

**THE NATIONAL OLD TRAILS ROAD**  
**PART 4: From Named Trails to U.S. Numbered Highways**

By  
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On November 9, 1921, President Warren G. Harding signed the Federal Highway Act of 1921, a landmark law that would set the framework for the Federal-aid highway program for decades to come. In passing the bill, Congress dashed the hopes of many good roads boosters, including Judge J. M. Lowe, president of the National Old Trails Road Association. Long before passage of the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916 that created the program, Judge Lowe had fought for the Federal Government to build and maintain a system of long-distance interstate roads, including the National Old Trails Road.

As discussed in part 3, many officials of the named trail associations, some State highway departments, and related organizations urged Congress to create a Federal Highway Commission to build a national highway system to supplement State highway systems and intercounty connectors. By the time Congress finally took up the issue in 1921, however, a revitalized post-war Federal-aid highway program and a new, more cooperative chief of the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) resulted in growing support for renewal and strengthening of the existing program initiated in 1916, but interrupted by World War I. The Federal-aid concept, ultimately, prevailed.

While Congress considered the legislation, the country was in a post-war economic downturn that held back the road building that was needed to restore the highway network from the damage it sustained during the war. Conditions, however, were improving. With implementation of the 1921 Act, BPR Chief Thomas H. MacDonald could begin his annual report for Fiscal Year (FY) 1922 with the good news:

Without overstatement it may be said that greater progress has been made in providing the means of highway transportation during the fiscal year 1922 than in any similar period in the history of the country. Industrial and financial conditions were better, as a whole, than they have been at any time since before the war, and as a consequence remarkable progress has been made in highway construction under the States and counties as well as under the joint control of the Government and States.

Ten thousand miles have been added to the Federal-aid roads alone, and doubtless more than an equal mileage has been constructed without Federal assistance. And there is now apparent a real public appreciation developed in large measure by the forceful words of the President in his message to Congress.

More significant, however, than the progress in the physical work of road construction, or any other accomplishments of the year, are two developments the results of which are not immediately apparent, and which can not be measured in miles or dollars and cents, but which promise results for the future unequaled by any developments of the quarter century of highway activity.

First of these is the passage of the Federal highway act with its plan for a connected system of roads for the whole Nation; the second is the extraordinary activity in economic and physical research in connection with the financing, location, management, and design of the highways. For more than two decades there has been in progress a slow but certain development of highway construction from a casual activity in the hands of unskilled local officials without plan or progress, other than to maintain an established minimum of facility in highway transportation, toward a reasoned industry in the hands of State and national officials, supplemented by intelligent local aid, the aim of which is to provide complete and economical highway transport service throughout the Nation.

### **Designating the Primary System**

The Federal Highway Act provided for a system of public highways not exceeding 7 percent of the total highway mileage in each State. The 7-percent system was divided into primary or interstate roads and secondary or intercounty roads. The 1921 Act required that the primary or interstate highways may not exceed three-sevenths of the 7-percent system, but the State highway departments could use up to 60 percent of Federal-aid funds on these roads. The remaining funds were reserved for the secondary highways connecting or correlating with the primary routes. In addition, the system in adjoining States was to be correlated. As Chief MacDonald put it:

The selection of 7 per cent of the roads of the Nation for future systematic improvement is unquestionably the largest and most important task ever assigned to the bureau.

Even before President Harding signed the legislation, Chief MacDonald asked each State highway department to certify its total public road mileage. They certified a national total of 2,859,575 miles, which meant that the Federal-aid system – the combined primary and secondary systems – would be up to 200,170 miles long.

As soon as the bill was signed, BPR asked the State highway departments to submit maps showing their tentative Federal-aid systems for initial examination.:

At the end of the fiscal year [June 30, 1922] tentative maps showing the systems proposed by the several States had been received from all States except Alabama, Indiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

While that task was underway, MacDonald asked one of his engineers, Edwin W. James, to devise an equitable way to test the State systems. James assembled a task force of BPR officials who used data from the Census Bureau and other sources to calculate county-by-county indices based on population, mineral products, forest products, and manufactured products. This data allowed them to calculate a composite index for each county. The Federal Highway

Administration's Bicentennial history explained:

By October 1922, tentative system maps had been received from all but nine States. Most of the routes in these systems followed existing roads, and they agreed remarkably well with the BPR task force's studies. Surprisingly, the largest deviations from what appeared to be the best interstate routes occurred in States such as New York and Massachusetts where a large percentage of the principal roads was already improved. In these States there was "a natural disposition to designate other roads of less importance as the Federal-aid highway system for the State." These and other differences were smoothed out in conferences between the BPR and the individual States and by regional conferences between the States to coordinate across State boundaries. [*America's Highways 1776-1976: A History of the Federal-Aid Program*, Federal Highway Administration, 1976 pages 108-109]

The first such conference, MacDonal explained in his annual report, was held in Troy, New York, "at which the tentative systems were correlated for all of New England, New York, and New Jersey." [*Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture for the Year Ended June 30, 1922*, pages 461-463]

### **Automobile Blue Book, 1921**

For motorists in the 1910s and early 1920s, the *Automobile Blue Book* was essential for traveling the unmarked primitive roads of the period. As the title page of the 1921 and other editions put it:

The Blue Books cover the entire United States and Southern Canada in twelve volumes. They tell you where to go and how to get there, giving complete maps of every motor road, running directions at every fork and turn, with mileages, all points of local or historical interest, state motor laws, hotel and garage accommodations, ferry and steamship schedules and rate. A veritable motorist's encyclopedia.

Instead of the road maps that would soon become the standard for road atlases, the *Automobile Blue Book* relied on descriptions that a motorist, or more likely a passenger, could read to stay on the intended road. Directions might involve turns at a stated building, a painted barn, a notable tree, a trolley, or a railroad crossing.

By the early 1920s, the publisher employed official pathfinders in Blue Book cars to update the listings. As John T. Bauer noted in an article about the guides:

Today, the method of navigating by detailed mileages and turn-by-turn directions may appear cumbersome and unnecessary to some drivers, especially those who excel at map reading, but those techniques were ideally suited for the conditions of automobile travel during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Roads at the time were constructed with only local uses in mind and often lacked descriptive signage. Prior to the automobile, roads that stretched across the country, or even a state, in an unbroken fashion were unnecessary. Traveling that far was reserved for railroads. Therefore, anyone wishing to travel cross-country by automobile was forced to make hundreds of turns onto hundreds of different roads. Such details could not have been depicted at an

appropriate scale on a sheet map because of the generalization that would have been required. Publishers and automobile enthusiasts turned to route guides such as the *Official Automobile Blue Book* and their turn-by-turn directions as a more effective solution. [Bauer, John T., "The Official Automobile Blue Book, 1901-1929: Precursor to the American Road Map," *Cartographic Perspectives*, Winter 2009, pages 4-27]

In talking and writing about the National Old Trails Road, Judge Lowe gave the roadway as positive a description as he could. Segments were hard surfaced in many States, funds were available for hard surfacing, or the pavement was good except for a stretch here or there. The 1921 edition of the *Automobile Blue Book*, Volume T ("Main Trunkline Highways of the United States") covered the National Old Trails Road/Santa Fe Trail broken into segments, each assigned a route number, found throughout the book. In addition to helpful directional guides, each entry commented on the road itself as observed by those without a vested interest in the success of the named trail.

The following compiles data on the National Old Trails Road, from east to west:

Route 198 – Baltimore to Washington – 39.7 miles

Via Elkridge, Laurel, Hyattsville, and Bladensburg.  
Macadam and concrete all way. Summary: 6 miles concrete; 34 miles macadam.

Route 180 -Washington, D.C., to Hagerstown, Md. – 76.7 miles

Via Rockville, Gaithersburg, Ridgeway, Frederick, Braddock Heights, and Boonsboro.  
Macadam and concrete roads.

Route 51 – Cumberland to Hagerstown, Md – 64.7 miles

Via Hancock.  
Macadam with some short stretches of brick and concrete.

Route 350 – Cumberland, Md. to Uniontown, Pa. – 63.5 miles

Via Frostburg, Grantsville, Keyzers Ridge, Somerfield and Hopwood.  
Macadam with some short stretches of brick and concrete.

Route 349 – Uniontown, Pa. to Wheeling, W. Va. – 68.2 miles

Via Brownsville, Washington, West Alexander, and Elm Grove.  
Macadam practically all the way.

Route 348 – Wheeling, W. Va. to Zanesville, Oh. – 74.9 miles

Via Cambridge.  
Practically all brick.

Route 347 – Zanesville to Columbus, Oh. – 54.3 miles

Via Brownsville, Jacksontown, Hebron and Reynoldsburg.  
Macadam, concrete, and brick.

Route 346 – Columbus to Dayton, Oh. – 67.8 miles

Via Springfield.  
Macadam and asphalt roads.

Route 345 – Dayton, Oh. to Indianapolis, Ind. – 209.2 miles

Via Eaton and Richmond.  
Hard surfaced roads the entire distance, with several badly worn stretches.  
Summary: 8 miles brick, 15 miles macadam, 49 miles stone, 26 miles concrete,  
5 miles gravel.

Route 535 – Indianapolis to Terre Haute, Inc. – 538 miles

Via National Road.  
Gravel and stone all the way.

Route 536 – Terre Haute, Ind. to St. Louis, Mo. – 176.3 miles

Via Effingham and Vandalia  
Approximately three-quarters of this route is hard surfaced; the balance will no doubt be  
closed in places for construction during the year.

Route 537 – St. Louis to Columbia, Mo. – 139.4 miles

Via St. Charles, Wentzville and Fulton.  
Macadam to St. Charles, graded dirt and some gravel to Wentzville, balance stretches  
of dirt, gravel and macadam.

Route 538 – Columbia to Kansas City, Mo. – 152.8 miles

Via Boonville, Marshall, Waverly, Lexington and Independence.  
Gravel to Rocheport, next 110 miles graded dirt, with stretches of gravel and macadam  
between Dover and Wellington; balance macadam and pavement. Summary: 102 miles  
dirt; 50 miles macadam, gravel, and pavement.

Volume T did not cover the Old Santa Fe Trail routing of the National Old Trails Road in  
Kansas, but did cover the rival New Santa Fe Trail, which departed from the National Old Trails  
Road between Olathe and Syracuse:

Route 600 – Kansas City, Mo. to Emporia, Kan. – 130.6 miles – New Santa Fe Trail

Via Olathe, Edgerton, Ottawa, and Waverly.

Pavement to Waldo; next 8 miles macadam; balance graded dirt. During dry weather, good average time can be made on this trip, especially where surface of dirt road has been dragged and oiled.

Route 601 – Emporia to Hutchinson, Kan. – 122.4 miles – New Santa Fe Trail

Via Cottonwood Falls, Florence and Newton

Graded dirt road all the way.

Route 602 – Hutchinson to Dodge City, Kan. – 154.5 miles – New Santa Fe Trail

Via Lyons, Ellenwood, Great Bend, Larned, Kinsley and Spearville.

Dirt roads all the way.

Route 603 – Dodge City to Syracuse, Kan. – 107.3 miles – New Santa Fe Trail

Via Garden City.

Dirt roads the entire distance.

Route 811 – Syracuse, Kan., to La Junta, Colo. – 114.9 miles

Via Lamar and Las Animas.

Practically all dirt roads, with a few stretches of sand.

Route 810 – La Junta to Pueblo, Colo. – 66.0 miles

Via Rocky Ford.

Practically all gravel.

Route 789 – Pueblo to Trinidad, Colo. – 89.3 miles

Via Walsenburg and Aguilar.

Graded gravel highway excepting some stretches of dirt between Walsenburg and Aguilar.

Route 611 – Trinidad, Colo., to Las Vegas, N.M. – 138.4 miles

Via Raton, Maxwell, Springer, and Wagon Mound.

Gravel highway to 15 miles beyond Raton. Natural dirt and prairie roads extend to Wagon Mound. The surface is generally fair, but in wet weather traveling will

be poor near Maxwell and Springer. From Wagon Mound to Watrous the road is hardly more than a trail and some very poor rocky stretches make only the slowest of progress possible. A dirt road which is very fast in dry weather connects Watrous and Las Vegas.

Route 612 – Las Vegas to Santa Fe, N.M. – 72.6 miles

Via Tienda, Rowe and Pecos.

The average condition on the first 60 miles of this trip is only fair; balance gravel highway. Constant improvements are carried on towards the establishment of a permanent highway between the two terminals.

Route 613 – Santa Fe to Albuquerque, N.M. – 64.6 miles

Via Domingo and Alameda.

With the exception of about 8 miles of sand along the foot-hills, skirting the Rio Grande, road conditions on this trip are good. There are long stretches of graded dirt and natural prairie road where excellent traveling will be encountered. Steep grades and sharp turns on La Bajada hill require slow and careful driving. The length of this grade is one and one-half miles.

Route 614 – Albuquerque to Magdalena, N.M. – 109.8 miles

Via Isleta, Los Lunas, Belen and Socorro.

Graded gravel and dirt road to Belen; natural prairie roads then predominate to Socorro, with a few bad stretches of sand and some rough crossings on dry river beds; gravelly road from Socorro to Magdalena.

Route 615 – Magdalena, N.M., to Springerville, Ariz. – 130.5 miles

Via Datil and Quemado.

Dirt Roads with stretches of natural gravel are traversed to the Arizona line, balance gravel.

The Blue Book did not cover the road from Gallup, New Mexico, to Holbrook, Arizona, following instead the Springerville routing.

Route 616 – Springerville to Winslow, Ariz. – 135.8 miles

Via St. Johns, Petrified Forest National Monument and Holbrook.

There are long stretches of graded highway and a good dirt road between Holbrook and Winslow. With the exception of a few poor stretches thru Petrified Forest and thence to Holbrook, this is a good road and fast time can be maintained during favorable weather conditions. The trip can easily be made in one day with plenty of time for sight seeing in the Petrified Forest.

Route 617 – Winslow to Flagstaff, Ariz. – 64.89 miles

No intervening cities noted.

Gravel and dirt roads, with about 10 miles of rough and rocky surface.

Route 618 – Flagstaff to Grand Canyon, Ariz. – 87.4 miles

Via Grand View Point

First 70 miles prairie road, with some short stretches of rough sand and rock; balance graded dirt. There are no accommodations or supply stations between terminals.

Route 620 – Grand Canyon to Williams, Ariz. – 64.8 miles

First 25 miles natural dirt and sand road; balance graded gravel and dirt. There are no stopping or supply stations en route.

Route 625 – Flagstaff to Kingman, Ariz. – 177.4 miles

Via Williams, Ashfork and Seligman.

Graded gravel and dirt to Seligman, poor road to a point 6 miles east of Peach Springs, good road to Hackberry, followed by graded gravel to Kingman.

Route 626 – Kingman, Ariz., to Needles, Cal. – 71.0 miles

Via Yucca and Topock.

Good graded, gravelly dirt to Yucca, fair to poor road to Topock, good road to Needles. Good time can be made between Kingman and Yucca and again from Topock to Needles, but the intermediate distance slows travel, owing to many cross washes. The route traverses a desert country, crossing the Colorado river on a steel bridge at Topock. Make local inquiry regarding road via Oatman which may be preferable to text here given.

Route 627 – Needles to Barstow, Cal. – 166.2 miles

Via Goffs, Amboy, Ludlow and Daggett.

The road is either of gravelly sand or of an oil surface. Between Amboy and Ludlow the old road is still preferable to the new road which follows the south side of the RR. Both, however, are in very poor condition. Average road conditions on this route are good and very fast time can be made except between Amboy and Ludlow. This route crosses the Mojave desert and owing to the intense heat during the summer months, tourists frequently make this run at night.

Route 628 – Barstow to San Bernardino, Cal. – 81.7 miles

Via Victorville.

Gravel and sand road to summit of Cajon pass, balance macadam

and concrete. After crossing the western edge of the Mojave desert and reaching the summit of Cajon pass, the tourist is suddenly confronted with a magnificent panorama of incomparable grandeur. Descending on easy winding grades over splendid roadway with high mountains towering on all sides, the tourist almost abruptly finds himself within the semi-tropical vegetation of southern California.

Route 629 – San Bernardino to Los Angeles, Cal. – 63.3 miles

Via Foothill Blvd. and Pasadena.  
Paved roads all the way.

### **The D.A.R. Continental Congress – 1922**

In April 1922, the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) met in Washington for its 31st Continental Congress. Mrs. William H. Talbott, of Rockville, Maryland, was allotted only 5 minutes for her report on the work of the National Old Trails Road Committee. She said, “It is impossible that in the five minutes allotted for this report I can give you the results of this work. It will be published and you will receive it later.”

The proceedings contained Mrs. Talbott’s full letter report. She began:

While we do not come with hands laden with work accomplished, your Chairman is glad to report we are getting back to our original object which, of necessity, was laid aside during the war. At that time this committee was encouraged to search out local pioneer trails, and since then much valuable history has been brought to light, and this research is greatly stimulating that degree of patriotism which is building the National Old Trails Road, our Memorial to the Pioneers. Today we are more closely united, more definitely concentrated upon one road than in any previous year.

To “conserve energy and prevent loss of time,” she had asked each State chairman “not to undertake any local work this year, except that which bore directly upon the National Old Trails Road.” The chairmen were asked to “organize a study course whereby the Chapters would search out their own pioneers, and then, in their honor, establish a National Old Trails Road Fund for our road signs”:

When reports show that only the States through which our road runs have expended funds upon this road we know it is entirely due to misunderstanding, and all that we now need is to get together on some plan for raising funds.

In response to many requests regarding “the exact location” of the National Old Trails Road, the committee had prepared a brief history of the road that went out in February, “and immediately there were requests for hundreds of copies.” This experience led to a puzzle:

While preparing this letter it became necessary for me to learn why our road, clearly defined and with a historic record, and which traversed 12 States, had gradually taken in under its name other trails of historic value, but not in any way associated with our

National Old Trails Road, and it was found that originally there was, and still can be, *but one* National Old Trails Road; yet, while searching out pioneer trails our road had added to it lateral trails until it included a system of roads instead of one definite highway.

From this review, she concluded, "There was but one thing to do." With the concurrence of D.A.R.'s president general, Mrs. Talbott had spoken with Representative Frederick N. Zihlman of Maryland to ask him to amend his bill to coincide only with the original National Old Trails Road:

All past and present bills were compared and changes noted as they appeared, and it was definitely determined that with several bills in Congress asking legislation for the National Old Trails Road the only possible hope of favorable action was in having all bills describe definitely one road, so steps were taken to amend our bill. We stand *pledged* to sign this road. When the States were encouraged to search out local pioneer trails they were not authorized to mark them, yet we find our committees working upon the Lincoln Highway, the Lee Highway, the Dixie Highway, the Old Spanish Trail, the Natches [sic] Trace, as well as marking old trails in nearly every State.

On January 25, 1922, Representative Zihlman had introduced H.R. 101165, the Daughters of the American Republic Old Trail Act to "provide a national ocean-to-ocean highway over the pioneer trails of the Nation." It had been referred to the Committee on Roads, from which it would not emerge.

Much valuable work, Mrs. Talbott continued, had been accomplished in many States during the year, "but I am sorry to add that every bit of work, even by our committee, which is not related to our road properly belongs to another committee." She added, "please remember, *we* can only report matters relating to our road."

The committee had established a fund to pay for monuments to the pioneers who "reduced the dense wilderness to broad fields for cultivation . . . until, at last, they laid their lives upon the altar of patriotism":

Where are the monuments to mark their resting place?

We are asked to commemorate their sacrifice; what do we offer in return? What could be more appropriate to commemorate their heroism than for their descendants to contribute towards a fund which will be used to memorialize their sacrifice?

. . . You will recognize the importance of having a fund in the hands of the Treasurer General, which will enable us to make a contract for road signs.

To that end your Chairman has asked each State Chairman to suggest a plan by which we can raise this fund. Every reply but one urged the per capita tax as the only equitable plan, and this is the only plan by which the small Chapters will not be overtaxed.

Your Chairman further asked for a contribution this year, and a definite pledge for next

year. So far, five Chapters in Pennsylvania have given \$25 each; five Chapters in Florida have given \$10 each; Wisconsin has given \$30; Iowa sends \$15; one Illinois chapter has raised \$119; one Alabama Chapter gives 15 cents per member; and other States favor the plan.

To stimulate patriotism in our work, the National Chairman has donated 5,000 little seals, "The Madonna of the Trail," with the request they be used on your letters. Ours is the only National Committee that can use such an emblem, and we must give to our work the distinction which is added by this appealing, and oft-time pathetic picture . . . .

There are many highways, stretching in every direction, but the Daughters of the American Revolution were the pioneers in the desire to build a road as a Memorial, and we must maintain the integrity of our road or we lose our identity.

She reported on State activities around the country, including those the National Old Trails Road passed through.

In Pennsylvania, the road was in "fine condition," and "the old Mile Stones are in good condition and will be preserved."

West Virginia reported that "upon the 16 miles of the National Old Trails Road have been erected four handsome bronze tablets and the funds are in hand for the fifth one, when the bridge of the Baltimore & Ohio Company is completed. The unveiling of each tablet was conducted by special program, with prominent speakers and special music":

The National Old Trails Road is in excellent condition, the whole having been recently rebuilt, and the old Mile Stones which were placed by the Government are in fine condition and are kept just as they were placed over 100 years ago.

The Ohio chapter reported:

The State Highway Department has widened the road (the Old Cumberland Road) to 80 feet, and it is being rapidly paved. Portions have been marked by the Highway Department with a red band on a white background, painted on telegraph poles; there are no permanent road signs erected, so far. Old Mile Stones are being reset and permanently preserved.

The Ohio chapter also was offering prizes to school children for the best essay on the National Road, "and one Chapter has presented a prize of \$25 for the best essay on this subject."

The Maryland chapter was not relaxing its efforts "to get the State Highway Commission to erect our road signs in accordance with the authority given them by our legislature." She added, "Maryland has a beautiful stone road which, with but a slight difference, follows Braddock's Road and the Old National Pike across the State."

After summarizing State activities, Mrs. Talbott added, "Nearly every State has expressed its

interest in our work – the kind of interest that will, in time, bear fruit”:

Many have stated they did not understand their efforts belonged to one road, and they manfully pledged “loyalty to the Society and the National Old Trails Road.”

It is but natural that committees want to *see* results, and this led many into local work, without realizing that *if* it is not related to our road then our energy and our funds are benefiting other committees.

She could report “what belonged to *our* road, but other committees will give the States full credit for what has been done.”

She concluded with an emphasis on the committee’s work:

It was not intended that we should erect even bronze tablets – we were specially organized to erect permanent road signs, which display our insignia and the words “National Old Trails Road” upon bands of red, white, and blue.

This must be our work for next year. If you can do nothing more, get your State to pledge 2 cents per members – just a postage stamp. Two cents per member today would produce over \$2,000. Is not this worth while? Do we realize that a pledge of 10 cents per member, *now*, will enable us to make contract for road signs?

Having presented her 5-minute report, Mrs. Talbott asked to add a word or two about the road signs:

Just as I left my home this morning I received by special delivery the picture I hold in my hand of our road signs, with complete details and specifications. We will present to you later a plan for erecting these road signs, with complete details, the cost of each set in the ground, etc. That we will submit to you for your consideration another year.  
[*Proceedings of the Thirty-First Continental Congress of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, April 1922, pages 101-105*]

In addition to reporting on the committee’s work, Mrs. Talbott prepared an article for *The Washington Post* on the history of the National Old Trails Road, beginning:

The National Old Trails road is composed of five sections, with a space of almost 100 years between the opening of the first and the last.

After summarizing the history of the segments, she concluded:

Thus we have a road from the waters of the Atlantic across the continent to the Pacific, a large portion of which was opened by the Federal government for military purposes, and all of it financed by authority of Congress.

Under the authority of Congress this road was surveyed and taken over a national road from the capital of the nation to St. Louis, Mo. Then taken as a military road under Kearney for the capture of the Southwest. It thus became a “national” road and, being based upon these “old trails,” is properly called the National Old Trails road, and there is none like it either in its national characteristics or historic interest.

The National Old Trails road committee was organized to urge the construction by the government (and by the States through which it passes) of a permanent roadway over these old trails, and to erect thereon the National Old Trails road signs of the Daughters of the American Revolution as a monument to and a memorial of the hardy pioneers who carried civilization from the Atlantic to the Pacific and through whose patriotic action the flag of our country now floats over a united people across the continent. [Talbot, William Hyde, “National Old Trails Road,” *The Washington Post*, April 17, 1922, page 6]

In addition to Mrs. Talbot’s report, the proceedings included a report on Patriotic Lectures and Lantern Slides during the congress, including one on “National Old Trails” that had been “rearranged with the contour of the regular map, showing the various States where the D.A.R. has put up the boulders and bronze markers. As our Society was the first to commence the marking of these old trails, these markers are of special interest.” [*Proceedings*, page 138]

Mrs. Alice Bradford Wiles read her report on the Legislation in the United States Congress “as rapidly as I can, and please no one ask that I read more slowly, because if I do I cannot get through and the last part is the most important.” After going through several issues, she pointed out that some issues were “a matter for State rather than National legislation”:

Since the making of good roads and their suitable marking is under State control, the raising of money for the Old Trails Road and for its proper marking was referred by the board to the legislatures of the twelve States through which the road passes, with the hope that this might be included in the appropriations for good roads in those States. West Virginia has marked the road with four boulders at suitable distances and with bronze tablets upon them telling the story of the road. Illinois has completed this year the road through its boundaries, from Vincennes to East St. Louis, and will ask the road commissioners to place historical markers upon it. Other States have done likewise, but the data are not in my possession, as is the work of our very capable and enthusiastic National Committee on “Old Trails Road.”

(Mrs. Wiles’ “most important” reminder at the end of her report urged all D.A.R. chapters to support the National Society’s legislative goals through gathering information, educating others, and contact with Members of Congress.) [*Proceedings*, page 139, 141]

### **Missouri’s Centennial Road Law of 1921**

Under the Federal Highway Act of 1921, only roads identified within each State’s 7-percent system were eligible for improvement with Federal-aid highway funds. Judge Lowe understood the importance of ensuring that every mile of the National Old Trails Road would be designated

as part of each State's primary or interstate road system. Considering the prominence of the National Old Trails Road, that goal was not as easily attained in Judge Lowe's home State of Missouri as he may have expected.

Voters in Missouri had approved a \$60 million bond issue in November 1920. Despite high expectations, the measure proved unworkable due to a defect in the law that prevented revenue from automobile licenses to be used as intended to back the bonds. In December, John M. Malang, superintendent of the State Highway Department, issued a tentative map along with his plan for using the funds:

The general idea of the plan is to have five main highways to be built of concrete; two east and west through the more thickly settled portions of the State; two north and south, one following generally the bank of the Mississippi River, and the other generally the western border of the state, with a fifth road extending from St. Louis southwesterly to the Kansas line, generally following the Frisco railroad.

Work should, in my opinion, proceed simultaneously on both primary and secondary roads. Primary roads should cost slightly less than \$140,000 a mile, and the secondary approximately \$10,000 a mile. ["Look Out for the 'Peacock Trails,'" *The Farmington Times*, December 24, 1920, page 2]

On December 18, the Commercial Club of Columbia appointed a committee to fight the Malang plan because it did not designate the entire Missouri portion of the National Old Trails Road as a primary road. The primary route proposed between Kansas City and St. Louis would include the Old Trails road only as far west as Fulton, where it departed for a southern route that would run through the State capital, Jefferson City.

E. W. Stephens, president of the Missouri Old Trails Road Association, headed the committee that would attend a meeting of the executive and legislative committee of the Missouri Good Roads Federation in St. Louis to explain the protest. He said he had communicated with the commercial clubs of Boonville, Arrow Rock, Marshall, Lexington, and Fulton. They were, he said, "all aroused and enthusiastic about the Old Trails route as a primary road across the state." The towns intended to send representatives to the St. Louis meeting.

Judge Lowe was among those protesting vigorously against any action to make part of the National Old Trails Road a secondary road. He wrote on December 20 to Malang to protest the announced plan. Judge Lowe cited the unfairness of Malang's proposed system and intimated that the trails association would go over the head of the board and carry the matter to the legislature. In addition to many other reasons, Judge Lowe called attention to the fact that the National Old Trails Road in Missouri had already been selected as the official cross-State route and that this action, taken years ago, must stand.

Malang replied in part:

I have your favor of December 20 subject, tentative map and plan for building state system of roads, at hand. We are in the midst of moving our office and as I am trying to

get away for the holidays, I beg of you to permit me a little more time to answer your letter in detail. I beg to say, however, that I have no desire to discriminate against anyone or any road, and hope to be able to show my disinterestedness when I answer your letter more fully. Thanking you for writing me on the subject, I beg to remain. J. M. Malang [“City to Fight for Place on Primary Road,” *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, December 23, 1920, page 1; “Columbians Go to St. Louis Road Meeting,” *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, December 28, 1920, page 1]

The Missouri Old Trails Association met on January 5, 1921, as the General Assembly session convened in Jefferson City. Columbia would not be on a first class highway under the bond issue, Stephens said, unless the cities and counties along the Missouri Old Trails Road, fought for it. The association unanimously adopted a resolution that set forth the delegates’ sentiment:

We the undersigned members of the Resolutions Committee of the Missouri Old Trails Association recommend to the Association:

*Whereas* – The Old Trails Road was established in 1911 through Legislative act by the State Board of Agriculture as the first official cross-state highway after due deliberation and authority on the part of the board –

*Whereas* – The Missouri Old Trails Road is a link of the historic National Old Trails Highway connecting with official cross-state roads in states on the east and west and is a part of the only transcontinental highway through the state –

*Whereas* – The Missouri Old Trails Road is the logical route serving the state from St. Louis to Kansas City, traversing the counties of great population, great wealth per capita and serving the greatest amount of traffic at present and promised in the future –

*Whereas* – The Missouri Old Trails Road is the shortest route traversing the state from the east to the west and is best physically adapted to construction –

*Whereas* – The Missouri Old Trails Road as now laid out is one third constructed with hard surface and the remainder is organized and financed –

*Be It Resolved* – That the Missouri Old Trails Road be recognized as designated and that whatever provision is made for the designation for other primary roads in the state whether by direct action of the Legislature or through a highway commission, every precaution be taken not to permit the repudiation or setting aside partially or completely the action already taken in this connection under authority of the Legislature by which this road was officially established as the first cross-state highway in Missouri –

*Be It Further Resolved* – That a committee be elected by this association with ample power and authority to present the claims of the road to the Legislature and before such other agency as may be constituted to have charge of the designation and administration and construction of the roads under the \$60,00000 bond issue.

The association appointed a committee to present its resolution and claims to the General Assembly. Judge Lowe was among the members. He had been unable to attend the meeting, but sent a telegram:

I recommend the adoption of the following resolution:

“We favor a system of state highways; through roads reaching every part of the state to

be designated by act of the Legislature and constructed and maintained under the supervision and control of a state highway commission.” I also suggest that a committee on legislation be appointed.

Much depends on this convention. Vigilance is the price of success. We must not sleep at the post. Having come up through tribulation our crown of victory will be the greater – [“Recognition of Old Trails Road is Asked,” *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, January 5, 1921, page 1]

The Missouri Old Trails Road was not alone in seeking designation as the cross-State highway under the \$60 million bond issue:

The Missouri Old Trails Association is not alone in organizing for a fight to get a cross-state highway built under the \$60,000,000 bond issue. One hundred and twenty-five delegates representing eighteen of the twenty two towns between Kansas City and St. Louis along the route of the Missouri North Cross-state Highway met in Moberly Thursday and reorganized to conduct a vigorous campaign before the Legislature to make this road the chief east and west cross state highway under the 60 million dollar road building campaign.

The road passes through Excelsior Springs, Brunswick. Moberly. Mexico and St. Charles and traverses the counties of Jackson, Clay, Ray, Carroll, Charlton, Randolph, Boone, Montgomery, Warren, St. Charles and St. Louis. [“Rival For Old Trails,” *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, January 8, 1921, page 1]

The General Assembly attempted to develop road legislation to correct the bond law, but the issues were too complex to be taken up during a regular session filled with many other matters. A special session was called for the summer to consider the issue, getting underway on June 14. The legislature was sharply divided, with members from large cities and members from small towns and farm areas wanting different things, as did the Senate and the House.

(With the new administration of Government Arthur M. Hyde taking office on January 10, 1921, Superintendent Malang resigned his \$5,000-a-year post to enter the contracting business. [“Personal Mention,” *Good Roads*, February 2, 1921])

During the special session to consider legislation to revamp the State’s highway program, Stephens appeared before the House roads and highways committee to call for a State system of hard-surfaced highways and designation of the National Old Trails Road between Kansas City and St. Louis as the cross-State highway. He reminded committee members that several years earlier, the State Board of Agriculture had chosen the National Old Trails Road as the official cross-State highway between those two cities – and the importance of a hard-surfaced road connecting them.

As summarized in a newspaper report, Stevens explained that “the counties the road runs through . . . have a larger population, greater automobile registrations, higher assessed valuation and greater value of farm products than the counties through which any of the competitive routes

run.” Four-fifths of the State’s public institutions are located along the road. “There are more than 15,000 in the denominational and eleemosynary institutions located in the towns on the road, he said, and \$450,000 has just been raised for the construction of a bridge across the Missouri River to join the north and south sections of the route.” [“E. W. Stephens Makes Strong Road Appeal,” *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, July 7, 1921, page 1]

In mid-July, Stephens took strong exception to a claim by Representative David Bagby, Jr., of Howard County that the legislature had not received any propaganda from the Missouri Old Trails Road Association. Stephens said that a detailed statement about the comparative resources of the competitive cross-State highways had been placed on the desk of each member of the legislature. He admitted, however, that the literature had not been mailed until the preceding Thursday and may not have been distributed until the following Monday:

An erroneous impression as to the publicity given to the Old Trails road in the legislature has been created by the statement of Mr. Bagby. We have not believed it necessary to devote much time to advertising the Old Trails road before the General Assembly because it has not seemed probable there would be any cross-state highway designated.

However, the Old Trails road is the only highway, according to the information I have obtained for which arguments have been presented to the House road committee . . . .

Afterwards, on learning that other routes have been sending in literature for distribution among the members of the Legislature, we sent to Jefferson City to be placed on the desk of both houses a full statement of the comparative resources of the counties through which the different cross-state highways pass. The figures contained in the statement are official, dependable, impartial, and not inflated. They cannot be refuted.

The three cross-state routes that have been most under consideration are the Old Trails road, the North Cross-State highway, and the suggested route through Fallon, Jefferson City, and Sedalia.

The figures we have collected from official sources show that in the grand total value of the farm products the counties through which the Old Trails road runs lead those of the North Cross-State by \$9,328,510 for the past year and those of the suggested Sedalia route by \$7,904,531.

In the same way, the Old Trails road leads the North Cross-State by 2,738 automobiles and the suggested Sedalia route by 3,615. In population, the Old Trails road exceeds the North Cross-State by 3,598 and the suggested Sedalia route by 27,147. In assessed valuation, the difference in favor of the Old Trails road over the North Cross-State is \$597,792,236. Furthermore, the Old Trails road is more than fifteen miles shorter than either of the other two routes.

In addition to the statement containing the facts and figures regarding the Old Trails road, we have prepared the material for an illustrated booklet giving in full a great deal of other information concerning the highway. This booklet will tell of the schools, colleges and state institutions located along the Old Trails road, and set forth the advantages of the new bridge at

Bayville. It will also call attention to the connections of the highway east and west and point out that the road has been the official cross-state highway in the past.

Many other facts will be included in the booklet, which we will publish at the proper time. We have not thought that the Legislature will designate the routes to be improved, our opinion being that the designation of the principal highways will be left to the State Highway Commission. To the commission, all the facts and other information concerning the road will be presented when we deem it advisable. We have no doubt as to the selection of the Old Trails road as the official cross-state highway.

The Commercial Club was mailing maps to the legislators showing the route of the National Old Trails Road across the continent. ["Better Roads Data Goes to Legislators," *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, July 19, 1921, page 1]

Theodore Gary, who would become chairman of the new Missouri State Highway Commission, wrote about the General Assembly's deliberations resulting in the Centennial Road Law on the anniversary of Missouri statehood. The law, he said, "was a last day compromise to end what seemed to be a hopeless deadlock and neither members of the House and Senate who finally voted for it nor the governor who approved it felt that it was satisfactory":

Nearly all the men who had led the bond campaign were grievously disappointed. Road experts declared it "a miserable mess." It was freely predicted that it was impossible of execution. This general opinion warrants a brief study of how it was fashioned. There had been no adequate data on which to base the amount of the bonds. The Hawes law had provided for 3500 miles of road and the McCullough-Morgan amendments had provided for 6000 miles built by Federal aid, state aid and local "match money." Federal aid of over \$2,000,000 a year might be reasonably expected for the estimated twelve years of road building. Advocates of the bonds naturally expected a state system. The memory of the cross-state highways designated in the Hadley administration was fresh. The Senate readily passed a bill, of which Senator Ralph, of St. Louis County, was author. It provided continuous, connected hard-surfaced state roads, such as Missouri would doubtless have built first, had its representation in the House reflected the population more and geography less.

The House struck out the entire Ralph bill and substituted one of its own, designating a state road system, dealing with each county separately, in alphabetical order. It was virtually a town to town designation. Each member of the House knew his own county, its towns and roads. He had the advantage of field surveys. Connections with neighboring counties were arranged among neighboring members. Scant consideration was shown the "peacock lanes," as they dubbed the Senate highways. The House, overwhelmingly rural, talked farm to market roads. Some members did not believe that any roads except dirt roads could be built in Missouri. But for the conditions of Federal aid and the necessity for final concurrence by the Senate, many members would have disposed of the funds in the old fashioned way, by distribution among the counties. The 4000 road overseers would have found a way to spend the money. The metropolitan press and other advocates of "peacock lanes" styled the House members "dirt roaders" or "daubers."

When the House bill was returned to the Senate, that body in turn struck out everything the

House had adopted and put back the Ralph measure.

The resulting conference to reconcile the two bills was so contentious that many legislators thought that the special session would end in failure:

Road friends had come in from all points of the state to help in solving the problem. Largely through the influence of Speaker Sam O'Fallon, of Holt County, the House agreed to certain provisos written by him, under which the State Highway Commission was permitted to designate as higher type than claybound gravel road approximately 1500 miles of the outlined state highway system to connect the principal population centers and one-third of the proceeds of the bond money and an additional \$6,000 a mile from the other two-thirds was allotted to the higher type roads.

With that and other provisos, the House and Senate agreed on the bill. It passed the House by a vote of 129 to 2 and the Senate by 28 to 0. [Gary, Theodore, "The Road History of Missouri," *Missouri, Mother of the West*, Volume 2, The American Historical Society, 1930, pages 614-615; "\$60,000,000 Road Measure Passes Missouri Legislature," *Good Roads*, August 17, 1921, page 91]

On August 4, 1921, Governor Hyde signed the Centennial Road Law. The law replaced all previous sections of State road laws. Chairman Gary wrote that before this law, Missouri did not have ". . . legal provision, funds and proper directing force for building a state highway system." [Gary, page 597]

As Stephens had predicted, the battle of the cross-State highway would be settled by the new commission.

### **The Memorial Highway**

In April 1921, Judge Lowe announced in Columbia that he had a plan to make the National Old Trails Road in Missouri a memorial to the soldiers, sailors, and marines from the State who had died in the World War. He had written a bill that he would submit for consideration during the special session on road legislation:

An act to authorize the acquiring and holding of lands along and adjacent to public highways for the purpose of beautification and adornment, and as a Memorial to the Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines of Missouri in the late World War, by any corporation or association engaged in the promotion and building of a highway or highways across the several states, including the state of Missouri, and particularly from Washington, in the District of Columbia, to Los Angeles, in the state of California, and commonly known as the National Old Trails Road.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Missouri, as follows:

Section 1. Any corporation or association engaged safely in the promotion, marking out or building of a highway or highways between the City of Washington, in the District of

Columbia, and Los Angeles, in the State of California, crossing or passing through the several states between such points, including the State of Missouri, is hereby authorized and empowered to receive and accept donations, conveyances and dedications, or purchase, strip or strips of land not exceeding 100 feet on each side of the right of way of such highway as may be in, or pass through, the State of Missouri.

Section 2. Such association or corporation is empowered and authorized to condemn such strips of land not exceeding 100 feet (100 ft.) in width, without expense or cost to the State of Missouri or any county therein; the proceedings for acquiring such strips of land by condemnation shall as nearly as may be the proceedings for acquiring or condemning for rights-of-way for railways, under the laws of the State of Missouri.

**Provided**, that nothing in this Section of this Act shall authorize any condemnation of strips of land in any city, town, or village in this State, nor of any land which is occupied by any public road or the right-of-way of any railway, nor of any land upon which there is any improvement in the nature of a building.

Section 3. Reasonable access over such strip or strips of land to and from the land adjoining such strip or strips of land, shall not be denied or obstructed.

Section 4. Such strip or strips of land shall be held and kept for the purpose of adornment of the highway or highways adjoining them by the planting and cultivation of trees, shrubbery and such other ornamentation as may be determined upon by such association or corporation as a memorial to the soldiers, sailors and marines from Missouri in the great World War.

Section 5. It shall be a misdemeanor for any person to injure damage or destroy any trees, shrubbery or other ornamentation on any such strip of land. [“Bill For Road Memorial is Now Prepared,” *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, April 1, 1921, page 3]

Judge Lowe prepared a flyer on the proposal displaying the National Old Trails Road in Missouri. The horizontal center contained three panels. The left panel contained a drawing of memorial trees along a roadside. The center panel contained a road map of the State of Missouri with the National Old Trails Road highlighted. The right panel was a copy of the bill.

Below the panels were the words:

**A MEMORIAL TO THE SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AND MARINES  
OF MISSOURI IN THE LATE WORLD WAR**

As provided for in the Accompanying Act by the State General Assembly. About 250 miles of Highway across the State (exclusive of City and Town Streets). A 60-foot Roadway Flanked by 100-foot strips of Memorial Parkways. [Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum, Accession Number: M1357]

A revised version of the bill came up for debate in the Missouri House during the special session on July 20, 1921, and was defeated, as reported in the news the following day:

An effort to provide for the paving of the Old Trails road between St. Louis and Kansas City as a memorial highway was defeated in the House late yesterday afternoon after a lengthy discussion in which the rural delegates denounced peacock lanes at every opportunity.

The paving of the road was included in the provisions of an amendment to the House road bill offered by Judge J. Allen Prewitt of the First district of Jackson County. A substitute for the amendment providing for five primary roads based on the plan suggested by John Malang, former state highway superintendent, was also defeated.

The amendment offered by Judge Prewitt provided for the designation of the Old Trails road as a memorial to the soldiers, sailors and marines of Missouri who gave their lives in the war with Germany and to the sturdy pioneers who blazed the Old Trails across the state. The amendment specified that the road was to be constructed of material most practical for a permanent hard surface road and that as a part of the construction of the road a monument of Missouri granite was to be erected at each mile post. The contents of the amendment were practically the same as those contained in the bill introduced in the House by Judge Prewitt but killed by the House committee on roads and highways.

Immediately after the amendment was offered by Judge Prewitt, William P. Elmer of Dent County tried to put through the substitute, causing the lengthy discussion of "peacock lanes." The substitute offered by Elmer provided for five primary roads reaching from St. Louis to Kansas City, from St. Louis to Joplin by way of Springfield, from Hannibal to St. Joseph with connecting spurs to St. Louis and Kansas City, from St. Louis north and south along the eastern edge of the state, and from Kansas City north and south along the western edge. The adoption of the substitute and the approval of the amendment would have left the Old Trails road out of the primary system since the road from St. Louis to Kansas City in the substitute ran by way of Jefferson City and Sedalia.

In support of the amendment, however, Judge, Prewitt made a strong plea. "The Old Trails ought to be hallowed ground," he said, in reviewing the history of the road across the continent. "The paving of the road," he continued, "will serve the double purpose of commemorating the memory of those old pioneers as well as the boys who crossed the water." He then called attention to the colleges and state institutions located on the route saying that "it is a burning shame that Columbia, the educational capital of the state, does not have better transportation facilities."

When questioned regarding the amendment, Judge Prewitt said that he estimated it would cost \$9,000,000 to construct the cross-state highway.

Opposing the amendment, Elmer claimed that Prewitt was attempting to take the Old Trails road, "or whatever else they called it," from the class of all other roads and put it in the so-called primary class. "He seeks to weave around that all the sentiment he can," Elmer added, and then began his argument for the primary roads included in his substitute for the Prewitt amendment. He pointed out the primary roads had been laid out by the state highway commission and that they connected almost every important town in

the state, including St. Louis, Kansas City, St. Joseph, Joplin, Carthage Springfield, Cape Girardeau, Hannibal, Jefferson City, and Sedalia.

Both the amendment and substitute were opposed, Prewitt and Elmer being severely criticized for attempting to designate primary roads. "This tomfoolery ought to stop," declared William A. Hubbard of Lawrence County, in concluding a short talk against the proposals.

The substitute and the amendment were both voted down by acclamation. ["Old Trails Memorial Is Badly Beaten," *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, July 21, 1921, page 2]

### **Seeking Recognition for the Old Trails Road**

The resulting Centennial Road law called for designation of a State road system that the legislation specified by county. The bill called for improvement of a system of approximately 7,700 miles of as described in the legislation. They were to be "properly bound" gravel, but the new State Highway Commission was to "designate the routes and types of the higher type roads of approximately 1500 miles connecting the principal population centers of the state." In the last minute compromises that made the bill possible, this provision for 1,500 miles of hard-surface highways satisfied the advocates for primary roads and was acceptable to those who favored farm-to-market roads. In addition, the commission was to make changes in the routes as deemed necessary "in the interest of economy and directness of routes, and it is authorized to commence the construction of said higher type roads at such place or places on such routes as it may deem advisable." The only limitation was "that no changes in designation shall increase the total mileage of the state highway system."

The August 1921 issue of the Missouri Road Bulletin explained:

Everybody is greatly interested in the new highway law as passed at the special session. The Highway Department has been requested to outline its program under that law. To those who have read the law it is no doubt plain that its interpretation into the actual construction of highways in 114 counties of the state involves much preparation and much thought. The building of such a system of highways of approximately 7,700 mi., can not be planned in a month or in two months. As the program of construction actually develops, new features will occur which may be overlooked at the beginning.

Taken in connection with the extension of the present law, it is evident that the carrying out of its provisions means a great undertaking. The Highway Department faces the new law with full courage, but without, as yet, a complete knowledge of what the new highway commission will desire. The highway engineer has no fears of the future, but his decision and his acts must be passed upon by the new board before they can be effective. For that reason, a road building program under the new law can not be promulgated at this time. ["The New Highway Law of Missouri," *Good Roads*, October 19, 1921, pages 191-192]

The law had emerged only after extensive debate, wrangling, and compromise, but as noted in part 3, Judge Lowe said of the law:

The legislature of Missouri, after much ill-natured criticism and abuse, has written into the statutes the finest road law in the United States, bar none. We most sincerely rejoice with this epoch-making legislature on the splendid results of its action.

The important thing for Judge Lowe was to have Missouri's entire segment of the National Old Trails Road in his home State designated for construction as a higher type road. The National Old Trails Road Association was confident of success, having survived the earlier battle to identify a cross-State highway (see part 1).

On February 21, 1922, the Highway Commission instructed Chief Engineer, Bion Harmon "B. H." Piepmeier, who had taken the position after 13 years with the Illinois road agency, and Consulting Engineer Rollen J. Windrow to begin investigating possible routes for the 1,500-mile network of higher type roads. They reported their findings on July 11, 1922, noting:

We realize that the most important route as well as the most difficult one to locate satisfactorily to all concerned is the road from St. Louis to Kansas City.

The observation revived the battles that had been fought in 1907 and 1911 over designation of a cross-State highway. After discussing and rejecting the northern and southern routes, Piepmeier and Windrow concluded:

The only economic and practical location of the St. Louis-Kansas City route is therefore the straightest possible location along the center line of population passing thru or near St. Charles, Danville, Fulton, Columbia, Boonville, Sweet Springs to Kansas City with primary connections with Mexico, Jefferson City, Moberly, Sedalia, Marshall, Warrensburg and Higginsville from this designation. A location on this route can be had that will be shorter by more than fifteen miles than any other location that may be secured elsewhere and this route will serve more population than any other road that could be selected.

From St. Louis to Boonville, the recommended route generally followed the National Old Trails Road. However, from Boonville to Kansas City, the recommended route diverted from the trail.

The National Old Trails Road Association had adopted a route through Arrow Rock and Lexington, to the north of the recommended line, for one simple reason: that was the route followed by the historic Santa Fe Trail. Historian Marc Simmons, who has written extensively about the Santa Fe Trail, discussed this northern turn. Arrow Rock had been a Missouri River crossing since a ferry began operating in 1817, and Santa Fe traders had crossed at this site. Before 1821, the Santa Fe Trail from Arrow Rock through Marshall and Lexington to Fort Osage had been called the Osage Trace. The Aull Brothers' store in Lexington was a leading outfitter for the traders in the 1830s. William Clark had established Fort Osage in 1808. During the early days of the Santa Fe Trail, Fort Osage was the westernmost outpost of the Federal Government. Traders stopped at Fort Osage to make their final purchases before heading into the wilderness. [Simmons, Marc, *Following the Santa Fe Trail: A Guide for*

*Modern Travelers*, Ancient City Press, 1986, Revised edition, pages 21, 32-45]

Because of the historic significance of the northern branch, the National Old Trails Road in Missouri had included it in the cross-State highway. From a practical standpoint, however, the northern branch was well off the straightest line between the two cities.

In a biographical recollection, Piepmeier's son, Francis, wrote about the alignment of the cross-State highway under the Centennial Road Act. The Missouri State Highway Commission was planning a concrete highway from St. Louis to Kansas City on the most direct, straightest, and practical alignment. On a Missouri map, Theodore Gary drew one line from the north end of the Missouri River bridge at St. Charles to the north end of the Boonville Bridge. From just south of Boonville, he drew a second line to Kansas City on a line south of Independence. Gary instructed Piepmeier to determine the alignment for the new concrete highway within a mile of the two lines.

Piepmeier and his reconnaissance party drove when they could, and walked when that was the best option to determine if a road could be built on that alignment. In a few places, the topography called for minor variations from Gary's line. The alignment "skirted the north city limits of Columbia, but missed Fulton by about seven miles," which greatly displeased the residents of Fulton who were used to being on the main highway – the National Old Trails Road.

Francis Piepmeier wrote:

One of the most difficult alignments on Route 2 was the hill several miles east of Boonville where the highway goes down into the Missouri River bottom. Bion once said that five different alignments were studied. One must remember that funds were limited and excavation in the 1920's was done with mules and slips . . . . This location was a worry to Bion, there didn't seem to be a good alignment using the money and earth moving equipment available . . . .

Another difficult topographic problem was near the City of Minneola. Here the route had to go down into a river valley. The original route down the hills departed from the general tangent alignment. [Piepmeier, Francis, "1922 to 1926 – Jefferson City, Missouri, compiled for a letter, dated August 31, 1992, from Arthur L. Piepmeier to author Arthur Krim]

The Missouri State Highway Commission held a public hearing in Jefferson City on July 25, 26, and 27, 1922, to discuss the engineers' report. Gary, who was the presiding officer, discussed the meeting in his chapter on roads in a book on the history of Missouri:

This hearing was somewhat like that presided over by Governor [Herbert S.] Hadley in the Capital city eleven years before; there was deeper earnestness, for an official decision, to be carried out by machinery, clothed with legal power and supplied with funds, was to result.

There were 8000 visitors during the hearing, which was held in the Senate chamber of the new capitol. Friends and foes of several recommended routes came as delegations, many accompanied by bands. At one time six different bands played as many different selections in the Senate chamber simultaneously. The commission on seat of permanent government had provided police for the occasion but Chairman Gary, who presided over the hearings, never found occasion to use force . . . .

The delegations had chosen resourceful speakers, familiar with every hill and valley and creek and spring and advantage and disadvantage of competing routes, and skilled in rough and tumble debate. The engineers found it no mean task to defend their recommendations against the assaults of such well-equipped speakers. But the liveliest debates were by the road champions. Lifelong friends were pitted against each other, in some instances. Often there were heated personal controversies over the character of the recommendations. Chairman Gary invariably stopped such controversies by calling for a rereading of the engineers' report. This was no punishment to newcomers but it was intolerable to those who had sat through the hearing and who knew the report by heart. They sat about the jammed Senate chamber in the torrid weather, fanning themselves with their hats and inwardly groaning at the monotonous reading. It checked the tendency to debate contents of the report. [Gary, page 619]

Judge Lowe presented the argument for the National Old Trails Road. He began:

I shall confine myself to a very brief statement of our position on the road question so far as it concerns the Missouri division of the National Old Trails Road. We shall further limit the discussion, so as to make it as brief as possible, to the discussion of just two questions.

Our first position is that every question involved in the proposition to either modify or change the location or character of the Missouri division of this road has been long since settled. For four long years, beginning during the Administration of Joseph W. Folk and extending on into the Administration of Governor Hadley, this question was agitated as no other road question ever had been in this state.

He summarized the history of the cross-State highway debates in 1907 and 1911. The Central Road had been selected, subject to certain conditions. They included formation of special road districts, the orders of the county courts, and subscription of private funds:

I repeat it took just four years to thresh out and settle this question. Let me call your attention to the fact that the questions thus adjudicated and settled were not only the location of the road, but the reasons for making such location, and those reasons were the very reasons at issue that are now being rediscussed and proposing to be reconsidered. All this was declared as in the nature of a contract between the representatives of the state and the representatives of the Central Route. Can it be possible that Governors Folk and Hadley, the Agriculture Department, the State Engineer and the parties concerned were acting without authority – not knowing what they were trying to do – but trifling with the

people?

He quoted a letter dated September 29, 1911, from State Engineer Curtis Hill discussing the decision on the cross-State highway. Hill concluded:

I further suggest that the name of the cross-state highway be "The Missouri Cross-State Highway – Old Trails Road." Other cross-state highways will in time be built and this name will distinguish it from them. In view of the fact that you have practically selected the old trails gives it a logical significance and a name which will remain with it always. Not only will this have a local significance but a national one since, with the Old Cumberland Turnpike on the east and the Old Santa Fe Trail on the west, the name "Old Trails Road" will soon be applied entirely across the continent. There can and will be nothing else like it across the country, and now that this route across Missouri will be built I recommend that it be officially named "The Missouri Cross-State Highway – Old Trails Road."

Judge Lowe also quoted a report by Engineer Hill dated August 1, 1912:

Progress has been slow; it requires time, but the Old Trails Road is now made a fixture, and sooner or later will become a great route for cross country travel. It is through a section of the state of varied interest, scenery and topography, the shortest and most direct route between the two large cities and whether in one year, five or ten years time it will eventually be a great highway.

Judge Lowe resumed his presentation:

It is already more than Curtis Hill prophesied it would be.

Permit me to close the discussion of this branch of the question by stating as I did in the beginning, that every question in this discussion at this time was threshed out and passed upon by the [State] Agriculture Department, authorized to make the decision by the Statute.

Next, he reminded the commissioners that on April 17, 1912, Governor Hadley had addressed the first convention of the National Old Trails Road Association and had commented on that recent decision on the cross-State road:

It seems to me I have seen a part of this crowd before. I have seen a part of you early in the morning and late at night. It seems to me that you were looking for the designation of a certain route as the official cross-state highway in Missouri and if my recollection serves me correctly, you got what you were after, and I am disposed to think that you can have the satisfaction, as we can all have the satisfaction, of knowing that in those early morning and late at night activities in which you engaged during the course of the last summer, you were making history; because you were beginning not only the designation, but the construction of a great transcontinental highway, extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Judge Lowe asked, “Can it be possible that the accomplishment of so great an enterprise as this by Governor Hadley and those who held up his hands can now be desecrated and destroyed, diverted or materially changed by the existing administration? I don’t believe it.”

He continued:

Immediately following this definite selection and location our people got busy all along the line building the road, carrying bond issue after bond issue, grading and hard surfacing it at various points, including the construction of a bridge at Boonville, aggregating more than a total of \$1,706,900, not including Jackson, St. Charles and St. Louis counties.

I pause here to ask what town in the United States (and I speak with a degree of certainty on this subject) with a population of 4,665 could raise, by voluntary subscription, \$376,000, and then carry a bond issue of \$50,000 on top of that, with which to build the bridge – the balance of the money necessary to build the bridge was raised by voluntary subscriptions in Columbia, Marshall and Lexington.

“Poor Old Missouri,” indeed!

Also comes Howard County with a bridge bond issue of \$105,000 for the bridge at Glasgow, and Saline with a bond issue of \$300,000 for the same purpose.

So, we have made good! We have kept the faith to the very letter, and at the time the sixty million dollar bond was carried we had already practically financed the entire construction of the road, and but for the sixty millions of bonds thus voted, possibly this road would have been completed by this time; but when that question was submitted, as the plan had originated with our Association as early as the first day of May, 1912, we threw our hats into the ring, went into the fight as earnestly and enthusiastically as we knew how, and aided in securing the great victory. Shall we now be relegated to a second place in the appropriation of that fund, and have a kind of stigma placed upon all the history of the past, and be rebuked by this Commission because of these activities?

(He was referring to the idea he had proposed using the revenue from automobile licensing for road improvements.)

The comunity of States also required Missouri to maintain good faith with regard to the cross-State highway in view of the actions of the other States:

On the adoption of the road by this state eleven other states, accepting the action of Missouri as made in good faith and as final, in some instances strained a point to include the Old National Highway in their state systems. Illinois, for instance, where the road does not connect or touch important centers of population as other roads do in that state [because of the shift of the State capital from Vandalia, the western terminus of the Cumberland Road, to Springfield], yet so strong was the patriotic sentiment for the

pioneers who handed this National asset down to her people, built this road first, and it stands today as the only completed highway in that State. And Pennsylvania and West Virginia, where it is for the most part a connecting link – these states, **after** Missouri's action, felt constrained by reason of patriotism and good fellowship to take part in a National enterprise that Missouri was sponsoring, and they restored in its entirety within their borders the road which had been permitted to fall into decay – a road which Henry Clay declared on the senate floor “superior to the Appian Way.” Similarly on the western end, California, Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado; but here in Missouri, with two of her largest cities at either end, and through which the principal tourist travel of the continent passes – the state which has received the greatest credit for the entire enterprise, is the only state where any purpose has been manifested to discredit it.

The Tourist Bureau of the Kansas City Automobile Club had informed him “that tourist travel passing through that city is greater than through any city in the United States”:

When the man in charge of that bureau was asked what road this traffic came over he promptly answered, “The Old Trails Road, of course.” This traffic has not been coming through St. Louis because, until the road was completed across Illinois, it was diverted at Indianapolis, but from now on it will come straight through.

Judge Lowe summarized the six points in favor of redesignating the entire Missouri route of the National Old Trails Road as Missouri's cross-State highway:

1. Valid, official designation and adoption by the State.
2. Faithful compliance with all the conditions required or imposed upon us.
3. The acceptance in good faith of Missouri's sponsorship by the other eleven states, and their accomplishments toward this end far in advance of Missouri.
4. Securing the greatest traffic through this state of any other road.
5. Its length, admittedly the shortest line between the two great terminals.
6. The action of the Agricultural Department was confirmed by the legislature at its last session when it was adopted as part of the State Highway System.

He recalled the last paragraph of Section 29 of the Centennial Road Law designating the State system of road: “Provided further, that no changes in designation shall **increase** the total mileage of the state highway system,” which limited the primary system to 1,500 miles.

He then came to the second question, namely the Federal Highway Act of 1921, which provided that, “In approving projects to receive Federal aid under the provisions of this Act the Secretary of Agriculture shall give preference to such projects as will expedite the compliance of an adequate and connected system of highways, **INTERSTATE IN CHARACTER**”:

This Act does not say that this Board, or any Board, shall create “a connected system of highways, Interstate in Character,” but it says that you shall give preference to such projects as will expedite the completion of an adequate and connected system of highways, **INTERSTATE IN CHARACTER**.

Our position is that the National Old Trails Road fills the exact definition of the roads provided for in the Federal Highway Act. It is not only “interstate in character” but it is National in character as well. It is completed across six states, beginning at the Atlantic and ending at the Mississippi, at St. Louis; very much of it built and under construction between the Mississippi and the Pacific. No action by this Board could make it, **or any other road**, “Interstate in Character” unless it was already in existence as such, or, unless the Highway Commissions of the adjoining states would unite in agreement with the Highway Commission of Missouri and establish an interstate road, **co-operatively**.

No other road east of the Mississippi between Illinois and Missouri is either built or proposed by the Illinois Board. No interstate road in Missouri can go east across the state of Illinois unless it comes to St. Louis and claimed the privilege and right of adopting the Old Trails Road from that point. It would seem an ungracious thing to try to bolster up such propositions by relying upon the work already done on this historic highway east of the Mississippi. Why turn down an existing interstate road for one yet to be established? Why permit the cuckoos that never build, to deposit their eggs in another’s nest? Why make this Interstate road an inter-county road – in part, or as a whole?

**We say with all the emphasis at our command that an interstate road is a fact, and not a theory.**

He quoted BPR Chief MacDonald, who addressed the American Association of State Highways Officials’ (AASHO) annual convention in 1921:

None of us has had or is ever likely to have a more serious responsibility than the one imposed of selecting the Federal Aid system to be composed of the most important highways, articulating not only within the state, but with the systems of the contiguous states. From the conception of highways as a purely local institution, a viewpoint we held for over half a century of our national life, we progressed to an acceptance of their importance to the state. This attitude persisted for another quarter of a century until, through the universal use of the motor vehicle, the transportation crisis of a great war, the repeated threats of extensive railroad tie-ups and the results already secured with Federal Aid, we have in a short period of five years visioned our more important highways extending and interconnecting to form a vast network, serving local, state and national traffic, only limited by the confines of the United States.

This is the conception which has been written into the new law and which, because of the projected effect of that which is done now into the future, lifts the importance of this requirement, that is, the selection of the Federal Aid system, above any other principle or duty therein announced.

Judge Lowe said, “I am admonished not to indulge in sentiment but I venture to say that if comparison is sought with the Appian, or other historic roads, I will ask you to look upon one richer far in historic interest, more replete in scenic grandeur, running through the center of the greatest agricultural and commercial districts in the world, every mile of which preaches the gospel of Christian civilization. This Old National Road carries more traffic over its entire

length than any road one-third of its length anywhere in Europe. The famous Appian Via is less than one-eighth the length of this road – and they were three hundred years building it. Let us now, at least, emulate this feature of that great example.

He promised one more word “and I shall have done”:

For long years we have labored, in season and out of season, to further this great project, and all other roads as well. It was a labor of love, and we make no apology for it. No organization ever broke a lance or shivered a spear in a greater commercial or patriotic endeavor. Under most adverse circumstances, and with an insignificant amount of Federal money, we brought this great National project to your door, and now lay it down at your feet. **Take it or leave it.** If you decide to abandon, change or materially modify any portion of it whatsoever by making it, or any section of it, an inter-county highway, we shall then set us down as one upon whose brow is written disappointment and despair. Do not, I beseech you, undertake to hand it back to us a mangled corpse.

Finally, Judge Lowe closed his speech:

Bear in mind it was Missouri through her great Senator, Thos. H. Benton, in 1824, that the move was made to extend this road beyond the Rockies to end at Santa Fe. It was Missouri through her lamented Borland who introduced a bill, prepared by this association, in 1913, to build this road. It was Missouri through the same representative who offered our bill in the same year to establish and build a great National system of 32,000 miles, reaching every capitol [sic] of every state in the union. It was Missouri again through our Association as early as the 1st day of May, 1912, that first suggested capitalizing the automobile tax for road purposes. It may be possible by the action you take to mar or tarnish this record, but “all the waters of multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red,” cannot blot it out. [“Statement by J. M. Lowe, president of the National Old Trails Road, to the Board of Highway Commissioners of Missouri,” Vertical File, FHWA Research Library]

(The quote is from Shakespeare’s *MacBeth*, written at a time when “incardine” meant making something pink.)

The Highway Commission adopted the engineers’ report on August 1, 1922, after eliminating enough mileage to stay within the statutory 1,500 miles. Regarding the central road, Gary explained in his chapter of the Missouri history:

This meant direct routes, considerably departing from the routes chosen in Governor Hadley’s administration, and there were many protests from advocates of old trails. No. 2 (later numbered U.S. 40) from Atlantic City to San Francisco, was severely criticized for sentimental reasons, but when sufficient progress had been made to show the kind of highway it would really be – second to none in the world in its layout according to the published opinion of the assistant state highway engineer of Wisconsin, criticism subsided. [Gary, page 619]

In short, Judge Lowe had lost. The National Old Trails Road in Missouri was State Route 2 from St. Louis to the vicinity of Boonville. From there, State Route 2 continued straight west on new alignment. Because the State had adopted a numbering system using even numbers for east-west routes and odd numbers for north-south routes, the number “2” indicated the route was the “first” route. The remainder of the National Old Trails Road in Missouri was split among State Routes 5, 20, 41, and 67. In fact, the Highway Commission would build SR 2 on new alignment to a large extent, bypassing towns along the original route for the first time.

Historian George R. Stewart, in his classic 1953 photo essay book on U.S. 40, commented on the Missouri section of U.S. 40. He was not much impressed by the landscape or the history of the route between St. Louis and Kansas City:

Anyone driving across it will be likely to describe it most easily by the word “pretty.” Its eastern half is a land of rolling hills, forested with oak. Here and there it opens up to display fine pastures for cattle. The alluvial bottoms along the river and the smaller streams are rich cornlands. In the western half, after the road has entered the Osage Plains, the country is flatter, and the cornlands stretch out more widely.

Yet, when all is said, nothing stands out. The ordinary tourist, having made the drive, would probably be hard put to tell anything, except that he had twice crossed the Missouri River.

Historically, also, the road is pleasantly interesting, not outstanding . . . . Across the western half of the state U.S. 40 is a very modern road. Missourians, indeed, claim that the Santa Fe Trail originally started from Boonville, but even if this somewhat doubtful claim is allowed, we cannot assert that the wagons for Santa Fe ever followed the line of U.S. 40 for more than seven or eight miles. After that point west of Boonville the older route swings off circuitously to the north.

The road swinging off circuitously to the north was the National Old Trails Road. Stewart continued to narrate his experience on U.S. 40:

From there on, to Kansas City, the highway runs across open, generally level country, on a direct course. It has many straightaways, one of them twelve miles long. Although these stretches follow the original lines of the land-survey, the highway is not a “section-line road” in the ordinary sense, for there are no right-angled turns and no north-south courses, even for short distances. This section from Boonville to Kansas City best exemplifies what the State Highway Department reports, not without pride: “the majority of Rte. 40 was built on new location in order to make it as near as an air line highway between St. Louis and Kansas City as possible.” [Stewart, George R., *U.S. 40: Cross Section of the United States of America*, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953, page 149]

Judge Lowe looked back on the State’s decision in his 1924 compilation of material related to the National Old Trails Road. After a document-heavy narrative of the cross-State debate that resulted in the selection of the National Old Trails Road, he added:

Note: This is the road the present Highway Board and State Administration has done so much to divert at different points, so as to leave out such important community centers as Fulton, Marshall, Lexington, Independence, Warrensburg; and have tried to take away even the name of the road, although they had adopted two-thirds of its original line and the Legislature had adopted it in its entirety. The changes made added more than 100 miles to the road system, and cost more than \$1,000,000. Why? Better not attempt to answer this question.

Of course, one of the excuses for making these changes of location is that they avoid going through populous towns where the people would be subject to much inconvenience on account of the reckless manner of operating automobiles. That this is an untenable position is illustrated by the fact that in the City of Indianapolis, Washington Street, the principal street of the city, is and always has been, the line of the N. O. T. Road. The same thing is true all through Illinois and all the towns such as Terre Haute and Richmond, in Indiana, through Dayton, Springfield and Columbus, in Ohio, and many of the other large towns in that State; through Wheeling W. Va., Washington, Pa., a town of 30,000 population, Cumberland, a town of 60,000, Fredericksburg, etc. It was supposed that roads were to be built where the people live, where transportation is required, both for passenger and freight service. In changing the route in Missouri, between the two largest cities, they establish a brand new line, paralleling closely the N. O. T. Road as established by the State Legislature, across the counties of Callaway and Boone, and again parallels an old established road which is a part of the State System clear across LaFayette, Slaine and a part of Cooper and Jackson, without any reasonable excuse – building a brand new road where the right-of-way had to be obtained through a district where difficult grades occur and along lines where no road ever existed before or is likely ever to exist – and all of which it is repeated, adds to, instead of diminishing the general road mileage of the State System. In Kansas City, the N. O. T. comes to the heart of the business district, while the new line, called No. 2, and “St. Louis-Kansas City” road, stops outside the city limits about fifteen miles away from the business center, and makes no connection with any road leading West or in any other direction.

The same thing has occurred on the Jefferson Highway, a part of the Interstate System, and the Surveyors are now in the field running lines all along the roads in various directions, and resulting in a tremendous additional cost for construction. [“Missouri State Board of Agriculture,” Chapter II, *National Old Trails Road: The Great Historic Highway of America*, National Old Trails Road Association, March 29, 1924, pages 77-78]

### **Isothermal Map of the National Old Trails Road**

While debate over the inclusion of the National Old Trails Road in State Route 2 was underway, E. W. Stephens of the Missouri National Old Trails Road Association submitted the brochure he had mentioned to the State Highway Commission in support of renewed designation of the road as the cross-State highway. As explained on the cover, the National Old Trails Road across Missouri was:

**The**                      **Route**  
Short  
Logical  
Practical  
Smooth  
Historic  
Transcontinental  
Educational  
Agricultural

The National Old Trails Road was shortest:

The route that is the SHORTEST and traverses the section of greatest population and most abundant resources must be the line on which the state can most profitably expend its money and which will be of the greatest service to the people.

Each of the alternatives had their advantages, “but we think it can easily be shown that the Old Trails is superior to any of the other three”:

In the first place it is shorter by many miles than either the Jefferson City or the Northern Route, which means the saving of several hundreds of thousands of dollars in construction and an hour of travel time. It is shorter than the Southern Route and far less hilly and hence more quickly covered, and it runs through a much more populous, fertile and attractive country.

In addition to the Old Trails being the shortest, it is the smoothest route between St. Louis and Kansas City. There are only a few small hills on the entire distance. No other route can be so economically built or operated.

The brochure listed mileage totals taken from the *Automobile Blue Book*, 1920, “the latest at hand,” for the distance between St. Louis and Kansas City:

It is no doubt possible to take out crooks and bends and make short cuts of all these routes so as to shorten any one or all of them. The Old Trails can thus be shortened. It is claimed that at least one of these routes has been abbreviated since the publication of the Blue Book. But an examination of the map of Missouri, the laying down of a rule measure upon it, or the drawing of a straight line across it, will convince any reasonable person that the most direct and practical route across the State of Missouri, and the one nearest a straight line, with the least number of hills, and through the most populous and resourceful country, is undoubtedly the Old Trails.

The brochure emphasized the businesses, universities, churches, farms, and other valuable properties along the National Old Trails Road. “The commerce of its thriving cities and villages corresponds with its educational advantages”:

Nowhere in the state are there more enterprising towns than Lexington, Marshall, Boonville, Columbia, Fulton, Warrenton, and St. Charles.

The Missouri Old Trails Association acknowledged one problem:

There has hitherto been but one tenable argument against the Old Trails. That has been its lack of a bridge across the Missouri River. That objection is now overcome by the subscription, within a remarkably brief period, of nearly half a million dollars by the citizens of the counties of Boone, Howard, Cooper, Saline, and Lafayette for a highway bridge at Boonville. The contract for this bridge has been let and it will be finished and in operation by the close of this year, 1922, by the terms of the contract. The city of Boonville voted \$50,000 for the construction of the Southern approach.

Since the stock to this bridge was subscribed Congress has passed an amendment to the Federal Aid Act declaring bridges to be highways and prohibiting aid to highways charging tolls. To meet this objection, it has been determined to make the bridge free, the details of which movement are familiar to the Highway Commission.

Recently Howard County has voted \$100,000 and Saline County \$150,000 to erect a bridge across the Missouri River at Glasgow, which city will add thereto \$25,000. The citizens of Glasgow have arranged for this amount to be supplemented by Federal aid in amount sufficient to build the bridge which will be free to all passengers. Thus the Old Trails whether it runs by Boonville or Glasgow, or by both, has assurance of a bridge across the Missouri River.

After summarizing the history of the route in Missouri, the brochure covered designation of the cross-State highway after a thorough investigation:

We claim that legally this route thus set apart holds that relation today for neither by legislation nor change of conditions has there been any occurrence to modify action taken at this time. We respectfully submit that to ignore this route at this time would be an act for which there is neither cause or justification.

On the assumption that the State had acted in good faith in 1912, the counties along the line had done so as well, the report stated, noting that "nearly all the counties along the route have since voted bonds for the hard-surfacing of the road within their limits." Moreover, at the request of the D.A.R., the State legislature appropriated funds "for the placing of granite markers on historical spots along this route." Since then, "These markers have been since erected and are sources of great historic interest and convenience to tourists and others."

In conclusion, the main text stated:

So in shorter distance, in higher productiveness, in larger population, in educational development, in economy, because of much of it being already built, and of its logical relation to the country, being a link in a great transcontinental highway, half way finished, of its value as a factor in the development of the road system and the prosperity of the state and last but not least, because it has stood for ten years as the legally authorized and officially dedicated and recognized cross state highway, we respectfully

submit that the Old Trails presents arguments for its adoption and construction that are pre-eminent and unanswerable.

The brochure included one additional item. In the back was a map of the National Old Trails Road, shown as a thick black line from New York City to Los Angeles. The map included a dashed, parallel second line. It was the Isothermal line drawn by William Gilpin in his 1860 publication, *Mission of the Northern American People, Geographical, Social, and Political*. Gilpin had a diverse career (the Wikipedia page describes him as: “US explorer, politician, land speculator, and futurist writer about the American West” who “served as military officer in the United States Army during several wars . . . and was instrumental in the formation of the government of the Oregon Territory. In addition, Abraham Lincoln, shortly after his inauguration, appointed Gilpin to be the first Governor of the Territory of Colorado (March 25, 1861-March 26, 1862).

The Missouri association explained that in “that remarkable book . . . written by that most remarkable man, Governor Gilpin, in 1860 (2d edition, 1873), there is much curious learning and optimistic prophesy concerning what is called “The West.” His prophesies of great things were “not the result of whimsical dreaming, nor of an over-heated imagination.” They “were the logical results of profoundest study, and most painstaking investigation.”

One of Gilpin’s ideas was the Isothermal Map of the world, as described in the brochure:

This Isothermal line is along the line of the 40th degree of North latitude, and is the axis of intensity whose annual mean temperature is 52 degrees of Fahrenheit. It belts the globe within the 25th and 55th degrees.

Gilpin had explained that, “It is along the axis of the Isothermal zone of the Northern Hemisphere that the principles of revealed civilization make the circuit of the globe.” He pointed out that along this axis are the great centers of population, including the great cities of China, India, Babylon, Jerusalem, Athens, Rome, Paris, London, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Columbus, Indianapolis, St. Louis, Kansas City, Topeka, Denver, Salt Lake City, and San Francisco. According to Gilpin, “The people along this axis are upon the line of intense and intelligent energy, where civilization has its largest field, its highest development, its inspired form”:

Along this line have come from the plateau of Syria, our religion, our sciences, our civilization, our social manners, our arts, our agriculture, our domestic animals, our articles of food and raiment; and here is the eternal fire from which is rekindled the spirit of the unconquerable mind, and freedom’s holy flame.”

The brochure explained:

It will be observed that when we reach the bulwark of the Rockies, the National Old Trails Road swings considerably below this line in order to find an easy pass and a better grade, to Los Angeles, but otherwise, it follows this Isothermal line most closely.

The line closely followed the National Old Trails Road in Missouri, including the circuitous route west of Boonville.

As if that were not enough reason to designate the entire route in Missouri, the narrative on the map included another reason:

Just before this war came upon us, a road convention was held in London for the purpose of promoting a great paved highway around the world along this line. That matter is necessarily postponed, but is fully assured in the future.

Whatever the merit of the Isothermic map, it did not alter the commission's decision to exclude the western end of the National Old Trails Road in Missouri's State Route 2. ["Isothermal Map of the National Old Trails Road," *The Old Trails: Missouri's Official State Highway From St. Louis to Kansas City*]

### **President Harding on Trucks and Railroads**

On December 8, 1922, President Harding delivered his second annual message before a joint session of Congress. For the first time in history, the President's address was broadcast by radio to "be heard by many thousands outside of the House chamber and hundreds of miles distant from Washington," as *The Washington Post* told readers. "The broadcasting will be done from the naval air station at Annapolis."

When the President entered the chamber around 12:30 p.m., he was greeted with applause for several minutes. First Lady Florence Harding, "in her room at the White House, through a receiving set specially installed, listened to the address and the applause that greeted him upon entering the House and that frequently punctuated his message." ["Will Read Message to Congress Today" (December 8, 1922) and "Applause Greets Request for Prompt Action" (December 9, 1922), *The Washington Post*]

He went through a number of concerns, foreign and domestic, but after describing the problems of the farming sector, turned to transportation:

I know of no problem exceeding in importance this one of transportation. In our complex and interdependent modern life transportation is essential to our very existence. Let us pass for the moment the menace in the possible paralysis of such service as we have and note the failure, for whatever reason, to expand our transportation to meet the Nation's needs.

In the three decades ending in 1920, the country's freight by rail had increased from 631 million tons to 2.234 million tons; "that is to say, while our population was increasing, less than 70 per cent, the freight movement increased over 250 per cent." The country had 40 percent of the world's railroad mileage, "and yet find it inadequate to our present requirements":

When we contemplate the inadequacy of to-day it is easy to believe that the next few decades will witness the paralysis of our transportation-using social scheme or a complete

reorganization on some new basis. Mindful of the tremendous costs of betterments, extensions, and expansions, and mindful of the staggering debts of the world to-day, the difficulty is magnified. Here is a problem demanding wide vision and the avoidance of mere makeshifts. No matter what the errors of the past, no matter how we acclaimed construction and then condemned operations in the past, we have the transportation and the honest investment in the transportation which sped us on to what we are, and we face conditions which reflect its inadequacy to-day, its greater inadequacy to-morrow, and we contemplate transportation costs which much of the traffic can not and will not continue to pay.

Manifestly, we have need to begin on plans to coordinate all transportation facilities. We should more effectively connect up our rail lines with our carriers by sea. [Applause.] We ought to reap some benefit from the hundreds of millions expended on inland waterways, proving our capacity to utilize as well as expend. We ought to turn the motor truck into a railway feeder and distributor instead of a destroying competitor.

It would be folly to ignore that we live in a motor age. The motor car reflects our standard of living and gauges the speed of our present-day life. It long ago ran down Simple Living, and never halted to inquire about the prostrate figure which fell as its victim. With full recognition of motor-car transportation we must turn it to the most practical use. It can not supersede the railway lines, no matter how generously we afford it highways out of the Public Treasury. If freight traffic by motor were charged with its proper and proportionate share of highway construction, we should find much of it wasteful and more costly than like service by rail. Yet we have paralleled the railways, a most natural line of construction, and thereby taken away from the agency of expected service much of its profitable traffic, for which the taxpayers have been providing the highways, whose cost of maintenance is not yet realized.

The Federal Government has a right to inquire into the wisdom of this policy, because the National Treasury is contributing largely to this highway construction. Costly highways ought to be made to serve as feeders rather than competitors of the railroads, and the motor truck should become a coordinate factor in our great distributing system.

This transportation problem can not be waived aside. The demand for lowered costs on farm products and basic materials can not be ignored. Rates horizontally increased, to meet increased wage outlays during the war inflation, are not easily reduced. When some very moderate wage reductions were effected last summer there was a 5 per cent horizontal reduction in rates. I sought at the time, in a very informal way, to have the railway managers go before the Interstate Commerce Commission and agree to a heavier reduction on farm products and coal and other basic commodities, and leave unchanged the freight tariffs which a very large portion of the traffic was able to bear. Neither the managers nor the commission saw fit to adopt the suggestion, so we had the horizontal reduction too slight to be felt by the higher class cargoes and too little to benefit the heavy tonnage calling most loudly for relief.

He was mainly concerned about operation of the railroads. The companies were "not to be

expected to render the most essential service in our social organization without a fair return on capital invested, but the Government has gone so far in the regulation of rates and rules of operation that it has the responsibility of pointing the way to the reduced freight costs so essential to our national welfare. [Applause.]”

He rejected the idea of government operation:

It was Government operation which brought us to the very order of things against which we now rebel, and we are still liquidating the costs of that supreme folly.

“Surely,” he said, “the genius of the railway builders has not become extinct among the railway managers.” When labor, which took 50 to 60 percent of railway earnings, went on strike, it “threatened the paralysis of all railway transportation.” What was needed was “the effective correlation and a concerted drive to meet an insistent and justified public demand.” [“Address of the President,” *Congressional Record – House*, December 8, 1922, pages 213-214]

President Harding’s supporters in Congress concluded that he had laid out enough tasks for 6 or 8 months of work, far beyond what a Congress that was to end on March 4, 1923, could achieve. One issue involved whether to ban railroad workers from going on strike. His requests may not have been as specific as some had hoped, but “his demand for cheaper and better transportation was expressed in no uncertain terms,” according to *The Baltimore Sun*. He had received applause for his call to relieve the plight of farmers by extending them further credits and ensuring the availability of cheaper transportation:

President Harding coupled transportation and farm problems in his message. After showing that additional credits should be extended to the farmer, and that this would possibly be enlarging the powers of the Farm Labor Board, he laid down the proposition that freight rates were now so high and transportation had been so inadequate in recent months that the farmer has suffered “losses counted in tens of millions.”

Although “permanent agricultural good fortune depends on better and cheaper transportation,” according to the President, he laid down no formula for cheapening transportation. [“Harding Plans Make Special Session Likely,” *The Baltimore Sun*, December 9, 1923, page 1]

### **Boonville Bridge Planned**

Judge Lowe had been in Jefferson City, Missouri, on January 26, 1921, for a meeting with the executive committee of the Missouri Old Trails Association at the Madison Hotel. A major portion of the meeting concerned construction of a Missouri River bridge at Boonville. All agreed the bridge must be built. Judge Lowe declared:

The Old Trails Road is a national highway created by an act of Congress and the State Legislature cannot change it and there will be no disposition to change it; but there will be an effort to change the route by way of Jefferson City because of the fact that there is no bridge on the north side of the river. Such a bridge must be built.

While agreeing the bridge was needed, the executive committee was neutral on where it should be located. The members believed that State highway officials should make that decision.

A news account of the meeting continued:

When asked his opinion on the cost of the bridge, Judge Lowe said he believed \$500,000 would be sufficient to cover it. While a free bridge would be preferable, it would probably be necessary to collect tolls until the federal government or state took it over, he believes.

The article quoted Boonville's Arthur W. Wallace:

Boonville is eager to have the bridge cross the river at that point. He stated that should the project cost \$500,000, at least \$250,000 could be raised in Boonville by subscription. It was his opinion, however, that it would not be necessary to build a bridge of this nature. The M.K.&T railroad has contemplated building a new bridge to replace the present one and the town has offered the [rail]road a \$100,000 bonus to make it suitable for automobile traffic. So far the road has not seen fit to take up this offer. Wallace believes that the road will build such a bridge if they were given approximately \$250,000. He holds that if such a scheme should be accepted the cost of maintaining the bridge, which would be borne by the railroad, would save a large amount of money.

The executive committee's chairman, E. N. Hopkins of Lexington offered his thoughts on the National Old Trails Road. These comments came before enactment of the Centennial Road Act:

There should be no contest with regard to the Old Trails Road. Whatever rights other routes may have, the matter of state pride should be recognized. Missouri was the first state to form an Old Trails Road society, June 24, 1911. It is strange that the eastern and western states have taken up the work and completed it. Missouri is the weak link in this great ocean-to-ocean national highway, because the road laws were designed to meet agricultural conditions of a few years ago. Now that we have the funds to carry on the work the idea of going back on the sentiment and first project and take up another one seems to strike at the integrity of the state. ["Committee to Consider Old Trails Bridge," *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, January 26, 1921, page 1]

A year and a half later, on July 8, 1922, Cooper County ratified a \$125,000 bond issue for construction of a free bridge across the Missouri River at Boonville on the National Old Trails Road, by a vote of 4,898 for and 1,708 against. Within Boonville township, only 11 votes were cast against the bonds.

The estimated cost of the bridge was approximately \$500,000. The Old Trails Bridge Company, organized in Boonville, was in charge of construction, with the cost to be divided:

Cooper County bonds:	\$125,000
Old Trails Bridge Company:	\$100,000

Franklin Township, Howard County:	\$25,000*
Federal-aid:	\$250,000**

\* Subject to a vote on July 22.

\*\* Promised.

The bridge was to be 3,128 feet long, including 1,820 feet in the river section consisting of three riveted steel spans 420 feet each, and two 280-foot long steel spans. The longer spans were to be supported on pneumatic concrete piers sunk to bedrock. The two shorter spans would rest on concrete piers resting on piling. The roadway on the bridge would be 20 feet wide. The bridge clearance over the river at the high-water stage would be 55 feet, which engineers predicted would be sufficient for any steamboat to pass under the bridge.

Boonville voted a bond issue of \$50,000 for the approach to the bridge from the city. The approach would be 564 feet long of reinforced concrete. The approach on the other end, in Howard County, would be of piling and earth connecting with a macadam highway.

The Mount Vernon Bridge Company of Mt. Vernon, Ohio, won the contract for the steel work on the bridge at a cost of about \$398,000. The contract for the substructure was awarded to the Missouri Valley Bridge and Iron Company of Leavenworth, Kansas. The contracts called for completion of the bridge by December 31, 1922. ["New Bridge Over the Missouri," *Missouri Road Bulletin*, March 1922, page 7; "Missouri River Bridge at Boonville, 1922/How the Bridge Will be Paid for," *Forty-Second and Forty-Third Annual Reports*, Bureau of Labor Statistics, State of Missouri, 1921-1922, page 766]

### **The New Mexico-Arizona Connection**

BPR Chief MacDonald had asked the States to submit tentative Federal-aid systems and instructed them on how to prepare the maps, along with a caution about length:

The present policy is to assent to no expansion of the existing State system, to encourage a reduction of the systems as revisions are made, and as individual projects are considered to assure that they lie on routes which are sufficiently important to warrant complete improvements as construction work is continued over a period of years.

To comply with BPR's request, Arizona State Engineer Thomas Maddock wrote to each county to request a map showing the roads and a report on total mileage. In his biennial report, he explained, "It was difficult in many cases to get a definite report, owing to the fact that many of the desert and mountains trails were not included."

After compiling the data, Maddock wrote to E. S. Wheeler, BPR's District Engineer for the southwestern States, on December 30, 1921:

The mileage of roads in the various counties of the State is approximately 21,400 miles, which compels us to limit our 7 per cent system to approximately 1,500 miles. This is a reduction of approximately 300 miles from the roads suggested by your office, but this

action is in accordance with instructions of Mr. MacDonald . . . .

The selections included the National Old Trails Road. There was a problem, as Richard K. and Sherry G. Mangum explained in their history of the National Old Trails Road in Arizona:

When the Engineer presented his first map to federal officials for approval of the state's section of 7% Roads, however, he omitted the Holbrook-Gallup [via Lupton] branch of the Old Trails, showing only the Holbrook-Springerville highway.

Maddock had written that he had eliminated "the road from the junction of the Apache trail east of Mesa thru Holbrook to Lupton, as we have not sufficient mileage for this road nor have we the funds in sight for its construction." He added, "The major portion of the road from the junction east of Mesa to Holbrook also lies within the forest reservation so it will no doubt be taken care of by forest funds":

We will endeavor to construct a road from Holbrook to Lupton, but in view of the fact that there is hope of little Apache county bond money being placed on this road and very small possibility [due to opposition from St. Johns and Springerville] of securing an appropriation from the legislature sufficient to construct to Federal Aid standards, we believe that even if we had the mileage available we should not indirectly pledge the state to its early construction by incorporating it in the 7 per cent system.

Federal engineers disapproved the map and sent it back. BPR's Wheeler replied on January 24, 1922, to suggest possible changes in the map. One suggestion was to eliminate the connections from Tombstone to Nogales and from Nogales to Tucson. While they would eventually be desirable, "they are not particularly pertinent to the skeleton system at the present time":

The mileage resulting from such elimination would provide sufficient mileage to close the gap between Holbrook and Lupton, a very necessary connection in view of the fact that the State of New Mexico proposes a connection at Lupton primary in character. In fact it would appear that this connection would almost be required. Further, this eliminated mileage would furnish a possible route from Grand Canyon connecting with your east and west northern route.

Maddock continued to work with BPR officials and participated in a July meeting called by BPR for the 11 western States to finalize their systems. The meeting allowed for discussions to ensure connections of the primary system across State lines.

On July 31, 1922, Maddock confirmed Arizona's agreement:

We are submitting five copies of map of Arizona showing the 7% system, in accordance with the verbal understanding arrived at between the various State Highway Departments, at the meeting held in San Francisco at the call of Mr. Thomas H. MacDonald, Director of the Bureau of Public Roads, on July 25-25, 1922.

Regarding changes from the December 1921 map, he included:

At the suggestion of the Bureau of Public Roads, we have placed on our secondary system the connection between Holbrook and Lupton with the understanding that in return for this action on the part of Arizona, New Mexico will place on her 7% system the road from Lordsburg to Franklin.

The road from Lordsburg, New Mexico, to Franklin, Arizona, carried several main named trails, including the Lee Highway, the Atlantic-Pacific Highway, and the Apache Trail.

On September 1, 1922, Secretary of Agriculture Henry C. Wallace approved Arizona's 7-percent system. It totaled approximately 1,498 miles, "so that the system does not exceed the mileage allowed by law." He listed the routes that were in the system, including:

Topock, Kingman, Ashfork, Flagstaff, Winslow, Holbrook, Lupton, New Mexico Line.

Holbrook, St. Johns, Springerville, New Mexico Line.

Thus, the final 7-percent system included the National Old Trails Road and both of its Arizona-New Mexico connections.

Secretary Wallace added that "it has been considered advisable to defer until later the determination of the classification which shall be given to each of the routes embraced in the system for each state." The relative importance of each route – whether it was primary or interstate in character – could be determined after "future study" developed additional information that "might influence the final classification." In short, the National Old Trails Road's links across the New Mexico State line were included in the 7-percent as neither primary nor secondary routes.

Maddock, in his summary of designation of the State's 7-percent system of Federal-aid roads, stated:

The seven per cent was divided into three per cent primary or interstate, and four per cent inter-county, but in the eleven western public land states practically the entire seven per cent will be absorbed in the construction of interstate roads.

To date no differentiation has been made by the federal law or by the rules and regulations of the Bureau of Public Roads between the primary and secondary highways, as to funds available from the government, the width of the road or the type of surfacing.

In length Arizona's portion of the seven per cent system is less than one per cent of the total seven per cent mileage in the United States. A glance at the map indicated that these roads pass through nearly every large city and town in Arizona. Nearly two-thirds of Arizona's Seven Per Cent system is already improved . . . .

At the present rate of progress, it is conservatively estimated by the Arizona Highway Department that Arizona's Seven Per Cent system will be so improved within the next

fifteen months that it will be possible to average thirty miles per hour in traversing any road across the State. [*Fifth Biennial Report of the State Engineer to the Governor of Arizona*, Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 1921 and 1922, pages 19-31]

The Mangums summarized:

The Arizona Engineer had no choice but to consent, since Arizona sorely needed federal aid and had to abide by the federal decision. Had the federal engineers not insisted on the inclusion of the Gallup branch, the Arizona Engineer would have torpedoed the work of the National Old Trails Road Association, stealthily thwarting it without notice and without review. The Gallup route thus had narrowly survived another attack by hostile forces. But it turned out that this was only a battle, not the end of the war.

