud for hours with King County dignitaries aboard. She had chronic mechanical problems and was condemned in 1908. She was replaced with the *Kirkland of Washington* the first steel hulled double-ended ferry.

The little steamboats competed with the county, but one by one, Captain John Anderson, an entrepreneur and an expert on operating a boat business, bought them up. By 1908 the Anderson Steamboat Company had cornered the market on all independent boats, and Anderson had opened the Anderson Shipyard south of Kirkland. His *Urania* and *Fortuna* were the speediest boats on the lake.

Since the county run ferry had a regular schedule, Captain Anderson used this to his advantage. He'd simply show up at the public ferry dock a few minutes before the regular ferry and then scoop up the passengers and zip away. Needless to say, this did not go over well with the Port Commission. Kirkland businessmen were also upset, because of the reductions in the public ferry's receipts. The city was dependent upon their business. He was eventually banned from using the Kirkland Dock. By 1922 the county ferry system was in such financial difficulty that it appointed its largest competitor to run the system, Captain John Anderson. *(Continued)*

In 1913, Captain Anderson drastically modified the deck of his steamboat *Urania* to accommodate four horseless carriages, but this method was unwieldy and highly inefficient. As with the horse and wagon, it was clear that the old-style steamboat days on Lake Washington were fading and it was time for a new design. The era of the double-ended ferry had arrived. In 1913 a reconfigured side-wheeler steamboat, the wooden *Leschi*, became the first Seattle-built automobile ferry. This ferry first operated on the Kirkland-Leschi run.



S.S. Lincoln of Kirkland Ferry at Kirkland Dock - 1923

On March 25, 1915 the *S.S. Lincoln of Kirkland* began its Kirkland to Madison Park (Seattle) run. For 25 years the *Lincoln* plied the waters between Kirkland and Seattle and never had an accident or a mechanical breakdown. The vessel was built in 1914 at the Anderson Shipyard. The *Lincoln* at the time was the largest ferry built for the lake crossing. She weighed in at 580 tons and was 150 ft long and could carry about 40 autos. The fare was 25 cents for auto and driver and 6 cents for a walk on passenger.

On August 25, 1916 the Lake Washington Ship Canal was completed and subsequently the lake was lowered 9 feet. Now boats are able to travel from Lake Washington to Lake Union and then to Puget Sound. In 1919 there was a proposal to change the route of the ferry from Madison Park to South Lake Union through the Montlake cut. This was to shorten the time it took travelers to reach downtown Seattle. This proposal never went anywhere but if it had the Yellowstone Trail most likely would have been rerouted to South Lake Union along with the ferry.

Those 25 years were not completely uneventful. If you were aboard on November 24, 1919 it was a different story. At 5:45am Monday morning as the *Lincoln* was leaving the Madison St. dock, two men named Letsley and Christianson in a rowboat came alongside the ferry and boarded it. They quietly made their way to the engine room where they bound and gagged the engineer. The engineer was aware of the robbery beforehand and quietly submitted to being gagged. (More on that later.)



S.S. Lincoln Ferry Leaving Kirkland 1923

After grabbing an ax they headed for the purser's office. They then smashed open the door with the ax, grabbed the safe and took it to the main deck. They were unable to open the safe so one of the men went back to the engine room for a crowbar. During the rush to open the safe they were unaware that they were about to be caught in the act.

The previous night at a bar in Seattle, the men had confided in two women about their plans to rob the ferry and then Kirkland Bank. The women informed the Seattle Police Chief who then early Monday morning drove the detectives down to catch the ferry. They boarded the ferry at 3:00 am. Yoris and Cochran stationed themselves in the pilothouse and Frank stayed on deck to await their approach. The engineer was informed and told to submit to the crooks.

When the robbers began to open the safe with the crowbar the detectives closed in on them. "Throw up your hands!" shouted the detectives. Letsley and Christianson dropped the crowbar and fled. Yoris, armed with a sawed-off shotgun, fired at Letsley and he dropped with three buckshot in his left arm and two more in his face. Christianson fled down the deck, pursued by Cochran and Frank. Two shots from the detectives' guns caused Christianson to drop to the deck, where he lay motionless.

With their guns trained on what they believed to be a wounded man, the detectives advanced, fearing Christianson might be playing possum. "I am thru!" Christianson yelled when the detectives turned him over to look for wounds. An hour later Christianson was in the city jail and Letsley was in the city hospital. It must have been one exciting and scary ferry trip for the passengers.

(Continued)

Another incident that took place was in the 1930's, a driver from Moffit's big hog farm out east of Kirkland had driven aboard, went for coffee, but neglected to set the truck brake. The crossing was in thick fog, and when something loomed up in the water, the captain reversed engines. The truck had been blocked, but it jumped the blocks. It made no noise and nobody knew anything had happened until the driver returned and asked, "Where's my truck?". It took three weeks for a diver to find it, in the deepest part of the lake.

As cross lake travel increased, talk of bridging the lake began to be discussed. In 1921 the Bellevue District Club held a meeting under the leadership of M. Reese. The residents of Bellevue (Bellevue is just south of Kirkland.) were organizing to fight for a bridge that would link their town with the Yellowstone Trail and shorten the trip to Seattle over this new highway. R.R. Montell and John H. Dirkes, engineers, explained how a bridge could be constructed at a cost of less than \$250,000 by utilizing a dozen of the abandoned wooden hulls, which have been laying in Lake Union. They would be linked together end-to-end over the lake with a platform for autos to drive over to be built on top. The engineers explained that besides shortening the Yellowstone Trail, the proposed bridge would make the trip from Seattle to Issaquah five miles shorter than the present route to Renton.



