

Iowa Lincoln Highway Association

Summer 2023 Newsletter | Volume 28, No. 2

President's Corner

by Mary Helen Preston

It's mid-June and it appears Summer will be busy! The Jefferson Highway Association just wrapped up their long overdue conference in Mason City. Kuddos to Sandii and Mike for hosting, by all accounts, a hugely successful conference. The Lincoln Highway Association conference is currently taking place in Folsom, California and without a doubt will be a great one. There are a TON of community events taking place over the next few months. Ragbrai is having its 50th ride the week of July 22 - 29. We have towns who will be hosting riders overnight, serving pass throughs and meeting towns. If the talk is true, this will be the largest in years. Darcy Maulsby, author of *The Lincoln Highway in Iowa* is traveling with a bus tour in August; stopping at a number of locations featured in her book. Youngville Café is open Tuesdays from 11:00a - 1:30pm, so why not take a day trip and stop in for lunch. There are great opportunities to visit favorite places or explore new. And while your out exploring, why not visit with others promoting the Lincoln Highway.

Just a reminder, if you received information from Prairie Rivers requesting completion of their historic property survey, please take time to complete so they can build a database on the condition of all National Register of Historic Places located within five miles of the Lincoln Highway National Heritage Byway. This will help assess the needs and provide resources where necessary for our historic places.

It's been awhile since I've been on my soapbox so please indulge me. It is imperative WE preserve and protect the historical significance of the Lincoln Highway. Preservation is not just focused on the route(s) itself but individuals, towns, and places - which played an integral part of its history. The Lincoln Highway was critical in building the groundwork for automotive travel - and my how travel has changed and continues to change. **WE cannot let the lore of automotive travel disappear. WE are the knowledge keepers and must be committed to educating and promoting the Lincoln Highway.**

Let's work together to get travelers off the interstates and back on the two lanes.

To those reading this newsletter - It will take ALL of us to plan, execute and sustain the Iowa Lincoln Highway Association and the historical significance of the Lincoln Highway.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the Lincoln Highway - the Past, the Present and the Future.

RV Trip Along The Lincoln Highway



As enthusiasts, we know how important it is to get off the four lanes and travel the two lanes to experience the Lincoln Highway.

As an Association, we have done a great job of providing travelers with tools, an interactive map and map packs, to travel the Lincoln Highway. Providing guides is not a new concept as the first guide was published in 1915.

Paul Gilger, California, recently shared a post on Facebook, *The Lincoln Highway: Plan An RV Trip on This Historic Path* from campersmarts.com (originally published July 20, 2021). Paul states in his post - this is a wonderful article and it is a wonderful extensive article. Be sure to check it out. I learned a few facts.

Brian Newman, author shares fun facts, details, back stories about the history and provides a list of books written about the Lincoln Highway. Be sure to watch the *The Lincoln Highway's Ideal Section* on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/hyYF0VbsSQQ>).

Brian comments in the section, "How Long Does it take to drive the entire Lincoln Highway?" it could take a traveler 4 - 5 days if you don't stop OR if you stop at all of the best attractions it could take weeks!

Hopefully this article will peak interest not just with RV travelers but ALL to travel the Lincoln Highway.

Travel Iowa Passport Program

Travel Iowa introduced the Iowa Passport program several years ago with Iowa State Park and Iowa Scenic Byway Passports. This program has now expanded and includes: Wine, Distillery and Beer Passports. This is a great program for travelers to experience ALL that Iowa offers. The Iowa Scenic Byway Passport encourages travelers to experience small town Iowa, while experiencing our rolling hills, farmlands, visit our historic sites, and support local unique restaurants and businesses. These passports are great tools for travelers. The programs are "mobile-exclusive" for ease of check-in when visiting a location participating in the program. The beauty part of the programs it's FREE. If you are an attraction or local business participating, please make certain you have your QR code posted for those experiencing Iowa through Travel Iowa's Passport Program. If you're experiencing Iowa, be sure to sign up for one or ALL of the passports - if EASY.