The problem was that as was happening around the country, Arizona had been hit by the post-war economic downturn in 1921. The Mangums explained the result:

Bureaucrats in the state house hid the impact by shifting money back and forth from budget to budget, hoping that conditions would improve and fresh funds could be used to patch up their fiscal manipulations. The State of Arizona was essentially kiting checks to pay its bills. The music stopped when an audit revealed that the Arizona Highway Department was in debt to the tune of almost half a million dollars.

In 1921, Arizona did some work on the National Old Trails Road, including the “road West of Williams and down Ash Fork hill,” but the work was primitive “because the funds would only allow grading, not surfacing.” Further work would depend on resolving the financial mess.

At the same time, Flagstaff decided to stop complaining about the Grand Canyon bypass of their city (see discussion of the Walnut Canyon Bypass in part 3) “and took the bill by the horns, convincing Coconino County to improve the road from Maine to the Grand Canyon so that it could be considered the primary automobile road to the scenic wonder”:

County officials had a hidden agenda in connection with this project, for they had decided that once the Maine road was usable, they would no longer maintain the old route to the Grand Canyon from Flagstaff, which would solve the bypass problem . . . once the old road became impassable due to lack of maintenance. [Mangum, Rickard K, and Mangum, Sherry G., *The National Old Trails Road in Arizona*, Hexagon Press, Inc., 2008, pages 105-107]

## **Snailing Around**

The January 1922 issue of AAA’s *American Motorist* contained an article by Elwood Lloyd titled “Snailing Around the U.S.A.” Snailing, he explained, involved traveling around the country in “a motor conveyance that carries its house upon its back and travels slowly.” His vehicle was a General Motors Corporation one-ton truck chassis on which a local truck body builder had erected a “five-room house having all the modern conveniences, but with no room less than 7 by 16 feet in dimension.” He had room for his two dogs.

Traveling around the country he covered the “wonderful roads from Cincinnati to Dayton, “and then nothing finer could be wished for motor travel than the National highway leading eastward to West Virginia”:

The roads were too good. Nothing to do but just sit at the wheel, like a bump on a log, and keep the accelerator depressed. Even the scenery proved uninviting where there was such ease of motion – developed instead of interest, a sort of day dreaming and species of self-hypnotism that did nothing other than to throw the miles behind. Our longest day’s run was made in this section, 127 miles, and of all the cruise thus far it bore the smallest fruit of real enjoyment. From reports heard we are sure that Ohio people are friendly but we have no first hand information on the subject; we traveled too fast to determine for ourselves.

West Virginia’s hilly travel, while not quite so swift as Ohio, is more conducive to friendly loitering and we like her people, notwithstanding certain sections are prone to argue matters of principle in manner forceful. Where we stopped long enough to swap a cheerful smile we found friends.

Southern Pennsylvania and Maryland are countries in which it is a delight to cruise leisurely. The Lincoln and National highways provide good runways for scooting from point to point for delectable side jaunts off the beaten path. [Lloyd, Elwood, “Snailing Around the U.S.A.,” *American Motorist*, January 1922, pages 29-30, 42]

### **President Harding on the Road**

For President Harding, automobile travel was a favorite pastime, along with golf and cards. A contemporary account in *The Baltimore Sun* described him:

The President has succeeded in creating the impression that he is always at the service of the people. He is ever ready to make a speech to a group of children, a delegation of Shriners, a committee of scientists, at a memorial meeting and informal gatherings. No President has ever been more democratic in his personal relations to the people. He likes to mix with them, and very frequently dodges the Secret Service sleuths assigned to protect him from annoyance, to wander around as he pleases. He likes to go off on trips by railway, boat or motor. He could qualify as an expert chauffeur, and some of his passengers say that he “steps on it” a trifle too hard to suit them, which means that he likes to “hit it up.” [“Harding Often At Work, But very Seldom At Play; A Close-Up of President,” *The Baltimore Sun*, July 24, 1921, page T2]

He was the first President who had driven automobiles as opposed to being driven in one. After being elected to the Senate in 1914, he had often driven his Locomobile on the National Old Trails Road to and from his home in Marion, Ohio, to Washington.

He also was the first President to ride in an automobile to his inauguration. The vehicle was a Packard Twin 6 supplied by the Republican National Committee. As *The Washington Post* put

it, “President-elect Harding’s action in choosing a more modern method of transportation probably sounds the death knell of the carriage as the presidential conveyance on Inauguration Day.”

His Locomobile was brought to the White House, and he purchased a new Locomobile in 1921 that cost \$9,000 (the equivalent of \$125,000 today). During his term, however, the official White House automobile during his term was a Pierce-Arrow. The Secret Service would not let him drive any of the vehicles. [Collins, Herbert Ridgeway, *Presidents on Wheels*, Acropolis Books, 1971, page 143-145; “Harding Will Ride in Auto to Capitol,” *The Washington Post*, January 1, 1921, page 1]

On July 1, 1922, President Harding and his wife Florence left at noon in the White House Pierce Arrow for the 83-mile trip to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, to watch 5,000 U.S. Marines reenact Pickett’s Charge, one of the pivotal moments in the Battle of Gettysburg 49 years earlier on July 3, 1863. The presidential party of 10 vehicles arrived in mid-afternoon after a drive of 3 and a half hours. Part of the trip was in a “driving rain,” as *The New York Times* reported. The President made several stops, including one near Frederick, Maryland, at “Richfields,” the birthplace of General Winfield Scott Schley, a hero of the Spanish American War in 1898:

A group of men, women and children had assembled there, including a dozen perspiring men, who said they had been threshing in a nearby field. As the President grasped the hand of each he remarked that any man who lived on a farm was to be envied.

Approaching the Pennsylvania State line, the presidential caravan stopped to allow Governor William C. Sproul and his party to welcome the President to the State. An automobile carrying some of the President’s officials “was crowded off the road to avoid colliding with an automobile ahead and crashed into a fence. The machine was not damaged, however, and none of the occupants was injured.”

Although the official reenactment would take place on July 3, the Marines staged a rehearsal for President Harding to observe before he left for his first presidential visit to his home in Ohio. He watched the rehearsal by climbing to the top of Ziegler’s Grove Observation Tower on Cemetery Ridge. [“Harding Watches Pickett’s Charge,” *The New York Times*, July 2, 1922, page 6]

They stayed overnight in a “temporary White House of canvas and wood,” as the *Times* described it, on a temporary camp the Marines had established for the reenactment. “The structure is equipped with elaborately fitted sleeping rooms [sic], baths, electric lights and even has a front porch.” Bell Telephone Company ran a line to the camp in case a need arose for communication with Washington.

On Sunday, July 2, the Hardings and their party left Gettysburg to drive to Ohio. “Reveille bugles of the Marine Corps at Camp Harding, Gettysburg, roused the Presidential party at 6 o’clock this morning. Few were able to sleep the night through, for a severe thunderstorm with high wind and torrential rain hung over the Gettysburg battlefield for several hours.” Following Sunday services, the Harding party left Gettysburg at around 9:30 a.m. to follow the Confederate Army’s retreat from Gettysburg. Because of the severe storm, Army vehicles had to haul the

automobiles out of the mud.

They briefly followed the Lincoln Highway through Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, and continued on to the National Old Trails Road at Hagerstown and Cumberland, Maryland, where they stopped an hour for lunch. The rest of their trip would be on the National Old Trails Road. “All along the route they were greeted by thousands of person [sic] who had received word of their coming and massed to greet them as they motored through.” At Chambersburg, church services and Sunday school were delayed “to give men, women and children an opportunity to see the President.”

They then continued through a heavy shower to Uniontown. After a 175-mile ride over the Cumberland Mountains, they arrived at the Summit Hotel about 7 miles from Uniontown at around 7:30 p.m. The ride “was taken at a comfortable rate of speed, and a few stops were made on the hill tops to enjoy the views over the rolling valleys of dense shade trees, splashed with the gold of ripening wheat.” At one point, they “drove through a terrific storm over the mountains from Cumberland, and at one stage of the storm the party had to stop to seek shelter from the rain.”

As they traveled, “each village was on the lookout for the President. Motor parties along the road were also on the watch, and all received a cheery wave from the President and Mrs. Harding.” The President retired early at the Summit Hotel, according to *The Washington Post*. He hoped to reach Marion the following evening, “but those in charge of the itinerary hesitate to believe that the journey can end before Tuesday unless good weather and good roads expedite traveling”:

The automobiles accompanying the President’s car were not so fortunate in today’s run from Gettysburg to Uniontown as was that of the President. The latter made the journey without the semblance of a mishap, but heated axles, blowouts and a variety of misfortunes bobbed up during the journey to vex others, and the President’s secretary and his military aid several times were separated by miles from their chief and were compelled to stop along the mountain roads of Maryland to make repairs . . . .

Mr. and Mrs. Harding seem not in the least fatigued by their journey and assert they prefer the view of the fine scenery of the country through which they are passing to a train ride, by which it is only a little more than a night’s journey from Washington to Marion. [“President Resumes Journey to Marion,” *The New York Times*, July 3, 1912, page 6; “Cheer Harding Party,” *The Washington Post*, July 3, 1912, page 1]

At 8 a.m., on Monday, July 3, the Harding caravan left for Marion, still on the National Old Trails Road. They passed “without incident” through the bituminous district where miners were on strike. Between Washington, Pennsylvania, and Wheeling, West Virginia, they had to take “a ten-mile detour, the main road having been closed for repairs”:

This delay and the prolonged enthusiasm of a number of county and local reception committees that hailed the President’s car to pay their respects put the party about two hours behind its schedule.

There was a stop at Wheeling for luncheon, and then the party pushed on for Columbus. Townspeople and farms along the National Highway between Wheeling and Columbus apparently had been waiting hours for a glimpse of the President. Intent upon seeing Mr. Harding and not knowing in advance that General [John J.] Pershing [the leader of the American Expeditionary Force in the recent war] was also in the party, the faces of the watchers were a study when the General's high-powered car flew by behind the President's.

But they were not too surprised to find their voices. On the outskirts of Columbus several automobile loads of the Marion Centennial Committee . . . followed the members of the Presidential party to their hotel . . . . After a quick dinner at their hotel the President and his party left the city for Marion.

President and Mrs. Harding, along with their accompanying vehicles, were escorted to Marion by a delegation of his old friends. They arrived around 11:45 p.m.

Marion officials and residents had expected the President earlier in the evening and had arranged a big welcome. However, when they were told that the presidential party would dine in Columbus and arrive in Marion around midnight, the official welcome home was postponed. "The result was that when a quick dash through the dust from Columbus brought the President and Mrs. Harding here ahead of time there were few people on hand to greet them." Because they had rented their home to a retired coal and lumber dealer, they were headed for the home of the President's father, Dr. George T. Harding, at 498 East Centre Street. ["President is Home After Motor Trip" and "Stops At Columbus For Lunch And Rest," *The New York Times*, July 4, 1922, page 4; "Hardings At Marion," *The Washington Post*, July 4, 1922, page 1]

The Hardings returned to Washington on July 8 – the anniversary of their wedding in 1891 – again following the National Old Trails Road on their 2-day journey. From Columbus, they spent the night at the Summit Hotel before leaving for Washington at 8:30 the next morning. After lunch at the Hagerstown Country Club, the presidential party left for Washington, arriving at around 7:30 p.m. ["Hardings, Wed in '91, Mark Anniversary," *The Baltimore Sun*, July 9, 1922, page 2; "President May Get Home Late Today," *The Evening Star*, July 9, 1922, page 2]

*The New York Times* was inspired by President Harding's auto trip to publish an article about exploring Maryland's National Road. The article by T. C. Carrington, secretary of the Frostburg Commercial Club in Maryland, began:

President Harding's recent selection of the National Road for his motor trip from Gettysburg to Marion, in preference to other more direct routes, has renewed the interest of motorists in that famous continental Highway, the oldest of all through roads and the most replete with scenic beauty and historic associations.

Carrington described the road from Baltimore to western Maryland as an example of "perfect construction" and referred to "the excellent condition in which it is maintained." It was "one of the best known and most traveled highways in the United States." The entire run from Baltimore

or Washington to Wheeling “can be made in twelve hours, but those unused to mountain driving, or who pause to admire the beautiful scenery, take from fifteen to sixteen hours”:

It is the popular route for tourists from the West and Northwest to and from Florida. The road winds for hundreds of miles over majestic mountains and gentle hills, and through happy valleys offering rare and glorious views.

Travel over the National Road has been made peculiarly attractive this Summer by the establishment of comfortable camping grounds at various points in Maryland. There are eight of these camps; going west from Baltimore they are in the following order: Elkridge Farm, one and a half miles west of Ellicott City; Cooksville, Frederick, Conococheague west of Hagerstown, Hancock, Bellgrove, Frostburg, and Negro Mountain. All are supplied with the usual conveniences for tourists, the most elaborate being at Frostburg.

In an era before roadside infrastructure had developed, communities created campgrounds to provide the service that later would be provided by the private sector.

Carrington explained that Maryland’s State roads “have a width of 24 feet with a metal surface of 15 feet, to which is usually added five-foot shoulders”:

The Road Commission is now building five-foot concrete shoulders on each side of the National Road between Frederick and Baltimore, later this work will be extended the entire length. Statistics show that last year the greater number of accidents occurred not on the steep mountain grades but on the comparatively level stretches from Frederick east. The addition of these five-foot shoulders is expected to reduce these accidents. Where the National Road winds over the mountains in Western Maryland the commission is spending about \$75,000 in banking and widening curves.

This Summer the commission has also placed markers at all horizontal and vertical curves on the National Road. These markers are lines put on with specially prepared paint and so drawn around and over curves in the road that the place of the car is clearly indicated to the driver either on the right or left side of the highway. They are of great protection to drivers where vertical curves prevent observation of cars coming over steep grades. At the summit of all mountains are signs giving the name of the mountain and its elevation, also detailed instruction to chauffeurs regarding mountain driving.

[Carrington, T. C., “Motoring in Maryland,” *The New York Times*, July 23, 1922, page 89]

## **Across the Continent**

In June 1922, *The Saturday Evening Post*, the most widely circulated weekly magazine in the country, carried an article about a coast-to-coast trip across the country on the National Old Trails Road. The author, Nina Wilcox Putnam, and her husband traveled across the country in 1920, crossing Missouri in the fall. (She referred to her husband as “George,” but at the time was married to her second husband, Robert J. Sanderson of Boston. During the 1920s, she wrote

a humorous syndicated column that appeared in 400 newspapers called “I and George” that readers of this article would have been familiar with.)

Ms. Putnam was a prolific author, novelist, and playwright, as well as a frequent contributor to the magazine. Her article, which referred to the road only as the Santa Fé Trail, began:

In another year or so they are going to need traffic cops on the Santa Fé Trail all the way from Broadway and Forty-second Street to San Bernardino, California. And it is for the benefit of those who want to join the crowd that this article is written. Having made the trip myself and suffered upon it from lack of certain knowledge, it occurred to me that perhaps a lot of folks who contemplated motoring across this trail might like a little practical dope on the trip. So here you are. Tear this out and stick it in your wallet. You can depend upon its being the real thing.

To begin with, it is possible to cross the continent by motor at any time of the year, but it is not probable. Take it all in all, the best bet for general good weather and good road conditions is from the first of June to the first of September. I wouldn't, however, advise making the start from the East after September first, as on the Lincoln Highway snow would very likely be encountered on the Continental Divide and through the Rockies. As for the time it takes, George – that's my husband – and I drove across in eighteen days, actual driving time, without any night driving at all, taking our way in leisurely fashion and seeing everything as we went.

Two things scared motorists from a transcontinental trip:

Crossing the desert, and the fear of not being able to get adequate supplies for the motor and for their living. Both of these fears are chimeras. There is a gasoline station every seventy-five miles all the way across the desert, and other supplies may be purchased anywhere along the route. There is no Sahara stuff about it, except that which is derived from the Eighteenth Amendment [which declared the production, transport and sale of intoxicating liquors illegal, ushering in Prohibition].

After a motorist decides to make the trip, a route must be selected. “There are no less than six main roads from coast to coast, and the first thing to do is to obtain a good map and look it over carefully.” She recommended the “Transcontinental Map of Main Traveled Roads” issued by AAA. “This is not only a clear and well-arranged map but has a great deal of valuable detailed information printed on the back.”

She chose the National Old Trails Road/Santa Fé Trail, but wrote, “Every trail is worth taking of course.” She broke the trail into a series of “comfortable jumps, that any average driver can make”:

New York to Baltimore, Maryland.  
Baltimore to Wheeling, West Virginia.  
Wheeling to Columbus, Ohio.  
Columbus to Indianapolis, Indiana.

Indianapolis to Terre Haute, Indiana.  
Terre Haute to St. Louis, Missouri.  
St. Louis to Columbia, Missouri.  
Columbia to Kansas City, Kansas.  
Kansas City to Hutchinson, Kansas.  
Hutchinson to Syracuse, Kansas.  
Syracuse to Trinidad, Colorado.  
Trinidad to Las Vegas, New Mexico.  
Las Vegas to Albuquerque, New Mexico  
Albuquerque to Magdalena, New Mexico.  
Magdalena to Springerville, Arizona  
Springerville to Winslow, Arizona  
Winslow to the Grand Cañon.  
Grand Cañon to Seligman, Arizona.  
Seligman to Needles, California.  
Needles to Barstow, California.  
Barstow to Riverside, California.

Another factor in her “jumps” was “the fact that excellent hotel accommodations can be secured in all the places mentioned.”

She chose the route because of “its infinite variety”:

Beginning with the charming Southern city of Baltimore you will next in order come upon the quaint little town of Frederick, which looks exactly as though it had been plucked bodily out of a set for a Civil War motion picture. It’s all you want and expect a small Southern town to look like, and then some. Next you get a good glimpse of the Western Pennsylvania coal fields and mining towns of which you read in the newspapers whenever there is a big rumpus going on in the coal industry.

Wheeling was “a charming city, alive, yet with a touch of quaintness, too” as was true all the way to Columbus. “This is agricultural country, and so much of a muchness as there is of it, then on to Indianapolis:

During the rainy season – or any other season for that matter – it is quite possible that you will find mud in this district, but there is always a way to get through.

The motorist will encounter cornfields in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois – “not measured by the acre but by the mile, and the growth not by the foot but by the yard”:

One passes literally through forests of corn and, I might say, shoals of pigs.

There is a richness about the entire stretch of territory that is enheartening to the Easterner, to whom bugaboos of Bolshevism and labor conditions are constantly presented.

Between Indianapolis and St. Louis, the motorist travels “over the Mississippi bottoms, a fertile flat land which in September is a blaze of golden bloom.” St. Louis “is a true city in the sense in which we know the word in the East,” but the rest of Missouri “is interesting chiefly because here begins a succession of beautiful little cities which are, so far as I know, unique and which continue from St. Louis through and beyond Kansas City to La Junta.”

Gradually, almost imperceptibly, “the whole journey has so far been leading up to the great change from the East to the West, but here it is as though the curtain had suddenly been lifted up on the play itself.” Leaving Kansas City, which she notes calls itself the “The Gateway to the West,” the motorist expects “enormous stretches of flat country filled with wheat and nothing but wheat.” Instead, Kansas was “one of the most varied states in the Union, and one of the most scenically dramatic.”

Approaching Colorado, the motorist is about to encounter mountain grades:

Trinidad comes next, and from this place one makes the Raton Pass over the Rockies, a drive that leads one to enormous heights over extraordinarily well-planned grades, a beautiful safe road, offering views that are like something you have dreamed about.

Alas, alack that I should have to say it of so marvelous a country as New Mexico, but it is the truth that the roads leave very much to be desired. There is a great deal of volcanic ash over this country, a substance which in its rough states is hard on tires, to say the least, and though it is an interesting experiment to cross an extinct volcanic cone heaped with black boulders, it is not good motoring. But it is worth any trouble to reach the city of Santa Fé.

There is situated one of the most interesting and important institutions in the country – to wit: The Institute of American Archeological Research, housed in buildings that are perfect reproductions of old Spanish and Indian structures. The original Spanish governor’s palace is preserved in character.

The city of Santa Fé “is itself remarkably beautiful and picturesque, replete with old churches and walled gardens. One is reluctant to leave it.” She commented on interesting sights in the area, including how an “excellent road leads right to the edge of a thousand-foot cliff at the bottom of which a prehistoric community house lies, and to see this at sunset is to find suddenly at your feet the civilization of a bygone age, revealed as if by magic, in all its strange beauty”:

I note with interest that none of the big road maps mention the La Bajada grade. But believe me, anyone who has once been over it is likely to mention it – considerably! It consists of a series of sharp turns, and if you like the shoot-the-chutes at Coney Island you will be strong for it. In Santa Fé they told me it had originally been a mule trail used by the Indians and Spanish as far back as 1600, and all I can say is that it sure was some mule that first made the grade.

The drive from Santa Fé to Albuquerque, a large and prosperous town, is a dramatic one, good for dry weather, but in the event of a cloudburst in the mountains it is sometimes

impassable. I have known of cars being stalled between washes for twenty-four hours at a stretch, unable to go either back or forwards.

In Albuquerque, she confronted the problem all motorists on the National Old Trails Road had to address, namely “which route to take to Holbrook, and to do so is an extremely difficult thing”:

If your time is somewhat limited and the upper road is in good condition I would suggest taking that one, as it makes the Laguna Indian Reservation very easily accessible, and there are no Indian villages on the southern trail. Los Lunas is the turning point where one must make one's final decision. As a matter of fact both ways are interesting, although, all things considered, the northern route is perhaps more picturesque. On the southern route the Datil Forest offers a relief from the desert country and is extremely beautiful in a friendly and more intimate manner, and one rides for hours through great cathedral-like columns of fox-tail pines, an uncommonly straight tree with red bark and dark green needles. The route is unquestionably cooler than the other.

After discussing the Hope Reservation between Winslow and Gallup, Putnam discussed the Grand Canyon trip:

The road from Winslow to Flagstaff is through a mountainous pine-clad country, and both roads up to the Grand Cañon are passable but not good, having sand in many places, but no very bad grades. But from Williams to Needles, California, is perhaps the most difficult part of the trip, for the roads are undeniably poor and it is desert country.

Kingman, “one of the biggest mining interests for hundreds of miles around,” was the “only large town en route.” Motorists had two options between Kingman and Needles, California:

One is across a rather bad stretch of alkali desert, through Yucca and Topock. And the other is by way of Goldroad, directly through the mountains over very bad roads and dangerous grades, but passing through several real mining settlements that bear all the earmarks of a gold boom town in a moving picture. Exceptionally careful driving is certainly necessary hereabouts, for the roads are full of blind turns and there is a long and unusually muddy stretch of bottomland approaching the Colorado River, which must be ferried on this route. The other route, which crosses the alkali stretch, is much longer, but the approach to Needles is over a bridge.

At Needles, “the real desert, the part of the trip which most people fear, is still before one.” Here, she credited the Automobile Club of Southern California, but she misunderstood its role

compared with the California highway department:

But here begins the work of that astonishing organization, the Automobile Club of Southern California, which has attempted to lay a hard road over the face of the desert. In point of fact it has actually done so, though succeeding at times indifferently well, and after wading through heavy sand for a few miles immediately out of Needles one comes upon this paved boulevard in the middle of nowhere. It is an unexpected sight that raises

one's hopes unduly, for the character of the ground is such as to make a permanent road little short of impossible. Nevertheless, their attempt has resulted in good stretches, although the frequent sandstorms have completely buried it in places. Very likely even as I write[,] this condition has undergone a tremendous improvement, but it is true that the terrors of crossing the desert have been greatly alleviated by the work of the club and you can now drive and still look at something besides the wheel and the road immediately ahead of you.

Moreover, the desert was not like the Sahara. It was filled with growth and color, "except that one piece of alkali country between Kingman and Needles":

If you can see nothing else upon the desert be sure you train yourself to perceive it shifting color and the weird tricks the light plays. More than this I cannot say. If you can't see what is there I can't tell you about it; it is one of those things that everyone must find for himself.

Between Daggett and Barstow, "the road is difficult; sandy, rough and high crowned." The road between Barstow and the San Bernardino Pass "is also poor, the roadbed being of loose gravel, and the grades stiff":

But at the end of this pass the miracle of California roads begins. At the very summit, sharply divided from the crude trail as though a knife had cut the black tar ribbon off abruptly, the paving starts, and from there on into San Bernardino, and thereafter, the beauty of the roads and the charm of the scenery both exceed the Eastern motorist's wildest dream of perfection.

She went on to discuss what to wear; tools and equipment to carry in the car; the choice of car; life in the wilderness; sleeping and eating; and the wonders of the west. For women, her advice on clothing began:

East of the Mississippi George and I found it practicable to wear just such motor clothes as we would use around home. But we both made one serious mistake – to wit: We started out in dark clothing. Believe me, before we'd gone very far we found that what you want is dirt-colored clothes. West of the Mississippi khaki for all hands becomes positively *de rigueur*. After we left Kansas City I put on a pair of riding trousers, and oh, the joy of that! I need not sing their praises to any female who has tried them, but for the encouragement of those who have not, allow me to insist and reiterate that they are the only thing to wear in thorough comfort west of the Rockies. Everyone from grandmamma to the snappiest chicken in the snappiest roadster that you pass wears 'em. Do not dream of going without them. Every department store that boasts of a motoring goods department now carries coat and knickers of khaki for women as well as for men, and these suits are remarkably reasonable, being purchasable for as little as six dollars; and believe me they will give six hundred dollars' worth of comfort and ease. I assure you, ladies, that you can walk into the best hotels through the Far West in the aforesaid garments without the slightest embarrassment, and the clerk will not even smile after your back is turned.

She concluded her article with a discussion of the wonders of the West:

But replete with interest as the whole Santa Fé Trail is, and inescapable as are the beauties thereof, I am still going to lay stress upon the advantages of certain side trips that are easily made from the main road, and without which no transcontinental tour is complete.

All through the Middle West you will recognize the trade names of familiar articles blazing across in front of their home site, and you will find a welcome from practically all these concerns if you care to visit them. I would suggest that whenever possible you do so, inasmuch as actually seeing the tremendous scale upon which America manufactures goods and the wide variety of articles we produce aids materially in forming a proper concept of the country as a whole.

St. Louis does not appear to be a packing center, which it is, "for its residence district is uncommonly handsome, and it possesses an exceptional art museum":

Kansas City is an object lesson in home building, and the average Easterner will be astounded at the uniform beauty of its residence developments and the interesting manner in which areas are restricted to a given type of architecture. The plan upon which its boulevards are laid out also is unique, and the planting of the parkways that border them will bring joy to the garden lover and the tree worshiper.

She found nothing particularly interesting to recommend between Kansas City and La Junta:

La Junta is the real starting point beyond which a variety of interesting side trips may be taken, beginning with the comparatively short run up to Colorado Springs via Pueblo, where the road in normal times is excellent, and from which a jog may be made back to the main route via Aguilar to Trinidad.

She recommended that readers planning a trip through the area write to the U.S. Department of the Interior to request "an excellent decorative pamphlet covering all the national parks," including information about motor vehicle regulations, saddle-horse rentals, and other details. "All these folders contain splendid maps, which are kept up to the minute as to road conditions."

She had already spoken of the wonders of Santa Fé, but south of Albuquerque, she advised, "allow yourself an hour or two at Isleta, an Indian village, which is one of the cleanest and most self-respecting of the Indian centers but which has not foregone picturesqueness in favor of blue jeans, as so many of the professional railway-station Indians have."

On the southern route between St. Johns and Holbrook, allow time to stop at the Petrified Forest. On the northern route from Belen, "it is a short trip to the Enchanted Mesa, while Laguna, perhaps the most noted of the pueblos, is almost directly on the railroad but is exceedingly picturesque in spite of the fact that it is the most highly commercialized of the Indian villages.

From Thoreau, New Mexico, is “a splendid trip to the more remote Pueblo Bonita, but Gallup was a starting point for several beautiful side trips, “notably the Zuni Indian Reservation and the far-famed Cañon de Chelly, which is perhaps the most dramatic trip of all.

At Winslow, “you can go down to the Roosevelt Dam over a somewhat difficult but exceedingly beautiful road, or north to the four little sky cities which represent the last stronghold of the Hopi Indians.”

Whatever else the motorist sees or passes up, “you cannot, must not, pass up the Grand Cañon of the Colorado.”

The gold country began at Kingman, “and the great basins used for washing gold by modern methods are only one of the many interesting things you will want to stop off and see.”

Nothing to see of importance was located between Kingman and Barstow, “and the only thing calculated to delay the traveler, who has by now become thirsty for a glimpse of California, are the marvelous experiments in dry farming for which this district is famous.”

Putnam concluded her article:

Upon leaving Barstow I strongly advise making straight to Riverside, California. But there is no news in that; I have from the start been advising you to go to California.  
[Putnam, Nina Wilcox, “A Jitney Guide to the Santa Fé Trail,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, June 10, 1922, pages 26-30, 76-77]

*The Columbia Evening Missourian* featured an article about Putnam’s article on its front page on June 9, 1922:

The authoress passed through Columbia in the fall of 1920 on a transcontinental tour and at that time liked the city so well that she remained here for two nights and a day. Women students in the School of Journalism gave an entertainment for her on this visit. At that time she expressed enthusiasm over Columbia and surrounding territory.  
[“National Old Trails Road Among Best,” *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, June 9, 1922, page 1]

### **The Worst Stretch in Missouri**

Readers of *The Columbia Evening Missourian* on June 13, 1922, must have been relieved, if not surprised, by the beginning of a first page article:

Tourists traveling to and from many parts of the United States stop at the Columbia Tourist Camp.

Among those at the camp last night were Mr. and Mrs. P. M. Gortner, of Wabash, Ind., who are motoring to Pomona, Cal.

“The worst roads in the United States are not in Missouri,” Mr. Gortner said emphatically. “Everybody told me to beware Missouri roads but they should have said Kentucky, for that’s where the worst ones are.” [“Many Motors Stop at Camp For Tourists,” *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, June 13, 1922, page 1]

In early September, however, the Commercial Club of Columbia, Missouri, received a “bombshell” in the form of a letter from the Automobile Club of Missouri. One of the club’s drivers, who had crossed the State on the National Old Trails Road, concluded that the road between Columbia and Rocheport was in “very, very bad condition; consequently, it makes it impossible for us to send tourists over this route.”

Directors of the Commercial Club agreed that this stretch of the road was in deplorable condition, as a news report explained:

It was brought out at the meeting that tourists coming through Columbia say the worst piece of road encountered on a trip across the country is between Columbia and Rocheport. The directors of the Commercial Club were deeply concerned over the condition of the road and expressed a desire and willingness to do everything possible to remedy the trouble.

They appointed a committee, headed by E. W. Stephens of the Missouri Old Trails Association, to determine what could be done in the short run to improve the road and to identify a permanent solution. “The committee was instructed to confer with county road supervisors, school districts, the State Highway Department, and others interested in good roads to ascertain what can be done to get the road in better condition at least until the permanent highways are completed.” [“Road Must Be Improved Soon,” *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, September 4, 1922, page 1]

The same issue of the newspaper carried an article above the Columbia-Rocheport bombshell about plans to apply 254 miles` of concrete from the Kansas City-St. Louis road.

The Kansas City-St. Louis primary road, which passes through Columbia, will be built the entire distance of 254 miles of concrete eighteen feet wide, B. H. Piepmeier, chief engineer, announced Saturday. Possibly in the sections adjoining the larger cities the width may be increased to twenty feet, he said.

The concrete will be built with a line of tar in a wide crevice in the center to divide the traffic. The line may serve also as an expansion joint.

The first block of \$5,000,000 in bonds, according to the \$60,000,000 road program, was sold to a syndicate headed by Liberty Central Trust Company of St. Louis for the high bid of \$5,032,215. Seven syndicates submitted bids for the entire amount and the three individual bids were made for parts of the 5 million dollar issue.

The bonds are to be printed as soon as possible and delivered to the successful bidders. The \$5,032,213, including premium and accrued interest, must be in the State Treasury by September 20.

The first contract for road construction work will be let as soon as the money is obtained. Final arrangements will be made September 19, and according to the program construction work will begin early in October. The contracts for the primary system, upon which Columbia is situated, will be let in sections of not more than five miles. The first contracts to be let will be near Kansas City-St. Joseph and St. Louis. Fifteen sections of the secondary system will be let at the same time and work begun immediately.

The fund commission of the highway department may sell another 5 million dollar bond issue this year. ["254 Miles of Concrete For New Highway," *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, September 4, 1922, page 1]

On September 7, Stephens approached Piepmeier, who indicated that funds were not available for the Columbia-Rocheport road, but that after surveying for the cross-State highway was completed, funds might be available for part of the stretch. At present, the State almost was ready to advertise a contract for 25 miles of road in St. Louis County.

Those living along the gravel road admit it needs immediate attention:

According to one of the men on the ferry boat at Rocheport, tourists are also complaining about the entire road across Boone County on the Old Trails road. It is said they think the Fulton Gravel road in the Harg Special Road District from Big Cedar Creek on the Callaway County line to the beginning of the Columbia Special Road District road is almost as rough as the Rocheport end of it, and the four miles west of Columbia in the Columbia Special Road District is nothing to brag about. ["No Funds are Available for Road Repairs," *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, September 8, 1922, page 1]

Stephens called a meeting for October 11 in Rocheport to discuss improving the road. A news report about the meeting began:

Nearly fifty farmers, living between Columbia and Rocheport met at the Midway School house last night and effected an organization to carry out the plans made for the repair of the Rocheport road. Committees for the solicitation of money from those living along the road were appointed and the plans for the repair of the road, the nature and extent of the work, were gone over.

Already, \$1,500 had been pledged for the work, with \$942 in cash. The new organization was going to try to raise more funds, in part by seeking contributions from the farmers living along the road. Some of the farmers would be able to contribute by working on the road.

Kirby Raines, a roadbuilder from Fayette, explained the problem to those at the meeting:

It is a waste of money to haul gravel to fill the holes in the road, unless it is properly ditched and crowned. If you just pile a lot of gravel on the bad parts of the road, it will all be washed away before next summer. The road must be well ditched to carry off the

water that now stands in the center of the road.

The outer edges of these parts of the road must be torn up and graded in the center. This will require the use of an elevating grader. In most places clay is needed to bind the gravel and sand together.

He estimated the work would cost an average of \$300 a mile for the 10 miles of the Columbia-Rocheport road.

The group discussed asking students from the School of Engineering at the University of Missouri in Columbia to participate in the road repairs, but a decision was not made. The concern was that not enough tools were available for so many students and farmers; they would have to work in shifts. ["50 Farmers Organize for Road Repair," *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, October 11, 1922, page 1]

On October 19, 12 farmers came to Columbia to ask the County Court for aid on the road, but the members were not available. They met instead with a county clerk to get an estimate of the possible funds available for the work, but were informed that all the County Court's funds had been spent and that the current members would leave office in January. The court would not have any additional funds until the next term.

Aside from securing funds, the farmers were looking for an experienced road contractor who would be able to take complete charge of the construction work and see it to completion. ["Farmers Seek Aid of Court to Mend Road," *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, October 19, 1922, page 1]

On October 19, the committee headed by Dr. Porter Mitchell, appointed Frank M. Quisenberry of the Midway district to direct construction of the improved gravel road. The plan was to work on several portions of the road at the same time so the farmers involved could work close to home. Initial work will be financed by the funds raised by the farmers before drawing on the \$1,800 contributed by citizens of Columbia. A member of the committee, John T. McMullen, explained that the funds would be kept as far as possible for maintenance work on the road over the coming year. The committee considered it a waste of money to improve the road without providing for its upkeep. ["Repairs Start by Next Week," *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, October 20, 1922, page 1]

The plan agreed on for the project was to dig ditches for drainage. Gravel will then be applied to fill in the holes before the surface is leveled. The committee had located rollers to pack the gravel in place and smooth the surface of the road. The project also included repairing culverts and bridges. McMullen commented, "It is very gratifying the way all persons solicited have responded and I think we will have no trouble now in putting the road in shape for travel." ["First Work on Road to Begin," *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, October 24, 1922, page 1]

In early December, the newspaper reported:

Repair of the Rocheport gravel road will be completed within the next two weeks if the weather continues favorably, according to Dr. Porter Mitchell, one of the executive

committee in charge of the work.

Work on the road has been in progress for the last week under the direction of Frank Quisenberry, superintendent. The road from the Columbia Special Road District to within three miles of Rocheport had been plowed on the outer edges, and the gravel that loosened was being graded to the center of the road . . . .

Sixty-Five loads of gravel have been placed on the road. Doctor Mitchell said that the recent rains and the travel over this part of the road have packed the new roadbed until it is as hard and smooth as a city street.

Gravel is being obtained from Sugar Creek and is costing the farmers nothing. Milton Lowery, who lives near the Rocheport road, is also donating gravel. Dr. Mitchell said that so far the repair of the road has cost only a small sum.

A large force of men is to be put on the road next week hauling gravel and spreading it over the road. More than a dozen men and many teams and two graders have been busy this week. The plowing of the old roadbed is being done by a tractor which is capable of plowing a mile of road a day.

Doctor Mitchell said this morning that when actual work on the road was begun, enthusiasm was high and most of the pledges of money and help were doubled and even trebled. ["Road Nearing Completion," *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, November 3, 1922, page 1]

By December 5, work was nearing completion. Men were directing teams dragging the road and filling in the "chuck" holes. McMullen reported that the work was progressing satisfactorily, with the road already surprisingly smooth considering how bad it was at the start. As of mid November, more than \$500 had been spent on the work. McMullen estimated that the balance of funds when the project was completed would be enough to maintain the road for more than 6 months. ["Road Work Finished Soon," *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, December 5, 1922, page 1]

According to *Good Roads*, engineering students wanted to help repair the road:

Three hundred University of Missouri engineering students recently volunteered their services for repairing the Columbia-Rocheport section of the Old Trails roads [sic], between St. Louis and Kansas City.

The road, which was hard-surfaced a number of years ago, is described by tourists as the worst in the United States.

The Missouri Automobile Club, according to reports received here, has been sending tourists across the state by other routes because of this bad stretch of road. ["University of Missouri Students Build Roads," *Good Roads*, December 6, 1922, page 197]

## **D.A.R. Congress – 1923**

During the 32nd D.A.R. Continental Congress, Mrs. Talbott reported on the work of the National Old Trails Road Committee. She began by emphasizing “the educational and historic value” of the committee’s work:

We believe that in the concentrated effort to search out the pioneers it has not only given to us, individually, a keener appreciation of the glory which crowned their sacrifice, but we have gained a broader knowledge of what “America” means. We are prone to accept conditions as we find them; but this movement has set in motion influences which will continue to operate long after our work is done.

The “determination of the greatest patriotic society, in the world, to erect a Monument extending from Ocean to Ocean, has drawn out the best your chairman could produce in a year of tremendous activity”:

Since the last Congress your National Chairman has written 717 personal letters; has distributed more than 1,000 maps of our road, and has issued 2,294 bulletins; also Congressmen have been interviewed regarding our bill, and House Resolution.

During this year there had been introduced in the House of Representatives a Joint Resolution by which the name “National Old Trails Road” is to be permanently and officially settled, as applying to this highway, and commending the patriotic services of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the National Old Trails Road Association, in promoting and signing the same. This Resolution did not pass the last session, but it will pass at the next session.

These two organizations have identical objects; that is, to ascertain and publish its location, its history, its relation to the development of the great west and the westward progress of civilization in pioneer days; the reconstruction of this highway into a wonderful military and civil transportation line; the permanent fixation by Acts of Congress of the name “National Old Trails Road,”: and the permanent sign-posting thereof, so that those who run may read, and become interested in the work of those who contributed so largely to the development of this country.

To show the value of cooperation, “and in the hope of completing our fund this year as the crowning achievement of our President General’s splendid term, the National Chairman offered a prize of \$25.00 to the State which contributed the largest amount, in proportion to membership, for our road signs.”

Although Mrs. Talbott would be stepping down as chairman, she concluded her final report with enthusiasm:

In closing our final report I cannot adequately express my appreciation of the splendid co-operation which has always been accorded to me. To my State Chairmen I render whole-hearted praise; many of you I have not seen but across the distance we have

clasped hands, and you who have so nobly rallied to the National call have made this a labor of love. To our National Officers, who have journeyed hither and yon, along our road, I express my appreciation of their every effort to advance this work . . . .

One more year of enthusiastic work will see our road signed from coast to coast. All of the details for the completion of our Memorial to the Pioneers have been worked out, and the end is in sight!

Pioneers, O Pioneers;  
'Tis your toil shall break the road;  
'Tis your backs shall bear the load;  
'Tis your souls must feel the goad;  
Where ye sow shall others reap;  
Others laugh where ye must weep;  
But your deathless souls shall keep;  
Vigil through the waiting years,  
Pioneers, O Pioneers.

[*Proceedings of the Thirty-Second Continental Congress of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, April 1923, pages 130-134*]

### **Four Great Highways**

*The Literary Digest* informed its readers in May 1923 of their options for transcontinental travel by automobile:

“The majority of motorists dream of the time when it will be possible for them to cross the American continent in one continuous journey,” says Arthur Cobb, Jr., in *Motor Life* (Chicago), but many are deterred from undertaking this jaunt because “they visualize themselves hanging over the brink of a cañon on a winding mountain road or plowing hub-deep through sand for weary miles across the dry and dismal deserts.”

The writer, who is manager of the Blue Book Touring Club, hastens to assure us that “the excellent work done during the past few years in improving coast-to-coast highways” makes a trip from the Atlantic to the Pacific no more formidable than one from Chicago to Milwaukee, for instance, “always provided you have sufficient leisure at your disposal.” Obviously the duration of a transcontinental journey depends a good deal upon the motorist’s inclinations and, to some extent, upon the car he drives, but with a total distance of 3,300 miles to cover, it is safe to figure on three weeks for the trip, taking 150 to 200 miles a day as a good driving average.

More important than the time is the route. It may be a surprise to some tourists to learn that the Lincoln Highway is not the only connecting-link between the shores of the two oceans. Three other “trails” across this broad land are systematically blazed with road-markers throughout their length, and no one possesses any definite superiority over the others.

The three trails were the Yellowstone Trail (Boston to Seattle), the Old Spanish Trail (Jacksonville, Florida, to San Diego), and the National Old Trails Road:

Unfortunately a great deal of confusion and in some cases deliberate misrepresentation exists. In many cases even nationally known highways coincide for a distance, tending to confuse the tourist who attempts to follow the markers; and in other cases, owing to sectional disputes or road construction, the exact routing is uncertain, the officials of the highways themselves not being able to give a straight answer to questions about the routing. The highway officials are in many cases not answerable, as these conditions sometimes arrive from causes beyond their control.

Whichever route the motorist chooses, “a trip across the American continent is an education and a lesson in geography that will last throughout the remainder of your life.” The automobile is the only means of conveyance “suited to so all-inclusive a purpose.”

As for the highways, Cobb wrote:

The National Road and the Old Spanish Trail are usually open the year round; the others are not. Of these two the National Road is by far the better. The Lincoln may be traveled at any time from June 1 to the middle of October, but its reputation is suffering severely from conditions in Nevada and western Utah. The Yellowstone Trail should not be attempted west of Minneapolis before June 15, nor after snow begins to fall in autumn.

As Cobb explained, the Lincoln Highway was the “most widely known of the transcontinental routes,” but he warned that “through western Utah and Nevada there is a great deal of rough, unimproved road, and while passable, it is somewhat unpleasant.” (The problem will be discussed later.)

As for the National Old Trails Road, Cobb described it:

The National Road is hard-surfaced from Washington to beyond the Mississippi River, then stretches of dirt and gravel alternate. Through the Mohave Desert, it is “sandy, but nearly always passable.” One advantage, says Mr. Cobb, is that –

This route goes through the Petrified Forest, and furnishes a side-trip to the Grand Cañon. If you take the National Road and wish to visit Denver and Yellowstone Park and points north, you can leave it at Indianapolis and follow the Pike’s Peak Ocean-to-Ocean Highway through St. Joseph, Missouri, to Colorado Springs or Denver, then north over the Yellowstone Highway to Yellowstone Park.

Cobb also summarized the Old Spanish Trail:

The Old Spanish Trail . . . is mostly sand-clay as far as New Orleans, with a few short stretches of dirt and several long ferries. If you take this route, watch your ferry schedules closely as the boats across Mobile Bay and into New Orleans run but twice a

day, and plans should be made accordingly. From New Orleans to San Antonio the road is largely gravel with some stretches of hard surface; from San Antonio to El Paso mostly dirt and gravel with forty-five miles of concrete on each side of El Paso; from there on, alternative stretches of sand and gravel as far as Phoenix.

You have two choices from Lordsburg to Phoenix, one via Douglas and the other through Globe. The Douglas road is in very good condition and always passable and includes about twenty-five miles of concrete from Douglas to Bisbee. The shorter route through Globe is good in dry weather and will save considerable mileage, but should not be used in wet weather. From Phoenix a concrete road extends thirty-six miles west through an irrigation district to Buckeye and enters the desert at Hassayampa . . .; from here a fair desert road extends to Mecca, from which point pavement is almost complete to Los Angeles.

The Yellowstone Trail “is hard-surfaced to Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and gravel from there to Ortonville, Minnesota; dirt – with a few short stretches of gravel from Ortonville to Billings; alternating dirt, gravel and hard surface from Billings to Seattle, with much pavement within the State of Washington.” [“Four Great Highways From Sea to Sea,” *The Literary Digest*, May 26, 1923, pages 61-65]

### **Another New President**

After campaigning in 1920 for a "return to normalcy," President Harding would preside over one of the most corrupt Administrations in American history. The first major problem, known as the Teapot Dome Scandal, had emerged in 1922. Secretary of the Interior Albert Fall had leased Navy petroleum reserves at Teapot Dome in Wyoming, and other locations, to private oil companies at low rates without competitive bidding. Investigation of the emerging scandal led to other scandals that undermined the Harding Administration's reputation, although the full extent of the corruption was not known in 1922 and 1923. In a 2021 survey of presidential historians of all 45 Presidents, President Harding ranked 37th, between President Herbert Hoover and Millard Fillmore. [C-SPAN Survey on Presidents 2021, C-SPAN.org]

With the economy gaining strength in 1923, President Harding's confidence about his political future was increasing, as biographer Francis Russell explained:

By the end of spring Harding's intimates were aware that he intended to run for a second term . . . . Facing four more years in the White House, Harding at last gave up the familiar thought of returning to his old editorial desk.

He was planning a trip to Alaska, the first President to visit the territory. He called the trip a Voyage of Understanding, as Russell explained:

But what had originally been planned as an excursion, he now saw in his earnestness as a “Voyage of Understanding,” reaching out and bringing his policies and his great issue of the World Court over the heads of the self-seeking politicians to the people's judgment. He would speak at every city and whistle stop along the way, just as – although the irony

escaped him – [former President Woodrow] Wilson had done four years before in defense of his League [of Nations]. Writing to Walter Brown [an aide during the 1920 campaign], Harding asked his help in planning the journey from Washington to Seattle to Alaska and back by way of San Francisco and Los Angeles, asking him to visit each scheduled city and to check up on all the local arrangements . . . .

To assert and justify his leadership in a series of speeches, to see and draw attention to his country's neglected Northern territory where no President had yet set foot, to encounter ordinary shirt-sleeved Americans – that was how Harding saw his Voyage of Understanding. In preparing for his Alaskan journey it was as if he wanted to break the threads spun round him in Washington and “bloviate” with his obscure fellow countrymen beyond the city. He sensed his own inner change and confided to his friends that he felt a “conscious spiritual influence” in his actions. Walter Brown's elaborate schedule for the tour now seemed an imposition. He complained to Colonel [Edmund] Starling [head of the White House Secret Service detail] that Brown was making a circus of the trip and ordered the Colonel to cut every program to the bone. Even so, the President was unavoidably faced with eighteen set speeches, plus innumerable informal talks at rural depots and whistle stops . . . .

Harding's mood as he made the last preparations for his Voyage of Understanding continued morose and restless. He told [Judson] Welliver [one of Harding's political secretaries] before leaving Washington that people he had supposed to be his friends had been “selling him all over this town, and all over the country.” But his mind was made up now to run for a second term and at the right time he would go to the country with his story of how his administration had been betrayed. “And the people will believe me,” he concluded, “when they hear that story.” [Russell, Francis, *The Shadow of Blooming Grove: Warren G. Harding in His Times*, McGraw Hill Book Company, 1968, page 573]

After visiting the western States, he planned to return to Washington by a U.S. Navy ship through the Panama Canal that would allow him to relax before getting back to work.

After his trip to Alaska, he traveled along the West Coast. On August 2, 1923, President died of a heart attack in San Francisco.

Although presidential historians consider Harding one of the country's lesser leaders, highway historians give him high marks for his role in creating the Federal Highway Act of 1921. The landmark 1921 Act corrected the remaining defects in the Federal-aid highway program established in 1916 and modified in 1919 (see part 3). Under the legislation, the State highway agencies and BPR began one of the greatest road building eras in history, one that continued with some interruptions, through the 1930s, resulting in an interstate system of paved two-lane highways. The principles it established would be at the core of the program established in the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 to build the modern Interstate System.

In addition, on June 19, 1922, President Warren G. Harding signed the Post Office Appropriation Act for 1923. The legislation included an unusual provision for the Federal-aid highway

program that replaced the statutory phrase "providing appropriation" with "there is hereby authorized to be appropriated." Although an appropriation of the authorized funds would still be needed, the change in wording meant that the Secretary of Agriculture's approval of a Federal-aid highway project "shall be deemed a contractual obligation of the Federal Government." In short, the Secretary's approval would "obligate" the Federal Government to pay the Federal share even though Congress had not yet approved a separate annual appropriation act for the authorized Federal-aid funds for that fiscal year. With contract authority, the State highway agencies could plan multi-year projects with the assurance they would be reimbursed for the Federal share. To this day, contract authority, signed into law by President Harding, remains a key element of the Federal-aid highway program.

Vice President Calvin Coolidge was in Vermont visiting family at the time. Because the home did not have electricity or a telephone, a messenger was dispatched to deliver the news about President Harding's death. On August 3, Calvin Coolidge's father, a justice of the peace, administered the oath of office to the new President.

President Coolidge's general view was that the Federal Government should play a more limited role than it had played in recent years. He did not believe the Federal Government had a role in regulating the stock market or should help farmers through hard times. He summed up his philosophy of government in a comment to Senator James Watson of Indiana: "Senator, don't you know that four-fifths of all our troubles in this life would disappear if we would only sit down and keep still?" He earned the nickname, "the Prince of Laissez-Faire." [Smith, Gene, *The Shattered Dream: Herbert Hoover and the Great Depression*, William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1970, page 48-50]

The new President supported highway development, but not the Federal-aid concept, which was used for highways, but also for activities as diverse as vocational education, cooperative agricultural extension work, maternity and infant hygiene, and industrial rehabilitation.

In his first Annual Message to Congress on December 5, 1923, he spoke in support of expenditures for highways:

Highways and reforestation should continue to have the interest and support of the Government. Everyone is anxious for good highways. I have made a liberal proposal in the Budget for the continuing payment to the States by the Federal Government of its share for this necessary public improvement. No expenditure of public money contributes so much to the national wealth as for building good roads.

He began speaking against Federal-aid on January 21, 1924, just 5 months after taking office. During a meeting of the Business Organization of the Government, he explained that, "There is scarcely an economic ill anywhere in our country that cannot be traced directly or indirectly to high taxes." He was in favor of sound administration as opposed to the tendency "to lapse into the old unbusinesslike and wasteful extravagance." After much thought, he had concluded that "the financial program of the Chief Executive does not contemplate expansion of these subsidies." He explained his concern:

My policy in this matter is not predicated alone on the drain which these subsidies make on the National Treasury. This of itself is sufficient to cause concern. But I am fearful that this broadening of the field of Government activities is detrimental both to the Federal and the State Governments. Efficiency of Federal operations is impaired as their scope is unduly enlarged. Efficiency of State governments is impaired as they relinquish and turn over to the Federal Government responsibilities which are rightfully theirs.

Although President Coolidge based his opposition to Federal-aid on his view of economy in government affairs and his support for lower Federal taxes, sympathetic State officials saw the debate he had launched from their perspective. Governor Albert C. Ritchie of Maryland, a Democrat who strongly opposed Federal intrusion in State affairs, joined in the denunciation of Federal-aid in a speech to the Governors' Conference at Poland Springs, Maine. After complaining that the Federal Government collected more in taxes from residents of Maryland than did the State government, he explained one of the causes for "this Federal invasion of the pocket-books of the people":

One of the contributory causes of this Federal invasion of the pocket-books of the people is maintenance of an enormous and growing overhead of bureaus and commissioners, of which some are not needed, while others should be curtailed, and still others do work and spend money for purposes which should be turned back to the states...

He particularly disliked the 50-50 Federal-aid concept that he said had begun in 1914 with

Federal land grants. In fact, he considered the term a misnomer:

The Federal Government can scarcely be said to "aid" the states, when all it does is take money from the people of the states and then give it back to them again. Most certainly the Federal Government does not "aid" the states, when what it actually does is give back only a part of what it collects from them, and keep the rest to pay the cost of expensive bureaus maintained for the purpose of giving it back.

He also questioned the quality of Federal supervision:

Then the everlasting annoyance of Federal inspectors and investigators and agents, often irresponsible and incompetent, prying into business which ought to be private and into affairs which ought to be personal, and exercising supervision and demanding reports and audits of almost every conceivable kind.

He was not singling out the Federal-aid highway program, but he did point out what he considered another injustice by using roads as an example:

The charge falls on all alike. But when the money goes out of the Federal Treasury,

gross discrimination is involved . . . . Maryland began her splendid system of state roads about 1910, and was far ahead of other states when Federal Aid for highways commenced in 1916. Other states have since been helped with Federal money in starting their improved road work. Maryland carried her burden alone for at least six years. [Ritchie, Albert C., "Back to States' Rights!" *The World's Work*, March 1924, pages 525-529]

Members of Congress contributed to the debate. Senator James W. Wadsworth, Jr., Republican of New York, denounced Federal intervention during a Lincoln Day Dinner on February 12, 1924. He begged the audience's indulgence to comment on a proposal "for the Federal Government to contribute from its Treasury to the support of undertakings at present carried on in the several States." He was referring to "the principal [sic] of Federal aid, so called." Based on his experience in the State legislature and the United States Senate, he explained:

I know but little of the Federal Government, but enough to know that the people of this State, for example, are competent through their own government to take care of their own affairs, and that nothing in the way of efficiency will be gained from the State surrendering to the Federal Government at the price of Federal money the control of those things which they have had under their control for a century or more.

Republican Representative John Philip Hill of Maryland expressed similar views in the House during debate on December 29, 1924, regarding the Treasury and Post Office Appropriation Bill:

Most of the causes for which appropriation from the States are asked are meritorious to [sic] themselves. Those backing them are zealous, persuasive, and tireless. Once on the statute books, the States hesitate to refuse the doles; they want their share. The movement being launched, there comes insistent demand for more and more money, more and more employees, until the States awake to the fact that there is another well-intrenched Federal agency in their midst with ever-increasing activities.

On February 6, 1925, Senator William C. Bruce, Democrat of Maryland, summarized the argument against Federal-aid during debate on a bill authorizing funds for the Federal-aid highway program for FYs 1926 and 1927:

My objection to the general system of Federal aid or subsidy is . . . fundamental. In my judgment it constitutes the stealthiest, the most insidious, the most perilous, the most effective invasion of State rights that has ever been known in the history of our country. A more skillful, a more ingenious method on the part of the Federal Government of robbing the States of the full measure of their State sovereignty could not be devised; in other words, this system of Federal aid is simply an indirect, oblique method of filching from the States the domestic powers that properly appertain to them...

Like Samson when robbed of his omnipotent locks by Delilah, the people of the United States have permitted themselves to be deprived of a large portion of the State authority with which they were originally endowed . . . . I do not quarrel with any proper exercise

by the Federal Government of the power to establish post roads. That is one of the objects to be subserved by the Federal power, just as much as any other object that falls within the domain of the power. I do object, however, to this system by which the Federal Government lures the State governments into the surrender of that State sovereignty, and that is not all; by which it tempts the State governments often into most imprudent, improvident, and extravagant expenditure of State funds.

BPR followed the debate closely. When Senator Simeon D. Fess, Republican of Ohio, a Federal-aid supporter, referred to BPR's program as being of the hit-or-miss variety, Chief MacDonald wrote to clarify that the program "is not on a haphazard basis, but is strictly confined to a system of roads, interstate and intercounty in character, limited to not more than 7 per cent of the total road mileage." His February 5 letter enclosed a map of the Federal-aid system of 174,350 miles, and explained that, "We are completing this system at the rate of about 9,000 miles per year." The goal, he wrote, was to do the major work of surfacing the system in a reasonable manner over the next 12 to 15 years, after which other work could be done, such as eliminating dangerous railroad crossings.

The Mississippi River, MacDonald continued, was something of a divider in highway policy. In the more populated States east of the river, Federal-aid projects involved higher types of surface, such as bituminous macadam, brick, and Portland cement concrete. West of the river, the less populated States requested assistance in "stage construction":

This means that we first do the grading and other necessary fundamental work such as the building of culverts and bridges, and pour on the surface a covering of gravel or sandclay [sic] to be used until funds are available and the traffic has reached a point where such a surface can no longer be economically maintained.

MacDonald concluded his letter with a general response to critics:

There are no arbitrary policies established with respect to the administration of Federal aid. Under the Federal Highway Act the States' rights and authority are very carefully preserved, and the question of State versus Federal rights is not raised in our actual operations. There is close cooperation between the State highway departments and the Bureau of Public Roads. Each respects the good faith and judgment of the other, and we approach the problem of road building as engineers seeking to accomplish the same objective and to be mutually helpful in this immense task.

Despite concerns about the concept, Congress approved President Coolidge's request to continue, but not expand, the Federal-aid program, with \$75 million for each of FY's 1926 and 1927. The President signed the Amendment and Authorization of February 12, 1925.

(This compilation is from a file called "FEDERAL-AID (prior to 1927)" maintained by the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads. It included news clippings, typed excerpts from speeches, and magazine articles on the subject. The file is part of a Vertical File of material now in the Federal Highway Administration's Research Library, Turner-Fairbank Highway Research Center)

President Coolidge would renew his opposition later in the year, but the Federal-aid highway program was too popular, especially in the western States, to kill. As Professor Bruce E. Seely put it, “for the BPR, the years between the wars were the ‘golden age’ of American road building.” [Seely, Bruce E., *Building the American Highway System: Engineers as Policy Makers*, Temple University Press, 1987, page 68]

## **New Roads in Indiana**

Judge Lowe wrote to *The Kansas City Star* in response to a recent article:

A recent article in the *Star* stated it was possible to drive east on hard-surfaced roads from St. Louis by way of Chicago or Indianapolis. One can go east on a hard-surface road from St., Louis to Washington and Baltimore on just one road, the National Old Trails road.

One can also go east from St. Louis to Chicago on a hard-surfaced road. To do so one must go on the National Old Trails Road to Marshall, on the east line of Illinois, then due north on the Dixie Highway to Chicago; or, to go east from Chicago, one must return to Marshall or Indianapolis and take the N.O.T. road.

The National Old Trails road never has been discovered by St. Louis nor, to large extent, by Kansas City. Yet it is the greatest asset, in my judgment, that ever has come to this state, not excepting any railroad that reaches this part of the country.

Now that we are assured of its early completion by the State Highway Board, maybe we will begin to appreciate it more. It is more nearly completed west except in Kansas City, than most persons have any idea of unless they drive over it from Kansas City to Los Angeles. In fact, it is the only practical all-the year-round route to the Pacific, and this does not except the so-called Southern highway, which has never been started. [“Old Trails Road is Good,” *The Columbia Evening Missourian*, August 31, 1922, page 1]

Judge Lowe often described the National Old Trails Road as hard surfaced all the way from Baltimore-Washington to St. Louis. As noted in part 3, hard surfacing often meant a surface that required extensive maintenance, especially after a rain.

In the fall of 1922, Director John D. Williams of the Indiana State Highway Commission announced completion of a couple of projects on the National Old Trails Road, as *Good Roads* reported:

Twenty-two miles of hard surface pavement of 28-miles contracted in three projects on the National road between Indianapolis and the Ohio state line, and 18-miles of 35-miles contracted on the same road between Indianapolis and Terre Haute, are completed . . . .

There remains to be built this season six miles between Indianapolis and the Ohio line, and approximately 170 miles on the west end of the road. The Indianapolis-Terre Haute

projects are divided into five contracts. Anticipating that weather conditions will permit the laying of concrete as late as November 15, it is reasonably certain all pavements contracted on this road east of Indianapolis will be completed this year, highway officials believe. ["New Roads in Indiana," *Good Roads*, September 20, 1922, page 105]

### **The Willite Proposal**

Concern about the condition of the western half of the National Old Trails Road prompted Judge Lowe to make a bold proposal. He recommended that the portion of the road from Trinidad, Colorado, to Los Angeles be reconstructed with Willite, which he called "THE GREATEST DISCOVERY IN THE HISTORY OF ROAD CONSTRUCTION." That was the subtitle of the association's bulletin of August 1922. The cover advised:

Read Openmindedly and Learn How the Best Road  
Ever Devised Can Be Built for the Least Cost and Smallest Maintenance

Judge Lowe included a Foreword dated August 29, 1922, in the bulletin:

My apology, if apology is needed, for announcing our purpose to build the remaining unbuilt portion of the National Old Trails Road, from the Mississippi to the Pacific, with what is known as the "Willite" process is because, during all these years in which we have been engaged promoting the N. O. T. Road as an interstate road by all the states through which it runs, and educating the people up to the point of actual construction, we have necessarily observed the processes used in road construction and found fault with nearly all of them.

About eight years ago our attention was called to "Willite" by its great discoverer, Colonel H. P. Willis, one of the ablest engineers that New York has ever had. After spending millions of dollars in building roads in that state, none of which met the requirements that he thought they should, he resigned and devoted four long years to experimentation, with the result that he found by certain combinations of asphalt, chemically prepared, mixed with certain other ingredients, it made an ideal material for road construction. I had much correspondence with him prior to his untimely death.

I have watched it in all its phases, its tribulations and its successes. I have set down by the side of the magnificent highway, known as the Los Angeles County Highway Harbor Boulevard, at [a slough] really an arm of the sea, where the boulevard crosses it, and watched with great interest the intense traffic thereon. At this point the water stands permanently on either side of the road. No one had been found who had nerve enough to undertake the job of building any kind of a road across that slough. It is some sixteen miles from Los Angeles down to the harbor. It has now been completed and thrown open to traffic for the last three years. It is carrying ten thousand tons of traffic per day, more than is carried on any other stretch of road of like distance in the United States. Extravagant as it may sound, traffic really seems to improve it. No other road in the United States, no matter what material has been used in its construction, could stand up under any such traffic as this. More than that, no other road would carry half this tonnage

and live six months.

Harbour Boulevard opened to traffic on July 1, 1919. In a photograph included in the bulletin, Judge Lowe referred to the boulevard as the western terminus of the National Old Trails Road. The foreward continued:

This process is entirely out of its experimental stage. Whilst we were convinced of its supreme value years ago, yet we waited patiently until all known tests could be applied, and until it had proven beyond any per adventure that it was the idea that Colonel Willis conceived it to be.

Now that the National Old Trails Road is completely constructed from Washington to St. Louis in sections perhaps of all known types of construction, and the balance of the way has been approved for construction by the states through which it passes, we think the time has arrived when we should not only build the remainder of the road of the very highest type known to men, having at the same time due regard to its permanency, its cheapness of maintenance, and to its cost of construction.

It will perhaps cost little more than one-half the price of any other type of road which can be built; its maintenance is insignificant; its resiliency is not the least among its qualities; it is perfectly smooth and avoids bumps, ridges and cracks which make traveling a burden over almost any other type of road. The best road ever devised is the earth road, except for dust when dry, and mud when wet. Willite has every good quality of the earth road, and eliminates both dust and mud, and approximates permanency more nearly than any other known type of road.

We have given the most careful and patient thought to this matter that a layman can possibly give to any subject, and we are willing to risk whatever reputation we have, and are prepared to meet the criticisms that will be provoked by taking a stand for completing the road with this material.

The booklet consisted of correspondence in support of Willite pavements, which Judge Lowe urged patient reading:

If you haven't the patience, the time and energy to make an effort to inform yourself upon this great subject, then you will not exert the influence that you should, or reap the benefits that you are entitled to receive from having been a member of this Association. We are now on the home stretch and a "pull all together" will land our work on the bright sands of the Pacific, a complete highway from ocean to ocean.

One word additional as to maintenance: A great engineer has said that, "Maintenance is the biggest word in road construction," and highway builders are worrying greatly about raising maintenance funds; and well they may if the usual high type or low types of roads are to be built, for the repair accounts of any such roads will run from \$300.00 to \$500.00 per annum and up. It is a crime to build such roads. Take a five-year period, and if the maintenance cost be \$300.00 per annum, in five years it will be \$1,500.00, or five per

cent on \$30,000.00 per mile – and at the end of that time probably will have to be rebuilt. No road, the maintenance of which cost so much, is worth building.

No rigid, hard surfaced road, no matter what the material may be, will meet the requirements of modern traffic. The nearer it approaches nature's type, the better it will be. The time will come when no intelligent engineer or Highway Board will approve a rigid, brittle, hard surfaced road.

And mark the prediction (although not a prophet and not even an engineer), the time will come, even though it may be delayed for some years, when this Road from beginning to end will be constructed of "Willite" pavement, as will every other worthwhile road.

In June 1921, *Highway Engineer and Contractor* carried an article stating that the Harbor Boulevard paving in Los Angeles "was one of the first paving jobs put through in Los Angeles for which Willite was specified":

After having been subjected to heavy motor-truck and passenger-automobile traffic for more than 2 years there appears no evidence of deterioration at this date. That, at least was my impression on making a brief inspection of that pavement in April this year. [The pavement] is about 1 mile in length but was laid in three sections, crossing two sloughs and one narrow swamp. It consists of 2-course Willite, 5 ins. thick, laid upon a sand-and-loam fill 6 ft. deep. The sand dunes in that locality were drawn upon, not only as material for making the fills, but for sand required in making the paving mixture . . . .

The manner in which this type of pavement is meeting the severe tests of traffic on Harbor boulevard undoubtedly has won for it a recognition that is assuring its adoption on other highways.

Calls for bids in the city and county of Los Angeles usually cite Willite "among those for which proposals will be considered":

Los Angeles county and city highway and street improvements performed within the last 6 months include considerable Willite paving. [Scott, W. A., "Willite Pavement Construction in California," *Highway Engineer and Contractor*, June 1921, pages 47-48]

Although Judge Lowe included mainly correspondence in the bulletin, he also reprinted an article from the August 1922 issue of *Highway Engineer and Contractor* titled "Willite Pavement Construction in California." The article, written by C. S. Reed, president of the Western Willite Road Construction Company in Los Angeles, explained that in June 1919, the Los Angeles Highway Department chose to employ Willite for "a supreme test" over four old earth-fills on Harbor Boulevard:

County Road Commissioner F. H. Joyner at that time stated that if Willite would stand up under the heavy pound of traffic on this road under terrific heat conditions in the summer, no one need ever have to worry about it elsewhere – that he considered it the heaviest traffic in America.

The old earth-fills were about 30 feet high, with lakes on each side thereof. This sub-grade was properly prepared and rolled with a 15-ton, 3-wheel roller. Wooden curbs were installed on each side of the road. Willite foundation 3 inches thick was laid thereon, raked, spread and rolled, on top of which Willite 2-inch top course was laid and rolled with 5 and 8-ton tandem rollers until no more compression was shown under the wheels of same . . . .

Willite pavement laid with tempered asphalt binder has been proven immune to the hottest summer temperatures and heaviest traffic loads – never a yard has waved anywhere. It cannot creep, shove or run under traffic.

The highway was opened in June 1919:

A few difficulties developed which were immediately remedied, and since the latter part of June 1919, the road has remained open to traffic every day in the year. It is now three years old and carries over 10,000 tons' traffic per day, consisting of the heaviest load units we have ever seen. Loads of 5, 10, 15 and 20 tons on motor trucks and trailers are more common than otherwise. This heavy traffic is carried between Los Angeles and San Pedro, the ocean port where the big Pacific liners are loaded and unloaded. The only limit on traffic is the number of tons the wheels will carry.

Engineers who were very skeptical of the promises made for Willite pavements were “now enthusiastic supporters of Willite.”

After discussing technical details, Reed concluded:

In view of the foregoing, we cannot see how it is possible for any progressive state, county or city highway department to refuse to investigate Willite merits and claims to the fullest extent. If they sincerely have the interest of their taxpayers at heart, they certainly will do it.

We have at this time laid in the state of California over 60 different Willite jobs showing a total yardage laid of 616,197 sq. yds., and contracts and proceedings under way for nearly that much more. These jobs are the absolute proof of the claims of Willite, because they have all been obtained upon the actual showing and record established here in the face of the most bitter competition, and if Willite was not everything claimed for it, we would have been out of business a long time ago.

Harry P. Willis had died suddenly on May 3, 1918, at the age of 45. Willis, a civil engineer and chemist, had begun work for the State of New York's surveyors' division as a leveler working on highway, canal and boundary surveys. He entered the State's engineering department through civil service and served as resident engineer for the State Highway Department and became Chief Engineer in 1909. In 1911, he resigned to devote time to his patented process for road construction. [“Death of H. P. Willis,” *Good Roads*, May 18, 1918, page 260; “Obituary,” *Engineering News-Record*, May 23, 1918, page 1021]

Willis had written a paper on his discovery that was published, posthumously, in the July 1918 issue of *Better Roads and Streets*. The paper began:

The efficiency of “Willite” has now been proven by over four years’ wear in the Borough of Queens, City of New York, and to the satisfaction of engineers and road builders from all over the world who have made an examination into the texture and method of laying this piece of pavement. The result here obtained may be said to be due to the recognition and utilization of four important principles; namely First, that the cost of maintenance of present day road construction makes road improvement an expensive luxury and almost prohibitive. Second, that in order to obtain full benefits of the earth as a foundation, the foundation for any road or pavement must be semi-elastic. Third, that the wearing course must be dense, tough and semi-elastic rather than brittle and granular, and be so bonded as to be absolutely proof against moisture, heat, cold, disintegration under traffic, slipperiness dust [sic], or noise. Fourth, that the foundation and wearing course should be joined together and consist of a solid integral mass having the same co-efficient of elasticity.

The first principle “did not fully dawn upon the writer until he had spent nearly sixteen years in actual road construction, and had been a large factor in the expenditure of nearly one-hundred million dollars appropriated by the State of New York in the improvement of its highway system.” Willis left the State “determined, if possible, to develop a type of highway construction which would render this excessive cost of maintenance unnecessary.” This, he believed, he had accomplished with Willite.

He explained the second principle:

As mother earth is the foundation of all construction, it stands to reason that the most effective paving foundation is one which transmits to the earth, in the most economical and efficient manner the loads coming from above and at the same time withstand efficiently the heaving effect of frost pressure from below.

As for the wearing course, he wrote:

It has been known for many years that Sicilian Rock Asphalt gives the best results as a wearing course but the price makes it prohibitive. One street in New York City was paved with this material over thirty years ago and yet to-day shows no perceptible wear.

Willis had studied the chemical properties of Sicilian Rock Asphalt. Willite was the result. He “tempered both wearing course and foundation so as to more fully carry out the principles just discussed”:

The final result was a pavement dense, tough and semi-elastic rather than one which is brittle and granular; one which is absolutely proof against moisture, heat, cold, disintegration under traffic, slipperiness, dust and noise.

Finally, the result would be more efficient “through having the wearing course and foundation

thoroughly bonded and of both having the same co-efficient of elasticity”:

Would it not have been more efficient and economical to have had the bottom three inches composed of a material nearly three times as tough as concrete and to that, have absolutely bonded a two-inch wearing course, tough and more dense than ordinary sheet asphalt but with the same co-efficient of elasticity as the foundation? Then no concrete base would be required. The writer answers the question in the affirmative and it is exactly the “Willite” way of accomplishing much more efficient results.

One of the most overlooked features of pavement design is that “it should consist of a solid integral mass”:

The day of weakly bonded surfacings, such as macadam, asphalt macadam, and concrete is over. First came the auto tire to suck the binder out of the surface but more recently has appeared the auto truck whose jar and vibration loosens the larger particles from the binder so that the effect is now upon both. The more general use of, and the increased loads upon auto trucks is certainly going to increase the amount of damage done by them. There are but three ways to meet this evil. One is to use a binder of greater strength, the second is to decrease the size of the particles composing the filler; and the third is to incorporate the binder with the filler and set the former just as water sets cement; except to make the resultant mixture tough and semi-elastic rather than brittle. The first of the above mentioned remedies is neither practical nor economical; the second is now being tried but with only partial success; the third is the “Willite” way which is practical, economic, and guaranteed to meet every requirement of present day traffic conditions.

That concluded Willis’s article, but *Better Roads and Streets* added a paragraph by an anonymous engineer written while the European war was underway:

I see that I owe no apology for the short time taken in bringing this paper to your notice. Mr. Willis was with the New Jersey Highway Commission the following day and on my calling at his office, a week ago this morning, I learned that he had been found dead in his bed two hours previously. I therefore consider this really as his last message to-day, a voice from the grave.

After my forty-six years of practical experience as a highway engineer, I have no hesitancy in endorsing this improved method of bituminous road construction as I not only saw the work being done in the Boro of Queens, City of New York, three years ago, but this week went over eighty thousand square yards of “Willite” laid at Kingston, New York.

I have also since leaving New York seen the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Chemist’s analyses of my friend, the Hon. Logan Wallen [sic] Page, director of Public Roads and Rural Engineering, U.S. Department of Agriculture; these were so satisfactory that I feel that the country is to be congratulated on another method of helping to “win the war” by this system involving both the saving of labor and material and also money, which can be invested in Liberty Bonds. [“Development of Willite,” *Better Roads and Streets*, July

1918, pages 264-265]

Judge Lowe returned to the subject in his December 1922 bulletin. He began by quoting an editorial in a Kansas City newspaper (October 27, 1922) noting the demand for engineering skill to “point the way to less expensive and more serviceable roads.” Can roads be more durable, the editorial asked, or “must the new road building era be accompanied by traffic laws limiting the load that may be both impractical and difficult of enforcement.” Judge Lowe replied that it was “high time” to employ engineering skills to avoid lower weight limits, which he said are not only impractical and difficult, but “illogical and contradicts every purpose of road construction,” namely to carry the traffic:

But even if it is true that highway authorities do lack this knowledge, yet we may rest assured that somewhere, locked in his laboratory, a chemical engineer will solve this great problem.

Millions of Federal Aid have been appropriated to the construction of dirt roads – gravel, macadam, etc. – other millions to roads which will not serve the traffic – and millions more to maintenance of such roads. This must stop.

He suggested comparing New York, California, and Illinois:

In New York one of the greatest State Engineers she ever had resigned because the roads that were being built would neither stand up nor carry the load. In California they have failed, and they are now calling for an additional bond issue of sixty-five million dollars to save the eighty million dollars already put into inefficient roads. In Illinois they are pleading for legislation to protect the roads against the traffic.

We, who have had occasion to look into this question most closely, are fully persuaded that it has been solved, by Colonel Harry Parsons Willis, former State Engineer of New York. After four years of intensive study and experimentation in his laboratory, this great chemical engineer made, what he believed, was the full solution of this great problem. His discovery has convinced many other engineers that roads can be built at a “reasonable cost” – a cost well within the ability of the people of any part of the country – roads, the maintenance of which will not be burdensome, and will meet the demands of traffic, and carry any load which commerce may demand.

He emphasized in bold:

**Don't lets build roads which require traffic laws to regulate the load, but build the roads to accommodate the traffic. [sic]**

He referred to his proposal for employing Willite on the National Old Trails Road from Trinidad, Colorado to Los Angeles. This portion of the road was “about one thousand three hundred miles, twenty feet in width,” and it could be redone in Willite for “about fourteen to fifteen thousand dollars per mile.” He explained:

This is because fully eighty-five per cent of the aggregates that go into the construction of the road through that territory are so convenient and so valuable for the purpose as to make this possible. **No monopoly or trust can possibly obtain on this eighty-five per cent.**

**Wonder if this is the reason some “road authorities” hesitate to adopt or recommend Willite construction for Federal aid?**

The benefits of Willite in Colorado, Missouri, and Kansas would be the same, “except the eighty-five per cent of material may be a little more expensive to transport in these states.”

Judge Lowe suggested:

**Build maintenance into the road construction and no maintenance fund will be required.** What more can be asked? No traffic laws limiting the load are needed. No legislation necessary to provide a great maintenance fund, and yet build a road so resilient that to ride upon [it] is a pleasure, instead of a torture – roads that automobile traffic really improves instead of destroys – roads so resilient that it meets and absorbs the shock of rubber tired vehicles instead of destroying them. In short, roads that come as near the ideal as has yet been conceived by the mind of man.

To this end we propose during the year 1923 to hold three National conventions, one perhaps at Kansas City, one either in Colorado or New Mexico, and one possibly in Washington, Pennsylvania. The sole purpose of these conventions will be to put the unbuilt portions of this road under contract during the year, and to urge that that portion of the road already built on the eastern side of the Mississippi and now ready, or soon to be ready for resurfacing, no matter what material has been used, shall be resurfaced with the same material, because we are convinced that this material, what criticism may be made upon it, is ideal for resurfacing on old foundations. Two inches of Willite on such a foundation will last almost interminably. We do not approve throwing away, as of no account, roads already built. On the contrary, we should save and utilize all the salvage possible.

As he indicated in the bulletin, Judge Lowe was concerned that “there is danger of this Association committing itself to work outside the legitimate object and purpose of this organization.” For that reason, he had asked Charles Henry Davis, his friend and long-time associate from the National Highways Association. On October 17, 1922, Davis replied:

I want to assure you that the National Highways Association, as such, and I personally, will back you in your plans for paving the National Old Trail Road from St. Louis west to the Pacific Coast with any kind of paving that you now decide upon, or that you may in future advocate.

You as President of the National Old Trails Road can at any time, and do, advocate a particular pavement for the completion of the National Old Trails Road. This is your act. You have a right to do this from every point of view, and you will be supported in this

right by your directors if they are solely guided by the needs of the National Old Trails Road and are not themselves individual exponents of a particular pavement. The National Highways Association, and I personally as President thereof, can support your efforts for the paving of the National Old Trails Road with such pavement as you select, without in any manner violating the principles that guide our Associations as enunciated above.

Davis closed by noting that “the source of much satisfaction and pleasure to me that I had the opportunity of seeing you when in Kansas City recently”:

You are not a day older in spirit than when I last saw you in Kansas City in 1917. It is men like you that make our country great and what it ought to be.

Judge Lowe reported that the association’s directors, with one exception, “unqualifiedly endorse our position.” The exception involved “a very mild criticism, more of a technical character than anything else.” He did not have the space to reprint all the correspondence, but did include “some brief extracts which, except that they are entirely too complimentary to your President, seem to cover the entire question.”

One of the excerpts was from C. S. Reed, the head of Willite’s Los Angeles office:

I am particularly interested in the National Old Trails Road as shown from Trinidad, Colorado, down through Santa Fe, New Mexico, through Arizona to Needles, California, and through the Mojave Desert into Los Angeles. In those three States billions of tons of the highest quality desert sandy aggregates are to be found on a job with which a most wonderful Willite highway could be built, which would work inconceivable economy  
. . . .

On that particular section of Willite highway, thirteen hundred miles in length, a saving could be made of approximately \$10,000,000, and at the same time build the finest and highest type of highway known in the world.

Judge Lowe explained he was not “blowing bubbles’ nor chasing rainbows.” Willite had been subject to “the severest tests in unfriendly laboratories.” For example, the Industrial Testing Laboratory of Los Angeles had concluded from its tests that the additives provided by the Willite formula had the effect of “giving them greater resistance to water and increased toughness, greater resistance to load . . . and longer life.” Judge added, “What more would you ask?”

He closed this essay:

The members of this association, living in other states, I am sure will take no offense nor make any objection if we close this bulletin by taking off our hat and making our profoundest bow to Arthur M. Hyde, Governor of Missouri, and to the splendid Highway Board he appointed, to-wit: Col. Theodore Gary, Chairman; Murray Carleton, C. D. Mathews, and S. S. Connett, for the splendid accomplishments already made. Missouri has been practically two states, because it was divided by a mighty river.

I think there have been just two bridges of any consequence, both privately owned toll bridges, one at St. Charles, on the extreme eastern side of the state, and one at Kansas City. Already bond issues have been carried in addition to the sixty million state road bonds; contracts are being let for four additional FREE bridges, one at Lexington, one at Waverly, one at Glasgow and one at Boonville, all of which connect directly with the National Old Trails Road.

I know of no state in the union which has risen to such great opportunities, and is carrying forward such a magnificent program of internal improvements as this.

Whether any segment of the National Old Trails Road was rebuilt with Willite is unknown. However, from the start of the Federal-aid highway program, Logan Page had objected to the many patented and proprietary pavement designs available for work. And he put his concerns into the regulations for implementation of the program. As revised in 1919, Regulation 8 (“Construction Work and Labor”) included:

Sec. 4. No part of the money apportioned under the act shall be used, directly or indirectly, to pay or to reimburse a State, county, or local subdivision for the payment of any premium or royalty on any patented or proprietary material, specification, process, or type of construction unless purchased or obtained on open actual competitive bidding at the same or a less cost than unpatented articles or methods equally suitable for the same purpose.

This limitation on the use of Federal-aid highway funds reduced the likelihood that the National Old Trails Road would be improved with Willite or other patented or proprietary processes.

### **Motoring Pleasure**

In January 1923, *The New York Times* carried an article by architect Newton C. Bond describing his 10,353-mile trip, with wife and 14-year old daughter, through 27 States. “Only the perfection of the automobile and the great improvement in roads make such a tour possible,” he wrote.

After traveling around the country, the three left Oregon to cross into northern California:

When entering California by automobile you are expected to register within twenty-four hours, and you must have your registration from your own State with you. They issue a free permit for you to tour California, good for ninety days.

After touring the northern and central parts of the State, they reached Los Angeles, which served as their base for travels in southern California:

While here put your car into a service station and have it thoroughly gone over preparatory to your return. A breakdown in the desert is rather unpleasant.

When they were ready to head home, they took the National Old Trails Road to the East Coast:

Upon leaving Los Angeles we traveled over the old Santa Fe trail through Pasadena, San Bernardino, over the Cajon Pass and down to Hesperia . . . .

The road, Bond reported, had been fine to that point, but from there to Las Vegas, New Mexico, “we found about 700 miles of very rough roads. Don’t figure on averaging much over fifteen miles an hour”:

We made an early start from Barstow so as to be sure and make Needles before dark. The trail lies across the Mojave Desert for 170 miles. From Needles we crossed into Arizona at Topock then through the mining towns of Oatman and Goldroads. They lie in the Black Mountains. Here we found another real climb over a good road, but with a few hair-raising turns.

Our route took us to Seligman, Ash Fork, Williams to Maine Station. At this point we took the side trip of sixty-four miles north to the Grand Canyon. Nothing we have ever seen or expect to see can compare with this wonderful work of nature.

We returned to the Santa Fe trail at Maine Station by the same route, then east to Flagstaff, where the Lowell Observatory is located. Just eleven miles beyond Flagstaff we visited the cliff dwellings, then on to Meteor Mountain, forty-four miles east of Flagstaff. A large meteor is supposed to have hit the earth and buried itself at this point, leaving a crater-like opening approximately one-half mile across and three hundred feet deep. From here it is twenty-one miles to Winslow.

The next town is Holbrook, Ariz. Where you have the choice of two routes. We were routed through the petrified forest to Springerville and this is called by the Southern California Automobile Club the better route. The other route from Holbrook is through the Painted Desert to Gallup, N.M., and is approximately ninety miles shorter. I can hardly imagine any route with worse roads than the Springerville route, but if the other route is worse you have ninety miles less of it to drive.

These routes come together at Isleta, N.M., then on to Albuquerque and Santa Fe. About twenty miles east of Santa Fe we hit La Bajada Grade, very steep, and in less than three miles there are twenty-three hairpin turns. A large car must back up in order to get around some of these turns.

Next we arrive at Las Vegas, N.M., then over the Raton Pass to Trinidad, Col. The road from Trinidad to La Junta, Colo., is full of chuck holes and very dusty. The roads from here to Kansas City and St. Louis, Mo., are dirt roads, mostly over level country and very good. If you get caught in a rainy spell in Missouri, content yourself wherever you are, as it will be impossible to travel. Missouri is noted for its poor roads. From St. Louis we continued on the International [sic] Old Trails through Indianapolis, Columbus, Wheeling, Hagerstown, and Baltimore.

From Baltimore, they continued to New York via Philadelphia. [Bond, Newton C., “See United

States by Motor – Pleasure in Continental Tour,” *The New York Times*, January 7, 1923, page XXX14]

### **Motor Routes From the Mississippi**

Later that year, *Sunset Magazine* discussed road conditions for the main routes into the Western States. The article began:

Ten years ago, the successful completion of a transcontinental motor trip was an event chronicled in the daily papers; as a rule such a journey was undertaken by an expedition of several machines accompanied by a truck carrying spare parts and a young machine shop for emergency repairs. This year probably 40,000 machines will travel from the Mississippi to the Rockies and beyond; thousands of them will be driven by women and few of them will be delayed on the way by any cause except their own defects. All of which indicates the size of the tremendous road-building job the Far West, having half the territory and one-tenth of the country’s population, accomplished in the last decade.

The article discussed the condition of several named trails, including the Pacific Highway parallel to the coastline. “The Pacific Highway is so nearly completed, it is so well marked and sign-posted that its full length can be traversed by strangers without the help of maps or printed directions.”

For east-west routes, the Lincoln Highway is “the best improved of the three routes here described.” In Utah, the State had refused to improve the road for 4 years in a lengthy dispute with the Lincoln Highway Association. “Rather than tackle this stretch of rough going, most of the tourists prefer to go southwest via the Arrowhead Trail to Los Angeles, or northwest over the historic Oregon Trail through southern Idaho and Oregon to the Coast.”

(The dispute related to selection of Federal-aid primary roads between Nevada and Utah. The Lincoln Highway Association wanted its route chosen across western Utah, but Utah officials chose the parallel Victory Highway/Wendover Cutoff between Utah and Nevada instead of the Lincoln Highway route through difficult terrain. The dispute eventually went to Secretary of Agriculture Wallace, who held a public hearing on the topic on May 14, 1923. He concluded that by law, he could act only on proposals from the State highway department, thus ruling in the favor of the Utah State Road Commission’s proposal. [Knowlton, Ezra C., *History of Highway Development in Utah*, Utah Department of Transportation, 1967, pages 180-191]

Next was the Yellowstone Trail. “Like the other two, the Yellowstone Trail is not a fast road when it rains in Dakota.” But some portions of it were in better shape. “From Spokane to Seattle or Portland the Trail is a real highway, the drive across the Cascades or along the Columbia river having few equals.”

The article also covered the western half of the National Old Trails Road:

The National Old Trails route traverses Kansas, a corner of Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and reaches the Pacific at Los Angeles. It has been improved throughout its

entire length and as a rule is kept in good condition. In Kansas there are many miles of difficult driving during wet weather; in Colorado the road has been graded and graveled for most of its length; in New Mexico there are still a few rough stretches, but during the last three years the road has been widened and graded across the mountain passes leading into and out of the valley of the Rio Grande, thereby soothing the nerves of the flat-country motorists.

In Arizona a great deal of work has been done on this route, but of course the sparsely settled state has not had the means to improve every portion of the Trail. Even in wealthy California the desert portion of the route between Needles and the San Bernardino mountains has not been paved, though it is always kept in good condition. The mountain stretches on this route are principally in New Mexico; elsewhere it traverses a plateau country with gradual approaches to the summits.

Having covered three of the main transcontinental highways, the article concluded:

To sum up: A transcontinental motor trip no longer is a hazardous expedition. The careful driver with a reliable machine, good tires and brakes can undertake the journey without extra equipment and enjoy the trip if he takes his time and inquires at the numerous information bureaus about the road conditions ahead.

Heave away! All clear! Let's go! ["Motor Routes from the Mississippi to the Rockies and the Pacific Coast," *Sunset Magazine*, June 1923, pages 36-37]

### **Across the Mojave Desert**

*Motor West* reported in 1923 on increasing traffic into California on the National Old Trails Road:

Early in July, traveling in caravans at night for coolness, swarms of motor tourists were arriving in California daily on the National Old Trails route, passing through San Bernardino. A count at Daggett in Mojave Desert showed 310 cars from 36 states, passing through Arizona via Needles. It was record travel.

The night caravans number 20 to 40 cars. The camping grounds at Needles, Daggett, Barstow and Camp Cajon – the fine camp in Cajon Pass, near San Bernardino – are said to be crowded every night. ["Tourists Pouring Into California," *Motor West*, July 15, 1923, page 29]

In the winter of 1923, the California Highway Commission created District VIII that included San Bernardino County, Riverside County, and Imperial County. E. O. Sullivan was the District VIII Engineer, with headquarters in San Bernardino. In October 1923, the State took over the eastern end of the National Old Trails Road, relieving San Bernardino County of responsibility for maintenance and construction of the route.

The November 1959 and March 1960 issues of *Profiles* magazine, published by the California

Department of Public Works, contained Sullivan's "Reminiscences," including:

"District VIII was formed in 1923. District VIII consisted of all of San Bernardino, Riverside and Imperial Counties. The gas tax had gone into effect and it was realized that something had to be done for the interstate connections. I came to San Bernardino as District Engineer. Mr. R. M. Mortan was Chief Engineer, and he instructed me to concentrate the energies of the District on passable connections to the Arizona and Nevada borders at the earliest possible time."

". . . the principle road entering California was the Needles road." "The present road location to Las Vegas had not yet been conceived. The road to Blythe was a mere trail. The road to Yuma, from the edges of the cultivated area in Imperial Valley to the Sand Hills, consisted of tracks in the sand with an 8-foot plank road across the Sand Hills and two deep ruts from Sand Hills to Yuma."

". . . Between Barstow and Needles, the County had at one time attempted to 'oil' the road but the 'oil' had long since disappeared except for one stretch, 8-foot wide about 10 miles near Essex . . . ."

". . . This was the heaviest traveled road into California. It is my recollection that over 300 vehicles a day passed over this road, headed for the promised land of Hollywood and Los Angeles . . . ."

". . . This was the only piece of oiled road in 160 miles that had not ground up and blown away in the wind. At the center of this 10-mile stretch of oiled road was a gasoline pump and a little shed service station known as Chambless. This old service station is about one half mile to the north of the present state highway . . . ."

". . . I had the nagging problem of the one 10-mile stretch at Chambless that was a marvel in having stood up like pavement . . . ." ". . . I finally purchased a powerful compound magnifying glass such as are used by geologists to examine small crystal structures. We took a good many samples of this 'marvelous' piece of road. I discovered that the voids in the aggregates were not filled by oil but that the particles were thoroughly coated with oil. Examining portions of other oiled roads that bled or rolled up in corrugations, on old county roads of ill repute, we found that invariably the voids between the particles were filled with oil. . . ." ". . . we finally believed that we could make a road every bit as good as the "marvelous ten miles near Chambless . . ." ". . . within two years the road all the way to Needles could be traveled at 35 miles per hour by the average car . . . ."

"Superintendents, foremen, and equipment operations were sent all over District VII to observe successful jobs and all soon learned the technique . . . ."