Line-up for the Kirkland - Seattle Ferry, 1920s



Site of Kirkland Ferry Landing in 2016

By the early 20's drivers now had three routes to choose from to get to Seattle from the eastside of the lake. The Renton route around the south end, take the ferry across the lake or take the Bothell route around the north end of the lake.

With the opening of the Lake Washington Floating Bridge in 1940 motorists now had a direct route across the lake and so began the demise of the ferries. The bridge required a toll which still made the ferries a viable option. But when the tolls ended in 1950, so did the ferries.

The old ferry dock that was big enough to handle cars and trucks is long gone, and the ferry parking lot now is called Marina Park and forms the heart of Kirkland's waterfront. The clock that told commuters how long they had to wait to catch the next ferry still stands at the intersection of Kirkland Avenue and Lake Street. Ψ



Original Kirkland Avenue Clock in 2016

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# Yellowstone Trail Association

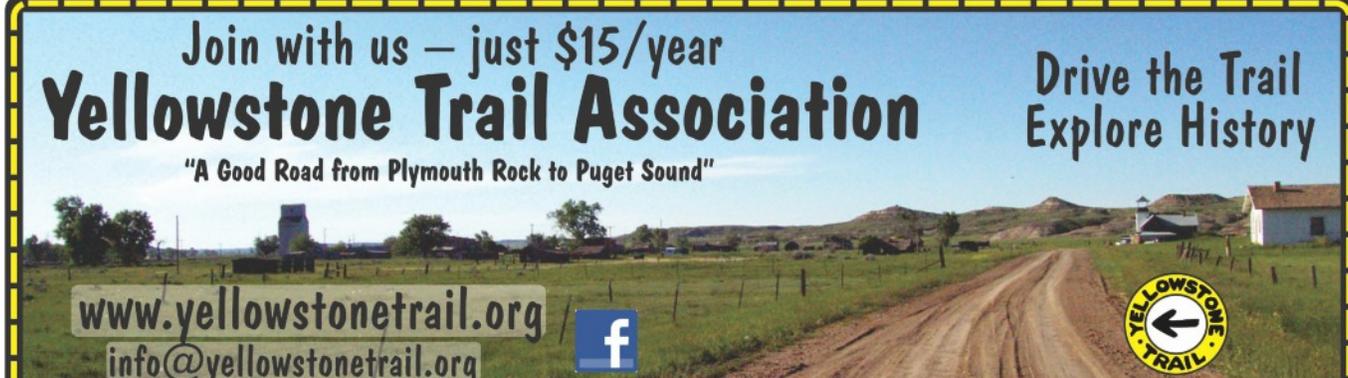
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Drive the Trail  
Explore History





Author's note: This is the first of five articles tracing the emergence of the Yellowstone Trail through Adams County and Hettinger, ND, in an effort to increase awareness of this historical roadway and to focus on the important part that Hettinger and Adams County, ND, played in that effort.

## The Dream You want to build a *WHAT?*

By Bonnie Smith, Hettinger, North Dakota

In 1912, as the automobile was becoming popular, few good, all-weather roads existed and certainly, no long-distance, carefully marked roads. Out here in the wind-swept, flat-topped butte country, *roads* were still dirt trails, cut out of gumbo and sand by meandering horse-drawn wagons.

But America is built on dreams and J. W. Parmley of Ipswitch, SD, had a dream. He dreamed of a good road for the emerging horseless carriages that would carry people and goods from Ipswitch, SD, where he lived, east to Aberdeen, SD. That dream quickly expanded west to Mobridge, SD, then further west to Hettinger, ND, and on to Yellowstone National Park. It ultimately became the first passable roadway from Minneapolis, MN, to Yellowstone, to Seattle, WA. And thus, the *yellow* stones (but more on that, later).



Hettinger citizen O.T. Peterson, the first secretary/treasurer of the Yellowstone Trail Association, stands by one of the natural sandstone, cone-shaped rocks (hoodoo) used to mark the trail across northwestern South Dakota and southwestern North Dakota. Three Hettinger men were board members of that first Association.

What became known as the Yellowstone Trail, now US Highway 12, grew to 3,700 miles long, beginning in Plymouth, MA, and ending at Puget Sound, WA. It still has the distinction of being the first transcontinental highway in the northern states and the first highway of any kind built completely without Federal funds. The southwest corner of North Dakota--from the state line southeast of Haynes, ND, to the state line west of Marmath, ND--is the only place in the state the Yellowstone Trail exists.

Three men from Hettinger, ND, played prominent roles in the establishment of the association and in its subsequent work and development that led to the completion of the Yellowstone Trail roadway. They were O. T. Peterson, who served as the first secretary/treasurer; Dr. John G. Johns, Hettinger's first physician who was on the Publicity Committee; and George N. Keniston, Hettinger's first minister of the Congregational Church, who served as Traveling Representative. They were part of the group of men Parmley gathered from each county along the Trail to create the Yellowstone Trail Association in October 1912.