Visit <https://www.traveliowa.com/passport> to

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Mission Statement

The Lincoln Highway Association shall identify, preserve, interpret and improve access to the Lincoln Highway and its associated sites, pursue the appropriate measures to prevent further deterioration, destruction or alteration of the remaining sections, publicize and seek public awareness of its goals and activities for preserving and developing the LH, facilitate research about the LH, and publish a magazine for articles and news of activity relevant to the LH, work with local communities and businesses to promote the LH as a tourism destination, and be exclusively charitable and educational within the meaning of the Internal Revenue Code.

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Stay in the Know!

Visit our website to read the minutes from our last meeting.
www.iowalincolnhighway.com/latest-news



@IowaLincolnHighwayAssociation
 @LincolnHighwayHeritageByway

Route Signage Task Force

During our April Association meeting, a task force was charged with gathering, reviewing and documenting recommendations then reporting back to the Association the accuracy of current route signage and possible realignments. **The task force task is NOT to unravel/rewrite/reroute history but to investigate.**

IDOT used the information provided by the Lincoln Highway Association when approving the route to become a state byway in 2006. The route signed by IDOT was the most accurate and safest. What a lay person and what IDOT considers "safe" may not be in agreement. Detailed mapping has been done for the map pack, on-line LHA interactive map, for the approved state route, and for the map submitted to make the byway a national scenic byway. The mapping has not been done haphazardly. **We MUST maintain the integrity and historical significance of the route, as the last thing we need to do is adversely affect any of our designations.**

There are without a doubt, changes which should to be discussed with IDOT such as the Lisbon/Mt Vernon road change, the Chelsea turnoff change, and the closure of Wapsie bridges. There needs to be an investigation regarding the section just east of Ralston for correction as it does not take the traveler around the Gregory Markers on a curved gravel on the south side of Highway 30, but instead takes the traveler north of Highway 30 on a gravel running parallel to Highway 30 before joining the paved highway. This area is very confusing with angled roads and curved roads intersecting.

We need to take into consideration the recent inventory of signage across the state. The map pack produced and the on-line interactive map do an excellent job of showing the different alignments over times. As we all know, no one wants to drive all of the options.

As stated on the Lincoln Highway National Heritage Byway website... *Based on the historical routes, the byway features many loops - paved and unpaved - giving you a feeling for the history of the road and what it was like to travel in the original days of the automobile.*

We as an Association need to make absolutely certain we retain the historical significance established.



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Meet Jeanie Hau New Lincoln Highway National Heritage Byway Coordinator



Jeanie comes to Prairie Rivers of Iowa with a background in landscape architecture, environmental studies, and design. She is an Iowa State University graduate but also cheers for the Hawks, Panthers, and the Bulldogs.

She says the best adventure she has ever taken was with the National Park Service NE Region as a landscape architecture historian.

Jeanie likes to read, flower garden, and thrift shop instead of cleaning her house. Her husband, Matt (of 32 years), daughters, Arabella (21), Audrey (19), and son, Joshua (16) are not as happy with her cleaning habits.

Jeanie brings positive energy and is excited to begin her newest journey on the Lincoln Highway National Heritage Byway as Iowa Coordinator.



Mark your calendars for what is shaping up to be a remarkable event in Elkhart June 24-28, 2024. Check out <https://www.visitelkhartcounty.com/lincoln-highway-association-conference> to see events and sites as well as up-to-date planned activities for the Conference. Hope you can come for some or all! - Jeff Blair, President

Annual Dues

Iowa Lincoln Highway Association dues are **\$15.00** annually. You may pay up to three years. Make checks payable to Iowa Lincoln Highway Association. Please send membership info and payment to:

**ILHA
P.O. Box 224
Grand Junction, IA 50107**

If you have any questions, please write to the above address or contact:

Membership Coordinator - Dean Parr
(319)366-0552 or drparr51@gmail.com

Carroll County Historical Society to Host Charlie Maguire Concert

Barbara Hackfort, Carroll County



Photo of Robert Capa. Photo credit: Britannica

The Carroll County Historical Society will host a concert by singer/songwriter Charlie Maguire on September 10, 2023, at 2:00 P.M. at the United Methodist Church in Carroll. Mr. Maguire will feature the Carroll County premiere of his song "Robert Capa Goes to Iowa" during his performance. This song tells the story of how the world-renowned photojournalist, Robert Capa, would find himself traveling the Lincoln Highway a mile east of Glidden in 1947 to discover the perfect family and farm for the Ladies Home Journal series entitled "People are the Same around the World." This was the same year that Capa would be awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Truman for his photographs of WWII. The Historical Society is proud to be a part of restoring this story to its proper place in county history, and to help people recognize the role played by the Lincoln Highway to make it happen.

Jefferson Highway Association Sociability Tour Stops in Nevada

Janice Gammon, Story County

The Jefferson Highway Association Sociability Tour came through Nevada, Iowa June 6 and were met by Thomas Jefferson, Abe Lincoln, Iowa Lincoln Highway President Mary Helen Preston, and Nevadians. The Lincoln and Jefferson Highways conjoin by the park at city hall then traveled east to Colo, Iowa where they part ways. The Jefferson Highway folks were heading to Mason City for their annual national conference.



Pictured above: Thomas Jefferson; Roger Bell, President Jefferson Highway Association; Mary Helen Preston, Iowa Lincoln Highway President and Abraham Lincoln



Photo credits: City of Nevada

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As you travel along the Lincoln Highway be sure to stop in Grand Junction to visit the Museum, Lincoln Highway Garden and the Green Gable Cabin.

201 East Main Street
Grand Junction, IA

(515)386-4521



Tama Bridge Update

Charles Betz, Facebook April 25, 2023 Post

From today's (April 25) council meeting.

The engineers did not have any good news. The Lincoln Highway bridge is likely beyond repair. They removed 6 inches of blacktop off the bridge decking to get to the concrete bridge span. It was then they started finding trouble. The decking itself is 18 inch thick concrete and in a couple of the test sections they've dug down 12 inches and not found any good concrete. When you are 2/3rds of the way through from the top and know the bottom has deterioration as well at some point you have to accept that there is not going to be anything left of the 108-year old bridge to repair if you keep digging.

The engineers did present 3 options:

1. Continue removing bad concrete in hopes to hit enough good concrete to salvage the bridge deck.
2. Evaluate whether the old concrete deck can be replaced with a new concrete deck.
3. Replace the bridge with culverts.

Option 1 - I don't believe got any serious consideration from the Council given the engineers had stated this could potentially lead to collapse of the bridge.

Option 3 - I think is the preferred engineering option. This of course mean the railings which make up the bridge would be removed and it would lose its place on the National Register. There are some other technical challenges here too in that the proposed culverts would require expanding the width from 24ft to 30ft. The property along side the bridge is privately owned so would have to be acquired by the City to move forward with this option.

Option 2 - Seemed to be the proposal with the most support. But it too needed some additional exploration before they would know if they could move forward with this option. The Council voted to have core samples taken from the 108-year old concrete abutments the concrete decking sit on. If the abutments are in the same shape as the decking there just wouldn't be anything that could be done to save the bridge. If they are good then the next obstacle becomes exactly how much could be done to the bridge so it could be preserved and maintain its place on the National Register of Historic Places. It was noted the 108-year old concrete railings spelling out LINCOLN HIGHWAY do not meet modern safety standards for guard rails. The street leading to the bridge is wider than the bridge itself so prone to being grazed by vehicles. It's unclear at this point if the bridge could be widened and still stay on the National Register. In that this was an engineering discussion the representatives from the state historical society were not allowed to present any information for discussion on that topic. And honestly without all the details they may not have been ready to present anything.