". . . Engineers were sent to us from all the Western States by the Bureau of Public Roads . . . to be schooled. The Bureau of Public Roads later on sent engineers to us from all over the world to observe our work. They came from Egypt, Australia, South Africa, Chile, Peru, wherever there were desert roads and lack of finances to construct

conventional pavements . . . .”

“Last week I took another look at this ‘marvelous’ old stretch of oiling. It is still there and in fairly good condition . . . .”

Mike Boultinghouse and Rick Roam, co-chairmen of the Old Trails Road Association of California, provided the text of Mr. Sullivan’s recollection. They added:

The excellent reputation of Sullivan’s work on the National Old Trails Road soon spread throughout the area and motorists changed their opinions of driving over this road. Once this route meant nothing more than dirt, sand and ruts in a trackless desert, but thanks to Sullivan and his crews, that had all changed for the better. These improvements, which included natural drainage during rainy periods with the road being placed between the flow lines of all the washes, allowed motorists to increase their speed from 10 to 35 miles per hour, which was really barreling along in those days. A drive from San Bernardino to Needles no longer meant a 2-1/2 day drive over terrible desert roads, seeking water stops or continuously having worn out or broken auto parts along a previously “rough” route over the National Old Trails Road.

They also commented:

With county and state road improvements now in progress across the desert from San Bernardino to the river crossing at Topock, things were starting to improve and the National Old Trails Road was getting a much needed “facelift.” Permanent type paving and wider roads had been completed as far as Daggett by July of 1927 along with other road improvements on into Needles.

California highway officials designated the State’s segment of the National Old Trails Road as a primary highway for Federal-aid purposes. [Boultinghouse , Mike, and Roam, Rick, Letter to Bureau of Land Management, October 28, 1994, copy in FHWA file]

### **Cannon Ball Baker - 1923**

Erwin George Baker, better known as Cannon Ball Baker, was a famous automobile and motorcycle stunt driver. He often took on challenges from automobile or motorcycle companies to demonstrate the durability of their machine on long-distance trips. During his dozens of cross-country trips, he periodically traveled the National Old Trails Road, as happened in October 1923.

At 11:30 a.m. on October 8, 1923, he drove from Columbus Circle in New York City for his latest cross-country journey. As the words printed on the side of his Oldsmobile Six Phaeton, Model 30, proclaimed, he was going all the way from “New York to Los Angeles in High Gear.” The low, second, and reverse gears had been removed, and high gear “officially” sealed.

*Motor West* described the trip:

Baker can drive anything drivable . . . . But Baker does no stunts with lame ducks. No. He's a demon demonstrator of what a really good motor vehicle can do; and his latest, this Oldsmobile stunt, said to be the first time any car whatever has crossed the continent in high gear, surely proved its power. Mud nor mountains could make it quit. Relatively as wonderful a trip as when in October, 1903, twenty years ago, the first automobile trip across the country was made.

On this, Baker's 62d cross-country journey, the car covered 3674 miles at an average of 28.8 miles per gallon of gasoline. The oil reservoir, holding 6 quarts, was drained 5 times. The car had the regular axle ratio of 5 1/10-to-1. No repairs were made on the engine, clutch, transmission, universal joints or differential during the run. S-o-m-e run.

The route from New York was via Philadelphia, Cumberland, Md., Uniontown, Pa., Wheeling, W. Va., crossing the Cumberland Mountains; then through Columbus, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Dodge City, Raton Pass, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Flagstaff, Needles, San Bernardino, to Los Angeles. Boulevards, mountains, mud, rain, snow, mountains, desert, boulevard.

As indicated, the majority of the run would be on the National Old Trails Road:

A cordon of New York motorcycle police escorted "Bake" through New Jersey. In Philadelphia, a huge parade was staged and a greeting by the mayor-elect. Then an all-night drive, over the Cumberlands to Uniontown – some grades 16 to 21 per cent, taken at 25 to 35 per, in heavy fog. Took the famous Uniontown Hill at 27 per. Through Ohio and to Indianapolis on the 10th. To St. Louis on the 11th. Probably 150,000 persons saw the rolling advertisement during the 861 miles to Missouri. No water taken, so far.

On the 12th and 13th – Missouri rains, Missouri mud. On the 14th, 6 hours to plow through the last 18 miles into Kansas City. A \$3,000,000-damage storm. On the 17th, Topeka. Mud-bound there the 18th. Kinsley, 150 miles, reached on the 19th – at 28.7 per gallon of gas, despite the mire, deep ruts, need of building cross-overs, etc. Snow and rain mixed. Had to chop ice off headlights. To Kinsley, only 9 ounces of oil used. On the 20th, out of Kinsley. Up grade all day, sometimes 15 per cent. Makeshift roads. Washouts. La Junta that night. On the 21st, rotten traveling – and up, up, up to Raton Pass, 7888 feet elevation. Snow-capped peaks all around, but hot in the pass. Hundreds of Sunday-outing cars, in second, boiling. That evening, Las Vegas, N.M., 2234 miles. On the 22d, Albuquerque, 2585 miles, after many stiff climbs. On the 23d, Holbrook, in the Rockies. Hard pulls? One of 6 miles, grades 10 to 17 per cent – over the top at 25 per. Continental Divide – 8300 feet elevation. Night. Blinding snow storm. On the 24th, bits like a 70 mile climb to Flagstaff, and on to Needles, Cal. On the 25th, across Mojave Desert to San Bernardino. On the 26th, boulevards to Los Angeles.

Eleven o'clock in the morning, October 26, at the City Hall, Los Angeles. Baker still at the bat. Handing Mayor Cryer a letter sent by Al Reeves, general manager of National Automobile Chamber of Commerce. A 3674 mile trip, in 18 days. High gear all the way. ["All the Way in High Gear," *Motor West*, November 1, 1923, page 42, final

paragraph shifted from its original placement in the article]

The point of the trip was reflected in an advertisement that appeared in newspapers:

### COAST TO COAST IN HIGH GEAR!

New Oldsmobile Six demonstrates new degree  
of engine flexibility and motor car stamina

The first car to cross the American continent in high gear! Driven by “Cannonball” Baker, holder of numerous road records, a new Oldsmobile Six (stock car with standard gear ratio) traveled 3,674 miles under every conceivable road and weather condition. Rain, snow, mud, rock-strewn passes and washed-out roads were encountered. Grades ranging from 5 to 17 per cent were negotiated. Yet, during this test, the car averages 28.7 miles per gallon of gasoline.

This run was planned to demonstrate the great flexibility and stamina of the new Oldsmobile Six by subjecting the car to the most unreasonable driving conditions. The 12½ days of the trip were equivalent to years of average driving. The fact that the car came through this grueling test with only minor adjustments and no recourse to the emergency kit, is proof of the car’s ability to give satisfaction in the hands of owners.

See the new Oldsmobile Six at our showroom. [*The Sunday Star* (Washington, D.C.), November 18, 1923, page 63]

Baker traveled parts or most of the National Old Trails Road in many of his transcontinental runs. He had, for example, traveled part of the road in his first transcontinental drive. Already successful as a racer, Baker decided to set a new record for crossing the country by motorcycle. With sponsorship for his Indian Motorcycle, he left San Diego, California, on May 3, 1914. Following a 210-mile southern route, he arrived in Phoenix, Arizona, 13 hours and 10 minutes after leaving San Diego. His ride to Springerville took 12 hours – his longest day thus far.

From Springerville, he stayed on the National Old Trails Road all the way to Uniontown, Pennsylvania. He picked up the Lincoln Highway for the ride into New York City, which he reached on May 14 around midnight after 11 Days, 14 hours, and 10 minutes. In article for *The Bicycling World and Motorcycle Review* (May 26, 1914), he gave due credit to his motorcycle. He had carefully selected his route based on the towns he would pass through, checking weather patterns over a 10-year period, and concluded that May was the best month for the run:

The weather ran true to form, and I did not hit rain until after I had gotten east of the Mississippi Valley, at which point I struck gravelly roads which absorbed moisture readily and gave me minimum trouble. This was just as I had planned. I followed behind a storm area trailing from west to east and struck no storm until another one finally caught up with me. During the rainy period I covered one stage of 72 miles through wind and water in 1 hour and 55 minutes . . . .

In all the distance of 3,497 miles I had no mechanical difficulties whatever and I encountered all the different road conditions known to travel. Between Mammoth, Cal. and Glamis I rode 64 miles on the railroad ties, crossing trestles and bridges. In a 1,027-mile desert stretch of sand, cactus, heat, thirst and desolateness, I traveled 115 miles without seeing a single living thing – except Gila monsters and snakes.

Four mountain ranges were negotiated. At one point at the northern end of Arizona I climbed from 200 feet below sea level to an altitude of 9,647 feet into the mountain snows . . . .

When I struck Indiana the authorities raised the speed limit for one day, so that I could do my best. And I did, making 376 miles in 11½ hours. I am a Hoosier, and welcome any encouragement which the people of my home state gave me as I passed from town to town with a generous and appreciated demonstration.

From Columbus, Oh., to Greensburg, Pa. the going was bad. I ploughed my way through 232 miles of mud – and was mighty glad to get out of it onto firm ground again.

My final dash was a 418-mile one from Greensburg, Pa. to New York City. This I did in 20 hours, 16 of which was actual riding. Total time for the trip was 11 days, 12 hours and 10 minutes, during which I took only 46 hours' sleep – about 4 hours per day. Average mileage per day was 304. [Emde Don, *Finding Cannon Ball's Trail*, Emde Books, 2016, pages 96-97]

During a cross-country drive in 1920, Cannon Ball Baker ran into a speed trap on the National Old Trails Road set up especially for him. While trying to break his own record for a New York-to-Los Angeles run, he reached California on August 4. As he raced across the Mojave Desert, he was well ahead of the record by about 7 and a half hours, despite heavy rain and the inevitable muddy roads of Kansas and Colorado. The new record was only a few hours away as he raced up to Cajon Pass.

He did not know that Governor William D. Stephens had objected to the many automobile races taking place on California's highways. In response to the Governor's concern, Motor Vehicle Superintendent Charles J. Chenu decided to make an example of Cannon Ball Baker on Cajon Pass where the speed limit was 15 miles per hour.

State Traffic Officer Jay Boone was waiting to catch Baker, who was driving 45 miles per hour. The *San Bernardino Sun* reported, "As Baker sped down the mountain road, Boone, who was secreted behind a tree, gave chase. Baker was arrested and cited to appear before Justice of the Peace Edward Wall in this city." Having done his duty, Boone escorted Baker to Los Angeles "setting a pace which was all that the law would allow."

With Boone's help on the last stretch, Baker completed his drive of 3,378 miles in 6 days, 17 minutes. He had broken his own record by 18 hours.

Superintendent Chenu praised Boone and told *The Sacramento Bee* on August 10 that, "We are

going to prosecute Baker and prosecute vigorously. If the judge in San Bernardino will fix a jail sentence instead of a fine, we may be able to stop this racing over roads.”

Chenu did not know that Baker had appeared a day earlier before Judge Edward Wall. Baker pleaded guilty, explaining, “if he had been informed he would not be permitted to exceed the speed limit in California as he did in other states,” he would not have gone so fast. Judge Wall fined Baker \$10. Baker paid the fine and headed off to his next adventure. [Blackstock, Joe, “Cajon Pass speed trap was too much for even ‘Cannonball’ Baker,” *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*, September 28, 2020]

### **Zero Milestones for the National Old Trails Road**

Judge Lowe sent a copy of the association’s October 1923 bulletin to chambers of commerce, commercial clubs, and D.A.R. chapters in every town of consequence along the road. He urged them to erect sign posts or granite monuments “in each town of consequence”:

There will come a time when this Association will cease to exist, but there will never be a time when this road will fade away or be blotted out . . . . In order to ascertain the exact mileage, I would suggest that we count it from the Capital [sic] in Washington, and thence West, and in Baltimore, Washington Monument, Washington Place, North Charles St., and Mt. Vernon Place. These official mile-stones or monuments accurately placed will give the tourist not only definite information, but the people of each community as well, and will also reflect the spirit of the age in which we have lived.

This interest in milestones resulted from the dedication of the Zero Milestone on the Ellipse in Washington, D.C. President Harding presided over the dedication on June 4, 1923. The monument read: POINT FOR THE MEASUREMENT OF DISTANCES FROM WASHINGTON ON HIGHWAYS OF THE UNITED STATES. Inscriptions on the side noted that the Zero Milestone marked the start of the first transcontinental army convoy (July 7 to September 6, 1919, via the Lincoln Highway) and the second (June 14 to October 6, 1920, via the Bankhead Highway).

Dr. S. M. Johnson of Roswell, New Mexico, had conceived the idea for the Zero Milestone based on the similar marker in ancient Rome. Dr. Johnson had been involved with the Southern National Highway Association, but he is best remembered as the head of the Lee Highway Association (Washington to San Diego). He had proposed the idea of a Zero Milestone in a letter on June 7, 1919, to Colonel J. M. Ritchie of the Motor Transport Corps:

It seems to me the time has come when the Government should designate a point at which the road system of the United States takes its beginning, and that the spot should be marked by an initial milestone, from which all road distances in the United States and throughout the Western hemisphere should be reckoned.

Rome marked the beginning of her system of highways which bound her widely scattered people together by a golden milestone in the Forum . . . . If that golden milestone in Rome still has power to fire the imagination of men, how much greater will be the appeal

of the Washington milestone as time goes on and American history grows ever richer in deeds of service to humanity.

A temporary marker was placed at the site of the Zero Milestone in a ceremony before the first convoy began; Dr. Johnson accompanied the convoy to deliver good roads speeches in towns along the way. In June 1920, a Federal law authorized the Secretary of War to erect a Zero Milestone, at no cost to the government. The ceremony included speeches by President Harding, Secretary of Agriculture Wallace, Chief MacDonald, Roy Chapin, and Dr. Johnson.

By September 1923, backers were supporting milestones for every State, hence Judge Lowe's interest.

(The idea of the Zero Milestone soon proved impractical. It has mainly been forgotten, but remains standing on the Ellipse, at an ideal location for tourists to stand while they take pictures of the southern side of the White House.)

Judge Lowe, in his bulletin, emphasized:

The cost of such a monument will be negligible, but ought to be so permanent as not to require re-placement within the next several generations. In the meantime, in co-operation with the Auto Club of Southern California at Los Angeles, we are signposting the road from ocean to ocean. Indicating the amount of travel on this road last year, the Auto Club . . . states, that last year there arrived in that city over the National Old Trails Road 27,830 cars, over the Lincoln Highway, 14,987 cars, over the Bankhead Highway 6,800 cars and over the Midland Trail, 9,125 cars, thus showing that nearly as many cars reached Southern California last year over the National Old Trails Road, averaging four people to each car, as came over all other roads combined, and the travel this year will be double over what it was last year. The Officials of this club estimate that the tourists this year will leave \$240,000,000 in the western states, more than half of them coming over this road (or \$120,000,000) estimating that each car carries four passengers, and spends \$4.00 a day each, and remains in the state sixty days. Is this worth while? If this is true now, what may we expect when the road is paved all the way? \$120,000,000 benefit in last year – it will never be less. But people travel East as well; suppose the benefit to the twelve states through which it runs, not counting California, be as much, the benefit to the twelve states will be \$240,000,000.

To illustrate his point, Judge Lowe referred to two letters he had received. Colonel E. R. Moses of Great Bend, Kansas, and a member of the National Old Trails Association's executive committee, had traveled by automobile through the New England States:

We traveled by auto through all of them, in the interior and the coast line, and they had elegant roads, kept up just like a railroad. They had to, if they got the [sic] travel, as they claim they took fifty-three million dollars from the tourists this year.

He also quoted a letter from B. A. Matthews of Columbus, Ohio, a State vice president of the National Old Trails Road Association:

Just arrived from a trip to Washington, D.C., over the National Old Trails Road. It is a wonderful road – like a city pavement all the way.”

Judge Lowe commented, “It makes life worth living when we receive such encouraging letters as these.”

He also quoted a news item:

Denver, Oct. 4.- Four and one-half million tourists visited Colorado this season and spent on an average of \$10 each, or a total of 45 million dollars, according to estimates made today by the Denver tourist bureau. Frank A. Bare, president, who announced the figures, said the number of motor car tourists increased in the 1923 season from 514,000 to 643,000.

Judge Lowe expressed the point:

The former State Highway Engineer of Colorado proved by accurate figures some years ago that the N. O. T. Road would pay for its construction across the state in one year. There is not a state through which this road runs but could pay the entire cost of construction and receive a handsome dividend each year on the investment, whereas, each state pays only one-half the cost [under the Federal-aid highway program].

However, disregarding every other argument for improved roads, let’s consider the question from the economical or commercial side only; it is agreed by all authorities, and generally accepted, that the saving in transportation charges of a good over a bad road amounts to 20 cents per ton per mile, but for the purposes of this argument let’s be over conservative and assume that the saving would be one-half, or 10 cents per mile.

The most intelligent action taken by any State Engineer or Highway Board which had come under my observation, is in Colorado, where the Engineer put men out on all the roads constituting their State Highway system and kept a count of the amount of wheeled vehicle traffic for a period of two months at different seasons of the year and then made an estimate based upon these reports of the amount of traffic on each of the 113 roads constituting a mileage of 3827, with the result that the National Old Trails Highway from the Kansas State line to Pueblo, covering a distance of 168 miles carried more than half the tonnage of the whole State system.

Having learned of some criticisms having been made upon this report, I had some correspondence with the State Engineer and asked him to make a calculation based upon 10c saving per ton per mile, estimating the cost of construction to be \$25,000 per mile, particularly as it related to the National Old Trails Road. His statement was that if 10c per ton per mile were to be accepted instead of 20c the generally accepted estimate, was made, that it would pay for itself in a single year.

In addition to his commentary in the bulletin, Judge Lowe included a press release from AAA for

release on September 14, 1923. The headline:

SATURATION POINT  
IS NOT IN SIGHT  
Report of Auto Registrations for First Six Months of 1923.  
Shows Big Increase in Leading States.  
New York Again Leads in Licenses –  
Ohio Goes Ahead of California.

The point of the press release was that, “There are no indications that the United States or any of the individual States are approaching the point of saturation in number of motor vehicles.”

The press release ended:

The total number of motor vehicles registered in all of the States during the six months period was 13,002,427 as against 12,238,375 for the entire year of 1922. The total revenue from registration was \$167,240,937.76 for the first six months as compared to \$152,047,823.74. In addition to the revenue from registrations the States collected from the motorists \$8,669,174.02 in taxes on gasoline during the six months period of this year, as compared to a total collection of \$11,923,442.61 for 1922. As the gasoline tax is collected as the fuel is used, the record for the year 1923 may be expected to double that of 1922. The gasoline tax in some of the States did not go into effect until late in the years

The final record of 1923 will indicate that motorists will have paid direct taxes in registration fees to the States and gasoline taxes approximately \$200,000,000 according to the Good Roads Board of the A.A.A. This will not include the personal property tax or special registration or gasoline taxes imposed by cities, counties and townships.

Judge Lowe continued:

May we add to the above illuminating statement, that the suggestion of appropriating this immense and immensely growing sum to the States to be used as a guarantee fund against a State Bond Issue, was suggested as early as the 2nd of May, 1912, BY THIS ASSOCIATION. In the states adopting this plan they are **Building Roads**. By this plan the Automobile owner nor the manufacturer does not add one penny to his taxes. The State simply sets aside this tax and applies it to the road fund, where it ought to go. These figures are illuminating too, indicating the most active states in building roads. It illustrates also that within the next five years such states as Missouri and Kansas will each have a road fund, from this source alone, of not less than the state of Michigan, or 624,590 cars, and if the license fee be \$10.00 per car this will amount to \$6,245,900 with the gasoline tax to be added, annually. It is a safe estimate to multiply this by two, within the five year period. Neither does this plan of providing a road fund add one penny to the taxes of the farmer, the chief beneficiary, for, after all is said, in the entire process of road construction, the land-owner is chiefly benefitted. It will double the value of every acre of land bordering on any through or National Road. Were it not for the purblindness of

this class of people, supported and encouraged by pig-headed road officials and crooked Politicians, the whole problem of road construction would be solved over night. It is not the purpose to levy a tax, but to appropriate a tax already levied. We repeat this is not a purpose to levy a tax, but an effort to see that a tax already levied shall go into the building of roads where it belongs and not into politics where it does not belong. Kentucky now has a campaign for a \$50,000,000 fund which will undoubtedly carry, and so will Tennessee for \$75,000,000.

Because “easy money” is thus in sight, we must guard against a saturnalia of extravagance and waste. We must regard this as a sacred fund and protect it from being robbed by crooked contractors, material interests, or unscrupulous, inefficient and untrustworthy officials. It seems we must still guard ourselves against the silly nonsense that that road is best which costs the most money. A gravel pit in McPherson County, Kas., it is claimed, will supply the material to pave the entire state system of roads in that state. It is claimed that this gravel cements itself, and does not RUT or WASH. Many of the other states no doubt have this same quality of gravel. Wichita, Kansas, has put on a Bus line to Los Angeles! After all “the World do move.” The distance between Wichita and Los Angeles is about 1800 miles. The Secretary of this Association, Mr. Geo. L. L. Gann of Pueblo, also a member of the State Highway Board of Colorado, informs me that there is practically an inexhaustible supply of limestone shale right on this road between La Junta and Trinidad which is superior for road surfacing to the best known quality of cement.

He referred to a speech by Chief MacDonald in which he divided roads into three classes:

- 1st – Cement-Concrete
- 2nd – Asphalt, and
- 3rd – Gravel.

“It is unnecessary,” Judge Lowe wrote, “to say we would not have thus classified them but, McDonald [sic] has the last guess.”

He also addressed a common concern:

It is claimed that this is an inopportune time to build roads because the farmers have been struck hard by the depressed conditions now prevailing. This fallacy is of easy solution. The farms do not contribute one penny to the road construction fund. If they did, when times are hard and agricultural industries suffering, it seems would be the most opportune moment to employ an army of men in road construction. It is no remedy for dull times to sit down and cry over the situation. Moreover, if this fund does not go into roads, it will be dissipated and distributed among a vast throng of political parasites. Which shall it be?

Judge Lowe also took the opportunity to criticize the highly publicized “Ideal Section” of the Lincoln Highway. The named trail associations, in general, were promotional organizations; they did not build or pay for construction of their roads. The Lincoln Highway Association was

unusual in providing resources for “seedling miles” as object lessons to encourage State and local officials to improve the road along the same lines. The most famous "seedling" and one of the most talked about portions of the Lincoln Highway at the time was the 1.3-mile "Ideal Section" between Dyer and Schererville in Lake County, Indiana. In 1920, the association decided to develop a model section of road that would be adequate not only for current traffic but for highway transportation over the following 2 decades. The association assembled 17 of the country's foremost highway experts for meetings in December 1920 and February 1921 to decide design details of the Ideal Section. They agreed on such features as:

- A 110-foot right-of-way;
- A 40-foot wide concrete pavement 10 inches thick (maximum loads of 8,000 pounds per wheel were the basis for the pavement design);
- Minimum radius for curves of 1,000 feet, with guardrail at all embankments;
- Curves superelevated (i.e., banked) for a speed of 35 miles per hour;
- No grade crossings or advertising signs; and
- A footpath for pedestrians.

The Ideal Section was built during 1922 and 1923, with funds from the Federal-aid highway program, the State highway agency, and Lake County as well as a \$130,000 contribution by the United States Rubber Company (company president C. B. Seger was one of the founders of the Lincoln Highway Association). In magazines and newspapers, the Ideal Section was hailed as a vision of the future. Highway officials from around the country visited the Ideal Section, and discussed it in papers read before technical societies in this country and abroad.

Judge Lowe had his own view of the Ideal Section as expressed in his October 1923 bulletin:

The “Ideal Section” mentioned, if it even demonstrates its endurance, will also demonstrate its uselessness, because its cost is prohibitive. Our opinion is that the “Ideal Road” of the future will be so resilient as to absorb the shock and blow of modern traffic, no matter how heavy the load, or severe the shock. But, our opinion is now what it has always been, to wit: to build with the best available material and to build better and better as the years go by.

We heartily endorse Theodore Gary’s definition that “Road Building is a Process.”

(Today, the Ideal Section is still in use between Dyer and Schererville, an early attempt to envision the type of highway that would evolve into today's Interstate superhighways.)

To further illustrate the point, Judge Lowe reprinted a letter dated September 28, 1923, from George W. Jones, Road Commissioner, Los Angeles County, regarding Harbor Boulevard in San Pedro. He described how the road had been flooded and damaged over the years from 1910 to

1918, and was impassable at times, after which:

June, nineteen-nineteen, additional disintegrated granite was placed over surface to level same on which five inch Willite Pavement was laid in two courses of three inches foundation and two inch top.

Subsequent investigation along edge of pavement shows many voids in base which is still subject to settlement of filler.

Traffic at date of Willite construction six thousand tons per day with gradual increase to date of seventeen thousand eight hundred tons per day. Pavement at present time in excellent condition. Total maintenance to date approximately two hundred fifty dollars. We are satisfied with it and building more. Decomposed granite used on this job FRIABLE material secured from Country pit.

Judge Lowe added, "May we add, this stretch of road has received greater punishment and required less maintenance than any road in the United States, BAR NONE.

Next, he reprinted a list of historic dates for the National Old Trails Road beginning with 1606:

New Mexico section established.....	1606
Eastern Section conceived by George Washington prior to.....	1800
Financed by Act of Congress admitting Ohio into the Union.....	1802
Established by Act of Congress.....	1806
Established and extended by Congress to Santa Fe, New Mexico..	1825
Constructed and extended by Congress to the Mississippi River and maintained until.....	1837
Its restoration and construction by "The Mo. Old Trails Association" in convention assembled.....	1907
Taken over, adopted and named, "National Old Trail Road" at Kansas City, Mo., in Convention assembled.....	1912

Judge Lowe reprinted an article he had written for BREEZES, the magazine of the Kansas City Automobile club. The title and subtitle were:

**THE HISTORIC "NATIONAL OLD TRAILS ROAD"**  
Conceived by George Washington and, Following  
Civilization Westward Under Various Acts of Congress,  
Now Reaches From Ocean to Ocean

He repeated the history of the Cumberland Road and other segments of the National Old Trails

Road, ending with the founding of the named trail in 1912:

We cannot dwell further upon the historic features surrounding it but hasten to a conclusion by saying that today it is completely hard surfaced from the Atlantic Seaboard to the Mississippi at St. Louis. It has now been taken over practically throughout its entire length across this state [Missouri] as the first interstate highway to be built under the late Act of the Missouri legislature. This insures its completion in the near future to Kansas City. Very much of the road between Kansas City and Los Angeles has already been built, and is in good travelable condition.

It is hoped that the road West from the Mississippi will be 20 feet wide. The road from Kansas City west will be uniformly paved twenty feet wide. It is already practically all graded and bridged. It is the only road you can take at the Mississippi River and reach the Atlantic Seaboard over a hard surfaced road. It is the only National Road ever established in the history of this country, and will be the first to be completed.

Finally, he reprinted his remarks his remarks to the Highway Congress of the Highway Industries and American Association of State Highway Officials on December 12, 1918. In doing so, he asked, "The Chicago Compromise – has it been kept? Lest we forget." He also reprinted the resolutions adopted at the time. (See part 3 for more information.)

### **Completing the Road in Indiana**

In 1923, Indiana was working to complete its segment of the National Old Trails Road, classified as State Road 3. In July, Director John D. Williams of the Indiana State Highway Commission announced that the road was now open from Indianapolis west to Mt. Meridian. *Good Roads* reported:

Mr. Williams points out that since work started this year closing the last gaps in the road, traffic has detoured at a point about 4 miles west of Stilesville.

The National road will be opened to traffic over the new Reesville cut-off by August 15 which will mark the elimination of all detours on this road west of Indianapolis.

On Labor Day, September 3, 1923, a scout car from a motor club traveled the road from Terre Haute to Indianapolis. Main Street in Richmond, Washington Avenue in Indianapolis, and Wabash Avenue in Terre Haute, "together with all the main streets of all points in between, are now tied up as all one thoroughfare, state-wide in scope and a part of a mainly-hard-surfaced highway extending from St. Louis on the west to Washington, D.C., and the Atlantic Seaboard as the result of the lifting by the State Highway Commission of detours between Indianapolis and Terre Haute. New construction east of Richmond to the Ohio State line is expected to be completed early this fall":

The National Old Trails Road is thus stepping forward as the main contender for cross-continent touring and Indiana cities and towns hold strategic positions on this famous route. At the present time the pavement is complete on the route between Indianapolis and Terre Haute with the exception of three places, but in such instances the old macadam has been left in passable condition. A motor club road scout who traversed the

National Road from Terre Haute to Indianapolis shortly after the last detour barricade had been removed, states that on these short stretches the going is none too smooth. This situation will exist for only a short time, it is believed, pending the construction of viaducts over railroad tracks at Glenn crossing just east of Terre Haute and at Putnamville. A relocation including a new bridge is not yet complete near Mt. Meridian but the old route is useable, it is stated. The road in the eastern city limits of Brazil is now undergoing hard surface pavement, but only one-half of the roadway alongside trolley car tracks is being paved at a time, leaving the other side of macadam still open to traffic. The Reelsville hill and the two death trap grade crossings are eliminated by the well-paved cut-off.

The report issued a speed warning:

On Labor Day holiday when our road scout car passed over this route, it was an almost continuous procession all the way from Terre Haute to Indianapolis. It was noted that many drivers in the procession on this new highway were taking deadly chances by dashing around a curve in the middle of the road or to the left, or rushing up a hill near the top, past another car. The motorist who takes chances on this sort of driving is only inviting an accident that is apt to have very serious consequences. ["Condition of National Road From Terre Haute to Richmond," *The Hoosier Motorist*, October 1923, page 32]

Director Williams opened bids on July 24, 1923, for construction of 37 bridges in 20 counties. One of the bridges was a grade crossing over the Pennsylvania Railroad on the National Old Trails Road 3 miles east of Terre Haute. The Indiana State Highway Commission and the railroad company were to divide the cost.

In addition, Williams opened bids on August 10, 1923, for grading and structures on approximately 49 miles of secondary roads in southern Indiana and for hard surfacing 8 miles of the National Old Trails Road in Vigo County. The project involved resurfacing 1.2 miles of brick pavement from west of Terre Haute to the city. The Indiana State Highway Commission would provide cement to the contractor. ["Indiana to Open Bids for 57 miles of Roads," *Good Roads*, August 8, 1923, page 53]

A September report on Indiana's good roads work explained:

The National Road will be the first transcontinental highway completed in Indiana's modern road system, and will be opened its entire length across this state from Richmond through Indianapolis to Terre Haute about September 15. Indiana highway officials plan to commemorate the event with a fitting celebration to include a parade over the route. Governors of Illinois, Ohio and Indiana will be asked to participate, and various industrial concerns, farmers, motor firms and citizens of towns on the road, together with chambers of commerce and automobile clubs will join to make the event notable in Hoosier road progress. It is proposed that pioneer methods of travel such as ox teams, horseback riders and prairie schooners be portrayed, followed by the evolution of antiquated gasoline chariots of a few decades ago to the luxurious automotive creations

of today that, through good roads, annihilate distances and symbolize progress. [Parrish, C. H., "Indiana's Good Road Program," *Good Roads*, September 5, 1923, page 70]

Chief Engineer C. Gray, in his annual report for 1923 stated:

All paving contracts have been completed on the National Road, designated as State Route No. 3, east and west through the central part of the state. The pavement is continuous except for three small gaps, each of which is approximately three-quarters of a mile in length, the paving of which has been omitted to provide for the construction of grade separations with railroads.

Notable bridges completed during the year included "the 280 foot reinforced concrete arch bridge (3 spans at 72 feet) over the Eel River on what is known as the Reelsville Cut-off, on Road 3, the National Road, between Brazil and Greencastle" and "the 325 foot open-spandrel reinforced concrete arch bridge (4 spans at 65 feet) over Deer Creek on a slight relocation of Road 3, at a point just south of Greencastle."

Several larger bridges had been awarded in 1923, but were still incomplete, including, "the 125 foot concrete-encased steel plate girder bridge (1 span at 33 feet and 2 spans at 44 feet) over the tracks of the Pennsylvania Railroad on Route 3, the National Road, just east of Terre Haute." Upon completion of this bridge over the double tracks of the Pennsylvania Railroad, "there will be removed from the National Road the last of the grade crossings with steam railroads, except those within the corporate limits of cities and towns and two crossings with the Pennsylvania Railroad where the visibility is good and the separation of which will require an unusually large expense." [*Yearbook of the State of Indiana for the Year 1923*," The Legislative Reference Bureau, 1924, pages 1034, 1049-1051, 1110]

### **The Federal-Aid System**

Under the Federal Highway Act of 1921, BPR was assigned the task of working with State highway officials to identify roads that would be eligible for Federal-aid highway funds. The roads, which could not exceed 7 percent of all public roads in each State, were to be further divided into two classes. Up to three-sevenths of each State's system were to be primary or interstate highways, with the States able to spend up to 60 percent of Federal-aid funds on these roads. The Secretary of Agriculture was to give preference to projects that would expedite "completion of an adequate and connected system of highways interstate in character."

The second class of eligible roads was to consist of secondary or intercounty highway.

Chief MacDonald considered the selection of the two classes of eligible roads one of the most important tasks ever assigned to BPR. As discussed in part 3 of this history, he established a task force to devise ways to evaluate how well each State's proposed system met the statutory requirements. In his annual report for FY 1923, MacDonald explained that proposed systems had been submitted by the States or proposed by BPR for all States:

As the result of conferences with officials of the several States and groups of States, 35 of

these systems had been definitely approved by the Secretary at the close of the fiscal year, and it was anticipated that the systems of the remaining States would be approved by the fall of 1923.

The total mileage of highways existing in the United States at the time of the passage of the Federal highway act (Nov. 9, 1921), as certified by the State highway departments, was 2,859,575 miles. The maximum mileage that can be included in the system for the whole country, being 7 per cent of the total mileage, is 200,170 miles. The mileage included in the 35 systems approved up to the end of the fiscal year was 111,699 miles; and as the permissible 7 per cent of existing mileage is, in general, not being included in the system as initially approved, it is not likely that the initial program will include more than 180,000 miles.

He emphasized that the approved system would cross the western mountains “at practically every one of the important passes. “These passes are the controlling points on the transcontinental routes westward. They are the passages through which the national roads must cross the mountain barriers.” Among the passes across the Rockies was Raton Pass on the Colorado/New Mexico line. Several named trails used Raton Pass, including the Colorado to Gulf Highway, the Buffalo Highway, and the National Old Trails Road.

System designation was completed on November 1, 1923, with the issuance of a Federal-aid system map. The initial map, published in a relatively small edition, covered 168,881 miles. Several States subsequently increased their mileage, bringing the total to 171,687 miles at the end of the fiscal year. BPR then published a larger edition of the maps consisting of 18 sheets, each sheet comprising several States. Most of the approved mileage was consistent with the mileage BPR’s task force had identified.

By then, three States – Delaware, Maryland, and Rhode Island – had reported they had completed their systems. Maryland’s original system, for example, of 1,036.7 miles was recognized by the Secretary of Agriculture as completed or provided for on August 23, 1923, at which time the Secretary approved additional mileage. [*Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture for the Year Ended June 30, October 15, 1923*, pages 464-465; Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Public Roads, *Report of the Secretary 1924*, pages 1-2; *America’s Highways 1776-1976*, pages 108-109]

Colorado had almost left a segment of the National Old Trails Road from Trinidad to La Junta off its primary system. *Colorado Highways* magazine explained:

Everybody in that section of the state was disappointed when the first draft of the seven per cent system for Colorado was announced.

This draft did not include the historic old roadway.

However, it had not been forgotten in the shuffle. L. D. Blauvelt, the state highway engineer, all the time had had the road in mind.

He ordered a recheck of the figures before they were finally submitted to the Federal Bureau of Public Roads for approval.

In the recheck it was found that an error had been made in the original figures. This made it possible to include the old Santa Fe Trail in the seven per cent system, which gives this highway the benefit of federal aid funds.

As the article added, the addition of the section to the seven percent system “was good news, to put it mildly,” adding:

Work of improving the Santa Fe Trail already is under way. During the tourist season, hundreds of autoists pass over this road, and with the improvements contemplated, it will attract still a greater number of visitors each year.

The trail is used particularly by transcontinental auto parties in the early spring and fall and during the winter months, when the more northern routes are made difficult from rain and snow. [“Historic Road Gets Federal Aid,” *Colorado Highways*, April 1922, page 6]

## **The Arizona System**

From the early days of the National Old Trails Road, advocates for the alternative Arizona-New Mexico links had battled for traffic. New Mexico had placed the Gallup-to-Lupton on its seven per cent system, as had Arizona although with BPR prodding. Even after Arizona’s Federal-aid system had been approved, the Holbrook-Lupton connection with Gallup, New Mexico, remained controversial, at least in Springerville, as the Mangums explained:

Springerville’s Gustav Becker was chairman of the Apache County Highway Commission and a long-time good roads activist, powerfully connected. He declared war on the Lupton Road, and both sides went to battle with a will. Editorials, letters to the editor and other propaganda filled the air.

The north reacted vigorously, opposing southern Arizona’s persistent efforts to stonewall the construction of the Holbrook to Lupton road. Judge Root of Needles went on a promotional tour, visiting each of the towns along the line, speaking to various civic groups and alerting them to the issue. He proposed that they unite across Arizona and join groups in California and New Mexico to urge building of the Holbrook-Lupton Road. The groups passed resolutions, wrote to their Congressmen, to the Bureau of Public Roads and to others, demanding that the Holbrook-Lupton Road be built. At the behest of the Gallup people the New Mexico-Arizona Good Roads Association was created to see that a suitable road was built.

In early 1922, Apache County residents approved a bond issue to build the road. “The State Engineer refused to build it and had to be goaded again by federal engineers to take action.” The Mangums reported:

The pro-Lupton forces had prevailed and a true road was built in 1922. In the Arizona

Engineer's report to the governor for the year, he reported:

Adamma-Lupton

State is now improving this road parallel to the railroad. Work does not comply with Federal standards, but the location is good, so we hope we can improve it to standards later. It was surveyed in 1920, then relocated, cutting 7 miles off. There are two bridges over the Puerco in this proposed project, eliminating the present fords. Bridges have been designed and contract let for building them. Work will be done with state road funds and Apache County bonds. [Mangums, pages 108-109]

At the end of 1922, the administration of Governor Thomas E. Campbell came to an end after he lost his reelection bid. Governor George W. P. Hunt took office on January 1, 1923; he had been the State of Arizona's first Governor, taking office on February 14, 1917, and would ultimately serve seven terms.

A report dated December 15, 1922, appeared in *Western Highway Builder* magazine:

Thanks either to good luck or good management (the reader must decide for himself) the outgoing State highway administration is able to turn over to its successors a practically continuous stretch of improved highway from the Colorado river at Topock to Flagstaff, Arizona.

This road is a portion of the Old Trails Highway across northern Arizona, a route of surpassing picturesqueness and one which has increased in popularity with the transcontinental travelers from month to month as mile after mile has been surfaced with volcanic cinders, an ideal surfacing material which abounds in this section.

The last three miles have been finished by State forces under Maintenance Foreman J. B. Bristol, and just in time to make possible the turning over of a completed job, for with the spreading of the last yard of cinders snow began to fall and 19 inches of "the beautiful" was piled up on the level before King Winter decided that was about enough to put a crimp in road operations for the year.

This last 3-mile job, located between Flagstaff and Williams on the great Arizona divide, was put through in about two weeks' actual working time between storms. But for a combination of circumstances and strenuous effort the big storm would have found the work unfinished and the road would have been impassable until spring. As it was the gasoline shovel in the cinder pit, the 20-dump-bodied trucks, the caterpillars and rollers were kept going night and day while Bristol and his crew worked like demons in the race against time and the elements.

The same crew had undertaken cinder surfacing a month earlier between Ash Fork and Seligman:

It was then a question as to whether the camp with its \$75,000 worth of equipment should

be moved up onto the 7,000-foot elevation in Coconino County, where remained the three incompleated miles. It was fully realized that snow might come at any time to halt operations, but against this was the record of several previous years when the weather had remained open until the holidays. Despite the indeterminate weather conditions, it was decided by the State Engineer to chance the elements and the move was ordered.

Hardly had the new camp been established up among the pine “on top of the world,” as the Coconinans like to say, when along came a storm which tied things up a bit. Again the question arose as to whether it was advisable to keep the camp intact or abandon operations. Still hopeful of two or three weeks of good weather, the State Engineer decided to hold the camp and the men were put to work felling trees on the south side of the highway to prevent the shade forming icy patches on the road.

By the time this work was completed, the weather cleared, the road dried sufficiently for hauling and the cindering operations were started with a vim and a push which saw no slackening until Old Man Winter blew his blast and ‘twas “tally” for the year.

Good luck or good management – which? Or maybe good hard work had something to do with it, too. [Rollins, Ralph, “Northern Arizona Road Improved,” *Western Highways Builder*, January 1923, pages 16-17]

## **In Colorado**

On June 16, 1923, the Arkansas Valley Association of County Commissioners met at the Pueblo County courthouse. George L. L. Gann of the advisory board of the State Highway Department and secretary of the National Old Trails Road Association, addressed the gathering about the importance of keeping the Santa Fe Trail/National Old Trails Road in good condition. He urged the counties that the trail passed through to give the road special attention in view of its status as part of a major national highway open from coast to coast. He emphasized the history of the National Old Trails Road, its many scenic segments, and its role in the country’s westward movement. It was, he added, well marked in red, white, and blue.

Overall, 2.8 miles of concrete paving of the Santa Fe Trail east of Pueblo had been completed, joining 3 miles laid between Pueblo and Blende. Another 2.5-mile segment of concrete paving had been submitted to BPR. When the project was constructed, Pueblo County would have a continuous concrete road from Pueblo to Vineland, which carried more traffic than any other highway in southern Colorado.

The county commissioners also were concerned about the capability of contractors. They appointed a committee to confer with State Highway Engineer Blauvelt about contractors who failed to complete projects as specified in contracts. Some segments of State highways had been closed as much as a year because of contractor delays. The commissioners planned to recommend that time limits be made on all contracts, and that when the contractors failed to complete the work on time, that they should be fined or penalized in some other way. [“Gann Urges Commissioners to Keep Historic Santa Fe Trail Smooth,” *Colorado Highways*, July 1923, page 8]

## **In New Mexico**

In 1923, New Mexico highway officials were concerned about the cost of maintaining the gravel road from Albuquerque north to the Bernalillo County line on the National Old Trails Road:

Although the road north from Albuquerque had been improved with a gravel surface, the state highway department found itself confronted with rapidly mounting maintenance costs as the daily traffic reached 1,000 motor vehicles. Under the present system of maintenance patrol by truck as used on the 3,000 miles of primary roads that make up the state highway system, it was possible to keep the road in fair repair, but looking ahead it was evident that hard surfacing would soon be necessary. Accordingly, a federal aid project agreement was drawn up and contract let to the Lee Moor Construction Company of El Paso, Texas, for a 16-foot concrete road from Albuquerque to the north county line. This stretch is known locally as Roosevelt Road, but is a part of State Highway No. 1 and of the transcontinental National Old Trails Road. The New Mexico Auto Club has marked all of the state highways so that they can be followed between cities by numbers alone.

The road was on the east bank of the Rio Grande River “through a productive irrigated district, and passes many old adobe dwellings as well as the modern homes of the ranchers.” Because of the high level of the water table along the river, “precautions were taken to prevent injury to the slab through insufficient supporting power of the subgrade”:

At such points, an eight-inch layer of gravel secured from deposits near the road was spread over the subgrade and rolled before the concrete was placed. In all cases the grade was raised at least two feet above the surrounding country, and at some places it was made considerably higher to give room for irrigation ditches, which at many points cross under the road through inverted siphons. Where the ground water level was three feet below the subgrade, no gravel layer was considered necessary. While there are occasional cold snaps in the winter season, frost does not penetrate into the ground. Mesh reinforcement was placed two inches below the surface of the concrete as an additional precaution where there was any doubt as to the stability of the subgrade, and particularly over all irrigation and drainage structure.

These details, and others, were necessary to protect the road:

In five years' time, through traffic on the National Old Trails Road near Albuquerque has increased from 50 motor vehicles daily to about 600. As the many interesting points reached along this route become more widely known, inter-city and interstate travel is sure to increase greatly. Picturesque Indian pueblos hundreds of years old, prehistoric cliff dwellings, deep canyons and snow-capped mountains, all are to be found along the way. Local traffic is now about equal in volume to through traffic, giving 1,200 motor vehicles a day. This includes a number of trucks used largely in delivery service and produce hauling. Already the City Electric Company has placed in operation a truck line to Alameda, seven miles north over the finished concrete, and will supplement its street

car service by a passenger bus line north to several small villages as soon as the paved road is completed to the county line.

Eventually, all the State's "main highways will doubtless have to be paved." [Sellers, Col. D. K. B., "Albuquerque Linked to Santa Fe by Concrete-Paved National Old Trails Road," *Concrete Highway Magazine*, December 1923, pages 280-282]

## **In Arizona**

State highway officials conducted a census of traffic on September 22, 1923, as reported in Flagstaff's *The Coconino Sun*:

That the National Old Trails highway east and west through Flagstaff – the transcontinental highway that offers much more of interest to auto tourists than any other – leads all other highways in number of tourist cars that use it is abundantly proven by a census taken on September 22 by State Highway Engineer Frank Goodman of the auto traffic on each of the leading highways of the state.

The census shows that on our Old Trails that day – despite flood conditions that entirely closed the Winslow-Holbrook section east of here and that held many hundreds of cars headed in either direction in California and east of Holbrook – 346 tourist cars used the highway between Flagstaff and Williams. The next heaviest tourist traffic in the state was the Seligman-Peach Springs section of the Old Trails; the third heaviest in the Ashfork-Seligman section of the National Old Trails; the fourth heaviest on the Williams-Ashfork section. The Phoenix-Mesa route (paved) then breaks in as fifth. The sixth heaviest made for the day was on the National Old Trails, on the Kingman-Oatman section.

The census illustrated where the tourist travel is:

At the 14 various points of observation in the northern section crossed by the Old Trails there were 2,082 tourist cars on September 22; while there were only 959 at the 20 observation points in the southwestern district, 395 at the 8 observation points in the central part of the state and 1,399 at the 15 observation points in the southeastern part of the state. If, as is generally conceded, Arizona's greatest source of future revenue is tourist travel – which is also generally conceded to be our greatest asset in getting outsiders acquainted with us and influencing them to settle permanently here – then the fact that the National Old Trails highway through northern Arizona is their favorite route should be taken into consideration by the rest of Arizona in mapping out any general program for road improvement. Also, it may as well be understood by the rest of the state that the climatic and scenic attractions of the National Old Trails will keep the bulk of tourist travel along this highway no matter how much effort may be wasted in trying to get it into and across the state over some other route.

The sensible thing for Arizonans generally to strive for is more perfect road conditions along the National Old Trails; then for good roads leading from it to other sections.

A paved highway through southern Arizona would not detract from travel along the National Old Trails. But if the latter were paved, or even well surfaced from state line to state line, it would mean an immediate and tremendous increase in tourist traffic that would be beneficial to the central and southern parts of Arizona as well as to the northern section.

The census broke the traffic into segments of interest to Flagstaff:

St. Johns-Springerville road, 242 autos, 146 being foreign.

St. Johns-Holbrook, 255 cars, 164 being foreign.

Adamana-Lupton, 216 cars, 208 being foreign.

Holbrook-Winslow, road closed.

Flagstaff-Williams (the observer being stationed 13 miles east of Williams) 456 autos, 346 being foreign.

Williams-Ashfork, 400 autos, 273 being foreign.

Ashfork-Seligman, 317 autos, 276 being foreign.

Seligman-Peach Springs, 351 cars, 314 being foreign.

Kingman-Oatman, 310 cars, 225 being foreign.

[“There’s Lesson in the Fact Old Trails Leads Every Road of State By a Big Margin in Tourist Travel,” *The Coconino Sun*, October 12, 1923, pages 1, 3]

### **Senator Jones’s Transcontinental Trip**

The March, April, and June 1924 issues of AAA’s *American Motorist* carried a series of articles by Senator Wesley L. Jones about his transcontinental motor trip. In 1923, he and his wife decided to make a round-trip automobile journey from Washington, D.C., to their home in Seattle, Washington. (In the three-part article, Senator Jones did not mention his wife’s name. She was the former Minda Nelson.)

Senator Jones, a Republican and chairman of the Committee on Commerce, had been in Congress since winning election to the House of Representatives in 1898. He became a Senator in 1909, but would lose his reelection bid in the Democratic wave election of 1932 that gave incoming President Franklin D. Roosevelt large Democratic majorities in the House and Senate. Shortly after his election loss, Senator Jones died on November 19, 1932, at the age of 69.

The first part of the trip was along the National Old Trails Road. Senator Jones began by recalling the growth of the automobile:

Twenty years ago the automobile was a curiosity. Ten years later pioneer drivers began to cross the continent. Such trips were deemed very dangerous and when made were thought wonderful achievements. If it had been suggested to me that I would drive to Seattle from Washington and back, I would have ridiculed the idea. Now thousands of people make the trip each year and the number is increasing rapidly.

While the idea now seemed reasonable, he acknowledged his inexperience:

I know nothing of mechanics and have learned nothing of the philosophy of a car. If anything goes wrong short of a flat tire or broken rod, I am helpless. I don't know where to look for trouble, and I don't know it when I see it and I don't know what to do when it is pointed out to me. I know how to steer a car, clean a spark plug, change a tire if there is an extra one around and fill and turn grease cups. With this lack of knowledge, it may have been a reckless thing for me to try to make this trip and especially to take Mrs. Jones along, but she was game . . . . If I could drive across the country and back again, anyone who can steer a car can do the same thing.

I had all sorts of advice before I started. Much of it was rather discouraging . . . . One friend said I might run into a cyclone, and another had me stuck in the mud many miles from help; one saw me marooned in the desert with a flat tire and no extra one to put on; another predicted sickness with a doctor many miles away; one saw rain storms making roads impassable ahead, and another saw highwaymen . . . coming on from behind, and all said I could not stand driving day after day for a month. Thus did good friends help us on our way . . . .

The weather had been rainy and the Joneses "were determined to leave Washington on a clear, bright day." They had their car serviced to ensure it was in shape for their trip. Finally, the day arrived. Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover met with the couple to wish them "good luck" on their trip:

We left Washington, D.C., Monday morning, April 9, and stopped 40 miles west of St. Louis Thursday evening about 6 o'clock. This part of the trip was uneventful but very enjoyable. The road was the "National Old Trail" and is paved all the way. I made 314 miles one day with but little effort. It is no trouble to follow the road through the cities, as it is the main street in all of them and plainly marked.

The road through the Alleghany Mountains are cultivated here and there to twelve in number, going down one side almost to the level where one starts up on the other, in this respect differing very much from the mountains of the West. These mountains are cultivated here and there to the top and the trip through them when everything is green is entrancing. Aside from going into the Yosemite Park, the heaviest grades and hardest pull going across the country are those through here from about forty miles west of Cumberland to Wheeling, W. Va. Gasoline and repair stations are all along the way every few miles, and camping grounds may be found at frequent intervals, some free and some where a small charge is made. Frequent warning signs are seen and if they are heeded there is little danger of accidents.

They traveled "along this splendid pavement" for almost a thousand miles. He envied the easterners:

They are nearer the big markets of the country and have at their service a network of steam and electric railways, in addition to the network of gravel or hard-surfaced roads.

Things began to change west of St. Louis when the hard-surfaced road came to an end:

Thursday evening it began to rain about 10 o'clock and rained hard until 4 or 5 o'clock Friday afternoon. The pavement was behind us and the dirt roads of Missouri were in front of us. Missouri people do not talk of the roads they have, but of the roads they expect to have when the one hundred and twenty-two millions of dollars now available are spent. They expect to have a concrete road completed from St. Louis to Kansas City within twelve or eighteen months. We found about ten miles of this concrete road completed on our return to Washington six months later.

When the rain ceased, the sun came out. There was considerable wind and the road dried rapidly. We started on our way Saturday morning, but after going about twenty miles we concluded to stay over for another day, as the roads had been recently worked and were slick and rutty and we were told of some very deep holes a little way ahead.

Senator Jones and his wife left the next morning around 10 a.m. Driving to Kansas City, they found the mudholes, but had no difficulty "in getting through in low gear, and 20 rods in distance would cover all the really bad road we had to Kansas City":

We were often told of the bad roads ahead and it is peculiar how bad they make roads in telling of them. We looked forward many times with considerable anxiety to the roads we had been told about, but we never found any of them as bad as we expected.

In Missouri, they found sufficient gas stations, as well as stops for meals and lodging:

From Kansas City two or three different routes can be taken to Colorado, one just about as good as the other in the same kind of weather. We took the route through Ottawa, Emporia and Dodge City.

They followed the New Santa Fe Trail, not the National Old Trails Road:

We had just enough bad road to appreciate what Kansas roads are when wet. Three or four miles from Ottawa a shower had passed through during the night and for about a mile the road was as if it had been soaped. We went into low gear and could hardly keep out of the side ditches, not having put on our chains. After a couple of miles there was less rain. The road was drying up and after another mile we had a good dry road and we had no more wet roads until we struck our own State of Washington.

He summed up the experience in the two States:

Kansas and Missouri at the present time are uncertain states for the autoist. If it rains, the roads are bad, but they soon dry and one will not be long delayed, unless the rain continues from day to day. The farther west you go in Kansas the less danger of rain. We had little dust during the entire trip but doubtless there is considerable as the dry

weather continues.

They made it from Dodge City to La Junta, Colorado, “easily in a day,” a distance of 255 miles.

At this point in his narrative, Senator Jones discussed the cost of travel:

Talk of profiteering – it ends after you leave Cumberland going west and it begins at Wheeling coming east. Outside of these places as indicated the cost of living is cut in two. At Cumberland we paid \$7.00 for a room and bath for the two of us. At Zanesville we had a larger room, better beds, a better bath, had a fine supper and breakfast for both and it all cost just \$6.50. Garage storage dropped from a dollar a night to 50 cents and at some places it was 35 cents. At La Junta, Colo., for dinner for the two of us we had two good steaks, corn, rice, potatoes, a fruit salad, spring onions, two pieces of blackberry pie, a baked apple, glass of milk, biscuits, rye bread and butter and the entire cost was \$1.20. We can motor across the country at less expense, and live better, than if we had stayed in Washington.

The road through Colorado and Raton Pass was good, mostly gravel. He concluded that “barring a very hard rain, [it] must be good most of the year,” adding that Raton Pass is “kept open all the year”:

The elevation of this pass is seventy-eight hundred feet, but the rise is so gradual that the summit is easily reached in high gear, barring forced stops.

Senator and Mrs. Jones found the road good all the way to Santa Fe, although they followed detours in some places where road construction was underway. They took 2 days, “although we could have made it in one very easily.” The good roads were interrupted as they neared Santa Fe. “About 20 miles out from Santa Fe there were a few miles of rather rough roads which would be really dangerous if wet.” The bad spot was in Glorieta Canyon.

They stayed in the Santa Fe area for 3 days of sightseeing. Part one ended with Senator Jones musing:

The dreamer, the poet and the archaeologist can revel among the mysteries of this enchanted land and dream and speculate about a people who lived and struggled and fought and died and passed away without leaving a line or word to tell us of themselves. [Jones, Senator Wesley L, “Motoring Across the Continent is Easy,” *American Motorist*, April 1924, pages 24-26]

Part 2 began:

The road to Albuquerque is fine and one can make almost any desired speed . . . . From there to Holbrook you can take either of two roads, one being about eighty-six miles shorter than the other. We took the short road by Gallup. It was slow driving, but the road was not bad. Some of it was a fine dirt and gravel road, but there was a great deal of detouring on account of road work going on. The entire road should be in fine shape by

next year and almost the entire distance through New Mexico and Arizona should be in splendid shape, and almost like a boulevard. We saw some places where it has been quite muddy a short while before we passed along, showing that rains do come in this section. The chances are, however, that you will have dry weather, but, if you strike it when it is raining, there are places in the road that may be quite bad.

From Gallup to Holbrook it was very windy and the air was full of sand and dust. The sand drifts during these winds like snow. We came near sticking in a sand drift at one place, and coming up the bank of a dry wash we were stuck with our rear wheels in the drifted sand. We played like children in the sand for a while scratching it away from the wheels. We pulled some sage brush and laid it down to give our wheels a purchase and so got out all right. You can imagine what happened to Mrs. Jones when she pushed at the back of the automobile while I put on the power and the wheels turned swiftly without moving the car forward. It would have been laughable to any onlooker, but no one came by until just after we had gotten out.

They reached Holbrook about 7:30 p.m., “with the air full of dust and sand and wind blowing a gale.” They visited one of the area’s petrified forests before returning to the road west:

In going to Holbrook from Gallup you go within about a mile and a half of it and can easily turn off and see it before going into Holbrook. It was so windy and dusty, however, that we did not turn off, consequently we had to drive back to it.

The two roads from Albuquerque united at Holbrook, “and there is one main line to California:

For a considerable distance you pass through a barren desert section, comparatively level. We had been told by several persons that there was twenty or thirty miles of extremely bad road beyond Winslow and we had been approaching it with considerable dread. However, we were advised at Holbrook to detour through Leupp, and we did so and found the road good.

Just beyond Flagstaff, they took the road to Grand Canyon, around 60 miles from the National Old Trails Road:

The road passes largely through national forests and there are no gasoline stations or garages along this road. This was the longest stretch anywhere on the trip without these places.

They spent 3 days in Grand Canyon National Park, before returning to the main road and continuing their journey:

The road to the Colorado River is fine, being largely gravel and almost as good as pavement. Across the river for about fifteen or twenty-five miles to Needles, we had a rather rough road through a sandy section that would be rather disagreeable and probably somewhat difficult if the wind should be flowing very hard.

They encountered bad roads in California:

The country from Needles to Barstow contains more real desert than any other section of the trip. It was warm, but I suppose nothing like it would be later in the summer. We stayed all night at Ludlow, about one hundred and twenty miles from Needles.

We had twenty-five miles of bad, worn-out asphalt road, narrow, bumpy, and very sandy on the sides, so that if you had to turn out you would have trouble in getting back on the road. One should be careful about water for the radiator, but there are stations every fifteen or twenty miles, where you can get water if needed.

From Ludlow it is about sixty miles to Barstow, with twenty-five or thirty miles of the worst road of the trip. It is rocky, bumpy, and narrow, with a great deal of sand on the side. We made about 10 miles an hour. I understand this road will be paved the whole distance from Barstow to the Colorado River beyond Needles in the near future.

The Joneses found a very good road from Barstow to Victorville, though it was not paved. They struck pavement again in Victorville, "and from here on for about nine hundred miles to Redding, California, we had paved roads or their equivalent":

One who has driven over the road from St. Louis to Victorville, California, knows the real pleasure of a paved road.

After a few days in the Los Angeles area, they left the National Old Trails Road and turned toward their home in Seattle:

As we neared the end of our journey and coasted down the grade overlooking Seattle, an arrow-shaped rock which we had evidently picked up somewhere in California gave us a flat tire. While putting on a new one, we feasted our eyes on our home city, and the end of our own journey, thinking what a wonderful trip we had made and how fine to be home. Tired? Not a bit.

Our speedometer registered 5,200 miles from Washington City. [Jones, Senator Wesley L, "On Our Way to Seattle from Albuquerque," *American Motorist*, April 1924, pages 10-11, 40]

Part 3, in the June 1923 issue, covered their return to Washington. With the 65th Congress set to begin on December 3, 1923, Senator Jones intended to drive back to Washington in the middle of September, but was delayed. They finally left Seattle on October 13. Their trip took them through Walla Walla, Washington; Ontario, Oregon; Twin Falls, Idaho; Salt Lake City, Utah; Granger, Rawlins and Cheyenne, Wyoming; Fort Collins, and Denver, Colorado; and Colby and Topeka, Kansas. They crossed Kansas on the Golden Belt Highway to Topeka:

There had been considerable rain a week or two before and the good roads agency in Denver feared we might have bad roads, but we got along very well, making from one hundred and seventy to two hundred miles a day until we got to Glasco, where we caught

up with a rainstorm and had to put up for a few extra hours. The Kansas roads dry very quickly after a rain if the sun comes out. We got into Glasco about four o'clock in the afternoon with the roads so slippery that one could make only three or four miles an hour and then we had great trouble in keeping out of the ditches along the roadside.

From Kansas City, the Joneses continued east in the morning "and got along very well, making fifteen to twenty miles an hour." They made it 80 miles to Manhattan where they spent the night:

"We had very good roads to Topeka, where we struck pavement reaching into Kansas City and found ourselves lucky again in crossing Missouri. There had been no rain for four or five days and we found the roads fairly good. The second night in Missouri we stopped sixty miles west of St. Louis, at the homelike little hotel where we had put up on our way west. We had no further worries because we knew that a paved road to Washington, D. C., was but a few miles ahead of us.

Our speedometer registered 3,800 miles from Seattle when we reached Washington. We had taken thirty days for the trip. Though our car was an open one we had not put up a single curtain. We had no mechanical trouble of any kind, not even a tire puncture. We reached Washington about five o'clock, picked up a couple of friends and went to dinner and then took a pleasant ride around the Speedway, feeling as fit as the day we left Seattle.

(The members of the Road Drivers and Riders' Association, formed by horse lovers in 1903, wanted a roadway where they could speed their horses. The association called it the Speedway. The Speedway, which opened in May 1904, extended from the Tidal Basin to 26th Street, SW. It would be reconstructed and extended through East Potomac Park as Riverside Drive. In 1949, Ohio's congressional delegation succeeded in renaming the road Ohio Drive.)

Senator Jones ended his series with general observations based on his experiences. He found "garage men" to be pleasant and reasonable in their charges, "although I had to call upon them for very little service." Similarly, hotel charges "were reasonable and accommodations generally good":

With ordinary care in planning from one day to another, good stopping places can be reached so as to avoid driving after dark.

With reasonable care in filling your radiator and gasoline tank, you need not carry any water or extra gasoline, although during the summer it may be very wise to carry some water through Wyoming, New Mexico, Arizona, and on the stretch in California from Needles to Barstow.

There are no really difficult or dangerous hills or mountain climbs on the way, unless it be the climb to the summit on the Hill Road between Los Angeles and Bakersfield, and that is not dangerous, nor is it really difficult, but your car may heat up considerably before you get to the top. The worst road in this respect is through the Alleghenies.

There is little danger of getting off the road, as it is well marked where marking is needed, although I must say that the road that we followed coming east is not so well marked or easily followed as the road going west. We had but little trouble in the towns and cities when we gave careful attention to the signs and directions. [Jones, Senator Wesley L., "Summer Best Time for Transcontinental Tour," *American Motorist*, June, 1925, pages 9-10, 52]

Judge Lowe included the first part of Senator Jones's narrative in the 1924 edition of *National Old Trails Road: The Great Historic Highway of America* (pages 240-245). He did not reprint the article in the revised 1925 edition.

### **Motor Tour by the Old Trails Highway**

Around the time the first part of Senator Jones's article appeared in the April 1923 issue, *The New York Times* offered advice on transcontinental travel on the National Old Trails Road. The article began:

One of the great transcontinental highways extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific is the National Old Trails Road. It has been called "The Broadway of America." It traverses mountains, plain and forest and is rich in varied scenery, while offering splendid road conditions and very little desert country. By many motorists it is regarded as the most practicable of all highways for transcontinental tourists.

Its importance as a through highway is evidenced by the fact that it is traveled by thousands of motorists, who come from the Pacific Coast direct to New York and from there into the New England States. There is also a great volume of travel from States in the Mississippi Valley and from the South to New York and New England. It also affords a direct route from the large centres of population in the East to Southern California and the Southwestern States.

Although the official eastern terminus was Baltimore-Washington, the National Old Trails Road Association often referred to New York City as an eastern terminus. The *Times* article described the route as starting in New York and going in a westerly direction "over a hard-surfaced road by way of Washington or Philadelphia":

It is hard-surfaced from St. Louis east to New York. West of St. Louis, particularly across Missouri and Kansas, weather conditions govern the traveling. In rainy weather across these two States skid chains should be carried, and when overtaken by sudden storms the motorist would do well to lay over a day or two in the nearest town, as the roads dry off quickly after storms.

As for supplies, "it is no longer necessary carry large supplies of gasoline." Two backup quarts of oil "may be carried, but gasoline supply stations are found all along the roads. Motorists are advised to keep the tank filled at all times." As for other equipment, the article recommended the following:

One set of skid chains, one good horn for use on mountain curves, one set of tools, one jack, good cutting pliers, two extra casings, four extra inner tubes, tube patches, three spark plugs, 1 to 2 gallon water bag or canteen, one flashlight, one axe, one small shovel, radiator hose connections, lamp bulbs, one motormeter and one tow rope or a short cable.

Good hotel accommodations were available and auto campgrounds “will be found in almost every city, and the mountain regions of Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona natural camp sites can be found along some stream, close to the highway, at almost every necessary stop.” The camps usually charged from 25 to 50 cents per day. [“Pacific Coast Motor Tour by Old Trails Highway,” *The New York Times*, April 6, 1924, page XX12]

A week later, the *Times* returned to the subject of cross-country motoring. The best roads at the time were “the Lincoln Highway and the National Old Trails.” Both went “through historic and interesting country.”

Motorists should consider practical matters:

Care should be taken in selecting a camping place. A good place to camp is in a level spot where water is obtainable. Ascertain whether there are flies around, for they are very annoying. The ground should be fairly dry. Park the car in the direction of the wind. Then make camp on the other side of the car.

For tourists making their first trip, it may be well to advise them not to permit a car coming in the opposite direction to push you off the road, for it is often very difficult to get back, especially in many parts of the West, where the roads are none too wide. Road hogs will be encountered now and then. Do not be misled by people who are employed by stores and garages off the main road to go the way they direct for a short cut, as those roads are invariably longer and in a worse condition than the main one.

When purchasing anything in a small store always bargain if you think the prices are too steep, as some storekeepers try to take advantage of motor travelers. It is well to carry money in American Bankers' Association or American Express checks and have them in ten-dollar denominations so as to avoid carrying too much cash.

It is advisable to carry a revolver. It is seldom used, but still an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. When driving keep it on the seat beside you, when sleeping have it close at hand. When sleeping it is wise to take the key out of the car.

A reliable road map is, of course, absolutely essential and they are readily obtainable from many automobile organizations. A general map of the United States will also be helpful. [“Cross-Country Motoring Will Be Heavy This Year,” *The New York Times*, April 13, 1924, page XX15]

*The Baltimore Sun* carried a variation of the *Times* article, based on the idea that spring was accompanied by thoughts of “the open road and some even extend over the 3,050 miles between

Baltimore and Los Angeles” along the National Old Trails Road. The article restated the *Times* advice that the road was hard-surfaced to St. Louis, but after that, conditions would vary. In addition to the cautions and advice from the earlier article, the *Sun* warned motorists:

Never ford a stream until testing the nature of the bottom and the depth. Go in under low gear and drive slowly. Pitch camp on high ground near good water and boil any water that seems at all suspicious. Build small fires and extinguish them carefully before going to bed and when breaking camp . . . .

The year of 1924 is going to be a banner year for transcontinental motor travel, and better road conditions along the main arteries of travel is one of the basis reasons for the substantial increase in the volume of travelers journeying both ways across the Continent.

The *Sun* estimated that, “The entire expense of a trip should not be more than \$5 a day per passenger. [“Road Data To Coast Is Given,” *The Baltimore Sun*, April 13, 1924, page F10]

On August 20, 1924, the *Sun* carried a contrary view in its letter-to-the-editor column. L. D. Davis of Towson in Baltimore County, Maryland, explained that his State took pride in its roads:

It was therefore a surprise to me in motoring from St. Louis, over the National Old Trails route to find that in some respects there is room for improvement.

Anyone who goes over this route will notice that west of Frederick and through Pennsylvania and West Virginia the road is not so good as most of the way through Ohio and far inferior to this route in Illinois, where the entire distance across the State one travels on a wide and well-graded and banked concrete road. Now, part of this route west of Frederick is in Maryland. Beyond Hagerstown it is narrow, very high crowned and frightfully rough at the edges.

But the most marked difference is to be found in the system of marking the route and traffic directions. In Illinois and Ohio a uniform way of doing this has been adopted. The signs are neat. Coming into Maryland you immediately meet old, dilapidated, unreadable signs. You notice very soon that there is no uniformity. Why not adopt a uniform sign and use that in all cases, showing by the wording that a curve is ahead, a road crossing, etc. Then the motorist knows what sign to look to for traffic directions. Why not have such a sign at entrance to towns, giving the name, at bridges over important streams, giving the name of the stream.

I hope the Highway Commission has plans for improving the marking of the State roads. Now this route, traveled by cars from every State, is both poorly and slovenly marked. [Davis, L. D., “Thinks The Marking Of The State Roads Should Be Improved,” *The Baltimore Sun*, August 20, 1924, page 8]

## **D.A.R. Congress – 1924**

As D.A.R. convenient for its Thirty-Second Continental Congress in April 1924, its Committee

on the National Old Trails Road had a new chairman. Mrs. Arline B. N. Moss of St. Louis, also known as Mrs. John Trigg Moss, had been silent for several months after accepting the position of National Chairman of the committee while she adjusted her thinking:

It was late in the summer before the files of this committee were received by the National Chairman. After very careful inspection and the reading of numerous letters, etc. etc., that took weeks of time, your National Chairman decided that she could not follow the policy of previous committees and continue to ask the Chapters for contributions to mark or "sign" the National Old Trails Road with the markers stipulated by the previous committee. In the first place, the cost of same was to be an amount that she considered decidedly prohibitive, taking into consideration the style of marker and the service they were to render to the people at large. In the second place, such markers, interspersed among the thousand and one other markers already placed along the highway, would reflect no credit to our Society and certainly would detract from, rather than carry the high honor intended to confer.

In view of the need for the committee to change directions, she had submitted a report to the National Board that was discussed during the October Board Meeting, as follows:

I believe almost every other National Chairman has complied with the request of the President General and has sent out instructions to State Chairmen and have a program planned for their committee work for the coming year. I am chagrined to think that I have not been able to do likewise, but under the existing circumstances I felt that it was not my prerogative to continue the policy that had been outlined to me by the past National Chairman as one that I should follow, until the matter has been discussed thoroughly in the board and I had the consent of the National Board to either continue the work or to discontinue the work, until such future time that legal action might be taken. This matter of raising thousands of dollars for Committee work is a very serious responsibility that I shall not assume alone, but if directed to do so by the National Board I shall consider this great co-operative force is back of me and proceed to the best of my ability.

She did not want to give the impression she was criticizing past National Chairmen. "I think the past National Chairman and their Committees were untiring in their labors and as earnest in their endeavors as they could possibly have been." She simply saw things differently, based on three facts. First, the bill introduced in each Congress to designate the National Old Trails Road a national highway had never passed, and might never pass. The committee, therefore, was asking "the Chapters to mark a National Highway not yet in permanent existence with a permanent name and the interest does not seem to be exceedingly keen." Since 1917, the committee had raised \$3,505. "The amount alone stands out as a goodly sum when not compared to the actual cost of the markers, stipulated as those we must use."

Second, the cost of the markers was \$14,786.40, "and this does not include the cost of freight from one end of the United States to the other, nor does it include the labor of erecting the said markers, which amount will be equal to the cost of the 'signs' themselves":

This means another \$14,000.00, making a total of \$28,000.00, and this is no doubt a very conservative estimate. The above figures are for three thousand and fifty signs or markers to be placed every mile from Ocean to Ocean, and I am told that these signs were to be accepted by the National Congress of 1917 and must be used.

Third, she could not find any record that D.A.R. had ever pledged to sign the National Old Trails Road. Each Continental Congress had accepted the committee's reports, but "without recommendations, etc., and there is no recommendation on this matter on record that I can find during Congress, 1913, and the same applies to Congress, 1917.

Mrs. McCleary, the late chairman, had confirmed this fact in a letter. Mrs. McCleary had never found a record of the D.A.R. receiving a permit, State or national, to post signs along the National Old Trails Road. She had written, "Until we have some authority for such proceedings or the United States Congress passes the Bill you have had introduced, I feel it a waste of money to sign-post it." She had asked, "What is to prevent any other organization from deciding to combine these roads or a part of them into one Highway and mark it with the title they choose?" Mrs. McCleary thought the focus should be on getting the bill through Congress.

Mrs. Moss wrote in her report that the plan for the committee had been "mapped out, signed, and sealed by pledge, ten years ago, to be explicit." Many changes had taken place in 10 years:

We have had a World War and almost every phase of our work has taken on a different angle. Originally we were to ask that this National Old Trails Road be made a great Memorial Highway and we were to mark this memorial highway in honor of our pioneers. This original program mapped out ten years ago under different circumstances may be far from suitable now and possibly far from being practical. The ten years past is long enough to outlaw any pledge, if pledge was given, and who of us can look forward ten years and say we would likely want to pledge to do the things we are planning to do and consider most vital right now at this day and time?

During those years, the States, counties, and cities had proceeded with building the National Old Trails Road, which "is on a fair way to completion without the Government stamp being placed upon it as the great 'Memorial Highway'":

The National Old Trails Association [sic] has spent time and money as have the Automobile Associations also in marking this Highway and remarking it. You can go from one end of the country to the other and where the two above associations have not marked the road, the state has put markers of its own. In many places there is an overabundance of markers.

Was D.A.R. operating on sentiment alone for a 10-year old plan? "Are we not builded instead on solid facts backed up by the highest patriotic ideals and purposes?" D.A.R. had initiated the idea of an Old Trails Road, but Mrs. Moss did not believe sentiment alone was behind the idea, "nor should we advance the sentimental side of the question now, losing sight of the common sense, conservative and practical side":

I want to ask the members of this Board if it is conservative, if it is practical, if it is patriotic, to mark a road or “sign” it with over three thousand signs that will, in the end, cost Thirty Thousand Dollars in all probability, when every sign is bound to be a duplication. We are to do this in honor of our Revolutionary Ancestors. Will it be such an honor, after all, to erect signs with no direct purpose, and they will not be put to any definite use? Would it not be more honor and more in keeping with the dignity of our Society to place markers of more pretentious proportions along this Highway at certain chosen spots that might well be commemorated for sake of historical interest. Is it the wish of the Board that I continue the present program with the perfect understanding on their part that I am seeking contributions from the Chapters to the extent of at least Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars or is it their wish that I work out a more practical program along a more practical line and present it for legal action at some future date.

As a result of Mrs. Moss’s presentation, the board approved the following motion on October 16, 1923:

That the National Chairman of Old Trails Road Committee formulate plans for the coming year’s work according to her own ideas, delaying, if necessary, any further work in ‘signing’ the road until such time as will be more propitious, when she shall present a more practical and complete program for this work.

Based on the board’s action, Mrs. Moss asked all State Societies in the National Society five questions:

1. How much money has your State contributed to date toward the markers or signs that were to be erected every mile of the Ocean-to-Ocean National Old Trails Road?
2. Knowing that the cost of erecting these markers will be \$30,000.00, conservatively speaking, will your State vote to continue this plan of marking, thereby pledging their support and their full per capita contribution toward this \$30,000.00?
3. Will your State vote to hold the fund you have already contributed for these “Mile Posts” or “signs” (funds now in the hand of the Treasurer General) until such time as your present National Committee, Old Trails Board, shall have formulated plans for a dignified and a more practical and up-to-date marking system?
4. Will your State favor a plan to place markers along the Ocean-to-Ocean Highway fewer in number, each marker erected to mark some historical spot, or commemorate some great act of historical interest?
5. Will you come to Congress, ready to vote on this matter and give your National Committee all the assistance you can?

She introduced a resolution for consideration by the continental congress that used a series of “Whereas” introductions to lay out the facts just stated in support of adopting the following:

*Be it Resolved,* To erect in each one of the twelve States through which the National Old Trails Road passes, namely: Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and California, one marker of dignified and pretentious proportions, to cost approximately one thousand dollars each,

these markers to be as nearly alike in size and design as will be consistent with the location and surroundings and each marker to definitely mark a historic spot or commemorate some great act of historical interest of the Revolutionary period, these markers to bear with other inscriptions the insignia of the N.S.D.A.R. and to be known as the National Old Trails Road Memorial Markers, and

*Be it Further Resolved*, That the funds contributed by Chapters and State Societies toward the Old Trails Marker Fund, amount reported by the Treasurer General to date as \$4,876.65, be applied to the cost of erecting the markers as stipulated in the new plan, and that chapters and state Societies be requested to continue their contributions toward this fund.

Respectfully submitted, The National Old Trails Road Committee. (Applause.)

By motion of the President General, Mrs. Moss's motion was referred to the resolutions committee. [*Proceedings of the Thirty-Third Continental Congress of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, April 14-19, 1924, pages 126-130*]

The resolution was adopted.

### **La Bajada Hill**

For motorists on the National Old Trails Road, La Bajada Hill (the "descent" or "the drop" in Spanish) in New Mexico between Santa Fe and Socorro was an expected test of their nerves and their motor vehicle's capability. Judge Lowe often cited this section of the National Old Trails Road as the oldest road on the continent, part of El Camino Real. In the 1924 edition of his compilation of material, Judge Lowe helpfully explained that the name was pronounced "Ba Hoddah" [page 126]

In an article about the La Bajada Mesa, the National Park Service says:

Beyond its importance as a geological landmark, La Bajada escarpment is a major cultural landmark. The routes built to cross La Bajada between 1598 and 1932 follow precontact pathways across the mesa, indicating its importance to native cultures who utilized natural topography, grade changes and drainage systems to best utilize the mesa top. Following the arrival of Spaniards in the region, La Bajada stood as the dividing line between New Mexico's primary economic and governmental districts: the Río Abajo (lower river) and the Río Arriba (upper river).

For those traveling the north-south El Camino Real between the districts, there were three clear routes: one gave travelers the choice of scaling the basalt behemoth, another followed the Santa Fe River through the yawning canyon of Las Bocas (the Mouths), and the third required another, longer trek around La Bajada through the Galisteo Basin. Initially, the La Bajada option was limited solely to pedestrians or livestock. Despite legends to the contrary, the heavy supply wagons and commercial caravans that traveled El Camino Real could not take the La Bajada route until the 1860s, when the U.S. Army made improvements that allowed for wagon passage.

Archeological evidence indicates that, despite its challenges, the La Bajada route was an attractive option. A water hole in a canyon directly adjacent to El Camino Real highlights a system of handmade dams that formed a deep plunge pool. A trail leading from El Camino Real to and from the pool indicates continuous human and livestock traffic. By the early 1700s, Spanish settlers had established the small village of La Bajada at the base of the escarpment. The settlement sat beside the Santa Fe River, close to an abandoned pueblo village that was still occupied when Don Juan de Oñate led the first colonizing expedition to northern New Mexico in 1598.

Diverse voices have referred to La Bajada, the place and the landmark, throughout history. In 1776, a Franciscan priest, Fray Atanasio Domínguez, described La Bajada Mesa as “a mesa [that] rises . . . flattening out on top . . . to a very steep slope . . .” In 1807, explorer Zebulon Pike mentioned both the village and the escarpment as he detailed his journey across La Bajada Mesa on his way to Mexico, writing, “We ascended a hill and galloped on until about ten o’clock, snowing hard all the time, when we came to a precipice which we descended, meeting with great difficulty, from the obscurity of the night to the small village where we put up in the quarters of the priest . . .”

Chroniclers of the early Territorial period made less frequent reference to the El Camino Real-La Bajada route as traffic through Las Bocas and the Galisteo Basin became more common. With Mexico’s victory over Spanish lands in 1821, and the strengthening of trade connections between Mexico and the U.S. via the Santa Fe Trail and El Camino Real-Chihuahua Trail, the La Bajada route regained traction as the most direct path to and from Santa Fe. Little La Bajada village, whose population peaked at 300, emerged as another important trading center, freight depot, stage stop and rest stop for El Camino Real travelers heading north and south. With the American occupation of New Mexico in 1846, the U.S. Army took note of the route’s potential, finally improving the roadway for heavy wagon use.

Even with the improvements, La Bajada remained a grueling excursion. In 1869, U.S. Army Lieutenant John Bourke described the descent as “. . . so risky that stage passengers always alighted and made their way on foot, while the driver found abundant occupation in taking care of his train and slowly creeping down with a heavy brake on the wheels locked and shod and the conductors at the head of the leaders....”

Three years later, John Handson Beadle recalled his trip south across the mesa to the escarpment on a freight wagon, writing, “Crossing the high mesa, level as the sea, we approach an irregular line of rocks, rising like turrets ten or twenty feet above the plain, which we find to be a sort of natural battlement along the edge of the big hill. Reaching the cliff we see, at an angle of forty-five degrees below us, in a narrow valley, the town of La Bajada. Down the face of this frightful hill the road winds in a series of zigzags, bounded in the worst places by rocky walls, descending fifteen hundred feet in three-quarters of a mile.”

El Camino Real was abandoned as a major commercial corridor with the 1881 arrival of the railroad, but La Bajada Mesa’s importance as a transportation corridor continued.

Not long after the wagons stopped running there, Model A automobiles began lumbering along the path. Between 1903 and 1926, a segment of the mesa trail as it approaches the escarpment edge became New Mexico Highway 1, part of the National Old Trails Road Highway system. During the 1915-1916 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego celebrating the opening of the Panama Canal, scores of vehicles a day are estimated to have traversed the mesa path on the way to California. Between 1926 and 1932, the same area became the avenue of the fabled Route 66. Adventurous tourists of the period traveled the roads with the famous Harvey House Indian Detours while on their way to explore area pueblos and other cultural sites. By the time the route was abandoned and moved a few miles to the east where the interstate is located, an estimated 1,200 vehicles were traversing La Bajada Mesa a day.

The article was illustrated with a postcard image of the switchback Automobile Road on La Bajada Hill.” [<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/new-mexico-la-bajada-mesa.htm>]

Judge Lowe, in his 1924 compilation, published a photograph of a vehicle on a narrow path between two cliffs in La Bajada, calling it:

A Section of the Oldest Road in North America, Established in 1606

Labajada (pronounced Bahoddah) [sic], a section of the National Old Trails Road in New Mexico between Santa Fe and Socorro about one hundred and fifty miles in length. The oldest established road on the North American Continent. The picture makes the walls look like granite and experience has shown that they are really about as substantial. I doubt if this piece of road was ever graded except by the traffic that passed over it. But the Highway Board of that State is now engaged in widening and grading this pass.

On May 11, 1924, the Santa Fe and Albuquerque Kiwanis Club held a celebration of the opening of the rebuilt La Bajada:

The opening of the new road on La Bajada hill on Sunday, May 11, was attended by fully 1,000 people from Santa Fe and Albuquerque.

The hill is about 20 miles southwest of Santa Fe on the main highway to Albuquerque. It rises abruptly to a heighth [sic] of about 1,000 feet. The road winds up the side in a series of turns and switchbacks.

The road was widened and the outer edge lined with a rock wall, and partly relocated to reduce the grade. To climb this hill “in high” has been an ambition accomplished by few motor car drivers, but now it is considerably less of a feat. When it rains torrents rush down the hillside and, to carry the water off and save the new road, a large number of culverts were put in – spaced at frequent intervals.

The work was done by convict labor at a cost of \$11,000. Speaking on the occasion of the opening, Governor James F. Hinkle said the work if done as a Federal Aid project

would have cost \$250,000. [“La Bajada Hill Road is Rebuilt,” *Western Highways Builder*, June 1924, page 30]

Author Joe Sonderman, writing in the 2010s, explained that the road dropped 800 feet in 1.6 miles and included 23 “razor-sharp switchbacks,” with only an occasional guardrail. A skull-and-crossbones sign warned motorists of the danger. Another sign warned motorists, “The road is not foolproof but safe for a sane driver.” A bypass in 1932 spared later motorists from the dangers of “the drop.” He discussed La Bajada today:

La Bajada has served as little more than a cowpath for 85 years, so to say the road is a little rough is putting it mildly. The road is impassable by vehicles. In 2017, the Cochiti Pueblo blocked access to La Bajada from the bottom. The top half remains accessible from Santa Fe and can be explored on foot. But the heat can be brutal, rattlesnakes are common, and it’s been decades since anyone has seen a tow truck out here.

The photograph Sonderman used to illustrate the item (identified as circa 1920) depicted the same switchback section as the postcard the National Park Service used, then and now. [Sonderman, Joe, *Route 66 Then and Now*®, Pavilion Books, 2018, page 94]

### **Opening the Boonville Bridge**

The Boonville Bridge, also known as the Old Trails Bridge, across the Missouri River opened on July 4, 1924. It consisted of six steel truss spans and ten concrete approach spans, with an overall length of 2,666 feet. A contemporary news account began:

A salute of forty-eight guns, fired from the river bluffs at 4:32 o’clock yesterday morning, ushered in the day set aside for the formal dedication of the Old Trails bridge at Boonville, which marked the culmination of the efforts of the progressive citizens of Boonville for the last fifty years.

Early in the morning a continually growing stream of vehicles began to pour their hundreds of passengers into the town, and the bridge, center of attraction, was lined with spectators where, at 12 o’clock, Mayor W. G. Pendleton of Boonville and a party of citizens representing New Franklin, met and shook hands in the middle of the structure to symbolize the union of Cooper and Howard counties, made possible by the crossing. The United States army dirigible TC-3 from Scott Field circled over the town while the ceremonies were in progress.

Officials held a dedicatory ceremony on the courthouse lawn. Colonel T. A. Johnston, superintendent of the Kemper Military School at Boonville, presided over the ceremony, which included speeches by Governor Hyde, Chairman Gary of the Missouri State Highway Commission; Chief Highway Engineer Peipmeier; and Judge Richard Field of Lexington. Governor Hyde offered his congratulations to Boonville and Cooper County, adding:

The State of Missouri is most of all to be congratulated on this enterprise. I rejoice in this structure because, together with other bridges, it will weave Missouri together, generating

a new State patriotism and a new State pride.

Here is a great river. Sixty years ago it carried a mighty cargo. The most magnificent waterway in the world, excepting the Mississippi, it ought to be carrying the commerce of the Nation. It ought to be reducing the freight rates for farmers of the Mississippi Valley, but the only cargo it carries now is mud. The Missouri remains to be developed as our great artery of commerce. As it is, it is the greatest source of waste we have.

Chairman Gary called for support of Amendment No. 2, which voters would act on in November. It called for maintenance of the 7,640 miles of good roads provided for under the \$60 million bond issue. "If it comes to a question of building more roads or maintaining those already built, we will do the latter."

With the bridge a key link in State Route 2, Peipmeier estimated that the road, when completed, will carry 2,000 vehicles a day, all of which would cross the Boonville bridge. The bridge, he said, cost about \$200 a foot, "and is to be maintained at State expense by indirect taxation. The automobile owners will pay the bills out of their license fees."

After the ceremony multiple parades took place, including a military parade and one of automobiles, one of industrial floats, and a Mardi Gras-themed parade in the evening. The day included acrobats on Main Street, two aviators doing stunts, and a dance in the gymnasium of the Kemper Military Academy. ["Celebration at Boonville Draws Crowd," *The Columbia Missourian*, July 4, 1914, page 1]

At some point in the celebration, Judge Lowe addressed the crowd assembled for the opening ceremony. He began:

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen – I congratulate you upon this red-letter day in the history of Boonville. Some of you, no doubt, have looked forward to this great day with fond but doubtful anticipation for a great, great while. If there be those who pay little regard to celebrations and dedications like this, I do not agree with them. If there be those who deem it unwise to mix "sentiment" with the every-day-affairs of life, I do not agree with them. If there be those whose sordid souls never rise above a very limited horizon, and regard "Idealism" as only fit for the indulgence of women and "visionaries," I do not belong with them. If there be those backward looking, pessimistic souls whose horizon is limited by their front dooryard, I do not agree with them.

He recalled the day in 1907 when State officials in Jefferson City met "in one of the greatest conventions of any character that ever called the people together" to select the cross-State highway. "What a wonderful day that was, and how we love to recall it!" He also recalled "that other red-letter day in the history of this road" on April 16-17, 1912, that "launched the *first* National Organization pledged to the building of a great paved highway from Washington City to Los Angeles on the Pacific, and christened it 'The National Old Trails Road':

So we were the *first* in organizing a State Good Roads Association; we were *first* in the organization of a National Association which had for its purpose the building and

maintenance of a great National Highway System through the length and breadth of the United States, in April, 1912.

He recalled the history of the National or Cumberland Road, dating to President Jefferson in 1806, and stated that the National Old Trails Road was completely paved to St. Louis in 1923, “one half of the states through which it runs.”

The Boonville Bridge was, he said, “one of the essential links in this great Highway.” He traced the origins of the structure to a banquet in Columbia “when the first steps were really taken toward the construction of this splendid and magnificent bridge.” Colonel Johnston gave a “brief and eloquent address” before announcing he was ready to subscribe \$10,000 toward construction of the bridge, “and we came so near tearing the house down with the applause which followed that I knew the question was settled, and this bridge would speedily follow.” Funds for the bridge were readily subscribed “and steps were immediately taken for its construction.”

He resented any implication that the State of Missouri had financed construction of the bridge under the Federal-aid highway program:

Let me state with emphasis that this is not true. The State of Missouri from its \$60,000,000 road fund, or from any other source, has never contributed one dollar toward the building of this bridge, of either of the other three bridges now in process of construction at Glasgow, Waverly and Lexington. On the contrary, it is but fair to claim and to state the truth, that they were financed by the National Old Trails Road counties and towns through which the road runs, and by individual contributions, together with Federal Aid.

The 130 miles between Boonville and Kansas City would soon include not only the Boonville Bridge but the three other “magnificent bridges along side the National Old Trails Road between Boonville and Kansas City, with the prospect of soon taking over the Toll Bridge at St. Charles and making it free – thus tying together not only the Interstate roads crossing the State, but the entire road system of the State”:

What, let me ask, has materialized these great movements, except the Idealism of the people who so early enlisted in this great campaign, and who have adhered to it until its consummation is well nigh complete?

He denounced the “pessimistic, non-sentimental crowd” who “would now hawk at, desecrate, and destroy this great work in which we, and a great host of others, have labored so long to develop and perpetuate.” (The reference is unclear, but he may have been talking about those who decided not to include the entire National Old Trails Road in Missouri in State Route 2.) They would “be swept away into that oblivion to which they are so well entitled.” These “laggards and drones who forever hang on the outskirts of the march of civilization . . . have never won a victory on any of life’s great battle fields.” They “never gave birth to a great purpose.” He lived by the vision, “Keep your eyes toward the sunrise, and your wagon hitched to a star.” He recalled the motto from Victor Hugo: “My motto is: Always forward – if God had wanted man to go backward he would have put an eye in the back of his head. Let us always

look toward the Sunrise, Development, Birth.” The “Sunrise of Hope” has no night:

Standing by the side of this Old Road and looking down toward the “end of the Trail,” I see it paved at least fifty feet in width, widened by the addition of at least one hundred feet in depth on either side of it; splendidly parked and ornamented with trees, shrubbery, and flowers; monumented and marked along its borders with appropriate devices.

He spoke of the association:

A great writer has said, “What kills propaganda, (in general) is the obvious purpose behind it. One little admixture of self interest and your effort is wasted.” This was the foundation principle upon which our Association has stood from the beginning. Some small people said in criticism of us: “It is true that they stand for the construction of one road, but we favor an enlarged system of roads.” Why, bless their hearts, this Association introduced the first bill in Congress since 1824, declaring in favor of establishing a great splendid system of National Highways to be built and maintained forever by the Government throughout the whole of the United States. Then, we stood staunchly and earnestly for the \$60,000,000 bond issue in this State, to be applied to the building of a great State System of roads, and now, when a final campaign is on to increase the Automobile Tax fifty per cent, and to level a two cent per gallon tax on gasoline for the purpose of raising an additional fund to go toward completion of this State System, we appeal to those in charge of that movement that we will gladly get behind it with all the power we possess.