From the first, the building of the road was a "grass roots effort," employing no one, but involving everyone in the small communities along the roadway.

### Sources:

*Adams County Records*, archived at Dakota Buttes Museum DBHS/M, 400 11th St S, Hettinger, ND.

*Hettinger ND Centennial: 100 Years of Change and Challenge*. Hettinger Centennial Committee, 2007.

Peterson, O.T., ed. *On the Yellowstone Trail: First Year Book of the Twin Cities-Aberdeen-Yellowstone Park Trail Association*, 1914.

Yellowstone Trail Association: [www.yellowstonetrail.org](http://www.yellowstonetrail.org) "The YTA Then and Now"

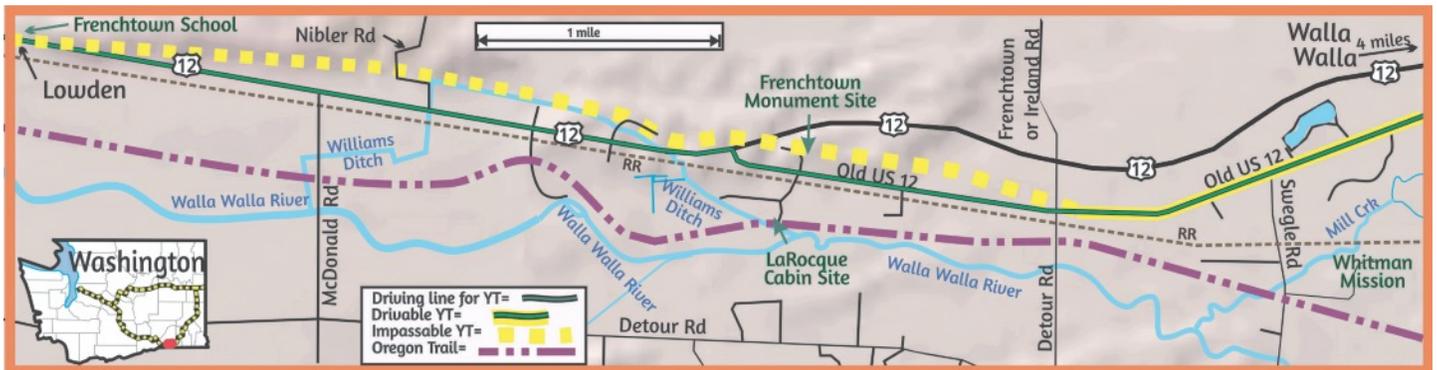


**Road Trip!** YTA member Bill von Tagen of Boise, Idaho is planning a round-trip, coast-to-coast adventure this summer. He plans to travel east on the Lincoln Highway from San Francisco to New York City. He will then return by traveling on the Yellowstone Trail from Plymouth, Massachusetts to the west. He will be driving his restored 1957 Ford Ranchero and towing his restored pop-up camper. Best of luck Bill. We will include more trip details in our next Arrow.

# History Every Mile in Washington

By Dave Habura, YTA Board Member and Northwest Correspondent, photos by author, map by John Ridge

Our Yellowstone Trail passes through history every mile of its length. When in 1915 William Warwick painted yellow blazes on posts, poles, and rocks between Walla Walla and the Columbia River, he passed through the line Native American warriors had formed making a determined stand against oncoming troops, and past the site of one of America's best known "massacres." Had he been fortunate, he might have talked with survivors, still alive at the time. He passed in front of the recently completed 1915 Frenchtown school (now a winery), and passed the sites and perhaps the remnants of the rough-hewn cabins of French Canadian Metis who had been displaced from Fort George (Astoria) in the 1820's.



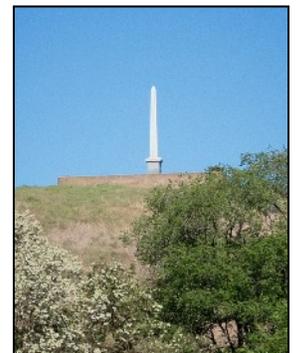
The pre 1925 Yellowstone Trail sweeps south from Spokane on a route shaped like a slack rope held at both ends, turning west toward the Columbia River at Walla Walla. It is sometimes thought to be an unnecessary detour on the route to Seattle. But the Walla Walla loop made sense in 1915 because it offered a better road than the alternative that was used by the National Parks Highway via the dusty and coulee scared barren badlands further north.

The Walla Walla area is a fertile land that attracted Native Americans and fur trappers long before Marcus and Narcissa Whitman established their Methodist mission in 1836 at Waiilatpu, about six miles west of present Walla Walla. They were not the only non-natives in the area. In fact there was a settlement of French Canadians (former fur trapping employees from the Red River colony and Fort George, today's Astoria) and their Indian families a mile or so to the west of the mission site. That area today is known as Frenchtown, and was the location of a large Indian - Soldier battle in 1855.