Then comes the question of money. No one would venture a guess what this could potentially cost. I don't think any of the proposed options would be less than the original bid. There was a small portion of the funding for the current project that came from donations and a grant specifically meant to preserve the bridge for its historical value. The City might not be able to use this grant money if the structure no longer has historical value.

And though not presented at the meeting there was some private discussions on the safety aspect of having a tourist attraction in the middle of what is a truck route. Frequently there are people standing or parking in the road to get that shot of the bridge. This is probably the strongest argument for moving the bridge off the street to the nearby park. This too costs money that would likely not come out of the current project budget or any street maintenance budget but something that would need to be added to the park maintenance budget. A non-existent budget item at this point.

No easy solutions for a small town in Iowa. I have a feeling I may have driven across the historic Tama Lincoln Highway bridge for the last time.

Note: Since Charles' April 25 post there have not been bridge updates during Tama City Council Meetings.
Next Meeting scheduled for Monday, June 19.



Step Into the Sankot Garage for Treasured Bits of Lincoln Highway History

Shellie Orngard, Prairie Rivers of Iowa Special Projects Manager

To get to Sankot Motor Company, or Sankot Garage as it's known in Belle Plaine, find the Lincoln Café where the Lincoln Highway National Heritage Byway crosses 8th Avenue in the middle of town. Treat yourself to the lunch special - it was fried fish the Friday when I was there - then walk east on the Byway barely half a block. The big red Case sign, the neon long gone, reaches out from the old red brick building to show you where you're going. As you get closer, you'll notice the large plate glass windows and the plaque that reads, *Sankot Motor Company has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of the Interior. Registered 1995.*

To step into Sankot Garage in Belle Plaine today is to step into the bits and fragments of small-town Lincoln Highway history. A massive safe rests alongside a beaten-up wooden table with worn, ornate hardware; racks of aging car parts line the walls up two stories. On one side of the building, a skylight allows the sun's rays to illuminate bins of car parts, hoists hanging from beams, and a partial tractor body waiting for repair.

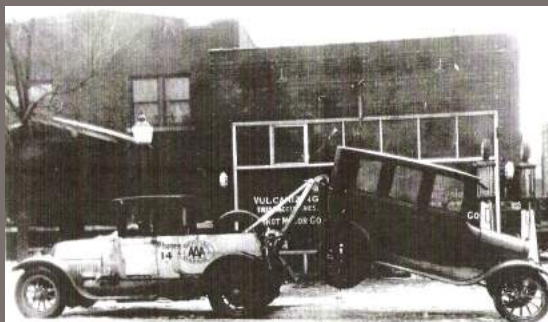
Dust and the faint scent of oil hang in the air. Over a century old, Sankot Garage is a place where the parts and pieces of the decade intermingle.

Owner Bill Sankot greets me. Dressed from neck to ankles in overalls, he's taking a break from his current Case tractor restoration project. Bill is great-nephew of O.B., Charles, and Sid, brothers who owned the company back in the 1920s, those heady years when the country's major coast-to-coast highway ran through Belle Plaine. This was the era before interstates facilitated travel bypassing towns and their amenities. Before the interstate rest stop, roads were designed to angle through towns, where travelers could stop for gas or get a bite to eat at a local café.

If it was late in the day, they might decide to stay the night at a local campground, spend a dollar for a motel room, or splurge for a room at the Herring Hotel. The Lincoln Highway eventually brought enough travelers to keep 19 gas stations in business, according to Mitch Malcolm from the Belle Plaine Area Museum, "and they all were a going concern."

Sankot sold Chrysler cars and auto parts, and did repairs in the 1920s and 30s. In those days before paved roads, Iowa had the dubious distinction of having both dirt roads that turned into "gumbo," sucking in automobiles in inclement weather, and the resistance to modern paving methods.

Every town needed a good towing service. Sankot Garage was open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and offered all-night towing and wrecker service. A poster on the wall displays photos from Sankot history. It shows a tow truck hauling a Model T Ford and some of the famous people who stopped by on their travels west from Chicago, including heavyweight boxer Kingfish Levinsky, crouching in a boxing stance for the camera.