This Association has had no ax to grind, no selfish interests to serve, no salaried officers, no one trying to make this a stepping stone to political preference, no side issues to maintain. We have made no appeal for support in order that some one may be personally benefited thereby, nor has this Association any selfish interests behind it, nor has it received one dollar, knowingly, from any selfish source, but has relied solely on the contributions of those living along its line. Founded upon a great principle like this, we have never worried about the indifference of the multitude, nor the criticisms of the unfair.

(The “great writer” Judge Lowe referred to was Henry Ford, who included the reference in *Ford Ideals*, The Dearborn Publishing Company, 1922, page 266.)

He concluded:

*Let our friends tie their fortunes to this fact!* In due time it will find its place. Agreements do not make facts, but facts make agreements. People who do not agree with the truth get bumped by it. It is not our place to do the bumping – the truth takes care of that. The only legitimate propaganda along all lines of material and spiritual endeavor is the ascertainment and establishment of true principles. A true solution of any worth while question is as permanent as the fixed stars. Winter nor indifference will not freeze it; summer nor heated opposition will not melt it; apathetic and sordid pessimism will not affect it.

I cannot close without asking you to join me in giving three cheers to Theodore Gary, chairman of the State Highway Commission, who has so helpfully, so successfully, so loyally supported the best interests of the state; and also to the great State Highway Commission's Chief Engineer, Mr. B. H. Piepmeier. [*National Old Trails Road: The Great Historic Highway of America*, 1925, pages 261-265]

## **Promoting the Road**

One purpose of each named trail association was to promote its road. Sometimes, the associations relied on allies, as in the case of the National Old Trails Road Association and the Automobile Club of Southern California. In April 1924, the Automobile Club announced publication of the 137-page book titled *National Old Trails Road*. It answered the "thousands of inquiries that come to the organization from motorists contemplating the transcontinental trip over this particular highway":

Sixty-nine strip maps are used on which, in addition to the highway, are marked the garages, hotels, filling stations, auto parks, mileage and other information desired by the tourists. Opposite each of these maps is a description of the road traversed, with notes on the history, legendry and romance of the continuous territory.

Transcontinental motoring to California has averaged a fifty per cent increase annually for the past four years, so the new volume was prepared to meet a definite and growing demand. Motorists actually contemplating a tour across the continent will be furnished a free copy of "National Old Trails Road: by addressing headquarters of the Automobile Club of Southern California. ["Automobile Club Issues Old Trails Highway Book," *The Windsor Mail*, April 11, 1924, page 1]

Perhaps because of Judge Lowe's poor health, others stepped in to do some of the promotional work that he and the National Old Trails Road Association had undertaken.

On July 31, 1925, for example, *The Winslow Mail* reported:

One month ago a daily newspaper, The National Old Trails Tourists' Daily News, created expressly for tourist distribution, was started by the publishers of the Winslow Mail. The initial copies, 600 in number, were sent to distributors along the line of the National Old Trails from Los Lunas, N.M., to Needles, Calif.

During the month, distribution has been extended until now it embraces many points between Kansas City and Albuquerque on the east and San Bernardino on the west.

Distribution consists of nearly 1, 200 per day – almost twice the circulation a month ago.

The papers are put into the hands of the tourists at service stations, garages, hotels and camp grounds along the line between the cities mentioned.

An endeavor is made to provide each tourist party at least one copy of *The News* every day, while they are on this particular section of the highway.

The object of *The National Old Trails Tourists' Daily News* is obvious. It is to acquaint the travelers with conditions presented along the route, to enumerate and describe the scenic attractions, and advertise and direct attention to the conveniences provided for him at the different towns, and to describe to him the great advantages presented by this all-year route over any of the other transcontinental highways.

Many motorists from the eastern and middle western States had been convinced that "the arid country of the southwest, spoken of in school textbooks as the Great American Desert, is a region of perils to travelers, and a section of the country good to keep away from." Tourist travel stemming from the "See America First" movement was "handicapped by fear of people of the eastern states to attempt auto passage across the thousand-mile section between the fertile plains and the Pacific coast." *The Daily News* was intended to "allay, in a measure, this fear" by providing truthful information about the conditions motorists can expect:

That the service, which is entirely new and unprecedented, has met with the approval of the tourists themselves, who appreciate the accurate maps and detailed description of the country, tables of distances and other classified information, is manifested by the many inquiries received from people in eastern and coast cities, who have seen copies carried there by tourists who have previously passed this way.

The article discussed the concern leading to *The Daily News*:

There are now an average of 250 cars per day traversing this section of the National Old Trails. During 1922 the average per day during the touring season was in excess of 500. In 1924 the average fell to below 400 per day. This year it has fallen off again.

There are possibly several reasons for the decline in travel on this route. One of the most important is that competing highways have been successful in drawing tourists to other roads. Systematic advertising has resulted in other highways becoming better known.

However, the advantages of the National Old Trails are too manifest, to people who are aware of them, for other roads to be exploited long to the detriment of this highway.

Following, as it does, close to the right of way of the greatest transcontinental railway system, providing quick access to other transportation in case of accident; its high elevation and consequently cool summer climate, and its southern latitude, which insures mild climate in winter; its well-built grade and constantly improving surface; its splendidly mapped and signed conveniences, and many other factors make this great highway the superior of all transcontinental roads.

The economic value of the tourist trade is enormous, and constitutes one of the assets of the region through which the National Old Trails passes. ["The Tourist Paper," *The Windsor Mail*, July 31, 1925, page 2]

An early example was titled “In the Land of Enchantment” by Indian Miller (“Crazy Thunder”):

This is the land of enchantment!

A spell has been cast upon this region. From Gallup to Williams lies this land of wonders, bound by silver chains of enchantment. Ho!

The silent ruins of thousands of ancient villages and of tens of thousands of isolated dwellings lie under this turquoise sky. Around about these ruins lie the things these dwellers left behind. Pottery bearing artistic designs wonderfully executed, yucca sandals of a people gone on, grinding utensils which bespeak an agricultural people, reservoirs which bespeak a provident people, dainty arrowheads of petrified wood apparently made by a people who could distinguish the beautiful from the ugly – these are some of the things they left behind.

And they left their graves here in this soil. With beautiful pottery around their heads the skeletons lie unnumbered through the land.

Were they ever to rise again our population would increase at least a hundredfold.

Who were these wonderful people who were prosperous and artistic agriculturists in this land where the white man can not raise a hill of beans?

They were red children of the Creator, the forefathers of the Hopis and the Zuñis, peoples who still thrive and are happy and artistic and graceful and musical in this land of wonders.

To them the land is not enchanted. For them the rains never fail to fall; for the white man the rains fail to fall, because the land is enchanted. But the day will come when the chains of enchantment shall be broken, and white men may thrive as the Indians do.

It will still be a land of wonders. The Painted Desert, the Grand Canyon, the cliff dwellings, Meteor Mountain, and many other wonderful things of this region will never be common things. They will always be world wonders.

The mirages may cease to be miracles when the chain is broken, but they will always cause wonderment.

The walls of the ancient ruins will always be sacred, though marred by the scribblings of a rude race.

Let the chains be broken, let fancy and the imagination be wrecked, this region will still be a land of world's wonders. [Miller, Indian, “In the Land of Enchantment,” *The Winslow Mail*, July 21, 1925]

Another example of the information contained the *Tourist Daily News* involved Meteor Mountain:

Did you know that, once upon a time, a star collided with the earth, and dealt it what must have been the greatest blow it ever received? That the scar of the impact is still visible? That the heavenly visitor is now buried beneath the arid soil of Northern Arizona, and that you might, with a little effort, find fragments scattered over a wide area a few miles west of Winslow? That looking down into the pit is one of the most remarkable sights on this earth – one that awes the beholder with its mystery?

Fifty or a hundred times as fast as a bullet flies, the million ton meteor blazed out of the blue sky collided with the earth, showered an area of 75 square miles with many thousands of white hot iron, nickel and platinum missiles, after the manner of a huge shrapnel letting go, tore a stupendous hole in the solid rock surface and imbedded its metallic head far beneath. The appalling planetary crash, which left the earth wounded that is a world wonder centuries ago.

Winslow derives its slogan, “The Meteor City,” from this unique and bizarre work of nature.

For more than 25 years mining operations have been conducted in the hope of locating the great mass of valuable ore. Thousands of pounds of surface specimens have been picked up, and within recent weeks one 200-pound piece was found on the desert five miles away from the pit. Every day there are minute fragments found. A 400-pound specimen is on display before the sales room of the Payne & Funk Studebaker agency in Winslow, and several are to be found at the court house at Flagstaff. Museums all over the world have purchased the [sic] most of the large pieces discovered.

Within a radius of ten miles of the pit has been found more meteoric iron than on all the rest of the earth’s surface. The sunken meteorite is estimated to be at least 300 feet in diameter and to weigh 1,000,000 tons. Some experts who have studied the subject would double, treble, and even quintuple these figures.

Its impact gouged a basin nearly four-fifths of a mile in diameter and 1,250 feet deep, but now the bottom is partly filled with sediment, and the average depth is 570 feet, with a level bottom of about 300 acres, and a rim 120 to 160 feet above the level of the surrounding country, sloping outward from 600 to 1,700 yards. More than 300,000,000 tons of stone were broken, crushed and expelled by the inconceivable pressure, and half as much more violently displaced. On the south side for half a mile along the rim all the strata were vertically lifted as a mass 105 feet above their original position, turned outward sharply on edge, and so remain.

A number of years ago a drill rig was erected by the Guggenheim mining interests to explore for the main body of the meteor. At a depth of 1,600 feet a mass of some substance far too hard for the drills to penetrate was discovered, and it is thought the drills reached the meteor, but no practicable means was ever devised to continue the

explorations through the crumbled and pulverized strata above. The derrick is still standing and is visible for 20 miles in all directions. Most tourists scowl or smile at the thought of “another wildcat oil well,” little realizing that the tower is a monument to a strenuous endeavor to solve one of the most perplexing riddles of the universe. Good roads lead up to the very edge of the gigantic pit, and tourists are more and more learning to visit this supernatural appearing spectacle, which has for its only counterpart the craters of the moon.—Tourists’ Daily News. [“Meteor Mountain Crater Made by Celestial Visitor,” *The Winslow Mail*, June 11, 1926, page 10]

Another article informed tourists about the Painted Desert:

Within the year past nine miles north of Adamana, on the edge of the Painted Desert, there has been erected the Painted Desert Inn, the cost of which has been \$28,000. It is the last place one would look for such an investment but the patronage of tourists and others has more than justified the undertaking. It is perhaps the only building in the world constructed from petrified wood taken from forests that grow in a remote geological era of the earth long before the advent of the human race. One might go to the uttermost corners of the earth and not find the duplication either of nature’s work or man’s work such as is found here.

The erection of this building was the conception of H. D. Lore, of Holbrook, who was in Gallup Monday. Mr. Lore says that on last Sunday there were 65 cars at the Inn and the travel that way is increasing as one gets a good view of the Painted Desert, a vast stretch of forbidding country but marvelously picturesque – a miniature of the Grand Canyon itself.

Two educated Hopi Indians, man and wife, are in charge of the Inn, Mr. Lore only occasionally visiting the place and checking up on the business. He says that the Hopis are entirely reliable and tourists who visit the Inn see and deal only with the Indians. It only takes a little more than two hours’ drive to reach the Inn from Gallup. Tourists’ Daily News. [“Painted Desert Inn is Built of Petrified Wood,” *The Windsor Mail*, June 25, 1926, page 7]

To assist in publicity for the road, AAA announced on March 12 that in line with its plans for mapping the great transcontinental routes, it had just undertaken a thorough survey and logging of the National Old Trails Road. The tour book was to be released on May 31, 1926, in time to aid the summer travel season:

“One by one, the bogies of transcontinental travel are disappearing,” says the National Touring division of the A.A.A. “The Missouri mud is a thing of the past and hand in hand with the opening of new highways comes up-to-date mapping and road information.

“The diffusion of this information through every section of the country will be made possible through the fact that the A.A.A. tour books are uniformly accepted as standard and are used by the 775 motor clubs – 95 per cent of all the actively-functioning motor clubs in America – affiliated with the national motoring body. The publication of the

National Old Trails Tour Book will make it virtually impossible to give misleading information to motorists traveling through the region it covers, as the Tour Book and the accompanying maps will be available at all the A.A.A. clubs located on the highway.”

Reporting on this news, *The Winslow Mail*'s article began:

The National Headquarters of the American Automobile Association broadcast an announcement today that for the first time in the history of the country justice is to be done to one of the nation's most famous highways, namely, the National Old Trails which girdles the continent from Washington and Baltimore to the Pacific coast. [“Old Trails Highway to Receive Just Recognition,” *The Winslow Mail*, March 12, 1926, pages 1, 12]

### Numbers versus Names

For interstate motorists in the 1920s, the named trails were the way to navigate around the country. A 1923 road atlas included a one-page “Midget Map of the Transcontinental Trails of the United States.” It showed the line of the following named interstate trails:

Atlantic Highway	Atlantic Pacific Highway
Bankhead Highway	Black and Yellow Trail
Colorado to Gulf Highway	Columbia River Highway
Custer Battlefield Highway	Dallas Canadian Denver
Detroit-Lincoln-Denver	Dixie Highway
Dixie Overland Highway	Evergreen National Highway
George Washington	
National Highway	Jackson Highway
Jefferson Highway	King of Trails Highway
Kings Transcontinental	
Highway	Lee Highway
Lincoln Highway	Lone Star Route
Lone Star Trail	Meridian Highway
Mississippi Valley Highway	National Old Trails Road
National Park to Park Highway	National Parks Highway
National Roosevelt Midland	
Trail	Old Oregon Trail
Old Spanish Trail	Ozark Trails
Pacific Highway	Pikes Peak Ocean to Ocean Highway
South West Trail	Theodore Roosevelt International Trail
Victory Highway	Yellowstone Trail.

(The map is on this Website at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/midgetmap.cfm>.)

The named trail associations had served an important purpose in the 1910s when many States lacked a highway department or had an ineffective one. With the growing number of vehicles on the roads, the associations helped focus attention on their condition, identified interstate roads for

use of motorists, and sought increased funding for good roads projects. Starting with the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916, but especially after the Federal Highway Act of 1921, the Federal road agency and the State highway agencies, now revitalized and professional, played a strong role in road improvement. Further, the public strongly supported the idea of good roads, and Federal and State road programs were better able to provide them. Basically, they were providing what people at the time thought of as the interstate system of two-lane paved roads.

By the early 1920s, as explained in a 1925 report, State and Federal highway officials realized that the named trail associations had outlived their usefulness, in view of “conditions which had existed for several years in connection with the expanding program of highway construction, and which were becoming aggravated as sentiment in favor of road construction spread and the building program assumed a more and more definite order and system”:

The conditions flowed from the well-intended efforts and the enthusiasm of local and commercial interests to secure the obviously desirable and necessary fruition of the road building program of the country. Numerous organizations, commonly known as trail associations, had promoted the marking of through routes, some extending entirely across the United States, some interstate in character and extending across two or more States, others of a more or less local significance only. In some cases the promotion of routes was done for the purpose of furthering road building by arousing, developing and maintaining local public opinion. Some were promoted more or less directly for commercial purposes, many were organized and maintained to promote and advertise some purely localized interest. Frequently the routes selected were chosen to develop scenic beauties, and had little thought of any other commercial value than that of leading tourists through particular sections of the country, and bringing to those sections the advantage of the tourist trade. Occasionally a route was laid out along very direct lines in an effort to secure the construction of short and direct routes between important centers of population. In a great many cases the routes were the result of an entirely selfish promotion to exploit good roads sentiment and provide salaries for paid officials of the various organizations.

These routes were named by their respective organizations after some person of distinction in the locality or in American history, for some place of greater or less note, or for memorial or sentimental reasons. Some undertook to perpetuate historic trails of early fame. In most cases some attempt to mark the routes was made in return for the local support given to the organization; in a few cases actual road construction was furthered by the organization. In most instances, however, a more or less careless marking was all that a community got for its outlay, which ranged from a few hundred dollars annually to as much as \$5,000 in extreme cases.

BPR's files contained evidence of at least 250 named trails:

These were sponsored by at least one hundred regularly organized associations supporting some kind of headquarters and issuing maps, advertising, or other promotion material. It is impossible to estimate the cost to the public of these activities; but when the 150 trails are omitted for which no record of a definite organization appears in the

record, it may conservatively be estimated that the 100 active organizations handled at least \$6,000 per year, or a total of \$600,000.

Over time, several problems had developed. Overlap was one problem. Many trails used the same roadway. In places, such as mountain passes, numerous routes followed the same path. The National Old Trails Road was no exception. For example, the Victory Highway shared the route of the National Old Trails Road in the east. Ben Blow, vice president and manager of the Victory Highway Association, described the origins and goals of the route in a 1924 article:

In the later part of 1921, a little group of road enthusiasts met in Topeka, Kansas, and incorporated The Victory Highway Association for the purpose of developing a new transcontinental highway line between New York and San Francisco as a national memorial undertaking in honor of those men and women who served their country during the World War.

That this undertaking might be worthy, plans were developed for marking the selected line in such a manner as no other road in the highway of the world had ever been marked, the selected design, of everlasting bronze, being an American eagle poised over its nest and young in an attitude of defiance, symbolical of that protection which this country gives its people.

The well-known Lincoln Highway already had a route from New York City to San Francisco that had been identified in 1913. To use the same termini, the new association had to identify a different routing that motorists might prefer to the better known route. The group chose a route from Battery Park in New York City, leaving the city by the St. George ferry to Staten Island, then to New Jersey by the Tottenville-Perth Amboy ferry and across New Jersey to Philadelphia:

From Philadelphia through Chester, Penn., Wilmington, Delaware, and then to Baltimore where connection is made with the National Old Trail as the selected line of the Victory to 50 miles beyond St. Louis, beyond which up to the present time, road improvement has been non-existent but where, now, a highway is in process of development between St. Louis and Kansas City – the Victory Highway line – which is 41 miles shorter than the shortest existent highway and 23 miles shorter than either of the two shortest rail lines. The development of this line was an engineering triumph due to the tenacity of purpose maintained by Theodore Gary, Chairman of the Missouri Highway Commission, who believed that the shortest line between two points was the logical way and who would not permit road deviation to adjacent towns by any political influences, but was governed solely by topographical conditions in aligning State Route 2, the St. Louis-Kansas City section of the Victory Highway. [Blow, Ben, “The Victory Highway,” *Good Roads*, June 1924, pages 159-160, 186]

The Victory Highway was a strong rival to the Lincoln Highway in the western States. The two associations became bitter rivals over designation of a Federal-aid route across the Utah/Nevada border. The Victory Highway won the rivalry by adopting a route across the Great Salt Desert through Wendover. BPR was involved in the unique project known as the Wendover Cut-off. The prominence of the Victory Highway was partly a result of strong support from the California

State Automobile Association (CSAA), the northern equivalent of the Automobile Club of Southern California. The northern group saw the Victory Highway as a way of drawing traffic, and tourist dollars, from the southern part of the State. Although the Victory Highway Association remained based in Topeka, the group appointed a CSAA member to be the western manager and designated the CSAA headquarters as the Victory Highway Association's western headquarters.

The 6-mile Wendover Cut-off was completed across the Great Salt Lake Desert with a ceremony on June 18, 1925, that included Secretary of Agriculture William M. Jardine, Utah Governor George H. Dern, and Nevada Governor J. G. Scrugham. "Dressed in white overalls, the two governors and the Secretary of Agriculture cleared away the last salt barrier in highway traffic between Utah and Nevada." ["Wendover Cut-Off Makes Utah California's Next-Door Neighbor," *American Motorist*, July 1925, pages 8-9, 44, 54])

Other less-prominent named trails also had adopted portions of the National Old Trails Road. In Missouri, parts of it were included in two diagonal transcontinental routes: the George Washington National Highway (Savannah, Georgia, to Seattle, Washington) and the Glacier Trail (Jacksonville, Florida, to Los Angeles). The Atlantic-Pacific Highway, from New York to Los Angeles, shared the National Old Trails Road in several States. From Gallup, New Mexico, to Los Angeles, part of the National Old Trails Road was included in the National Park-to-Park Highway. The Evergreen Highway adopted the National Old Trails Road between Kingman and Seligman, Arizona. Several trails shared Raton Pass, as noted earlier.

The same was true for other routes:

Specific cases were studied . . . in which as much as 70 per cent of the mileage of one route lapped others and sometimes as many as eleven different marked trails were involved in parts of greater or less length in a single trail. One section of road is known to have carried eight different sets of route markers for a considerable distance. Two and three different sets of markers on the same road were common; and four and even five sets of markers were not infrequently found. This confusion finally resulted in complaints from the public that road marking was becoming in many cases more annoying than helpful.

Route duplication was another issue because "it was almost as common to find two or more separate roads bearing the same designation." The Lincoln Highway and Victory Highway were an example, but routes such as the Dixie Highway (on a dual line between Michigan and Florida) and the New and Old Santa Fe Trails were another:

One of the most vigorously promoted routes has at several points three alternate lines, and over most of its length there exists a duplicate location.

This resulted from the fact that in promoting the route and inviting local support interested organizations made their layout where they could secure local support, and being morally too weak to reject financial support offered them by an alternate route, they accepted both routes and both sets of contributions. In a great many cases such

alternate routes exist among the marked trails, and very few of them were entirely free from this objectionable feature. There are also routes which branch and are a collection of routes rather than a single route. This condition of having two or more different roads carrying the same route designation was as confusing as having several designations applying to the same route, and was equally productive of complaint.

Another problem, faulty location, resulted from promoters following “the line of least resistance financially . . . . The line was routed where the most financial support could be secured.” As a result, the location and alignment “could not be defended on economic or engineering grounds.”

Further, the named trail associations were resistant to correction or change. The associations often objected to State highway department plans for State highway systems that did not include some or all of the trail. “The interests back of the individual route protested the interests of the community as a whole, and exerted their influence to make good showing to their supporters regardless of the real intrinsic merit of their location. This meant that faulty locations and improperly adjusted priority of construction were threatening to affect seriously the road-building program.”

These concerns applied to the named trails as a whole:

There were conspicuous cases of public spirited work, by men of wide vision, who under careful management were promoting worthily the construction of connected roads, and doing much to improve highway transport conditions in the country, but these organizations working independently and having no co-ordinating agency could not be expected to develop a unified and correlated system of routes. [*Report of Joint Board on Interstate Highways*, October 30, 1925, Approved by the Secretary of Agriculture, November 18, 1925, pages 5-8]

For these and other reasons, State highway officials realized that a new system of marking would have to be found to help motorists travel around the country. On November 24, 1924, AASHO adopted a resolution on marking known as Resolution No. 5:

*Whereas*, this Association has adopted the report of the Subcommittee on Traffic Control and Safety, recommending the immediate selection of transcontinental and interstate routes from the Federal-aid system, said roads to be continuously designated by means of standard highway marking signs and protected by standard traffic warning signs; and *Whereas*, this system of highways when established and marked will satisfy the demand for marked routes on the part of transcontinental and interstate traffic, thus meeting the need which had been met in the past in a measure by the marked trails established by the reputable trails associations; and

*Whereas*, many individuals have sought to capitalize the popular demand for interstate or cross-country routes by organizing trails, collecting large sums of money from our citizens and giving practically no service in return, with resulting discredit to the reputable trails associations which have heretofore rendered distinct public service by stimulating highway improvement, maintenance, and marking; now, therefore, be it *Resolved*: That this Association hereby recommends to the several States that the

reputable trails associations now existing be permitted to continue their markings during their period of usefulness, pending the establishment of the proposed marking system, unless such action shall conflict with the marking systems and policies now in force in the several States; and be it further

*Resolved:* That no trail association be permitted to establish further routes on State or Federal-aid routes; and be it further

*Resolved:* That we hereby warn the citizens of this nation to investigate carefully the responsibility of trails organizers and demand convincing evidence insuring proper expenditure of funds before contributing to or otherwise supporting such agencies.

[Resolutions Adopted by The American Association of State Highway Officials At Annual Session November 20, 1924, *American Highways*, January 1925, pages 42-43]

AASHO called on the Secretary of Agriculture to appoint a joint board of BPR and State highway officials to "cooperate in formulating and promulgating a system of numbering and marking highways of interstate character.

Resolution No. 5 did not specify the "reputable trails associations" or indicate how to identify them. Susan Croce Kelly, in her biography of Cyrus A. Avery, at the time the chairman of the Oklahoma Department of Highways, speculated that the reputable associations included members of the Associated Highways of America (see part 3 of this history), including three roads that Avery was associated with – Albert Pike Highway (from Hot Springs, Arkansas, to Colorado Springs, Colorado, via Tulsa), Ozark Trails (St. Louis to Las Vegas, New Mexico, via Tulsa), and White River Trail (Branson, Missouri, through Springfield to Tulsa). [Kelly, Susan Croce, *Father of Route 66: The Story of Cy Avery*, University of Oklahoma Press, 2014, page 133]

On February 20, 1925, Secretary of Agriculture Howard M. Gore approved appointment of the Joint Board on Interstate Highways, as recommended by AASHO. He appointed the members of the Joint Board on March 2, just 2 days before becoming Governor of West Virginia. He stated that he was taking this action, at the unanimous request of the State highway agencies because "the general public in traveling over the highways through the several States encounters considerable confusion because of the great variety of direction signs and danger signs." He added:

This move . . . is just another proof that the Federal Government in its cooperation with the States is doing a vital work which would not otherwise be accomplished if entire dependence were placed upon the States themselves.

BPR Chief MacDonald was chairman while BPR's chief of design, E. W. James, would be the Secretary. The BPR's Consulting Highway Engineer, A. B. Fletcher, was the agency's third representative. The State highway agencies were represented by 22 top State officials. AASHO's Executive Secretary, William C. Markham, also attended the Joint Board's meetings.

On February 26, 1925, Judge Lowe wrote to Chief MacDonald to express concern about the proposal:

I am just in receipt of a wire from Washington telling me that pursuant to a resolution adopted at the last Session of the State Highway Boards held at Oakland, California, some action was taken regarding the sign-posting of roads. I was told at the time that they excepted from the provisions of the resolution, the Lincoln Highway and the N. O. T. Road, for the reason, as I understood it, that these two organizations were, and have been from the beginning, actively at work trying to get the road built. Anyway, whatever the exact action may have been at that convention, they now tell me in this telegram that the Agricultural Department is in sympathy with the action of that meeting.

I am writing simply to lay the facts before you, which are, very briefly, that when this Association was organized (the first of its kind in the United States), we began the active agitation not for promoting only, but to build the road. Our efforts have always been to work up public sentiment so as to get the road actually constructed. The progress, under the circumstances, has really been wonderful. That portion of the road from Washington to the Mississippi, is the longest continuously paved road in the world. There is not a break in it, and it will undoubtedly be completed across Missouri this year. We have it, perhaps, three-fourths hard surfaced the balance of the way to the Pacific. We have it sign-posted with metallic signs on steel posts set in cement from Los Angeles to the western line of Ohio, and the Highway Board of Ohio has put a metal plate immediately above the numerals on her sign-posts, "National Road", which is so nearly [an] identical name that it does not mislead the traveling public.

I sympathize altogether with the objections to indiscriminate sign-posting of roads. They are not only annoying, but in many cases misleading. I do not object, of course, to the Highway Boards for adopting the numerical system, that is convenient and if any Trans-Continental Road was numerically sign-posted from beginning to end by the same number, it might answer every purpose. But a road like ours running through twelve states, the average tourist would never know, when he went out of one state into another, whether he was pursuing a Trans-Continental line or some other route, because they are all numbered differently. For this reason, aside from any sentimental reason, it seems to me that the sign-posting of the N.O.T. should not be torn down and destroyed, and I can see no reasonable objection to our continuing to maintain such signs.

Chief Engineer P. St. J. Wilson of BPR replied on March 4 to assure Judge Lowe that:

Your letter will be brought to the attention of the Joint Board at an appropriate time. The members of the Board have just been appointed and the organization is not yet complete.  
[National Archives at College Park, Maryland]

## Developments Along the Road

While BPR and the State highway officials were planning to find an alternative to the named trail method of designating interstate roads, the States the National Old Trails Road passed through continued working on the road.

In early 1925, Division VIII of the California State Highway Commission, in cooperation with the Santa Fe Railroad, completed work on removing a dangerous rail-highway crossing on the National Old Trails Road in San Bernardino County near Oro Grande between Victorville and Barstow:

Some three miles of the state highway have been straightened out and graded and a dangerous grade crossing eliminated by the building of an underpass . . . .

Many accidents have occurred at this point in recent years. The railroad crossed the highway after rounding a sharp curve, and likewise the highway approached the railroad on a sharp turn that entirely concealed the tracks.

The Santa Fe Company has been straightening out and double tracking its lines between Los Angeles and the east and an understanding was reached between the commission and the railroad that whenever the work was done in the vicinity of Oro Grande, the state highway would be graded at the same time. The highway followed the winding course of the railroad and crossed it on the curve as described above.

The cost of the underpass, which was built by the railroad company, was shared by the railroad and the state. This expenditure and the three miles of grading being entirely new construction was financed from the state highway fund. Both the railroad and the traveling public will benefit from this important improvement. [“Dangerous Grade Crossing Eliminated on Old Trails Highway,” *California Highways*, March 1925]

The *Albuquerque Morning Journal* reported on a challenge of car versus train:

A wager that he could better the time of the California limited between Albuquerque and Winslow was won by E. J. Tilson of Winslow, Ariz., on February 17, according to a letter written by Mr. Tilson to the Morning Journal. In his letter, Mr. Tilson says that he submits the story to the Journal to illustrate the good condition which the roads of New Mexico are now in.

The motorist claims that he completed the 302 miles from Albuquerque to Winslow over various detours and a road with which he was unacquainted, in the actual running time of eight hours and 15 minutes. The actual running time from Albuquerque to Gallup he gives as four hours and 25 minutes, which is fifteen minutes better than that made by train No. 3 on the Santa Fe railroad.

The trip was made in a roadster with the top up. Mr. Tilson said that he had no tire trouble on the trip. He further says that he can verify the run by various parties in Albuquerque, Gallup, Holbrook and Winslow. [“Autoist Races to Beat Time of No. 3 Train,” *New Mexico Highway Journal*, March 1925, page 9]

### **The D.A.R Continental Congress – 1925**

When D.A.R. held its annual continental congress in April 1925, Mrs. John Trigg Moss delivered a report on the work of the National Old Trails Road Committee. As reflected in her 1924 report, National Chairman Moss was taking the committee in a different direction than her predecessors. They had some success, as she acknowledged, but their main goals – passage of legislation and posting of road signs – had not been achieved and seemed unlikely to succeed and, in the case of signs, impractical if they did.

Mrs. Moss would prove to be the most successful of the National Chairmen of the National Old Trails Road Committee. The former Arline B. Nichols was born on December 24, 1876, in St. Louis. A biographical sketch stated that, “she had been a teacher of the deaf before her marriage to John Trigg Moss in 1902.” She had two sons, John Trigg Moss, Jr. (born March 7, 1903) and Harry Nichols Moss (September 17, 1912). She began her D.A.R. work with the Cornelia Greene D.A.R. Chapter in St. Louis. She was elected State Regent in October 1917 (confirmed April 1918). She retired from that post in 1920, and was elected to the post of Vice-President General during the Thirtieth Annual Congress in April 1921. As noted earlier, the President General, Mrs. Anthony Wayne Cook, appointed Mrs. Moss to the post of National Chairman of the National Old Trails Road Committee in 1924. [Bauer, Fern Iola, *The Historic Treasure Chest of the Madonna of the Trail Monuments*, John McEnaney Printing, Revised edition, 1986, pages 6-7, 88]

Mrs. Moss’s 1925 report began:

Another year has passed into the realm of yesterdays, and your National Chairman will let you judge the amount of progress made since Congress a year ago. At that time a resolution was unanimously adopted to set aside or discontinue all former plans of erecting markers on the National Old Trails Road and to adopt a new marking system – one that seemed conservative and in keeping with the dignity of our Society; within reason from a financial standpoint and fulfilling the long-expressed desire or pledge to erect markers that would be lasting memorials to our early pioneer ancestors, who blazed the old trails that have become our great system of highways, recognized and approved by the government. The National Old Trails Road (Road No. 1) is the main ocean-to-ocean highway and is termed the “backbone” of the entire system.

The route taken by the National Old Trails Road was not chosen by the Daughters of the American Revolution, nor did they have any voice in the matter. Locating the different trails, or roads, was the work of the National Highways Association, the National Old Trails Road Association, State Highway Commissions, and many other State and national organizations solely interested in the National Highway Movement. If, in their better

judgment, the main cross-country ocean-to-ocean highway, to be known as the National Old Trails Road, comprised Braddock's road, the Old Cumberland Road, the Boone's Lick Road, the Santa Fe Trail, and the Kearney Trail, running from Washington, D.C., to California, then cannot we, Daughters of the American Revolution, accept the route without a question and proceed to mark it as planned, whether or not the road runs through your State, or whether it does not pass through certain States that formerly laid claim to this distinction. It is a national institution and the history of this road remains the history of the development of our country. The Daughters of the American Revolution are marking it for history's sake and as an "In Memoriam" to the great army of Revolutionary ancestors who had the great vision of a great land of life and freedom to hand down to posterity . . . .

The time is now at hand for us to definitely take hold and consummate the pledge of last year and of all previous years. Please bear in mind that from the very inception of this National Old Trails work it has always been and still is a national project and does not belong exclusively to those States through which the main ocean-to-ocean highway runs. As a national project, it should have not only the endorsement of, but the earnest support, morally and financially, of every State Society in our organization.

In 1924, Mrs. Moss reported that she had studied the committee's records and determined that its activities were unsustainable. Now, in 1925, she explained her activities since adoption of the resolution:

Last summer your National Chairman turned her attention to the study of every phase of the National Old Trails work, and went to Kansas City for the purpose of conferring with Judge J. M. Lowe, National President of the National Old Trails Road Association, who gave a very hearty and enthusiastic approval of the new plan or program the Daughters had voted to follow.

She then divided the States into five sections, each with a National Vice-Chairmen in charge:

- Mrs. Herbert M. Gault, of Maryland – New England (14 States: Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Delaware, West Virginia, Virginia Maryland, District of Columbia, and Pennsylvania).
- Mrs. Richmond P. Barnes of New Mexico – Southeastern (10 States: Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi).
- Mrs. William R. Van Tuyle of Kansas – Central Section (8 States: Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, and Louisiana).
- Mrs. Lipscomb Norvell of Texas – Middle Western States (8 States: North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado, and Wyoming).
- Miss Ida Meyers of California – Western Section (9 States: California, Washington, Oregon, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, Idaho, and Montana).

Chairman Moss's idea was a single monument in each National Old Trails State:

Much time has been spent by your National Chairman in considering sizes and shapes and styles of markers and monuments as well as materials of stone, cement, etc. A request was made for designs, to be sent to your National Chairman before April 1925, but to date only one State, namely, Tennessee, submitted two designs. Your National Chairman also has a design to submit, the work of Nancy Coonesman Hahn, the young sculptoress of note, who at the present time lives in St. Louis.

On the first of October, Mrs. Moss had sent a letter to every State Chairman and a copy to each State Regent containing “a copy of the resolution adopted at the Thirty-third Congress and asked for a ten-cent per capita contribution to raise the balance of the necessary amount to erect the twelve markers at approximately one thousand dollars each”:

The Treasurer General’s report for Congress last April gave the amount in the National Old Trail’s fund as \$4,876.65. This year, to April 1, 1925, \$2,475.12 has been contributed, making a total of \$7,351.77 . . . .

Your National Chairman feels that the first objective should be the completion of the fund, believing that a suitable design can be determined upon and the locations for the markers decided by vote of the States in the several sections as soon as the fund is completed. If the States will come forward and pledge their quotas, we may proceed with the actual work this year. Co-operation is the one word needed here to interpret success in this work – not half-hearted luke-warm co-operation, but interested, whole-hearted, and enthusiastic co-operation, that is consistent with the erection of memorials to our honored forebears:

For don’t we eternally breathe a prayer on the evening breeze  
And thank God for our heritage from these?

Mrs. Moss also discussed some of her more routine activities:

Many letters have been written by your National Chairman, and 200 copies of the National Old Trails Map, supplied by the National Old Trails Road Association, together with other printed matter, have been sent to members upon request. A copy of the joint resolution No. 79, as presented to the House of Representatives by Mr. Jost, was sent to each State Chairman. A copy of the “National Old Trails Road,” or “The Great Historic Highway of America,” was sent to each Vice-Chairman and each State Chairman by the author, Judge J. M. Lowe, of Kansas City, Missouri

She recognized that every State had historic old trails, “a relic of those early days, and all of these should be preserved and marked in the course of time.” The D.A.R., however, “should first bend all their efforts to the erection of their memorial markers on the National Old Trails Road and complete this tribute as a national organization.” When that tribute was completed, “let every State follow out a program for the marking of their own historic trails, which time and traditions have made dear to the heart.” [*Proceedings of the Thirty-Fourth Continental Congress of the National Society of the Daughters of the*

American Revolution, April 1925, pages 235-238]

On April 23, D.A.R. members “marched past President and Mrs. Coolidge in a colorful procession representing many States at the reception in their honor given at the White House yesterday.” President General Cook led the procession:

The President and Mrs. Coolidge stood in the blue room to receive these descendants of the heroes of 1776 and a cordial word of greeting and a hand clasp accorded by both to each Daughter. So great was the number received that few could linger to exchange more than a greeting, but the President and Mrs. Coolidge recognized many friends in the Vermont delegation and others of the New England groups.

After passing down the reception line the visitors went out into the grounds of the White House, which had been opened for their benefit, and strolled about the beautiful lawns, enjoying the novel spectacle and particularly the colonial gardens. [“White House Doors Are Open Wide to 5,000 D.A.R. Guests,” *The Washington Post*, April 24, 1925, page 1]

### **The Joint Board on Interstate Highways**

The Joint Board’s first meeting took place on April 20 and 21, 1925, in Chief MacDonald's office at BPR headquarters in Washington. Chief MacDonald was present, along with BPR’s E. W. James, the Joint Board’s secretary, and 18 State highway officials. Three State members of the Joint Board were not present (from California, Oregon, and West Virginia).

The goal was to decide how to designate interstate routes, adopt a uniform system of marking such routes, including signs for identifying the roads and for traffic control, and secure uniform legislation if needed to provide for such markings.

For designating routes, the agenda covered several points:

Shall trail organizations be recognized by the Board –

1. By hearings?
2. By submitting briefs?
3. By no method?

Shall designated routes be named or numbered?

Shall a mechanical and prearranged system of numbering, or shall a promiscuous system of numbering be adopted?

Shall an effort be made to establish a correlation between other numbered State routes and the designated route?

Shall the Board recommend that after the Interstate routes have been designated, trail associations in good standing, operating without profit, be authorized by permission of the respective State highway departments, to name and mark routes for sentimental, memorial, or patriotic reasons, under restrictions covering:

- Type of sign,
- Avoidance of overlapping routes,
- Choice of a single route,
- Continuity of route,
- Permission of all States concerned and
- Routes to follow single numbered route.

The Joint Board also was to adopt policies regarding signs and markers as well as determine the organization of the Joint Board and the nature of its meetings.

As the meeting began, Chairman MacDonald asked each member to state their views on the proposed agenda. According to minutes of the April 20 meeting, the State officials supported the designation of interstate routes and uniform marking of the selected roads, but several commented on the named trails.

William F. Williams of Massachusetts:

Believes that names such as “Yellowstone Trail” “Gold Star Trail” or “Liberty Trail” should be kept off the highways.

Preston G. Peterson of Utah:

Believes in the elimination of trail organizations.

B. H. Piepmeier of Missouri:

Does not think trail organizations should be recognized, although they have done some good work.

Frank T. Sheets of Illinois:

Believes trail organizations have long ceased to be useful.

Lou A. Boulay of Ohio:

Believes trail organizations should not be recognized.

After the survey of leaders, including Frank F. Rogers, Michigan's commissioner of highways and president of AASHO, the minutes continued:

Discussion by the Joint Board on the elimination of trail organizations.

Mr. F. F. Rogers of Michigan: "I suggest that Mr. James read Resolution No. 5 regarding trail marking, as adopted by the American Association of State Highway Officials at its last annual convention."

Resolution No. 5 read by Mr. James.

Mr. F. T. Sheets of Illinois: "I move that it is the sense of this Body that Resolution No. 5 regarding trail marking, as adopted by the American Association of State Highway Officials at its last annual convention in California, be adopted as the policy of this Board."

Motion made, seconded and carried.

They also discussed whether to publicize the Joint Board's proceedings. "After discussion, it was agreed that such resolutions as were adopted by the Board would be made public."

On the second day, April 21, the Joint Board convened at 9:45 a.m. They discussed selection of routes to be included in the system. E.W. James pointed out:

The original Federal aid system was drawn up only after we had held group meetings. I think if we could have group meetings as a start, inviting to each group meeting not only the members of this Joint Board, but also representative [sic] from each State in the group, it would be advisable.

Frank Sheets put the comment in the form of a motion:

I move that the Chairman of this Joint Board be asked to group the several States in such manner as will best promote the study of the roads to be selected and marked under the supervision of this Board; that group meetings be held at which representatives from each of the States involved and from the Bureau of Public Roads be present, at which meeting or subsequent meeting a study of the proposed routes to be selected and marked in each State be made; that joint meetings of related groups be held when necessary; that these groups report their recommendations to this Board for review, adjustment and ultimate adoption.

Motion made, seconded and carried.

Chairman MacDonald followed up:

When group meetings are called it would be a good idea to notify all the States in a group and tell them if they wish to have a representative present at their own expense they may do so.

With regard to tentative schedule of group meetings: Meeting of Western Group at San Francisco May 15th; Meeting of Mississippi Valley Group at Kansas City May 27th; Meeting of Lakes Group at Chicago June 3rd; Meeting of Southern Group at Atlanta, June 8th; Meeting of North Atlantic Group at New York City June 15th; and Meeting of New England Group at Boston June 18th.

After the first series of group meetings I think we will be very close together.

Susan Croce Kelly commented:

They agreed unanimously that publicity and public hearings would lead only to gridlock and failure, so one of their first decisions was that while they would hold regional meetings, there would be no open-to-the-public discussions and there would be no prepublicity – reports of the meetings would only be distributed afterward. [Kelly, page 138]

The Joint Board also agreed unanimously on a shield design for signs to be placed on the designated highways based on the official U.S. shield. As James later recalled:

At a Board meeting I was sitting at the side of Frank Rogers of Michigan. As we discussed a possible distinctive and unique marker for all the Federal Aid System, he doodled and produced a sort of shield. He handed it to me. I think I improved on his design by drawing a picture of our present shield. He took it back, presented it to the Board as just what was wanted, and that was that. [Kelly, page 140; see “E. W. James on designating the Federal-aid system and developing the U.S. numbered highway plan” on this Website.]

The members of the Joint Board had come to the initial meeting with State maps showing which roads they wanted to include in the plan. James had BPR’s mapping team prepare regional maps showing the members’ choices. He then sent the maps to the members as the starting place for consideration during the regional meetings. [Kelly, page 140; First Full Meeting of The Joint Board For Designating Highways Held in the Office of The Chief of The Bureau Of Public Roads at Washington, D.C., National Archives at College Park, Maryland]

During the course of discussions during the 2-day meeting, the Joint Board adopted several resolutions:

Moved that it be the sense of this meeting that we adopt a uniform system of through routes for the United States, based on numbering and that a uniform shape and type of route marker, to be adopted later, be selected for the marking of these routes.

Moved that it be the sense of this Body that Resolution No. 5 regarding trail marking, as adopted by the American Association of State Highway Officials at its last annual convention in California, be adopted as the policy of this Board.

Moved that the Secretary of this meeting request each State to submit for the consideration of this Board a design for a marker of national significance to be acted on later.

Moved that it be the sense of this Body that the recommendations of the Sub-Committee on Traffic Control and Safety of American Association of State Highway Officials, as adopted by said Association at its last annual meeting at San Francisco be adopted as the preliminary standards for traffic warning signs to be used by this Body; except that the specification as to the use of lemon yellow as the color for the background of said signs be determined after further investigation by this Body; and, be it the sense of this Body further that the standards as finally perfected and adopted by this Body be recommended to the American Association of State Highway Officials and other highway officials having jurisdiction over the highways of this country as standards for their adoption.

Moved that it be the sense of this Body that each State, where the authority does not exist, empower its State Highway Department to provide a uniform system of marking and signing for the roads under State jurisdiction.

Moved that it be the sense of this Body that no discussion along the line of numbers to be adopted for these routes be had until the system of arterial highways for the United States is selected.

Moved that the Chairman of this Joint Board be asked to group the several States in such manner as will best promote the study of the roads to be selected and marked under the supervision of this Board; that group meetings be held at which representatives from each of the States involved and from the Bureau of Public Roads be present, at which meeting or subsequent meeting a study of the proposed routes to be selected and marked in each State be made; that joint meetings of related groups be held when necessary; that those groups report their recommendations to this Board for review, adjustment and ultimate adoption.

Moved that it be the sense of this Board that in laying out the highways to be recommended for adoption as part of the proposed uniformly marked system of interstate highways each State be requested to bear in mind the following purposes:

The connection of important centers with those reasonably direct lines which will be improved at the earliest possible date.

The dispersion of traffic over a sufficient number of alternate routes to promote safety and ease of maintenance.

The selection of approximately 1 per cent or less of the total highway mileage of the State as of greatest importance; of a second 1 per cent approximately as of secondary importance; and a third 1 per cent approximately as of tertiary importance; and that these suggested percentages be increased in sparsely settled States.

Moved that it is the sense of this Board to adopt as a preliminary and tentative standard for the interstate highways to be selected, the following color scheme: For all route markers and directional signs, black lettering on lemon yellow background, and that this tentative recommendation be submitted to each of the States for their comments and recommendations before being finally adopted by this Joint Board.

Moved that it is the sense of this Board that green be used as a luminous sign as indicated in Section A, No. 3, to indicate “go” instead of “look or attention.” (See Recommendation of American Association of State Highway Officials.)

Moved that it is the sense of this Board that the design here suggested be sent out to the different States asking them to submit their comments on this type of design for use as a marker on the interstate highways to be selected. (Copy of the design referred to will be furnished each State Highway Dept.)

Moved that it is the sense of this Board that specifications be drafted for the size and shape of warning signs and that tentative standards be set up for the directional signs. [Report of Joint Board on Interstate Highways, pages 14-15, 17-21]

On April 22, 1925, *The New York Times* carried the following article on page 11:

### **WARNS ON TRAIL FUNDS**

#### Highway Board Advises Public to Investigate Appeals

WASHINGTON, April 21. – A warning was issued today by the Joint Board of State and Federal Highway Officials in session here against certain “trails associations” which, they charge, are in some cases mainly money-raising associations. The offending associations were not named.

“All citizens,” the board said, “are warned to investigate carefully the responsibility of trail organizers and demand convincing evidence insuring proper expenditures of funds before contributing to or otherwise supporting such agencies.

The board decided to permit “reputable trails associations” now existing to continue their markings of highways provided they do not conflict with State and Federal policies.

The officials agreed to adopt a uniform system for marking national highways and standard designs for cautionary and danger signs. Suggestions will be sought from the State highway departments.

An editorial in *The Washington Post* stated that the officials “reached a wise decision when they agreed to create a group of interstate roads to be known as United States highways”:

Good roads are a national asset of the highest importance. The Romans realized this truth fully, and accordingly throughout their far-flung provinces they constructed roads of such durability that many of them are in use to the present day . . . .

If good roads were a necessity then, they are a hundredfold more necessary now. The exigencies of an advanced and still advancing civilization require a ready, easy, cheap, and rapid transit for personal transportation and the interchange of commodities. To a large extent such facilities are supplied by railways and in a less degree by waterways; at no distant date they may be supplied by airways. But the highway was never ousted in the past, nor is it likely to be in the future, and at the present time the automobile and the motor truck make highways, and good ones at that, an essential adjunct to commerce and pleasure. The building of new and better roads is therefore imperatively demanded in the general interest both of the people of today and of posterity.

Referring to the plan to hold regional meetings on the new system, the editorial continued:

There is evidence here of good teamwork. They will assemble again in Washington in August to make a final decision on the selection of highways and of the signs by which they will be marked.

A great advance in intelligently coordinated road building may be looked for as the result of the methods and plans now being so carefully laid. [“United States Highways,” *The Washington Post*, April 25, 1925, page 6]

(Information about the Joint Board’s actions is adapted from the article “From Names to Numbers: The Origins of the U.S. Numbered Highway System” on this Website)

### **Across the Country Nonstop**

In June 1925, stunt flier Leigh Wade, famous for his round-the-world flight in 1923, planned a non-stop automobile trip in a Packard 8 from Los Angeles to New York City. Linton Wells, a newspaper writer, would accompany Wade as co-driver. AAA agreed to sponsor the stunt. Wade explained the plan:

By non-stop drive, we mean that over this distance we expect to keep the wheels of the car moving and the motor running, a feat hitherto unattempted so far as we have been able to determine. We do not intend to break any speed records or violate any speed

laws. We hope that we will be able to complete our run within seven days, averaging about twenty miles per hour for the distance.

We plan to receive gasoline, oil, water and food at specified places, slowing down to a few miles an hour and taking it aboard in containers. We do not anticipate tire trouble, having decided to use an oversize balloon of the best possible make.

Wade was to leave Los Angeles, drive to Phoenix, and then turn north to Albuquerque. From there, they would follow the National Old Trails Road to New York City. [“Wade to Start July 16 on Non-Stop Auto Trip,” *The New York Times*, June 18, 1925, page 6]

As planned, Wade and Wells left from Los Angeles on July 16. They arrived in New York City on July 23, as explained in the *Times* the following day:

A crowd of several thousand persons at the headquarters of the Metropolitan Automobile Association, 1773 Broadway, yesterday greeted Lieutenant Leigh Wade, round-the-world flier, and his companion, Linton Wells, at the finish of their non-stop automobile tour from Los Angeles to New York.

Escorted by a platoon of motorcycle police, the mud encrusted car, a Packard eight, rolled up to headquarters just off Columbus Circle at 1:55 o'clock, after 3,963 miles of continuous traveling, without once stopping for oil, gas or water or engine adjustment. The distance from Los Angeles to here was covered in 163 hours and 50 minutes.

During the entire trip Wade slept eighteen hours and Wells sixteen in the back of the car. Both wore a week's growth of beard, and the blood was running from a deep sunburn on Wade's left arm, caused by the hot Kansas sun.

The nonstop drive ran into several situations that nearly forced the pair to stop. The most talked about incident occurred in Arizona, before the pair reached the National Old Trails Road, near Tucson when they had to change a flat tire, as described in *The Washington Post*:

From Tucson, Ariz., near which city the puncture occurred comes the story of how the thing was done, possibly the first time it ever was attempted. The tire was changed in about 40 minutes with change crew running alongside the big Packard 8 for about 4 miles.

The car was on the pavement when the deflated tire was first detected. Wade was driving. Wells joined the crew from the pilot car and the process of discovering the intricacies of the Dolly pack strapped to the running board was started. This jack, equipped with 4 wheels, had been tested only for the front wheels before the start from Los Angeles. It was found that it would not raise the car quite high enough to clear the tire from the ground. Another mile – and a short piece of plank was fastened to the top of the jack.

By this time the tire had gone down so far that the height of the jack when released plus the thickness of the plank would not permit the jack to go under the axles. Then a big rock was placed under the offending wheel and Wade who had traded places at the wheel with Wells followed the plank-clapped jack as closely as possible to the rear axle. The Packard rolled over the road, Wade shoved the jack in place and as the rock was left behind the car hit a solid position on the jack. An accommodating Phoenix speed cop arrived with a gallon thermo jug of iced water to counteract a temperature of 116 degrees in the shade of a cactus and a working temperature of about 173 ½.

By means of a special individual rear-wheel braking device, the crippled wheel was partially locked and enough traction was thrown to the other rear wheel to propel the car. The hub bolts had been loosened during the difficulties of getting the Packard on the jack. The balance of the toughest tire change that has ever been accomplished consisted of lining up the holes in the disk wheel with those of the hub while the hub itself fitfully released itself from the brake and occasionally took a spasmodic revolution or two en route.

While on the National Old Trails Road, the pair encountered several problems that nearly ended the run:

Near Las Vegas, N. Mex., Lieut. Wade missed the main road, and while following a poorly defined wagon track and hurrying to catch his escort, he hit a high irrigation culvert. The car was thrown into the air, all four wheels leaving the ground, but it landed upright in the irrigation ditch, and, without a stop, Wade ran along in the ditch until he could pull out into a field.

Crossing Missouri presented the usual mud problem:

Crossing Missouri two cloud bursts were encountered, which made the gumbo roads impassable for normal driving. Several times the Packard slid into the ditch and churned its way through the mud and water without a stop. Men from the escort cars had to keep shoveling the mud away as it dammed up in front of the front axle, and by main strength had to hold the wheels in the ruts. Hours were spent with the car traveling only a mile an hour.

Nearing St. Louis gravel roads were encountered and at this point the tire chains which had been put on without a stop in the gumbo mud country threatened to break and lock the rear wheels. Wells took the wheel and drove as slowly as possible. Wade dove under the rear end of the car and hooking one elbow around the rear axle, permitted himself to be dragged on his back over the gravel, while with his free hand he cut the wires with which the chains had been fastened. His clothes were torn off and his back badly lacerated.

After the pair were off the National Old Trails Road heading for New York City, a police officer

nearly halted the nonstop drive. The *Times* reported:

But it was not the Missouri cloudburst nor the sands of the desert that threatened to stop the wheels. It remained for a traffic officer in Irvington-on-Hudson, thirty miles from their destination, to almost upset the non-stop journey. As the transcontinental car with its escort of banner-draped machines and State troopers on motorcycles proceeded down Irvington's Broadway, a traffic policeman, who had not learned of the unique trip, set the "stop" signal. Lieutenant Wade, who was at the wheel, kept right on moving.

He slowed down to explain to the traffic officer who walked beside the car. Finally, without stopping the machine, Wade gave over the wheel to Wells and hopped from the car to receive a summons for violating a traffic ordinance. Wells continued on to New York, Wade overtaking him later in another machine.

At Peekskill, New York, the pair were almost arrested when Wade drove on the wrong side of a traffic tower. "A policeman rode alongside, arguing with them until the purpose of the trip was explained by State police accompanying the machine."

Finally in New York City, "the two men had their first square meals since leaving Los Angeles," having subsisted on a fruit and liquid diet. From the *Times*:

Wade described the trip as a good vacation stunt, much harder than flying, even harder than the world-circling flight, requiring much more physical and mechanical endurance. The reverse, he said, had never been used on the entire trip. The Metropolitan Automobile Association and the affiliated clubs helped them greatly. In the cities through which they passed the clubs furnished them gas, oil and water while in motion and cleared the way through the populated districts . . . .

As the result of their experiences Wade and Wells stressed the need of a national code of automobile signals and the uniform marking of the motor roads from coast to coast.

Thanks to the oil rectifier in the Packard, "the trip was made without a change of oil . . . . At the end of the 3,965 miles the oil in the crank case showed less than two per cent dilution. Oil was added from time to time, but in the whole trip only 20 quarts were used." The escort cars carried 5-gallon tins of gasoline that was poured into a 40-gallon auxiliary tank in the tonneau. In all, the trip required 323 gallons of gasoline, or about 13 miles per gallon.

When the trip was over, the car was restarted without any repairs, other than the changing of two spark plugs, and ran without a stop for 162 hours and 45 minutes before being shut off to be displayed in a Packard sales room in Boston. ["Non-Stop Tire Change Hit of Transcontinental Run," *The Washington Post*, August 16, 1925, page AT2; "Non-Stop Auto Here From California," *The New York Times*, July 24, 1925, page 6; "Nonstop Auto Trip, Coast to Coast, Ends," *The Washington Post*, July 24, 1925, page 5]

## **Group Meetings of the Joint Board**

The Joint Board's report on its work described the group meetings as being of great interest to the States:

The interest of the States in the matter is clearly shown by the very large percentage of attendance. Of the eleven Western States eight sent personal representatives to group meetings; of the eleven Mississippi Valley States nine had personal representatives; of the six Lakes States all sent representatives; of the nine Southern States all sent representatives; of the five Middle Atlantic States two sent representatives; and of the six New England States all sent representatives. Every Board member was present at his respective group meeting, and in some cases States sent three or four representatives. States not represented in person generally furnished maps and correspondence indicating their choice of routes with the result that in the course of the group meetings all but two States have taken the opportunity to express themselves definitely regarding the routes selected.

The meetings were intended for the State highway departments, as had been the case with the group meetings on the Federal-aid systems following enactment of the Federal Highway Act of 1921. The Joint Board's report summarized the meetings:

Trail associations raised no serious difficulties at any meeting, although at Kansas City, Chicago and Atlanta numerous representatives of these organizations appeared quite evidently expecting to be heard. In no case, however, were any outside representatives permitted to appear before the meetings, but in all cases it was necessary in courtesy to meet these trails representatives outside of the meeting and talk with them regarding the situation. At Kansas City the number of visitors was so large it was suggested that they make arrangements for their own meeting in a separate place where a brief statement might be made to them, explaining the work of the Board. In every case the trails representatives appeared to recognize the difficulties raised by the multiplicity of marked routes, and seemed satisfied that the Board was giving every practicable and fair consideration to the general trails situation throughout the country.

Despite general agreement on the purpose of the Joint Board, State highway officials displayed "no definite attitude" on some of the key issues:

For instance, the Northeastern States hold the attitude toward the system that the routes should be of a transcontinental character and that an interstate route that extended only through two or three States should not be included. It would have clarified the situation somewhat if the conflicting ideas of interstate vs. transcontinental had been given better definition and obviously, if the system as now laid out is to be diminished, a distinction of these ideas will have to be developed.

In the Western group the general attitude was that roads of immediate importance should be included and the understanding seems to prevail that additional routes would be added from time to time. At the Chicago meeting on the other hand the attitude appeared to be that the States of that group were prepared to lay out at this time a system of interstate connections that would comprise all likely routes for an indefinite period, and the other

roads built in the future would be tributary to the system now planned. [*Report of Joint Board on Interstate Highways*, pages 25-26]

The group meetings began in San Francisco with the Western Group assembling on May 15, 1925, in the State Building. “The regular work of the meeting was carried on expeditiously and in entire harmony, and the selection of the major routes was done almost without any difference of opinion.” Agreement was reached on the major routes, with the only issues involving routes added after the interstate connections were agreed upon. “There appeared to be a very strong tendency to add such additional routes and I made it clear to the meeting that I believed such additions should be considered tentative and subject to the review of the full Board at the next meeting.”

(It is not clear who “I” was.)

The trail associations were in attendance:

No representatives of trails organizations or named routes asked to be heard at San Francisco and representatives of such organizations, whom I saw there, appeared to be very well satisfied that the work of the Board would be fairly done so far as the trails organizations are concerned. Representatives of the Automobile Association of California [the CSAA of northern California] and the Southern California Automobile Association were present, however, and after consultation with Mr. [Robert M.] Morton [California State Highway Engineer] and Mr. [Harvey M.] Toy [chairman, California Highway Commission] it appeared advisable to allow these gentlemen to present their views on the question of signs before the members of the group meeting. An opportunity was, therefore, given to both of these organizations to make a statement of their work which might be affected by the standardization of signs and markers on the interstate highways. There was no discussion whatever with these gentlemen and their statements were accepted as submitted. [*Report of the Joint Board on Interstate Highways*, pages 29-30]

Arizona and New Mexico were included in the Western Group meeting. Arizona’s State Engineer, W. C. LeFebvre, attended, while New Mexico’s State Highway Engineer, James A. French, attended as a member of the Joint Board. One of the issues to be resolved in designation of interstate highways was the connection between Arizona and New Mexico. The two States had five connections, including the National Old Trail Road’s connection from Gallup to Holbrook along the Santa Fe Trail and its connection via Springerville. LeFebvre wrote about the challenge of selecting its interstate connections:

[The] problem of selection of these arteries of travel was very difficult in certain places. One of the questions that came up, that in which Arizona was vitally concerned, was whether the National Old Trails connection from Holbrook to Gallup or the connection from Holbrook to Springerville should be selected as the Arterial Highway through Northern Arizona. New Mexico’s population and resources and consequently the development of their highways through their State had been along the Santa Fe [Holbrook-Gallup], while Arizona’s population and resources lay mostly along the

Holdbrook-Springerville Highway. This problem was finally solved, after a great deal of discussion, at the Washington conference, by designating both highways as Arterial Highways.

He also discussed the California connection:

The next connection which I will take up is our California connection at Needles, California, on the Old Trails Highway. Recently California has decided that it would build a paved highway from the vicinity of Barstow, California, in a Northeasterly direction to the Nevada State line, proposing that Nevada extend its connection, which it will, to Las Vegas. The object of this connection is to cut off considerable distance for the tourist who is coming from Salt Lake City eastward over the Arrowhead Trail and wishes to go to Los Angeles or Southern California.

It is not the intention of California to do any amount of improvement work on the Old Trails road from Needles west to Barstow. California wishes Arizona to change its seven per cent system and swing northward and connect with the Arrowhead Trail at either Searchlight, Nevada, or some point to the north of Searchlight. This would simply mean that California would be abandoning one of the main arteries of travel East and West.

It is my opinion that the Bureau of Public Roads would support California and Nevada in this connection, which would work a considerable hardship on Arizona, for we have spent a considerable amount of money in the construction of the National Old Trails Highway.

Recently the Highway Department submitted to the Bureau of Public Roads a project for the construction of a road from Oatman west, approximately three miles. The Bureau of Public Roads refused to participate in the construction of this road and gave as its excuse that it desired to wait until it learned what the ultimate development of the Colorado River near Needles would be.

If, with the large amount of work that Arizona has done on this section of road, it is abandoned, and the Bureau of Public Roads decides to throw open this part of the seven per cent system for revision, then Arizona will most certainly take the stand that that part of her seven per cent system shall likewise be open to revision, because the revision proposed is of no benefit to Arizona, being of benefit only to California and Nevada. There will be a conference held between the three States interested and the Bureau of Public Roads shortly, to determine what shall be done with our connection to the west. [LeFebvre, W. C., "Does Arizona Want Tourist Traffic?" *Arizona Highways*, October 1925, pages 16-17, 23]

He was referring to the Joint Board's August meeting. He was not a member of the Joint Board, but French and California's Morton would attend.

Meanwhile, New Mexico had six highways designated for inclusion in the new system. As described in the *New Mexico Highway Journal*, the routes included a north-south route that was

known in the State as “El Camino Real” from Raton, along the old Santa Fe Trail through Santa Fe, Las Vegas, Albuquerque, and south through Las Cruces to El Paso, Texas. One of the main east-west routes crossed El Camino Real at Albuquerque, stretching from Clovis on the east to Gallup on the west, continuing on to Holbrook, Arizona. As a result, the entire National Old Trails Road in New Mexico was included, although divided among two routes. [“Conference Gives New Mexico Six United States Highways,” *New Mexico Highway Journal*, June 1925, page 9]

The Mississippi Valley Group met in Kansas City, Missouri. The meeting was in the Baltimore Hotel, “and again there was practically complete harmony in the selection of the major routes.” The first choices of adjacent States “were not always continuous, but the first and second choices were generally sufficient to secure complete correspondence.” Based on the experience in San Francisco, Joint Board members tried to avoid the tendency of the States to add routes, “and was generally successful, but there was a marked tendency to add, as of major importance, more routes than should in all probability be finally included, and this is a matter which should have careful consideration by the full Board.”

The trail associations were represented:

The meeting at Kansas City appears to have attracted considerable attention among trail organizations and there were between 50 and 60 representatives of various trails in the city to attend the meeting. Mr. Piepmeier announced that a number had made inquiry of him and he had uniformly advised that it was useless for them to attend as the meeting would be executive in character. There was, however, considerable pressure from these organizations to be heard, some of the delegates had come from Oklahoma and Texas understanding that they would be heard, so the announcement was circulated that if all interested persons could arrange to get together in one place that a brief statement would be made to them regarding the work of the Board, the proposed selection of routes, and the uniform marking. Such an informal meeting was held in a room of the hotel other than parlor D where the group meeting occurred, and Mr. James and Mr. Avery, at different times, addressed the representatives of the trail organizations. The statements made seemed to satisfy these organizations and they very clearly agreed that the work proposed by the Board was entirely satisfactory to them and passed a motion to that effect.

On the whole, the trail organizations so far appear to be taking a very sensible and broad attitude toward the work of the Board. [*The Report of Joint Board*, pages 31-32]

Kelly, in her biography of Joint Board member Cyrus Avery of Oklahoma, elaborated on the meeting with the trail associations:

The board had not invited outsiders but by the time of the Kansas City regional meeting, word had spread. About fifty or sixty trails association people descended on the Baltimore Hotel, all concerned that a national highway system meant they were about to lose their identities and, in many cases, their incomes. Both, of course, were true. They made their stand at the Kansas City meeting.

As the Joint Board's host state member, Piepmeier explained to the throng of trails people that the meeting was not open to the public. Nonetheless, the trails people demanded to be heard and refused to leave. Finally, given that they were, after all, highway supporters and that most of them were acquainted with one or more of the AASHO members, the board relented.

Cy and James met with the trails association people in another part of the hotel. Once everyone was settled, they explained the board's plans. They answered questions. They also showed the trails representatives the routes selected so far and explained what the uniform markings would look like. By the time the informal meeting ended, the trails people seemed to be on board and voted to accept the work to date . . . .

It is interesting that, with Cy so involved in three trails organizations himself, this was the meeting where the trails groups demanded to be heard. On the other hand, so many of the trails rolled through the Mississippi Valley states that this meeting was an obvious one to attend. The question of how they all knew to converge on Kansas City on May 27, however, still remains open. [Kelly, page 141]

Whether Judge Lowe or another representative of the National Old Trails Road Association was among the 50 or 60 unexpected guests in his home city is unknown, but seems likely.

The Lakes Group met on June 3 in the Kimball Building, Chicago, and was conducted "in entire harmony." The sentiment "inclined toward the selection of practically a complete system at this time rather than the selection of an abbreviated system to be augmented in the future from time to time." They agreed that the system they selected "would be final for a long period of years." The report of the meeting did not mention trail associations. [*The Report of Joint Board*, page 33]

Similar harmony prevailed on June 8 during the Southern Group meeting in Atlanta's Glenn Building. "All connections delivered to this group were at once agreed upon by the States concerned and the work of putting through the main roads was done without any serious disagreement." Two routes remained to be decided, while the States tended to add routes "which did not involve connection with adjacent groups, but which very substantially increased the mileage in several of the States in the Piedmont region." After agreement was reached on the routes, several members anticipated that "a more or less substantial culling of the mileage in this region" would likely be needed. [*The Report of Joint Board*, page 34]

Only two States, New Jersey and Ohio, participated in the North Atlantic States Group meeting in the Engineering Societies Building in New York City on June 15. Correspondence from Delaware "indicated their willingness to accept decisions of the Board." Chairman John N. Mackall of the Maryland State Roads Commission indicated "that the principal roads through Maryland were so obvious that he thought it would be unnecessary for him to be present." Pennsylvania had not sent word.

Superintendent Frederick S. Greene of New York, a Member of the Joint Board, but representing

one of the North Atlantic States, thought the field map brought to this group meeting had too many roads. He “was especially desirous of reducing the mileage and the layout in New York was made accordingly”:

Mr. Greene said he thought he would on his own initiative send a copy of his State map to the other States in order that they could more clearly get his idea of a desirable density of transcontinental routes. He felt that the whole system should be very carefully gone over by the Joint Board with a view to eliminating a large number of alternates, short cuts and cross roads, which could not fairly be considered as of transcontinental significance, or even of major interstate importance.

The summary of the group meeting concluded:

Except for the general difference of attitude there was no lack of harmony at this meeting. All connections delivered to the group were met and carried to the New England line. [*The Report of Joint Board*, page 35]

The final meeting, of the New England Group, took place on June 18 in the State House, Boston. “All interstate routes delivered to the New England group were continued without question and entire harmony existed with the group in designating through routes.” Maine’s Paul D. Sargent, “suggested extensions of the present Federal Aid Highway System in his State to make Canadian connections and these are shown on the working map.” They agreed on another matter:

There was a general feeling that more routes have been introduced in the country as a whole than should be adopted and in order to make the layout in New England of about the same density as that existing elsewhere in the East, additional roads were inserted within the group, which could be eliminated if necessary on a further consideration of the whole system. [*The Report of Joint Board*, page 36]

### **The Joint Board’s August Meeting**

On August 3, members of the Joint Board met in BPR headquarters for the start of their second full meeting. Avery, who had a commitment to preside over the Albert Pike Highway Association meeting in Colorado Springs on July 29 and 30, asked James to change the date of the meeting. James replied that the date of the meeting had been set during the Joint Board’s initial 2-day meeting in April and could not be changed. After the Albert Pike Highway Association ended, Avery rushed to Washington, but missed the morning session. [Kelly, page 148]

The tentative designations resulting from the group meetings included about 81,000 miles of road.

Acting Chairman E. W. James opened the meeting by requesting a verbal statement from each member on “the general adequacy of the interstate routes selected at the various group meetings . . . and shown on the map presented for the action of the Board.” He also asked the members to comment on “whether the number of these routes should be increased or decreased.”

The comments covered a range of issues, including the topics raised and the relationship of the named trail associations to the designation of routes. The following comments are either from representatives of States along the National Old Trails Road or of related interest.

California's Morton said:

We are satisfied with the mileage for California. I am at a loss to know just exactly the purpose of picking out these routes. California selected their routes on account of interstate importance. It seems to me that some of these other States have selected routes not of interstate importance.

Harry Neal attended the meeting for Ohio in place of Mr. Boulay:

I have come to represent Mr. Boulay and to voice his sentiments. I think he is satisfied with the routes as outlined for Ohio and would not care to have them reduced, except perhaps some minor changes.

Superintendent of Maintenance A. R. Hinkle from the Indiana State Highway Commission, responded:

I advocate a fairly large number of routes. Too few routes will concentrate traffic and bring about a condition contrary to what we are working for. The Mississippi Valley will want to reduce some, but on the whole I would not advocate reducing the mileage to any great extent.

Frank Sheet, Illinois' Chief Highway Engineer, commented:

I believe that in our enthusiasm about this matter we have lost sight of the main issue. We have designated too many roads on this map. I believe that the multiplicity of marking which will result if this plan is carried out as laid out, will be confusing and that it will defeat the object of the marking. I would like to have some State routes left to mark. We think we are going pretty strong with what we propose for Illinois. I think we have need for retrenchment. By reducing the mileage we will add to the value of our nationally marked system, to the importance of it in the minds of the people and a very wholesome condition will result. I believe the Western States' system is all right. I believe the Middle West went wild on the subject.

West Virginia State Roads Commission's C. P. Fortney said:

The layout of West Virginia suits the situation very nicely. I do not believe we want to reduce it. However, if the Board wishes we can reduce it.

One of the longstanding questions was whether the Joint Board was designating transcontinental highways or interstate highways. Commissioner of Public Works William F. Williams of

Massachusetts, who endorsed Sheets's statement, commented on the confusion:

I think we have been confused in our consideration of transcontinental routes with our long interstate routes. On the interstate route scheme we can have as many as we want, but it seems to be the transcontinental routes want to be essentially direct routes for the benefit of the few, the really through tourists who will use them. Massachusetts has but few which would fit in the transcontinental system. Furthermore we must not lose sight of the fact that no matter how many intervening routes we have, we will be obliged to come down to the few of the Pacific and Atlantic Seaboard. I believe the real purpose of this conference will be best met by confining ourselves for the transcontinental system to the few straight through routes east and west and north and south, leaving to the States the marking and designating of those routes which are strictly interstate. Massachusetts has submitted the number of routes it thinks ample. I would be willing to withdraw a portion of these routes to carry out the theory of simplicity and directness.

William G. Sloan, New Jersey's State Highway Engineer, agreed with Sheets and Williams:

It seems to me that the routes as they cross the Middle Western States should be confined to the few of the Atlantic and Pacific Seaboard. The tremendous Middle West mileage bears no relation to the transcontinental system. I am in favor of reducing the mileage very considerably.

Chairman F. O. Hotchkiss of the Wisconsin State Highway Commission identified two things to consider. "We have our knowledge of traffic and the conditions in our various States, and we also have the political problem." He could see that "it might be dangerous for some of us to go home with serious eliminations and serious cuts in that map." The pressure to restore them would be strong. "Every locality that desires to participate in the transcontinental and interstate tourist business is going to demand in no uncertain language that the Federal marked system go through that locality." The map of routes in the Middle West could be reduced and still meet what I believe are the two essential features in laying out this system."

He did not agree with an idea that South Carolina's Moorefield had suggested ("We are perfectly willing to adopt the skeleton layout as proposed, but we are more concerned with an easy procedure in making additions than in making reductions at the present time." Hotchkiss explained;

I think if we do not meet political demands we will make a serious mistake. We will have general dissatisfaction with the results of the work of this board. If we leave the map open, tremendous pressure will be exerted constantly to add to it.

As for the size of the network proposed for Middle Western States, "I believe we can take off some of the routes resulting from the district conferences, but I do not believe we can take off too many."

New Mexico's French said:

I believe there is too much mileage in the middle west and in the eastern States. There might be a little lacking in the far western States which may not amount to much in the next few years but possibly will in the next 50 years. I would approve the system with the exception of the extreme amount of mileage in the middle west and eastern States.

B. H. Piermeier of Missouri was next:

I believe the whole purpose of this interstate marking is brought about on account of trail organizations. As I see it the different trail organizations have been marking transcontinental highways across the States and leading the people in all directions that they should not go. We must have the interstate routes marked intelligently, as the trail organizations will mark them if we do not.

The system as laid out practically represents the routes of travel in Missouri and in adjoining States. There are a few which can be taken off, but no large percentage of them.

We cannot concentrate on a small number of roads. That will show up when we number these routes. Any route that is following out the line of traffic through several States has got to remain in this system. Our preliminary rate is not far wrong.

After all the members had spoken, Acting Chairman James "stated that he believed the designation of these routes was going to run hand in hand with any reduction, revision or alteration in the map." He asked for suggestions on how to proceed.

They had two maps to review:

1. Map No. 1 showing scheme for numbering of through routes and suggestion for reduction of mileage.
2. Map No. 2 showing routes tentatively adopted by representatives of the various States present at the regional meetings.

Chairman Henry G. Shirley of the Virginia State Highway Commission moved to adopt Map No. 1 "with the understanding that no more than 20 per cent of the mileage as shown on the map be added in any State." His motion was seconded, but Hotchkiss did not agree. He thought the members should break up into groups, as in the regional meetings, to work out differences.

Piepmeier commented:

I would like to suggest that we work out a plan from map No. 2 instead of adopting map No. 1. It seems to be the opinion that somewhere between these two maps we will agree. We should be able to work by process of elimination a system of transcontinental highways from this system as laid out here. I would like to see the points north and south and east and west connected by colored strings tacked on the various routes across the map. We can then eliminate the routes that are not a part of this system.

Sheets moved:

I move that it be the sense of this Board that as the first step in the process of considering the system of interstate highways resulting from the action taken at the group meetings, the Bureau of Public Roads call group meetings of this Board from the States here represented, in the same manner as was done when the original system was laid out, and the revisions as made in this series of group meetings of this Board be then submitted back to this Board for consideration, after which we take such steps as wisdom will show.

His motion was seconded by Hinkle and carried. After a few additional comments, the Joint Board divided into groups per the motion.

In the afternoon, with Avery finally in attendance, the groups reported on their decisions, which were to be mapped in time for the August 4 meeting. They then discussed issues involving the signs for marking the routes and the guide and warning signs (STOP, CURVE, HILL 2nd GEAR, 20 MILES SPEED LIMIT, etc.).

They discussed a suggestion from Hotchkiss about sending the current map, with the revisions from the morning groups, to the States to give them a chance to be heard. Perhaps, Piepmeier suggested, BPR could set up a small group to consider any changes from the States before submitting the plan to the Secretary.

Hotchkiss: I move that it be the sense of this Board that the map as it now stands amended, as to the extent and general location of a system of U.S. routes to be marked, be approved by this Board; and that this map be sent out to the various States for their confirmation.

His motion was seconded and carried.

On numbering, C. M. Babcock, Commissioner of Highways in Minnesota suggested:

I would like to offer a motion that the Chairman be authorized to appoint a committee of five, the Acting Chairman of the Joint Board to be Chairman of the Committee, for the purpose of presenting for the approval of a board, a scheme for numbering this system of interstate routes.

After brief discussion of possible numbering plans, the Joint Board seconded Babcock's motion and approved it. Acting Chairman James was to establish a Committee of Five, with himself as chairman, to present a system to the members on August 4 for numbering this system of interstate highways. The Committee of Five consisted of:

Cyrus S. Avery, Oklahoma  
Roy A. Klein, Oregon  
Charles H. Moorefield, South Carolina  
B. H. Piepmeier, Missouri  
Frank T. Sheets, Illinois

[*Joint Board on Interstate Highways*, Second Full Meeting, National Archives at College Park, Maryland]

The Committee of Five worked all night on the numbering plan. Kelly pointed out:

The numbering committee went to work on what was considered pretty much a pro forma project. The big job, the one fraught with emotion, had been the actual selection of the highways themselves. How much difficulty could there be in doling out numbers? Not much, initially. [Kelly, page 151]

### **The Joint Board's Final Meeting**

The Joint Board returned on August 4 to complete its work on designations, numbering, and signs.

Overnight, the members had reduced the proposed U.S. numbered highways to approximately 50,100 miles. As amended, the map was approved by the Joint Board, which directed that it be sent to the States for their confirmation. Piepmeier suggested that BPR, with a committee of one or two, should be the final review board for suggestions by the States for modifying the map.

However, James was concerned that "if there were any substantial changes it could be a very serious situation for a committee of 3." He recommended that the maps be sent to the States through the regional groups formed within the Joint Board. The members, who "understand that we want this map to stand as nearly untouched as possible," could then work with the States "and in that way we will have the confirmation by the States constantly under the fingers of the 4 or more members in each group." The Joint Board adopted his idea.

The members also considered what to do with their decisions and conclusions. Rogers suggested that the Joint Board send a report to the States to consider at AASHO's annual meeting, to be held that November in Detroit. Williams pointed out that the former Secretary of Agriculture had created the Joint Board, so the current Secretary should be allowed to submit the report to the States with any suggestions he may choose to make. This plan was adopted. The Joint Board also directed James to appoint a Committee of Three to draft the report, with James as chairman of the committee.

Concluding the morning session, the Joint Board agreed to delay publicizing the selected routes until the Secretary's approval was obtained.

As the afternoon session began, James announced the members of the committee that would draft the Joint Board's report, namely Hotchkiss, Moorefield, and Williams. James would be the primary author and likely the "I" mentioned earlier. James also listed the group chairmen who would transmit the map to the States in their region.

The members discussed some routes, including:

Acting Chairman: With reference to the old and new Santa Fe routes in Kansas.

W. C. Markham, AASHO: The State wants the Old Trail. Why not put an alternate number on the Old Trail?

Cyrus Avery: The Highway Department of Kansas wants the Old Trail and the Secretary of Agriculture wants the other route.

Secretary of Agriculture William M. Jardine, who had succeeded Secretary Gore on March 5, was from Kansas. He had served as director of the State's Agricultural Experiment Station, and was the dean of agriculture at Kansas State College when President Coolidge nominated him to be Secretary. As the eventual judge of the Joint Board's work, his view on this detail was important.

Hotchkiss, Wisconsin: I am opposed to alternate routes. I think this Board should go on record as favoring the route that will serve the greatest number of people; if possible leave the matter of the Santa Fe Trail open so that the Kansas highway department can present, if they desire, reasons why we should change it.

Sheets, Illinois: I move that it be the sense of this Board that the map with respect to the Old and New Santa Fe Trails in Kansas stand as it is now prepared, with the statement formally appended to the motion, that we leave the matter open for the State highway department to present further argument for change if they wish to do so, or of the need of an additional route in that same locality.

Rogers, Michigan: I believe we should accept the map as it is and make no changes in Kansas until it goes to the Secretary.

Sheets, Illinois: I withdraw my motion.

The Committee of Five, presented its report on numbering the selected routes. The minutes state:

Scheme worked out on the map showed 8 main east and west routes and 10 north and south routes. Numbers were then added on next most important routes. There are 32 numbered routes and a large part of the system has been covered.

When the members of the Joint Board had finished reviewing the partially numbered map, James asked if they were satisfied. Klein, a member of the Committee of Five, said he was not. He preferred a system of numbering by zones. Morton agreed. The Joint Board, however, approved a motion by Babcock to return the map to the Committee of Five to complete the marking along the lines shown on the map, to be considered at some later date. Klein was still not satisfied. He wished to be recorded as voting against this action.

In response to Klein's disagreement, Morton offered a motion calling on the Committee of Five to develop a numbering plan based on a zone system. However, Chief MacDonald interrupted.

"There does not seem to be much enthusiasm over either one." He suggested leaving it to the committee to bring in a numbering system that seems to meet both ideas. Based on this suggestion, the Joint Board approved Hotchkiss' motion to refer the matter of selecting a scheme for numbering the U.S. system to the numbering committee "without instructions."

In final actions, the Joint Board approved Rogers' motion that the shield measure 16 inches from tip to tip and a motion by Chief MacDonald disapproving the use of the same number on alternate routes, but leaving the issue to the discretion of the Committee of Five "if no other method seems to meet the exigencies of the situation."

With that last minute flurry, the Joint Board's second and final meeting came to an end.

### **The Old vs. New Santa Fe Trail**

The decision to appoint group chairmen to clear the tentative U.S. numbered highway map with the State highway agencies did not, as James had expected, result in holding the line on expansion. James later acknowledged that "the public seemed to have been aroused to the possibilities." As a result, "the work of the group chairmen in some sections was not of an enviable sort."

One issue of immediate concern was the dispute between the Old Santa Fe Trail and the New Santa Fe Trail. *The Herington Sun* in Kansas carried an article on August 13 about the issue:

So much emphasis has been put upon the location of Federal Highways according to the best interests of the people served, the transcontinental highways to be the shortest and most feasible [sic] route between two points agreed upon by the state interested and the adjoining states that most everyone had come to believe that there really were no politics in the Bureau of Roads.

Last week we quoted from a letter signed by E. W. Jones [sic], secretary of the Joint Board, that, "The action of the group meeting at Kansas City will stand as the expression of the states involved, unless the State Highway departments officially request changes, and such changes would have to be acceptable not only to the immediate state involved, but also to the adjoining states in the route."

No doubt the secretary was quoting a board rule laid down for its guidance in such matters and believed that the joint board would stand by its own rules. But he didn't know of how and when a political pull might upset things.

When influential Kansans with letters and telegrams from certain other influential Kansans appeared at Washington concerning the designation of the New Santa Fe trail as a primary Federal Highway, the fact that the Old Santa Fe trail was the choice of the Kansas Highway commission, and was also approved by the group meeting over the claims of the New Santa Fe trail was entirely disregarded, and the New Santa Fe trail substituted.

Its forming a part of the National Old Trails from Baltimore to Los Angeles as well as its historical significance and importance, as well as the facts that made it the best trail when located a hundred years ago make it the best today were also disregarded.

When the advocates of the New Trail appeared before the State Highway commission and the regional group meeting at Kansas City, their claims were heard and the matter determined in favor of the Old Santa Fe trail by men fully informed concerning all matters at issue.

To save its face, the Bureau of Public Roads proposes to refer the matter back to the several state commissions interested and the regional group meeting for final determination. But what a difference! The matter was considered and decided on its merits against the New Trail before; now it comes before them with, what the friends of the New Trail will hold to be, the approval of the Department of Agriculture and the local people will be expected to bow their necks to the department.

The whole matter, of right, should come before the state Highway commission only. The New Santa Fe trail is a highway wholly within the state of Kansas, that hooks onto the Old Trail at Edgerton, but claims to start from Kansas City. It gets back into the Old Trail at Kinsley.

No objection could be justly made against its designation, as a branch of the Old Trail and so marking it. But every principle of justice and fairdealing [sic], calls for the department sustaining, as its rules called for, the State Highway departments and group meetings.

If it must need be passed on again, let it be on its merits, as it was determined before, and most emphatically not with any order, suggestion or action by the authorities at Washington giving it a predudiced [sic] or unfair standing.

As it now stands those familiar with the history of the location of the Federal Highways in Kansas seem to be justified in questioning the fair dealing of the Department at Washington, assuming the news stories are true and report the matter fully.

W. E. Blackburn, the *Sun*'s editor, sent a copy of the article to Secretary Jardine on August 16 with a letter summarizing the issue:

Just why the Board felt better able to determine this matter than those on the ground as [sic] the Kansas Highway commission and the regional meeting, is not clear.

The matter that concerns us, is the reference of the matter back by Washington, with the added weight in favor of the other roads of the Washingtonian approval, and that based, we feel, on political pull, plus a good deal of plausibility.

In the article, he had tried to “present the matter as it appears to the people along the line of the Old Trail”:

If I am wrong in any material matter, I'd appreciate it if you or the Joint Board would correct same.

Secretary Jardine replied on August 29 with a letter written by James:

I have your letter of August 16, and note what you say regarding the action of the Joint Board on Interstate Highways. I was sorry to see the article published in the “Sun”, because I understand that the Joint Board did, in fact, follow as nearly as it could be ascertained the wishes of the State Highway Department of Kansas. There appears to have been some inconsistency in the communications from that Department. The Board, however, followed what it believed to be the last word as properly representing the final choice of that Department. This was in the form of a map brought to the Board meeting by one of the members, and I understand that this map was followed practically without change.

I think that the Board has acted wisely in referring its selections back to the States for confirmation as this will make it possible to correct within the State those features which, while considered important to the State, will not seriously affect interstate connections.  
[National Archives at College Park, Maryland]

### **The Joint Board's Report**

Meanwhile, James and the Committee of Five were considering a numbering plan. James wrote to the committee members on August 27 enclosing a small map of the United States on which he had shown, he believed, "the possibility of a systematic plan for numbering interstate routes." Many years later, he recalled how he approached the task:

As you know, the U.S. is about twice as wide as it is from North to South, and with this I saw a complete pattern of just what I wished. It stares one in the face, it is so simple and so adjustable. With north-south roads numbered odd from east to west, and east-west roads numbered even from north to south, you at once start a simple, systematic, complete, expandible pattern for a long time development.

All of the "continuous routes" laid out by the committee during the Joint Board's meeting had been numbered. For the principal east-west routes, James assigned two-digit numbers ending in zero. For the principal north-south routes, he assigned numbers ending in 1 or 5. With these base routes numbered, the remaining routes could be numbered accordingly. He thought three-digit numbers, which he considered inevitable, should be assigned to short sections, cutoffs, and crossovers. Logical alternate routes should be given the number of the principal line of traffic, plus 100. Thus, under his original scheme, an alternate for U.S. 55 would be U.S. 155.

On September 25, the Committee of Five met in St. Louis at the Jefferson Hotel to complete the numbering plan. The committee followed James' concept. Transcontinental and principal east-west routes were assigned multiples of 10, with the lowest number along the Canadian border (U.S. 2 chosen to avoid a U.S. 0). The principal north-south routes were given numbers ending in 1, with U.S. 1 along the East Coast. The north-south routes of considerable length but secondary importance were given numbers ending in 5.

The resulting grid was filled in with two-digit numbers for alternates, cut-offs, and connecting routes. Three-digit numbers were assigned to branches, with the figures 1, 2, 3, etc., added as a prefix in sequence along the line of the through route (thus, the first branch of U.S. 20 was U.S. 120, the second U.S. 220, etc.).

For the most part, the plan resulted in a consistent numbering sequence, with room for expansion because some one- and two-digit numbers had not been used (8, 33, 35, 37, 39, 43, 44, 47, 55-59, 66, 68, 72, 79, 82-84, 86, 88, 93, and 98). The Joint Board's final report noted, however, that absolute consistency was neither possible nor desirable:

An unbroken numerical sequence was not possible unless lines of prevailing flow of traffic were to be entirely neglected. Such lines cross each other and demand that numerical order be sacrificed in a few cases.

The most flagrant inconsistency was the route designated U.S. 60. As a multiple of 10, the number should have been assigned to a transcontinental, east-west route between U.S. 50 (Annapolis, Maryland, to Wadsworth, Nevada) and U.S. 70 (Morehead City, North Carolina, to Holbrook, Arizona). However, the Committee of Five assigned the number to a crescent route from Chicago to Los Angeles, with only the routing through the Southwest in correct numerical sequence. Although this route, because it crossed most of the transcontinental highways, would inevitably be one of the most heavily traveled U.S. highways, the fact that three of the States through which it passed were represented on the Committee of Five (Illinois' Sheets, Missouri's Piepmeier, and Oklahoma's Avery) made this exception to the "zero" numbering plan suspicious – and would result in the most contentious battle over approval of the U.S. numbering system as well as creation of what would become one of America's best known highways.

On October 26, 1925, the Joint Board submitted its report to Secretary Jardine. As quoted earlier, the report explained the origins of the Joint Board, from the AASHO resolutions, the rationale for finding a successor to the named trails, and how the Joint Board proceeded to reach decisions. It explained its decision during the April meetings not to hold hearings, a decision that reflected its concern about the importance of the named trail associations:

An important policy of the Board was the decision to hold no hearings. This action was taken advisedly and from developments in the course of the work demonstrated itself to be entirely sound. Had hearings been held a general invitation to trail organizations and to all other civic bodies interested in road construction and promotion must have been issued. The number of such delegations desiring to appear would have prolonged the work of selection unreasonably if, indeed, it would not have defeated the whole

undertaking. To have invited a special group of organizations or local interests to attend hearings to the exclusion of others would have been impossible in an official body like the Board. Questions raised at such hearings would inevitably have resulted in placing the Board in the position of an arbiter among the numerous trail organizations and other local interests; and such an event would have embarrassed the Board to so serious a degree that its purpose would probably have been defeated.

Moreover, there was available through the several state highway departments and in the Bureau of Public Roads a large amount of information available to all States and to the Board in assisting them to arrive at definite conclusions regarding the respective merits of roads or routes under consideration.

Further, had the Board permitted itself to be placed in a position of selecting in toto certain predetermined routes, like the marked trails, because they existed in that particular status, and of similarly rejecting other marked routes, a difficult legal question might have been raised. The Government, at no time and through no agency, had ever officially recognized any system of marked trails or routes except the primary or interstate classification of the federal aid highway system, and no authority had ever been given to any governmental agency to such end. The Joint Board, therefore, felt it necessary, if not indeed imperative, that its task be so handled as to preclude any appearance of giving an official status to any predetermined route or combination of routes.

In other words, the Joint Board would be forced to give a single number to each transcontinental named trail across its entire length, thus perpetuating what the group was established to eliminate.

The report also discussed the routes selected and numbered:

The Group Meetings produced a tentative system of approximately 81,000 miles of road . . . representing 2.8 per cent of the total public road mileage of the country.

This tentative system was then referred to a meeting of the Board in Washington, August 3-4, and was there adjusted and reduced to approximately 50,100 miles . . . . Separate maps of each State were then prepared and submitted to the respective States for confirmation, with the privilege of making such minor alternations and corrections as might to them appear necessary or advisable. Such changes as were made involved generally interstate sections of routes only and in only five instances were any changes required at state line connections. The total mileage . . . is approximately 75,800 miles.