Whitman Mission markers

The Whitmans were killed in 1847 by the Indians in what is often referred to as the Whitman Massacre. Conflicts over land, cultural animosities, distrust, and revenge on both sides spawned the Indian wars of the following decade, including the Battle of Walla Walla fought along the river valley followed by our Trail. The stories of the Mission, the Whitmans and the massacre are widely available, and a good place to start is at the National Parks Service website at: <https://www.nps.gov/whmi/index.htm>. For several years, early in the tale of the settlement of the new northwest, the Mission was a beacon of security, replenishment, and rest on the Oregon Trail. Here for a short distance, the Yellowstone Trail and a segment of the Oregon Trail overlap. The Oregon Trail was not one long path, but more accurately an aggregate of paths. One early path went to and through the Mission and along the Walla Walla River valley as does the Yellowstone Trail. At the Whitman Mission the foundations of the Mission buildings are marked, but none stand. They were burned in the massacre. The burial site of the Whitman's and others killed in the massacre is on the grounds. The monument to the Whitmans placed on top of a hill on the site in 1897 would have been seen by Warwick.



Whitman Monument

(Continued)



L'Ecole Winery - former Frenchtown School

About a 2.5 miles west of the Mission on the old Yellowstone Trail is the Frenchtown monument and exhibit.

(<http://www.frenchtownwa.org/>). Stop and learn about the important history of Frenchtown. It includes a cabin mentioned in a letter by Marcus Whitman. It has been moved to this site and restored. When you stop, you are on a line formed by Indian warriors as they took a stand against advancing troops on December 7, 1855 in what was the longest Indian battle to take place in Washington.

This rich land has spawned dozens of top notch wineries, and in fact one occupies the 1915 Frenchtown schoolhouse in Lowden which

Warwick and his wife, who traveled with him, would have seen because it was built in the year they passed through, and opened most probably by early September when he was here. The battle between about 450 volunteers and 600 or more Indians began near modern day Touchet. Over the course of the next few days the Indians were driven to the east, skirmishing along the way and advantaged by their ability to shoot while mounted. On December 7<sup>th</sup> they had been driven to within a couple of miles of the abandoned Whitman Mission site. *“The Indians held a line that stretched from the north bank of the Walla Walla River, where cover was provided by trees and underbrush, across the level gap where the La Rocque farm lay, and into the rolling hills to the north. In the flat, the Indians fired from the cover of sagebrush and sandy knolls. Those Volunteers on the fastest horses advanced on the farm, but were met by withering gunfire, and the soldiers fell back, many of them wounded.”*

If my calculations are correct you should be standing (or parked) about in the middle of that line of warriors when you are at the Frenchtown monument site and exhibit. Late in the afternoon the soldiers killed four Indian hostages, including the Walla Walla chief Peo Peo Mox Mox who had come under a flag of truce (and tried to escape after being held) casting a pall over the history of the battle. By December 10 the volunteers were near the point of losing, exhausted and almost out of ammunition. But as so often happens in western movies, that afternoon they were reinforced by troops from Fort Henrietta (where Echo, Oregon is today), and they carried the day. You can read the details of the battle here: <http://www.historylink.org/File/8132>



Teepee at Frenchtown Monument site



Wagon on original Oregon Trail ruts

The Oregon Trail itself passes through the Frenchtown site between the Walla Walla River and the current railroad tracks south of Old Highway 12. The Yellowstone Trail is co-located with the early Oregon Trail as the OT passes through the Walla Walla River valley on the segment of the OT that led into and out of the Whitman Mission. The Oregon Trail, the Yellowstone Trail, and the railroad all followed the valley floor, constrained as they were by the barriers of the river on the south and the hills to the north. Most of the Oregon Trail traffic using this route came between 1841 and 1845, with later and larger movements staying further south in what is now Oregon.

Finally, I did not include exploring the now abandoned segments of the Yellowstone Trail just north of the modern highway between the Frenchtown monument site and exhibit and Frenchtown School. They look interesting on Google Earth but I confess I did not follow them myself when I last visited Walla Walla.

Our Yellowstone Trail brings us to and in contact with our country’s history. This short segment of about six miles has much to discover, including an Indian war, the Oregon Trail, old (1915) school architecture, wineries, and the site of the Whitman Mission. And I didn’t even count an abandoned segment of the old Yellowstone Trail followed by the early trail blazer, William Warwick.....his story needs to be told here one day. Ψ

## Many Yellowstones - Part 2 of 3

By YTA Member Malcolm "Mac" Nelson of Brocton NY.

Most of our YT articles are about the main Yellowstone Trail; but how wrong it would be to ignore Yellowstone, the world's first and greatest National Park. What follows is one traveler's appreciation of the crown jewel of our Trail. So what is the real Yellowstone?

### Rangers: The National Park Service 1916 - Present



Courtesy - National Park Service

Although the US Army had run the Park since 1886, the US Army in 1916 had other priorities, such as winning World War I. They pulled out of the Park in 1918 and were replaced by a fledgling service, whose uniforms still show their quasi-military origin: The National Park Service. They eventually came to supervise hundreds of units of the National Park system, but they began here. It's easy to make fun of their sometimes stiff demeanor, to laugh at their hyper-protective, often strict requests. That's unfair. They have a huge job to do, chiefly protecting tourists from their own ignorance. Mom might give a toddler candy to give to a bear for an adorable picture, and the bear might mistake fingers for tootsie rolls. It's amazing that there aren't more disasters. Check You Tube some time for the insane things people do at Yellowstone, and get chased by bison or elk as a result. These charges are often billed as "wild animal attacks," but they're really just stupid tourists getting too close to wild animals, violating the animals' space and the park's clearly stated rules.