Sankot Garage self-made wrecker made from a 1929 Cadillac chassis.

implements. Once Interstate 80 sapped clientele, things got quieter, but there is still enough business to keep Bill busy.

What's next for Sankot Garage? None of Bill's children are inclined to take over the business, but as long as Bill's there, he's minding the store ... and the history.



A Lincoln Highway Gem - The Historic Lincoln Hotel

Prairie Rivers of Iowa Staff



One of the gems of the Lincoln Highway in Iowa is the historic Lincoln Hotel in Lowden in Cedar County. Following a complete restoration, the hotel was listed on the National Register of Historic Places 1996 by Susan Licht for the owners at the time Brad and Elizabeth Norton. They started restoration work in 1992 with a historic resource grant from the government. At that time, the town saw little value in the building and considered burning it to the ground. It had sat empty since 1981.

The inside, however, has changed numerous times and was qualified for Housing and Urban Development (HUD) housing with HUD-style light fixtures. It was then fully occupied by tenants. Importantly, the dog legged yellow pine staircase has been preserved.

Built in anticipation of the Lincoln Highway's construction, America's first transcontinental highway, the property is associated with events that made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. The original construction of the hotel started in March 1915 by Cecelia Clemmens and her husband to coincide with the construction of the Lincoln Highway and was one of the first businesses in Lowden established to serve the automobile.

With the construction of the new highway, came a demand for food and lodging from automobile travelers. The hotel provided an alternative to railroad hotels, campgrounds, and motor courts. At its beginning, a stay at the Lincoln Hotel cost \$2 a night and a steak dinner was only 75 cents.

No longer \$2 a night, the hotel still offers very affordable rates for each of its four suites featuring private baths, queen size beds, and luxury linens. And as their website notes, "guests can enjoy a quiet small-town setting surrounded by beautiful farms and scenic byways." Most notably, the Lincoln Highway National Heritage Byway. It's a great place to experience history while getting away from the craziness of everyday life. Don't worry though, they do have Wi-Fi if you need a "reality check" during your stay.

Another factor of the hotel's significance is the modern Prairie School architectural style, one of the only examples in Lowden. Elements which make up this style are the low-hipped roof, wide overhangs, and textured stucco with a neutral color. The building faces south with a wide front porch to cover guests from the elements.

In the 1990s, owners took the exterior down past the old stucco and rebuilt using a similar building method of pebble dash stucco. Everything on the outside is preserved close to its original state. The windows, the Tuscan-style columns on the porch, and galvanized pipe railings are all original.

More work was done in 2019 to incorporate modern amenities. "It has been fun and wonderful to restore," according to Owner-Proprietor Melissa Schliff-Hardman, "We are very proud to operate the hotel."

Today local events drive visitors according to Schliff-Hardman. "We see people come for birthdays, family reunions, and the occasional wedding," she reveals. Bicyclists feel at home too including a place for bike storage inside. Lincoln Highway enthusiasts and car clubs stay from time to time and appreciate the history. "Some visitors are train enthusiasts too and stay for the soothing night train sounds," adds Melissa.

A Preservation Iowa "Preservation at Its Best" award winner, the Lincoln Hotel is a fine example of what can be done to preserve Lincoln Highway in Iowa cultural and historic places. Visit them on the web at www.lincolnhoteliowa.com to learn more and make your reservation. You will enjoy your stay!



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**The next ILHA meeting will be
July 8, 2023 beginning at 9:30 am
at Belle Plaine Area Museum in Belle Plaine, Iowa**

The Museum is located at 901 Main Street in Belle Plaine, Iowa. The meeting will begin at 9:30 am with lunch following at the Lincoln Cafe. Please let Mary Helen Preston know if you'll be attending lunch so we can make appropriate arrangements with the Lincoln Cafe.

Upcoming Iowa LHA Meeting
October 14, 2023
Location: TBD

FIRST CLASS

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