The confirmations by the several States of the tentative routes adopted by the Board at the full meeting of August 3-4 were considered final . . . . Attention is called especially to the fact that the procedure of the Board gave every State easy and ample opportunity to submit its own original suggestions and recommendations; to review these after action by the Board in make such adjustments as were deemed necessary or desirable to effect a satisfactory distribution of routes and connections at state lines; and finally to make

additional changes in cases where a State believed the Board had failed to give consideration to all the pertinent facts or had acted on insufficient or faulty data.

One section of the report discussed "The System of Interstate Highways":

So far as possible the routes selected have adhered to the federal aid highway systems already approved for the several States. Practically all of the States, however, have some small margin within the legal limit of seven per cent which comprises the full federal aid system, and this margin has allowed minor departures from the approved federal aid systems. These new sections, as may be required, can at the request of the respective States, be added to the federal aid systems and in some instances States have already filed applications for such additions.

[It] was obviously necessary to exceed in some States the three per cent prescribed by law for a primary system of roads. To have arbitrarily adhered to the three per cent limit in several Western States would have resulted in omitting many desirable and needed routes. In the country as a whole, however, the total mileage of routes selected by the Joint Board is 2.6 per cent of the total certified public road mileage and, therefore, is within the three per cent primary classification permitted by law.

Having selected a system of routes for uniform marking, the question of designation was considered and an effort made with gratifying success to introduce an orderly arrangement of routes. In general, the scheme involved the use of even numbers for routes carrying east and west bound traffic, and odd numbers for the north and south routes. An unbroken numerical sequence was not possible unless lines of prevailing flow of traffic were to be entirely neglected. Such lines cross each other and demand that numerical order be sacrificed in a few cases. These are, however, so few and slight that the value of the numbering scheme is not diminished for practical purposes. The routes given continuous designations have been carefully considered and so far as possible are those (1) which are carrying on the whole the heaviest long distance traffic, (2) which the States contemplate improving to high standards, and (3) which are in the construction program for early improvement.

The Joint Board's transmittal to Secretary Jardine concluded:

The Board has had unmistakable evidences during its sittings that the task assigned it was timely and necessary to a proper development of the correlated state highway systems. Its efforts, if successful, will provide a practicable channel for putting into effect recommendations for improving the usefulness, the safety and the convenience of the public highways. [*The Report of Joint Board*, pages 1-13]

The report contained the first log of the proposed U.S. numbered interstate routes, beginning with "Route No. 1" (Fort Kent, Maine, to Miami) and ending with "Route No. 630" (Echo to Ogden, Utah, the sixth branch off of U.S. 30). The report also transmitted the signs approved by the Joint Board, including the U.S. shield (using "56," one of the numbers not assigned to a

route, and the State name "MAINE" as a sample). The Joint Board recommended that the Secretary transmit the report to AASHO, which represented the State highway agencies that owned and operated the U.S. numbered routes.

### **The Arizona Connections**

During the Joint Board's August meeting, State Engineer LeFebvre of Arizona, who was not a member, had discussed the Arizona-New Mexico connections with New Mexico's French. As the members of the Joint Board considered the State maps after the August 3 meeting, LeFebvre and French agreed on the connections. The Mangums discussed the agreement:

As Arizona officials saw it, there were four routes entering Arizona from the east and two from the west that should be suitable for numbered highway designations:

The four roads entering Arizona from New Mexico were:

1. The Old Trails Highway entering the state at Lupton and crossing Arizona parallel to the Santa Fe railroad;
2. The Springerville cutoff, entering the state east of Springerville and joining the Old Trails at Holbrook;
3. The Sunset Route entering at Duncan and crossing by way of Globe and Phoenix to Yuma;
4. The Borderland Route via Douglas, Tombstone, Tucson, and Phoenix.

The routes entering Arizona from the west were:

1. The converged Sunset and Borderland Routes at Yuma
2. The Old Trails at Topock.

As the National Old Trails Road Association had done in 1915, AASHO classified both the Gallup and Springerville roads as arterial highways and as branches of the same road. The Arizona Engineer came away from the meeting believing that the National Old Trails Road with its two eastern branches, one through Lupton and the other through Springerville, would be assigned the number U.S. Highway 60, and began using it on maps. [Mangums, page 117]

*The Winslow Mail* provided additional context regarding the alternative routings of the National Old Trails Road at the Arizona/New Mexico border:

A dispatch in the Albuquerque Journal of last Friday states that W. C. Lefebvre, state highway engineer of Arizona, is in Washington, and yesterday attended a conference of federal and state highway engineers at which one of the principal items to be discussed was the rerouting of the National Old Trails via Socorro, N. M., instead of following the right-of-way of the Santa Fe railway via Gallup, as at present.

The dispatch stated that New Mexico favors the present route from Albuquerque to Holbrook via Gallup, while Arizona is committed to the Holbrook-Springerville-Socorro route, which lies south of the line favored by New Mexico.

The dispatch further stated that Mr. Lefebvre will urge the south route, on the contention that Socorro is the converging point of roads both from the northeast and the southeast, and that from Socorro the motorist has a direct route both to El Paso and through Albuquerque to the midwest and east. It will be urged, too, that by leaving the National Old Trails at Springerville, the tourist can take the recently constructed Rice-Springerville highway to Miami and Globe and Phoenix, in the southern part of Arizona, and thence by way of Yuma to California.

The dispatch states also that Mr. Lefebvre will urge that the south route from Holbrook to Albuquerque does not materially increase the distance between those two places. The north route is eighty-four miles shorter.

Messages of protest were sent to Washington by Williams, Flagstaff, and Winslow Commercial clubs, against changing the route of the National Old Trails.

The Miami Silver Belt, one of the staunchest supporters for the construction of the link between Springerville and the southern part of the state, in a recent news dispatch, says: "When the Rice-Springerville road is completed, the state of Arizona and the county of Gila will receive back the money which they have expended on its construction ten times over every year in the flood of dollars which will pour into the communities benefitted by tourist traffic over this route.

"There are in New Mexico and Arizona two cities which are the natural distributing points for auto traffic. They are Albuquerque and Phoenix. The Rice-Springerville road is the short and logical route between the two main distributing points. It starts somewhere and goes somewhere.

"The only completed route to the coast is by way of Yuma. It is not likely that any other route to the California coast will be finished for several years. The Rice-Springerville road is the long missing link which will connect transcontinental highways directly with the Yuma route.

The rivalry among the cities was fierce, as reflected in a first page editorial from *The Needles Nugget* as quoted in the *Mail* article:

"Tourists passing through Needles from the east report that they were told that gas stations are sixty-five and seventy-five miles apart; that the water on the desert is unfit to drink; that the heat is so intense many cars have caught fire; that the sand is so hot it melts the tires, and that if one gets off the road it is impossible to get back on the highway.

"That the National Old Trails highway is not carrying its share of the tourists this year

that its superiority over the southern route should warrant is a fact that is recognized by every business man along its route through Arizona, New Mexico and California, and the reason for this condition is due to a well-organized campaign of the interests along the southern route that has been carried on for the last two years, with the result that the southern route by actual check is getting 72 per cent of the westbound tourists, while the National Old Trails highway, a much better road, just as scenic and a shorter route to California, is by the same authority, getting but 28 per cent of the travel.

“The southern highway employs a man who resides at Los Lunas, N. M., the junction point of the two highways, whose sole business it is to proclaim the advantages of the southern highway, and by the same token, perhaps, to misrepresent, if not by actual word of mouth, at least by inference, conditions that obtain along the National Old Trails highway.

“The Needles Chamber of Commerce, as its first important endeavor, is fathering a plan which also contemplates the placing of a man at Los Lunas and the highway committee has already secured a pledge of this town’s proportion of the funds that will be necessary to carry on this work, and several of the towns along the route have signified their willingness to participate in such an undertaking, and there is no doubt but that its success is already assured. Lou Downing, a member of the highway committee from this chamber, is planning a personal interview with similar organizations and business men in the various towns east of here as far as Gallup, N. M.

“Tourists coming this way and finding conditions so much better than they had been led to believe they would find from the lurid tales told them along the road, are justly indignant and express surprise that the cities along this route have not taken action before this to stop this campaign of . . . untruthful statements.” [“Route of the National Old Trails May Favor South,” *The Winslow Mail*, August 4, 1925, pages 1-2]

As Lefebvre had stated, pressure also was being applied to change the connection between Arizona and California. As discussed in *The San Bernardino Sun* on July 7, 1925:

Federal-aid money has been withdrawn from the Old Trails highway between Barstow and Needles and the federal good roads bureau is urging the construction of a new highway designed to cross the Colorado river at a point far to the north of Needles and join the Arrowhead Trail at a point about half-way between Barstow and the Nevada state line . . . .

The government is declared to object to what is described as an unnecessary swing from Kingman, Ariz., to the south to reach Needles and then a swing back to the north. Approximately fifty miles could be saved if the road cut due west from Kingman, so it is reported. This saving in mileage would be sufficient to build the new bridge necessary across the Colorado river.

Serious difficulties in solving the situation developed by the government’s attitude are presented. The state legislature has designated the highway via Barstow and Needles to

the Colorado river as a state highway, and the state is maintaining the Old Trails highway as it is now routed. Withdrawal of Federal aid from Barstow to the Colorado river means a financial loss to the state, for it must maintain the highway in proper condition. There is no present provision for the creation of a new state highway along the route suggested by the government.

The issue will soon become of major importance, for Southern California interests are uniting for a drive to secure proper highways on the transcontinental routes leading into Southern California. The condition of the northern routes far surpasses that of the southern routes.

Various sections of San Bernardino county will face the situation with conflicting emotions. Needles will violently protest such a move, for that city is now one of the main supply points on the Old Trails highway. The Redlands interests supporting the project for a cut-off from Amboy to Whitewater will likewise resist the new proposal by the government.

Other sections of the county will either remain neutral or take the position that there must be immediate solution of the matter to the satisfaction of both the state and government highway departments, in order that a comprehensive transcontinental highway program may be worked out immediately. Los Angeles interests are declared to favor the government's suggestion on the theory that the route from the east would be shortened and faster action would be secured by support of the Federal government than through opposition to it.

*The Winslow Mail* reprinted the Sun's article, adding the commentary that "we infer from the article that Needles may be wiped off the map as far as the National Old Trails highway is concerned . . . . It hardly seems probable that the route of the Old Trails road will be changed, a road this is nationally known as it is. The people of Needles will certainly be up and doing if such a thing is attempted. ["Bureau Favors Change of Road Across Desert," *The Winslow Mail*, July 10, 1925, page 1, 6]

Whatever the intent of the officials involved, the Joint Board retained the original location of the National Old Trails Road from Kingman to Los Angeles as part of U.S. 60:

From Chicago, Illinois, to Bloomington, Springfield, St. Louis, Missouri, Rolla, Springfield, Joplin, Vineta, Oklahoma, Tulsa, Oklahoma City, El Reno, Sayre, Amarillo, Texas, Tucumcari, New Mexico, Santa Fe, Los Lunas, Gallup, Hotbrook [sic], Arizona, Flagstaff, Barstow, California, Los Angeles.

### **Countering the Lies**

In July 1925, State highway officials opened the new National Old Trails Road segment from Winslow to Canyon Diablo. Tourist traffic had been using the new road for several days, but the State opened it formally a few days early to accommodate a motorcade from Winslow to Flagstaff for the big "Days of Forty-Nine" celebration. *The Winslow Mail* reported that the road

“is in fine condition, despite the heavy rains in that part of Coconino county. At least one hour will be saved in running time between Winslow and Flagstaff by the opening of this link of the National Old Trails.” [“Open Highway For Benefit of Motorcade to Flagstaff,” *The Winslow Mail*, July 3, 1925, page 1]

A few days later, a contract was awarded for macadamizing a 23.7-mile segment of the National Old Trails Road between the end of the Flagstaff paving and Angel:

The contract is in two parts, one calling for crush malpais rock base with asphaltic binding, more than one and a half gallons of the oil being used to each square yard of surface. This is to be completed next June. Follows a top dressing a half inch deep of finely increased rock and oil, to be rolled in. The completed job is to be ready in October of next year.

It will take 60,000 cubic yards of crushed rock to complete the job, and when done it will be one of the finest stretches of highway along the entire National Old Trails. The grading already done and the concrete culvert work is highly satisfactory.

The winning bid the contract was for \$321,000.

In August, the Automobile Club of Arizona received a consignment of 10 tubular iron posts ten feet long to mount signs along the National Old Trails Road between Winslow and Ashfork. “Signs will be erected as soon as the Automobile club receives the distance between points from the county surveyor of Coconino county.” [“Old Trails Will be Signed Ash Fork to Winslow,” *The Winslow Mail*, August 21, 1925]

While work to improve the road continued, community leaders were well aware of the campaign to divert traffic from the National Old Trails Road. Leaders in the southwestern States were working on a plan, parallel to the *Tourists' Daily News*, for promoting tourist traffic through the National Old Trails Road cities in New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

In late 1925, local newspapers reported on a meeting in Kingman on October 5, 1925, to establish the National Old Trails Traffic Association. Initiated by the chamber of commerce of Needles, California, many of the 75 participants came from cities along the road in Arizona:

The organization will include memberships from all cities from Albuquerque to San Bernardino. The purpose is to disseminate accurate information concerning the National Old Trails, and to carry on an extensive advertising campaign to inform tourists in all parts of the United States of true conditions pertaining at all times along this route, and to aid in securing state, county and federal aid in its improvement. The original route of the Old Trails through the three states, Albuquerque to Los Angeles, via Gallup, was endorsed, and endorsement was given to the improvement of the original route across the Mohave desert in California, condemning change in routing as has been suggested by federal engineers from Kingman straight west to Goffs, eliminating Oatman, Topock and Needles from the highway . . . .

A campaign will be inaugurated immediately to popularize the famous Old Trails and to combat adverse propaganda from every source. The campaign will be conducted by the executive committee. By the first of the year the committee will have prepared a complete and accurate map of the Old Trails extending through the three southwestern states, with information concerning the national parks, monuments, and tourist attractions of all kinds. This will be supplemented by a circular letter or pamphlet giving, in detail the conditions of travel, conveniences of the road and information of the things visitors from other states may be interested in. It was reported that extensive improvements are being planned for the highway at many points between Albuquerque and Los Angeles. The pavement from Victorville to Barstow has been completed, and the pavement of a piece extending 16 miles east of Barstow is about to be contracted for. ["National Old Trails Traffic Association," *The Coconino Sun*, October 9, 1925, pages 1, 13]

A follow up a few weeks later the new association reported:

The members of the executive committee of the National Old Trails Traffic Association, the road organization which was formed in Kingman on the 5th instant, are reporting activities to President L. V. Root [of Kingman]. Considerable finances have already been placed in the treasury and more are in process of collection from the various communities along the National Old Trails road.

Stationery and printed matter is now being gotten out and it is expected that the campaign of the association will be in full swing within a short period. The bringing back to the National Old Trails the motor traffic that it has heretofore enjoyed is the great objective of this association and a plan of publicity will be adopted which will bring before the general public something of the advantages of this route in mileage, scenic attractions and ease of motor travel through its entire length because of its all-season availability, good road conditions and the frequent service stations, camping and hotel accommodations that abound along this line.

The great bug-a-boo of the dangers of the so-called "desert" dangers which do not exist, will receive a knockout blow if publicity of the truth can be gotten to the motoring public. The dangers of this much heralded "desert" lie entirely in the propaganda that is from time to time circulated. The "desert" is no more than a good roadway across a stretch of country with service stations, hotels and small towns every few miles. It is that stretch of country usually designated as lying between Needles and Barstow, California, a distance of 161 miles over which the automobile takes from six to eight hours in driving time and some of those who desire make it in much less time.

There are no difficulties to overcome, no dangers to face and no privations to meet. If it were not for the untruths that have received much publicity the motorist would know nothing of having crossed the desert. Those long stretches of sand where you are told you will be stuck and have to go miles in low gear do not exist except in the minds of those who don't know the truth or have some other motive for such statements. ["National Old Trails Traffic Association Now Becoming Active," *The Coconino Sun*, November 6, 1925, page 12; reprinted from *The Kingman Miner*]

The association held its quarterly meeting in Needles:

The executive committee of the National Old Trails Traffic association, at its regular quarterly meeting held in Needles on Saturday, March 6, formally launched an advertising campaign that will be national in its scope and having for its purpose the dissemination of authentic information in regard to that portion of the National Old Trails highway lying west of Albuquerque and Socorro, N. M., through the three states of New Mexico, Arizona and California. Eventually the organization, which is just now in swaddling clothes but a lusty infant at that, will include in its membership the business interests of the full length of the highway from Baltimore to Los Angeles and it will come without solicitation.

There is no good argument against the just claim that the National Old Trails highway is the shortest and the best all-year route across the continent and it is the purpose of this association to make it also the most popular by looking after the welfare and comfort of its tourists, down to the minutest detail. Reliable information as to road conditions, mileage, accommodations and interesting, worthwhile side trips – in which the Old Trail highway excels – is thought to be of first importance and accordingly this information, kept up-to-date and absolutely reliable, is to be supplied to all member garages, service stations and hotels, in a distinctive emblem-container, so that it may be displayed as a badge of truthfulness and seen by the tourist even before he stops so that he may know that such information is available. Any unusual condition of road or weather will be immediately made known to him for his guidance and in every possible way he is to be made to feel that he is welcome; his business desirable and sought after and his comfort of paramount concern to the association and its individual members.

Supplementing the bulletin service will be accurate road maps and booklets descriptive of the various cities and places of scenic beauty and historical interest, of which there are many along the route. [“Old Trails to be Widely Advertised,” *The Coconino Sun*, March 12, 1926, page 14]

## **The Next Steps**

The maps that the Joint Board agreed to on August 4 were not the final maps. As noted, the Joint Board members were to take the maps back to their States to work with members of their group of States on final alignments. The Mangums explained:

The Federal subcommittee, considering the roads for Arizona, decided that there should be no Springerville branch on the National Old Trails Road, and recommended that the Holbrook-Lupton-Gallup alignment be the only one . . . .

For the first time ever, there was a numbered and coordinated U.S. highway system, and in Arizona the northern east-west highway would go from Holbrook to Lupton, omitting Springerville. The road across northern Arizona from Lupton to Topock was given the number U.S. Highway 60. The road from Springerville was assigned U.S. Highway 70.

Springerville was never dropped from the National Old Trails Road, but once the highway names were discontinued and all roads were identified by numbers only, Springerville was located on Highway 70 and Lupton was located on Highway 60.

U.S. 70 was a near-transcontinental route beginning in Morehead City, North Carolina, and ending in Holbrook.

Overall, the National Old Trails Road, like all the long-distance named trails, had been broken into segments by number. Much of the National Old Trails Road was part of U.S. 40, a transcontinental route from Wilmington, Delaware to San Francisco. The second longest stretch, from Romeroville, New Mexico (near Las Vegas), to Los Angeles, was included in U.S. 60. [Mangums, pages 116-118]

Meanwhile, Missouri's Chief Engineer Piepmeier informed officials in his group of States about the Joint Board's decisions. On October 27, he wrote to O. M. Wilhite of Emporia, Kansas, chairman of the Good Roads Committee of the Emporia Chamber of Commerce, to inform him:

The numbering committee on the Joint Board designating United States Highways selected the road from Kinsley through Hutchinson, Newton, to Kansas City as Route 50 and the alternate route from Great Bend, Marion to Kansas City as 150 [sic, 250]. This report is being submitted to the Secretary of Agriculture for his approval. It will be acted upon by the American Association of Highway Officials [sic] at its meeting in Detroit, on November 18.

U.S. 50 was designated from Annapolis, Maryland, to Wadsworth, Nevada. U.S. 250, a route entirely in Kansas, ran from Baldwin, Kansas, to Emporia, Newton, Hutchinson, Dodge City, Garden City.

Wilhite wrote to BPR Chief MacDonald on October 30, citing Piepmeier's letter:

Mr. Piepmeir [sic] has re-assured us of that statement by letter, a copy of which I am enclosing. We are reliably informed that the Highway Department of Kansas has reversed the numbers.

I feel sure, Mr. MacDonald, that you understand the local conditions out here, and as the Joint Board is endeavoring to select and number routes which follow the prevailing flow of traffic, it seems to us that a mistake would be made in giving the alternate number to our route.

We would like to know if there has been any changes made in your department since the information given us by Mr. Piepmeir.

In Chief MacDonald's absence, E. W. James replied on November 9:

Both the selected routes and the scheme of numbering them in Kansas were submitted to the State Highway Department and the Board was given to understand that the adjustments made were satisfactory.

The work of the Board is completed and its report was submitted to the Secretary of Agriculture on October 30.

I am not quite sure what you desire in the way of information regarding changes in this Department since certain information was given you by Mr. Piepmeier. The only change in the personnel of the Board was the appointment of Mr. I. J. Moe of North Dakota, vice Mr. O. A. Brown of that State.

Before receiving James's reply. Wilhite and O. A. Kirkendall, president of the Emporia Chamber of Commerce, wrote to Secretary Jardine on November 3, to object to the proposed numbering:

Mr. B. H. Piepmeir [sic], Highway Engineer of Missouri, informed us immediately after the sub-committee meeting held in St. Louis, Missouri, September 25 for the purpose of selecting numbers for U.S. Highways, that the Hutchinson Route (New Trail) would carry the Coast-to-Coast through number 50, and that the McPherson Route (Old Trail) would carry the alternate number 150 [sic].

He has re-stated it to us, also stating that no State Highway Commission has the right to change numbers – only the Joint Board which meets in Detroit, November 15-18, has that right.

We are reliably informed that some one in Washington or in the Kansas Highway Commission has reversed the numbers. Our understanding was that the Joint Board was to select and number routes which follow the prevailing flow of traffic. The route through Ottawa, Emporia, Newton, Hutchinson and Dodge City, not only takes care of western traffic, but also the south and southwestern. It passes through the larger cities, all having first class hotels – following the Santa Fe Railroad and Harvey Hotel system.

The Emporia Chamber of Commerce is asking you to recommend that U.S. Highway number 50, pass through the above named cities. This route not only has the shorter mileage, and more pavement, but it will be the first to be made a 365 day road through Kansas.

We feel it would be a great mistake not to have this route carry a through number, and we will appreciate your assistance very much.

Secretary Jardine replied to Kirkendall on November 10, again with a letter written by James:

I have your letter of November 3, signed jointly with Mr. O. M. Wilhite, with reference to the marking of the Old and New Santa Fe Trails, so called, across your State.

I recall that representatives of cities on the New Santa Fe Trail brought this matter to my attention, and it seemed clear at the time that the essential detail involved was to provide an interstate route through Ottawa, Emporia, Newton, and Hutchinson, all of which are important centers of population. This desire has been met in the routes selected by the Joint Board on Interstate Highways. The selection was satisfactory to the State Highway Department and likewise, I am informed, that the numbering system is satisfactory to the State. It was submitted to the State and certain adjustments were made to meet alterations which the Highway Department suggested.

It would appear that the real merits in your case have been satisfactorily met in providing an interstate route through the cities mentioned, and I can see no objection to the action taken which appears to be clearly in accord with the desires of the Kansas State Highway Department. [National Archives at College Park, Maryland]

In contrast with the supporters along the National Old Trails Road Association and the competing Santa Fe Trails, Cy Avery was satisfied, as Kelly explained:

He had managed to number seven national highways through Oklahoma, including three through Tulsa. These three were north-south U.S. Highway 751 from the Canadian border near St. Vincent, Minnesota, to Galveston; east-west U.S. Highway 64, the Albert Pike Highway; and diagonal U.S. Highway 60, which was partly the Ozark Trail. Back at home he returned his attention to building highways and bridges. [Kelly, page 152]

## **A New Record**

While the Joint Board was changing the landscape for the Nation's interstate roads, the Federal-aid highway program was at its peak, despite President Coolidge's opposition to the Federal-aid concept. In BPR's annual report for FY 1925, Chief MacDonald began:

By completing 11,328.6 miles of Federal-aid roads during the fiscal year 1925 the cooperating Federal and State governments established a new record. The greatest mileage previously completed in any one fiscal year was the 10,247 miles completed in 1922. The new record exceeds by 30 per cent the mileage completed in the fiscal year 1924, and by more than 50 per cent the aggregate mileage completed during the first five years of work under the Federal-aid plan.

The year's work brings the total of mileage completed since the passage of the first Federal-aid road act in 1916 up to 46,485.5 miles; and in addition to the mileage completed a great deal of work has been done on the 12,462.6 miles which at the close of the year were under construction. The program of work thus far undertaken includes the above mileage completed and under construction and an additional 2,181.6 miles approved for improvement with Federal aid but not yet placed under construction. Including this latter mileage the program of Federal and State cooperation in road building as definitely planned or completed to date involves 61,129.7 miles, of which all but 3,570 miles undertaken prior to the passage of the Federal highway act in 1921 are

included in the interstate or Federal-aid highway system designated in accordance with the provisions of that act.

He added that the 7-percent system included 178,797 miles of roads. "Of this mileage . . . approximately 57,560 miles has already been improved or undertaken for improvement with Federal aid." Overall, the work included 50 miles of bridges.

He also discussed the designation of transcontinental highways:

As the result of the general improvement in the condition of roads throughout the country and the greatly increased use of motor vehicles the range of travel by highways has been so extended that transcontinental journeys are by no means uncommon. In consequence of this development the early improvement of a limited number of transcontinental routes and the uniform marking of such roads by all States has become one of the most pressing needs.

After summarizing the work of the Joint Board on Interstate Highways, MacDonald continued:

The transcontinental routes designated are all included in the Federal-aid highway system. Their designation and adoption by all States is an accomplishment of the highest order, carried out in a splendid spirit of cooperation by the Federal and State departments. Its immediate effect should be to facilitate compliance with section 6 of the Federal highway act which requires that the Secretary of Agriculture shall give preference in approving projects to those which will expedite the completion of an adequate and connected system of highways interstate in character.

Preferential consideration given to the improvement of the designated transcontinental system should at a very early date result in the complete improvement of the system, and the uniform numbering and signing of the system will be of inestimable value in promoting the safety and convenience of the highways used by interstate traffic. [*Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture for the Year Ended June 30, October 15, 1925, pages 1-4, 25-26*]

On November 19, the Agriculture Department announced that Secretary Jardine had approved the Joint Board's proposal, which was forwarded to AASHO for considered during its annual meeting in Detroit.

### **AASHO in Detroit**

When AASHO met on November 18-21, 1925, E. W. James was called on to report on the Joint Board's work. He began by quoting General George W. Goethals, who had supervised construction of the Panama Canal, as saying that in his experience with official boards, he found them "long, narrow and wooden." By contrast, James absolved the board "of being dilatory, indecisive or faint-hearted in attacking the particular problem it had to deal with." The Joint Board had, he said, met the conflicting demands of the 48 States "on a broad gauge basis."

After outlining the decisions of the Joint Board, and how they had been made, James thanked the members:

The task has been full of pitfalls and might very easily at a number of points have been seriously embarrassed had we had any other than the most unselfish and broad attitude of mind among the members . . . . I am confident that no better start could have been made by any group of engineers or administrators in this country.

James then read a November 18 letter from Secretary Jardine to Chief MacDonald acknowledging receipt of the Joint Board's report and commenting on it. Recognizing the task facing the Joint Board, the Secretary had been "impressed with the broad lines, orderliness, and conspicuous fairness" of the work done. He asked that Chief MacDonald transmit the report to AASHO as a body, as well as to the separate State highway departments, and express the Secretary's concurrence with the system of routes proposed and with the plan to mark them uniformly "for the promotion of greater safety and convenience in connection with interstate traffic":

I should be glad also if you would call the attention of all the States to a request which has been officially received from the War Department, and which has a direct connection with the plan covered by the report of the Board. The War Department has adopted a system of marking localities on maps for defense purposes, and the system requires eventually a corresponding marking of locations on the ground, as at cross roads, forks and other points where directional signs might properly be installed. The designation of such local points by the method of marking adopted by the War Department appears to me as thoroughly worthy of consideration by the States. Such a course would no doubt greatly increase the value of the general highway system to the Government.

Adoption by the States of the proposal "will accomplish a marked advance in the highway system," while the designation of important routes of travel "will be a distinct advantage not only in eliminating confusion, but also in furthering systematic and continuous construction." In addition, uniform marking via the system of signs "should promote safety of travel, especially if it can be associated with uniform traffic regulations":

The directness of the through routes will doubtless serve a very large number of our population that travel from one general section of our country to another and will facilitate that freedom of communication which more than anything else binds our States and our country in one united Nation.

He thought the many agencies and groups involved "will find a practical application through the work of the Joint Board which is for this reason, I believe, very timely and adequate." He added:

There appears to be ample authority in the Law for promulgating the plans outlined by the report of the Board, and the interests of the Federal Government in the highway system of the Nation might eventually have produced action essentially like that

originated by the States in the present case. It is gratifying to have the States on their own initiative originate a plan of such broad National aspect and value.

From this point on, the Secretary said, "the results accomplished will rest largely in the hands of the several States under whose direct supervision the recommendations of the Board will be carried out." On that basis, he terminated his predecessor's appointments to the Joint Board and thanked the members for their time and effort, as well as "for the breadth of view they have taken in working out the details." [James, E. W., "Work of the Joint Board of Interstate Highways," *Wyoming Roads*, April 1926, pages 7-8, 14-15; Secretary Jardine's letter, National Archives at College Park, Maryland]

AASHO adopted the Joint Board's report and delegated to its Executive Committee the authority to make minor changes to the recommended system "as appeared necessary or desirable." AASHO asked James to cooperate with Markham on numbering questions. [Kelly, page 153]

### **The Victory Highway Fights for 40**

Reaction to the Joint Board's work was mixed. It was widely applauded. Travel writer William Ullman began an article, "Seventy-five thousand miles of highways and not one cent for promotion!" The plan would "untangle the jumbled network of roads left by the haphazard, incoherent, disjointed activities" of the named trail associations:

The harmless tourist in his flivver doesn't know whether he is going or coming, whether he is a hundred miles from nowhere or on the right road to a good chicken dinner and a night's lodging.

Ullman praised the safety and directional signs as "simple in design, easily remembered and intelligible even to a driver who may not read the language." He added:

The map will be wiped clean of a lot of rubbish and in its stead the new highway map will tell the tourist how to reach his destination, where he is going, when to stop and when to proceed with caution. This, indeed, is a need in motor touring long past due. [Ullman, William, *The Louisville Times*, February 17, 1926]

The *North Dakota Highway Bulletin*, published by the State Highway Department, praised the trail associations for their "splendid spirit and work done," but added that they had "outlived their usefulness." [Moe, I. J., "Trails Associations Now Unnecessary," *North Dakota Highway Bulletin*, September 1925, page 5]

In some cases, praise for the new system was based on how it would affect a State or city. The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, in reporting on Secretary Jardine's approval of the Joint Board's report, listed the four major routes that would pass through the city – U.S. 40, 50, 60, and 61 – under the Joint Board's 1925 numbering plan:

St. Louis, the logical "hub" of this great highway system, will, more and more, become

the important center of motor travel. ["Standard Marking System for U.S. Roads Approved," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, November 22, 1925]

Others criticized the plan. Hanna of *Western Highways Builder* commented:

Of all the idealistic proposals yet advanced for the administration of highways, none can equal this for pure imbecility. ["Oppose Road Signing," *Western Highways Builder*, February 1926, page 23]

Meanwhile, Colonel Greene was still upset that the Joint Board had not limited the U.S. routes to transcontinental highways. He told *The New York Times* that, "In many of these states, I found short stretches of road which can by no possible mental gymnastics be called even important state routes; they are merely country roads." By adding more routes approaching New York, he said, some States seemed to think New York would add connections. "This I positively refused to do, thinking that they wanted to justify their great amount of roads by having New York pursue the same ridiculous policy."

In fact, Colonel Greene told *The New York Times*, when AASHO's Executive Committee met in January to consider objections, he planned to advocate eliminating the road on the west side of the Hudson River from New York City to Albany. He wanted to set an example for the other States so they would follow and designate only transcontinental roads that really run across the continent. ["Too Many Roads as U.S. Highways," *The New York Times*, December 20, 1925, page XX11]

Maryland's Mackall, who had chosen not to attend the group meeting for Middle Atlantic States, was highly critical, especially about the role of the Middle West in developing the plan and selected the designated roads:

The whole numbering scheme of highways seems to have been dictated and dominated by the Middle West for and in the interest of that section.

As far as Maryland is concerned, the whole highway designation is wrong in principle and practice. We will not agree to co-operate in the numbering of Maryland roads unless radical modification is made in the plan as far as it concerns Maryland. Road authorities in Pennsylvania, so I am informed, are taking the same position.

Many of the roads in the western States, he pointed out, did not carry 10 percent of the traffic using roads in Maryland, New York, and Pennsylvania. He added as an example of absurdity that between Cleveland and New York, the plan called for only one road, while between St. Paul and Kansas City, about the same distance as Cleveland-to-New York, ten roads had been included:

If a proper road system is adopted, bringing in Maryland roads which have been ignored in the plan thus far, the commission will co-operate with the United States Highway Commission in the marking of the roads. In fact, if what we believe to be the proper plan

is adopted this commission expects to supplement the road designations by also numbering and marking every road in the State system. This would be done with different types of numerals to prevent confusion of the State and interstate systems. [Maryland Scores U.S. Highway Plan," *The Sentinel* (Rockville, Maryland), December 4, 1925]

As Mackall stated, Pennsylvania also had doubts about the proposal. J. Clyde Myton, Secretary of the Motor Club of Harrisburg, provided an example resulting from dominance of the Middle West:

The natural route from Indiana east is via Ebensburg and the William Penn Highway. The section from Kittanning to Indiana and from Indiana to Ebensburg is a secondary highway, unimproved. Had the Joint Board seen fit to adopt that route, which is about ten miles shorter than the one it selected, there is reason to believe the State would have placed it on its primary highway system, and scheduled it for early improvement. Rather than follow the route it selected, the Joint Board might have turned north from Delmont on the William Penn Highway over an entirely improvement road to New Castle and Youngstown.

The route selected from Lewistown to Selinsgrove, Sunbury, Wilkes-Barre and Scranton is not a natural travel route.

(In March 1916, the William Penn Highway Association of Pennsylvania chose a highway parallel to the Pennsylvania Railroad from Philadelphia via Harrisburg to Pittsburgh, with an extension to New York City. It was an alternative to the Lincoln Highway. With approval of the U.S. Numbered Highway System, the William Penn Highway essentially became U.S. 22. For information on the evolution of the route, see "U.S. 22 – The William Penn Highway" on this Website.)

William H. Connell, engineering executive of the Pennsylvania Highway Department (and president of ARBA), said his State could accept the Joint Board's proposal only if provision

were made for necessary revisions in the system:

I stated that Pennsylvania agreed in principle to a balanced interstate highway system and to uniform marking and traffic regulations, but I felt that considerable revision would have to be made affecting the State of Pennsylvania before the people of the State would back up such a highway system.

Upon examining the map and report of the joint board it will be seen that it designates a mileage of interstate highways in two midwestern States totalling 5,295 miles, while three of the largest Eastern States with about the same area and with nearly three times the population and very much more traffic have a mileage of interstate highways of only 2,939 miles. The system should not be made up in certain States of a great number of

interstate highways, which are of far less importance than interstate highways in other States not on the interstate system as it stands today.

He said the interstate system “should be limited to important interstate highways of equal importance in all of the States.” The resolution AASHO adopted during its annual meeting in Detroit “provides that any revisions of the system as it now stands should be referred to the Executive Committee . . . for consideration.” This option meant that “a better balanced interstate system” could be accomplished, but “only by thoroughly revising the recently adopted system.”

He added:

President Coolidge, in his message to Congress, stated that Federal aid should be confined to interstate highways. It is obvious, therefore, that the system must be balanced, as it is certainly not the President’s intention to have Federal funds appropriated for a large number of interstate highways in some States and relatively few in other States. [“Too Many Roads as U.S. Highways,” *The New York Times*, December 20, 1925, page XXII; “Officials Plan Revision of United States Highways,” *The New York Times*, December 27, 1925, page XXII]

In this regard, Connell misunderstood the proposal. The Joint Board’s plan involved designation of routes, without any relation to funding. No additional funds were apportioned to the States based on its number of designated routes. The routes were all on the Federal-aid highway system or soon would be added, and were all equally eligible for Federal-aid funding at the choice of the State highway department.

The trend, however, was decidedly in the opposite direction.

Whether the reaction to numbering the Nation's interstate highways was positive or negative, one thing was clear to all observers: this was a major change that would have profound effects not just on motorists but on States, counties, and cities, as well as the named trail associations. This understanding was reflected in the strong, at times bitter, reaction of those who felt cheated by the Joint Board's choice of through routes and numbers. Almost immediately, for example, they accepted the Joint Board's intentions in applying the numbers. Highways assigned two-digit numbers ending in "naught" (multiples of 10) or "1" were seen as first-class highways. Highways with other two-digit numbers, including those ending in "5," were perceived as secondary. A three-digit number seemingly relegated a community to tourist purgatory.

The named trail associations, of course, were not happy. The Joint Board, which wanted to eliminate the trail associations, had not outlawed or eliminated them and had no authority to do so. No action had been taken to prevent them from posting their signs. In fact, the members of the Joint Board had informally agreed that the States could, if they desired, carry the names of the highways on the same standards as the shield adopted for the U.S. numbered highways. However, the Joint Board had also ensured it would not give a single number to any of the multi-State named trails, instead breaking them up among several numbers.

By the time members of AASHO's Executive Committee met in Chicago on January 14-15, coinciding with the American Road Builders Association's (ARBA) Road Show, they were faced with a flood of complaints generated by the named trail associations, communities, other groups, and individuals who were dissatisfied with the number their route received, or the fact that their route or city was left off or situated on a perceived secondary number.

While Maryland and Pennsylvania were threatening not to endorse the plan, many States wanted more mileage. In North Dakota, for example, the State highway agency's bulletin indicated the State was satisfied with its three east-west routes (the National Parks Highway, the Theodore Roosevelt International Highway, and the Yellowstone Trail), but felt that the two north-south routes assigned to the State, U.S. 81 (King of Trails) and U.S. 85 (not aligned along a named trail), were not enough. The State needed three additional U.S. routes, 82-84, and suggested that cities "sharpen their pencils to figure out just where a U.S. road should come" – and keep in mind the old adage, "The early bird gets the worm." ["More U.S. Roads Needed for North Dakota," *North Dakota Highway Bulletin*, February 1926]

Many problems were of a minor nature; the Executive Committee resolved 79 of them during its meeting. But many of the disputes were major and would have to be held over, to be resolved through letter ballot of the States during the remainder of the year. [Kelly, page 155]

Maryland's Mackall was satisfied with the results. After returning from ARBA's Road Show in Chicago, he announced on January 16 that Maryland's roads would be numbered as United States highways in accordance with the Joint Board's plan – as amended in Chicago. *The Baltimore Sun* recalled his opposition to the Joint Board's plan because of the large numbers of designated routes for the Middle Western States compared with the more heavily populated eastern States:

The joint board has been disbanded, Mr. Mackall pointed out yesterday, and the work has been placed in the hands of the executive committee of the Association of State Highway Officials [sic], which body held a special session last week at Chicago in connection with the road builders' association convention.

Essentials of the new plan were discussed last week, Mr. Mackall explained, but the details of the system will not be completed for several weeks.

Under the new plan, he declared, Maryland will double the number of its highways included in the project under the original proposal; Pennsylvania will have four times as many roads in the system as apportioned to it originally, and New York will be granted at least eight times its original allotment.

Highway officials from Maryland, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania will meet in Washington within the next two weeks to draft the final plans of the project and ratification through mail ballots is expected shortly afterward, Mr. Mackall said. ["To Be Numbered as U.S. Highways," *The Baltimore Sun*, January 17, 1926, page 6]

Contrary to Mackall's expectation, resolution of routing and numbering issues would take much of the year. By James's count, the Executive Committee acted on over 60 additional cases through early November 1926. A sampling of the issues provides an idea not only of the complexity of creating a numbering plan but also of how vitally important the decisions were to the combatants.

The longstanding dispute between the Old and New Santa Fe Trails – U.S. 50 versus U.S. 250 – resurfaced soon after the Joint Board's report became public. Kansas had a similar problem with advocates of the Victory Highway who were upset that their route was assigned U.S. 340 (Manhattan, Junction City, Salina, Russell, Oakley, Cheyenne Wells, Kansas, to Limon, Colorado) while the main number, U.S. 40 went to Topeka, Manhattan, Beloit, and Colby to Limon, part of the National Roosevelt Midland Trail, a transcontinental route from Newport News, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., to Los Angeles and San Francisco.

As part of the 40/340 debate, R. J. Brown of Solomon, Kansas, sent a telegram to Secretary Jardine on November 23:

We believe route number forty should continue of [sic] victory highway as it was dedicated to our boys.

Receipt of the telegram was delayed, but on December 5, Secretary Jardine's administrative assistant, H. M. Bain, replied:

In the absence of Secretary Jardine I am acknowledging receipt of your telegram regarding the numbering of the interstate routes through Kansas, in which you suggest that the southerly route through Junction City, Salina and Oakley, be given a continuous number as a through route. A number of other communications also have brought this matter to the attention of the Secretary and on inquiry it is learned that the southern route was originally given the through number, but at the specific request of the State Highway Department a change was made by the Joint Board.

The Board submitted its report to this Department on October 30, and it was transmitted to the Association of State Highway Officials at Detroit on November 19th.

The Joint Board has been dissolved, and in the circumstances it is suggested that any further inquiries regarding the details of the interstate routes be addressed to your State Highway Department at Topeka.

I shall take pleasure in bringing your letter to the Secretary's attention.

Secretary Jardine replied on December 9. He noted that he had received 25 similar telegrams from "Chambers of Commerce and leading men along the Victory Highway in Kansas, with reference to designating Victory Highway as route forty." The Secretary noted that as Bain had explained, the Victory Highway had initially been assigned "40" but "just before the report was concluded, a wire was received from Mr. John W. Gardner, Chairman of the State Highway

Commission of Kansas . . . asking the Committee to transfer the number forty to another route and to assign the number three hundred for forty to Victory Highway.” The Secretary enclosed a copy of the telegram:

COPY.

TELEGRAM

TOPEKA, KANSAS OCT 14, 1925

E W JAMES

CHIEF DIVISION OF DESIGN BUREAU OF PUBLIC ROADS WASHN DC

KANSAS COMMISSION DESIRES ROUTE MANHATTAN CLAYCENTER BELOIT  
COLBY LIMON AS NUMBER FORTY STOP MANHATTAN SALINE OAKLEY  
CHEYENNEWELLS LIMON AS THREE HUNDRED FORTY

JOHN W GARDNER  
CHAIRMAN KANSAS HIGHWAY COMMISSION

The Secretary’s reply continued:

The desire of this Department has been to O. K. recommendations by State Highway Commissions. At the time I signed this report I had not had an opportunity or the time to examine in detail the recommendations that had been made for all the states. What I did do was ask if the recommendations here made were the recommendations of the respective State Highway Commissions and if they had the general approval of the people of their respective states. I was assured that this was a fact. Some protests came to me before the report was finished and signed. In such instances I always did what I could to straighten things out.

Then he came to the main point, also stressed by Bain:

The matter is out of my hands now. Your only recourse is to make your protest to the State Highway Commission. If you make it strong enough, doubtless, you will get some results. The way has been left open in the report for straightening out injustices, wherever they may occur. I am sorry that I am not in a position at this late date to do very much for you. It is your own State Highway Department that is in a position to do something. [National Archives at College Park, Maryland]

On December 18, representatives of the named trails associations appeared before the Kansas State Highway Commission. Chairman Gardner explained that he had tried for the split 40 North/South arrangement in September but had been turned down:

The highway commission pointed out it sought to have as many national routes as possible through Kansas and had suggested both routes. Then the commission asked

where optional routes were designated that both be given the same numbers. But the executive committee of the association of highway officials and the federal good roads bureau turned down the state commission and followed the general rule that the north route be given the original number and the alternate route be given the same number, but with a numerical prefix attached.

The highway commission asserted it would use all of its efforts at having both roads given the same number and that it also proposed the same plan be followed on the old and new Santa Fe Trails. The old Santa Fe Trail is now No. 50 and the new trail 250 in Kansas.

Governor Benjamin S. Paulen, who attended the meeting, declared at the close that tourists traveled on roads, not numbers, so the numbers were of little importance. "But if residents on either one of these roads get out and actually construct good highways that people will like to drive over, there isn't any question as to which one will get the traffic," he said. With the issue turned back to State officials, he suggested that Kansas highway officials would meet with AASHO to secure "40" for both routes, with North and South added to differentiate the routes. ["Would Divide 'No. 40'," *Topeka Capital*, December 19, 1925]

News of the proposed North/South split for "40" inspired advocates of the New Santa Fe Trail. *The Topeka Capital* reported:

Milt Wilhite of Emporia; Will C. Austin of Cottonwood Falls, and about 20 others, representing towns along the New Santa Fe Trail attacked the office of Walter V. Black, state highway engineer, in force yesterday afternoon, demanding a "50-50" split on the numbering of the New and Old trail thru Kansas. Under the federal system adopted, the Old trail gets the number 50, and the New trail gets 250.

The arguments were much the same as in the Midland-Victory row of two weeks ago, when the Victory folks protested against giving the Midland Trail 40 and the Victory 240 west of Manhattan. The highway department has promised in both instances to ask federal approval of giving both routes "50" on the Santa Fe trails, and both "40" on the Midland and Victory, but without promising that the numbering will be changed from the way it now stands. ["New Santa Fe Trail Towns Launch Sequel to '40-240' Contest," *Topeka Capital*, file copy dated only December 1925]

On January 8, 1926, Ralph S. Hinman of the Hutchinson Chamber of Commerce wrote to Secretary Jardine, saying among other things:

As we understand it, the number "fifty" was assigned by the Federal authorities to the highway which included the New Santa Fe Trail (so-called); but through some motive the State Highway Commission as we understand it, gave the main designation "fifty" to the roadway running from Edgerton west through Council Grove, Osage City, Marion, Larned, Jetmore, etc., while the subordinate designation of "250" was given to the New Santa Fe Trail, diverging at Edgerton and continuing through Ottawa, Emporia, Florence,

Newton, Hutchinson, Stafford, Kinsley, and Dodge City – converging with “50” at Garden City. It is to be noted that “50” as outlined by the State Highway Commission, touches the home community of Mr. Markham, Mr. Miller (the private secretary of Governor Paulen, passing his ranch), Mr. Gardner (chair of the State Highway Commission), and joins “250” at Garden City, the home of the Governor’s Pardon Clerk, - Judge Hutchison.

Hinman continued that if the idea of 50 North and 50 South was rejected “as impractical or impossible . . . then it is respectfully suggested and urged that the main numeral should be applied to the one now designated by the State Highway Commission as ‘50’ between the point of divergence at Edgerton and the point of convergence at Garden City.”

Secretary Jardin replied on January 29, 1926, saying in part:

The Executive Committee held its meeting in Chicago January 14 and 15, and I am informed that at that meeting the Kansas Highway Department was given a special hearing, and that an adjustment satisfactory to all respects was arrived at as affecting Routes 50 and 250. This involved the assignment of the designation 50 North to the Old Santa Fe Trail and 50 South to the New Santa Fe Trail. This is a solution of several difficulties of the same sort which were found to exist in the Western States, and was applied to Routes 40 and 240 in Kansas, which were designated respectively 40 North and 40 South.

This appeals to me as a very common sense and satisfactory way of meeting the opposing demands of the advocates of different routes within a State, and I think it should be acceptable to the communities in Kansas. [National Archives in College Park, Maryland]

### **Springerville Fights for 60**

Julius W. Becker of Becker Mercantile Company in Springerville wrote to Secretary Jardine on December 5 about the Arizona-New Mexico connection of the National Old Trails Road. As noted earlier, the Joint Board had designated a route from Chicago to Los Angeles, via Gallup-to-Holbrook, as U.S. 60, while U.S. 70 from North Carolina continued via Fort Sumner and Socorro, New Mexico, to Springerville, Arizona, and a terminus at U.S. 60 in Holbrook.

Becker began by regretting he had to write to the Secretary about this matter after efforts at the State level had failed to resolve it. “Our experience, however, has shown us that the big man is more easily approached than the man of a smaller calibre.” He was not seeking “any special favor,” but would base his argument on “fact in as far as New Mexico and East Arizona local conditions are concerned.”

Becker acknowledged the many benefits of the move to recognize a network of interstate roads and to mark them with federally approved signs. However, he asked, “have you ever considered that highways in certain states may be political highways, and that they may be designated by the

State Administration from a selfish standpoint instead of from the standpoint of helping the people of the State in general as much as possible?"

He was referring to New Mexico's previous and current Governors, both Democrats, while the Coolidge Administration was, of course, Republican. Governor James F. Hinkle, born in Missouri, had moved to New Mexico in 1885 and served as Governor from January 1, 1923, to January 1, 1925. His home was in Roswell. He was succeeded by Arthur T. Hannett, the current Governor, who was born in Lyons, New York, but moved to Gallup, New Mexico, in 1911.

You, no doubt, are receiving some complaints from different states since these highways have been designated. No doubt, many of these complaints are not justified, others may be.

In New Mexico the Democratic Governor comes from the town of Gallup. Before becoming Governor he was a great highway booster for his own town. His Highway Engineer, who is a very capable man, has always played politics to a very great extent, and consequently, several good Republican towns have suffered. He has been open and above board in declaring himself against them.

Several towns in New Mexico on routes competitive to those passing through Gallup, and also on routes that Gallup coveted, have enjoyed a wonderful tourist trade for the past thirteen years. They have built good garages, money has been invested in good hotels in order to take care of the traveler, stores have taken on a more prosperous look, and besides this, in a number of sections the farmers have prospered through the market that the tourist furnished. I can name you several towns in the cattle districts where the business houses and many of the people would have gone broke during the period of depression in the cattle industry had it not been for the hundreds of thousands of dollars left in these towns by the travelling public.

Naturally, all of these towns were at the mercy of the present Democratic administration, and if you will kindly look at the map which I will send you under separate cover, you will notice that all routes of any importance and which are travelled by the best class of tourists now lead directly and indirectly into the town that Governor Hannett comes from, and in as much as we feel that the government sign posted highways will be followed by the tourist regardless of the old routes that were travelled, it is easy to be seen that a great many people in towns that enjoyed the traffic in the past will be compelled to lose heavily through this new movement.

Pardon me for making the following suggestion, but don't you think it would be best if the Department of Agriculture were to withhold issuing any maps of designated U.S. Highways and all road markers until impartial investigations can be made of all complaints? Why should people in certain towns be compelled to lose heavy revenues and in fact, all investments that they have made in the past through the fact that they are powerless to protect themselves?

No doubt, you are wondering why an Arizonian is so much interested in New Mexico affairs. That is easily explained. We are so near to the line that for years our interests have been identical with those of New Mexico. Besides this, the shifting of highways and travel in New Mexico affects us to a very great extent also. In fact, we have been leaders, although living in a small town, in the good highway movement both in Arizona and New Mexico (through our affiliations in New Mexico) for a great number of years.

It is true that Springerville has been placed on Route No. 70, but that is just like taking us off of a main street and placing us on a third rate street. For the past thirteen years we have enjoyed traffic off the National Old Trails, as we were a part of that Old Trails, and we have enjoyed traffic off of routes passing through Oklahoma City and Amarillo. The shortest way for the tourist through that section of travel on his way to California was through Springerville.

We have spent thousands of dollars in boosting for good roads. In fact, we have the reputation in this section as being rather radical for roads in general. It did not seem possible to us that through a stroke of the pen we would be compelled to lose a heavy revenue. Naturally, this will mean a big loss to our farmers as well as to the business men. Springerville may show a very small population on the map, but it is surrounded by about a dozen villages, some larger than Springerville, and the farmers in these little places have enjoyed the market which the tourist traffic through our town furnished.

People from different sections of Western and Central New Mexico have suggested that I write this letter. I sincerely hope that it rings true to you. There is absolutely no desire to throw mud at the Governor of New Mexico, however, it was necessary to be definite in order to impress you with the fact that there might be some merit to this letter. My sole object is to convince you that it might be best to withhold any further action in this highway matter until all complaints are in and sifted as to whether they have any merit or not. You have the reputation of being very humane. You always have the reputation of understanding the people in general. A man who has risen from the ranks as you have could not be otherwise. Won't you kindly feel that this letter is not written to gain special favor, but simply to get justice from the Highway Department of the Federal Government where it would be impossible to get it locally?

Becker had not clarified his point, which seemed to be that since the founding of the National Old Trails Road, motorists had traveled through Springerville because it was on the best road between Albuquerque and Holbrook. Now that the Gallup-Holbrook road had been improved, traffic was increasingly taking the shorter alternative in the National Old Trails Road. That shift would continue under the new designated numbers; through motorists already on U.S. 60 would not consider the former alternate route via Springerville as they once had done. The city was now on a completely different long-distance road, U.S. 70.

He wrote again on December 8 to provide the maps mentioned in the earlier letter. "You will notice that the highways for Federal markers vary a great deal in New Mexico from the highways which have been traveled by the tourists for a number of years. These are the natural tourist routes":

We would like very much to have the privilege of showing our side of the story to any impartial representative whom you may designate to look into this matter.

As I have explained to you in my letter of the 5th, there is a reason as far as the New Mexico highway administration is concerned for all important routes to run towards Gallup. The result is apparent, but why should hundreds of people be made to suffer for the sake of a Governor's ambition? Tourists will follow the marked highways regardless of anything else, as they are strangers in the country and you could expect nothing different of them. Those in power have the privilege of using this situation for their own benefit, unless of course, we succeed in getting an impartial investigation and a chance to show our situation and tell our story.

If necessary, some of us will be very glad to have the privilege of coming to Washington to go into this situation more thoroughly.

E. W. James wrote a reply that Assistant Secretary R. M. Dunlop signed on December 17 in his capacity as Acting Secretary. He expressed "much interest" in the matter described in Becker's December 5 letter and the maps submitted on December 8 related to the designation of interstate routes for uniform marking and numbering:

I am somewhat at a loss to understand your letter of the 5th, as neither the map submitted nor the letter itself gave any intimation of the details which you had in mind as underlying your complaint, and a careful examination of the federal aid highway system in New Mexico and eastern Arizona, and of the routes selected for marking in that same area indicated that they could not be characterized as they were in your letter.

Your letter of the 8th with somewhat more elaborate maps on which you indicated some of the details, explained your contentions, but I am inclined to believe that you have misconstrued the situation, as the map in which you showed the routes which you understood are selected for marking is seriously in error. For instance, the north and south route in the Rio Grande Valley south of Los Lunas to El Paso, is entirely omitted, and likewise the route from Clovis to El Paso as well as some others. I am enclosing a section of a map of the United States showing New Mexico and Arizona and the routes proposed as interstate highways. I am inclined to think after examination of this map you will find that the situation is satisfactory.

The Joint Board on Interstate Highways, which had in hand the designation of these routes, submitted its report to the Secretary on October 30. He approved the report and, as recommended by the Board, transmitted it to the association of State Highway Officials, which accepted the report on November 19. I understand that that Association provided a method for making the necessary minor corrections that might appear necessary, and all such matters are to be handled only through the respective State highway departments. I believe that this adjustment is now actually in progress, and that reports have already been received from a number of States. This Department is asking, therefore, that hereafter all further suggestions regarding the interstate system be taken up

directly with the proper State highway department. [National Archives at College Park, Maryland]

## **The Numbers Game**

Kelly explained the problems facing members of AASHO's Executive Committee, including Avery, when they arrived for a meeting in Chicago's Congress Hotel on January 24, 1926:

[Avery] and his colleagues were confronted with nearly one hundred requests to change either highway routes or numbering. The petitions came from bypassed towns, from trails associations that had lost their identify, from individuals, and from state officials who felt their states had been shortchanged when numbers were handed out.

In the months after AASHO secretary Markham sent the first national highway maps to state officials, the highways with numbers ending in one, five, and zero quickly took on an aura of their own. A community that could boast one of those numbers would be a place that would draw people and business. It would be a community set apart. Every town wanted to be on those numbered roads and those that were not, asked for changes to be made. The executive committee dealt with seventy-nine of the appeals during the one-day meeting. Others that were not so straightforward were held over for a later time, and one became so contentious that it threatened to undo all of the joint board's work of the past year . . . .

In addition:

The Kansas people were still at loggerheads over the Old and New Santa Fe Trails and over a numbering switch just past Manhattan, Kansas, in what had been the cross-country Victory Highway. That latter even elicited a telegram from the secretary of agriculture. To address the Victory Highway issue the executive committee split U.S. 40 into U.S. 40 North and U.S. 40 South. They turned U.S. 50 into U.S. 50 North and U.S. 50 South for the two Santa Fe Trails. Neither decision turned out to be the right one, and the issue festered for years.

Kelly's reference to a fight that became "so contentious" involved the battle over "60" which Kentucky, Virginia, and other States knew should have been assigned to them instead of the Chicago-to-Los Angeles route. Governor William J. Fields of Kentucky, a former member of the U.S. House of Representatives and a strong highway booster, "was beside himself that in all the road numbering, Kentucky had not been given even one prestigious single-digit or zero-ending number on any of her primary federal aid highways." Whatever the merit of any complaint he had with the other numbers, he had a strong point on "60," which the Committee of Five had placed outside the numbering plan they had agreed on. Governor Fields, with his State Highway Engineer E. N. Todd, was in Chicago for the showdown over the numbers.

The Executive Committee voted to retain "60" for the Chicago-to-Los Angeles route and tried to placate Governor Fields by assigning the single number 62 to a route from Springfield, Missouri

to Newport News, Virginia. Governor Fields was not placated. Instead, “he stormed to Washington, D.C. He rounded up his state’s whole congressional delegation and paid a heated visit to Chief MacDonald on January 25. There, the Kentuckians pointed out that their state, alone of all the states in the Mississippi Valley, did not have a road designated with a zero ending”:

At that point – seeking the path of least resistance – MacDonald and James changed the numbers. They made U.S. 60 the highway from Springfield to Newport News, and renamed Avery’s route U.S. 62. As they were soon to discover, that was not the easy way out. Cy was furious. He telegraphed his friend and Oklahoma congressman Elmer Thomas in Washington: “Bureau of Roads attempting to change U.S. route number sixty from Chicago to Oklahoma City to Los Angeles . . . . This change without notice to us effects [sic] Missouri, Oklahoma and other states. We have had most of our numbers made and ready to put up. Kansas and Kentucky are the states asking for this change . . . . See MacDonald and insist on this being left as it was agreed on in Chicago. Wire me collect results of your interview.” Just as Governor Fields had been sure that the Chicago mob was behind the decision not to grant Kentucky a zero highway number, Cy was at least suspicious that disgruntled Santa-Fe Trail Kansans were working against Oklahoma. [Kelly, pages 155-158]

On February 16, 1926, several members of the Executive Committee – not including Avery or Piepmeier – met in Washington to consider the correspondence received on U.S. numbers. A summary of the Executive Committee’s action covered numerous topics, but on the issue of “60” James’s summary explained:

It was agreed that the present arrangement affecting Kentucky and involving Routes 60 and 62 should preferably stand as at present adjusted, that is, 60 from Newport News to Springfield, Missouri, and 62 from Chicago via Springfield to Los Angeles, because the State of Kentucky protested against 62, since all other States north and south were given a number ending in an 0, which adjustment appears to be in line with the understanding had by the Executive Committee, but before submitting the matter in the form of a motion it should be ascertained whether Mr. Piepmeier and Mr. Avery would prefer 60 East from Springfield, Missouri Newport New Virginia, and 60 North from Springfield, Missouri to Chicago, as an alternate to the present proposed arrangement. In case the use of 60 East and 60 North is agreeable to Mr. Piepmeier and Mr. Avery, those present agreed to support a motion to use those numbers in lieu of the present proposed arrangement.

The Executive Committee’s formal report, dated March 4, 1926, to State highway officials did not address the 60/62 controversy. [National Archives at College Park, Maryland]

Kelly explained that this “curious decision . . . may have had more to do with a reluctance to finalize their actions than any question about the outcome.” Avery and Piepmeier were not satisfied. [Kelly 161-164]

## **As for the National Old Trails Road**

In January 1926, *The New York Times* carried an article by author Adolph C. Regli about travel in the western States. It began:

Motorists who long had had visions of a transcontinental tour have often cast aside the idea as being too risky. The West, with its reputation for hazardous desert and mountain highways, has suggested to the uninitiated the picture of a wild, treacherous expanse, hostile to everything but the cowpuncher on horseback.

This, however, is the day of the motor car, and the West is not waiting for the sunset. In another year some of the trails across the United States will have undergone changes and improvement sufficient to make the trip over them as different as was experienced in changing from an ox cart to a spring buggy. In six months last Summer the National Old Trails Highway was improved enough to make the motorist forget most of the difficult, tortuous roads he traveled on his way to the Pacific Coast.

After discussing other routes from New York, including the Lincoln Highway to Chicago and the

Victory Highway, Regli commented on the National Old Trails Road:

The National Old Trails Highway is picked up at Dodge City and carries the tourist through the remainder of the Western States to California. This trail is not advisable through most of Kansas since there are other and better routes from Kansas City to Dodge City. It is well marked from Dodge City west and blazes the best trail through the Southwest to the Pacific. The National Old Trails Highway is advertised as an all-year route, with all mountain passes open during the Winter.

Central and Western Kansas flattens out into great wheat plains and ranches where horses and cattle graze. Despite the apparent barrenness of Southeastern Colorado, the highways are straight and have a gravel surface, which makes motor travel exceptionally fast. An hour's time is gained in Eastern Colorado where the Rocky Mountain time zone begins. Lamar, Los Animas and La Junta are the chief cities on the trail, each a thriving centre.

At La Junta the motorist must decide if he will make a side trip to Pueblo and Colorado Springs, with its Pike's Peak, or go southwestward to Trinidad. The road continues to be graveled to Pueblo and Colorado Springs with the exception of short stretches. The National Old Trails is reached by running directly south from Pueblo to Trinidad.

In traveling from Trinidad, Col., to Raton, N. M., the first mountain driving of the trip will be encountered. The grade to the south is easy and presents no difficulty to any car.

Raton is situated at the base of the pass and is the last community of any size until Las Vegas is reached.

From Raton to Las Vegas, 114 miles, the route is over flat country in which huge cattle ranches and mesquite trees afford most of the scenery. For fifty miles out of Raton the road is graveled; at Colmar the gravel gives way to rough dirt, which becomes worse as Wagon Mount is approached. From Wagon Mound until gravel is again found seventeen miles out of Las Vegas, the drive is a continual bounce and jolt.

With the exception of the first fifteen miles south of Las Vegas, the highway to Santa Fe is good gravel. Between Santa Fe and Albuquerque, which are connected by a fast gravel road, the La Bajada hill is encountered, but it is down grade when one is traveling from east to west. The only concrete pavement in the desert country is found at Albuquerque, eighteen miles running north and twelve miles south. Indian basket weavers and pottery molders take up posts along the Santa Fe-Albuquerque road and offer their wares to every passing motorist.

The entire highway between Albuquerque and Gallup, five or six hours' run, is a good graveled road, with the exception of eighteen miles of stony, very rough dirt road from Grants to Bluewater. The tourist passes several quaint and interesting communities – Las Lunas, Laguna and Cubera – as well as numerous adobe villages where the Indians make their homes. The continental divide is crossed twenty-eight miles east of Gallup, but a small sign beside the road is practically the only evidence of it. Rare scenery is found east and west of Gallup where immense red cliffs, carved and molded by rushing water at some early date, present a noble picture of natural architecture.

Eleven miles of new gravel road west of Gallup were opened for travel last Summer. From there to Holbrook the road is dirt and will be only fair under ordinary conditions, but is exceedingly rough after rains, which are rare but are veritable cloudbursts when they come.

A side trip which the motorist should not deny himself can be made through the petrified forest on the rim from Gallup, N.M., to Holbrook, Ariz. By turning off at Adamana, the traveler can enter the forest from the north and pass through it to a good graveled road and thence to Holbrook. A glimpse of the Painted Desert is also had from the main highway between Navajo and Adamana.

From Holbrook to Winslow a good gravel road permits fast driving. A new road was completed last Summer from Winslow to the Cliff House Canyon, about thirty-five miles west of Winslow. From the end of the new stretch to Padre Canyon, fourteen miles, the worst road of the entire cross-country run confronts the motorist. Besides being painfully rough and crooked, the road is strewn with huge rocks and stones which play havoc with tires.

After this stretch of desert trail is passed, the remaining twenty-five miles into Flagstaff are dirt and stone, fair ordinarily but rough if traveled after rains.

From Flagstaff to the Arizona-California line at the Colorado River, fast time can be made because of long sections of well-graveled and dirt highway. Although the roads are good, too speedy driving should be avoided because of many dips and washes which take the place of bridges and culverts. To hit these while traveling fast will result in a severe jolt which may wreck a car. River beds, usually dry, are crossed and recrossed in Western Arizona.

Not more than sixty-five miles north of the main trail lies the grand Canyon [sic], which offers the finest side trip of the entire journey. A good gravel and dirt road goes northward from Maine, a few miles west of Flagstaff, and the return can be made directly to Williams over a fair highway.

The route through Williams, Seligman, Peach Springs, Hackberry and Kingman brings the traveler over good road to Oatman, a picturesque gold mining city. The motorist has another taste of mountain driving over a fairly easy grade just before Oatman is reached. A short run then brings one to the interstate bridge at Topock, from where a hilly ride carries the tourist into Needles, Cal.

From Needles to Victorville, the motorist made his last run over desert highways in crossing the noted Mojave Desert. Heavy crushed rock and gravel will be found on most of the road, although twenty-five miles of fair asphalt has been laid in the neighborhood of Amboy. The 215-mile drive from Needles to Victorville, where California's famous pavement begins, is not a pleasant one and the tourist is cheered when the black asphalt is sighted. After crossing the easy Cajon Pass, west of Victorville, there is a pleasant run through orange, lemon and olive orchards to San Bernardino, Ontario and Pomona to Las Angeles.

While the drive through the Southwest becomes tiresome at times, the remarkably clear atmosphere, the wide expanse of the horizon, the beautiful sunrises and sunsets and the Western air and geniality of the people give the traveler from the East a new conception of the immensity and grandeur of the United States.

The National Old Trails Road followed the Santa Fe Railroad, "so the traveler has the advantage of being close to aid by rail should it be necessary":

Tourist camps, most of them privately operated, are found in every city and hamlet so that a person touring and camping out can find accommodations without trouble . . . .

The West is aware to the traffic it can attract by good roads and is making efforts to provide excellent highways. [Regli, Adolph C., "Far West Offers Good Auto Roads," *The New York Times*, January 10, 1926, page A35]

As Regli's article implied, Missouri and Kansas were a continuing problem for Judge Lowe and the National Old Trails Road Association. However, Assistant State Highway Engineer C. W. Brown of Missouri reported in February 1926:

By the summer of 1926 the National Old Trails Highway will be concrete paved from the Indiana-Ohio line to Topeka, Kansas, which is several hundred miles farther west than any other continuous pavement extends. For the past three years this historically famous road has been undergoing a transformation in Missouri and in a few more months the 256 miles between the post office in St. Louis and the post office in Kansas City will be entirely paved. And 239 of the 246 miles of state highway between these two cities will be Portland cement concrete. The other 7 miles is an old hard surface which has not yet outlived its usefulness.

After summarizing the historic routes of the road known as the St. Louis-Kansas City road or U.S. Route 40, Brown suggested:

Imagine the surprise and delight of Boone and his companions if, in some ghostly centennial of those early days, they should ferry across the Mississippi on a log raft and drive their six-ox teams and heavy, broad wheeled conestoga wagons out upon a concrete road which stretched over all the weary miles they last traveled with such great difficulty.

Yet it is only in the last three years that Boone would have found much change. It is true there were bridges before 1923 and that trees had been cleared and grubbed, fences built and a few miles of gravel surface laid, but there were still many days when six oxen would have found a conestoga wagon a heavy load to pull through hub deep mud and when no man might know at sun-up how far upon his way he would be by dark. For except 13 miles, near St. Louis, built by St. Louis County in 1922, the whole 239 miles of concrete has been laid or contracted for since the summer of 1923.

Following its double policy of improving the most important roads first and of concentrating on a single road, so that during a short period of construction traffic may entirely avoid that road, then use it for all time without detouring, the state highway department put nine contractors to work on Route 40 during 1924 and '25. In those two years, construction was going forward over practically the entire length of the road and at the end of 1925, the pavement was complete except for a few short stretches where inclement fall weather so delayed construction that contractors could not finish, as they had expected, or where differences of opinion concerning the proper location of the highway have caused delay. But there is every reason to believe that by the fall of 1926 cars will be traveling across the state entirely on a paved surface – a notable achievement for three years of construction.

The all-weather surface is not the only improvement which has been made on Route 40, for, while the new road follows the old traveled way in many places there are many miles of relocation where, to straighten curves, save mileage, reduce grades or eliminate railroad crossings, the road was built over virgin soil. So well has this been done that the

steepest grade on the present road rises only six feet in the hundred, while the long grades do not exceed 5 per cent. Except in cities, where relocation was impossible, no curve turns more than 10 feet in 100 feet.

The original distance across the State was 297 miles. "Straightening unnecessary curves, eliminating jogs and avoiding roundabout roads reduced this distance 41 miles, saving the state \$1,557,000 which would have been spent for grading, bridging and concrete surface that additional distance."

The road was "so straight that if a string were stretched between these cities and extended to Kansas City and St. Louis the road would not diverge from the string more than 2 miles at any point. And the route chosen is so direct that it is 23 miles shorter than the shortest railroad between the two terminal points." Fifteen railroad crossings had been eliminated, leaving only two across the entire distance. The engineers were careful in avoiding city streets. "Boonville and St. Charles are the only cities through which the road passes directly and that was necessary because of the river crossings." The two bridges were the only crossings on the roadway. The corporation that built the St. Charles bridge charged a toll for all vehicles or pedestrians, but the Boonville Bridge was toll-free. [Brown, C. W., "Pavement on National Old Trails Highway Strides Westward," *Concrete Highway Magazine*, February 1926, page 40-42]

Although Brown referred to the road as the National Old Trails Road, he was probably referring to State Route 2, which diverged from the named trail as discussed earlier.

On February 12, 1926, E. W. James was in Kansas City for a convention of State highway engineers in the Baltimore Hotel. That same day, Judge Lowe sent a telegram to James:

I regret that continued illness keeps me from attending important session of your association.

At this time the question of correct marking of the Federal highways is one of especial interest to me and I have no doubt but you will solve the problem as you have so many others in perfect harmony with amended Federal aid act which has lead us to the greatest bureau of road construction that the world has ever known. As president of a road organization which has freely given much time and money to the rebuilding of the Old National Highway, I want to congratulate you and express our high appreciation to the highway board of the twelve states through which it runs for the fact among others that it now constitutes the longest continuous paved stretch of road in the world.

But for the patriotic and energetic perseverance of these organizations this unbroken record could not have been believed. Neither could it have been done except for the unanimous and heroic devotion you have given to this act, which in my opinion is by far the greatest single act of Congress on the subject of internal improvements ever promulgated at a given time. The act means that fifty percent of the cost of building and maintaining the system of roads provided for will go on.

The nine northeastern states they can afford to pay their fifty percent because they will gain more than any other section of our country by the building of these highways. They will not gain in the mileage but they will gain in the gravitation of still more wealth to these nine states. Forty percent or more of the cost will be borne by the great cities or centers of population within which lies most of the balance of the wealth of the nation, this being so they can afford to pay this fifty percent because in turn more wealth will gravitate to them by the building of these roads than can possibly come to the rural district that will gain the mileage and pay only 10 percent of the cost in the states where the automobile and gasoline taxes have been appropriated (not levied mark you) appropriated to the building and maintenance of roads.

Entire system of about one hundred and eighty thousand miles of roads can be built without costing the general tax payer a copper cent in taxes. I know this sounds absurd but is the absolute truth as demonstrated in every state where the provision of this act has been followed. [Edited with punctuation and paragraphing for readability]

Judge Lowe did not explain this observation but he apparently was referring to the idea of paying for road improvements by road-user taxes such as license fees.

James replied on February 21, 1926:

I thank you very much for your appreciative telegram of the 12th, which was delivered to me at the session of the State Highway Engineers Convention at the Baltimore Hotel.

I think there is no doubt of those truly and intelligently interested in the larger aspects of highway transportation that the proposals to introduce a uniform system of marking routes, which will be subject to general extension to all important lines of travel marks a very definite advance in road administration.

I regret I was unable to reply more promptly to your message, which was received only as I was on the point of leaving the city. [National Archives at College Park, Maryland]

### **George R. Stewart on U.S. 40**

In George R. Stewart's book on U.S. 40, he wrote about meeting with E. W. James to discuss the origin of the transcontinental highway:

On September 8, 1950, I sat in the Cosmos Club in Washington and talked with Mr. E. W. James. Still actively at work, he was just back from Central America, where as Chief of the Inter-American Regional Office of the Bureau of Public Roads, he had just been inspecting the latest extension of the Pan-American Highway:

“Just who,” I asked, “is actually responsible for the route that U.S. 40 follows?”

With a pleased twinkle in his eye, he gestured backward with his right hand,

pointing the thumb at his own sturdy chest . . . .

Stewart summarized the history of the named trail era, starting with the Lincoln Highway. The Lincoln Highway Association's activities "impressed the name Lincoln Highway so strongly on public consciousness that one still hears it in ordinary conversation, even though the Association itself has not functioned actively for over twenty years." (As will be discussed later, the Lincoln Highway Association ceased operation in 1928.) From there, Stewart discussed the value of the named trails, until they became "too numerous . . . . Particularly irked were the officials of the various state highway departments and those of the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads."

The frustration of State and Federal highway officials had led to creation of the Joint Board on Interstate Highways, with James as secretary:

During its months of deliberation the Board had considered the question of the already marked "trails" and had decided to ignore them completely. This means, unfortunately perhaps, the end of even such a national institution as the Lincoln Highway. The Board recommended a new country-wide system to be set up on kind of a checkerboard-grid . . . .

The report of the Board was accepted, and in the next few years the system of numbered highways came to be universally accepted. A few of the old associations converted themselves, but their importance had vanished. They soon ceased to maintain road signs, and the bedizened telegraph-poles, in a few years, weathered back to gray.

Turning to U.S. 40, Stewart based his account on James's recollection of events:

At the time of the Board's deliberations the chief transcontinental route was, beyond all doubt, the Lincoln Highway. Since it lay toward the northern half of the country, it received the number 30, in the eastern part of the United States. Perhaps the Board felt, however, that the complete taking over of one of the older named highways in the new system would result in pressure that other highways also should be taken over as a whole. In any case U.S. 30 ceased to follow the line of the Lincoln Highway in northern Utah and veered northwestward, along the line of the old Oregon Trail.

A little to the south of the Lincoln Highway an important route of 1924 – also using the red-white-blue as its colors – led out of Washington, D.C., through Frederick, Maryland, and thus west to Columbus, Indianapolis, St. Louis, Kansas City and Los Angeles. It was known as the National Old Trails Association Highway, or merely, the National Old Trail. It served as the basis of U.S. 40 from Frederick to Kansas City. West of Kansas City, however, its swing-off toward the Southwest made it ineligible for inclusion as a unit in the new system of east-west highways. Directly westward, however, other routes continued, at least on paper. By means of these the new U.S. 40 passed through Denver. By the time Kremmling, Colorado, was reached, all these routes had turned off in one direction or another except the so-called Victory Highway with its yellow-blue marker. U.S. 40 followed this road on to the west, clear to San Francisco. Near Salt Lake City the route of the Victory Highway and of the new U.S. 40 coincided with that of the Lincoln

Highway for some hundred miles.

At its eastern end the new route departed from the line of the National Old Trail at Frederick, where that road swung south toward Washington. Continuing more directly eastward in accordance with the new east-west plan, U.S. 40 followed the Old Frederick Turnpike to Baltimore. As Mr. James recalls, the original plan was to end the new highway there, at tidewater on Chesapeake Bay. It was, however, apparently in later meetings, extended eastward, first to connect with U.S. 13 in Delaware, and then clear to the ocean at Atlantic City. At the first official publication of the new routes, in April 1927, U.S. 40 was a full-fledged transcontinental.

As thus established, it was essentially a combination of extensive parts of the National Old Trail and the Victory Highway, incorporating shorter sections of other roads.

Stewart noted that despite the “immediate and overwhelming” success of the U.S. numbering plan, communities resented being left off the route, “and state highway departments were subject to such pressures. U.S. 40, for instance, split between 40 North and 40 South over a long stretch in Kansas and Colorado, and only in 1935 did the northern branch become U.S. 24. [Stewart, pages 10-16]

### **A Standard Reply**

Throughout this process, BPR received many letters from Members of Congress, named trail associations, chambers of commerce, and others objecting to replacing the names of the highways with numbers. For example, Senator Earle B. Mayfield of Texas, wrote to Chief MacDonald on April 10, 1926, to join with citizens of his State who objected to “the elimination of the names of national highways and the substitution of numbers therefor.” He admitted that standardization is often desirable, “but I submit that it is going rather far when in the interest of standardization it is proposed to eliminate the names of highways that are known almost as household words in every section of our great country”:

Sentiment is, and will always, play its part in every great undertaking. I submit that it would not have been as easy to construct the Lincoln Highway, the Jefferson Highway, the Dixie Highway, the Santa Fe Trail, and other highways if these great highways had simply been designated by cold figures.

The Senator was particularly partial to the Meridian Highway (Pembina, North Dakota, to Fort Worth, Texas), “not because it was named after the little town of Meridian, Bosque County, Texas, that is my home, but simply because the name of my home happens to be connected with the Meridian Highway.” Under the Joint Board’s recommendations, the highway “is not only destroyed, but it would be divided into three sections, each section being given a different number”:

Each of the national highways above referred to has a distinct personality that, in my opinion, should not be destroyed. Enthusiastic citizens of the nation believe in good roads, and in improved highways, and made unstinted sacrifices towards establishing the

Lincoln Highway, the Jefferson Highway, the Dixie Highway, and the Santa Fe Trail, and others, and I think it would be a serious mistake for the Government not only to allay and cool that enthusiasm, but in all probability to destroy it by eliminating the name of these highways and designating them by numerals. I do not suppose there would be any objection to adding a numeral to the highways above referred to, but most certainly the elimination of the names of our highways, in my humble opinion, should be not considered. May I not ask that you give this matter your most serious and thoughtful consideration before adopting the recommendations of the Joint Board of Interstate Highways.

Chief MacDonald replied on April 13, 1926, using language that he used in similar replies to many letters received during this period. He began by explaining that the Secretary of Agriculture had appointed the Joint Board at the request of AASHO to consider the uniform marking of important interstate highways:

It was the opinion of the Board at that time that the naming of highways was a matter entirely within the jurisdiction of the States, and if the individual States desired to perpetuate the names there would be no interference on the part of the Joint Board, nor would any action taken by the Joint Board prohibit the continuance of these names.

The same day your letter was written I received a letter from the secretary of one of the best known transcontinental trail associations in which he says:

“We are being bombarded from all directions with requests that we send letters and telegrams, etc., to Congressmen and Senators protesting against the removal of trail markers from U.S. highways.

“Our attitude has always been that the question of whether markers of highway and trail associations shall be allowed to stand rests with the individual States. Our impression has been that the Bureau of Public Roads would not attempt to take any definite stand and that the matter was one that could not properly come before the national law makers.”

This is an exact statement of the facts. Not only was the matter of perpetuation of the names of highways left to the individual States, but it was informally agreed by the members of the Board that should the States desire to carry the names of the highways on the same standards carrying the numbers adopted for the interstate highways as recommended by the Board, that the Board would make no objection. This in fact is the practice in some States now, i.e. to carry the State number and on the same standard a neat sign giving the name of the highway.

Whatever representations have been made to you are either by misinformed persons who honestly think that some injustice will be done to the old established named trails or through a wilful attempt for purely selfish purposes to misrepresent the situation to the Senators and Congressmen.

We found that there were in existence more than 250 so called trail organizations. Of these a very few had earned the right to a continuing existence. These few had kept faith with the public. They had succeeded in obtaining recognition for certain highways and worked with a definite purpose to put up markers, secure the interest of the people along the way in the improvement of their particular routes, and had built up pride in the communities in the improvement and care of the routes.

You have adequately described the situation in your reference to the Lincoln Highway, Jefferson Highway and others, and you also refer to the pride in the name which the towns along these routes have. The members of the Joint Board are all very familiar with these facts. There has been no act of the Board to interfere with the continuance of these names, and any representation to the contrary is false. On the other hand, the Association of State Highway Officials [sic] is determined if possible to wipe out the promoter of trails whose numbers and activities in collecting funds from the public have been increasing rapidly.

You know how urgent is the demand for improved roads, and how great the desire to hasten their actual accomplishment. It is this fact that has encouraged promoters to go into the field with the representation that by contributing to some new trail association Federal or State funds or both would become available and the improvements desired hastened. Needless to say, these promoters have not been in the position to control the application of one dollar of public funds. I do not criticize the civic organizations and individuals who have supported such individuals because they have been driven by the very laudable motive of doing anything possible to secure the improvement needed.

The plan to use numbers for uniform marking of important interstate roads is not an activity of the Federal Government, but a cooperative activity between the States, and all work is proceeding under the supervision of the Executive Committee of the American Association of State Highway Officials, an organization made up of the directing officials of the State highway department.

I have gone into the matter rather fully because there have been a number of letters received here from members of Congress and others who apparently have had representations made to them similar to those made to you. This statement should be helpful in doing away with such misinformation or misrepresentation. [National Archives at College Park, Maryland]

Chief MacDonald did not say so, but the named trail era might linger on but its demise was in sight.

He would use similar, if not identical language in response to many letters from Members of Congress and others.

### **The Life of Judge Lowe**

*The Kansas City Star* published a tribute to Judge Lowe on April 11, 1926:

In The Star recently appeared an account of continued progress in the building of the National Old Trails road. This transcontinental highway, considerable portions of which now are hard surfaced, has been for nearly fifteen years the chief object of care and the one ambition of a Kansas City man, Judge J. M. Lowe. It was Judge Lowe who organized the Old Trails Association, the first of its kind in the country. That organization Judge Lowe has fathered, working zealously, unselfishly and, most significant of all, without personal remuneration.

The history of American road building will record Judge Lowe as one of the outstanding pioneers in what now has become a leading development of the country. Years ago, when federal aid hardly was talked of, when the dirt roads were universal, and when state systems were unknown, Judge Lowe vigorously was maintaining up and down the land that a national highway system must come, that state systems must be laid out and that the motor vehicle must be looked to as the chief source of revenue for road construction. He protested against political interference and graft in road work; he denounced piecemeal road building, "measly little patches of road that lead nowhere," and demanded vision and business methods in construction.

Much of what the judge has worked for has been accomplished. Much yet remains to be done. But the lesson of honesty, broadmindedness and unselfishness which the man has taught has not been and will not be unavailing. In spite of his eighty years, the judge has continued to work and to hope. It has been his ambition some day to ride all the way across America on pavement. He will!

BPR Chief MacDonald saw the tribute and wrote to Judge Lowe on April 16:

I have received a copy of the Kansas City Star for April 11th, and have read with pleasure the tribute to you and your work in the editorial column. It is good to have one's efforts appreciated, and I congratulate you for having won such a splendid tribute.

With sincere good wishes, I am

Very truly yours,

/s/

Chief of Bureau

Judge Lowe did not receive Chief MacDonald's warm letter.

On April 16, 1926, Judge Lowe passed away in Kansas City. He was 82 years old. Nationally, his death was barely noted. For example, *The New York Times* mentioned his death in "Obituary Notes":

Judge J. M. LOWE, 82, President of the National Old Trails Road Association and a pioneer highway builder, died in Kansas City, Mo., yesterday. ["Obituary Notes," *The New York Times*, April 17, 1926, page 17]

*Touring Topics*, the magazine of the Automobile Club of Southern California, had documented the club's long association with Judge Lowe and the National Old Trails Road Association. Following his death, the magazine published a tribute to him and his work:

### RENOWNED ROAD BUILDER PASSES

Judge J. M. Lowe, "father of the National Old Trails Road," passed to his reward on Friday, April 16, in Kansas City, Missouri, after an illness of many months.

Judge Lowe was a man of transcendent vision; of indomitable zeal and faith. His mind, decades ago, envisioned the flow and ebb of motor travel from coast to coast. His practical mind, grappling with the requirements of this flood of future travel, foresaw the need and the practicality of a surfaced highway connecting the Atlantic with the Pacific; and to Judge Lowe is due the credit for the creation and existence of the National Old Trails Road, that tremendous artery that unwinds its length for three thousand miles, traversing eleven States [sic] and with its terminals in Baltimore, Maryland, and Los Angeles, California.

Judge Lowe advocated the construction of motor roads with ardor and/or when the automobile was in its infancy. His shibboleth was "Good Roads." He neither wearied nor faltered in the fight when hailed as visionary or crank or worse. He was the first man to propound the theory of utilizing all automobile license fees and taxes for the construction and maintenance of motor highways.

April 17, 1912, the National Old Trails Road Association was formed to labor for the completion of a continuous improved highway from Baltimore to Los Angeles, utilizing the historic Santa Fe Trail as its principal Western link and with other links to be provided for at later dates. Judge Lowe was the first and only president of this association. For fourteen long years, to the very day of his death, Judge Lowe was its motivating, directing and executive head, divesting himself of all other business cares to give his whole time to this monumental undertaking and serving without monetary compensation of any kind. No greater example of whole-hearted devotion to a cause exists in the annals of the present generation of Americans and it is more than gratifying to know that this wonderful old fighter lived to see the fruition of his hopes and efforts.

Few men in all the world's history have left a more colossal life memorial than is this three thousand-mile road of teeming travel, the longest continuous mileage of improved road in all the world. Few men have left a greater heritage to their fellow men than has Judge Lowe. ["Renowned Road Builder Passes," *Touring Topics*, May 1926, page 27]

Local newspapers covered Judge Lowe's death more extensively. *The Kansas City Star* published an obituary on the day of his death:

Judge J. M. Lowe, president of the National Old Trails Road Association, died at his home at the St. Regis hotel early today. Judge Lowe, a pioneer in highway building known throughout the United States, had been a resident of Kansas City more than forty

years. He was 82 years old, and had been in ill health more than a year.

Judge Lowe was one of the first advocates in the country of connected highway systems, state and national. For more than seventeen years he had devoted his time, efforts and personal funds to highway promotion, chiefly to the building of the National Old Trails road across the continent.

For years the ambition of Judge Lowe was to ride all the way across the United States on pavement. Had he lived a few years longer, his hope would have been realized, for the Old Trails road now is paved all the way from its eastern terminus at Washington, D.C., to Kansas City, and a considerable part of the way from this point to its western terminus at Los Angeles.

The obituary discussed his long life before joining the highway crusade. Joseph Macauley Lowe had been born in Pendleton County, Kentucky, in 1844 and “was a typical gentleman of the old school of the South.” His grandfather had migrated from Virginia to Kentucky. Many members of his Anglo-German family had “been prominent in English and early American life”:

Leaving the Kentucky plantation at the age of 16, Judge Lowe enlisted in the Confederate army and served several months until the close of the Civil War. Following that he taught school at Greenfield, Ind., and shortly began the study of law. He served as clerk in the Indiana state senate and was admitted to the bar in that state. In 1868 Judge Lowe moved to Plattsburg, Mo., where he practiced law fifteen years. For four successive terms he served as prosecuting attorney of Clinton County. It was at Plattsburg that Judge Lowe married Mary Elizabeth McWilliams, daughter of a physician there. The McWilliams family also was of southern ancestry and originally had lived in Kentucky.

After moving to Kansas City more than 40 years earlier, he “devoted most of his time to personal affairs, although for several years he gave attention to the practice of law”:

A Democrat of the old persuasion, he also gave some attention to political affairs from time to time, although he did not become affiliated with factional or boss politics in the city. About fourteen years ago he was one of the leaders in an independent political movement in Kansas City. Judge Lowe occupied various appointive offices, and also served as judge of the county court of Jackson County.

Judge Lowe was a man of polished manners, he was widely read, an interesting conversationalist, and an orator of considerable force. For many years he was in demand as a speaker at political and business functions and, especially in later years, at highway conventions throughout the United States.

About seventeen years ago, when growth of the motor car industry made it evident that hard roads must be had, Judge Lowe turned his attention to highway promotion and building. From that day virtually until the hour of his death, the all-absorbing theme with him was highways, connected highways, “that lead somewhere, not measly patches of road.”

“I took up this work actively seventeen years ago,” Judge Lowe said recently. “And I have devoted every hour of my time since then to construction of the road (the National Old Trails). I have enjoyed to the limit every hour of that time. The pleasure has been full compensation for what I have done, and when the task is finished I shall feel amply rewarded for the dreary, heartbreaking periods through which we have passed.”

Judge Lowe always served the association without pay. “And, in addition, he contributed of his own means to support the road organization and its work. Judge Lowe declared he was not selfish in giving his all to one road, because he wanted that highway to serve as an example to road building throughout the country.”

The *Star* recalled his plan, 13 years earlier, for a highway system for Missouri that would cost 50 million dollars. “Mention of such a sum for state roads at that time was astounding. But Judge Lowe calmly asserted the expenditure was necessary, and showed how it could be made without burdening the taxpayer.” He proposed to finance the work by devoting revenue from motor vehicle licenses to the cause – “the first person in the United States” to do so.

Judge Lowe had proposed Federal legislation to create a national highway network before enactment of the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916. He considered the Federal-aid concept a compromise. “What he advocated was a national system of roads built entirely by the government; state systems built wholly by the states, and county systems, built by the counties alone”:

Pork barrel methods, political domination of road work and waste of funds on disconnected roads built largely as political favors, Judge Lowe denounced for years. He came to be feared by politicians both in the state and in congress, who had begun to see the big public demand for highways, the possibility of big sums being invested in the enterprise for selfish purposes. It was Judge Lowe’s influence, as much, perhaps, as that of any other man in the country, that helped to get road building out of politics and on a sound business basis.

The article concluded:

Judge Lowe, a member of the Baptist church, was an ardent believer in the fundamental, long accepted principles of orthodox religion. When the fundamentalist-modernist controversy broke in the country he took an active part in defending traditional religious belief and wrote fully in defense of his position. He wrote numerous articles and pamphlets on highway work, together with a volume giving an extensive history of the National Old Trails road, which originally had been laid out and in part built by the government more than one hundred years ago.

Judge Lowe a few years ago was a member of the board of management of the Missouri Confederate home at Higginsville, having been appointed by Governor Arthur M. Hyde. Recently he was made honorary vice-president of the National Optimist Club. He held membership in numerous organizations.

Judge Lowe was survived by his widow Mary; a daughter, Mrs. Hughes Bryant of Kansas City; and a son, J. Roger Lowe, of Lees Summit. Judge and Mrs. Lowe had celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary about a month before his death.

On April 17, 1926, the *Star* contained an editorial recalling the life of Judge J. M. Lowe, "Citizen and Man":

A community finds its chief enrichment in the examples of its upstanding citizens. Such a citizen was Judge J. M. Lowe, who died yesterday. The example left by Judge Lowe is an example of courage, of militant honesty, unselfishness, vision, faith. Here was a man whose life is a lesson for those who waver and are uncertain, for those who fear to stand out against wrong, pettiness, fraud, narrowness. Judge Lowe was a man firm in his beliefs, religious and political; he was uncompromising for the right and confident that, ultimately, the right would prevail.