YNP Ranger at Old Faithful - NPS

The Rangers of course also monitor traffic and construction, do valuable science projects, lead hikes, mind counters, answer questions, give evening programs. Those I have known are great people. When you can get them to talk, Rangers often have an ambivalent attitude toward their jobs. They love the places they serve, and they like their jobs, though they sometimes complain about being "paid off in sunsets." The service, which was mostly white male, has become diversified. The most recent retired Yellowstone Superintendent is a woman, Suzanne Lewis. Since the park is much busier in the summer than winter, seasonal rangers are hired to fill the gap. They are often very knowledgeable science teachers from high schools and colleges.

### 1915: Auto Tourism Changes the Park Forever.

The personal auto changed every aspect of American life, Yellowstone too, not always for the better, if you accept the words of Mr. H. W. Child in 1912. He warned that "some of our most law-abiding citizens...uniformly disregard speed limits and rely on... a kind of intoxication superinduced by the ecstasy of automobile travel." True enough, it still is, but he had an axe to grind. His company ran stagecoaches into the park, so he naturally disapproved of the "ecstasy of" this new competitor. Nobody listened.

The park was opened to private autos in 1915. In the summer of 1916, there was chaos and competition, stagecoach versus car, on the narrow park roads. Within a year, stagecoach travel was gone and some of the old hotels closed. "Sagebrushers" were auto passengers who simply camped by the side of the road. Park visitations climbed steadily. The first million-visitor-year was 1947, after the gasoline and tire rationing of World War II had ended, and Detroit was making new cars again instead of tanks. More than four million visited in 2015, with no end in sight. Traffic jams are unfortunate, but they are minor blots on the experience. Heck, most of them are caused by bears anyway.



1920s Autos entering Park- NPS

*(Continued)*

## Yellowstone Campgrounds Large and Small



1920s Yellowstone Park Auto campground - NPS

An excellent way to live in the park is to camp; in tent, RV, or trailer. Some campgrounds—the big ones—take reservations, but some are first come, first served, and you can usually get a space. Mammoth seems to fill up last. The big campgrounds are crowded and almost urban, but in Yellowstone it is hard to find a place that isn't beautiful. Bridge Bay campground, near Fishing Bridge, has more than 400 sites. But it also has glorious views of the lake, and meadows where bison graze. The only one with

hookups is Fishing Bridge, and it REALLY is crowded—just a big paved parking lot. Showers are available for all there. The little primitive campgrounds—as few as 23 sites—are my favorites, especially Slough Creek. It is three miles off the main road and usually full, well worth the extra effort. A young moose once spent two days in a meadow across the creek from my tent. Pumps supply water, and the outhouses are well-designed, clean, and not smelly, as they are throughout the park. There are many campsites along the 900 miles of hiking and backpacking trails and on the lakes. If that's part of your plan, check with the rangers in the park's Back Country Office before you go, and reserve what you need. And if you don't want to hike, just get off the busy main road and sit quietly in the grass for a while and listen to the silence.

### Housing Outside the Park: Gateway Towns

National Park gateway towns: there's a good topic for an article, but not here, not now. Most federal recreational areas were established against the will of many of the locals. That wasn't true in Yellowstone, because there weren't any permanent locals. Gateway towns do indeed change, not always for the better. To my eye, it's many blocks of Eyesore and Tourist Hustle, good mostly for the hustlers. I do feel for those who lament the kitschy growth of their former little towns.

West Yellowstone, Montana, is the busiest gateway to Yellowstone, in terms of numbers of cars (and snowmobiles) entering. It is replete with motels, both chain and local. It also has some showy tourist attractions, the best of which (I think) is The Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center. At the Northeast entrance, there are a few small motels in the tiny towns of Silver Gate and Cooke City. There are no services at the East entrance—52 miles further east is Cody, a vast vacation metropolis. Gardiner, Montana, at the North entrance, is my favorite gateway town: small enough to be laid back, big enough to have services. As in West Yellowstone, there are many motels, most with views of the mountains or the Yellowstone River. But go see for yourself. Four days would be good, a week better. You will discover your own "Many Yellowstones". It will be a highlight of your life and you will want to return. Ψ

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## Minnesota's Yellowstone Trail Signs

By Bill Dirnberger, YT Minnesota Correspondent

Editor's note: This article first appeared in the *Northern Lights*, the official publication of the Minnesota Region, Antique Automobile Club of America.

Our interest in old cars takes us in travels where we encounter road signs that show direction and miles to a destination. Several members have old signs and some museums have road signs displayed along with interesting stories. A road sign at the Sacred Heart Area Historical Society museum had an interesting story that triggers this article. The sign that is displayed there was found when a cable was being laid in a ditch, one mile north of the west edge of town. This was at one of the corners of the Yellowstone Trail road and at which point it turns and goes west into Granite Falls, MN. One of the members of SHAHS said he knew of one that still stands and it piqued my interest. This sign recently brought to my attention was just north of the railroad tracks along highway 212 at Sumter, MN. I took pictures and shared the knowledge of this sign with several old car club members.

*(Continued)*



A fellow member of the Yellowstone Trail Association, Lance Sorenson, has been on a tour with us previously and has plotted the Yellowstone Trail with signage, yellow rocks, etc. through Hector, MN. Take the time to look for the yellow signs or rocks if your travels take you on highway 212.