A loyal member of one party throughout his long life of more than four score years, Judge Lowe was never a slave to party or to party leaders. Time after time he denounced leaders whom he believed false to party principles, insincere, incompetent or dishonest. And he followed that course openly and unafraid at the risk of being termed disloyal and a deserter of party organization. Judge Lowe's service as election commissioner in Kansas City for six years was typical. In that office he fought dishonesty in politics and at elections, regardless of party. He was against political boss rule; he was a foe of inefficiency and lax methods of administration in public office. He contended for better election laws that would help to make honest voting easy and dishonest voting hard. In political life he made enemies, of course, as later he encountered foes in another form of public activity.

The contest that Judge Lowe waged for honest, businesslike methods in road building was but a continuation of previous public service. In this field he exercised rare vision, unselfishness and devotion. He was far ahead of most men in seeing the needs of the road building situation. He realized years ago that the motor vehicle would mean something of a revolution in methods of travel and communication; that state and county lines would mean little on the highway map of the future. Hence, his persistent, vigorous stand for connected highway systems, each system, national, state, and county, to be built through exercise of distinct and definite responsibility. He saw that the hundreds of millions of dollars the country would be investing in roads must be kept out of the hands of politicians if fraud, waste and incompetence were not to do their expensive work and the public end the loser. So, without pay and without hope of reward of any kind save that which comes through a consciousness of service honestly rendered, Judge Lowe gave the entire latter period of his life to the cause of good roads.

Optimistic, fearless, firm in faith, ever a fighter, this man has ended his work. The community, the country, is the gainer from his life.

Judge Lowe's widow, Mary McWilliams Lowe, died on May 2, 1939, at Menorah Hospital after

a brief illness. She was 83 years old. Between her daughter and son, she had six grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren as discussed in an obituary published in *The Kansas City Times* on May 3, 1939:

Although Mrs. Lowe's chief interests centered about her home and family, she shared her husband's dream of a network of hard-surface highways linking the principal cities of the United States. Throughout Judge Lowe's long campaign that succeeded in securing the passage of the federal aid act during the first Wilson Administration, Mrs. Lowe devoted herself to the cause, too.

Although Mrs. Lowe's active work in the highway movement ended with her husband's death April 16, 1926, she continued her interest in motoring, making several trips across the continent . . . . Nothing gave Mrs. Lowe greater satisfaction, in her later years, than the knowledge that Judge Lowe's once criticized dream reached a brilliant fulfillment . . . .

Believing in the Victorian tradition that a woman's place was in the home, Mrs. Lowe belonged to no clubs and limited her activities to her family and her husband's highway interests.

Mrs. Lowe had been born on January 23, 1856, at Plattsburg. "Related to President Cleveland and the Revolutionary war hero, Col. Benjamin Cleveland of Virginia, Mrs. Lowe's ancestors included six officers in the Revolutionary arm and six officers in the Confederate army. Her parents were "members of old southern families that came to Missouri about the time of the Mexican war."

Her interest in politics and international affairs was maintained throughout her life. A southern Democrat, Mrs. Lowe voted for only two Presidents, Woodrow Wilson and President Roosevelt.

On August 4, 1926, Frank A. Davis, manager of the National Old Trails Road Association, wrote to Chief MacDonald in response to a telegram to the association's convention wishing the association continued progress.:

I thank you for your interest in the National Old Trails and your wish for our continued progress as indicated by your wire to our Convention. We expect to continue along the same lines as established by our late President Judge Lowe, and hope to cooperate very closely with your department.

By then, the association's letterhead had been revised. Davis was the Secretary-Manager. Julius W. Becker of Springerville was General Vice-President. The new President was a local official, temporarily out of office, named Harry S. Truman.

### **D.A.R. Meets in Washington - 1926**

During D.A.R.'s continental congress from April 19 to 24, 1926, Mrs. Moss, national chairman

of the National Old Trails Road Committee, gave the committee's annual report. She summarized the committee's evolution from a plan to secure Federal legislation and post signs along the National Old Trails Road to placing a large monument in each of the 12 States it passed through "to mark some historical spot thereon or commemorate some historical act of the Revolutionary period":

To this end your National Chairman has been bending every effort the past two years, asking for a 10 cent per capita contribution from all the State societies and urging that we consummate a pledge made in the past intended as a memorial to the "mighty throng of our pioneer men and women who kept the faith and builded true," that we of today might journey through a land of plenty and of every convenience, never to know the hardships they endured, never to realize the sufferings they bore.

The National Old Trails Road, she said, "has been built, and, with the exception of a very few miles, it is a hard-surfaced road from ocean-to-ocean; and whereas the pioneer of the earlier day traveled months to reach the western coast, it is now a matter of a few days' pleasant travel." Every State had an "energetic program" of building good roads, and whether a motorist is going east, west, north, or south, "really remarkable systems of concrete highway give access to all parts of the United States." In securing a highway from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the committee's primary goal had been achieved, "but we as an organization have still to erect our memorial markers."

She experienced "a decided thrill of joy and pride" in the hard work of the D.A.R. that allowed her "to announce today that the fund of \$12,000 necessary to erect the twelve markers, at approximately \$1,000 each . . . has been contributed in full, and this fund is now available, and the work of erecting the markers may proceed as soon as a suitable design shall be chosen." After discussing State contributions to the fund, she concluded:

Many letters have been written by your National Chairman during the three years and copies of different bills and many maps distributed; the vice-chairmen in charge of the several sections have rendered loyal service, and it is through their untiring and persistent efforts that we have reached the goal, and the National Chairman wishes to close her last report with a word of grateful appreciation for their able assistance.

Mrs. Moss did not discuss the design of the proposed monument.

President General Mrs. Anthony Wayne Cook told the audience, "This is not only a gratifying report, but a very wonderful one." [*Proceedings of the Thirty-Fifth Continental Congress of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, April 1926, pages 255-259*]

On April 24, the resolutions committee adopted a resolution:

#### RETAIN NAMES ON NATIONAL HIGHWAYS

Whereas, There has been inaugurated a movement to use numbers instead of names for the National Highways; and

Whereas, Such action would do away with the significance of the National Old Trails Road, the Lincoln Highway, Old Santa Fe Trail, Meridian Highway, Dixie Highway, King's Trail, Glacier to Gulf, and Old Spanish Trail, and would substitute for historic nomenclature cold numbers which have neither patriotic nor romantic appeal; and

Be It Resolved, That the Thirty-fifth Continental Congress Daughters of the American Revolution, go on record as favoring the retention of significant names for the National highways and proper marking of said names upon the designated roads; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of these resolutions be sent to the Board of Interstate Highways with the request that they take favorable action upon this question.

The resolution was signed by Mrs. Charles B. Jones, State Regent of Texas, and Mrs. Moss.

That same day, the Recording Secretary General of the D.A.R., Mrs. Alice Frye Briggs, transmitted a copy of the resolution to BPR Chief MacDonald.

MacDonald's May 19 reply was similar to the letters he sent to Senator Mayfield and many others in response to inquiries on the plan for numbering the country's main highways. He began, "it is apparent from the resolution that your society is not informed as to the facts," which he proceeded to provide. During the Joint Board's first meeting, the members decided "that the naming of highways was a matter entirely within the jurisdiction of the States, and if the individual States desired to perpetuate the names there would be no interference on the part of the Joint Board, nor would any action taken by the Joint Board prohibit the continuance of these names."

He referenced the letter he had received from "one of the best known transcontinental trail associations," stating that the decision on naming highways rested entirely with the States, and that BPR would not interfere. The was "an exact statement of the facts." He assured D.A.R. that neither the Joint Board, which was defunct, nor BPR would interfere if States decided to retain the names as well as displaying the numbers. "There has been no act of the Board to interfere with the continuance of these names, and any representation to the contrary is false." After discussing the promoters of the named trails, he clarified that the plan to use numbers was "not an activity of the Federal Government," but a cooperative State initiative. He concluded, as in other similar letters, that, "I have gone into this matter rather fully with the hope that this statement will be helpful in doing away with misinformation and misrepresentation." [National Archives at College Park, Maryland]

### **Harry S. Truman**

When the National Old Trails Road Association assembled at the Hotel Muehlebach in Kansas City, Missouri, for its annual convention on July 24, 1926, the association faced its greatest crisis. The plan for the U.S. numbered highway system, though not yet approved, had fractured the road by splitting it among several numbers. Some parts of the route, particularly in Missouri, had been left off the main number. U.S. 40, as well as State Route 2. And the National Old Trails Road's greatest champion, Judge Lowe, had passed away.

The 150 delegates to the convention voted to maintain the organization even though the Federal-aid highway program, in cooperation with State highway departments, was accomplishing

highway improvements without the need for booster associations. To continue its work, the association would need a new leader for the next stage in the association's work.

For president, the association chose Judge Harry S. Truman of Independence in Jackson County, Missouri. In Truman, the association had chosen a man who had a lifelong love of motor vehicles and roads. As a young man, he longed for an automobile when he was courting his future wife, Bess, who lived in Independence. "Just imagine how often I'd burn the pike from here to Independence," he wrote to her from his family's farm on Blue Ridge Boulevard in Grandview (now part of Kansas City, just off U.S. 71 in the southern part of the urban area).

In 1914, his mother agreed to pay for an auto – but Truman didn't want a Model T that would brand him as a farmer. As biographer David McCullough observed, Truman wanted all the power his car could give:

Nothing could have pleased him more or made such an immediate difference in his life. He had never had anything of his own of such value or that drew such attention. He was to love automobiles all his life, but this was *the* automobile of his life.

It was a big, black, five passenger 1922-model Stafford, hand-built in Kansas City by a man named Terry Stafford . . . . On a good road, Harry soon demonstrated, it could do 60 miles an hour. It was a rich man's car. New, it sold for \$2,350. Harry paid \$650 . . . . From all practical viewpoints such an automobile was a huge extravagance – but to Harry \$650 for an automobile was a "bargain" . . . . With a little work on the engine, Harry found, he could go up Dodson Hill – considered the great test locally – so fast he had to shut off the power before reaching the crest.

Soon, he was visiting Bess regularly and taking her for a "spin" in his "machine." This love of driving never left him. [McCullough, David, *Truman*, Simon and Schuster, 1992, pages 92-93. For more on the life of Harry S. Truman, see "The Man Who Loved Roads" on this Website]

During the European War, he had served in France, where he discovered his ability to lead men and to earn not only their respect but their loyalty. But that wasn't all he learned. As he wrote to his future wife on May 19, 1918, from France:

The French know how to build roads and also how to keep them up. They are just like a billiard table and every twenty meters there are trees on each side. [Ferrell, Robert H., editor, *Dear Bess: The Letters from Harry to Bess Truman, 1910-1959*, W. W. Norton and Company, 1983, page 262]

Later that year, on November 10, he revealed his homesickness to Bess:

This has been a beautiful Sunday – the sun shining and as warm as summer. It sure made me wish for Lizzie and five gallons of gas with her nose pointed down Blue Ridge Boulevard and me stepping on the throttle to get there quickly. I wonder how long it will be before we do any riding down that road. [*Dear Bess*, page 280]

After the war, Truman and a friend, Eddie Jacobson, opened a clothing store in 1919. Truman

and Jacobson Haberdashery was at 12th and Baltimore (104 West 12th) in Kansas City on the ground floor of the Baltimore Hotel and across the street from the Hotel Muehlebach. The store was an initial success, but the recession of the early 1920s resulted in its closure in 1921 and debt for both men.

In 1922, Truman ran for election as a Jackson County Judge, an administrative post. The “court” included two judges (eastern and western) and a presiding judge; Truman ran for the eastern judge covering the outlying part of the county. As McCullough explained:

The judges had control of the county purse strings. They hired and controlled the road overseers, as well as road gangs, county clerks, and other employees numbering in the hundreds. They could also determine who was awarded county contracts, and for the county road system, such as it was, there seemed a never-ending need for maintenance and repairs. [McCullough, page 159]

He campaigned for better roads and sound management. His campaign came after enactment of Missouri’s Centennial Road Act on August 4, 1921. At one campaign stop, he told the crowd:

The time has arrived for some definite policy to be pursued in regard to our highways and our finances. They are so closely connected with our tax problem that if they are properly cared for, the tax problem will care for itself. [McCullough, page 163]

He won the election and took office as Judge Truman. McCullough summarized how:

Harry Truman, as he later boasted, made himself "completely familiar with every road and bridge . . . ." Years of mismanagement and crooked contracts had produced roads so poorly constructed that they caved in like pie crusts. Bridges were inadequate or in sad repair . . . ." The improvements made now were impossible to ignore. Even the Kansas City *Star* had praise for what was happening under the crisp, efficient new county administration. “When a road project or a bridge application is brought before the county court, here is what happens,” wrote one Republican. "Judge McElroy turns to Judge Truman and asks him what about it. Nine times out of ten Judge Truman already has been on the ground and knows all about the proposition. He explains it to the court. Judge McElroy then says, ‘All right, if you say so I move the work be done,’ and it is ordered." [McCullough, page 167]

Judge Lowe’s frequent reference to mismanagement of road management stemmed at least in part from his observation of roads close to home.

The job paid \$3,465 a year, much needed funds for the failed businessman trying to support a family while paying off his debts.

Despite an excellent record, Truman lost his reelection bid in 1924 – by 877 votes, the only election he ever lost – against Republican candidates aligned with the Ku Klux Klan, which was in the ascendancy at the time and having an impact on races in several States. Another factor in the loss was the success of President Coolidge, who secured nearly half the votes in Missouri.

Aged 40, out of work, broke, and in debt, he planned to run again in 2 years, but in the meantime, he needed to make a living to support his family:

From an office in the Board of Trade Building, he began selling memberships in the Kansas City Automobile Club, working on commission, which, after expenses, came to approximately five dollars for every new member he recruited. In a year he had sold more than a thousand memberships and cleared \$5,000, which, with a family to support and debts to pay, he greatly needed. Roads, highways, the new age of the automobile had become his specialty. [McCullough, page 171]

The National Old Trails Road Association elected Judge Harry S. Truman on July 23, 1926, as its second president. In addition, the association voted to take steps to encourage officials of the States west of Kansas City to provide a hard surface to their portions of the National Old Trails Road. According to a local news account, “Virtually all of the trail east of Kansas City is hard surfaced, it was said.”

Like Judge Lowe, Truman would lead the association without a salary. According to the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum:

The earliest tax form I found was for 1927. In all of the forms that I checked from 1927 through 1933 (the year before Truman was elected to the U.S. Senate, which substantially increased his income), the only income that is reported is his salary as a Judge of the Jackson County Court, which ranged from about \$5,000 to \$6,500 annually. [Sowell, Randy, Truman Library, email, November 30, 2022]

In addition to electing a new president, the convention elected Frank A. Davis secretary-treasurer. Davis, long involved with the association, also was involved with the King of Trails Association (see part 3), served as manager of the Kansas City Automobile Club, and was a friend of Truman's. Other elected officials included Julius W. Becker of Springerville as general vice-president, and E. R. Moses of Great Bend, Kansas. [“Judge Truman Honored,” *Independence Examiner*, July 24, 1926. Provided by Randy Sowell, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum; “Old Trails Association to Continue Work,” *Douglas [AZ] Daily Dispatch*, July 24, 1926]

Having served as one of the district judges in Jackson County, Truman sought election as the presiding judge in November 1926 and won a 4-year term by 16,000 votes. His salary increased to \$6,000. According to Margaret Truman's biography of her father, Truman's predecessor as presiding judge, Miles Bulger, “had made a policy of boondoggling away millions and running the country into murderous debt. In 1921 the Bulger court had spent \$1,070,000 on roads that were already disintegrating because they had been built by crooked contractors using shoddy, low-grade materials.”

She wrote of her father:

He dates the real beginning of his political career from this 1926 election. For the first time he had the kind of authority he needed to build a record that voters could see and

admire. He poured all his energy into the job, and he needed every bit of it. The county government was in disastrous shape. The roads, most of them built by Bulger, were called “piecrusts” by two local engineers whom my father hired to survey them. “These men, with my assistance planned a system of roads estimated to cost \$6,500,000,” Dad says. [Truman, Margaret, *Harry S. Truman*, William Morrow and Company, 1972, pages 67, 70]

## **The Business Plan**

Now that Judge Lowe was no longer available to use his resources to supplement the finances of the National Old Trails Road Association, its future depended on dues paid by members, businesses, and other supporters.

His successor, who was still paying debts incurred from his failed haberdashery store, understood the importance of assuring income for the association. The members had decided to continue the association’s operations, but Truman would have to put it on a solid financial footing.

In November 1926, he was still working on the plan, as reported in *The Republican* of Oakland, Maryland. One issue was to work out a coordinating agreement with the newly formed National Highway Booster Association of Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio. The booster group held a preliminary meeting during August 1926 in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. When the group met again a month later on September 23 in Zanesville, Ohio, representatives from seven States were in for a surprise:

It was disclosed that there already was a similar organization, known as the National Old Trails Association [sic] in existence, a fact which few of those in attendance knew about.

J. P. Eagleson, of Washington [Pa.], who is vice-president of the National Old Trails Association, told the gathering at Zanesville that the association had been formed in 1912, covering the highway from Maryland to the Pacific Coast.

The purpose of the meeting at Zanesville was to form a permanent organization known as the National Highway Booster Association, and to discuss ways and means of perpetuating the traditions and history of the Old Trails, advertising its scenic beauty and many points of historical interest, and to promote additional tourist travel on the highway.

When Mr. Eagleson explained that a similar organization already was in existence, but had been inactive of late years because of lack of funds, George E. Lutz, temporary president of the National Highway Booster Association, urged that a committee be appointed with the view of consolidating the two bodies, the suggestion being favorably acted upon. [“Seven States Join to Boost National Highway,” *The Republican*, September 30, 1926]

(On February 27, 1927, when the National Highway Booster Association met in Wheeling, it considered recommendations “that the highway be used to erect beacon lights for the proposed

model airway across the country. A large number of planes follow the course of the pike every month, and it would seem logical that this route would be quite advantageous for the erection of beacons. Should this be done, it would be a simple matter to light the roadbed as well and thereby make a most excellent highway for both day and night, driving.” [“Highway Booster Association,” *The Republic*, February 24, 1917])

By November, Truman had not finalized a business plan for the National Old Trails Road Association:

The plan of financing the national organization has not yet been completed and Judge Harry S. Truman, president of the older organization, was authorized to work out a plan and submit it for approval to both groups at their meetings later. It is figured, however, that on the basis of \$5 a year for national membership, reliable hotels, restaurants, garages and other business places along the highway will become members and thus entitled to display the highway association insignia. These places will be thoroughly examined before being permitted to become members in order that all firms may have reliable backing in the association.

Among the activities of the association will be to issue courtesy cards to all tourists using the highway, to put up direction signs in all towns through which it passes and the many other necessities which may be required to make the National Highway the most popular road by which tourists may travel during the touring season.

During a recent meeting of the two groups in Dayton, Ohio, a plan was tentatively adopted, pending approval in coming months:

The plan as set forth in Dayton calls for the division of the highway system into four divisions extending from the Eastern seaboard to the Pacific coast, with terminals at Baltimore and Los Angeles. The National Old Trails road is perhaps the most famous in the United States and from the Eastern seaboard to St. Louis consists of the old Cumberland Trail and the National Pike, while from St. Louis westward it consists of the Boon’s Lick Trail, the old Santa Fe trail and old Spanish trails extending to Los Angeles. Passing through 12 states, the highway presents a vast opportunity to an organization for the bringing of tourists into those states which it traverses and by means of a consolidated organization, national in scope, those interested in boosting the highway feel that better results can be obtained.

The local division of the highway will consist of Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Maryland with a headquarters at a suitable point in either of the four states. In controlling the work of the association it is planned to have the president and secretary of the national organization and two vice-presidents from each state form a board of directors, while the president and representatives from each state of the four divisions will form an executive committee. It is planned to have national headquarters located in Kansas City, where the National Old Trails Association [sic], which was formed in 1912, and is the older of the two organizations, now has its headquarters. [“Consolidation of Old Trails Roads Boosted,” *The Republic*, November 25, 1926, page 1]

While trying to put the association on a solid foundation, Truman was running for election as presiding judge of Jackson County. After his victory, Truman received dozens of congratulatory calls, but he was not home to receive them. He was on the road for the National Old Trails Association. [Truman, Margaret, *Bess W. Truman*, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1986, page 102]

The trip appears to have been an opportunity for the new president to meet leading members of the association, familiarize himself with the road, and build relationships that would benefit the organization. Frank Davis accompanied Truman on the trip. Truman had wanted Bess to travel with him, but she stayed home with their little girl Margaret. Although Bess accommodated her husband's annual 2-week summer army reserve duty, Bess "pursued him with complaints" during his trips for the National Old Trails Road. [*Bess*, page 102]

The collection of letters in *Dear Bess* from Truman to his wife provide a partial picture of his activities as president of the National Old Trails Road Association. The Truman Library and Museum has some additional letters, beginning with November 7, 1926, in Herrington, Kansas:

Dear Bess:

We have kept our schedule to the dot. Got to Council Grove at 2:30 P.M. and met all the prominent citizens in town, at "the" Building and Loan Association office. You'd think I was the President of the U.S. We discussed the National Old Trails, cussed Osage City, the next larger town to the east (we'll do the same for them when we go to Osage), and came over here to Herrington. Arrived at 5:45, left Council Grove at 5:45. [This anomaly was possible because of the time zone variables in Kansas.] It is twenty-six miles, so we lost no time on the finest dirt road you ever saw. Had a flat tire at Burlingame. The hotel man called a garage and had it fixed while we ate the finest chicken dinner you ever saw with the leading lawyer, the county judge (commissioner they call him out here), and a couple of other prominent citizens. Tonight we'll do the same here. It has been misting since 3:00 P.M. I don't know if it is going to rain but I hope not. I am feeling fine and dandy. My voice is improved. I've eaten a box of the whiskered bro's cough drops. Be sure and kiss my baby and look in the mirror for one for yourself. Will write you tomorrow. I wish you and the young lady were here. Love to you both by the bushel.

Yours, Harry

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November 08, 1926

The Palace Hotel, Lyons, Kans. Nov, 8, 8:30 P.M.

Dear Bess:

We got on a train at Herrington at 1:20 after Davis & I had made speeches to the Rotary Club and went to McPherson, a beautiful little town right in the center of a county of the

same name. We had an hour there between trains and a number of the prominent citizens including the Mayor what would be the Presiding Judge of the County Court in Mo (they call him Commissioner out here) and the Chamber of Commerce head met us at the Chamber of Commerce and we had a very good meeting. At 5 o'clock we caught a Santa Fe train for this place and got here for the regular meeting of the Chamber of Commerce which they turned into a good roads boosters meeting and Harry had to make a real speech or try to. They've put us up at a good hotel and we can't pay for anything. We are leaving by bus in the morning for Sterling, south of here where we'll catch a main line Santa Fe for Great Bend where we'll have another booster's meet.

It has cleared off as nice as can be and by the time we get back the roads will be as good as when we came down. I'm feeling fine and I hope you are. How many phone calls from the Saviors of Democracy have you had? I hope Miss Marger is behaving herself. I wish I could see her.

Be sure and kiss her for her daddy. Lots of love to her mamma from

Your Harry.

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November 09, 1926

Hotel Zarah, Great Bend, Kans. Tuesday 10:30, November 9, 1926

Dear Bess:

Got up at six-thirty, had grapefruit, bacon and eggs, oatmeal, toast, and hot tea for breakfast. Took a bus for Sterling and got a Santa Fe train for this place. Mr. Moses, of the Moses Milling Co., met us in a big Hudson sedan and the president of the Chamber of Commerce was there in his Buick sedan. We are billed to speak to the Lions Club at noon, after which these gentlemen are going to drive us over to Larned for a 3:00 P.M. meeting and a Chamber of Commerce meeting at six-thirty at Kinsley, after which they will drive us to Dodge. This is almost like campaigning for President except that the people are making promises to me instead of the other way around. They sure do treat us royally. The Rumanian Queen had nothing on us.

The weather is ideal, as pretty a day as you can wish for. This a beautiful town [sic] and seems to be plumb full of live wires. I do hope I get a letter in Dodge. Bill Francisco was at Lyons. He's straightened up and is making good as a salesman for the Rock Island Imp. Co.

You sure ought to be along. We'd have the time of our lives. I've got a trip all arranged to California for next fall if you want to take it. Kiss my baby and take a carload for yourself. I've got to run.

Love from Your Harry

The comment about Queen Marie of Rumania referred to a sore point with Bess. According to Margaret Truman:

Bess reported that Sunday was “poky” without her husband. She had wanted to go to a reception for Queen Marie of Rumania, who visited Kansas City during a world tour. Her majesty was the guest of honor at a musical extravaganza staged on November 5, to raise money to pay for the city’s memorial to the dead of World War I. Bess and Harry had been invited. She declared herself unable to go without him.

Bess allowed the comment to pass, as Margaret explained:

Instead, there were more complaints about missing the Queen and about the deluge of telephone calls from jobseekers . . . .

She had succeeded in making him feel guilty. Although I think I have made it clear that I love both my parents, I must confess to a certain prejudice in favor of my father as I read these letters. The man was only trying to make a living for himself and his family! I suspect it was his honesty that got him into trouble. Much as he loved his wife and daughter, Harry Truman also liked to get out and see the rest of the country. He poured out his fascination for places such as Dodge City and the characters he met there and elsewhere . . . . Bess did not find such pieces of living history as interesting as her husband did. More to the point, he was enjoying himself too much – while he was several hundred miles away from her.

It did not seem to matter that he had urged her to come with him. “The child” was her excuse to stay home now, although her two sisters-in-law were ready and willing to substitute for her . . . . [Bess, pages 102-103]

Margaret cited the next letter as an example of activities and people that Harry found fascinating, such as the details about Ham Bell, while Bess did not.

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Dodge City, Kans

November 10, 1926, 5:30 P.M. (or 4:30?)

Dear Bess:

We had a fine meeting at 10 A.M. It lasted until 3 o'clock this afternoon with time out for lunch. We succeeded in getting Larned and Kinsley to let the wind dispose of their signboards tonight and all the towns from Garden City to Herington have buried the hatchet and are now pulling hammer and tongs for the National Old Trails Road. I also got them to pass a resolution favoring a State Highway Commission for Kansas, similar to ours in Missouri. That was a real accomplishment because the Kansans are 'agin" it on general principles. The president and sec. of the Chamber of Commerce wanted us to stay two days more and do some more fixing, but I told them we had some [fixing] to do at Marshall Missouri and Dayton, Ohio.

I met Ham Bell, who was mayor of South Dodge at the same time Bat Masterson was mayor of North Dodge. One lies south of the R.R. and the other north of it. They tell me that the Hon. Ham was not so pious in those days as he is now. He's a pillar of the Methodist Church and places a bouquet on the altar every Sunday now, but they tell it on him that in days gone by, when he ran a dance hall in the part of the city of which he was the presiding officer, he was pitched bodily over into his part of town by the invincible Mr. Masterson when he came across the track to meet some ladies from Wichita who were going to work for him. It seems that inhabitants of the two sections were supposed to stay in their own bailiwicks and if they ventured into strange territory, they did so at their own bodily risk. It seems that Mr. Bell thought he could get over to the train and back without attracting attention, but a long scar on his face shows that he failed. He's forgotten it and no one can persuade him to mention it, but gossipy neighbors spilled the beans.

We went out to old Ft. Dodge, southeast of here on the Arkansas River, just to say we were there. It is now a soldier's home and not interesting to look at except that it was an Indian frontier about sixty years ago. The fort is four miles from town because it was against the law to sell booze within that distance of a government post in those days and when the R.R. came they had to start the town four miles away. They showed us "Boot Hill," where they buried the gentlemen who were slow on the draw in an argument. It has a schoolhouse on it, a large brick structure which the city has outgrown. It has been abandoned as a school for a better one and is now vacant. The Catholics built a fine hospital here and some of the "Sheet Bros." bought "Boot Hill" to build a finer one but fell out among themselves, as usual, and it's still Boot Hill with an old schoolhouse on it. I am enclosing you a picture of it.

We're leaving at 7:00 P.M. and will be home Friday. You really don't know how awful glad I was to hear from you. I'm sorry you were so uneasy about me but I was never better in my life. I hate it because you had a poky Sunday. I hope the time will soon come when you never have one. Be sure and kiss my baby and take a carload of love for yourself.

Your Harry

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Dodge City, Kans., Nov. 10, 1926 Tuesday, 10:15, maybe 9:15

Dear Bess:

We had a grand meeting in Great Bend and Mr. Moses and the president of the Chamber of Commerce hooked up a fine 1927 Buick sedan and hauled us to Larned where we had a meeting at the Cafe Bon-bon with the town's leading citizens, after which we drove out to Pawnee Rock, which is a rock hill about one hundred feet above the surrounding plain at a little place about twenty miles southwest of Great Bend called Pawnee Rock and from the top of which you can see for miles. It is the only rock in forty miles and was formerly used by Indians as a place from which to jump out and slaughter unsuspecting

travelers who were going down the Santa Fe Trail. The D.A.R. have put a fence around it and erected a fine monument on top of it to the early pioneers.

We drove on to Kinsley, where we had another meeting at 8:00 P.M. At Kinsley the road forks going east and the new Santa Fe Trail goes by way of St. John and Syracuse to Hutchinson and Emporia. At Larned the road splits and goes west to Garden City by way of Jetmore and is called North 50. If Larned directs traffic straight west by North 50, it misses Kinsley and Dodge City. If Kinsley directs traffic east over the new Santa Fe Trail, it misses Larned and Great Bend. Larned and Kinsley each have had signs up directing traffic away from the other but they each claimed that some outside town on the other road had put up the sign. The inhabitants of each town are almost afraid to be caught in the other town because of the situation. We have delegates from each place due at our meeting here tomorrow and from the look of things we have reestablished good relations and will have all the cities in this neighborhood pulling for our National Old Trails, which is what we came for.

I have met some real characters on this trip. This Old Man Moses I rode down with on the train from Kinsley and in the auto to that place is not the Kansas Milling Co. Moses but is a financier of these parts. He owns (or did until he gave them away) four department stores and three banks besides generous portions of the business sections of Great Bend, Larned, Pawnee Rock, and various and sundry other towns. Davis tells me he's worth a million or two. He has two sons and some granddaughters in whom he seems to be very much interested. He gave his department stores to the managers who had been with him longest and organized a finance company to run his banks and gave them to his sons. He is still burdened with his real estate. His wife died in June, but he told me that they had seen everything on the American continent and most of Europe before she died and that he intended to keep their big house in Great Bend running just as if she were alive for they both believed in getting everything out of life there is in it. He came here from Sedalia, Missouri, in 1874 after taking a much shot-up trip across Colorado to San Francisco and Portland. He said his brother was sheriff of Great Bend when he arrived and that the chief deputy killed a man that night and his brother had to kill one the next day. I'm meeting some fine old Kansas Red Legs, as my mother would call them, and they're not half bad.

We came down from Kinsley on Santa Fe No. 5, which arrived here at 10:05, stayed fifteen minutes and left at 9:20. You can't beat that and I'm sober too.

I'm hoping I get a letter from you tomorrow. I'll sure be disappointed if I don't. Be sure and kiss my baby. I'll be home Friday evening and gone again Saturday at 10:00 A.M.

Loads of love from Your Harry

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Hotel Stamey, Hutchinson, Kans., November 11, 1926

Dear Bess:

. . . This is Armistice Day . . . .

Truman recalled what he was doing 8 years earlier on Armistice Day, and the fright he had when he received a letter from Bess indicating she had nearly died with the flu:

I hadn't suffered much except loss of sleep and worry for my outfit and here nearly all I had in the world was nearer the great divide than I'd ever been because I believed my name was on a bullet . . . .

I am ashamed now that I didn't stay at home and fight the job hunters and take you to see the Queen. I'm afraid I'm not as thoughtful of your pleasure as I ought to be. If ever I can connect, you'll never want to do anything you can't. Kiss the baby. I wish I could her [sic] say "Lo Dad"

All the love to you, Your Harry.

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Daniel Boone Tavern, Columbia, Mo. November 13, 1926 8 P.M.

Dear Bess:

We had a very good trip to Marshall. Stopped at Higginsville by making a 5 1/2 mile detour and picked up Mr. Hopkins, president of the Traders Bank of Lexington and V.P. Natl Old Trails Road Assn. Had a fine meeting at Marshall. Independence, Lexington, Dover, Arrowrock, & Columbia were represented. We left there after the meeting at about 3:30 and arrived in Boonville at 5 P.M. Called on the newspaper man who, it developed, is a cousin of Dr. Nelson's and is called Edgar Nelson. I gave him my Kansas speil [sic] and he immediately agreed to called [sic] a special meeting of the Chamber of Commerce on our way back. He sent for Dr. Nelson to come over and call on us but the Dr. was not available. We had dinner at the same place you & I ate and came on over here. It sure poured down rain, but has quit now. We ran into a football game and (my pen ran dry at that point) came very nearly having to sleep in the street. The clerk told us he had only rooms with cots and sent us up to look at them. He made a mistake and sent us to one of his real rooms, which we immediately signed up for. We'll leave here about 8 AM, stop in Fulton about 10 and aim to get to Greenville, Ill at stopping time tomorrow.

I had such a terrible time getting out of Independence. I never did call you because I couldn't. It was 10:30 before I shook off all the leeches and on account of the detour to Higginsville I couldn't get to Marshall on time if I stopped. I'm calling you tonight to make up for it. Write me care of the Dayton Automobile Club, Dayton, Ohio. I hope you and the young lady are all O.K. Kiss her for me.

Love to you from,

Your Harry.

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Thomas Hotel, Greenville, Ill. November 14, 1926

Dear Bess:

Still it rains. We left Columbia about eight-thirty this morning and stopped in Fulton to see Nick Case, the senator from that town in the state legislature. He invited us out to his house and was very cordial to us. We arrived in St. Louis about one-thirty and came on out here. Found George's Hotel, and just now phoned the president of the Chamber of Commerce. He's coming down to see us after a while. We've seen the local newspaperman, who said our names and business would be in the paper tomorrow.

This hotel is run by an old fat codger who is very good humored but he has a tough egg for a wife. She made a couple of kids take their pup out of her hotel lickety-split just now. They were tourists same as we are, but my sympathies are always with the kids. The old lady told them they could take their dog up to the garage and let him stay in the car, which they did.

We are now traveling on the National Pike, which was surveyed and laid out in Thomas Jefferson's administration to get communication with Louisiana Territory. That was done along about 1806. Last year or the year before the road was finally paved into St. Louis. Quick action what? We've gone from wheels on the ground to wheels on steel and now we are back on the ground. What, I wonder will be the next step?

The National Old Trail is really on the map here. They have hotels, eating houses, garages, and drugstores all named for it. So you see we won't have a very hard time getting things rolling over here. I hope you and the young lady are in fine health and spirits. I'd like very much to see you both tonight. Be sure and kiss my "good girl" and make believe for yourself.

Love by the bushel from Your Harry

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Hotel Gibbons, Dayton, Ohio November 15, 1926

Dear Bess:

We arrived here at 8:10 P.M. after an all day's drive, and I find it a rotten town. I thought I'd get a letter as soon as I arrived and I found none. I was so disappointed that I went off to a show before I wrote this. Then I got to thinking that maybe you had so much to do Saturday that you couldn't write and maybe after you wrote Sunday it didn't get off until Monday, in which case that's today and I won't get it until morning. But I sure did want it.

We left Greenville, Illinois, this morning at 7:00 A.M. Old man Thomas, who is the proprietor of the Thomas Hotel, proved to be a right interesting old man. He told me about a former saloonkeeper of his town who was such a good citizen and ran such a clean place that all the high collars and "the ribbon ladies" (Thomas called them that) looked on him with favor. He told me all that to impress upon me how nice it is to leave your widow money, no matter how you get it. The good saloonkeeper died and left his wife rich. In due course of events she married a Baptist preacher and the money personally went to a good purpose.

Davis has just read in a Terre Haute paper that President Coolidge dedicated a \$2 million memorial for K.C. and that Will Rogers says it looks like a silo. Other people have the right slant on R.A. Long's monument to himself as well as us perverted people who only fought the war behind a gun.

(On November 11, 1926, President Coolidge was in Kansas City to dedicate the \$2.7 million Liberty Memorial, erected "in honor of those who served in World War One in defense of liberty and our country." Humorist Will Rogers asked, "What is it? A silo?" The reference to the "R.A. Long memorial to himself, may refer to the R. A. Long Building at 928 Grand Avenue, a 16-story skyscraper in Kansas City built by lumberman and philanthropist Robert A. Long in 1907.)

We passed through a whole string of Illinois towns. Evidently they were all good ones too. We stopped awhile in Greenup to see a former supporter of the Old Trails and also stopped in Casey, another nice little town, to see quite a number of former supporters of the movement. They all seemed to be still enthusiastic.

We ate our noon meal at Brazil, Indiana, at the Hotel Davis. Had a grand lunch for fifty cents. Then we headed for the Hoosier State capitol. Got there about two-thirty and drove around and round the town for thirty minutes trying to find a place to park. They have a fine town, a good-looking state capitol, a federal building, and a courthouse equal to any. The Old Trail runs straight through the town from one side to the other on a big, wide street called Washington. Down in the center of town and a block north of this street is the Soldiers and Sailors Monument erected to the men who fought in the Civil War. It is a beautiful thing and is in the center of a large circle into which run four streets, one from each cardinal point. Around the circle are fine hotels, theaters, and clubs. We wanted to see the secretary of the Hoosier Auto Club, whose office is in the English Hotel. It is on this circle. After driving around about a dozen times and out each cross street and around the block trying to find a place to park, Davis finally got out and I kept going around the circle. Finally I stopped in front of the hotel and the secretary came out to see me. I told him I'd been around that circle so often I didn't know south from straight up. He set me right and we headed for here. Stopped in Richmond, Indiana, at 6:00 P.M. and had as fine a meal as I ever ate and safely arrived here for a woeful disappointment. No letter. This is a fine town, however, from a civic standpoint – good hotels, fine buildings, and apparently lots of business. I hope we have good luck tomorrow, and I hope that letter comes. Kiss my baby and lots of love to you from

Your Harry

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Hotel Lincoln, Indianapolis, Indiana 10:30 P.M., November 16, 1926

Dear Bess:

This day turned out to be fine in every way except the weather. Your letter came, we had a fine and successful meeting, got our pictures in both evening Dayton paper [sic] and got back as far as Indianapolis on the return trip. It was a grand and glorious feeling when your letter came this morning, appreciated the clipping, digested what you said of my friend Mr. Hall and am filing it away for future reference. I'd like to see both you and the young lady.

There was some very fine and intelligent men here to talk over the situation with us. Mr. Corcoran, Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce of Wheeling, W. Va., Mr. Schenk Sec Chamber of Com of Uniontown, Pa., Mr. Elkins, proprietor of the Elkins Hotel at Wheeling and the Cumberland Hotel at Cumberland, Md. as well as the Sec. & Gen. Mgr. of the Dayton Chamber of Com. Mr. Wayne Lee, and Mr. Ackerman of the Dayton Auto Club. I dictated a plan of action to the Auto Club Steno and it was adopted verbatim. All that had to be done now is work out a financial plan and that is tentatively agreed on. The National Old Trails is back on the map east of Indiana and is there to stay.

This is some city. We left Dayton in a snow storm but ran out of it about 40 miles this side and it is now clear with the moon shining. We ate supper in Jas. Whitcomb Riley's town of Greenfield. The "old swimming' hole" is just outside of town but it was a little chilly to go try it.

We arrived here at eight and got settled, then went out and walked over the downtown section. It's a lot easier to walk over it than to find a place to park. We'd expected to stay at the Washington Hotel, a copiously road advertised house, but we couldn't find it anywhere so we stopped here. This is a bigger and finer place we discovered after stumbling onto the Washington while walking around. We came across it right on the street we came in on but after placarding [sic] the roads for a hundred miles in each direction, the sign wasn't big enough to see on the Hotel itself. The Claypool is right across the street from here. That is where all the Indiana politics is brewed. It covers a whole block and has been here for a long time. We hope to see some of the Indianapolis politicians tomorrow.

We have to see the Pres of the Chamber of Com., the Auto Club and the Mayor or Manager if they have one. Probably got our pictures in the Indianapolis papers too.

We'll go to St. Louis tomorrow night and be home Thursday night. I'm going to call you on the phone. Kiss the baby and love to you.

From your Harry.

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en Route aboard The National Limited February 11, 1927

Dear Bess:

Davis suggests that I inform you of all the tricks we are entitled to on this Limited whether we use them or not; such as maid, hairdresser, barber shop & bath, secretary, valet, tailor etc. ad infinitum.

We left St. Louis after I called exactly at 12 noon and have been moving along about sixty to the house ever since. I could dictate this letter but I don't like to dictate letters to my honey, even at the risk of being accused of inebriety. This train does not slow up for curves, towns or crossings, hence the wobbly writing.

We are evidently in for a fine meeting at Wheeling. Davis had two telegrams and three letters from the interested parties. The N.O.T. is getting bigger every minute even if we did pull a bloomer at Topeka. There's no alibi for that, we were simply licked.

I hope the baby is all right and you too. It would surprise you how well my brain pan is feeling and apparently working.

Much love and a kiss for my girl and you,

Your Harry.

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Hotel Windsor, Wheeling, W. Va. February 12, 1927

Dear Bess & Margie:

We arrived some time during the night. The porter woke me up and said it was after seven. I got up very hurriedly shaved and dressed and then found my watch said it was still five minutes until seven. However when we got out on the street all the clocks said eight o'clock, so we were cheated out of an hour's sleep by a chance in time.

The town is right on the edge of the Ohio River and looks as if it might fall in any minute. There are high bluffs on the east side, which gives you that impression. We were expected and assigned a room and are to be entertained at lunch at dinner, so you see we are the distinguished citizens again.

I am enclosing you a horoscope which Davis wanted me to send you. He said you were undoubtedly due for a splendid outlook unless all signs fail. He honestly believes it and so do I.

We expect to start home tonight and ought to arrive there Monday for breakfast. Kiss the baby. Love to you.

Sincerely Harry.

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Hotel Windsor, Wheeling, W. Va., February 12, 1927

Dear Bess:

The meeting is over and was one howling success. The National Highway Boosters Association is no more, and the National Old Trails Highway Association is a national organization indeed [sic] and in fact. We are completely organized back here and have had our financial situation practically guaranteed. George Washington Lutz, who was the president of the Boosters Association, is our executive vice president back here and Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio are completely organized with two vice presidents each and a bunch of enthusiastic boosters behind them.

George Washington Lutz is seventy-one years old and is *the* leading citizen of Wheeling. He looks like George F. Baker, the president of the First National Bank of New York, his mutton-chop whiskers and everything. He's been president of the Board of Trade, the Fair Association, Chamber of Commerce, mayor of Wheeling, and most everything else. He is a widower with no children and has only one nephew, of whom he is very fond. He told me if his nephew had been a girl, he'd have married him long ago, which was his way of saying that he is very fond of him. He took us to his house just outside the city and gave us of his liquid hospitality and showed us the most complete house I've seen under one roof.

Our trip is a success. I've got to go to the train. Kiss my baby.

Your Harry

### **End of the Trails**

While Truman was away from home building support for the National Old Trails Road, AASHO was finalizing plans for the U.S. numbered highway system.

In general, the major named trail associations accepted the need for an orderly, uniform system of marking, while wanting to preserve their own connected routing. Some of that interest in preservation was reflected in the numerous inquiries BPR received from Congress about specific named trails. In one case, congressional interest went beyond letters.

On March 15, 1926, Senator Park Trammell of Florida introduced S. Res. 169 asking BPR to "make no change in the marking and designating of interstate public highways which would bring about a discontinuance of the designation and marking of said highways by names as heretofore adopted." Chief MacDonald advised Cyrus Avery that the resolution had been made as a result of a "determined effort" by trails people to defeat the U.S. numbering plan. MacDonald said he had spoken with Senator Trammell to explain that nothing would prevent the States from allowing trail markings. As a result, Senator Trammell had withheld the resolution, but MacDonald was still concerned that the numbering plan might be defeated by what he described as "a great deal of false and mischievous propaganda." [Kelly, page 168; S. Res. 169, 67th Congress, 1st Session, "Designation of State Highways," *Congressional Record-Senate*,

March 15, 1926, page 5593; “Designation of State Highways,” *Congressional Record-Senate*, March 25, 1926, page 6217]

The most contentious issue – placement of U.S. 60 – remained to be settled after several options had been rejected by Governor Fields or by Avery, Page, and Piepmeier. On April 30, 1926, with MacDonald acknowledging the merit in Governor Fields’s argument, the three State highway officials met in Springfield, Missouri, as Kelly described:

The three men got together in Springfield at the hometown of Avery’s friend and fellow highway supporter John T. Woodruff. Most likely, the men met in Woodruff’s Colonial Hotel.

By this time, Cy was critically aware that the whole highway numbering system was in peril. It had always been far more important to him to have his highway through Tulsa than the number it carried. He had been upset by the high-handed manner in which the number had been changed and distraught over money expended for now-useless signage and maps, but it was Piepmeier more than Cy who was truly wrought up over the situation.

After quite some discussion, Cy led the conversation around to the possibility of adopting one of the alternative numbers that had not yet been considered. He asked Page to look into the numbers that were left over. There were not many; with the way the numbering system had come down, after the major east-west highways ending with zero and the major north-south highways ending with one or five, the joint board had quickly given other numbers to bypasses, alternative routes, and the rest of the selected primary roads: odd numbers for north/south roads and even numbers for east/west roads.

Page went back through his records to a report by Markham that listed unused numbers. Out of the twenty-four unused single- and double-digit numbers, Page suggested that sixty-six might work.

Sixty-six.

To Avery that sounded like it might be a good choice. It may have been that he realized how easily the number sixty-six rolls off the tongue. With his promotional bent, he may have seen design possibilities in the rounded back of the double sixes. And it is not unlikely, given the era’s interest in the occult and spiritual, that at least one of the three men recognized the double sixes as a master number. In numerology, this particular master number was known to bring material pleasures and success. By mid-afternoon Piepmeier was on board and the decision was made.

At four o’clock in the afternoon of April 30, 1926, Avery sent a brief telegram to MacDonald: “Regarding Chicago to Los Angeles Road, if California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and Illinois will accept Sixty-Six instead of Sixty we are willing to agree

to this change. We prefer Sixty Six to Sixty Two.” The telegram was signed Avery and Piepmeier.

Some negotiations were needed to complete the decision. As BPR’s chief engineer, P. St. John Wilson, observed, the agreement meant that U.S. 60 would begin in Virginia, but end in Springfield, Missouri, not the West Coast, while U.S. 70 would begin in North Carolina, but end in Arizona, closer, but still not on the West Coast – both with termini on the new U.S. 66. This would, he said, “upset the general theory of numbering.” As Kelly pointed out, however, “Not surprisingly, no one else cared about the niceties of the theory, at least not enough to stop the highway system’s newfound momentum.” [For a detailed account of these events, see Kelly, pages 155-175]

In July, Kentucky agreed to this arrangement – U.S. 60 from Newport News to Springfield, and U.S. 66 from Chicago to Los Angeles. When James informed Avery of this news, Avery wrote to thank James for his interest in finding a solution. As for the Chicago to Los Angeles highway, "We assure you that it will be a road through Oklahoma that the U.S. Government will be proud of." As for the U.S. 60 shields that the States had placed on the road, we "will have to junk them."

(Although Route 66 would, indeed, become a road America could be proud of, neither Avery nor Piepmeier would be around to make it happen. Piepmeier submitted his resignation in December 1926 to accept a private business opportunity. In Oklahoma, Governor Martin E. Trapp was succeeded by Governor Henry S. Johnston, who dismissed Avery and Page. As for Fields, his term as Governor of Kentucky ended on December 13, 1927.)

In the first week of August, AASHO’s executive committee approved the complicated deal. They also wrangled with a few other lingering debates over numbers.

By November, when AASHO was in Pinehurst, North Carolina, for its annual meeting, only a few cases remained to be settled by the executive committee on November 8. In all, the executive committee had acted on requests from the State highway agencies seeking 132 changes in routing or numbering. The network of U.S. numbered highways had expanded to 96,626 miles. The time had come for AASHO to adopt the Joint Board's proposal, as modified during the past year.

Perhaps approval was inevitable, but as E. W. James reported to AASHO on the work of the executive committee, he brought the subject up. He could not speak for the executive committee, he said, but he would express his personal view. His words reflected the tension and frustration he had experienced over the past year and a half in mediating disputes about the numbered highway network that had nearly doubled in length during that time – while fending off entreaties by and on behalf of the named trail associations:

I urge the immediate adoption of the system as now laid out. It is not perfect. After 18 months almost continuous experience with the work I am convinced that to leave the case for further consideration will not improve it. So far as it contains errors of

arrangement or selection, the worst ones are due to efforts to meet narrow local viewpoints, and this condition has become more and more pronounced as the requests for changes have come from the States. The Joint Board started out with a broad general conception of the country as a whole and the nationwide significance of a great system of routes. We should not announce an opportunity for further revision but adopt the system as nearly as possible as it now comes from the Executive Committee.

It was, moreover, too difficult to continue making changes. James had canvassed the States and found that 22 States had nearly completed marking their U.S. highways. Signing was underway in 10 States while another 14 had ordered the signs to be manufactured. Only two States had not responded:

This means that the system is rapidly being crystallized. Changes can not be made satisfactorily without altering signs now in place, and in fairness to the States such changes should not be asked.

The fact that 32 States have the work far advanced indicates the reception which the plan has had and argues well for its ultimate complete success. [James, E. W., "Executive Committee Report on Numbering of United States Highways," *American Highways*, January 1927, page 41]

On November 11, AASHO adopted the U.S. numbered highway system.

Not everyone was happy about the new numbering plan. Henry Bourne Joy, president of the Packard Motor Car Company and president of the Lincoln Highway Association, was so bitter that he wanted to send, but did not, a note to President Coolidge, his Cabinet, and all Members of Congress:

The Lincoln Highway, a memorial to the martyred Lincoln, now known by the grace of God and the authority of the Government of the United States as Federal Route 1, Federal Route 30, Federal Route 30N, Federal Route 30S, Federal Route 530, Federal Route 40 and Federal Route 50.

Ernest McGaffey expressed his concerns in humorous fashion by suggesting that "substituting arithmetic for history, mathematics for romance" opened illimitable prospects for innovation. Why, he asked, burden the minds of school children with the events of yesteryear? "Perish the thought." Why not number our Presidents ("let George Washington hereafter be known as No. 1"), our Senators ("numbered according to seniority, with a judicious sprinkling in of ciphers where necessary"), our Supreme Court justices, our rivers, our mountains, our States, our Governors, our Mayors, and certainly our oceans (No. 1 and No. 2)?" He noted:

They were all very well in their day, but they have no claim on the "American" Association of State Highway Officials and the Federal Bureau of Public Roads.

In short, McGaffey wrote, the trail signs would come down, tossed aside as so much useless junk. "Logarithms will take the place of legends, and 'hokum' for history." [McGaffey, Ernest, "Numbering Highways of the United States," *Highway Engineer and Contractor*, February 1928, pages 31-33]

Even after AASHO adopted the U.S. Numbered Highway System in November 1926, Pennsylvania's Connell would raise concerns, not with the overall plan, but about the numbering of Pennsylvania highways, particularly the splitting of named trails among several numbers. (For information on the dispute, see "U.S. 22 – The William Penn Highway" on this Website.)

*The New York Times* quoted the *Lexington Herald* of Kentucky:

The traveler may shed tears as he drives down the shady vista of the Lincoln Highway, or dream dreams as he speeds over a sunlit path on the Jefferson Highway, or see noble visions as he speeds across an unfolding ribbon that bears the name of Woodrow Wilson. But how in the world can a man get a kick out of 46 or 55 or 33 or 21?

*The Times* added:

This is part of the effort to "save the souls of the national highways." For it seems the United States Bureau of Roads has officially changed their names to numbers and has sprinkled the highways with signs that bear cold numerals instead of names that glow in American history. [ "Numbers for Names," *The New York Times*, June 18, 1927, page 16]

Despite such sentiments, the U.S. numbered highway system proved its worth, almost immediately rendering the named trails and their booster associations obsolete.

As for the National Old Trails Road, the new numbering system broke up the route, with the longest segments split among U.S. 40 and U.S. 66. According to AASHO's first log of the United States Numbered Highways, published in 1927, U.S. 40 was a 3,205-mile highway from Atlantic City, New Jersey, to San Francisco. The route went through Baltimore and connected with the National Old Trails Road at Frederick, Maryland, then generally followed the older National Road to Missouri.

In Missouri, U.S. 40 followed State Route 2, partly on the old named trail but following the Victory Highway on other parts. From Marshall to Waverly the National Old Trails Road was part of U.S. 65 (St. Paul, Minnesota, to Ferriday, Louisiana). From Waverly to Kansas City, the old trail was part of U.S. 24 (Pontiac, Michigan, to Kansas City).

In Kansas, the new numbering stirred up the rivalry between the Old and New Santa Fe Trails. As discussed earlier, both wanted to be on a two-digit, zero-based number, not a three-digit number. AASHO's executive committee approved a split. The Old Santa Fe Trail became U.S. 50 North from Baldwin City to Larned. At Larned, U.S. 50 North left the National Old Trails Road for a detour through Jetmore before meeting the main line again at Garden City. The

New Santa Fe Trail, and the segment of the National Old Trails Road between Larned and Garden City, became U.S. 50 South.

In the Southwest, AASHO modified the numbers assigned to the National Old Trails Road in Colorado and New Mexico. The National Old Trails Road between La Junta and Trinidad was U.S. 350. South of Trinidad, the road became U.S. 85 (from the international boundary north of Ambrose, North Dakota, to Las Cruces, New Mexico) through Las Vegas, Santa Fe and Albuquerque. The number was continued along the National Old Trails Road branch to Socorro, then continued south to a terminus at Las Cruces.

U.S. 66, the Chicago-to-Los Angeles highway crossed Oklahoma and Texas before joining the National Old Trails Road in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The AASHO log listed the main contact points:

New Mexico Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Los Lunas, Grants, Gallup to the New Mexico-Arizona line west of Lupton.

Arizona Beginning at the New Mexico-Arizona State line west of Lupton via Navajo, Adamana, Holbrook, Winslow, Flagstaff, Williams, Ashfork, Seligman, Peach Springs, Kingman to the Arizona-California line west of Topock.

California Beginning at the Arizona-California State line west of Topock via Needles, Ludlow, Daggett, Barstow, Victorville, Pasadena, San Bernardino, Los Angeles to San Fernando.

By July 1926, with the battle over "60" resolved, Cyrus Avery was determined to promote the new highway in the manner of the named trail associations. "We designed Route 66 as the most important highway in the U.S. and it will carry more traffic than any other road in America." On April 2, 1927, he took the lead in forming a Missouri corporation called the U.S. 66 Highway Association, with his friend and associate, John Woodruff, as president. Avery was State vice-present for Oklahoma. The route was, the association stated on all its literature, "The Main Street of America," a slogan once applied to several named trails, including the National Old Trails Road, the Lincoln Highway, and the Roosevelt Midland Trail. The phrase also was appropriated by the U.S. Highway 40 Association. [Kelly, pages 190-193]

If E. W. James's words to AASHO at Pinehurst in 1926 contained a hint of desperation about approval of the uniform plan, a relieved James could assure AASHO members in 1933:

After nine years the wisdom of the course pursued can no longer be questioned. The Joint Board designated a total of 75,000 miles of routes to be marked and provided a method for increasing this number as additions became desirable. At the present time the system comprises 124,758 miles. The trail associations so far as they cause embarrassment or annoyance have almost entirely disappeared. Several at once converted themselves into proponents of one or the other of the principal numbered U.S. highways. For several years, the "U.S. 40 Association" was active but it was soon seen

that the plans of the several States for systematic construction were actually producing the very results for which the earlier associations stood, and it became evident that their continued existence was no longer necessary . . . .

The present scheme needs no defense, because it has the merits of being easily extensible to include any reasonable additions, has that impersonal aspect which resists all local favoritism, and has actually accomplished the purpose for which it was created.

[“Making and Unmaking a National System of Marked Routes,” *American Highways*, October 1933, pages 16-18, 27]

But perhaps AASHO expressed it best in a statement issued in 1927:

Probably there is no single item which shows the value of federal and state co-operation more than the work of the officials of the state highway departments and the Bureau of Public Roads in the selection of a limited system of roads to receive national numbers, so that people may travel across the continent following the same number.

The named trails served a valuable purpose in their day, but they began to pass into history when AASHO adopted the U.S. numbered highway system on November 11, 1926. Today, their remnants are scattered across the map. A motorist can still travel bits of roads carrying the old names – the Bankhead, the Dixie, the Jefferson, the Lee, the Lincoln and many others – although for residents of the towns they pass through, the origins of the names often have been lost in time, part of the unknown history of America.

### **Madonna of the Trail – D.A.R. 1927**

On April 22, 1927, during the thirty-sixth Continental Congress of D.A.R. in April 1927, Mrs. Moss reported on the activities of the National Old Trails Road Committee.

She began:

Daughters, it is a great privilege and honor to introduce to you the grand old patriot of the Old Trails Road, the Honorable Ezra Meeker. He wishes to say a word to you.

Honorable Ezra Meeker: History is recorded and the history of this nation is written by the battles over the Old Trail and by the movement of the pioneers who by their actions extended the boundaries of this nation to the Pacific.

I want to invite your cooperation in recording permanently that great action, not only by the men but of the courageous women. Seventy-five years ago I crossed over this Oregon trail with a little courageous wife. I am here the only survivor in this generation.  
(Applause.)

Meeker and his wife had crossed from Iowa to Oregon Territory in 1852. In his 70s, Meeker began seeking support for placing monuments along the old trail, including by retracing the trail in 1906-1907 in an ox-drawn covered wagon. At 97 years of age, he was still promoting his cause. He was in Washington for a speech at 2 p.m. that same day at Memorial Continental Hall to tell D.A.R. about plans to use the revenue from the sale of Oregon Trail memorial half dollars to build a million-dollar pioneer memorial in Washington. According to the April 21 edition of *The Washington Post*:

He spoke last night at the Waugh Methodist church, Third and A Streets northeast. Recently he placed on sale at the Riggs National Bank, the memorial coins authorized by Congress. He plans to set aside one-third of the amount realized for the pioneer memorial. To this end steps already have been taken to incorporate a branch of the [Oregon Trail Memorial] association in Washington. ["D.A.R. Convention Notes," *The Washington Post*, April 21, 1927, page 5]

Mrs. Moss began her presentation by reciting a poem that President Harding had spoken during his Voyage of Understanding in Meacham, Oregon, before 30,000 people on July 3, 1923. The occasion was the dedication of a monument to the Old Oregon Trail and of a named trail called the Old Oregon Trail Highway, with Meeker in attendance:

There are no new worlds to conquer,  
Gone is the last Frontier  
And the steady grind of the wagon train  
Of the sturdy pioneer;  
But their memories live like a thing divine,  
Treasured in heaven above,  
For the trail that led to the glorious West  
Was the wonderful trail of love.

The D.A.R., Mrs. Moss said, "caught the vision of this 'Thing Divine' – this great spirit of the pathfinder, the trail blazer – and we have loved it and cherished it for many years, and we have sworn our allegiance to the upbuilding, preservation and marking of this great transcontinental Old Trails Road, the longest continuous track in the world and probably the trail of the greatest tragedies – as the greatest memorial that can be or will ever be preserved to honor American pioneers."

She talked about the origins of the Old Trails movement. She referred to the Cumberland Pike, the Pony Express, the Santa Fe Trail, and of course, the Oregon Trail:

Here may I stop long enough to say that these time-worn, time-honored names ring in our ears like sweet old refrains. They spell hardships you and I will never know. They interpret the fortitude and ever-abiding hope of the women. They speak to us of the old prairie schooner slowly wending its way, and when we read the fascinating history and romances told of the Oregon Trail alone, and picture that covered wagon moving, dust begrimed, across river and plain, with the sacred burden of the dead mother and the little

children unattended, we know that the names of these old trails are written in blood and spelled out in countless graves along the way, and can never be supplanted by numbers cold and meaningless; but, if the "Powers that Be" insist on such a desecration, then at least dignify the name and character of The National Old Trails Road by giving it one number across the continent, and let it be known as "Number One."

AASHO had just published the first official log of the U.S. Numbered Highway System, so that change was unlikely to happen. Within this grid of numbers, north-south U.S. 1 was the main East Coast road.

Despite the many old trails her committee had called attention to, "the D.A.R. also had the vision of a national highway, an ocean-to-ocean highway, built on the sacred ground of these famous old trails as a memorial to our pioneer patriots, claiming such a highway had for the present day social, economic, and commercial value." As mapped by a former chairman, Mrs. Van Brunt, it was "the most practical, the most historic, and the most scenic of any suggested as a transcontinental highway:

And the D.A.R. were convinced that such a monument would not only honor the dead, but would serve the living. The D.A.R. entered into the movement with heart and soul and all the energy they possess. The chairman at that time suggested that red, white, and blue bands be painted on telephone poles to mark the National Highway with the national colors, and Daughters far and wide took the paint pot and brush in hand and, with little or no assistance, painted the red, white, and blue strips around the telegraph posts in front of the farms and home, and the slogan for that day's traveler was "Follow the flag of the D.A.R."

Now, while our D.A.R. committee gave the first organized impetus to this plan of a pioneer highway across the continent, and issued the first map, named the road, originated the original road sign and painted it on the poles, and introduced a bill in Congress calling upon the Government to build the road, we gratefully acknowledge the impetus and far-reaching power to this movement by the National Old Trails Road Association, which states in its by-laws that it organized to "assist the D.A.R. in carrying forward their plan." Like the wise men of old, we have followed the same bright star all these years together, and with the exception of a very few miles, the National Old Trails Road has been built and is a hard-surfaced road from ocean to ocean, and whereas the pioneer of the earlier day traveled months to reach the Western Coast, it is now a matter of a few days' pleasant travel . . . .

And to remember that at the present time the National Old Trails Road is the most popular transcontinental highway, as statistics of national park associations and automobile clubs show that more cars traverse the National Old Trails Road than any other highway. This part of the committee's intent and purpose has been carried out in full, but the D.A.R. organization has still to erect their memorial monuments on this great memorial highway . . . .

It is with this thought in mind that the D.A.R. will fulfill their pledge, to wit: To erect in each of the twelve States through which the National Old Trails Road passes . . . one marker or monument of dignified and pretentious proportions to cost approximately one thousand dollars each – these markers to be as near alike in size and design as will be consistent with the location and surroundings, and each marker to definitely mark an historical spot or commemorate some great act of historical interest of the Revolutionary period; these markers to bear, with other inscriptions, the insignia of the National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, and to be known as the National Old Trail Road Memorial Markers.

She discussed the chosen design:

Numbers of letters and suggestions for the “Memorial Markers” were received by the National Chairman from all sections, and every one expressed the hope that we would not erect the old-style “tombstone” marker, or “gravestone” style, or the regulation boulder type, but that we would erect some sort of a monument that would be truly representative and distinctively a memorial monument, worthy of our National Society, the Daughters of the American Revolution. The vision that your National Chairman has long had fitted right into such a description – a *monument, not a marker* – to be the figure of a pioneer mother, to be known as “The Madonna of the Trail.”

After quite extensive investigations, it was found that the cost of same, carved in stone or granite, was prohibitive and could not be considered. Finally, the attention of the National Chairman was drawn to the composite stone known as “*algonite stone*.” It is a composite, poured mass, more dense, even more solid, than many kinds of stone; made of many of the everlasting materials, crushed granite, crushed marble, crushed gravel and stone and cement, and a “chat” that is the screening from lead ore, used as a backing. It is very hard when finished, requires the services of a sculptor, and is termed *everlasting*. It was found upon investigation that many very beautiful monuments had been erected, and that such sculptors as Lorado Taft considered this composite stone worthy of their consideration. Mr. Taft speaks of it as “a medium for sculpture which is as flexible as plaster and ultimately as hard as rock, that might in time not only give a new character to our building arts, but very greatly assist in crystallizing American ideals.” The beautiful monument in Washington Park, Chicago, called “March of Time,” was expressed in sculpture by Mr. Taft, and is cast in this composite stone.

The Black Hawk Indian Statue in Illinois is another work of art in composite stone, as also are the four figures on the High School in Little Rock: Ambition, Preparation, Personality, and Opportunity . . .

When the National Chairman submitted a tentative design and suggestion to the Algonite Company for the figure of a Madonna of the Trail, to see if such a monument would be within our reach financially, it was estimated that the amount of our fund would cover the cost of the twelve monuments, but would not pay the cost of freight or the erection, which meant, of course, that we had to have more money; and to face such a situation

was more than impossible to the National Chairman after she had definitely stated to chapters that no more funds would be solicited for the National Old Trails Road Marker Fund.

In the meantime, the National Old Trails Road Association, with headquarters in Kansas City (Judge H. S. Truman, President), was seeking the assistance and cooperation of the Daughters of the American Revolution National Old Trails Road Committee, and at the request of your National Chairman they sent valuable information in the form of books, pamphlets, etc., about the Old Trails Road to each Vice-Chairman and each State Chairman. They also intimated that they would lend us very material aid and cooperate with our committee in the program we had for marking the National Road, providing we would not erect any more "grave stone" markers. Upon this advice, your National Chairman went to Kansas City and held conference with Judge Truman and Mr. Frank Davis, the Secretary, and, to state facts concisely, came home with this written statement signed by them both:

National Old Trails Road Association  
Headquarters and Offices of Manager  
1018 Central St., Kansas City, MO.

#### THE GRAND CANYON ROUTE

To the National Old Trails Committee of the  
Daughters of the American Revolution:

The National Old Trails Road Association will assist your committee in the erection of memorial monuments on the National Old Trails Road by guaranteeing the expense of erection of same; and we will assist the committee in the location of the sites for these monuments.

National Old Trails Road Assn.

(Signed) "Harry S. Truman"

(Signed) "Frank A. Davis."

"The above is with the proviso that the monuments be in form and class entirely different from the boulder or tombstone variety.

(Signed) "Harry S. Truman"

(Signed) "Frank A. Davis."

And I trust that this offer will be acceptable to the Thirty-sixth Congress.

That much settled for the time being, your National Chairman returned home and proceeded to have designs drawn, none of which was entirely satisfactory. Finally, a well-known sculptor in St. Louis produced in wax a composite design of the ideas expressed in the designs submitted and by the National Chairman – a miniature statue of the Madonna of the Trail as your National Chairman has visioned it.

The figure before you was accepted by the National Board last Saturday, April 16th, as the Memorial Monument to mark the Memorial Highway, as stipulated in resolution accepted at Congress April, 1924.

You will note the figure is that of the typical “Mother of the Covered Wagon Days,” strong and determined, faithful and true. This model in wax is one foot in height, and in the scale of measurements is on a base of four feet. The monument to be erected will be approximately eight times as high and in proportion, making it between eight and nine feet high, to be on a base six feet in height.

The paramount idea was not to have a figure of too many angles and too many outstanding, jutting features that would project and be broken easily, but that it should be a well-rounded figure that would look better from a distance than close up. Any change can be stipulated. Any color can be named, but a real warm granite color would be more suitable than a dead white; in other words, more granite used in the composite stone than marble. This figure in miniature simply indicates the idea of “The Madonna of the Trail,” and the National Committee hopes it will meet with the approval of every Daughter in the Society; and we hope every State in the Union will point to these monuments with pride as they pass along this great highway as a great national and universal tribute of a greater love, as a nation, to our mothers – and our fathers – of the Covered Wagon Days.

In accepting the cooperation of the National Old Trails Road Association, it would be a courtesy and a great help, of course, to accept their assistance on the committee also, to help determine the location of the site of each of the monuments in the twelve states in which they will be erected.

A date will be set, fixing a time limit before the expiration of which all requests for monuments must be formally submitted. Each request must be accompanied by the reasons upon which the request is based.

The National Old Trails Road Association have offered to use their Publicity Department and give each one of the twelve ceremonies on these twelve occasions, not only State-wide publicity, but nation-wide; and your chairman feels that with their interested cooperation, we shall be able to put over this marking program in a very big way!

She concluded her report with another poem:

Down the old trails, unscathed by worldly schemes,

The men seeing visions; the women dreaming dreams;  
For these pioneer women who knew not the word fail,  
What could be more fitting than “The Madonna of the Trail?”

[*Proceedings of the Thirty-Sixth Continental Congress of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, April 1927, pages 533-539*]

According to Fern Ioula Bauer, “All records indicate that it was a picture of Sacajawea’s statue in Portland, Oregon, that inspired Mrs. Moss to create our Monuments.” It had been dedicated on July 6, 1905, during the Lewis and Clark Exposition. In fact, “the Statue of Sacajawea was much more than an inspiration – it had a big impact on Mrs. Moss” because the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery had begun its western expedition in St. Louis. “There can be no doubt that St. Louis paid close attention to the celebration held in Portland, and Mrs. Moss was one of the chief observers.”

Sacajawea’s story was little known until 1900 when Mrs. Emery Dye wrote a bestselling book, *Conquest*, that told the dramatic story. “Overnight, Sacajawea became a household word. Without a doubt, Mrs. Moss read *Conquest*, watched with interest as Sacajawea’s statue became a reality, and fully understood its significance.”

The thought of this woman, Bauer wrote, who had done so much to make the explorers’ mission

a success “must have laid dormant for many years in the fertile mind of Mrs. Moss”:

“Just as Sacajawea was rightfully honored for her valuable contribution to America so should the women who endured so much in settling this land be honored and immortalized.” When the opportunity presented itself, this idea surfaced. She caught a vision of “A thing divine” and conceived the idea of our “Madonna of the Trail” Monuments.

Mrs. Moss and her son John developed the design over 5 months before they were ready to proceed in 1927. First, they needed an architect, and found one in St. Louis:

August Leimbach was an architectural sculptor whose line of work was in the design and execution of the decorative scheme of public buildings. He had worked on buildings at the 1915 San Francisco World’s Fair and on buildings in Salt Lake City, Illinois, Missouri and Texas. He had not entered the competition to design and model the Madonna of the Trail Monuments.

Three days before Mrs. Moss was to leave for a DAR meeting in Washington, D.C., the head of a stone manufacturing company who was to make up the statues suggested to Mr. Leimbach that he create and submit a design. In just three days he had a model to show Mrs. Moss, who was most pleased. A few days later she sent him a telegram asking

him to send the model to her, which he did. A few days later she sent him another telegram awarding him the contract. He commented, "I doubt if any other sculptor ever created a design and had it accepted in such a short time."

In an article in *Federal Illustrator*, quoted by Bauer, Leimbach explained:

The monument "The Madonna of the Trail" was modeled for art-stone (granite) and done in a time less than a month to be placed in twelve states from Maryland to California as a trail marker on the Old National Trails. The idea I had, when I modeled the design was this: The pioneer mother with her two children was waiting for the father at her block-house in the wild West, for the father did not come home as he had promised. She, believing him to be in danger, put her little child in a blanket, grasped the gun and with the boy ran out in the field to look for the father. [Bauer, pages 6-18]

### **Two-Way Trip Across Country**

With the country still in the "Roaring 20s," stunt driving could catch the public interest as in years past.

In June 1927, L. B. Miller set a record for a round-trip transcontinental trip on two of the country's most famous named trails. Unlike Cannonball Baker and other long-distance record setters, Louis Miller, in his 50s, did not do stunts for a living. He was the manager for West Coast Operations of the Victor X-Ray Corporation. He sought long-distance records as a hobby. After pursuing city-to-city records, he sought his first transcontinental record in 1925, driving his Wille Sainte Clair Roadster on the Lincoln Highway. [Hokanson, page 103]

At 10 a.m. on May 31, 1927, Miller drove his Chrysler Imperial "80" Phaeton out of San Francisco bound for New York City on the Lincoln Highway. His goal was to break the transcontinental driving record he had set in August 1926. He reached New York City on June 3 – his 3,385-mile trip had taken 79 hours and 55 minutes. He had beaten his own record by 3 hours and 17 minutes.

He did not linger to celebrate his success. He stayed in New York City only long enough to get his time stamped at 8:55 p.m. At 8:56 p.m., he began the drive to Los Angeles via the National Old Trails Road. From a map of the trip, he appears to have driven across New Jersey and intersected the National Old Trails Road in southwestern Pennsylvania. After driving 3,336 miles, he reached Los Angeles in 86 hours and 20 minutes later.

Overall, he had driven 6,721 miles in one minute less than 7 days. The time was clocked officially by the Western Union Telegraph Company and verified by the Lincoln Highway Association and the National Old Trails Road Association. The two-way record was official.

On arriving in Los Angeles, Miller told reporters:

I made a one-way transcontinental record two years ago by driving from New York to San Francisco in 110 hours. This record was broken, but last August I got it back again. Now I've broken my own record, and the other fellows have something to shoot at. The new mark we made going East this time will stay put for the one-way trip, I guess, and this round-trip record is going to tax the abilities of any one to better.

*The Washington Post* reported:

Miller was accompanied in his grueling ordeal by J. E. Wieber, of Portland, Oreg., who was his companion on the one-way record trip last August.

Neither man was able to sleep more than a few minutes at a time during the week, and their only nourishment was black coffee and orange juice carried in thermos bottles, supplemented by an occasional brick of ice cream picked up at filling stations under orders wired ahead. In spite of lack of sleep and inadequate food, both Miller and Wieber were in excellent physical condition on their arrival in Los Angeles, apart from the loss of a few pounds of weight, a fact all the more remarkable in Miller's case, as he is in his fifty-fourth year. This absence of exhaustion, in his opinion, is striking proof of the unusual riding ease of the Chrysler car.

The Stover Signal Engineering Company of Racine, Wisconsin, sponsored the two-way run by Miller and Wieber. The company's sponsorship was intended to demonstrate the value of the newly perfected Neo-Ryan non-glare headlight for night driving. Chrysler also used the record-setting drive in its advertising. An ad in *The New York Times* on June 19, 1927, was headed:

**All America Applauds  
the  
Triumphs of Chrysler  
In Speed in Stamina**

Setting new world's records for speed and stamina among stock cars throughout the world, Chrysler in the last four weeks has thrilled all America with further new proofs of performance leadership.

The ad highlighted two events:

**89.091 Miles in One Hour**

Driving a stock Chrysler Imperial "80" Sport Roadster of 288.6 cu. in. piston displacement, at the Atlantic City track on May 14th, Ralph DePalma (under A.A.A. supervision) covered 89.091 miles in one hour – the American record for cars of less than 300 cu. in. piston displacement and within seven-tenths of a mile of the free-for-all stock car record, established by a car in the 450 cu. in. class.

Miller's cross-country drive was the other event:

### 6720 Miles In 167 Hours

Starting from San Francisco on May 31st, in his personally-owned Chrysler Imperial "80" Phaeton, Mr. L. B. Miller, of Racine, Wis., accompanied by Mr. John Wieber, of Portland, Ore., drove 3,385 miles to New York in 79 hours, 55 minutes, breaking the former transcontinental mark by 3 hours and 17 minutes. Turning around without losing a minute in New York, Mr. Miller and his aide sped back to the Coast, reaching Los Angeles on June 7th, covering the 6720 miles of the round trip in 167 hours, 59 minutes – a whole season's driving in a week's time – an average of 40 miles an hour for the entire distance – an achievement without precedent.

Not everyone was impressed by the trip. *Michigan Roads and Pavements* wrote that such records "are merely relative and informative." For the ordinary motorist, "it only tells him that one can travel across the continent in a motor car in several hours less time than he can in a railroad train." The magazine explained that Miller took the Lincoln Highway east and "another route" west:

Mr. Average Motorist, reading an account of Miller's performance, will not be prompted by any desire to cross the continent with similar speed; but he will receive the impression that it is now possible to drive a motor car from coast to coast at reasonable speed and in reasonable comfort. He will believe that America has highways that the day of motor driving has arrived. [sic] And he will be right.

[“Breaks Record Crossing U.S.,” *The Baltimore Sun*, June 19, 1927, page TA12; “Chrysler Hangs Up New Cross-Country Round-Trip Record,” *The Washington Post*, June 19, 1927, page A2; “Pacific to Atlantic and Back in a Week,” *Michigan Roads and Pavements*, June 30, 1927, page 8]

### Locations for the Monuments

In April 1928, when the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution assembled in Washington for their Thirty-Seventh Continental Congress, Mrs. Moss had much to report.

She did not repeat the history of the National Old Trails Road Committee, as she had in 1926 and 1927. Instead, she began with the resolution adopted for installing monuments in each of the States along the National Old Trails Road:

To this end your Committee has been diligently working, never ceasing their labors during the entire past year; and, with the assistance of the National Old Trails Road Association, very splendid progress has been made toward the erection of a great National shrine reaching across our broad land, from ocean to ocean, to be our tribute of love and affection to the memory of the great host of Pioneer Mothers – the thousands of

“Known” and “Unknown” Mothers – whose great courage, faith, and hope are recorded in countless pages of the histories of our early America.

Your National Chairman has traveled back and forth over the National Old Trails Road 1,200 miles by auto and 2,916 by train – as far west as Albuquerque, New Mexico, and as far east as Washington, D.C. She has mailed close to 4,000 pieces of mail – books on the National Old Trails Road, maps, booklets of information on good roads in general, and circulars, all of which were supplied by the National Old Trails Road Association. Twenty-four dozen large photographs of the Monument, taken when the full-sized model was finished, were sent everywhere upon request, as well as 500 large cuts and 1,000 small cuts of the Monument. Mail all during the year has been constant and demanding, and your National Chairman has literally lived with her pen in her hand during the past year, writing hundreds of letters to interested members and to people outside of the ranks of the D.A.R. who were interested and enthusiastic about the project. Publicity Bureaus, the Extension Divisions of Universities, Editors of magazines and newspapers, have requested information, and splendid publicity has been the result; and the photograph taken the day the sculptor finished the full-sized model has been printed in papers and magazines from one end of the country to the other, bringing very favorable comment from all sections.

She had watched development of the Madonna of the Trail statues:

As you no doubt know, the small model was presented last April to the National Board and to Congress and accepted without a dissenting vote. One change was made after consideration: the shawl that was over the head of the *Mother* was replaced by a bonnet of old-fashioned type.

During the hot summer days, your National Chairman watched the figure of the Mother and her children grow under the skilled hands of the sculptor, Mr. A. Leimbach of St. Louis, who willingly took the ideas given him and fashioned them into a very beautiful, and certainly a very representative and distinctive memorial to those Pioneer Mothers of ours whose granite virtues were outstandingly great.

The figure of the Mother is a strong one, showing fortitude, perseverance, and energy in her bearing; and the foot pressed forward, as well as the grasp of the gun, expresses firm determination. Her face is one of beauty and of strong character – the face of a Mother who realizes her responsibilities, and trusts in God.

The one great outstanding feature of our statue of the Pioneer Mother and children that has been commented upon so favorably is the compactness of the group. The children are clasped to the figure of the woman, giving at once the idea of solid, substantial, heroic proportions, and not easily to be marred.

For your information, the figure is 10 feet high and weighs 5 tons. The base upon which the monument will stand is 6 feet high and weighs 12 tons. The foundation upon which

the monument stands is 2 feet above ground, which will make the monument 18 feet above ground. In color, the finished monuments are of a warm pink granite shade, the color of the Missouri native granite. The Missouri granite is used as the main aggregate in the “poured mass” of algonite stone, of which the monuments are made.

The foundation is 9 feet square, which made it necessary to secure ample-sized plots of ground for “sites” upon which to erect these monuments. On the front of the base will be the following inscription; in small letters directly under the monument will be the words:

“THE MADONNA OF THE TRAIL”

Then will come the N. S. D. A. R. Insignia, under which will come –

“N. S. D. A.R. Memorial  
To The  
PIONEER MOTHERS  
Of the  
COVERED WAGON DAYS

On the back of the base will be the words:

“THE NATIONAL OLD TRAILS ROAD”

On the two sides will be 25 words each of historical data or local commemoration. These inscriptions must be of Revolutionary Period or as early history as may be recorded for the respective localities.

She explained the process employed to decide where to install the monuments in each of the States of the National Old Trails Road:

Last year we accepted the generous offer of the National Old Trails Road Association to assist in the erection of the monuments, helping to secure the funds to defray the expenses of the National program, as well as to assist in the selection of the site upon which to erect the monument in each one of the 12 States on the National Old Trails Road. Through the office of the National Old Trails Road Association, a bulletin was sent out last spring to every town on the National Old Trails Road announcing the fact that the Daughters of the American Revolution were about ready to erect their memorial monuments on the main Ocean to Ocean Highway, the *National Old Trails Road*, requesting each community that felt it had a claim as a point of historical interest to send in their data. Your National Chairman followed these bulletins with her letter giving the plans for the campaign for sites. The “time limit” for applications to be sent in was set for August 20, 1927. Many points of interest were heard from, and a number of competitors forwarded beautifully designed brochures. These little works of art are themselves worthy of special attention.

Several States had 5 or 6 places bidding for the honor of securing the monument, but to Kansas went the distinction of being the most enthusiastic, for 10 towns entered into the contest. Each one of these 10 towns had history that no other town could boast of, and each one practically claimed to be the center of Kansas – and each, with great pride, pointed out the first school house in Kansas.

The personnel of the Committee to decide on the location or “site” for the Pioneer Mother monument in each State was as follows: The State Regent of each State, respectively; the Vice Chairman of the National Old Trails Road Committee in charge of each State; the National Chairman, National Old Trails Road Committee, D.A.R.; the President and Secretary of the National Old Trails Road Association; and one business man from each of the two first places submitting data in the State; these men to be appointed by the Chamber of Commerce in each town. This made a committee of seven.

All arrangements for the trip west to select sites were made by the gentlemen of the National Old Trails Road Association, and your Chairman finds it difficult, indeed, to adequately express her appreciation of the very business-like and thorough manner in which this entire matter was handled by these gentlemen. Judge Harry S. Truman, President, and Mr. Frank A. Davis, Secretary, of the National Old Trails Road Association, accompanied your National Chairman and the committees for each State, respectively, all the way west to Albuquerque, New Mexico, and east as far as Bethesda, Maryland, and their untiring efforts and never-ceasing courtesy and thoughtfulness made what might have been a very hard, tiresome trip one of great pleasure.

Mrs. Moss went through the State selections:

Missouri: September 28, 1927, the Missouri Committee inspected sites at Lexington and Independence, the two Missouri towns to qualify, and the Committee chose Lexington. The inspection through Missouri and as far west as Dodge City, Kansas, was made by auto, and accompanied in each State by the State Regent and the National Vice-Chairman.

Kansas: Kansas rain and Kansas mud was overshadowed by Kansas hospitality, and it took the Committee 3 days to view the sites, and, after long and serious deliberation, give the Kansas monument to Council Grove.

Arizona: Judge Truman, with Mr. Davis, his Secretary, and your National Chairman then went by train to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where they were met by the Committee from Arizona on Monday, October 3d. After listening to the claims of 3 towns in Arizona, the Committee rendered a decision in favor of Springerville.

New Mexico: Your National Chairman had the privilege and pleasure of attending two social affairs of the New Mexico State Conference in Albuquerque on October 3d, and enjoyed the hospitality extended her. On Tuesday, October 4th, the site offered by Albuquerque was inspected, and the Committee then motored to Santa Fe to inspect the

site there and review their claims. The decision for the New Mexico monument was rendered in Santa Fe, and the Albuquerque site was chosen.

Colorado: From Santa Fe your National Chairman and party proceeded to Trinidad, Colorado. A very enthusiastic local committee met us there, and we inspected the site at Trinidad on October 5, 1927. From there we drove to Las Animas, in company with the local committee from Las Animas, and after luncheon viewed the site offered us there; and then, together with the local committee from Lamar, who had driven down to Las Animas to meet us, we proceeded on to Lamar to view their sites and hear their claims to the Colorado monument. We were given a banquet that evening at the hotel, and a large community get-together meeting was held in the Elks Club.

The Committee went into executive session late that evening, discussed the sites suggested in the 3 towns in Colorado, and finally made a choice in favor of Lamar, after which your National Chairman, in company with Judge Truman and Mr. Davis, took the midnight trains back to Kansas City, arriving there on October 6 . . . .

On October 7, your Chairman arrived from this western trip, only to prepare for her trip east to confer with the committees in the respective eastern States in regard to their sites.

Maryland: On Monday, October 17, 1927, the Committee met at the Hotel Lafayette in Washington, D.C., and proceeded to inspect sites for Maryland in the following three towns: Bethesda, Frederick, and Cumberland. Although the Committee inspected a number of sites, no one was decided upon definitely, but several places offered at Bethesda are being given very serious consideration, and it seems to be the consensus of opinion of the Committee that the farthest monument to the east should be erected as near the eastern terminus of the National Old Trails Road as possible.

Pennsylvania: The Committee proceeded next day, October 18th, to Pennsylvania, inspecting sites in the two towns in Pennsylvania to qualify – Uniontown and Washington. The Committee went into executive session upon their arrival at Washington, after a very enthusiastic “get-together” meeting of Daughters and citizens, and the site offered in Washington was chosen by the Committee.

West Virginia: The Committee drove from Washington, Pennsylvania, to Wheeling, West Virginia, Tuesday, October 18th, where they were met by a committee from the Chamber of Commerce and a Committee of the representative Daughters, and together they had a very delightful banquet, after which they went into executive session and voted to give the West Virginia monument to Wheeling.

Ohio: Wednesday, October 19, 1927, the Committee drove from Wheeling, West Virginia, to Zanesville, Ohio, where we were asked to inspect 2 sites and were given historical data bearing on their claims. We proceeded immediately to Columbus, where the Committee was entertained at luncheon, and we were asked to inspect a site on the grounds of the beautiful new City Hall there. The Springfield delegation came over to

Columbus and drove the Committee back to Springfield in time for a late conference at six o'clock that evening. That night your National Chairman enjoyed the hospitality of the members of the La Gonda Chapter, D.A.R., at Springfield. A decision was rendered at a later date, and the Ohio monument was given to Springfield.

Mrs. Moss returned to St. Louis by train on October 20 "after a very successful and happy trip sight-seeing and site-hunting along the eastern half of our National Highway."

She also discussed two other States:

Indiana: The site for Indiana has not been definitely decided upon by the Committee, although the logical place for the Indiana monument is undoubtedly at Richmond. It is the choice of the Indiana Daughters and will be the choice of the Executive Committee just as soon as definite arrangements for the erection expenses can be completed. The site offered in Richmond is in a beautiful park, and it is another site that would be perpetually beautified, and constant care would be given the monument.

Illinois: The Illinois site has only recently been decided upon, and has been very appropriately voted to be located at Vandalia, on the grounds of the old State Capitol Building. The State of Illinois now owns this ground and building, and are restoring the building and beautifying the grounds. The landscape artist has been called in and the monument will be erected under the supervision of the State Welfare Department. It will face the National Old Trails Road, a few hundred feet from the Old Trails, and can readily be seen by tourists as they pass.

During the western tour, the Committee had not been able to go into California, "but when the western monuments are dedicated the Committee will then go on into California and select the site for the California monument."

Mrs. Moss reported that the first monument would be dedicated in June 1928 in Springfield, Ohio, followed by dedication of the Wheeling statue a few days later:

Your National Chairman pledged to Maryland that she should have the first monument, but because of the fact that we could not definitely decide upon the site, we are obliged to go forward with the program, erecting the one that is in readiness first. If by chance Maryland's site has been decided upon and such a thing could be done, the Maryland monument will be erected shortly after the Springfield and the West Virginia monuments. It is necessary now for the Committee to expedite matters and as quickly as possible start the program for the erections.

She commented on several of the chosen sites:

In regard to the sites that we chose in the above-mentioned places, your National Chairman wishes to remark that Missouri's site is a very beautiful one, up on the brow of a high hill overlooking the river and a beautiful new bridge. Lexington is teeming with

the history of early pioneer days, and the Committee felt that this site was very well chosen.

(The Lexington Bridge over the Missouri River was a seven-span truss bridge that opened on October 31, 1924, and dedicated on November 5. It was replaced on June 25, 2005, by the Ike Skelton Bridge, named after a U.S. Representative from the area.)

In Kansas, the site selected at Council Grove is on the right-hand side of the National Old Trails Road as you come into Council Grove approaching the new bridge. They have turned several acres of ground over to the National Society D.A.R. for a memorial park, and in this memorial park will be placed the monument to the Pioneer Mothers. They have moved many carloads and hundreds of truckloads of earth to this site since it was chosen, and the people of Council Grove have never ceased their enthusiastic work to make this site one of the most beautiful. The Boy Scouts of this town proposed to have a medallion struck of the monument, with the Madonna figure and appropriate wording, to sell as a souvenir on a small commission for the benefit of the Monument Fund, the day the Kansas monument is dedicated.

The site at Albuquerque, New Mexico, is located in a very beautiful city park known as McClelland Park. The monument will be located close to the National Old Trails Road, where it may be viewed by the tourists as they pass. Such a setting as this assures us that the monument will always be taken care of and the surroundings will be beautified.

The site for Colorado is located upon ground owned by the Santa Fe Railroad, close to the Santa Fe Station at Lamar. It can be seen by the traveler from the train, and also by the tourist as he passed on the National Old Trails Road. The National Society D.A.R. will receive a 99-year lease on this plot of ground from the Santa Fe Railroad. It is a plot of ground that will always be kept beautified, and the historical data will be recorded and register important facts regarding the old historical "Big Timbers."

We have been offered a choice of two sites in Springerville, Arizona, one of them just off the road facing the National Old Trails and southward toward the White Mountains and southern Arizona points. The other site is close at hand, in the center of the intersection of cross-highways. We are awaiting the approval of the Highway Commission of Arizona before we definitely decide which one of these sites we will take. The National Old Trails Road at this particular point connects with what is known as the Rice-Springerville Highway, later to be named The Apache Trail. The Coronado Trail is to the right about a mile.

In regard to the above-chosen sites, your National Chairman wishes to say that the site given to us for our West Virginia monument is indeed a very beautiful one. Mr. George W. Lutz, a Vice-President of the National Old Trails Road Association, who lives in Wheeling, represented the President, Judge Harry S. Truman, on the eastern trip, and through him, with the cooperation of the Park Commission and the Chamber of Commerce, two very enthusiastic affiliated bodies, the site offered is one of the finest

locations given in any State for our monument. It is at the beautiful entrance of their new park grounds, this entrance being about seventy feet wide. The Commission will spend about \$20,000 to place the Pioneer Mother monument in this beautiful location, and I am sure if she could speak for herself she would say, "I am glad I have been placed in such a beautiful spot in Wheeling."

The Pennsylvania site chosen at Washington was on the grounds of the County Court House, and was a very beautiful site, we thought at the time. However, there is a movement under consideration to change the National Old Trails Highway to the next parallel street east of the present location, and if this is done, the Committee will ask for another site on the new route of the National Old Trails Road.

The Ohio site is on the beautiful grounds of the State Masonic Home. The monument is to be placed on a beautiful knoll facing the north, near the western boundary line of the Masonic grounds, close to where the old Valley Pike joins the National Pike. If every locality seeking the honor of securing one of these monuments had entered the campaign with as much determination and as much enthusiasm as the citizens and Daughters of Springfield, it would have been a very hard task for your National Chairman to make any decision whatsoever. The Springfield Daughters and their friends "went after" the memorial monument long before they ever knew what form it was to take, and when they heard it was to take the form of the Pioneer Mother they did not cease their efforts day or night to win the prize. Their constant, local support of our big national project has been a continuous source of strength and inspiration to your National Chairman, and this little word of commendation in the annual report of the Committee is certainly due them.

Mrs. Moss said that the question she received most frequently was why the National Old Trails Road had been chosen as a memorial highway:

In answer, your National Chairman would say that "This road was built, not by the road engineers, but marked out by the Indians and the buffalo, their choice always being the quickest and best line of travel. In the olden days, day after day, year after year, was heard the music of the creaking wagon and the lowing ox. The mighty host of pioneers who crossed this highway were armed, not alone with the rifle, but with the axe and spade. They took with them, not the ammunition wagon and artillery, but herds of livestock and bales of household goods, implements of husbandry, their women and their children – evidences and guarantees of a future state, the requirements of a permanent settlement, and the basis of an American home.

"The Daughters of the American Revolution have long interested themselves in preserving all of the State and National Highways. They are sacred to us as battlefields. They record the steady triumph of peace. They were built in order that the torch of American civilization might be carried into the wilderness. The trails have not come about by accident. They are the true index of the nation's progress, the life-history of a people. That they are linked in a complete chain from ocean to ocean is not a matter of

chance, and each link represents an epoch in the growth of this Republic. They are the autograph of a nation, written across the face of a continent.”

She concluded her annual report by stating that the time had come to bring this national program to a close, “and your National Chairman fully realizes the great responsibility resting upon her and values the confidence you have reposed in her.” With the help of the committee, “she will go forward with this year’s work, endeavoring to erect for the National Society, D.A.R., a great National Shrine, each State unit to be a link in the beautiful National Memorial we are placing across this broad land of ours in the name of God and with veneration for the high ideals of our Pioneer Ancestors.”

With her report ended, Mrs. Moss exhibited the color of the monuments and the material they

were made of:

Mrs. Moss: I shall have it on the desk and anyone who wants to can see it. I would love to have you see it.

Miss Richards: Do we understand you are going to put a duplicate in every one of those cities all along?

Mrs. Moss: Yes.

Miss Richards: What are the dimensions of the monument?

Mrs. Moss: The figure of the Pioneer Mother is 10 feet high. It rests upon a base 6 feet high. That rests upon a foundation 2 feet above the ground. The entire monument is 18 feet over all. The figure weighs 12 tones, 17 tons in all. Daughters, it is a monument, not a marker. (Applause.)

Mrs. Dow (New York): I have been exceedingly interested many years. I was a member of the National Old Trails Association that issued two pictures called the “Madonna of the Trail.” They were very much admired. I wish to ask a question of information. Do you still have them?

Mrs. Moss: Those pictures were never turn over to your present Chairman. I haven’t them.

Mrs. Dow: I am very sorry. They were called the “Madonna of the Trail” and they were very beautiful.

Mrs. Sweeney (Illinois): May I say that I saw the first monument and that the Daughters of the American Revolution will be proud of this monument?

Mrs. Moss: I might say – please don’t all come at once – I have about eighteen of the large photographs of the monument with me and I would be glad to give them out as long as they last.

Miss Richards: Are they for sale or a present?

Mrs. Moss: These are paid for out of the expenses of the National Committee.

Miss Richards: Will you save one for me? (Laughter.)

Mrs. Moss: Yes. [*Proceedings of the Thirty-Seventh Continental Congress of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, April 1928, pages 162-172*]

According to the proceedings, “Mr. Harry S. Truman, president of the National Old Trails Road Association” made an address, but the address was not reprinted. *The Evening Star*, Washington’s leading newspaper, also mentioned the address:

An interesting report on the progress being made in marking the National Old Trails road was given by Mrs. John Trigg Moss, chairman of the committee in charge of that work, and Harry S. Truman, president of the National Old Trails Road Association, addressed the congress on the development of this highway. The road follows across the continent the trails of covered wagon days. [*Proceedings*, page 78; “D.A.R. Resolution Assails Pacifists,” *The Evening Star*, April 21, 1921, 1928, page 4]

### **Truman’s Take on Selection**

As described earlier, Harry Truman often wrote to his wife Bess about his daily activities while traveling the National Old Trails Road. The letters continued while he traveled the road to help select sites for the Madonna of the Trail monuments, providing a somewhat more detailed – and personal – explanation of the selection process.

August 30, 1927

Lyons, Kans. Tuesday, August 30, 1927

Dear Bess:

Yesterday as I was driving along west of Olathe I picked up the nicest looking fellow thinking he belonged somewhere around west of town and that I could put him down at home. He told me he owned a cleaning shop in Borger, Texas, and that he had been making as high as eighty dollars a day running it, but that the governor of Texas had ruined his business by sending rangers in there and chasing all the girls and gamblers out of town. Claimed he was trying to sell his cleaning machinery. Told me his name, which I promptly forgot, and asked me mine. I handed him my card and he looked at the Judge on it and said, "Well I wish I'd been in your court in K.C. yesterday, I'd have had you send me to St. Joe. I began to wonder what I had aboard and he said he was a dope fiend and that he had been since the war, got the habit in the army, and that he was either going to quit or die in the attempt. When I went north to Topeka he got out and went south, said if he went to a big town some uplifter would try to sell him dope or hire him to rob a bank. I told him if he'd come into court Monday I'd send him to St. Joe for the cure. I think he was honestly trying to quit.

I saw the big Auburn 8 that those two fellows were killed in at Council Grove. It was some wreck. They were actually driving a hundred miles an hour when they hit. A little too fast. The whole works ought to be exhibited for the benefit of the wreckless drivers' club.

Thompson couldn't go after I got there and the Mayor of Council Grove came with me. His name is Young. He owns nine farms, fifteen or twenty business buildings in Council Grove, a winter home in Florida and spends his time building and running the finest

tourist camp in the Country at Council Grove. Just worries his head off if some body at Dodge City or Lyon or some other place on the Old Trails routes a tourist around some way to miss his town. You'd think his life and bread and butter depended on how many groceries he sold in his camp and how many paid customers he had in his park. He's making about \$500.00 a month off it. Told me he had to ship 4 carloads of corn out of his grainery to make room for the new crop on just one of the nine farms. He's a very nice pleasant fellow and has invited you and me and Miss Margie to come down and stay a couple of days at his camp free. He has a slide, merry-go-round, monkeys and a dozen other things to entertain touring kids. His park is an elaborate affair.

We found the roads fine. I drove from Topeka to Council Grove in two hours and then waited around for Mr. Young to get ready until 3 o'clock then drove to Herrington and stayed an hour with Thompson and got here at seven o'clock. It is 68 miles from Topeka to Council Grove and 125 to here so you see the roads weren't very bad.

I hope you and your daughter feel fine and that you are having as hot weather as we are. Haven't needed any vest or coat either today.

Kiss the baby and tell her to kiss you for me.

Love to both, Harry

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September 1, 1927

La Junta, Colorado, Thursday, September 1, 1927

Dear Bess:

We arrived at 11:30 from Syracuse where we stayed yesterday evening. There is a Harvey House at that town but it was full when we arrived but we found a place to stay.

We stopped in Great Bend and heard that Davis and his party were there. He has a man and woman driving him out and they are getting up ads for a Natl Old Trails Map. We went uptown to find him and they told us that the party had gone. We drove to Pawnee Rock and stopped and looked around over the country and then went on to Larned but no sign of Davis. We stopped a while and then drove to Kinsley and had lunch from there to Dodge City and called on our friend Mr. Ham Bell who was Mayor of South Dodge in the old days; but still no sign of Davis. We then drove to Garden City leaving Dodge about 5 P.M. and arriving in Garden City about 5 P.M. I forgot to change my watch at Dodge so we drove 35 miles in nothing. We decided to go on to Syracuse and arrived there about 6:30. We stopped at a little town called Lakin to see their camp and there we found Davis. When we couldn't get a place in the Harvey House we went out and stayed with Davis and his gang at the camp.

We are going to Rocky Ford to the fair this afternoon and then back here and to a meeting tonight. Tomorrow morning our road meeting and then back home by Monday morning.

You should have come. The roads were like boulevards and the weather has been ideal.

Tell Marger to be a good young lady. Love to both of you.

Your Harry

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Sept 30, 1927

Dear Bess:

We left the Meuhlebach on time arrived in Olathe at 9:30 looked at their site and then went home with ex Gov. Hodges to coffee and toast served by the good looking daughters of the Hodges Bros. They each have one about eighteen. We then made a canvass of the situation and had to wait until 11:45 for the cars from Baldwin to arrive. Got to Baldwin at 1:30 where they gave us lunch and the President of Baker University told us why we should put the monument on the campus. It is a very remarkable school having been founded in the fifties and was coeducational from its founding. It is one of Kansas' three accredited Universities and has about 600 students. About four hundred couples have married from the University and there is only one divorce, happened last year. Some record I'd say.

We had supper in Burlingame where we listened to a plea for the monument by a commissioned officer in the Federal army and a man who had been over all the trails seventy years ago. He is 87 years old, had all his faculties, and made us the best speech we've heard.

We came on to Council Grove where the band met us at 9:30 P.M. march down the street in front of the cars and delivered us at the city hall where the D.A.R. women were in session. They read us the history of the town showed us the site and then I called you.

We'll be in Herington at 9:30 at Marion at 11:00 for lunch at McPherson in the afternoon and Lyons to stay all night. We are to get through all right. You should be along. I haven't spent a nickle and I can't. They won't let me even the phone call was free. Hope I see a letter at Lyons or Dodge or somewhere. We'll be in Dodge at noon Saturday. Saturday night at La Hunta [sic] at the Harvey House.

Kiss my baby and look at my sweetie for me in the mirror.

Your Harry.

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September 30, 1927

The Palace Hotel, Lyons, Kans. Sept. 30, 1927

Dear Bess and Baby:

We left Council Grove this morning at 8:30 and arrived in Herington at 9:30, where we were shown more sites and heard more conversation. Left Herington at 10:30 and arrived at Marion at 12 o'clock where we had dinner. Marion was having an old settlers picnic and didn't pay us much attention. They turned us over to an old man 87 years old who told us a lot of Indian stories and then we left for McPherson where we had a grand reception by the D.A.R. chapter. They have a beautiful little city with parks and boulevards, two colleges and a lot of history just like all the rest.

Lyons met us at McPherson and they will give us a grand banquet tonight. Tomorrow Great Bend will come and get us and then we'll go to Dodge City where we'll have lunch decide the Kansas town that gets the monument and go on to New Mexico, where we'll decide the Arizona and New Mexico points and then decide Colorado.

Kiss my baby and look at my sweetie in the glass and kiss her too.

Harry.

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Dodge City, Kans.,  
Oct. 2, 1927

Dear Bess:

The Kansas situation is settled. Council Grove won. It was a hard thing to settle but abiding by the rules and weighing all the historical data obtainable, Council Grove won.

We woke up in Lyons this morning to find it raining, and our transportation from Great Bend had stuck in the mud and didn't arrive. We went down in the salt mine, supposed to be the largest in the world. It is 1,043 miles deep and the finest looking I've seen – nineteen feet thick. The deposit was made some centuries ago by the sea. There are fourteen miles of tunnels and a theater down there. They have mules in the mine that haven't seen daylight in six years. We got some fine examples of salt . . . .

Lots of love to you and everyone else in our family (kiss the everyone else).

Your Harry

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Franciscan Hotel, Albuquerque, N.M.  
Monday, October 3, 1927

Dear Bess:

I sent you a telegram today but I couldn't tell you what a time we've had. Arizona put up its claim and I want to tell you it was some job to decide. L. S. Williams from Williams, Arizona, made the best plea I ever listened to, but Williams was like Independence – they never had done anything for the National Old Trails. Springerville, which happens to be the residence of J. W. Becker, national vice president of the N.O.T., has never missed an opportunity to boost the road and pay its money. Davis and I voted for Springerville and Mrs. Moss voted for Williams. Kingman had a little old maid here who was a member of the committee and was supposed to have an unprejudiced mind but who put forward an argument for Kingman every time a point was made for another town. Her name was [illegible] and the man from Williams named her incompetent. She was. She lost her town every opportunity to win.

The state conference of the D.A.R. for New Mexico is being held here today. They invited Davis and me to their reception this evening and I had to make a speech. Then they had refreshments. An old lady by the name of Joyce got hold of me and told me her home had been Pleasant Hill [Missouri] some twenty years ago and wanted me to recollect a lot of people who had been dead before I was born.

After she got done with me the Albuquerque delegation backed me into a corner and tried to force me promise to vote for this town for the monument. Then a Santa Fe outfit did me the same way, and then Albuquerque started all over. Santa [sic] followed us to the hotel and wouldn't let us loose and I am writing you at 1:00 a.m. at home. I've got to get up at six-thirty, meet Mrs. Moss at seven-thirty, and at 9:00 a.m. hold another court to hear this town, then drive to Santa Fe sixty-six miles, hear Santa Fe come to a decision, and then start at Trinidad, Colorado, and hear Las Animas and Larimer and decide Colorado, and then I'm coming home.

It will be Thursday before I arrive, but I'd better get this over now than to make another trip. I am crazy to see you and my baby. I don't know how much I love you till I get away for a day or two.

Kiss my baby and tell her to kiss her mamma for Daddy.

Love to you,  
Harry

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On October 4, the committee considered sites in Colorado. They considered Trinidad, La Junta, and a cite north of Las Animas on the Santa Fe Trail. The Lamar Daily News summarized their visit to that city:

Lamar cars picked up the delegation at 4:40 and arrived in this city shortly before 6 o'clock to find the main Street adorned with Flags and the High School Band in uniform. The procession moved to Santa Fe Park, the site offered by the local committee.

Mrs. Moss, Judge H. S. Truman, Independence, MO, president of the National Old Trails Association [sic], Frank Davis, Kansas City, secretary of the association and Judge Herman Bailey, Las Animas, were honored guests at a delightful dinner served at the Ben Mar Hotel at 7 o'clock. Following the dinner the party of twenty repaired to the Elks Home, where a group of members of the Fort Bend DAR and other interested local citizens met. [Quoted in Mallinson, Jane, "Harry Truman and the Selection of Sites for the DAR Madonna Statues, Part II," *Wagon Tracks*, May 1995, page 6]

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April 14, 1928

Hotel Mayfair, St. Louis, Mo. April 14, 1928

My Dear Mamma & Baby:

We left Independence at 10:40 A.M., got to Columbia at 1:40 and arrived here at 6:30 P.M.

I saw Fred in Columbia and found that he didn't know the name of the book he wanted either but I guess I can find it anyway. Al Saengli was there to meet me and try and get his guest out of trouble. I turned him over to Fred and I guess they accomplished it.

We stayed an hour in Columbia and then slipped along down here arriving in good condition all around. Old Dave Nail talked without intermission from start to finish. We just finished our dinner and Davis and Mr. Nail have gone for a walk. I am going to bed pretty soon and I am hoping I wake up in time to call you.

I had a letter from Mrs. [Alfred J.] Brosseau [President General of the D.A.R.] saying she had reserved a seat on the platform for any lady I cared to have up there and I am writing her thanking her but reserving no places for ladies.

Kiss my baby and tell her to be a good girl and maybe daddy will have something in his pocket when he gets home. I wish you were both along. Love to you both from

Your Daddy.

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April 16, 1928

Hotel Gibbons, Dayton, Ohio April 16, 1928

Dear Bess and Marger:

I had driven so far yesterday that I was too tired to write you last night. We had an excellent Sunday. Saw our Bolshinks in Vandalia and got them all straightened out and then went to Terre Haute where we made the acquaintance of the Auto Club & Chamber of Commerce while we were eating a fine dinner. Then drove to Indianapolis where we met Mr. Nail's son and daughter-in-law. They took us to dinner at the Claypool Hotel and we had a very pleasant visit. We got to Indianapolis an hour ahead of time but when we went to pull out, found our hose connection to the pump was broken and had to wait an hour and a half to fix it. There were so many of the inhabitants of Indiana in cars on the road between Indianapolis and Richmond that it took us two hours and a half to make and that [illegible] two hours late which was the cause of the late call.

We left Richmond at seven fifteen but they changed the clock on us here and made us half an hour late in spite of our half hour earlier start.

We are due in Springfield at eleven A.M. and I hope to make it. Will phone you from Wheeling.

Kiss the baby.

Your Harry.

-----

Fort Cumberland Hotel, Cumberland, MD.

April 17, 1928

Dear Babies:

We arrived here at 5:30 p.m. and the leading banker of the town wanted to take us to dinner, so we just decided to stay here all night. We are only a half-day's march by auto from the Capital anyway and we can get more rest by doing that.

Mr. Lutz came down to the hotel this morning and went over to Washington, Pennsylvania, with us where we met one of our vice presidents for Pennsylvania and had a meeting with him and the Chamber of Commerce and the president of the country club, McGinnis by name, and tried to settle the monument location for Pennsylvania. Then we went to Uniontown to a Rotary Club meeting, after which we met the president of the Chamber of Commerce and the manager of the Motor Club and found out that Washington and Uniontown are at swords' points because the former got the monument.

They've even brought in the governor and the state auto commission. They're worse than Kentucky mountaineers. Same here in Maryland. But Davis and I are going to straighten them out I believe if we can get the feminine part of the row satisfied. The local D.A.R.s in both states are at outs with Mrs. Moss and with each other.

I saw General Braddock's burial place today, was on top of the Allegheny Mountains 2,908 ft. above the sea level and there was the remains of a snowstorm of last night, just enough to see.

It has cleared off and is very pleasant tonight. We'll be in Washington at noon tomorrow. Hope to see at least four letters there from you. Tell Margie to be a good young lady and tell her to kiss her "mudder" for daddy. Wish you were both here.

Yours,  
Harry

-----

Hotel La Fayette, Washington, D.C.  
April 19, 1928

Dear Bess and Baby:

Got your letter soon as I arrived and another one this morning. I'm glad they are at last getting the bond business going. If we carry that, there'll be no stopping us from being a real court. I just had to call you last night. Maybe my phone bill will be the biggest bill I have, but what do we live for anyway. Money or nothing else matters when you have a real sweetie and a baby.

Mrs. Moss and an old maid niece of hers had dinner with us and took us to the Congress, where Secretary Davis was the main speaker [not Truman as the proceedings and *Star* had indicated]. I met the president-general and a whole string of women, from Maine to California – every one of them Mrs. Mark S. Salisbury type, but nice to talk with. We go to a reception for the Missouri delegation tonight. Glad to stop here and go down in town with Dave and Davis. We called on Reed, who was gone, and Capper and Curtis and I left a card for Hawes and George Combs. George was out too. He made a speech to the women Tuesday night and they all want to adopt him. His speech was to the Missouri women not to the whole Congress. Only Coolidge, the Cabinet, and a county judge from Missouri do that – he-haw.

Be sure and kiss my baby and other of you be good girls until I get home and after too – I'll bring you a stick of gum.

Your Harry

Truman was referring to Senator James A. “Fighting Jim” Reed of Missouri; Senator Arthur Capper (KS); Senator Charles Curtis (KS); Senator Harry B. Hawes (MO); and Representative George Hamilton Combs, Jr. (MO). [*Dear Bess*, pages 332-334, plus additional letters from the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum]

### **Saving the Names**

By 1928, the U.S. numbered highway system was an accepted way for navigating around the country. The named trails and their supporting associations were fading in importance.

That did not mean the named trail associations were not clinging to hope of revival. For example, on March 13, 1928, Representative Charles G. Edwards of Georgia introduced H.R. 12040:

#### A BILL

Requiring the names as well as the numbers of memorial highways to be given on maps and directional signs to perpetuate the purposes of such memorials.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That all highways built or maintained by and through Federal aid should be designated by numbers and by names, where such highways are known by names, on the directional signs erected along said highways and upon the maps authorized and published by the States or the federal Government; and in the case of memorial, or other distinctive highways, built or maintained by Federal-aid funds, such as the Lee, Lincoln, Washington, Jefferson Davis, Dixie, Bankhead, Victory, Atlantic Coastal, and others well known by name, shall be designated on such markers, signs, and maps, by names, as well as by numbers.*

The bill was referred to the Committee on Roads.

On April 26, 1928, not long after the visit by Truman, Davis, Mrs. Moss, Senator Capper of Kansas was even more explicit in S. J. Res 138, perhaps a result of Truman’s visit:

#### JOINT RESOLUTION

To provide for the designation of the route of The National Old Trails Road and the markers thereon.

Whereas the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution has been active for years in the work of preserving the history and sentiment attached to a transcontinental highway from the colonial East to Spanish Southwest; and

Whereas these famous trails, to wit, the Washington or Braddock Road, the Old National or Cumberland Road, the Boone's Lick Road, the Old Santa Fe Trail, and the Grand Canyon-Petrified Forest Road have been placed end to end to form a great transcontinental highway under the name of The National Trails Road [sic]: Therefore be it

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That this highway extending from Washington, District of Columbia, and Baltimore, Maryland, via the States of Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and California, to Los Angeles, California, shall hereafter be known as The National Old Trails Road.

Sec. 2. That the road herein described as The National Old Trails Road shall follow present designated highways which are as close as economic and topographical conditions will permit to the routes traveled by the pioneers in their journeys westward over said trails, which shall be via the following route:

Across the State of Maryland from Washington, District of Columbia, to Frederick, Maryland, via United States Highway Numbered 240; from Baltimore, Maryland, via United States Highway Numbered 40 to the Maryland-Pennsylvania State line.

Across the State of Pennsylvania via United States Highway Numbered 40.

Across the State of West Virginia via United States Highway Numbered 40.

Across the State of Ohio from the West Virginia-Ohio State line to the town of Brandt, Ohio, via United States Highway Numbered 40; from Brandt to Dayton via Ohio State Highway Numbered 201; from Dayton the Ohio-Indiana State line via Ohio State Highway Numbered 11.

Across the State of Indiana via United States Highway Numbered 40.

Across the State of Illinois via United States Highway Numbered 40.

Across the State of Missouri from Saint Louis to Boonville via United States Highway Numbered 40; from Boonville through Arrow Rock to Marshall via State Highways Numbered 41 and 20; from Marshall to Waverly via United States Highway Numbered 65; from Waverly through Lexington to Kansas City via United State Highway Numbered 24.

Across the State of Kansas from the Missouri-Kansas State line via United States Highway Numbered 50 to Baldwin; from Baldwin to Larned via United States Highway Number 50 north; from Larned to Kinsley via Kansas State Highway Numbered 37; from

Kinsley to Garden City via United States Highway Numbered 50 south; from Garden City to the Kansas-Colorado State line via United States Highway Numbered 50.

Across the State of Colorado from the Kansas-Colorado State line to La Junta via United States Highway Numbered 50; from La Junta to Trinidad via United States Highway Numbered 350; from Trinidad to the Colorado-New Mexico State line via United States Highway Numbered 85.

Across the State of New Mexico from the Colorado-New Mexico State line via United States Highway Numbered 85 to Socorro; from Los Lunas through Gallup to the New Mexico-Arizona State line via United States Highway Numbered 66; from Socorro through Magdalena to the New Mexico-Arizona State line via United States Highway Numbered 70.

Across the State of Arizona from the New Mexico-Arizona State line east of Springerville, Arizona, via United States Highway Numbered 70 to Holbrook; and from the New Mexico-Arizona State line west of Gallup, New Mexico, via United States Highway Numbered 66 to the Arizona-California State line.

Across the State of California via United States Highway Numbered 66 to Los Angeles.

Reference herein to United States Highway and State Highway route numbers is to those in effect January 1, 1928.

Sec. 3, That the memorial character of The National Old Trails Road may be perpetuated, it is hereby recommended to the Bureau of Public Roads, Department of Agriculture, and to the Highway departments of the States across which The National Old Trails Road as herein designated passes, that along this highway the signs on which the numbers are placed, while conforming to the size, shape, and design adopted by the American Association of State Highway Officials, shall contain a distinctive red, white, and blue color combination.

The joint resolution was referred to the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry. The committee's chairman, Representative Charles L. McNary of Oregon, transmitted the bill to the U.S. Department for Agriculture examination.

Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Renick W. Dunlap (April 1, 1925-March 6, 1933), an Ohio

farmer and former Ohio Secretary of Agriculture, replied for Secretary Jardine on May 16, 1928:

Dear Senator McNary:

Senate Joint Resolution No. 138, submitted with your letter of April 27, has been carefully examined and I feel that comment should properly go somewhat beyond the merits of the action specifically provided for by this resolution because H.R. 12040, which resembled S. J. Res. 138, but which is more general in its scope, has recently been brought to the attention of the Bureau of Public Roads of this Department.

I feel that very doubtful advantage would result from any such action as that proposed in either of these documents. Certainly, before giving specific consideration to the route to be known as The National Old Trails Road, or to any other single route for which a name has been proposed, the whole question of policy should be first carefully considered. Bills of this character in effect instruct the States to give certain names to certain trans-state highways which are parts of these named routes and further provide that the routes shall be marked in a particular way.

Inasmuch as the States have already taken in hand on their own initiative the matter of designating and marking transcontinental and interstate routes, it appears to me unnecessary that specific bills should take the time of Congress and the committees for covering some particular route, especially when it may not be satisfactory to many of the States through which it passes. I think it would be much better to leave these matters in the hands of the States.

Considered simply from the historical standpoint it would be regrettable and very easy to introduce anachronisms. The present bill contains at least two, so that its historical significance is blunted, and at least one of the instances in the present bill, as I know from previous discussion of the matter, abandons all idea of history and sentiment for the sake of purely selfish business advantage.

Should a policy of designating such routes be acceptable to the Congress, the work should certainly be well done and it is suggested in such cases that the question of routes be left entirely to the States; that the general policy should be to retain the old historic names; and that a selection of routes be insisted upon that would avoid either the duplication of names on the same route, or the duplication of routes having the same name.

I feel, however, that such a policy or such specific recognition in isolated cases, like that covered by the resolution, is more likely to result in endless controversy than in any good. An attempt to administer such acts would result in pressure being brought through every possible channel in order to influence decisions under the act. Cities large and small would attempt to influence the selection of routes and between such places there would be serious differences of opinion as to which existing present-day highway most nearly represents the historic route or trail.

You will, I think, readily appreciate the serious embarrassment of any Government agency that might be called upon to administer an act of this kind in view of the fact that there are more than 250 named trails on record in this Department and over a hundred

separate trails organizations promoting these routes. Recognition of any one trail or organization by official action would be considered discriminatory by those not so favored and recognition of all would unquestionably be ill-advised and probably impossible. It was the confusion resulting from the uncoordinated action of these voluntary organizations that led the States to take this matter into their own hands, and I believe the States have adjusted it in the most advisable and least controversial way.

I think S. J. Res. 138 would lead to endless controversy were it adopted, and I certainly do not recommend it. [National Archives at College Park, Maryland]

The reply is odd in some ways, particularly the reference in the second paragraph to the National Old Trails Road, one of the best known roads of its era, as if it were being designated by the resolution. Nevertheless, the letter reflected the official view that the named trails era of highway promotion was over.

The National Old Trails Road Association was not about to give up. AASHO had a process for considering changes in the U.S. numbered highway system, and that seemed to offer a way to proceed.

In a typed message dated June 24, 1927, George L. L. Gann of Pueblo, Colorado, offered a "Plan" for correcting what National Old Trails Road Association considered a mistake:

End U.S. 66 at Las Vegas N. Mex.

U.S. 66 is not a THROUGH NUMBER and it would not be any violation of rules to end it where ever it intersects a THROUGH NUMBER. Also the "Official" influence within the Assn. of State Highway Officials which brought about this diagonal irregularity has been removed.

Take U.S. 50 N. as now located via Pueblo to Montrose and thence south to Gallup N.Mex.

Take U.S. 50 S. from La Junta via Trinidad, Las Vegas and Santa to Gallup N.Mex.

And U.S. 50 from Gallup thru Ariz. and Calif. To Los Angeles.

Thereby giving a uniform, continuous number from Kansas City to Los Angeles.

Continue U.S. 40 S. from its present dead end at Grand Junction over the route now designated U.S. 50 to Salt Lake City and a connection with U.S. 40 and thereby making that a real thru line instead of a make believe.

In stating that the "Official" influence within AASHO had been removed, Gann was referring to the departure of Avery, Piepmeier, and others who had created the Chicago-to-Los Angeles route, initially as U.S. 60, then as U.S. 66.

Frank Davis replied to Gunn on June 27, 1927:

Dear Mr. Gann:

I wrote you on June 25 and the next day received yours of June 24th covering your findings concerning the U.S. Numbering System.

We indeed do attach much importance to this numbering system. We think it was a great work and if they had adhered to the announced plan of giving continuous numbers to routes along the "trend of travel" it would have met with little opposition.

But as it now stands there is much dissatisfaction throughout the entire country and U.S. Congressmen and Senators are being importuned by their constituents to do something about it.

The unfairness to the National Old Trails and Kansas City in giving two continuous numbers to San Francisco [U.S. 40 and U.S. 50, which ended at U.S. 40 in Sacramento] and NONE to Los Angeles and giving both Chicago and St. Louis a continuous number with a road crossing all the other through routes to Los Angeles is a glaring and outstanding irregularity in their system which the dissatisfied element all over the United States is using in their argument against the whole plan, and they are beseeching the N.O.T. to take the lead in a fight to tear down the whole system, which we are not inclined to do.

But we are taking steps to enlist the help and sympathy of Senator Reed of Missouri, who is both politically and personally a friend of our president Judge Truman.

In a letter pertaining to this U.S. Numbering system written by Thos. MacDonald of the office of public roads, to Senator Mayfield of Texas, MacDonald says "The plan to use numbers for uniform marking of important interstate road is NOT an activity of the Federal Government."

But if the correspondence that I have on file here from all over the United States is any indication, there will be proposed at the next Session of Congress some National Legislation bearing on this U.S. Numbering Stunt and unless the American Association of State Highway Officials takes some action to cover up the glaring irregularities that they have incorporated in their plan as now proposed, they are likely to land in some embarrassing situations.

We do indeed attach much importance to this numbering system and even tho the Highway Assn. may think the matter is closed, we expect to stay on the job of advocating a continuous number from K. C. to L.A. which position we can support with indisputable evidence concerning the "trend of traffic". Thanks for your interest and sympathy.

In a letter dated July 2, 1927, Davis tried to enlist support from L. D. Blauvelt, Colorado's State Highway Engineer, for a meeting to discuss the best way to protest the unfairness to the National Old Trails Road:

We expect in the very near future to stage a meeting in Southern Colorado to voice a protest against the unfairness to the National Old Trails Road of the U.S. Numbering System, and our loyal friend Mr. Geo. L.L. Gann of Pueblo writes us that you would be a valuable ally to us if you understood our position and he urged that we invite you to attend the meeting and even that we fix a date to suit your convenience.

Therefore we would like to know what dates between July 24 and August 10th you could be present at a meeting at La Junta Colo. [sic] to discuss this matter and we will try to arrange our meeting to coincide therewith.

As indicative of our position in this matter I inclose copy of my last letter to Mr. Gann; also a suggestion for relief that would conform to the plan of the Association of State Highway Officials.

We would appreciate from you a frank criticism of this suggestion, for we would rather co-operate in building up than to attempt to tear down, and if you can see your way to give us any encouragement, we will attempt to organize all Southern Colorado (even Colorado Springs and the towns on 40 S.) to support you in your own State; and our friends and Legislators from the States thru which the N.O.T. passes in support of your angle of the National legislation pertaining to this marking which is sure to be presented to the next National Congress.

Blauvelt replied on July 6, 1927, that because of the construction season, he would be unable to attend the meeting. He offered his comments in the letter:

I would suggest that the proper way to handle this matter, from your point of view, would be to submit a petition, endorsed by the Highway Departments of the various States affected by the proposed number "U.S. 50-South" to the Executive Committee of the American Association of State Highway Officials at its annual meeting in Denver, October 3rd, where I think that other matters pertaining to U.S. road numbering will be taken up and receive due consideration.

There is nothing that I could personally do at your meeting, other than advise you of the proper procedures, i.e., to take up through the affected State Highway Departments the proposed request.

On June 16, 1928, Davis wrote to AASHO's William C. Markham:

Dear Mr. Markham:

Following the plan suggested to us at the Denver meeting we have proceeded to secure the "official" endorsement of the Highway Commissions of the States effected for a single U.S. Number from K.C. to Los Angeles and to date we have such resolutions passed by every state except one, and in that one, we have been assured by our friends it will be passed.

Now as you have always been our friend I am giving you this information in advance so that you can advise us of the procedure to accomplish our object. The basis of our claim will be that the “trend of traffic” from K.C. to the Pacific Coast is overwhelmingly to Los Angeles.

We are going to miss very much the advice and help of B. L. Thompson (deceased) of Herington who has already represented us in this matter but we expect to leave no stone unturned to get righted the wrong done the N.O.T. in this U.S. Numbering System.

Please let me know your suggestions at an early date so that we will not be caught unprepared. [National Archives at College Park, Maryland]

After AASHO approved the U.S. numbered highway system on November 11, 1926, the organization considered changes only if they were submitted directly by the members of the association, namely the State highway departments. AASHO would not consider a proposal directly from the National Old Trails Road Association, even if it included State highway department concurrence. The proposal would have to come in the form of a joint proposal from all the States involved.

Davis may not have been aware that those who had conceived U.S. 66, originally U.S. 60, thought of it as one of the greatest routes in the new network. It cut across most of the transcontinental routes to provide a link to the southwest, including of course Los Angeles. It would, in their view, be one of the most heavily traveled.

As Susan Croce Kelly explained in her biography of Avery, he was proud of his role in seeing that such a road could be connected – via Tulsa – and securing a single number for it. As early as July 1926, he was talking with John Woodruff, like Avery a veteran of the named trail era, about ensuring the road was improved:

Years later, Woodruff remembered that afternoon. “He [Avery] was particularly impressed with the importance of Highway 66. I suggested that we should organize a 66 Highway Association to promote the early completion and permanent maintenance of this great highway, but we did not perfect plans at that time.”

In October 1926, as AASHO was finalizing the map of the new system, Avery again visited Woodruff “and a handful of other local diehard road promoters:

Their purpose: to see that U.S. 66 was the first cross-country highway paved from end to end. These veteran highway men were all well aware that even with federal aid funds and the public’s relentless determination to have hard-surfaced roads, U.S. 66 would not become a national highway in the public’s eye without their help. At least not on their schedule.

Avery's vision was large, promising 5,000 cars a day on U.S. 66 once it was paved. "We designed Route 66 as the most important highway in the U.S. and it will carry more traffic than any other road in America," he told the eager group."

They invited the towns from Chicago to Los Angeles to send representatives to Tulsa in February for a meeting to organize the U.S. 66 Highway Association:

Together, these promotion-minded business leaders wrote bylaws that allowed for a general membership with an annual five-dollar fee for individuals. An annual meeting would be held the second week of March. They elected John Woodruff as the first president of the U.S. 66 Highway Association, and Cy was selected as the state vice president from Oklahoma. [Kelly, pages 189-191]

Although Avery and Piepmeier were no longer in office, the idea that Frank Davis had floated about changing the number, U.S. 66, assigned to the southwest end of the National Old Trails Road was doomed by the new highway that had been designed to carry a single number for its entire route between Chicago and Los Angeles.

## **The Monuments**

When Mrs. Arline Trigg Moss took over as National Chairman of D.A.R.'s National Old Trails Road Committee, she abandoned the ideas pursued by her predecessors. Their ideas were worthy, she acknowledged, but had never been achieved – and their prospects had not improved with the coming of the U.S. numbered highway system. Mrs. Moss's new idea was bigger in scope, and required her to coordinate a nationwide effort that could have gone off-track in many ways. Now, she was to see the first of her Pioneer Woman monuments dedicated in Springfield, Ohio, on July 4, 1928.

On March 6, 1928, the Springfield Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Charles L. Bauer, held a special concert to raise the \$2,000 needed for the shipping cost. At an admission charge of 50 cents, 3,000 people filled Memorial Hall. Additional funds came from private donations:

When the monument arrived in Springfield from the sculpturing firm on railroad car, it was crated and packed so deeply in sand that only the sunbonnet was visible. Because they had the necessary equipment, a Xenia firm transported it to the Ohio Masonic Home grounds – the exact spot where the Federal Government had stopped paying for the National Road in 1839.

(For several years, Illinois and Missouri had vied for the crossing of the Mississippi River – Illinois for Alton, Missouri for St. Louis. The debate continued for so many years that it was never resolved before Congress stopped funding the work. For that reason, the Cumberland or National Road ended in Vandalia, then the capital of Illinois.)

Mrs. Moss and Judge Truman were present on July 4 at 2 p.m. for dedication of the first of the 12 monuments. The program included:

Ohio State Masonic Home Boys Band  
 Salute to the Flag – Lagonda Chapter, D.A.R., Mrs. C. C. Cory, Regent  
 Springfield Vocal Octette – “America Triumphant”  
 Invocation – Rev. J. B. Markward, D.D., Pastor First Lutheran Church  
 Raising the Flag – Wm. C. Shultis, Commander of the American Legion, officiating  
 Unveiling of the Madonna Statue by Gen. J. Warren Keifer, Ex-Speaker of the  
 National House of Representatives  
 “Star Spangled Banner” – Ohio State Masonic Home Boys Band  
 Presentation of the Statue to Springfield and Lagonda Chapter, D.A.R., and Dedication  
 Address, Mrs. John Trigg Moss, St. Louis, Missouri, Chairman of the Old  
 Trails Road Committee, N.S.D.A.R.  
 Addresses Accepting the Statue  
 For Springfield, Clark County, and the Ohio Masonic Order;  
 Mr. John B. McGrew  
 For Lagonda Chapter, D.A.R., Mrs. Frank W. Harford, Retiring Regent,  
 Lagonda Chapter, D.A.R.  
 Octette – “We’ll Keep Old Glory Flying”  
 Greetings from Mrs. Walter P. Tobel, Hamilton, Ohio, Vice-State Regent, Ohio D.A.R.  
 Addresses – “Inception of the National Road” – Hon. Chas. H. Lewis, Columbus, Ohio  
 “The National Old Trails Road” – Judge Harry S. Truman, Kansas City,  
 Missouri, President, National Old Trails Road Association  
 Unveiling Poem – “Mrs. Lida Keck Wiggins’  
 Octette – “Medley of American Airs”  
 Address – Judge D. D. Woodmansee, Cincinnati, Ohio  
 Benediction – Rev. Paul Ewing Davies, Pastor, Oakland Presbyterian Church

(General Keifer had been Speaker of the House during the 47th Congress – December 5, 1881-  
 March 4, 1883.)

For its inscriptions, the local D.A.R. chapter chose the following on one of the side panels:

THE NATIONAL ROAD  
 COMPLETED BY THE  
 FEDERAL GOVERNMENT  
 TO THIS POINT IN 1839  
 FROM THIS POINT WESTWARD  
 BUILT BY THE STATES THROUGH  
 WHICH IT PASSES

The side panels contained the following:

THREE MILES SOUTHWEST OF HERE  
 GENERAL GEORGE ROGERS CLARK  
 COMMANDING  
 KENTUCKY FRONTIERSMEN

VANQUISHED THE SHAWNEE  
CONFEDERACY AUGUST 8, 1780  
THUS OPENING THE  
NORTHWEST TERRITORY [Bauer, pages 19-26]

Lida Keck-Wiggins, who read the unveiling poem, recalled the event:

When the sites had all been chosen suitable unveiling exercises were held, and at each of these Mrs. Moss was present. A sentence used by her on one occasion is revelatory of her own conception of the ethical and patriotic significance of the Old Trails Road and of other National Trails. She said: "The trails are the autograph of a nation written across the face of a continent."

I stood at the side of Arline Nichols Moss when at Springfield, Ohio, the veil dropped which revealed the first of the completed Madonnas to be placed. I felt her tremble. I saw tears well in her eyes. I whispered to her "I know just how you feel." She smiled then and said: "Pardon me, but you cannot imagine how much it means to me to see my dream of the blessed Madonna of the Trail a reality at last." I replied as I pressed her hand, "I think I understand, dear," and I am sure that all who read this will likewise realize what it meant to see the glorious Figure silhouette itself against the blue of a July sky, and to observe that somehow it cast over every heart present the spell of the covered wagon days! [Quoted in Bauer, pages 80-81]

When U.S. 40 was widened to four lanes in 1956-1957, the State paid \$22,257 to move the Madonna of the Trail monument east to the entrance of the Snyder Park Golf Course. "The state restored the statue, cleaned and wired it. Since 1957 the Springfield Park Board has maintained the site of the monument." [Bauer, page 27]

One D.A.R. member, Edna Massman, who attended the dedication ceremony, recalled at the time of Bauer's book, "that Harry Truman was so pleasant." [Bauer, page 28]

The claim that Springfield was the end point for Federal involvement in the National or Cumberland Road was not accurate, although it had a grain of truth. Even before the monument was shipped from St. Louis to Springfield, a question was raised about the claim. Vandalia's N. C. Gochenour wrote to Representative William W. Arnold about the topic:

You have probably heard of the movement of the D.A.R. to erect twelve statues of the figures representing the Pioneer Woman, one of which is to be erected in each of the 12 States through which the National Old Trails road passes. Vandalia has been selected as the site for one of these memorials, and the monument is to be placed in the Court House yard.

The D.A.R. leave part of the space on the monument for suitable wording, and a part of the space is allotted to the local community. In examining one of the monuments which will be erected in Ohio, and which is now in St. Louis, we find the wording prepared for

the monument by that locality is to the effect that at that point in Ohio was the terminus of the National Road so far as the government work was concerned. We do not believe this is true. All of the accounts that we have of the matter show that Vandalia marked the end of the work done by the United States Government, and we have never read of anything showing that the State of Illinois contributed in any way to this project.

We hate to bother you about this matter, but if you can confirm our belief that Vandalia marks this spot, we will appreciate it very much. We have always been led to believe that the bridge over the Kaskaskia River was built by the United States Government contractors. Any information that you give us will help us to put a truthful historical statement on the monument. Can you send this request to some authority in Washington who can give it prompt attention?

Representative Arnold forwarded the letter to BPR on June 19, seeking information on the exact termination spot of government work on the National Road.

P. St. John Wilson, serving as Acting Chief of Bureau, replied on June 22. After the introductory paragraph, he wrote:

There is no data available at present in the Bureau of Public Roads which will enable us to satisfactorily decide the point in question, and I am taking the liberty of referring your letter, together with a copy of Mr. Gochenour's, to the Chief, Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army, with the thought that possibly through the records on file in his office an authoritative decision may be reached.

West of the Ohio River, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had been responsible for construction of the National Road. (East of the river, the Department of the Treasury had overseen initial construction of the road from Cumberland, Maryland, to Wheeling, then in Virginia; the Corps took responsibility for the Cumberland-to-Wheeling segment after the Treasury Department completed it.) Thus, Wilson was forwarding the inquiry to the most likely source of an answer. How the Corps handled the inquiry is not known.

After the National Road reached Wheeling, Congress decided to extend the road west through the State capitals of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois to the Mississippi River, eventually with a continuation to Jefferson City, Missouri. Corps engineers surveyed an alignment for the road on as straight a line as possible linking the State capitals, including in Missouri. The expectation was that the Corps would employ contractors to build the most modern type of pavement known at the time – the crushed rock macadam style pavement – all the way to Jefferson City. During the 1830s, Congress engaged in lengthy debates about continuing to fund the work, with the result that macadam pavement made it only as far as Springfield, Ohio.

That was not, however, the end of Federal activity on the road. Contractors continued building it to a much lower construction standard (grading, possibly removing tree stumps, building culverts and bridges in some cases, and applying a layer of stones in some areas) in the expectation that Congress would eventually fund completion of the road to full macadam standards. In Indiana

and Illinois, the road never progressed beyond a graded dirt track while under Federal control. This Corps work continued all the way to Gallatin Street in front of the State House in Vandalia – and ended there. The final appropriation for the National Road, signed by President Martin Van Buren on May 25, 1838, included funds for the road in Ohio and Indiana, as well as \$9,000 for the road in Illinois.

In 1848, Congress ceded all rights and privileges associated with the road to the State of Indiana, and did the same in 1856 for the segment in Illinois. Years of local debate over whether the road would continue to cross the river at St. Louis, Missouri, or Alton, Illinois, delayed construction beyond that point even as the railroad had begun its dominance of surface transportation. When Congress ceased appropriations for the work, the Corps ended its activities on the road. [*America's Highways 1776-1976*, pages 21-22; Stewart, *U.S. 40*, page 116]

Thus, the claim on the Springfield monument is accurate only if an asterisk were possible to explain that construction to full macadam standards ended in Springfield, but Federal funds were employed beyond that point, with the States having to complete the work, usually by chartering companies to operate it as a toll road.

## **More Monuments**

### WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA

Three days later, on July 7, 1928, the Wheeling monument was dedicated. Its inscriptions:

TO THE PIONEER MOTHERS  
OF OUR MOUNTAIN STATE  
WHOSE COURAGE, OPTIMISM, LOVE  
AND SACRIFICE MADE POSSIBLE  
THE NATIONAL HIGHWAY  
THAT UNITED THE EAST AND WEST

BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE  
UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT  
AND CHIEFLY THROUGH  
THE STATESMANSHIP OF  
HENRY CLAY  
THIS ROAD WAS MADE POSSIBLE  
IN 1806

Bauer explained:

The monument at Wheeling, West Virginia, dedicated July 7, 1928, stands on the National Highway (now U.S. 40) with the Washington Elm to the right. It was located in Wheeling because Colonel Moses Shepherd, a contractor on the original National Road lived there. Henry Clay was a frequent visitor in the home of the Shepherds, so they

erected a monument on their lawn to him. The home became known as Monument Place and is about a mile from the site of the Madonna. The Shrine owns Monument Place now . . . . The address before unveiling was by Mr. H. S. Truman and the dedicatory address was by Mrs. John Trigg Moss.

The statue faces west, overlooking the Park Apartments across U.S. 40.

The site includes a marker at the edge of a short, curved drive in front of the statue:

THE NATIONAL PIKE  
The National Pike, called  
“Old Cumberland Road,” was  
Started in 1811 and used to  
Wheeling in 1817 and by mail  
coaches from Washington by  
1818. Most of it followed the  
Nemacolin Path and Braddock’s  
Road from Cumberland, Md.

In addition, a later addition to the memorial area was a large elm tree with a marker:

This American Elm Tree  
Planted by Old Trails Society  
N. S. D. A. R. – Nov. 18, 1939 [Bauer, pages 102-103]

In September 1928, five monuments were dedicated.

#### COUNCIL GROVE, KANSAS

On September 7, the monument in Council Grove, Kansas:

Council Grove is considered the most historic town on the Santa Fe Trail in Kansas. The monument was placed in old Santa Fe Camp Ground, now Madonna Park, in the center of the main street with the Post Office Oak at the end.

The unique inscriptions read:

1825-1866 TRAILSMEN  
CAMPED ON THE SPOT.  
1847-1873 KAW INDIANS  
LIVED HERE.  
1847 – FIRST WHITE SETTLER  
SETH HAYS  
1847 COUNCIL GROVE

## A TRADING POST

HERE, "EAST MET WEST"  
WHEN THE 'OLD SANTA FE TRAIL'  
WAS ESTABLISHED AUGUST 10, 1825  
AT A COUNCIL BETWEEN THE  
UNITED STATES COMMISSIONERS  
AND OSAGE INDIANS

Bauer explained:

In July of 1964, a flag pole to the right of monument, presented by the conservation department of the State Society, was dedicated by the Kansas State Society of the National Society. The following June a bronze plaque at the base of the flag pole was dedicated by a group of distinguished State and National officers of D.A.R. That same year the Council Grove Chapter received an award at Continental Congress for the best slide program of the year and, with the money, placed two cement benches beside the Madonna. [Bauer, 103-104]

## LEXINGTON, MISSOURI

The Missouri monument was dedicated in Lexington on September 17, 1928:

In Missouri, the Madonna overlooks the Missouri River from the east bank at Lexington, known as Missouri's "History City." Here the three-day battle of Lexington in the Civil War was waged in September 1861. Lexington was so named by pioneers from Lexington, Kentucky in 1822 and also is the namesake of the first battle of the Revolutionary War – Lexington, Massachusetts – the site of the "shot heard 'round the world."

In Lexington pack mules and ox teams, caravans of pack ponies, long trains of ox-drawn wagons, picturesque teamsters and wagon bosses were a common sight in the 1830's and 40's when they took off for Santa Fe and the southwest. These pioneer freights were founders of the famous Pony Express to Mexico and California . . . .

In the center of history, our Madonna of the Trail was dedicated on September 17, 1928, by the Honourable Harry S. Truman, then presiding judge of neighboring Jackson County. This date marked the 67th anniversary of the battle of Lexington of the Civil War and was some 153 years after the Lexington battle of the Revolutionary War.

The Lexington D.A.R. chose the two inscriptions:

LEXINGTON  
SETTLED IN 1820 BY

VIRGINIA AND KENTUCKY  
PIONEERS  
EARLY TERMINUS OF  
RIVER TRANSPORTATION  
STARTING POINT ON THE  
WESTERN TRAIL OF THE  
PACK PONY AND OX CART

JOHN, JAMES AND ROBERT AULL  
RUSSELL MAJORS & WADDEL  
DONIPHAN  
PIONEERS – TRADERS  
SOLDIERS – CITIZENS  
OF LEXINGTON  
WHO GAVE VALIANT SERVICE  
TO THE WINNING OF THE WEST [Bauer, pages 104-105]

#### LAMAR, COLORADO

The Colorado monument in Lamar was dedicated on September 24, 1928. With Trinidad, La Junta, and Las Animas competing for the monument, “the Fort Wm. Bent DAR Chapter, the Lamar Chamber of Commerce and other civic organizations worked very hard for the monument”:

Once the monument was awarded to Lamar, a Mr. Steward, without any charge for his labor, erected it on the corner of South Main and Beach Streets next to the Chamber of Commerce. The 72 yards of muslin veiling the monument were donated to Ellis Island. As honored guests at the biggest celebration – a red letter day – Lamar has ever had, were the living pioneer mothers of Southern Colorado . . . .

It was placed at Big Timbers, which took its name from large Cottonwood trees extending up and down the Arkansas River, over an area 20 miles long and three quarters of a mile wide. Big Timbers was the finest camp after Council Grove and a haven for travelers and the Indians.

Many celebrities attended the dedication, and Harry S., Truman was the speaker.

The dedication program included a poem that “very simply describes the great migration along all the trails that penetrated our great country”:

“I HEAR THE TREAD OF PIONEERS  
OF NATIONS YET TO BE  
THE FIRST LOW WASH OF WAVES WHERE SOON  
SHALL ROLL A HUMAN SEA”

The two unique inscriptions read:

IN COMMEMORATION OF  
“BIG TIMBERS” EXTENDING  
EASTWARD AND WESTWARD  
ALONG ARKANSAS RIVER  
APPROXIMATELY TWENTY MILES  
AND OF BENT’S NEW FORT  
LATER FORT WISE, 1852-1866

A PLACE OF HISTORICAL LORE  
NOTED FOR INDIAN LODGES;  
SHELTER FROM STORM AND HEAT;  
FOOD SUPPLY FOR BEAST;  
BIVOUAC FOR EXPEDITIONS;  
SCENE OF MANY COUNCILS. [Bauer, pages 62-64, 105-106]

#### ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

Three days later, on September 27, the Albuquerque monument was dedicated. Initially, Santa Fe, the destination of the Santa Fe Trail, had the historical edge for the monument in New Mexico, but it went to Albuquerque because:

The Madonna did not fit in with the Spanish Art in Santa Fe  
and

The Lew Wallace DAR Chapter came up with the necessary money to bring the  
monument to Albuquerque.

(Lew Wallace was a lawyer, a Union General during the Civil War, a Territorial Governor of New Mexico (1878-1881), a diplomat, and an author (best known today for *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ*.)

The Lew Wallace Chapter dedicated the New Mexico Madonna at Albuquerque on September 27, 1928, in McClellan Park, located in the 800 block of Fourth Street, N.W. A memory box was placed in the base of the monument containing names of donors to the fund. Many celebrities attended the luncheon which was served at the Franciscan Hotel. Lew Wallace Chapter hosted guests to “The First American” in natural showgrounds with the Sandia Mountains as a backdrop:

INTO THE PRIMITIVE WEST  
FACE UPSWUNG TOWARD THE SUN,  
BRAVELY SHE CAME,  
HER CHILDREN BESIDE HER.  
HERE SHE MADE A HOME.  
BEAUTIFUL PIONEER MOTHER!

TO THE PIONEER MOTHER OF AMERICA  
THROUGH WHOSE COURAGE AND SACRIFICE  
THE DESERT HAS BLOSSOMED  
THE CAMP BECAME A HOME,  
THE BLAZED TRAIL THE THOROUGHFARE.

The program included a speech by Harry S. Truman. [Bauer, pages 67-69, 106]

#### SPRINGERVILLE, ARIZONA

The final dedication in September 1928 was in Springerville, Arizona. By then, the main route of the National Old Trails Road was part of U.S. 66 from Gallup, New Mexico, to Holbrook, Arizona. Bauer noted that, "The nearest DAR chapter is one hundred-fifty miles away in Flagstaff." Nevertheless, Springerville, with a population under 600 at the time, secured the monument based on the city's long record of support for the National Old Trails Road Association.

The inscriptions chosen for Springerville were:

CORONADO  
PASSED HERE IN 1540  
HE CAME TO SEEK GOLD –  
BUT FOUND FAME

A TRIBUTE TO THE PIONEERS  
OF ARIZONA AND THE SOUTHWEST'  
WHO TROD THIS GROUND  
AND BRAVED THE DANGERS  
OF THE APACHE  
AND OTHER WARRIOR TRIBES

The first inscription, Bauer wrote, "calls attention to the fact that, long before the English established any settlement on the Eastern Seaboard, the Spanish were most active in Mexico and the southwestern part of the United States." In November 1519, Hernando Cortez had arrived in Mexico and quickly conquered the Aztec nation and confiscated large amounts of gold. In February 1540, Spanish leaders dispatched Francisco Vasquez de Coronado to locate what rumors said were seven wealthy cities to the north. They found no such cities.

Judge Truman was among the speakers. [Bauer, pages 71-72]

#### VANDALIA, ILLINOIS

Dedication of the monument in Vandalia, Illinois, took place on October 26, 1928. During the period when the United States Government was involved with extension of the Cumberland

Road west of the Ohio River at Wheeling, the law required that it reach each State capital: Columbus, Ohio; Indianapolis, Indiana; Vandalia, Illinois; and across the river, Jefferson City, Missouri. Although the Federal Government did not complete the road, some limited construction work was done as far as Vandalia, and surveying continued to Jefferson City, pending a decision on where the road would cross the Mississippi River. As noted earlier, Congress ended funding for the project before a choice had been made.

The inscriptions read:

AT VANDALIA, ABRAHAM LINCOLN,  
MEMBER OF ILLINOIS LEGISLATURE,  
FIRST FORMULATED  
THOSE BASIC HIGH PRINCIPLES  
OF FREEDOM AND JUSTICE  
WHICH GAVE THE SLAVES  
A LIBERATOR,  
THE UNION A SAVIOR.

THE CUMBERLAND ROAD,  
BUILT BY  
THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT,  
WAS AUTHORIZED BY CONGRESS  
AND APPROVED BY  
THOMAS JEFFERSON IN 1806.  
VANDALIA MARKS THE  
WESTERN TERMINUS.

The monument was placed on the northwest corner of the old Capitol Square:

Between the monument and present U.S. 40 is a small marker telling the story of the Cumberland Road:

“Vandalia was the western terminus of the Cumberland or National Road which extended eighty feet wide for 591 miles from Cumberland, Maryland, through Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Construction by the Federal government began in 1811 and ceased in 1838, the approximate cost being seven million dollars.”

Mrs. A. M. White of Old State Capitol Chapter in Vandalia has designed a seven inch replica of the Madonna in plaster of Paris which she sells as a souvenir of Vandalia. Her profits go to the Old State Capitol Chapter treasury. It is her desire to place figurines in other “Trails” towns when she can make enough available.

Harry Truman addressed the crowd at the dedication. [Bauer, pages 106-107]

## RICHMOND, INDIANA

Bauer discussed the rivalry for the monument in Indiana:

There was a three-chapter rivalry for Indiana's Madonna of the Trail: Richmond, Indianapolis, and Terre Haute. So certain was Indianapolis of being chosen that a year before the dedication, the Rotogravure section of *The Indianapolis Star* printed a picture of Leimbach working on a monument with the caption: "...to be placed in Indianapolis by N.S.D.A.R." But a year and a day later, Sunday, October 28, 1928, an immense crowd gathered at the entrance of Glen Miller Park for Indiana's dedication in Richmond.

Colonel John Ford Miller, a railroad executive, bought the land and sold it to the city to operate as a park that opened in 1885. Glen Miller park was named after the healthy water in the springs of Glen Miller:

The spot selected is across the present U.S. 40 from where the first toll gate in Indiana stood – "Gateway to the West" – and near the site of the earliest burying ground in Wayne County. Mrs. Moss gave an eloquent address, and Mr. Truman was in attendance. The Sons of Veterans Drum and Bugle Corps took part, depicting "The Spirit of '76." The local brass foundry donated a 4x8x8 inch memory box, filled with photographs, clippings, and two sonnets by the Honourable William Dudley Foulke (read at the dedication): "The Settler's Wife" and "The National Old Trails Road."

Mrs. Frederick S. Bates, chapter chairman of the project, died before its completion, so her daughter was asked to draw the veil which was made of canvas. The monument stands amid pine trees. On the north of the base is inscribed a poem written by Richmond's Chapter Regent Mrs. J. F. Hornaday and selected by the National Committee:

A NATION'S HIGHWAY!  
ONCE A WILDERNESS TRAIL  
OVER WHICH HARDY PIONEERS  
MADE THEIR PERILOUS WAY  
SEEKING NEW HOMES  
IN THE DENSE FORESTS  
OF THE GREAT NORTH-WEST.

The south face read:

THE FIRST TOLL-GATE  
IN INDIANA  
STOOD NEAR THIS SITE  
ON THE NATIONAL ROAD

Bauer described the scene:

The Monument is illuminated at night by one ray of light. On snowy winter days, the Madonna, when approached from the east, seems to be wearing a heavy white shawl and bonnet. Three phrases used about the Madonna at her dedication are most interesting in relating the next dedication: (1) "... in its setting of green it is an object of art"; (2) "... magnificent piece of sculpture"; (3) "...artistic monument in no small degree."

Truman, who had helped pick the site, was scheduled to attend the dedication ceremony, but a few days earlier, he had to cancel. He was, he explained, "very busily engaged in politics."  
[Algeo, Matthew, *Harry Truman's Excellent Adventure: The True Story of a Great American Road Trip*, Chicago Review Press, 2009, pages 197-198]

## WASHINGTON, PENNSYLVANIA

Many States had multiple candidates for the monument, but Pennsylvania also had controversy,

as Bauer explained:

The story in Pennsylvania, which climaxed in a dedication in Washington County on December 8, 1928, is one of controversy. Washington and Fayette counties were contenders for the location of Pennsylvania's Madonna. Arguments were taken to Harrisburg where politics were powerful and for a while it looked as if Pennsylvania would be the only state along N.O.T.R. without a Madonna monument. Finally, it was awarded to Washington County and a site on the Court House lawn at Main Street and West Cherry Avenue was selected in the town of Washington. However, the State Art Commission of Pennsylvania refused to approve because "the monument was not a work of art." The Commission has power to control placing of anything on publicly owned property in Pennsylvania.

The second site suggested was on the lawn of the Elks Home on East Maiden Street, but it was not logical to place a monument of one fraternal organization on property of another. The third suggestion was on the campus of Washington and Jefferson College, but this was off the route of N.O.T.R.

Chairman James P. Eagleson approached President Charles E. MacGinnis and his Board of Nemaquin Country Club, who subsequently donated a plot of ground across the highway from the entrance to their club house. Next was the problem of \$2,500 for freight, handling, erection, landscaping, and dedication expense. Mr. Eagleson devised a 50-50 club (there were 50 members, each giving \$50), and without prior planning at their one meeting, there were 25 men and 25 women, each of whom received an engraved certificate. The balance after dedication was held for future repairs. A memory box with the names of the 50 women and men was placed in the base of the monument, and is to be opened by the Washington County Chapter of D.A.R. on December 8, 1978.

Local D.A.R. members feel that the action of the State Arts Commission was really a blessing because no more desirable site could be used than this on the north side of National Pike about a mile east of the town of Beallstown, which was laid out September 13, 1819 and has enjoyed interesting history on National Pike. [Bauer, pages 108-109]

In 1981, Harriet Branton of the *Observer-Reporter* of Washington, Pennsylvania, looked back on these events:

The tenth monument was destined for erection on the grounds of the Washington County Courthouse in Washington, Pa. All seemed to be in order until the Pennsylvania State Art Commission got into the act. As early as March 1928 the Commission had issued a preliminary opinion that it was “unable to find in the figure submitted for the proposed memorial . . . such qualities as would justify its erection in the State of Pennsylvania.” In September the Art Commission announced its final decision: it disapproved of the statue’s erection on public property because “the figure submitted has not sufficient artistic merit to justify its erection . . . .” Since the Commission had the power of veto over monuments to be placed on public grounds, it became necessary for the DAR and the Old Trails Road Association to look for another site.

In the meantime the flap over the project so distressed Miss Nancy J. Hall, Regent of the Washington County Chapter of the DAR, that Julian Millard of the Pennsylvania State Art Commission felt compelled to write a letter of apology. In it he expressed his sorrow that adverse publicity about the matter had caused her concern and he assured her that the Commission had no intention of interfering with the erection of the statue on private property; the Commission had, in fact, “no further interest in the disposition of the monument.”

What to do? Well, two influential Washington men came to the rescue. It so happened that James P. Eagleson, a local attorney, was vice-president of the National Old Trails Association; indeed, he had been instrumental all along in obtaining the statue for erection in Washington County. Faced with rejection of the courthouse site, Eagleson set about acquiring private land and went to Charles E. McGinnis, president of the Nemaocolin Country Club, for help.

McGinnis and the club’s board of directors enthusiastically agreed to help. They donated a small parcel of land on U.S. 40, “which turned out to be more suitable than the original courthouse location anyway.”

Eagleson organized the Pioneer Fifty-Fifty Club to finance the \$2,500 fee for installation and dedication:

Fifty people were recruited to contribute \$50 each to cover expenses involved in the erection of the monument. When the list was closed it turned out that exactly 25 men and 25 women had subscribed as members of the select group. Since the mission of the club had been explained as the erection of a “suitable tribute” to pioneer mothers and an effort

to place them on an equal basis with pioneer fathers, it was regarded as a curious coincidence that the supporters of the "Fifty-Fifty" club were equally divided between men and women.

The club's only meeting was held before a banquet the night before dedication of the monument.

The monument arrived by train to Scenery Hill on Saturday, December 1, 1928. On Monday and Tuesday, the 10-foot Madonna of the Trail was hoisted onto its 8-foot base:

On Friday evening a gala banquet was held at the Nemaquin Country Club. Violin and piano music was provided by members of the Washington High School Orchestra, and among the honored guests were Dr. Louis J. Lyle and Miss Margaret Bureau. Miss Bureau, 89 years old, was a retired piano teacher who had been a member of the Washington County Chapter of the DAR for 35 years. She was presented with a bouquet of roses (one for each year of membership) by Miss Hall. Others in attendance at the banquet were Mr. Eagleson, Mrs. N. Howland Brown, Pennsylvania State Regent of the DAR, and Mrs. Moss.

On the following afternoon, a blustery December day, formal dedication ceremonies were held in the clubhouse at 2 o'clock. A capacity crowd of 500 listened with interest to a program presided over by Mr. Eagleson. It included music by the American Legion Drum and Bugle Corps; vocal selections by Glenn P. and William I. Carson, accompanied by Miss Margaret B. Acheson; and addresses by Mrs. Alfred J. Brosseau, President-General of the National Society of the DAR; and Mrs. Moss. The program also listed a speech by Judge Truman; unfortunately he was unable to attend and his letter of regret was read by Eagleson.

After the ceremony, the guests went to the site opposite the entrance on U.S. 40 to the golf club, "where the canvas-shrouded monument awaited its unveiling":

Miss Ethel Boughner of Uniontown, chairman of the Pennsylvania DAR Old Trails Committee, officiated and the statue was formally accepted by Miss Hall.

The inscriptions chosen for the monument were:

ERECTED IN  
NINETEEN HUNDRED TWENTY EIGHT  
IN WASHINGTON COUNTY  
PENNSYLVANIA  
THE OLDEST COUNTY WEST OF  
THE ALLEGHENY MOUNTAINS  
NAMED FOR THE FATHER  
OF OUR COUNTRY

ON THIS HISTORIC SPOT

THE HUNTING GROUND  
OF THE FRIENDLY INDIAN  
NEMACOLIN  
THIS MONUMENT  
IS ERECTED AND DEDICATED  
TO THE MEMORY OF OUR  
PIONEER MOTHERS

Branton concluded her article:

While there was some controversy about the artistic merits of the statue, it has come to be regarded as an appropriate likeness and descriptive tribute to pioneer women. It also provided Washington County with another interesting historic site, and the inscriptions on the monument remind visitors of the area's rich heritage.

Her article was accompanied by a large photograph of the monument on the day of its dedication, with five participants in the ceremony in their heavy coats: James P. Eagleson, Mrs. N. Howland Brown, Ethel Boughner, Mrs. Alfred J. Brosseau, and Mrs. John Trigg Moss. [Branton, Harriet, "Madonna of the Trail," *Observer-Reporter*, November 7, 1981]

According to Bauer, the monument was rededicated in October 1978 at the Nemacolin Country Club. [Bauer, page 44] The statue was restored and rededicated in 1990. The Washington County Chapter of the D.A.R. is responsible for maintenance of the monument.

UPLAND, CALIFORNIA

The original location for the California monument was San Bernardino. However, the city did not like the proposed site and refused to pay the \$2,500 fee for erection and dedication. Instead, the monument was awarded to Upland, in San Bernardino County near Los Angeles County.

The monument was dedicated on February 1, 1929, at the intersection of Euclid Avenue and Foothill Boulevard (the address is 1010 Euclid Avenue), as Bauer described:

The site on which she stands is a double drive parkway (encompassing a bridle path) lined with pepper, grevilla and evergreen trees . . . .

The dedication day was somewhat disappointing in that it rained (in California), but the parade and rededication ceremony went on . . . . On February 1, 1929, a pageantry of progress was depicted in an impressive parade. First came Indians on horseback with luggage slung between poles dragged behind an animal. Then came Spanish and American modes of travel including covered wagons and stage coaches and finally the automobile and aeroplane.

Unveiling the statue was 81-year old Mrs. Carolyn Emily Cook who had come to California from Brighton, Washington County, Iowa, by ox-cart and covered wagon when she was three years old. Her mother was the only woman in the party of one hundred "covered wagon" pioneers. As Mrs. Cook pulled the covering away from the statue, one hundred carrier pigeons were released.

Mr. John Steven McGroarty of California gave the dedication speech. Participating in the ceremony was Mrs. Theodore Jesse Hoover, sister-in-law of President Herbert Hoover.

On February 9, 10 and 11, 1979, the California State with the San Antonio Chapter as the hostess chapter, and assisted by citizens of Upland, held a three-day celebration to rededicate this statue. The time capsule from the base of the statue was removed and the contents displayed at the Civic Center. Items for a new capsule were reviewed, then sealed in the cornerstone to stay for another fifty years.

Our California Madonna stands facing south. Mt. Baldy of the San Gabriel Mountains looms behind her as the present Highway 66 makes its way ahead of her to the blue Pacific where writer Betty Simmons in a soliloquy imagines her dreaming of throwing off her heavy boots to splash barefooted in its tide and laughing as she burrows her toes into the gritty sand to face the challenge of stinging salt spray. [Bauer, pages 72-73, 110-111]

The road on which the monument stands has had several names:

First it was the Mojave Indian Trail established as early as 1776. Then as the Spanish came into the area, it became known as The Spanish Trail. American explorers, settlers, hunters, traders and gold seekers renamed it The Santa Fe Trail.

The inscription on the east reads:

THIS TRAIL, TROD BY  
THE PADRES IN SPANISH  
DAYS, BECAME  
UNDER MEXICAN RULE,  
THE ROAD CONNECTING  
SAN BERNARDINO AND  
LOS ANGELES, LATER  
THE AMERICAN POST ROAD.

In July, 1769, Spanish Missionary Father Junipero M. J. Serra founded the first of twenty-one Franciscan Missions in California. Taking its name from Saint James of Alcala, Spain, seat of a great university, this mission was known as Mission San Diego de Alcala. It was from this mission that the city of San Diego took its name.

On the west, the inscription reads:

OVER THIS TRAIL  
NOVEMBER 1826,  
JEDEDIAH SMITH, SEEKING  
A RIVER FLOWING WESTWARD,  
LED A BAND OF SIXTEEN  
TRAPPERS, THE FIRST  
AMERICANS TO ENTER  
CALIFORNIA OVERLAND

Smith was one of the best known of the era's mountain men. "In 1831, he was killed by Indians as he led a caravan over the Santa Fe Trail."

According to the Route 66 Times Website:

This statue has seen some tough times, having been knocked down by a falling tree in 1957 and years later being damaged so significantly by an earthquake in 1991 that she had to be taken down and restored. The restoration went well and she's back on the pedestal where she belongs paying tribute to the courage, strength, and resilience of women everywhere. [<http://route66times.com/l/ca/upland-madonna-of-the-trails.htm>]

### **The D.A.R.'s 1929 Continental Congress**

Mrs. Moss scheduled dedication of the final Madonna of the Trail monument to coincide with the Thirty-Eighth Continental Congress of the National Society of the D.A.R., April 15-20, 1929. During the congress, Mrs. Alfred J. Brosseau, President General of the National Society D.A.R., introduced Mrs. Moss as "our very hard-working chairman who has achieved a great thing for our own city. (Applause.)"

Mrs. Moss began her report to the congress on the work of the Committee on National Old Trails Road by proclaiming:

"Excelsior" is the triumphant cry of The National Old Trails Road Committee for 1929. Our dreams of almost 20 years have come true, and our vision has crystallized into a real fact! It has been the privilege of your present National Chairman to serve you on this Committee for the past 6 years, and it is a matter of pride that she, a native-born Missouri woman, should bring to a very successful close a program that was begun practically 20 years ago in Missouri by a group of women who, loving the history of the past, formed a committee to locate the old Santa Fe Trail in Missouri.

She recalled the committee's history, beginning with its formation by Mrs. John Van Brunt, who "was influential in securing an appropriation from the State of Missouri to mark this Trail with suitable boulders or monuments":

Encouraged by the splendid achievement of this small group, the State Regent of Missouri, Mrs. R. B. Oliver, appointed a Missouri D.A.R. Good Roads Committee, with Miss Elizabeth Gentry as Chairman, assigning as their work the locating, exploiting, and advertising of the old historic roads and as far as possible to see that the new automobile roads being built in the State were upon old historic trails. Reports show that this Good Roads Committee came into being at the psychological moment. The State of Missouri was about to select a route and build a cross-state highway. Three roads had been surveyed. Our Committee opened a campaign appealing to a group – to the State Highway Engineer, to commercial clubs, to men of influence in the county through which the trail runs. They marked the route for miles, at first with flags nailed to fence posts and trees. Through this Committee, the route selected for the Missouri Cross-State Highway was the Boone's Lick Road from St. Louis to Old Franklin, and the Santa Fe Trail from that point to Kansas City. A bill was introduced in the House of Representatives by the Honorable A. P. Borland, of Kansas City, on January 15, 1912, to:

Provide a National Ocean to Ocean Highway over the Pioneer Trails of the nation, thus making a continuous trunk line on to California; another branch was to lead from Gardner, Kansas through Kearney, Nebraska to Olympia, Washington, also to aid the State through which the highway therein described as the *National Old Trails Road, shall run, in extending, constructing, rebuilding and repairing same.*

This bill received the ardent and enthusiastic support of the Daughters of Missouri, and interest in the work of studying old trails or traces spread through the rank and file of the Daughters of the American Revolution like wild-fire, and the President General, Mrs. Matthew T. Scott, appointed the first National Committee, with Miss Elizabeth B. Gentry as Chairman . . . .

In 1913, the National Chairman, Miss Gentry, reported briefly that “the object of the Old Trails Road Committee is to get the Old Trails Road designated by Congress as the National Highway, and the first road to receive Federal aid.” She reported the organization of a society of men known as “The National Old Trails Road Association” that stated in its by-laws that it had organized “to assist the D. A.R. to establish the Old Trails Road as a National Highway,” and that organization of men adopted the Daughters of the American Revolution route and the name we had given it, “The Old Trails Road.” It was this year that the Chairman suggested the red, white, and blue bands to be painted on telephone poles to mark the National Highway with the national colors. Many miles of this marking was accomplished by the D.A.R. women with paint-pots and brushes, and motorists used the slogan, “Follow the Flag of the D.A.R.”

Mrs. Moss recalled the committee's work over the years through 1924, when she became National Chairman and the congress adopted a resolution to erect “one marker of dignified and pretentious proportions” in each of the States through which the National Old Trails Road passed:

The resolution was adopted unanimously, and with this program in view your National Chairman set to work.

In 1925, Mrs. Moss reported having conferred with Judge J. M. Lowe, National President of the National Old Trails Road Association, who gave hearty and enthusiastic approval to the new plan the Daughters had voted to follow.

She discussed the process for raising the necessary funds:

In 1927, your National Chairman reported progress in the committee work that sounds as though she had “Put on Seven-League Boots” and was leaping forward! The National Old Trails Road Monument Fund to date had reached the sum of \$12,414.03, with unpaid pledges of \$493.60 still to hear from. It had long been a vision of your National Chairman to erect a monument, not a marker, and your National Chairman caught the vision of a Pioneer Mother clad in homespun, clasping her babe to her breast – the figure of a mother showing fortitude, perseverance, and energy in her bearing – one in the act of going forward, expressing firm determination – her face to be of strong character, beauty, and gentleness – the face of a mother who realized her responsibilities and trusted in God. This vision was suggested to your National Chairman by the picture of the Indian squaw carrying her papoose upon her back which was a piece of statuary at the World’s Fair in St. Louis. And after months of carrying this vision in her mind, your National Chairman, collaborating with her son, John Trigg Moss, Jr., who is a graduate of Princeton University, an artist and architect in the Graduate College there, worked out the vision into the design for our monument. Mr. A. Leimbach, a sculptor of St. Louis, willingly took the ideas as presented to him, catching the real spirit of our dreams, and fashioned them into a very beautiful and a very representative and distinctive memorial to those Pioneer Mothers of ours whose granite virtues were so outstandingly great.

She recalled displaying a miniature statue during the 1928 congress:

The most important matter that was presented to you in the report of 1927 was that the National Old Trails Road Association had guaranteed very material aid and cooperation to the National Old Trails Road Committee of our Society for the marking of the National road, providing the monument be entirely different from the boulder or tombstone variety. It was this generous offer of The National Old Trails Road Association, through its president, Judge H. S. Truman, and its Secretary, Mr. Frank A. Davis, that made it possible for us to proceed with our program, for, while the sum of our fund would cover the cost of the twelve monuments, it would not, by any means, cover the cost of freight or erection, the expense of which was equal to, if not more than, the cost of the monuments. The Algonite Stone Company is located in St. Louis, from which central point these monuments would have to be shipped, and it was not until this offer of the National Old

Trails Road Association was accepted by vote of Congress, April 1927, that the project could be considered.

The cost of erecting the monuments varied according to the distances from the shipping-point and the nature of the celebration held at the time of the unveiling. The National Old Trails Road Association took the lead in the publicity, and working in connection with chambers of commerce, civic clubs and federations, business men's clubs, such as Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, and in many places the masonic groups and church federations in these different sites respectively, they secured financial backing to cover the cost of freight, erecting monuments, committee expenses, programs, etc. It has cost approximately \$30,000 dollars to deliver these monuments to their destinations and erect them on their respective sites. Our society has not been called upon to pay any of this amount, except in certain localities where the Daughters preferred to take the lead in their community during the celebration.

The fund for the monuments had raised \$13,170.73 from a 10-cent per capita voluntary contribution from all chapters of the organization:

Thus, the records show that we have able to erect a National Memorial costing approximately \$50,000 with an outlay of but a little over \$13,000, the actual cost of the 12 monuments. Like anything else of its kind, the initial cost of the first monument was greater in proportion to the remainder of the series, and we would not have been able to secure a group of 12 monuments for anything like the amount of \$12,000 had it not been that they were alike. That the Daughters could have the able assistance of the National Old Trails Road Association proved a very fortunate circumstance, indeed, for their marking program.

During the hot summer days of 1927, your National Chairman watched the figure of the mother and her children grow under the skilled hands of the sculptor. The idea of your National Chairman and her son, in thinking out this design, was to have a figure that would be compact and solid, and that would look better from a distance than close up, and *that* is the great outstanding feature of our statue of the Pioneer Mother and Children that has been commented upon so favorably everywhere. The children are clasped to the figure of the mother, with no jutting parts to be broken or marred easily. It at once gives the idea of something solid and substantial, something that will stand through all ages and not be easily destroyed.

In 1927-1928, the National Old Trails Road Association sent bulletins to every town along the National Old Trails Road "announcing the fact that our Society was ready to erect their memorial monuments on the main Ocean to Ocean Highway, and requested each community that felt it had a claim as a point of historical interest to send in their data." The applications were due by August 20, 1927. Many States had more than one application – "Kansas, with great enthusiasm, had 10 towns enter the contest." She explained the selection process:

A committee of 7 decided on the location or site in each state respectively. Your National Chairman accompanied the President of the National Old Trails Road Association, Judge Harry S. Truman, and Mr. Frank A., Davis, Secretary, all the way west to Albuquerque, New Mexico, and east as far as Bethesda, Maryland. Close to 5,000 miles were covered by your National Chairman in the interest of locating these sites.

After listing the cities selected for the monument, she continued:

The actual plot of ground in each one of these places upon which the Pioneer Mother Monument stands is in every instance the best location the community had to offer. In 5 places these monuments stand at points of advantage in beautiful city parks. In the other 7 places, the most advantageous location to be secured along the highway has been given to our monument. In all but one of the respective towns a flood light has been placed to display the “Madonna” at night. In the meantime, much publicity was given to the project, many pictures and articles were presented in papers and magazines from one end of the country to the other, bringing very favorable comment from all sections. Full pages of dignified publicity were given to the program, not only in the 12 states receiving one of the monuments, but east and west, north and south, the pictures and stories copied to the value of many thousands of dollars, had we been obliged to pay for them. But this program, though idealistic and inspirational, seemed to appeal to the innermost heart of the thinking men in the publicity world, and their editorials and comments far and wide show that they believe, like the 12 stones set up by Joshua in the River of Jordan, “It is a fitting memorial to those who have gone before.”

(Mrs. Moss was referring to *Joshua 4:6-7*: “that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, ‘What do these stones mean to you?’ Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever.”)

With the unanimous consent of the society’s executive committee, Mrs. Moss had taken out letters patent and copyright on the design of the monument:

Your National Chairman, through Rippey & Kingsland, Patent Lawyers of St. Louis, patented the design, and a certificate of copyright was granted to your National Chairman December 4, 1928. This copyright and patent design was turned over immediately to the National Society by your National Chairman, Mrs. John Trigg Moss, for all time.

The full responsibilities on her over the past year hit her as “an overwhelming realization.” For example:

One of the most difficult things to decide upon was the date upon which to hold the dedicatory ceremonies. May 30th was the first date, given to Ohio, but owing to the fact that not enough time had been allowed for transportation and erection, etc., this schedule could not be followed out, and the first dedication was postponed to July 4, 1928, and the second one three days later, July 7, was held in Wheeling, West Virginia. When one stood by these immense figures, it seemed almost an impossibility to transport them safely from one end of the country to the other, and it was with fear and trepidation that your National Chairman saw the first one go out of St. Louis. However, everything can be made a work of art, and if you could have seen this Mother cradled in her great cradle of sand, fully protected and safe-guarded in every way, you would have understood how she would safely reach the farthest distance without a broken bone.

She cited the dates of the dedications, adding that while in Springerville, Arizona, for the dedication, “the Committee proceeded on to California for a hurried trip to definitely decide the location of the site for the monument in California”:

The week of April 19, 1929, during the 38th Continental Congress, we shall dedicate the twelfth link of our Great National Shrine in Bethesda, Maryland, thus fulfilling our pledge given years ago and bringing to a final close one of the most dignified and representative pieces of memorial work ever attempted by any organizations.

Over 10,000 invitations had been sent out for the dedications in the name of the National Society of the D.A.R. and the National Old Trails Road Association – to National Officers, State Regents, and National Chairman. “These invitations were sent directly from the home of your National Chairman, and with pictures, papers, booklets, and maps, it would be a conservative figure to estimate that between 15,000 and 16,000 pieces of mail have been sent out from her office during the past year.”

So many “perplexing problems” presented themselves, and “it grew to such gigantic proportions that at times it seemed an impossibility,” but the task was finished. She had crossed the country “from one end of the continent to the other” practically three times. “We have reached the goal; we have marked in a very wonderful way our main National highway, 3,050 miles across our land.”

She concluded her speech:

May our Madonna of the Trail create an atmosphere of love and peace, for surely no memorial was ever erected with higher ideals, nor a greater love of nation, or a more tender sympathy for mankind than this beautiful *Madonna of ours*. May she speak to you always as she does to me:

To the Honor and Glory of the  
Great Motherhood of the past,  
I stand . . . A Sacred Shrine.

May all who pass within the  
Shadow of my Form, pause  
Awhile, and Understand the Faith,  
the ideals, and the real Inner  
Beauty of Soul of those Mothers

of Old, as they Passed Down the  
Great Homing Trail of the Nation.

--A. B. N. Moss

Respectfully submitted,

Arline B. N. Moss  
(Mrs. John Trigg Moss),  
Chairman.

[*Proceedings of the Thirty-Eighth Continental Congress of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, April 1929, pages 175-185*]

### **The Dedications**

After her report to the continental congress, Mrs. Moss submitted a report summarizing the 11 dedications of the monuments that had taken place before the annual congress.

To a great extent, she let the towns involved set the dates for the ceremonies. “The wishes of the men of the National Old Trails Road Association and their ability to attend these celebrations on the certain dates, were always first taken into consideration.” The inscriptions were another factor:

The inscriptions on the two sides of the pedestal base of each monument had to be submitted and passed upon, allowing from 3 to 4 weeks for the base to be made after the inscriptions were accepted.

The matter of freight delivery was a very serious part of the entire program, as your National Chairman did not want the monument delivered too far ahead of time and still, on the other hand, it had to be delivered early enough to allow delays in transit or for any possible breakage which was very likely to happen. Your National Chairman considers it a very unusual record to make that, of these 12 figures and pedestal bases, not one was broken in transit.

She commented on each site, beginning with the “very fine ceremonies” dedicating the monument in **Springfield, Ohio**. Columbus, Dayton, Hebron, and Zanesville had sought the monument. All but Dayton, which was not on the National Old Trails Road, were qualified, but

Springfield secured the honor:

General J. Warren Keifer pulled the cord that revealed the first statue to the public gaze. The knoll on which the statue was erected is part of the State Masonic Home grounds and was donated for that purpose by the trustees of the Home. The statue marked the spot approximately where the National Pike, as constructed by the National Government ended, and also is in reasonably close distance to the site of the "birth of Tecumseh" and the battlefield of Piqua where the Shawnee power was broken by George Rogers Clark, August 8, 1780. The Government had surveyed the road westward into Missouri and had even built a few culverts and bridges beyond the point in question, but the building of the road progressed no further than the knoll, a short distance west of the city of Springfield . . . because of the bitter debates in Congress over the means by which the maintenance of the road might be kept up and whether the road might be used for military or other service in case on internal warfare among the states, for "state's rights" figured mightily then in National affairs. A compromise was effected and Congress agreed to turn the much contested National Highway over to the states for further completion and maintenance. The spot likewise is only 3 miles from the site of the George Rogers Clark monument erected a few years ago by the State of Ohio on the ground where the Battle of Piqua was fought, August 8, 1780. The importance of this battle, which is the only battle of the Revolutionary War fought on Ohio soil, concerned the opening of the Northwest Territory to American colonization.

She summarized the ceremony, noting that Judge Truman had delivered a short address. She added:

The spirit of cooperation was very fine and the interest was rife. One of the most interesting features connected with the erection of the statue was the placing of a strong metal box made of copper 11x8x8 inches in size, hermetically sealed within the pedestal before the statue was placed thereon. Miss Zimmerman, local Chairman of the National Old Trails Road Committee, to whom the National Chairman is greatly indebted for her splendid cooperation and wonderful assistance, filled the box with records, newspapers, clippings, photographs, histories of the city and county, and city directory, a telephone directory, year books of Lagonda chapter, coins, and various other things which would be of interest in the future . . . .

An interesting part of the day's program was the taking of some moving picture films of the ceremony, for which Mrs. Teresa Adelsperger, Chairman of Better Films, was responsible . . . .

The festivities of the long summer's day were concluded by a tea given by Lagonda chapter at the home of Mrs. P. O. Crabill to all of the out-of-town guests . . . .

Lagonda chapter feels grateful in every way that she secured this lovely monument for Springfield. It is a beautiful work of art, majestic in its completion, inspiring us through its simplicity and its humble realism to a recognition of the dignity, the worth, and at length the grandeur of the deeds wrought by our Pioneer Mothers . . . .

It is fitting that the Ohio monument should be placed in Springfield. It is a matter of no small pride to the Daughters of the American Revolution to have been able to take the lead in the erection of this great Ocean to Ocean memorial to the Pioneer Mothers of our Nation.

The second monument was dedicated in **Wheeling, West Virginia**, on July 7, 1928:

The choice of the site was particularly fortunate, facing, as it does, the National Road just to the right of the entrance to Wheeling Municipal Park within a semi-circular wall of stone work and backed by the beautiful shrubbery of flowering plants. In the background may be seen the surrounding municipal golf course and many beautiful forest trees.

The West Virginia chapters paid their quota of 10c per capital and over a total of \$230.15 to the fund for the purpose of providing these monuments. The completion of the monument in West Virginia was made possible by the generous contributions and earnest efforts of the Wheeling Park Commission, as well as the many individuals who were sincerely interested in this completion. These patriotic citizens gave splendid cooperation to the Wheeling to the Wheeling chapter, and assisted them in arranging for the beautiful site and the program and came forward in a very generous way to finance the expenses of freight, foundation, and the cost of placing the monument, amounting to approximately \$3,200.

She pointed out the role of Judge Truman, Secretary Davis, and George W. Lutz, vice-president of the National Old Trails Road Association in selecting the site:

Mr. Lutz, being a very active and patriotic citizen of Wheeling, was the prime mover in the program for the monument and contributed a beautiful flag and flagpole and large urns to be placed in front of the monument, amounting to the sum of \$125. The Wheeling chapter assumed the other expenses to the sum of \$302.

During the ceremony:

The monument was unveiled by Mrs. Edward F. Hartley, National Vice Chairman for West Virginia, the National Old Trails Road Committee and Mrs. John Trigg Moss, National Chairman of the National Old Trails Road Committee, then made a very inspiring and interesting address of dedication. Mr. George Lutz made a short address and Mr. Frank A. Davis represented the National Old Trails Road Association and gave an address . . . .

With the representation at the dedication exercises of Wheeling's civic, patriotic and fraternal organizations, and the attendance of a vast throng of citizens interested in the placing of an impressive monument at the city's beautiful public park, it is probable that a record will be set in local annals for a greater display of general interest in public ceremonials.

In the event that future generations become bent on historical exploration, the sealed lead box which was placed in the base of the monument will prove a rich find. In heavy black envelopes are stored clippings and data relative to the history of West Virginia, Wheeling and Ohio County, its industries, its monuments and institutions, a copy of the city charter, photographs of the sponsors of the project, together with information and statistics, National, State, City and of the Daughters.

Wheeling chapter has always been specially interested in the marking of the National Old Trails Road, and in 1922 the chapter placed 5 bronze tablets at historic spots along the 16 miles of road in West Virginia.

In Kansas, interest in securing the monument was intense, with 10 towns competing, but **Council Grove** "was chosen because of its great historic lore and a willingness to formulate plans for a memorial park situated at the entrance to Council Grove." She added:

Nothing had ever come to this town that induced a better civic spirit and patriotic endeavor than this project of the National Society. The site given to the Daughters was at one time under water and required thousands of truck-loads of earth taken from the river bank to build up to the required level for a park. Citizens and farmers volunteered their time and labor, their teams and trucks, and worked day after day to get the site in readiness for the monument.

The plot of ground has been filled in to the height of over 6 feet and approximately 10,000 loads of dirt were moved by different groups of interested citizens. This meant hard work on their part, but records show that one day 225 farmers, 50 teams and 10 trucks moved 711 loads of earth one mile distance to "Madonna Park," while the band played from under the famous 300-year old "Custer Elm" tree. Dinner was served at noon to the 292, and families came from far and near to make the work of the day "a picnic." With a civic spirit such as this, and led by the Mayor of Council Grove, Mr. W. L. Young, a man of indomitable energy and intensely interested in the project, is it any wonder that Council Grove, Kansas, recorded the largest gathering to assemble at any of the dedications? Between ten and fifteen thousand people from all over that section of the country witnessed the unveiling of the statue of the Madonna of the Trail at Council Grove, Kansas, Friday, September 7, 1928.

(General George Armstrong Custer and his 7th Cavalry camped around the tree in 1867 while patrolling the Santa Fe Trail. The tree died of Dutch Elm disease in the 1970s. [The Historical Marker Database, <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=44938>])

She described the “vivid spectacle” of the ceremony:

Four hundred years of Kansas history was reenacted in a pageant of pioneer times. Indians brilliantly beaded and painted, Spanish adventurers in shining armour, soberly garbed priests, trappers, and hardy bands of pioneers, a colorful pageant depicting successive epochs in the Kansas history, moved slowly down a crowd-lined Main Street. It was a procession of successive dilapidated prairie schooners and vehicles of ancient lineage. Coronado and helmeted Spaniards, Father Padilla and Don Pedro were recalled. The “‘49ers,” the pioneer settlers, the birth of the Santa Fe Trail, the old Mission, “Custer Elm,” the Pony Express, the Brown Jug School, and occasionally a gorgeously handsome modern float made a vivid splash of color in the procession. Pioneer wagons bore eloquent signs “Kansas or Bust” and “Busted.” The old Prairie Schooner rumbled along with a coop of cackling chickens wired to the rear of the wagon filled with a family of small children.

The contrast in transportation of the past was introduced by one who rode a bicycle of the early '80's. Sprinkled through the pageant were Fort Riley's soldiers, trappers, scouts, veterans from the Blue and Gray Armies of the Civil War, clowns, and slaves in chains – all portraying incidents and periods in the history of the west. A dramatic stage coach “hold up” was possibly the best feature of the historical parade of the picturesque Pioneer Day. The stage coach in which the National Chairman, Mrs. John Trigg Moss, and Judge Harry S. Truman, President of the National Old Trails Road Association, were riding with Mayor W. L. Young, was “held up” in true frontiersman style.

After a recitation of the monument's unique inscriptions, the report continued:

Historic and current matter was sealed in the memory box to be opened each quarter or half of a century with public ceremony. In the box is placed a list of all donors to the monument fund, names of all volunteers, workers on the park site, and the history of the original townsite, compiled by R. M. Armstrong, current newspapers, centennials, booklets, telephone directories, photographs, etc.

The Daughters of the American Revolution have been deeded the plot of ground with a 70-foot frontage on Union Street paving to add to the city's site for the National Old Trails Road monument. The County Commissioner agreed to deed the Daughters 70 feet bordering the City Park site on the north. The gift is for the purpose of adding to the Madonna of the Trail sites, and is to remain property of the Society forever free from taxes, if used for the purpose given.

The fourth monument was dedicated in **Lexington, Missouri**, “with very impressive and befitting ceremonies” on September 17, 1928:

The entire day was devoted to the ceremonies of the monument erection, and the unveiling of the 5 bronze tablets marking historical sites in Lexington. Throngs of visitors and local citizens witnessed the ceremony and enjoyed the various activities of the day. The weather was ideal for comfort and enjoyment.