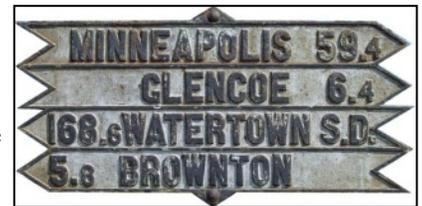
About five years ago at the end of December, two fellows, backed up to the sign in Sumter and with a chop saw, cut off the sign, threw it in the pickup and drove off.

A few years ago Lance Sorenson gave me some information if I would promise to write an article about the signs. Lance forwarded an article that was published in the October 1913 issue of the American Motorist. I'd like to be on the top of the list if anyone has a copy to acquire the issue but I will utilize the information I have to confirm the date that these signs were initially cast and put into service. I have asked about copyright and plagiarism and was lead to believe that Public Domain allows us to use excerpts from the article or in some instances, a copy of the article and its purpose.

The following is that 1913 article from **AMERICAN MOTORIST**.

“The Automobile Club of Minneapolis has been working out a system of road guide signs during the last three years that promises much as a permanent, legible, and reliable method of marking turns and crossroads. The problem of properly marking the crossroads in Minnesota, more particularly in Hennepin County, the county in which Minneapolis is located, is peculiarly difficult and expensive. It is doubtful if the same conditions are met elsewhere. Not only are there a great number of main highways or trunk lines to be marked, but also a multitude of crossroads and by-roads leading to the many lakes and settlements of summer cottages contiguous to Minneapolis. As an example, Lake Minnetonka, a large body of water, has a shore line which is variously estimated to be from 300 to 400 miles, continuously lined with summer cottages, each group of cottages being known by some local designation. It is of the utmost importance to these cottagers that the roads be marked, that their friends and guests may readily reach them by automobile.

Another and perhaps the most discouraging feature of guide-posting roads in Minnesota is the damage done to road signs by vandals. Nowhere else, it can be safely stated, is such utter disregard of the rights of the traveling public shown in road signs. Minnesota is and has been a great hunting ground. From September to January almost everyone who goes out upon the highways carries a gun; as the game becomes scarcer the disappointed hunters—they cannot be called sportsmen—have become firmly fixed in the habit of shooting up signs. The Automobile Club of Minneapolis had in the past eight years erected many wooden signs, but these signs would rarely be permitted to remain one season, never two. It was disheartening work: nothing was accomplished; each year the work of the previous year was to be done again.



But something permanent had to be erected. In Minneapolis, in Hennepin County, throughout the whole State of Minnesota, the good roads movement was showing results. Good roads of appreciable mileage were here, they were a fact and rapidly extending; they must take up the matter of permanent, indestructible signs. Why have good roads and no road directions? Good roads and good signs are twin brothers and should travel hand in hand, signs must be erected that would last.

With these conditions staring them in the face the Automobile Club of Minneapolis seriously took up the matter of a permanent, indestructible sign. An iron sign was suggested and tests made; sheet iron, galvanized iron and cast iron were each in turn tried and found wanting. The result of various tests and conferences , a cast iron sign five-eighths of an inch thick was adopted, patterns made, a sign cast and with no little ceremony erected, in the presence of the President, Vice-president, Secretary, Treasurer, and Sign Board



Committee of the club, newspaper representatives, official photographers, good road representatives, and the usual number or small boys. This sign seemed to the multitude assembled to be “IT”; the proper sign had been found, bouquets all around. It stood up just two weeks and in spite of its 5/8 inches of good cast iron, it was broken and laid a wreck upon the ground.

Something that cannot be broken was wanted; that was evidently the only solution. What can't be broken? Someone was informed that you can't break malleable cast

iron, that it was indestructible. The Automobile Club of Minneapolis tried it; and it seems to be just the thing. Never has one of the malleable cast iron signs been broken. These signs have been tested with gun and rifle, at various ranges, without appreciable effect except a slight damage to the paint. These signs made of malleable cast iron are 30 inches long. The plate is shaped like an arrow, with the mileage figures at the head end of the arrow; 5/8 of an inch thick, each line 3 inches wide with 2 inch raised letters; letters and border raised from the background about 7/8 of an inch. As a finish to the sign, and perhaps more for ornament than for utility, a cap is bolted into the top of the standard lettered with the name: “Automobile Club of Minneapolis” and offering a reward for the arrest and conviction of any person damaging the sign. This is in accord with the statutes of Minnesota making such damaging a misdemeanor. After the casting is made the whole is galvanized to prevent rust penetrating the paint and disfiguring the sign.

A 2 ½ inch galvanized iron gas pipe 12 feet long is used for a standard to which the signs are firmly bolted with 3/8 inch galvanized carriage bolts. The gas pipe standard is sunk three feet into the ground imbedded in a rich mixture of concrete. The concrete surrounding the standard is made at least 14 inches in diameter; if the soil is loose and sandy, this is greatly increased. *(Continued)*

For painting the signs a special paint is used that gives promise of great durability. The signs, having been galvanized at the foundry, are painted two coats of white; the letters figures and border painted black, and the whole finished with a coat of spar varnish. Several colors and combinations of colors have been tried, and it has been finally decided that a white background with black letters and border make the most legible and neatest finish.

In transporting the signs on a posting expedition, a Three-ton truck is used. Three men are usually employed. The cement is, of course, carried on the truck with the signs and tools; but as good sand and gravel can be found almost anywhere in the vicinity of Minneapolis, this material is secured from roadside cuts as the truck proceeds. The nearest farm house, creek, or lake is depended upon for water. With such a truck and three men, 27 signs have been erected in one day. The expense of these signs seems, at first blush, to be excessive, but if they prove as permanent and indestructible as there is every reason to believe will be the case, they are far and away the cheapest signs ever erected. Casting, painting, assembling and placing the signs; averages about \$7 for each sign.



Little need be said about securing data for the signs; this work is about the same everywhere. It is a slow, tedious business; back and forth over the same road time and again, until the main road and all crossroads have been secured and checked up, distances marked on the map, and sign locations determined upon. This work has all been done by members of the Automobile Club of Minneapolis without expense to the Club. All instruments used in measuring distances were first tested over a measured mile, and later again tested from time to time to prove their continuing accuracy.

Realizing the great importance of a state-wide campaign of guide-posting, the Automobile Club of Minneapolis has made earnest effort, and with much success, to interest cities, villages, and other clubs in this work. With this in view, and to

get these signs before as any people of the State as possible, the Minneapolis Club has not confined its efforts to the immediate vicinity of Minneapolis, but has already placed malleable cast iron signs in fifteen counties and in South Dakota as well as Minnesota. In guide posting main routes the Automobile Club of Minneapolis stands ready to assist and co-operate with cities and other clubs through whose limits any proposed route will run; each club and city or village bearing a share of the expense and seeing that the signs are properly placed. The Automobile Club of Minneapolis, bearing the greater portion of the cost, would decide with the local officials the location of each sign, ordering the castings and standards, painting and assembling, and shipping them by freight along the route. One such main route was guide-posted in 1912, from Minneapolis clear across the State of Minnesota to Watertown, South Dakota, 228 miles. Another main route is now being posted from Minneapolis to Morris, Minn., a distance of 158 miles.

It is the opinion, often expressed, of those who have seen these signs upon the highways of Minnesota; that they are far in advance of any guide signs being erected elsewhere. The Automobile Club of Minneapolis has accomplished what it went after, a permanent, indestructible guide sign, signs that are there to stay.” Ψ

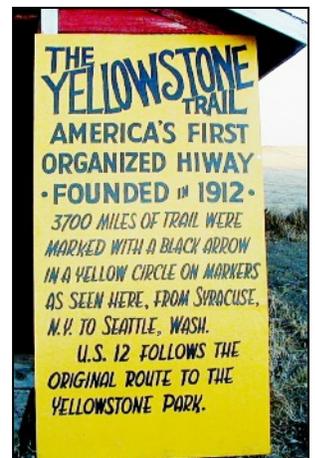


## Trail-O- Grams

By Alice Ridge, Arrow Editor Emerita

\* The good folks in Hettinger, North Dakota, are paying homage to their heritage by creating a park area in front of their historic Adams County Courthouse. Also to be placed in that space is the bullet-shaped hoodoo (left) with “Yellowstone Trail” written on it. That hoodoo was shaped by the winds of nature and stood for almost 100 years on the Trail before being brought in to downtown Hettinger. It will now occupy a space of honor.

\* Mary Rowley of Hettinger (what is it about that place!) rescued an old Yellowstone Trail sign from the dump. As it was quite dilapidated, she bought a 4 x 8 piece of plywood, copied the letters and painted it yellow and black (right). She thought that it should be displayed for the Yellowstone Trail Association’s 100th anniversary in 2012. She found the spot in nearby Bucyrus - a small granary right on the Trail. Since that time, the small building has been sold and the sign needs a new home. Nice work, Mary.



\* How’s this for an idea! You know those “custom” auto license plates you see everywhere? Some have fire department emblems, some wild life, etc. Well, Juanita Ketcham of Indiana is hoping to create a Yellowstone Trail plate which would display the Yellowstone Trail logo and would be available to all! She apparently needs to collect many Indiana signatures to promote the idea in her legislature so it may take a while, but what a great idea! Ψ

## Waupaca's Yellowstone Garage Plan One Year Later

By John (Gunner) Gunnell

It has been about a year since I purchased Hansen's, a circa-1909 brick building that was The Yellowstone Garage in Waupaca, Wisconsin. I have been a collector of vintage Pontiacs since 1972, which was the same year The Pontiac Oakland Club International was formed. The Oakland Motor Car Co. was an early automaker that grew out of the Pontiac Buggy Co. Oakland sold its first car in 1908 and became a part of General Motors Corporation in 1909.

In 1926, Oakland brought out the Pontiac as a smaller, lighter, less expensive "companion car." By 1931, Pontiacs were outselling Oaklands 5-to-1 and the Oakland name was dropped. The name Oakland came from the name of the Michigan county where the cars were built. The city of Pontiac is in Oakland county. Both the city and the car are named for American Indian chief Pontiac.

As a Pontiac collector, I had always wanted to add an Oakland to my fleet of vintage cars. For years, Hansen's had been operated as a car sales and repair business. In 2010, I opened an auto restoration shop called Gunner's Great Garage in Manawa, WI. It was housed in a building that had formerly held a tax and accounting service.



The former Yellowstone Garage in Waupaca, Wisconsin

In the summer of 2015, I was looking for a technician. Bob Hansen, one of the brothers who had owned Hansen's, told me they had closed and that he was looking for a job. I told him I had a job for him. I knew that Bob and his brother Fred were fellow car collectors and I had actually bought a used 2003 Ford Ranger pickup from them. During that purchase, I learned that the old building dated back to 1909 and that it had been leased, in 1917, to a man for the purpose of selling Oldsmobile and Oakland automobiles.

I also learned that the building was called a Yellowstone Garage and that the name had something to do with it being a stopping point for motor tourists traveling the Yellowstone Trail back in the day. I mistakenly thought the building had an historical plaque in front of it, but it did have a Yellowstone Trail Association sticker in the window, I liked buying the truck from such an historic place, but I never thought that someday I would come to own the building.

After Bob Hansen came to work for me, he mentioned that he and Fred were hoping to sell the old garage. Since my other shop was small and I had turned away some business due to its limited room, I made the Hansen brothers an offer on the building. My offer was less than they wanted and nothing happened at that time, but in October of 2015 they decided to take my offer.

It was only after I purchased the building that I started researching the history of the automobile businesses that had operated in Waupaca. J.J. Johnson and Mike Kirk and other members of the Waupaca Historical Society were very helpful in locating newspaper clippings about my building and others. Other than knowing that a man leased the building in 1917 with the intent of selling Oldsmobiles and Oaklands, I came up with very little information on the Oakland link. Hoping to find out more about that link, I got in touch with curator Tim Dye at The Pontiac-Oakland Automobile Museum in Pontiac, Ill. That is not a mistake, because even though the Pontiac Motor Car Division of GM was headquartered in Pontiac, Mich., the museum wound up in Pontiac, Ill.

I was hoping that Tim Dye had a list of Oakland dealers who were in operation in 1917 or 1918. He had no such information, but he did tell me an interesting fact; he said the Yellowstone Trail had been blazed by a 1913 Oakland. Dye also put me onto the fascinating little book: **We Blazed The Trail: Motoring to Yellowstone in Mike Dowling's Oakland** by Dorothy Dowling Prichard.

Learning that an Oakland had been one of the first two cars to travel the trail sent a spooky feeling up my back. It was as if some strange force had led an Oakland enthusiast to purchase The Yellowstone Garage in Waupaca. What happened next fit right into the whole feeling that unknown forces were working behind the scenes to fit some pieces of this puzzle together.

*(Continued)*

In early November of 2015, my son and I decided to go to an automotive trade show in Las Vegas. We decided to make it more of an adventure by driving and when we were on the way home, I told Jesse to check his Smart Phone to see if there were any cheap Oaklands for sale. I had spent most of my money to buy the building, but I still had a little left. I figured that any Oakland for sale in my price range would have to be a project car needing lots of costly restoration.



1917 Model 34 Oakland Touring car in showroom

The first day he tried to find a car, we came across a man named Wayne Koefel from Pennsylvania who restores only Oakland automobiles. Wayne had a few cars he was trying to sell for people, but they were all out of my price range. He said that most Oaklands were not really all that valuable, but that owners thought they were since there weren't many of them around. In our case, Wayne was wrong.

The next day Jesse found me an Oakland touring car in the Moline, Ill., area. The asking price was in the neighborhood I could afford and the car was close enough to go take a look at it.

Two weeks later, I was going to a show in Chicago and after it ended, I rode west to check out the car. It was better than expected and I was able to negotiate

the price down a little bit. I bought the car and picked it up with a trailer a few weeks later. When we got to Waupaca, we had surprisingly little difficulty pushing the car off the trailer and rolling it into the old showroom in our Yellowstone Garage. Since that day, we have not done a lot of work to the car or yet got it operable.

One reason we want to get the car going has to do with a plan we have to celebrate the Oakland's 100th birthday next year. Our hope is to get the car running reliably enough to drive the Wisconsin section of The Yellowstone Trail, an approximately 409-mile trip from Kenosha to Hudson, passing through 18 counties.

In the meantime, we have slowly started redecorating the showroom at Hansen's. The entire room had previously been painted light green. To keep costs as low as possible, we actually painted the brick sections of the wall brick red and then used off white paint to highlight the mortar. The rest of the room is now a tan color with dark brown framing. Old Oakland advertisements from 1912 thru 1931 were purchased on eBay and are being mounted in frames found at the Goodwill store. It's all a budget-conscious operation, but it sure is fun. Ψ

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Enter Amounts:	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%;">Dues for 1 year (June -May) –</td> <td style="width: 40%; text-align: right;">\$</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gifts are tax deductible.</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dues for 2nd year –</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><small>Same rate. Optional.</small></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Additional contribution –</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><small>We are a nonprofit 501c3 corporation.</small></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total =</b></td> <td style="text-align: right;"><b>\$</b></td> </tr> </table>	Dues for 1 year (June -May) –	\$	Gifts are tax deductible.		Dues for 2nd year –	\$	<small>Same rate. Optional.</small>		Additional contribution –	\$	<small>We are a nonprofit 501c3 corporation.</small>		<b>Total =</b>	<b>\$</b>
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