Fifty out of 85 Daughters of the American Revolution chapters in Missouri had representatives at the dedication . . . . A colorful parade was the first feature of the day's program at 10 o'clock promptly. The parade marshalled by Sanford Seller, Jr., represented the evolution of transportation from pioneer days of the era of ancient stage coach times down to the present day of the perfected motor car and truck. Prizes for floats, decorated cars, and old vehicles, were awarded . . . .

The Indians, one of the most realistic groups in the parade, were noteworthy for their picturesque dress, war paint and blanketed ponies upon which they were mounted. This group was contributed by the Red Men Lodge. Lexington Boys' Band and the Richmond Boys' Band added materially to the parade. The Wentworth Military Academy, led by the Wentworth Band, marched in the parade in highly approved fashion. The decoration of the bronze tablets marking the historic spot was held at 11 o'clock with Dr. C. T. Ryland, President of the Rotary Club, presiding . . . .

A luncheon was held at the Lexington High School building at noon with 1,146 guests in attendance. Music was rendered and Mrs. John Trigg Moss, Chairman, the National Old Trails Road Committee, and Mrs. Henry Chiles of Lexington, were presented with beautiful framed pictures of the Pioneer Mother monument taken by Miss Alice Spencer. The unveiling ceremonies were at 2 o'clock at the monument site. They were preceded by the presentation of a flag and flag-pole by the American Legion.

Among the speakers was Mrs. Moss, who made the "dedicatory address following the formal unveiling of the monument by Colonel George P. Venable, 92, a veteran of the Civil War." Judge Truman "delivered an address on the National Old Trails Road." After the ceremony, a "public reception and dance was held at the Lexington High School at 8 o'clock Monday evening":

Very beautiful souvenir booklets on the National Old Trails Road and "The Part Played by Lexington in the Westward Movement," written by Mr. B. M. Little, were given to the guests in attendance that day. This little brochure is a very splendid piece of work and it is a cherished souvenir. Many out-of-town guests were entertained, among whom were Miss Elizabeth Gentry of Kansas City and Mrs. John Van Brunt of Belmont, former National Chairman of the National Old Trails Road Committee. The National Committee for the Old Trails Road work was established in 1911, under the leadership of Miss Elizabeth Gentry, a Missouri woman, and it is fitting that the work of this Pioneer Committee should be brought to a successful culmination.

Missouri has 302 miles of the National Old Trails Road across State. Facing westward into the setting sun toward which the brave and shining eyes of many a Pioneer Mother

must have looked – striving to pierce the far away distances – the Madonna of the Trail stands sentinel at the graceful curve of State Highway No. 13 as it enters Lexington from the North and West . . . .

A copper box was placed in the monument holding articles that will be of value in years to come: pictures, books, clippings, newspapers, directories, stamps, etc.

Many beautiful social functions were given to honor the guests of the town that day. Mrs. Chiles gave a beautiful dinner in honor of Mrs. John Trigg Moss, National Chairman.

The location committee had chosen **Lamar, Colorado**, to receive the monument that was dedicated on September 24, 1928. “The Committee on ‘Selection of Sites’ in search for points of historical interest on the National Old Trails Road decided for Lamar when their two citizens, Senator A. N. Parrish and Mr. L. M. Markham related in detail the story of historical incidents that took place in ‘The Big Timbers.’” After reprinting the inscriptions, she explained:

The legend is that here in “Big Timbers” white men smoked pipes of peace after blazing the way for a nation over “The Trail” and found that the Indians had chosen the camp after Council Grove had been left behind. The most famous trading post within the limits of Colorado was Fort William Bent on the Arkansas River, and here the trappers and Indians came with their furs. Here in the “Big Timbers” Major Fitzgerald established his agency trading with the Indians and by his proper handling of the “Children of the Plains,” saved the lives of settlers and turned the Red Men toward the path of useful citizenship.

Colonel John C. Fremont, in his trip across the plains, reported that he found 600 Indian Lodges located, in the “Big Timbers” and there the Pioneer Mother and her brood found, because of the Arkansas undrained by irrigation, protection from the rays of the sun and from the chilly blasts of winter.

The site upon which the monument stands in Lamar was given by the Santa Fe Railroad, and is adjacent to the Santa Fe station. Several officials of the Santa Fe Railroad were in attendance at the dedication and were introduced from the platform. September 24th was considered to be “the red letter day” in the history of the community. One of the largest crowds ever known to gather in Lamar came for the entire day’s program, beginning with the parade at the noon hour and ending with a ball at night. Many “mementoes of the past” were brought forth and displayed in the show windows of Lamar merchants. Beautiful old relics including pieces of old china, old glassware, quilts and pictures, beautiful old spinning wheels and many beautiful gowns were displayed. The parade depicting pioneer scenes was witnessed by thousands of people and the first cars in the parade carried the Pioneer Mothers of Southeast Colorado.

In the first car rode Mrs. Felix Cain, who had been in Colorado since 1865, accompanied by Mrs. A. D. Hudnall of Las Animas, who came to Colorado when 6 months old. Three

Civil War veterans followed the Pioneer Mothers, namely: A. Deeter, Commander Sheets and P. S. Lynch. The Spanish American War and World War veterans came next and hosts of grade and high school children followed the veterans. The yoke of oxen and the Prairie Schooner attracted attention from young and old, as the driver, walking alongside prods his team along the “Dusty Trail” – the Santa Fe Trail. Then came the Pioneer Prospector with his two burros with pack, shovel, gold pan and grub. The different steps in the progress of the country were portrayed by the team of horses, the cattlemen on horseback, and the Santa Fe Railways, miniature reproductions of “Chief.” The Pioneer Mothers at her spinning wheel; the Pioneer people on horseback: the float showing progress in lighting from the torch through the candle and old lamp stages to the modern electric light stage. The progress in road building from the day of horses and plows to the day of grader and tractor: the parade closing with a long procession of the last made, high powered, shining new automobiles. In fact everything but the aeroplane was in the parade.

A very touching and beautiful sight was presented when, during the program, the Pioneer Mothers were seated about the Madonna of the Trail and Mrs. Felix Cain was presented to the audience and was given a beautiful spray of flowers.

Frank Davis, representing the National Old Trails Road Association, “opened the program” and Mrs. Moss delivered the dedicatory address. In addition:

On the morning of the 24th of September, upon the arrival in the city of Mrs. John Trigg Moss of St. Louis and the representatives of the National Old Trails Road Association, a short memorial service was held at Fairmount Cemetery for the late Senator A. N. Parrish, who so ably represented his town in the first committee to select the site.

(On May 23, 1928, the Fleagle Gang, headed by Jake and Ralph Fleagle, robbed the First National Bank of Lamar. State Senator Parrish, the bank’s 77-year old president, went into his office, grabbed a Colt .45 he called “Old Betsy,” and opened fire on the robbers, shooting a member of the gang, Howard Royston, in the face. In the ensuing gunfire, Senator Parrish and his son John, who worked at the bank, were killed. The robbers left with \$10,664 in cash, \$12,400 in Liberty Bonds, and almost \$200,000 in commercial paper. After a second gun battle with local authorities on the way out of town, the gang escaped to a farm in Kansas where they tricked a doctor into a house call to treat Royston’s wound. They then killed the doctor. The Fleagle Gang’s robbery became known to history because a single fingerprint on the doctor’s car led authorities to the killers – the first time a fingerprint enabled the Bureau of Investigation, later known as the FBI, to identify suspects and secure their conviction. Three of the four robbers were sentenced to execution by hanging. The fourth, Jake Fleagle, died in a shootout while fleeing arrest.)

The monument in **Albuquerque, New Mexico**, was unveiled on September 27, 1928. The city, with a population of 30,000, was “a thoroughly modern city” and was the largest city in the State:

It has beautiful homes and many attractions and points of real interest. It is located in the heart of the Indian country. From the time the National Old Trails Road enters this section of the country it traverses a region of intense interest as its many civic wonders greet the eye of the traveler. It is a land of limitless panoramas.

During the week of the dedication, “the fiesta known as ‘The First Americans’ was taking place at the Fairgrounds”:

The pageantry of “Early American Pioneers” gathered there for protection. No word picture can describe the color that greeted the eyes of the visitors in Albuquerque at this time. The vivid Red Chili and all the colors of the rainbow against the adobe background was beautiful indeed, and formed a perfect setting. Several thousand Indians were there for this celebration, and picturesque, indeed, were the garbs of the different tribes as they surged back and forth on the streets with gay colored flags and bunting.

The site selected in Albuquerque is in McClellan Park in the pretty residential section of the town facing directly upon the old Santa Fe. Trail. New Mexico has 450 miles of this old trail, entering the State to the northeast and going directly south to Albuquerque, turning west a short distance beyond.

Impressive ceremonies marked the unveiling of the monument. The procession to the park was led by the Indian School Band. Then came a car of Pioneer Mothers, including Mrs. J. A. Maloy, who has since passed into the Great Beyond. This was followed by cars bearing the distinguished city officials, officers of the Daughters of the American Revolution, members and citizens. More than 2,000 people surrounded the Park and listened to the interesting program with eyes aglisten as the real significance of the monument was presented to them.

Mrs. Moss delivered the dedicatory address; Frank Davis, representing the National Old Trails Road, spoke; and Mayor Clyde Tingley accepted the monument for the city:

In the memory box were placed documents of interest to the Daughters, as well as those of interest to the community. All the names of those who cooperated in financing the movement were placed in the base of the monument in the memory box, this being done by Mrs. Homer Ward, Vice-Chairman, National Old Trails Road Committee, after which Mrs. George K. Angle, retiring State Regent, and Mrs. Ada M. Bittner unveiled the monument.

The dedication took place at 11 o’clock, followed by a luncheon, hosted by the Lew Wallace Chapter, for honored guests. After lunch, the guests were taken to the Fairgrounds to see the “First Americans” performances.

Local newspapers had held a contest to select the inscriptions on the sides of the monument, both honoring the Pioneer Mother.

Two days later, on September 29, Mrs. Moss, Davis, and others were in Springerville to dedicate Arizona's monument. Although Springerville had been part of the main line of the National Old Trails Road from the start, it had become a bypass now that the Gallup-Holbrook road had been approved and included in U.S. 66, while Springerville was on U.S. 70. Mrs. Moss explained:

Out in the Western country, "The Land of Enchantment," distances are great and what would seem a long trip to the Easterner is "but a short side trip from the main Highway" to the Westerner. This was exemplified when Springerville, Arizona, put forth every effort to secure the Pioneer Mother monument for the State for its very own. Springerville is located on the National Old Trails Road at the intersection of the Coronado Trail, 95 miles from the railroad. Several towns entered the contest and presented briefs to the Committee, but a State-wide influence was brought to bear for Springerville. The Governor of Arizona [Governor Hunt] added his plea for Springerville to hundreds of others . . . .

The site upon which the monument was erected in Springerville is located at the junction of the National Old Trails Road highway, and the famous Coronado Trail from Clifton, the approximate route traveled by Coronado and his men in 1540 on their way from New Mexico to the Seven City of Cibola.

Splendid publicity was given to the program throughout the entire country for several months beforehand and on September 29, 1928, all roads seemed to lead to this White Mountain City, for hundreds of people came from every direction all over the State to attend this celebration. Springerville was found to be dressed in gala attire and every possible thing was done to show the true spirit of western hospitality to the honored guests. Every part of the program was given in true western style, even to the applause when the cowboys used their "six shooters" to applaud effectively.

The ceremony opened with a covered wagon parade at 2 o'clock led by Governor Hunt of Arizona on a saddled burro leading a burro with a pack as he did years ago when he entered the State as a young man for the first time. Included in the parade were many covered wagons, cowboys, pack trains, etc., led by the Round Valley and Roosevelt Indian bands. This parade stopped in front of the reviewing stand, and the participants grouped about in colorful array to take part in the program.

As usual, Mrs. Moss delivered the dedicatory address while Davis spoke on behalf of the National Old Trails Road Association. Governor Hunt gave an address titled "A Tribute to the Pioneer Mothers." Gustav Becker of Springerville, "the honored patriarch and pioneer citizen of the town," accepted the dedicatory address while Mrs. Frederick Winn of Phoenix accepted the monument for the National Society:

The program continued on through the evening, with a very delightful musical program from five to six. And at eight o'clock, the Apache Indians gave their weird Devil Dance, which lasted an hour. Though the Apaches have been in the past a warlike tribe, today, of course, the Apaches are peaceful, although they were the last of the southwest Indians

to be subdued and placed upon their reservation. A dance at the High School that evening completed the day's program.

The members of the Committee remained in Springerville several days, the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Gustav Becker, and when you have the good fortune to visit Springerville, go prepared to enjoy yourself every minute, and with the idea in mind that you will find something new to fascinate and interest you constantly.

The dedication in **Vandalia, Illinois**, took place a few weeks later on October 26, 1928, "the hundredth anniversary of the completion of the western terminus of the Old National Road (Illinois has 172 miles of this Old Trails Road across State)." The monument was installed on the grounds of the old State House, dating to the days when Vandalia was the capital of the State:

The dedication of the "Madonna of the Trail" memorial in Illinois was a celebration in song and pageantry that Illinois will long remember. From all sections within the State and from surrounding States came the members of our National Society, and from the farms and villages of surrounding counties came the people that massed before the old State Capitol and the monument, in a throng that is estimated between ten and fifteen thousand.

The amplifying truck was set in place, the business houses were closed, and upon platforms erected for the purpose, entertainments were staged during the morning hours. Daughters of the American Revolution were registered from Indiana, Missouri, Louisiana, Florida, California, Arizona, and Texas, and the District of Columbia as well as hundreds from Illinois.

The hour for the program was sounded by a stirring march from the Boy Scout band, and Miss Columbia and her court, drawn by four white horses, followed as the first float. Behind the float marched "The Spirit of '76" in wigs and cockades, followed by a stage coach bearing Abraham Lincoln, Stephen Douglas in whose company rode the National Chairman of the National Old Trails Road [Committee], Mrs. John Trigg Moss. Indians on their ponies in war bonnets and paint; the frontiersmen, the trappers, the old time fiddlers, and approximately 1,000 school children in the guise of Indians formed a big chorus at the monument.

Joseph C. Burschi, president of the Chamber of Commerce, presided during the program. He related the history of the foundation of Vandalia, on the spot where the hunters shot deer, of the arrival of the Ernst Colony from Germany in 1820, and the arrival of the State Officers from Caskaskia with the territorial records." Frank Davis "recounted the history of the old road." Mrs. Moss gave the dedicatory address. Burschi accepted the monument for the city, "and Mrs. William J. Sweeney of Rockport, State Regent of Illinois, accepted for D.A.R. and spoke at length of the early history of the country:

A panoramic picture was taken of the crowd and of the participants in the big event.

Following the program, the Benjamin Mills chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, of Greenville, was hostess for a reception in the roof garden of the Hotel Evans. They were assisted by the Unalilyi Camp Fire Girls. In the receiving line were many National Officers and State Regents of other States, as well as State Officers of Illinois.

In **Richmond, Indiana**, the ninth monument was unveiled on October 28, 1928, “with very impressive ceremonies before a large audience and in the presence of a number of State and National officers of our Society.” The monument was erected “at the west entrance to the beautiful Glenn [sic] Miller Park, near which place formerly stood the first toll gate on the National Road in Indiana, and on the site of one of the earliest burial grounds in Eastern Illinois, where the dust of many settlers still rests”:

A background of trees gives an effective setting to the statue which, besides its historical significance, also has artistic merit in no small degree. The Indiana dedication was the only one of the 12 to be held on a Sunday, and the exercises were impressive and dignified as befitted the day.

A luncheon was given at the beautiful new Richmond Leland Hotel at one o'clock honoring all visiting guests.

Guests included Mrs. Moss, Frank Davis, members of the National Old Trails Road Committee, D.A.R. State Regents from Indiana and nearby States, “and officers and Regents from many chapters in Indiana and Ohio”:

The day was very cold and cloudy, but despite the chill of the weather a vast assemblage of people greeting those who drove out following the luncheon and occupied the platform. The program was impressive and inspiring, from the raising of the Flag on the new flag pole to the unveiling of the beautiful figure of our Pioneer Mother by Miss Elizabeth Bates. Miss Bates is the daughter of the late Mrs. Fred S. Bates, who was the Chairman of the local committee of the National Old Trails Road Committee for a number of years, and mainly to the untiring efforts of Mrs. Bates and her interest in having Richmond selected as the site for the statue because of the historical pre-eminence of Wayne County, can be attributed the presence of the statue in Glenn [sic] Miller Park. Beautiful tributes to Mrs. Bates were impressively made throughout the dedication program, and it seems as if the “Madonna of the Trail” in Indiana was dedicated and unveiled in the memory of this loyal woman who worked so diligently to bring this beautiful monument to her home city . . . .

The outstanding part of the program was the address given by our National Chairman, Mrs. John Trigg Moss, who delivered the dedicatory address in a clear ringing voice that could be readily heard by everyone of the several thousand people who composed the vast audience, many hundreds of them standing motionless throughout the address – and, indeed, the entire program.

Frank Davis addressed the crowd for the National Old Trails Road Association. The account concluded:

Mrs. James B. Crankshaw gave a greeting from the Indiana Daughters, and Mrs. James F. Hornaday a eulogy to Mrs. Fred S. Bates, closing with “America the Beautiful” and the benediction. Thus ended the dedicatory service, “and it was truly a service, with a very real and impressive atmosphere of something sacred, almost holy.” The people stood intense with silent expectation as the white canvas was gracefully lifted from the face of the massive figure. When the unveiling was taking place the Sons of Veterans Drum and Bugle Corps came from over the hill playing the “Spirit of ’76.” These men, as they approached in costume and “make up” of the days of ’76, awakened the memories of many of the elderly gentlemen with snow white beards and hair.

Mrs. Hornaday had submitted one of the inscriptions on the base of the monument:

A Nation’s Highway!  
Once a wilderness trail  
Over which hardy pioneers made their perilous way  
Seeking new homes in the dense forests  
Of the Great North-west.

She had been present for “practically all of the time during the erection of the monument and it was appropriate that her verse be chosen, not only for sentiment expressed, but as a tribute of appreciation to her for time and effort expended”:

Through the efforts of the National Old Trails Road Association, the total expense incident to the transportation and erection of this mammoth monument memorial was financed by the Rotary Club, the Kiwanis Club, the Lions Club, and the Elks Club, and other local civic groups who were most generous in helping to make this project the great success that it was. Even the White Water chapter, Children of the American Revolution, rendered their loyal service.

The local Brass Foundry donated the heavy solid bronze box 4x8x8 inches for the memory box, which was filled with photographs of those who had any part in the projects, clippings from local newspapers, two sonnets by the Honorable William Dudley Foulke, who was gracious enough to give those two poems during the program of the afternoon. Many other valuable papers were placed in the box, and Mr. John P. Emlie of the local Monument Company took charge of the erection.

The final dedication of the year – the 10th – took place on December 8, 1928, at 2 p.m. in **Washington, Pennsylvania**. The Cumberland Road, and now the National Old Trails Roads, and more recently U.S. 40, in Pennsylvania was only 82 miles long “entering the State in the southwestern boundary line between Grantsville, Maryland, and Addison, Pennsylvania, taking a northwesterly direction through Uniontown, Brownsville, Beallsville, to Washington, then a southwestern route crossing the border near West Alexander”:

The site chosen for the Pennsylvania monument is very appropriately placed on the Old National Road in Washington County near Beallsville, on land donated by the Nemacolin Country Club. One hundred seventy-nine years ago there lived on the banks of the Monongahela at the mouth of the Dunlaps Creek, Chief Nemacolin, a chieftain of the Delaware tribe of Indians, and it is generally supposed that at one time this chief had a very respectable following of warriors, but at the time the Whites found him there he had very few and they were quite peaceable. It is interesting to follow the history of the old Indian who was known throughout that section of the country as the "Friendly Chief, Nemacolin."

It seems eminently fitting and proper that the "Madonna of the Trail" should stand guard over the old Turn Pike in this region of Pennsylvania, and particularly over the grounds of this Country Club which takes its name from and in memory of that fine friendly old Delaware Indian who played such an important part in the laying out of what is now known as this National route from "Coast to Coast."

The report included the resolution Mrs. Moss had received from Mrs. James P. Eagleson, vice-president for Pennsylvania of the National Old Trails Road Association, who headed the Committee on Arrangements for Pennsylvania:

#### RESOLUTION

Whereas, The National Old Trails Committee of the National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, have made application to the Nemacolin Country Club, located in Washington County, Pennsylvania, for a site for the location and erection of their memorial designated as the "Madonna of the Trail" statue; and

Whereas, The Board of Governors of said Nemacolin Country Club are desirous of granting said privilege to said Committee;

*Therefore, Be It Resolved*, by the said Board of Governors of the Nemacolin Country Club in regular meeting assembled that the privilege of location, constructing and maintaining said monument be granted to said Committee on the location chosen and selected on said grounds of the Northern side of said National Road directly opposite to the entrance of driveway to the Country Club grounds and that the necessary grounds be granted to said Committee for the erection and construction of the same, the area of said ground not to exceed one-half acre (1/2 A.) free of cost, this grant to continue so long as the said ground is used and occupied for the purpose herein granted and at the expiration of that time, the same to revert to the Nemacolin Country Club, its successors and assigns, and the proper officers of the Nemacolin Country Club are hereby authorized to execute the necessary agreement in connection with the carrying out of this grant.

The National Old Trails Road Committee, "needless to say," accepted "this generous offer."

Mrs. Eagleson's husband, "with intense interest in the project and patriotic loyalty to his county and state, rendered a splendid service to the Daughters of the American Revolution of Pennsylvania and to the National Committee on the National Old Trails Road:

He organized what is known as the "Madonna of the Trail – Pioneer Fifty-Fifty Club" of Washington County, Pennsylvania. This Club was composed of 50 members paying \$50, entitling each member to a life membership paid and non-assessable in the said club. The membership list was closed when 50 members were listed and this charter list was placed in a sealed box with other valuable papers to go down in history as the only club of the kind ever organized with a membership of 50 with full dues of \$50 and known as the "Pioneer Fifty-Fifty Club." A copy of the charter and list of members was sent to the National Chairman, Mrs. John Trigg Moss, and 4 honorary members were presented: one to Mrs. Alfred J. Brosseau, President General, National Society; one to Mrs. N. Howland Brown, State Regent of Pennsylvania; one to Mrs. John Trigg Moss, National Chairman, National Old Trails Road Committee, and the fourth to Judge Harry S. Truman, President of the National Old Trails Road Association. Embossed membership certificates were presented the evening of December 8th at the Washington Hotel, Washington, Pennsylvania, during a very delightful banquet that was given in honor of the visiting guests by the Washington County chapter of Washington, Pennsylvania.

On the day of the dedication the weather was very cold and threatening, but the long automobile journey did not seem to dampen the ardour and enthusiasm of patriotic residents of that section of Pennsylvania.

Due to the inclement weather, the ceremonies were held in the Nemaquin Country Club House. Mrs. Moss gave the dedicatory address, after which Mr. Eagleson accepted the monument on behalf of the Pioneer Fifty-Fifty Club. Miss Nancy Jane Hall, Regent of the Washington County chapter of the D.A.R., "accepted the guardianship of the monument for the local chapter."

After the ceremonies, the audience was led by the American Legion Drum Corps, to the site of the monument, "where it was unveiled by Miss L. E. Boughner, after which 'America the Beautiful' was sung and the benediction by the Reverent H. M. Jenkins of Beallsville completed the day's program." Miss Boughner was National Vice-Chairman of the National Old Trails Road Committee.

The 11th monument was dedicated in **Upland, California**, on February 1, 1929:

The State of California has 302 miles of the Old National Road. The route of the Old Santa Fe Trail guided thousands of the early settlers to California through the valleys and deserts and over the mountains in the early days of the State's settlement. Upland is a small city large enough for a wonderful civic spirit and strong enough to assume any ambitious civic enterprise. It is a city of 5,000 people in the heart of California's richest citrus district, 42 miles from Los Angeles . . . .

Ten dedications had taken place in as many States respectively, and it seemed the hand of fate that “Sunny” California should produce the only “rainy day” of all the celebrations. The enthusiasm and splendid spirit of the people were not at all dampened . . . .

Owing to the inclement weather the program could not be carried out as planned. The amplifiers were in place, the platform had been built and everything was in readiness for the complete program at the site of the monument, but the Chairman in charge, Mr. C. E. Kirk, Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, and his committee, deemed it unwise to proceed with the program in the rain.

Nevertheless, the parade took place:

Hundreds of automobiles were parked all along the way and the pageantry of progress from early days to the present was depicted in an impressive parade. First came the development of transit, beginning with Indians on horseback and with luggage slung between poles dragged behind the animals. Then followed the succeeding epochs in transportation including Spanish Colonial and other early American types leading to covered wagon and stage coach, and then the motor car in its various stages from 2 cylinders to 12 and, finally, the aeroplane. Beautiful historic scenes and striking displays were prepared by many committees and organized for the costly float decorations of the parade. Floral decorations, flags and insignia of our Society added colorful charm to the last division of the parade. Chief Standing Bear, hereditary head of the Ogala tribe of the Sioux Nation, was a distinguished visitor and took part in the ceremonies.

Too much admiration cannot be expressed for the wonderful spirit of loyalty and patriotism which prompted the carrying out of so excellent a parade even though it was raining. The disregard of personal comfort and the fine determination to make a success of the entire dedication program showed a marked inheritance of the true pioneer spirit of those of the early days who were being honored.

Addresses, including Mrs. Moss’s dedicatory speech, were delivered in the auditorium of Chaffey High School. Mayor A. H. Johnson accepted the monument for the city:

The site upon which the California monument is erected could hardly be more beautiful. It is located at the intersection of the Old Santa Fe Trail and Euclid Boulevard. This is a double drive highway with a parkway in the center lined with pepper, grevillea, and other beautiful ever-green trees. On each side of the avenue are groves – most of the time displaying the golden fruit of the orange and lemon. Intermingled among the groves are palatial residences and artistic landscapes. What could be more picturesque than this boulevard extending from the base of the hills through Upland to 7 miles south of Ontario?

The memory box was not sealed within the base until Lincoln's Birthday, February 12th. It contains newspapers, books, coins, and other valuable printed matter. This is placed in the base to be opened February 1, 1979. [*Proceedings* April 1929, pages 185-207]

### **The Final Dedication – Bethesda, Maryland**

On April 12, 1929, Mrs. Moss visited Bethesda to see the site of the final monument that would be dedicated at Wisconsin and Montgomery Avenues, facing the Montgomery County Building. She conferred with S. H. Miller, chairman of the Bethesda Chamber of Commerce, who was in charge of erecting the monument. He supervised as workers completed the base on April 12.

Walter R. Tuckerman had donated the site for the monument near the subdivision known as Edgemoor. Tuckerman was an attorney, entrepreneur, banker, and philanthropist; he founded Edgemoor. He and Mrs. Tuckerman presented the deed for the site to Mrs. Moss and Mrs. Enoch G. Johnson, Maryland's national vice chairman of the National Old Trails Road Committee. ["Last D.A.R. Marker Rising at Bethesda," *The Washington Post*, April 13, 1929, page 3]

The dedication took place on April 19, beginning at 4 p.m. The continental congress had cleared its afternoon schedule to allow delegates to drive to Bethesda for the dedication. Mrs. Moss's report on the dedications explained:

The day of the dedication, April 19th, was one of sunshine and clean crisp air after a week of spring rains and cloudy weather. A large crowd attended the exercises, which were held out in the open, near the site and under the shelter of century-old trees. National Officers, State Regents, and hundreds of D.A.R. members from almost every State in the Union, as well as officials of Bethesda city government, and prominent residents participated.

The special guest was Vice President Charles Curtis, who had represented Kansas in the House of Representatives (1893-1907) and the Senate (1907-1929). He had taken his oath of office on March 4, 1929, along with the new President, Herbert Hoover.

The dedication, presided over by Mrs. Robert A. Welsh, State Regent of Maryland, began with a concert by the First Tank Group Band of Camp Meade in Maryland. After an invocation, a salute to the flag by the Children of the American Revolution, and the singing of the "Star-Spangled Banner," Mrs. Johnson gave an address of welcome. President General Brosseau "recounted the hardships and self-sacrifice of the early pioneer mothers who followed ox carts along the early trails":

It is preeminently fitting that in following a plan of dedication of the statues in each of the twelve states, the first should be last, and that Maryland, which was the scene of the first questing, should experience the fulfilment in this tribute to her pioneering spirit.

In eleven of the states, statues have been erected and dedicated, and now we come to Maryland, the twelfth state and the source of inspiration. Here we rest, and into the keeping of the citizens of Bethesda do we commend in imperishable stone, the soul of the pioneer mother.

Proud as I am of the joint accomplishment of the National Old Trails Association [sic] and the Daughters of the American Revolution in their notable plan of marking this historic highway with the statues dedicated to the pioneer mothers, I shall make no comment upon the glorious monument itself. When it is revealed to you, I know you will be reminded, as I am, of the definition of eminence as “something that is created in stone, stops in animals and lives again in man.”

But I shall indulge in a bit of personality and allow you to share with me a secret which I am sure is known to but few, and that is the bit of beautiful and patriotic sentiment which attaches itself to the creation of this symbolic group.

The young college student, son of Mrs. Moss, our efficient National Chairman, whom you have here today, designed the statue. That the mother was able to capture the past, envisage the future and, through the rare gifts of her son, synchronize all with the present – with the ideals and the practical aims of our great Society is quite the perfect expression of patriotic service.

Also do I want to pay a tribute to our own Mrs. Talbott and the years of service that she gave to the work of this Committee. But for her zeal and patient efforts we would not be standing here today, helping to make immortal this phase of our nation’s early history.

She closed by reciting William D. Foulke’s “The Settler’s Wife,” previously read during the dedication in Richmond, Indiana. [“The 38th Continental Congress, N.S.D.A.R.,” *Daughters of the American Republic Magazine*, June 1929, page 344]

Judge Truman was the next speaker, delivering a version of his address on the Old Trails:

The National Old Trails Road Association, ladies and gentlemen, has helped the Daughters of the American Revolution to finish a Memorial to the woman who made this country great – the Pioneer Mother.

It was the grand old pioneer mother who made the settlement of the original thirteen colonies possible. She came to Virginia in 1609, she came to Massachusetts in 1620 and after that to all the colonies, thus making their settlement a permanent undertaking.

When that great and fertile plain, west of the Alleganys [sic] needed settlement, she went with the hearty pioneers who made an empire of it. She crossed the Mississippi and she went to Oregon and California.

She made this country what it is by being the hearty mother [sic] she was and producing sons and daughters to make it great.

It is exceedingly appropriate that the Daughters of the American Revolution should have originated the idea and it is also proper that the National Old Trails Association [sic] should have helped them to carry it out. It was over the old trails that those wonderful women made their trek [sic] to the Ohio Valley and from there to Louisiana territory and the great west.

The Old Trail started here, or some where not far away. The first road from Baltimore to the west was laid out over the trail taken by Braddock and Washington in the French and Indian War. It is yet the best and shortest road from here over the mountains and to the west.

From 1750 to Revolutionary times those good women were going over that trail to the head of navigation on the Ohio and down that great river to Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana.

After the Revolution the National Government recognized the necessity of land transportation and adopted and laid out the National Road from here to St. Louis and later to Jefferson City, Mo. Daniel Boone used the road to Booneville, Mo., in his salt business and it is today known as Booneslick trail.

About 1825 the National government recognized the necessity of a trade route to old Mexico and after making treaties with the Plain's Indians authorized and had completed a survey from Sibley, Mo., to Santa [sic] Fe, Mexico, then in a foreign country. Therefore the National Old Trails Road follows the history and development of all this country beyond the Alleghenies. There isn't a foot of it but what is linked with the history of the country. Over it those pioneer mothers went to make the winning of the West really and truly stay won. They were just as brave or braver than their men, because in many cases they went with sad hearts and trembling bodies. They went, however, and endured every hardship that befalls a pioneer. They fought Indians, want, and loneliness and won. My grandmothers were pioneer women and that is why I am here.

There she stands, ladies and gentlemen, the mother of the country – the finest thing on earth and here at the beginning of the trail and the foundation of the country it is appropriate that we erect the last monument to the pioneer mothers, originated by the Daughters of the American Revolution and carried to completion with the assistance of the National Old Trails Association. [Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum; Quoted in Mallinson, Jane, "Harry Truman and the Selection of Sites for the DAR Madonna Statues, Part II," *Wagon Tracks*, May 1995, page 6]

As Algeo explained, the Pioneer Mother monuments were "a project close to Truman's heart" because both of "his grandmothers had made the arduous trek from Kentucky to western Missouri in the 1840s." [Algeo, page 50]

Tuckerman formally presented the deed to Mrs. Moss, who presented it, in turn, to Mrs. Brosseau to be placed in the national society's archives.

Mrs. Moss delivered the dedicatory address, which was reprinted in the *Daughters of the American Republic Magazine*:

The National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution organized under a constitution, of which Article 11, Section 1, reads:

“The objects of this Society are: To perpetuate the memory and spirit of the men and women who achieved American Independence – the acquisition and protection of historical spots – and the erection of monuments.”

And wholly in keeping with this very first sentence in this section “to perpetuate the memory and spirit of the men and woman who achieved American Independence,” in 1911, the National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, established a National Committee known as “The National Old Trails Road” Committee, whose work primarily was to definitely establish the Old Trails Road as a great National Memorial Highway – a Memorial to be of great National scope, expressing a great National love for those sturdy pioneers whose memorials *shall live forever* like a “thing devine.” To that end, this loyal band of women went about their work enthusiastically and untiringly, an inspiration to the country at large, awakening interest in locating, exploiting and advertising old historic roads, and influencing the new automobile roads in course of construction at that time all over the country, to be built upon the old historic trails.

During the early work of the Daughters, the National Old Trails Road Association came

into being, stating in its own By-Laws, Article II, Section 1 –

“The object of this Association shall be to assist the Daughters of the American Republic in marking the Old Trails and to promote the construction of an Ocean-to-Ocean Highway of modern type worthy of its memorial character.”

They also adopted the temporary marking of the Ocean-to-Ocean Highway as suggested by the National D.A.R. Committee, of marking the National Highway with our own National Colors, and they, too, went forth with the paint-pot in hand, as many of the Daughters had done before, banding the telegraph and telephone poles with red, white, and blue, so that the character of this road might be evidenced to the traveler of the day, whose slogan was “Follow the flag of the D.A.R.”

From that time on these two patriotic groups, the National Old Trails Road Committee of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the National Old Trails Road Association, have had much in common, and while our D.A.R. Committee gave the first organized

impetus to this plan of a Pioneer Memorial Highway across the Continent, and issued the first map, named the road, originated the first road-sign, and painted it on telegraph poles and introduced a bill in Congress calling upon the Government to build the road, we Daughters most gratefully acknowledge the impetus and far-reaching power, the able assistance, and never-ceasing cooperation given to this movement by the splendid men of the National Old Trails Road Association. Like the wise men of old, we have followed the same bright star together, and it has been “a long, long trail awinding into the land of our dreams” – there has been “the long night of waiting” – but even that is spent, and we are here to realize the vision we caught of this “Thing Divine,” and, while we know that “Gone is the last frontier and the steady grind of the wagon train,” we know that the Great Spirit of the Pathfinder, the Trail Blazer lives – and will ever live in our heart of hearts – for the trail he took to the glorious West was that wonderful trail of Love!

The National Old Trails Road that we memorialized at Bethesda was the “Homing Trail” of a young nation, for it was the most natural route of travel when our early Americans began to pour across the Alleghenies and plant their homes in the Great Western wilderness.

This road was built, not by road engineers, but was marked out by the Indian and the buffalo, their choice always being the quickest and best line of travel. In the olden times, day after day, year after year, was heard the music of the creaking wagon and the lowing ox. Just why the mighty host of Pioneers left their comfortable homes to plunge into the Great Unknown, we will never know, except that the restless spirit of adventure possessed them. And after the heat of the warfare and strife of the early Revolutionary days, they had one desire in their souls – to establish their own homes and live in peace and happiness with their neighbors the rest of their days. To come into this great possession they were willing to pass down the great “Homing Trail” of the Nation, into the land of mystery and romance, of hardship and endurance, and with them they took, not the ammunition wagon and artillery, but herds of livestock and their household goods, implements of the farm land; they took with them their women and their children – the guarantee of a future state, the earnest of a permanent settlement, the basis of an American home.

We carry our banner aloft for “Home and Country”; hence the Daughters of the American Revolution have long interested themselves in preserving all State and National Highways. They have studied the Old Indian trails or traces, the stage coach lines, military roads, federal roads, and the old post roads and mail routes, and marked them all over this country. The Pony Express, The Rainbow Route, and The Santa Fe Trail, the Cumberland Pike, Ye Old Kings Highway of the East and the King’s Road of the South and East; the Oregon Trail of the West, the Old Indian Agency Road and the Mormon Trails; also The Old Territorial Road of the North, the Natchez Trace, the El Camino Rail, the Dixie Highway of the South; the Jackson Trace, the Lincoln Highway, the Old Boston Post Road and the Mohawk Trail, the Boone’s Lick in Missouri, and the Old Braddock Road in Maryland – all these and hundreds of others, have been marked, and are as sacred to us as battlefields. They record the steady triumph of peace; they are the true index of a Nation’s progress – the life-history of a people. That they are linked in a

complete chain from ocean to ocean is not a matter of chance, we are told, each link representing an epoch in the growth of the Republic.

In the words of the late Honorable W. P. Borland, of Missouri, who supported the National Old Trails Road to the end of his days, “they are the autograph of a Nation written across the face of a Continent.” Surely, these sacred names shall not perish – *numbers must not, shall not*, take their places. These time-worn, time-honored names ring down the ages like sweet music of old. They tell the story of hardship you and I will never know; they speak to us of the old Prairie Schooner slowly wending its way, – of the tent, – of the plain – “and dust, alas, on breasts that rose not up again!” They interpret the fortitude of the Pioneer Fathers who opened the way and the enduring faith and ever-abiding hope of the Mothers, the great hosts of known and unknown Mothers, who went forth “with mother love” in their hearts, and a “mother song” upon their lips, who represented then – and we pray God they do now – the very heart of the whole world!

These mothers of the covered-wagon days never faltered, never ceased to hope, though they stalked the dreary plains with unsteady footsteps, privation and suffering their constant companions.

Possessing the sterling qualities of duty and sympathy, sacrifice and joy, stern reality and romance, gentleness and severity, justice and mercy, faith in God Almighty, and a great dignity of soul – the “Madonnas of the Trail” entered the threshold of their new-found homes and erected an altar therein to country and to God. We are told Mary, the Mother of Christ, entered into sacred history with song, “My Soul Doth Magnify the Lord.” Our Pioneer Mothers have passed into sacred history, and we catch the refrain as it wafts back to us across the mountain and plain, along the Old Trails and Pathways, an echo growing stronger with the passing years – “Praise the Lord, Oh, My Soul!” And the strength of this great echo has made this Nation.

And today we Daughters of the American Revolution present to the Nation our tribute of love and veneration, a great National Shrine reaching from ocean to ocean, and as we unfold the veil that hangs over her, revealing to the world the outward beauty and magnificence of our Monument, may we feel the great benediction of that glorious anthem ringing in our hearts, “Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet, last [sic] we forget, lest we forget.” May we dedicate ourselves anew to the great and hallowed ideals of the past, and live true to the Spirit of our Pioneer Forbears, and with their abiding faith, *believing in our Nation*, and *steadfastly* upholding her institutions, we dedicate this, the twelfth link of our Beautiful National Shrine this day – we dedicate it to the honor and glory of our Pioneer Mothers of the Past, and in the name of God, amen. [“The Madonna of the Trail,” *Daughters of the American Revolution Magazine*, July 1929, pages 399-404]

Wisconsin Avenue, as Mrs. Moss explained, was the road that Major General Edward Braddock marched on April 14, 1755, on his way to Fort Duquesne, later the site of Pittsburgh, during the French and Indian War. The British officer, whose troops included young militia leader George Washington, was on his way to dislodge the French. The soldiers had to build or widen a path

through the wilderness. The British force was attacked shortly after crossing the Monongahela River. Braddock died on July 13 from wounds he suffered during the battle, leaving Washington in charge of a retreat. Daniel Boone, a wagon driver on the march, barely escaped with his life. Washington also presided over a funeral for Braddock. To ensure the body could not be found and desecrated, Washington buried Braddock in the middle of the road his men had just built; wagons were driven over the grave and the troops marched over it to hide the site.

According to an account in *The Evening Star*, Mrs. Moss explained beyond her formal remarks, "It is of peculiar interest to recall today that the State of Maryland, where our trail is now completed, the first road law was passed in 1666, and the first mail route was established in 1695. She recalled that the Maryland chapter of the D.A.R. had begun marking the trails about 18 years earlier:

Past records mention Mrs. Morris Croxall as your first chairman, whose zeal and constant efforts were rewarded by interested co-operation from all chapters.

You own Mrs. W. H. Talbott of Rockville, was an interested member of this committee from the beginning – one of the pioneers – and it was while she was serving as vice chairman under the leadership of Mrs. Henry McCleary that the fund to mark the road was established. Mrs. Talbott served as national chairman of this committee for six years, and her untiring efforts kept the interest alive during the war period. I wish to pay Mrs. Talbott this tribute today.

I find the following names mentioned in the records of the past: Mrs. Herbert M. Galt, Mrs. F. H. Markel, Mrs. Albert A. Doub, Mrs. Enoch Johnson and Mrs. Samuel Tubman. All have contributed time and effort in the past in the interest or memorializing these sacred old paths.

Numerous monuments and markers have been erected, but today we are dedicating our long-dreamed-of memorial to our mothers of the past. We are at last paying tribute to the silent and patient "Madonnas of the Trail" – brave in their sacrifice, loyal to their men, following them trustfully, carrying the coming race in their arms.

Former Postmaster General Harry S. New (March 1923-March 1929), a former Senator from Indiana (1917-1923) but now a Bethesda resident, accepted the monument on behalf of the people of Bethesda. Mrs. Robert A. Welsh, State Regent of Maryland, accepted the guardianship of the monument on behalf of the Maryland Daughters.

A parade of State Regents followed:

The escort of State Regents from the 12 States through which the National Old Trails Road passes, formed in line with their State flags carried by their personal pages . . . . Coming forward to the front of the platform, each State Regent in turn gave the data recorded on the base of the monument in their own State respectively. They were then escorted to the monument by the Boy and Girl Scouts, and surrounded the statue during

the unveiling by Mrs. W. H. Talbott, who was assisted by 2 small pages, Masters E. Windsor Offutt, Jr., and M. Wilson Offutt 3d, America was sung and the American's Creed was led by the author, Mr. William Tyler Page.

The Offutts were the grandchildren of a pioneer father.

Following a benediction, the ceremony came to an end. [Proceedings, pages 207-210; "Old Trails Road Marker Unveiled," *The Evening Star*, April 20, 1929, page 4; "Statue Is Unveiled To Pioneer Mother," *The Washington Post*, April 20, 1929, page 20]

### **A Kick for Truman in Santa Fe**

Jesse L. Nusbaum was the National Park Service's first archeologist. In 1921, he became superintendent of Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado. In 1927, he was given the additional title of lead archeologist and prime enforcer of the Antiquities Act of 1906 for the Southwest. He lived and worked in Santa Fe, New Mexico, for many years until his death there in December 1975 at the age of 88.

Nusbaum recorded an incident – a legend, really – involving Harry S. Truman, and the plan to erect the Madonna of the Trail in Santa Fe. In a recollection for his daughter Rosemary, he wrote that when he moved to Santa Fe in 1932, the arts community was "buzzing with a recent triumph" by refusing the plan to install the Madonna of the Trail monument in the city's Plaza. During the New Deal era of President Roosevelt, Nusbaum was Director of the Laboratory of Anthropology, but "also had a small part in the management of the local chapter of the Arts Commission." At the time, following the collapse of the stock market in 1929, the city's artists and writers were suffering:

Preliminary to New Deal time a Commission was set up in Washington to assist artists, and it was decided that sculptures be included. Joe Davidson, a well-known and fine sculptor was commissioned to sculpt a larger than life size version of a Pioneer Mother. Several copies were to be placed along the old Santa Fe Trail, all at the direction of the Washington Commission and Santa Fe was designated to be one of them.

When the arts community heard of the plan "a great controversy raged." Writer Mary Austin, who had moved to Santa Fe in 1918, and others "decided that the intrusion was unfitting," but debate continued in person and by letter and telegrams with Washington. However, "decisions had been made far away and there was insistence that Santa Fe was a proper place":

Well, the day came for the sculpture to appear and indeed the afternoon the Pioneer Mother arrived at the corner of Shelby and San Francisco Streets on the Plaza by truck, all swathed in wrappings and accompanied by three men – one a short fellow named Harry Truman, then working for the Penderghast [sic] bosses of Kansas City, and soon to become Vice President of these United States under Franklin Roosevelt. As the truck came to a stop, the Santa Fe group there to meet it immediately expressed refusal and loudly ordered the truck to move on. Someone shouted that life was not lived merely

consisting of breathing but in acting and the controversy raged loud and heated, as the Pioneer Mother was unwrapped by the equally determined men on the truck.

When an attempt was made to move the sculpture, Mary Austin, known to all of us as a lady of great literary brilliance and independence, and a formidable and large lady of stature, stepped forward and with no offense to modesty began to kick Harry Truman on the shins.

The Pioneer Mother never left the truck. She was hastily rewrapped and taken to grace the little park on Fourth Street in Albuquerque. [Nussbaum, Rosemary, *Tierra Dulce: Reminiscences from the Jesse Nussbaum Papers*, The Sunstone Press, 1980, pages 59-60]

While the image of Mary Austin kicking Harry Truman in the shins is vivid, Nussbaum's recollection gets a few details wrong. Actually, he got all the details wrong.

The date is wrong. In fact, 1932 was the year President Franklin D. Roosevelt won the presidential election and would take office in March 1933. The New Deal had not begun in 1932. In any event, the decision on where to place the New Mexico monument was made in October 1927.

In a letter to his wife Bess on October 3, 1927, quoted earlier, Truman recalled the monument committee's consideration of New Mexico. The Albuquerque delegation had "backed me into a corner and tried to force me to promise to vote for this town." Then Santa Fe "did me the same way," even following Davis and him to the hotel, "and wouldn't let us loose." The next day, they were going to drive to Santa Fe, 66 miles, "hear Santa Fe come to a decision," and then start on the location for Colorado.

Clearly, he was talking to boosters, not the Santa Fe arts community.

In Santa Fe, the committee viewed possible sites for the monument before meeting at the La Fonda Hotel for a luncheon and further discussion. J. D. DeHuff of the Santa Fe Chamber of Commerce explained why Santa Fe was the logical site for the New Mexico monument. Mrs. Francis Wilson, a former regent of the State's D.A.R. and a Santa Fe resident, supported the city for the monument, but a Mr. Kloch of Albuquerque spoke in favor of his city. (This probably was "the Honorable George S. Klock," who would preside over dedication of the monument in Albuquerque.)

Mary Austin and writer Frank Applegate spoke in opposition to the monument in Santa Fe. Jane Mallinson, in the Santa Fe Trail Association's *Wagon Tracks*, wrote about these events:

As DeHuff later explained in the October 14, 1927, *Santa Fe New Mexican*, "it had never once occurred to me, and I feel sure that it had never occurred to Mrs. Wilson or any other supporter of Santa Fe's claim, that any one living here would, or could object to the location of the monument in Santa Fe." Thus he was surprised when "Mr. Applegate soon got up and began with an uncomplimentary reference to the Santa Fe chamber of

commerce, stating that this was another case of where the chamber of commerce was attempting to put something over on the Santa Fe public without letting the public know anything about it. Mrs. Wilson interrupted him immediately . . . . Mr. Applegate then made a statement to the effect that he had canvassed all the artists and writers in Santa Fe and that none of them wanted this monument here, that it was not artistic, and Santa Fe did not want something unloaded on it that it didn't want. Mrs. Austin made a few remarks the tenor of which was that the so-called Pioneer Woman monument did not represent the real pioneers of this region at all, that the real pioneers were the Spanish people and that they had not been consulted and were not represented at all."

Mallinson quoted Austin from the *Santa Fe New Mexican* issue of October 18, 1927, as saying she had been suspicious "when I asked what artists had seen and approved the monument. I was informed that 'you will have to rely upon us for that.' Now in matters of art that do not come within my own profession, I am not accustomed to rely upon the judgment of any but experts":

She continued, "Had I known nothing else of the matter, this answer alone would have been enough to make me oppose the acceptance of the monument. When a picture of the monument was shown me, I felt that I would have no right to let Santa Fe in for anything in the way of art so atrocious. Not only is the monument indifferent art, but as a descendant of a long line of Pioneer Mothers myself, I felt that the monument did not represent them truly . . . . Moreover . . . the Pioneers of New Mexico are not the Pioneers of the D.A.R. . . . I considered it profoundly discourteous for the D.A.R. to think of setting up one of their monuments in the city of Santa Fe without the widely expressed approbation of the New Mexican pioneers. Austin made it clear that she objected to the "rude interruption of the D.A.R. official who presided [Mrs. Moss]." According to DeHuff, "Mrs. Moss was infuriated."

In the October 19 issue of the *New Mexican*, Applegate stated that when he was asked to address the meeting:

I replied that I would be willing to give ten dollars toward a fund to keep the statue away from Santa Fe and that if the statue was wanted here I had better not be asked to the meeting. Thus I gave fair warning." According to his recollection, Applegate listened to the statements made in favor of Santa Fe at that meeting and spoke out when it "seemed from the tenor of the meeting that Santa Fe was about to be handed the statue.

Now it is an old saying that one must not look a gift horse in the mouth, but I had seen some cuts of this statue and was adversely impressed by it and raised the question of whether Santa Fe, as a whole, wanted the statue unloaded on it in this manner, that the Old Santa Fe association, to my knowledge, had not been consulted and that I had spoken to a number of artists and writers and that none of them cared for the statue. I said further that if a single artist in Santa Fe was found who approved of the statue I would withdraw all further protest. Mrs. Moss interrupted me at this point and said artists had nothing to do with this statue, that it was between the D.A.R. and the chamber of commerce.

Applegate also recalled that Mary Austin, “in a manner to which no one could possibly take exception, questioned the propriety of placing a monument of this subject in Santa Fe on the ground that Santa Fe was an old Spanish pioneer town, and also that the descendants of these pioneers had not been consulted in this matter.” Applegate further clarified his own position, stating that “I had no quarrel with the D.A.R. but what I did object to was the inartistic quality of this particular statue. I said I did not consider it a work of art.” At this point, as he remembered, “Mrs. Moss lost her temper . . . and said I was excused from the meeting. I thanked her very kindly in my most suave and courteous manner and departed bearing no rancor whatsoever. Up until my last remark Mrs. Moss seemed intent on the statue’s coming to Santa Fe, but her anger overcoming her she tossed it to Albuquerque.”

Mrs. Moss asked everyone but the committee to leave the room. The committee then voted 5 to 2 to place the New Mexico statue in Albuquerque. DeHuff and Wilson cast the only votes for Santa Fe.

Mallinson quoted Nusbaum’s recollection of Mary Austin kicking Harry Truman in the shins until he got back in the truck to take the statue to Albuquerque, adding, “This account has no basis in fact, but it may represent the strong opposition of some Santa Fe artists to the Madonna.” [Mallinson, Jane, “Harry Truman and the Selection of Sites for the DAR Madonna Statues, Part III,” *Wagon Tracks*, Volume 9, Issue 4 (August 1995), pages 10-11]

Fern Lyon added details to the meeting. The local Kiwanis Club, which hosted the luncheon, “had invited interested citizens of Santa Fe to join the guests and contribute their own ideas on the statue matter.” Only Applegate and Austin showed up:

Mary Austin has been described by publicists as an internationally known “feminist, mystic, southwestern naturalist and environmentalist.” In Santa Fe she had been described as “God’s Mother-in-Law.”

She and Applegate, “a sculptor, painter, and writer,” were “triumphant veterans of a good many artistic battles.” Lyon wrote:

The two of them were kept cooling their heels in the De Vargas lobby for more than an hour as the luncheon went into overtime.

When they got into the meeting, Mary Austin announced that the statue was inappropriate for New Mexico, that New Mexico’s pioneer mothers were not those of the D.A.R. They were Hispanic. She added that she, herself, came from a long line of pioneer mothers and none of them looked like that statute. She called it a caricature.

Frank Applegate in turn pronounced the Madonna a cheap copy of a work that was inartistic in the first place. He said there had been too much supervision of the sculptor by the D.A.R. and repeated the rumor that Mrs. Moss’ own child was one of the models. Then he pointed out that Santa Fe citizens would be asked to raise some \$1,500 for

moving and installing the statue. He offered to donate \$10 to a fund for keeping the thing out of town.

Mrs. Moss was understandably infuriated. She told Applegate to apologize or leave the room. He left the room. Mary Austin left with him.

Lyon added that on the 50th anniversary of the dedication in Albuquerque, Mayor David Rusk and others gathered to extract the time capsule. She quoted an account in *The Albuquerque Journal*:

The first bad sign came last week when drilling revealed the stone behind the plaque was eight inches thick . . . with Mayor David Rusk, husbands of D.A.R. and perhaps a dozen guests circling the base tapping it with their rocks . . . They found a hollow sounding spot, but no capsule. The D.A.R. president says if they find it they will put in a new one with a copy of the program, a 15-cent stamp (because it's such a horrible postage compared to 50 years ago) and several bicentennial coins. "But we're not going to seal the instructions. They're going in the file."

A week later, the *Journal* published a photo of the senior radiographer at Sandia Laboratories X-raying the base of the Madonna. Still no memory box.

That seems to be the last story so far about the Madonna of the Trail.

If on some Elysian Field the spirits of Mary Austin and Frank Applegate meet they must be exchanging knowing thought waves. [Lyon, Fern, "Madonna of the Trail," *La Crónica de Nuevo México*, Issue number 27, March 1988, page 2]

Some apocryphal stories are too good to fact check. One of those stories is the image of Mary Austin kicking Harry Truman – then-president of the National Old Trails Road Association, future United States Senator, future Vice President, and future President of the United States – in the shins until he drove the Madonna of the Trail monument to Albuquerque. But unfortunately, it is not true.

### **The Master Highway**

In 1921, Cy Avery had encouraged a friend to launch a magazine called *The Nation's Highways*. Kelly wrote, "Most issues carried an article with Cy's byline, pieces about him, or stories about one or more of his projects. It was another bully pulpit." After adoption of the U.S. Numbered Highway System, *The Nation's Highways* was named the official publication of U.S. 66. The U.S. 66 Highway Association brought on a public relations and promotion man named Lon Scott of Springfield, Missouri, as corresponding secretary. Kelly suggested that, "Scott ultimately may have been almost as responsible for Route 66's international fame as was Cy." [Kelly, page 74, 191]

The June 1927 issue featured Scott's article titled "The Greatest Highway Project in America." It began:

America's master highway! The main street of a continent is rapidly passing from the realms of dreamland and fantastic imaginations to become one of the magnificent realities of this wonder age in which we are blessed with the privilege of living.

Believing the time has come when America must be served by a great continuous highway to connect, like a railroad, the centers of population with a region capable of expansion by younger generations, the business men of America's Great Southwest have formed an organization, "The U.S. 66 Highway Association" to bring into being, at the earliest possible date, through Federal and state cooperation, America's widest concrete thoroughfare. They propose to concrete the U.S. 66 Highway from Chicago, Illinois, to Los Angeles, California, to be known as "THE MAIN STREET OF AMERICA."

The association was gathering information on the cost of converting the entire route to concrete. The goal was a unified effort by members to convince their State legislatures and State highway departments to establish "by the end of 1928, an unbroken concrete slab from the Great Lakes to the Pacific."

Scott gave credit where due:

Much of the honor for precipitating the public concern that brought about the U.S. 66 Highway Association, goes to Cyrus S. Avery of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and John T. Woodruff, of Springfield, Missouri, both of whom have had in recent years a deal to do with promoting good roads in the United States. Avery, former Chairman of the Oklahoma State Highway and Chairman of the Federal Highway Marking Committee of the United States Department of Agriculture, looks upon the U.S. 66 Highway as the most important transcontinental road in America.

Woodruff, the association's president, envisioned "a great development, the result of completing at the earliest possible date, a wide concrete highway." The entire route through Illinois and Missouri "has been paved in the usual width," so the focus was on Oklahoma through California:

By every token, he points out, the 66 route should be concentrated upon by the various states to the end of providing soon for its final completion as America's widest strip of concrete road. No other route is so feasible of maintenance, no other route affords so much completed concrete now; no other route to the great centers of population of the Central West and East affords the large cities of the Southwest as good a highway as does U.S. 66. Woodruff's claim, and of particular importance to southwestern cities, is the fact that U.S. 66 intersects every other east and west Federal Highway besides transecting a good portion of the north and south roads. [Scott, Lon, *The Greatest Highway Project in America*, *The Nation's Highways*, June 1927, pages 4-5]

These ambitious goals far exceeded the possible reality. A December 1929 article in *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch* identified the surfacing for the entire Route 66, including its detour through Santa Fe. Contrary to Woodruff's statement, the route in Illinois and Missouri was a mix of asphalt, brick, concrete, and gravel. The National Old Trails Road portion of the route from Santa Fe to Los Angeles was described as:

Then 42 miles gravel; 24 miles concrete, to Albuquerque. Then 19 miles concrete; four miles gravel; 31 miles oiled; 46.2 miles gravel; 20.6 miles earth; 50.2 miles gravel, to Gallup. Then 7.6 miles gravel; 13.4 miles earth, to New Mexico-Arizona State line . . . .

Then 75 miles earth (23 miles construction to be completed in December) to Holbrook. Then 75.5 miles gravel; one mile concrete; 12.2 miles earth; 1.6 miles concrete; 23.4 miles macadam; 19.3 miles gravel, to Williams. Then one-half mile concrete; 98 miles gravel; 40 miles earth (32 miles construction to be completed in December). Then 23 miles gravel; 16.6 miles earth; 32.6 miles gravel; 3.1 miles earth, to Arizona-California State line . . . .

Then 131 miles earth; 35 miles oiled to Daggett; 45 miles oiled; 16 miles macadam; four miles oiled; 11 miles macadam; eight miles concrete; 5.6 miles of San Bernardino streets. Then 28 miles asphalt; two miles macadam; three mile [sic] asphalt; four miles macadam; 15.7 miles of Claremont, Glendora, Azusa, Monrovia, Arcadia and Pasadena Streets. Then two miles macadam and 10 miles of Los Angeles streets. ["U.S. Highway No. 66 From Chicago to Los Angeles," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, December 15, 1929, from Texaco National Road Reports]

Despite promotion of a completed concrete highway in 2 years, the States were not cooperating. In late 1929, California highway officials reported:

Eastern travelers entering southern California via the Old Trails Highway and southern travelers to the Grand Canyon and Zion Park regions, all go through the Cajon Pass.

The upper part of the old Cajon Pass road has long been a source of anxiety and danger to travelers. The combination of narrow road, many sharp turns and the great chasm below has resulted in in many serious accidents in past years.

An entirely new road is now well toward completion, eliminating the worst part of the present road.

In order to construct a new road on modern standards in this rough country, it is necessary to make great cuts and fills. This has resulted in very heavy construction.

The article stated that the present traveled road included 56 sharp curves, "many of which can not be traveled safely at more than 15 miles per hour." The new road, when completed, would include "11 easy curves, all of which can safely be traveled at full legal speed limit."

The article quoted an October 3 article in the *San Bernardino Sun* describing the work:

Mountains are being moved along the westerly side of Cajon Pass in the reconstruction work being done on the National Old Trails. The work is of such a stupendous nature that the topography of the pass will show a material transformation. Few people conceived the magnitude of the project until they saw the mountain crest moved away and deep, wide cuts made huge fills in the canyons below the new road.

The contractors have progressed with the construction work until it is possible to get an adequate conception of the new highway curves for more than three miles through the pass. The new road will be safe as compared with the present route with its many acute curves. The scenic outlook will be as entertaining as from the present road, and the occupants of an automobile may enjoy it without fear of meeting some wild driver trying to take all of the roadway on a sharp turn.

Those who have traveled day after day through the Cajon Pass may have become so accustomed to it as to fail in appreciation of its charm, but those who traverse the region for the first time are delighted with its peculiar beauty and ever changing phases of interest.

The contractors hope to have the new section of the highway complete and ready for travel in January or February unless the early part of the winter is unusually wet. ["Heavy Work on Southern Roads," *California Highways and Public Works*, November 1929, pages 11-12]

### **The National Old Trails Road in the Age of Numbers**

Before November 11, 1926, newspapers carried articles about interstate travel on the named trails. After AASHO approved the U.S. numbered highway system on that date, the newspapers still carried articles about interstate travel, but focused on the U.S. numbered highways. Still, they recalled the fading names of years past.

On June 2, 1929, for example, *The New York Times* carried an article by Leon A. Dickinson titled "Good Ways Lead Across Country." It began:

Vacationists desirous of "Seeing America First," particularly that part west of the Mississippi, which abounds in natural wonders, may follow any one of a variety of routes out of New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington . . . .

Three of the main routes shown [on the accompanying map of the West] converge at Chicago, there to spread out again, one toward Milwaukee and Minneapolis, another through Dubuque, Mason City and Spencer, and a third across Cedar Rapids, Boone and Omaha. A fourth stems out of Chicago in the direction of St. Louis, where the motorist may turn westward in the direction of Kansas City or southwest through Springfield, Mo.,

to Tulsa, Okla. All these highways, like so many trees, have branches spreading out into the surrounding territory.

Any such journey “takes a little planning at the outset if one is to see as much as possible in a few weeks”:

As most of the better-known scenic marvels lie west of Denver, one way for the Eastern tourist to gain time is to pass rapidly across the Middle West. This may now be easily accomplished, as most of the main east-and-west highways across the country are paved at least as far as the Mississippi, and several of them offer pavement for a hundred miles or more west of that river.

The National Old Trails Road, to cite on example, is now continuous surface all the way to Topeka, Kan. This is marked as U.S. Route 40 to Salina, Kan., where most tourists drop south for a few miles to Hutchinson, and then west again, following U.S. 50 to La Junta, Col.

Here there is an important parting of the ways. Those headed for Los Angeles via the National Old Trails Road (Santa Fe Trail) will turn southwest to Trinidad and then over the Raton Pass into New Mexico.

Other motorists may pass through La Junta to Pueblo, and then to Colorado Springs and Denver and several National Parks:

If he so desires, the tourist may continue west to Salt Lake City and then across Nevada direct into San Francisco. A more pleasant way, however, considering that Nevada roads are in none too good condition, is to drive south through Pueblo to Trinidad and then follow the National Old Trails Road across New Mexico and Arizona into Southern California. This will permit visits to the cliff dwellings and Indian pueblos in the vicinity of Santa Fé and Albuquerque. Then there are the Petrified Forest, Painted Desert, Grand Canyon in Arizona and the trip across the Mojave Desert in Southern California.

The article was accompanied by a maps of the western United States showing the routes mentioned. Prepared by Dickinson, the map lacked names or numbers on the routes depicted. [Dickinson, Leon A., “Good Ways Lead Across Country,” *The New York Times*, June 2, 1929, page XX12]

A year later, Dickinson advised readers of the *Times*:

A cross-country motor trip is very different from the usual vacation tour. Not much special preparation or planning is required for a jaunt through the White Mountains or the Adirondacks, but when one intends to drive to the Pacific Coast and back it is a different story . . . . So great has been the progress in road improvement throughout this entire region in recent years that it is now possible to travel from coast to coast along a number

of different routes, all of which offer excellent conditions, particularly during the months from May to October.

He discussed the attractions available via the Lincoln Highway, which he added was U.S. 30:

Contrast with this the National Old Trails Road, as it has been known for years. This latter, which is now a combination of United States Routes 40, 50, 350, 85, and 66, is celebrated for the wide diversification of its scenery, especially in the Southwest.

This time, Dickinson's map included the U.S. numbers for the routes shown. [Dickinson, Leon A., "Across the Continent," *The New York Times*, May 18, 1930, page XX6]

A year later, with the country well into the Depression, the reporter wrote again about a western

trip, beginning:

There are indications that, in spite of business conditions, long distance motor touring will be as popular this Summer as ever. One reason for this is the continual and rapid improvement of roads throughout the country. This is especially true of some of the Western and Middle Western States, formerly bugaboos for motorists from the East . . . .

It is important for the cross-country tourist to recognize the fact that route numbers, and not names, are the essential designations nowadays. A few years ago, when improved roads were few in the West and sign posts almost non-existent, the so-called "marked trails," bearing such curious names as "Sunflower Trail," "Red Ball Trail," "Rocky Mountain Highway," "Black and Yellow Trail," "Custer Battlefield Highway" and Pike's Peak, Ocean to Ocean Highway," served a useful purpose. They were marked and often maintained by private subscription. But the universal adoption of the Federal numbering system, following a similar numbering of practically all State roads, has done away with most of these romantic appellations. To be sure, a few still persist, notably the Lincoln Highway, Atlantic-Yellowstone-Pacific Highway, Custer Battlefield Highway, Pacific and the National Old Trails Road, but even these are also known by numbers.

Despite his recognition of the U.S. Route numbers, they were absent from the map accompanying the article. [Dickinson, Leon A., "Across the States," *The New York Times*, May 17, 1931, page 126]

### **D.A.R. Congress, 1930**

When Mrs. Moss reported in April 1930 on the work of the National Old Trails Road Committee, she could not help but address the Thirty-Ninth Continental Congress with a note of triumph. She began:

This committee, known as the National Old Trails Road committee, functioned for many years past to achieve two outstanding endeavors: First, to secure State or National legislation creating an Ocean-to-Ocean National Highway; and second, to establish this highway as a National memorial to our worthy pioneer fathers and mothers of the past.

Triumphantly, this was reported as an accomplished fact last year, and a full, detailed report was given to Congress, April 1929. The erection of 12 monuments, beautiful in design and heroic in size, had been completed and dedicated as a National shrine, reaching across our land from ocean to ocean, and for a year or more the Daughters of the American Revolution, in different sections of this country, marched down the old sacred pathway, celebrating with song and pageantry the dedication of this National shrine. Conceded to be one of the most outstanding memorials ever erected by any organization, our beautiful Pioneer Mother continues to receive applause and commendation and nationwide publicity. Reports are received from time to time of extensive improvements being made to beautify the sites in these 12 States, respectively, and over 11 of the 12 monuments a strong floodlight shines brightly at night, that the belated traveler may recognize the monument and pause to note its beauty.

Lagonda chapter, of Springfield, Ohio, deserves first honorable mention for the very extensive and expansive improvements they have made, beautifying the site of the Pioneer Mother monument on the grounds of the State Masonic Home in Springfield. The plot was outlined by placing a serpentine wall of West Virginia brick around the small park; sodding and flowers, shrubbery and vines, were planted under the personal supervision of a well-known landscape gardener and artist, creating a very beautiful background and surroundings for the Ohio Madonna of the Trail. The cost of this improvement was approximately \$3,000.

At the Pennsylvania State Conference, last October, a resolution was adopted endorsing the proposed improvements of the site of the Pennsylvania Pioneer Mother monument, between Washington and Uniontown, in Washington County. This resolution called for the laying of concrete walks and steps and planting of trees and shrubbery and rambling roses, all forming a beautiful picture up on the hilltop, surrounding the monument – a view that can be seen for miles. This will cost approximately \$1,000.

Reports come in from the other States that certain improvements are being made to care for the different monument sites – trees, flowers, and shrubbery planted; and in every State the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution keeps a watchful eye and assumes guardianship over the monument located there. Accounts of interesting programs have been sent in; vesper services have been held at the feet of the Pioneer Mother; radio talks have been broadcast, from all sections of the country, telling about the monuments; requests for information and the loan of cuts for printing purposes have been received from historical societies and schools and authors; and very splendid newspaper articles have been sent to the National chairman from all over our own land and from foreign countries, one of the best coming from Shanghai, China, others from Philippines and from London, England.

All of this, together with the requests from ten other States that they, too, should be permitted to own a Pioneer Mother monument, creates within the hearts of your Old Trails Road Committee a feeling of gratification and satisfaction. As a matter of information, the Pioneer Mother monuments were designed as a memorial for the Ocean-to-Ocean Highway, marking specifically the pioneer progress from East to West, and any deviation from the original plan would be a mistake. In due course of time, however, if the demand be justifiable, a further distinctive plan of marking other trails might be considered by your National committee.

Three thousand reprints of the National chairman of the Old Trails Road committee for Congress, 1929, were sent by mail to every State regent and National officer, and to every chapter chairman. Including the invitations sent out for the dedication of the Maryland monument, together with historical books on Old Trails, supplied by the National Old Trails Association [sic], as well as maps and circulars of information, over 4,000 pieces of mail passed directly through the hands of your National chairman of Old Trails this past year.

Following the 1929 continental congress, the name of the committee was changed to The National Old Trails with a goal to “continue the study of old trails and traces in a more general way in every section of the country,” rather than focus on a single route:

Years ago, when this committee was organized, every State society entered into the study of old trails enthusiastically, each and every State studying its own pioneer trails. Many boulders, granite shafts, tablets, and markers were erected in almost every State. When it was first decided to mark the National Old Trails Road, the pledge was made that when this memorial highway was completed we would take up the study of the old trails in every State again.

In going over the past records, your National chairman finds many interesting detailed reports of very splendid work accomplished. It is hoped that the Southern States will continue their work, started in the early days when, though remote from the National Old Trails Road, they searched for and marked the pioneer trails of the south that helped to open up our entire County.

She cited the northwest’s “sacred old Oregon Trail,” which would be “celebrated with a centennial this year.” Similarly, the northeast’s chapters had been “very active, indeed, in this splendid work.” They had studied and marked “many of the old military roads and post roads.” The chapters from the midwestern States “have records to be very proud of. Missouri has never ceased her interest in the study of her old trails. Years have passed since these records were made.”

To encourage renewed interest in the old trails around the country, Mrs. Moss had offered “a prize of \$50 in gold for the best State map, to be accompanied by a paper or story of the old trails in that respective State. Each map was to have the old trails properly placed, and the monuments erected to date listed, and to have the names of these old pioneer trails also listed.” She formed a

committee to consider the 18 submissions, consisting of a historian, a writer, a lay member, and herself:

After due consideration, the committee . . . awarded the prize of \$50 in gold to Miss Katherine B. Rowley, State chairman of the National Old Trails committee for New York. Miss Rowley's paper and map received the highest number of points in the grading of the entries. She herself lives "by the side of the road," and her paper included historical facts and romantic sentiment told vividly.

Honorable mention must be accorded Mrs. Lillian Rice Brigham, of Denver, Colorado, whose very beautiful pictorial map of the State of Colorado was a work of art. The romance of the early history of the State of Colorado lends itself particularly to this beautiful method of portrayal.

She thanked all the participants "who demonstrated that the desire is still great within the hearts of the Daughters for definite knowledge of patriotic lore attached to the old trails of our land."

She emphasized:

One purpose we should all have in view, no matter whether in the north or the south or the east or the west – we want these old names firmly attached to these old routes in the minds of the people. The Lincoln Highway, the Dixie, the National Old Trail, the Appalachian Way, and many others of like character, are loved and cherished in the hearts of American men and women who have labored long and faithfully that these memorials might serve as an inspiration to future generations.

Mrs. Moss reported that erection of the national monuments had cost approximately \$50,000, "yet the actual money expended by the Daughters of the American Revolution chapters has been approximately \$13,000; of this, the sum of \$580.24 was left as a balance." This balance had been transferred into the current fund of the D.A.R.

On that point, she concluded her remarks:

Not all of the requests for photographs of the Pioneer Mother monument could be granted. The supply was exhausted, and this led to giving consideration to the matter of having a small statuette made, so that anyone desiring a replica of the Pioneer Mother could have one for the nominal sum of \$5. With the approval of the President General, details have been worked out by your National chairman with a company in Pittsburgh, and a model (a very beautiful piece of work) for this miniature statuette was submitted to the National Board, Saturday, April 12th. This model was accepted by the Board, and recommendation for its reproduction will come before this Congress for your approval. This miniature model is an exact replica of the monument itself, with one exception: On two sides of the pedestal base will be the names of the 12 States in which the monuments are located, instead of the local historical data which occupied the space on each one of the original monuments. (Applause.) [*Proceedings* of the Thirty-Ninth Continental

Congress of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, April 1930, pages 477-480]

After the resolution was adopted unanimously, an order was placed for 1,000 statuettes.

### **Touring – a Different Perspective**

On December 10, 1927, *The Baltimore Afro-American* published a travel article by a Negro writer named Joseph N. Hill. (At the time, the terms “Negro” and “colored” were in common usage. The term “Black” will be used here, but it did not come into common use until the 1960s.) During this era, Black motorists had less access to accommodations, and were subject to segregated facilities, suspicious police officers, and sundown laws (dating to the 1890s, they prohibited Blacks from being within their borders after sundown unless they were with a White employer).

Hill and his wife Louise began their trip in Baltimore, followed the National Old Trails Road, for the most part, to California, then continued on to Portland, Oregon, before returning to Baltimore – a trip of 12,000 miles:

We had but a faint idea of the many things that awaited us as we left Baltimore and Washington behind. Glad to be on our way we yet had a little misgiving over leaving well-known persons and places so far behind.

Within 60 miles, they had reached the Middletown and Cumberland Valleys of Maryland. “Fifteen times we ascended to the top of Blue Ridge summits rising to altitudes of from 2,000 to 2,900 feet above sea level.” Hill noted that the road barely touched Pennsylvania and West Virginia, but he commented on the people they had seen thus far:

As for the people: we found that they followed the same occupations that most of us followed. Some were farmers, many had black faces of mine workers, while still others refused to be classified. Negroes were not numerous and often seemed to be filling the menial positions. At least they seemed to be insignificant in the world of great economic factors.

They stopped at Wilberforce University, a historically Black college in Wilberforce, Ohio, just east of Dayton. It was, Hill wrote, a “beautiful campus with several beautiful buildings. Considerable support from the state of Ohio, a large student enrollment, and all this in the hands of somebody who insists on squabbling, firing men from office or otherwise giving evidence of mismanagement.” While at the university, Hill and his wife picked up two women from the Baltimore-Washington area, Miss Annie Williamson and Miss Lucinda Cook.

Continuing their journey, the four reached Indianapolis, “the city with an excellent new high school for our youths and with another addition to the Poro College enterprises. (Annie Turbo Malone, a self-made Black millionaire based in St. Louis, founded businesses and the related college in St. Louis to help Black women. They learned hair and beauty work with the hair care

and beauty products of the Poro System for merchandising and marketing. [Johnson, Erick, “Who Was Annie Malone?” *Chicago Crusader*, April 24, 2018]

In St. Louis, they saw evidence “of the disastrous Mississippi flood” as they entered the city:

We would not dare leave the city, however, without visiting Poro College. This institution is a distinct credit to the race. Well equipped, beautifully appointed, quiet and perfectly managed and oh – how clean and comfortable.

Hill also commented on another St. Louis institution for the Black community:

By the way, there is a Peoples’ Finance Corporation in St. Louis, Mo. that is doing a great business as the people of Baltimore and Washington have not yet dreamed of doing. They handle loans of various descriptions and handle them speedily, efficiently and apparently safely.

Professor Candacy Taylor, in her history of the *Green Book* guides for Black travelers, wrote about the Peoples’ Finance Corporation:

For those who couldn’t afford to purchase a car outright, it was nearly impossible to get credit or financing from a bank. Some black industrial workers in need of financing went to the People’s Finance Corporation. Created in 1922, it was the first bank of its kind to loan money to black people who had little collateral. The People’s Finance Corporation started in St. Louis and then spread to Cleveland, Detroit, Newark, and Kansas City. [Taylor, Candacy, *Overground Railroad: The Green Book and the Roots of Black Travel in America*, Abrams Press, 2020, page 39]

The next big city Hill commented on was Kansas City:

Before long we were leaving the extremely progressive and hospitable people of Kansas City, leaving the paved road and actually facing the true West. Not until you have left the good road behind and have faced the possibility of getting stuck in the mud roads of Kansas or of being almost imbedded in the soft newly scooped up earth can you say that you have tasted the real tourist fare of the middle West.

We spent our first uncomfortable night of the trip in the hovel of a good-hearted fellow-being in the little town of Oakley, Kansas.

A Black tourist passed many accommodations that accepted only White customers. The tourist, therefore, often had to rely on the good will of Black residents of the towns they passed through.

Hill and his companions speeded on to reach Denver by noon. Hill wrote that he would never forget the thrill of seeing the massive peaks of the Rockies:

We must have seen most of these peaks, for we climbed to the tops of mountains, descended to the bottom of canyons, rolled over the foothills, skirted the surrounding country for several days. This is the scenic state of America. For two days we drove almost continually in second gear. Climbing or descending the process was slow but never painful.

He thought the city dwellers who see these roads would come to hate cities.

After seeing Mesa Verde National Park, they “finally tore ourselves away from Colorado, passed through the poor Indian reservations of New Mexico. Drove for seventy-five miles without seeing any sign of habitation and stopped for the night at Gallup, New Mexico.”

At this point in the narrative, the subhead in Hill’s article asked:

### **Prejudice?**

Prejudice? Not so much as we had left in Baltimore and Washington. Yes, even Arizona was kind – no I should say civil. And we checked that fact in our little memorandum book. We saw more Mexicans, half-breeds and Indians in New Mexico than any other nationality. In Arizona we were entertained at the homes of members of our own race who opened their doors from the genuine friendliness of people who know no cast, who know no discrimination within the race, who know and care only about being human. I could but pause to make comparisons with the folk back East.

In Arizona, the travelers experienced their first desert experience and two mild sandstorms, but also “the mighty climax – the Grand Canyon of the Colorado.” For Hill, the experience was almost spiritual, more so than “all of the gospel sermons put together.”

From Arizona, they crossed the Mojave desert “and let us rest in sunny California.” They enjoyed the change in scenery. The roadside contained every type of fruit, flowers by the acre, and palm trees waving in the wind:

Drive from the mountain to the desert in a few minutes or, if you prefer, go to the Pacific ocean, or step over to the interesting Catalina island. Better yet, if your taste runs in that direction, drive down millionaires’ row in beautiful Pasadena. Ask what you will and it will be given unto you provided – you have the money.

Visit the poor, visit the McPherson temple, visit the Negro churches, visit the thousands of Movie houses and see the magnificent estates of Harold Lloyd, Mary Pickford or Charles Chaplin.

Hill provided few details of their trip to Portland, Oregon; Seattle, Washington; and Vancouver, British Columbia, but enjoyed stops in Yosemite and Yellowstone National Parks. On the way

east, they crossed Nebraska into Missouri and then retraced their trip on the National Old Trails Road:

We met many former Baltimore and Washington people in the West. We noticed greater business activity among the people of the race. One man said that the people out there were more honest. The enterprises are new and are therefore proof of an added progressive movement among the people. Undoubtedly, the people are inclined to be more friendly, this can be said even of white Southerners who are often forced into friendliness by the loneliness and by the experiences of travel.

Hill summarized their experience:

The mountains, deserts, famous knife edge roads, the beautiful national forests, parks and dreamy valleys lift one's self, makes one feel the greatness of the world, the smallness of one's self. Here is a great tonic and I recommend it to any one who has not departed from the East. Go to the West and learn of things. [Hill, Joseph N., "To the Pacific Coast And Back Again," *The Baltimore Afro-American*, December 10, 1927, page 16]

As recounted in the article, Hill, his wife, and their two companions had a relatively smooth trip, unmarred by the prejudice, segregation, and fear that often accompanied Black travel well into the 1960s. He did not mention the recent change from names to numbers, but at least part of their trip, in New Mexico, Arizona, and California, along the National Old Trails Road was on the newly numbered U.S. Route 66.

Route 66 had not yet become America's best known highway; it was just another narrow, two-lane partially paved road, subject to the prejudices of its time. Over the decades, however, it was one of the routes for those fleeing the Dust Bowl who were headed for California; featured for that reason in John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), which called it the "Mother Road, the road of flight"; depicted in the 1940 movie adaptation of the novel; prompted the song "Route 66" by Bobby Troup ("Take the highway that's the best"), sung initially by the King Cole Trio in 1946 and subsequently by hundreds of other singers and bands; and the CBS television series *Route 66* (1960-1964) about two men who drove a Corvette from town to town having dramatic adventures; and syndication of the show to a worldwide audience.

By the mid-1980s, AASHO's successor, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), had approved requests from State transportation officials in California and Illinois to remove the Route 66 designation for their bypassed portions of the highway. Route 66 was officially reduced to 1,162 miles.

After the opening of Interstate Route 40 in the vicinity of Williams, Arizona, in 1984, Route 66 was fully bypassed by highways on the Interstate System. On June 27, 1985, AASHTO approved a request by highway officials from the remaining Route 66 States (Arizona, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas) to remove "66" from the network. An AASHTO press release began, "Route 66 – the celebrated highway of song and screen – met its final

demise today, wiped off official U.S. road maps by the action of the Executive Committee of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.”

Television, newspapers, and magazines lamented the demise of the famous old highway, sparking a nostalgia for the old road and its colorful roadside attractions, motels, restaurants, and even billboards. Officials in some States acted to assign “Historic Route 66” or similar names to the remaining segments. Many books have been released on the highway, and booster associations formed in the Route 66 States to preserve the road, its history, and its roadside, and to encourage travel on what remained of the old road. The Pixar animated film *Cars* (1986) was based on how the opening of the Interstate highway near Williams threatened the survival of the bypassed businesses and towns on the old road.

Professor Taylor, in her history of *The Green Book*, included a chapter on Route 66 titled:

The Roots of Route 66: Why Black People Aren't Nostalgic  
About the Nation's Favorite Highway

She wrote that for White motorists, “No other road trip so thoroughly symbolized freedom, prosperity, and the pursuit of the American Dream as a trip along Route 66.” The experience, however, “was not the same for everyone”:

When the *Green Book* was first published [1936] roughly half of the eighty-nine counties on Route 66 were sundown counties. By the 1950s, about 35 percent of the counties on Route 66 didn't allow black motorists after six PM. And although the road was open to black travelers, it was unknown where they could find a meal or a place to rest because six of the eight states that lined the Mother Road as far west as Arizona had segregation laws . . . .

The most insidious reality black motorists had to accept when traveling along Route 66 was that there was virtually no way for them to know what was coming up around the bend. And there was no such thing as a list of sundown towns to assist them in planning their itinerary.

In 1930, six Route 66 towns in New Mexico were sundown towns, as were 10 towns in Arizona, and 14 in California. [Norris, Frank, “Courageous Motorists: African American Pioneers on Route 66,” *New Mexico Historical Review*, July 1, 2015, page 296]

*The Green Book* alerted Black motorists to sundown towns along the road, but also businesses, restaurants, hotels and other facilities that served Black people either exclusively or in addition to White people.

Although Professor Taylor was writing about a period long after the National Old Trails Road had lost its identity as a single, connected route, her observations provide some idea of how Black motorists experienced the old road.

In the three western States of the National Old Trails Road, now Route 66, New Mexico towns along Route 66 in 1930 had only 653 businesses catering to Black travelers, but mostly in Albuquerque (441), Gallup (118), and Santa Fe (85). Arizona had even fewer, namely 177, with most in Flagstaff (100) and Winslow (65), and several towns had none (Seligman, Peach Springs, and Kingman).

Demographics played a role in the reception of Black motorists. Referring to a later period in the history of the road, Frank Norris observed in an article on the Black experience of Route 66:

Between Chicago and the Texas Panhandle, the racial composition of the passing landscape held a white-black dichotomy. In each of the five intervening states, whites comprised a strong majority of the population, and blacks were the principal minority racial group. West of the Texas-New Mexico line, however, this racial pattern dissolved and gave way to a more complex, multicultural racial composite. In both New Mexico and Arizona, blacks ranked a distant fourth behind white, Hispanics, and American Indians, and they comprised less than 4 percent of the population, a far smaller proportion than in the more eastern states.

Within New Mexico, the reception of blacks by the majority population varied by location. Conditions in southern and eastern New Mexico were similar to those in Texas, while San ta Fe was reputedly more tolerant. Albuquerque was somewhere in between . . . .

In Arizona, as in New Mexico, blacks ranked fourth demographically and encountered similar discrimination in public accommodations . . . . Along the Route 66 corridor in northern Arizona, blacks numbered less than 2 percent of all residents. Many blacks who lived there worked either in the Flagstaff-area lumber industry or for the railroad in Winslow. Discrimination was in full force, however, all along the way. In both Flagstaff and Winslow, for example, blacks and Hispanics had to sit upstairs at movie theaters, and the Flagstaff sheriff prevented non-whites from patronizing restaurants north of Highway 66, even though there were no specific ordinances enforcing segregation.

These observations are for a later period, but similar concerns affected travelers earlier on the National Old Trails Road/Route 66.

California was a different matter. In 1930, towns along Route 66 had 43,304 businesses catering to Blacks, with the largest number in Los Angeles (38,894). Dating to the 1890s, thousands of Blacks lived in the Los Angeles area. An 1897 law guaranteed equal access to public accommodations, and that law was strengthened in 1919 and 1923. However, "its enforcement was negligible." [Norris, pages 297-298]

Professor Taylor, writing about the *Green Book* period, reported that only a few hotels served Blacks. Motels along Route 66 from the Texas border to Albuquerque consistently refused

service. Outside Albuquerque, Black travelers would next find accommodations 130 miles away in Gallup; with another gap of 185 miles to Flagstaff. “Flagstaff didn’t have any Green Book listings until 1957.”

Overall, travel was challenging regardless of accommodations, as Professor Taylor wrote:

Driving in the southwestern United States was especially challenging for black motorists because they had to travel through triple-digit desert heat, and the threat of car trouble was always looming. If the car overheated, it was unlikely they would find help, as most of the towns didn’t offer tow service for black people. If they found themselves stranded on the side of the road, they had to pray that someone would give them a ride. It was also doubtful that they would find assistance from other black people, as the black residents constituted only 4 percent of the population, after whites, Mexicans, and Native Americans.

It’s a mystery how black travelers made the trip through this region before the mid-1950s; there was only one Gallup tourist home listed in the 1939 *Green Book*, for example. And it wasn’t until 1947 that the *Green Book* had listings for Albuquerque, which was more than six hundred miles from the next *Green Book* site, in Victorville, California, on the western edge of the Mojave Desert.

We can assume that most black families survived because they were prepared, traveling with ample food and camping along the way.

In California, Murray’s Dude Ranch near Victorville (a sundown town) was the first *Green Book* site a Black motorist would encounter. (It was not open during the life of the National Old Trails Road.) Seventy miles east, the motorist came to Pasadena. “This wasn’t a good place to stop: There were no *Green Book* sites, and some of the pools in Pasadena allowed black people to swim only on ‘International Day,’ which was usually on a Wednesday, the day before the pool was cleaned.”

Regarding the *Green Book* era, Professor Taylor wrote that “the experience most black motorists had on Route 66 couldn’t have been more different from that of the average white American.” She added:

And it’s not that Route 66 was more dangerous than other trans-American road trips. What makes Route 66 different is the branding associated with it. The “Mother Road” lives on in the hearts of tourists as a beacon of American travel. It became a global icon and is still the most celebrated highway of its time. [Taylor, pages 200-228]

In the heyday of the National Old Trails Road during the 1910s and 1920s, the limited infrastructure for Black travelers did not exist. The numerous articles quoted about interstate travel during this period were written by White writers for White audiences. Unlike Hill’s article in *The Baltimore Afro-American*, the writers did not feel a need to discuss prejudice – their White readers need not worry about that.

## **Fighting for the N.O.T.**

The National Old Trails Road Association had not given up hope of recognition. On

September 30, 1931, A. D. Hosterman of Springfield, Ohio, wrote to BPR:

Recent conferences have been held and plans under way for developing increased interest in the National Old Trails Road running as you know from Washington and Baltimore to Los Angeles through the 12 states.

I have been urged to accept and have accepted the Executive Vice Presidency of the Association and plans are being considered for marking the N.O.T.R. uniformly across America and to also develop [sic] plans for publicity and developing not only greater interest locally in the historic highway but also to encourage tourists passing over the National Old Trails Road to see the beauties and the historic values every where to be found.

I will appreciate hearing from you and receive any information or publicity available that your department can furnish or you suggest is available that will be helpful in shaping the new plans.

Among other things I will be glad to have knowledge as to what plans of marking other national highways have been adopted and presume there are publications or organizations that supply this.

Appreciating a reply with any suggestions you may see fit to make now or at any time.

Herbert S. Fairbank, signing as "Highway Engineer," replied on October 7, 1931. At the time, he was Chief of the Division of Information, a position he held from creation of the division in 1927 until 1943. [*America's Highways 1776-1976*, page 181]:

We are in receipt of your letter of September 30 requesting information which will be helpful in shaping plans for the National Old Trails Road and also information concerning the plans for marking other national highways. Under separate cover we are forwarding typical examples of press releases which we have issued in order to acquaint the public with certain of our through roads.

With regard to your request for information concerning plans for marking highways, the Federal Government has not recognized any of the named highways sponsored by unofficial highway or trail organizations and to do so might establish a precedent under which it would be difficult to control recognition of highways or routes having much less significance or historic interest than the National Old Trails Road. In fact it was to remove the confusion that arose from unofficial and unrestrained marking of some of the

main highways that the American Association of State Highway Officials adopted a system of interstate and transcontinental highways such as might be appropriately numbered and thereby facilitate interstate traffic. These routes are known as United States Highways. A current map of the United States numbered highway system and an illustration of the standard marker are being forwarded to you. The State name changes as required but the number remains constant throughout the route.

Notations in the file indicate that BPR sent Hosterman, under separate cover, a U.S. numbered highway map, a picture of the U.S. highway marker, and BPR press releases on U.S. Routes 30, 40, 80, and 90. [National Archives at College Park, Maryland]

After receiving Fairbank's reply, Hosterman wrote again to BPR on October 12, 1931:

I have just received the information for the press you have kindly sent covering the two southern coast to coast highways also U.S. Highway #30 and U.S. Route 40.

Has there similar information been published as yet regarding what for a long time has been known as the National Old Trails Road which is a direct and no doubt the shortest route between Washington, Baltimore and Los Angeles, paved practically all the way? This as must be admitted, is the most historic coast to coast highway although it travels several highways of different numbers west of Kansas City where it leaves Route 40.

As possibly you know, there has for some 20 years been relations and officials connected with the N.O.T.R. Association in all of the 12 states through which the National Old Trails passes. In each of the 12 states, along this route, as no doubt you already know, the National D.A.R. placed . . . beautiful Madonna of the Trail monuments.

He explained that plans were underway for marking the road with distinctive mileposts.

I will appreciate hearing from you as promptly as possible what, if anything, has been published by the government or what has been contemplated in this direction.

I may say, representatives of the group interested in the National Old Trails in the various states will soon meet in this city for further conference and handling the plans for the future and I will be glad to hear from you as promptly as possible as this may be very helpful to us in further planning.

Fairbank replied on October 17:

We are in receipt of your letter of October 12, relative to plans for marking and issuing information concerning the National Old Trails route. In our previous letter we indicated that this bureau and the American Association of State Highway Officials, which represents the various State highway departments, have agreed upon a system of United States highways and adopted standard signs for the marking of the roads. This numbered

system is now known and accepted throughout the entire country. We do not know of any agency concerned with route designation or supplying touring information which is not using the system of route numbers and the signs have been adopted by all classes of road officials. In view of the success of this plan we are not considering any plans for additional systems of route designation or marking.

With regard to your request for publications, we assume that you refer to publications dealing with plans for marking and route development. All of our publications of this character deal with the United States System of Highways such as were sent in response to your former letter. We will be glad to supply additional information concerning the standard signs and route descriptions, if so desire. [National Archives at College Park, Maryland]

Beginning in 1927, BPR issued news releases describing the main U.S. numbered highways. The releases, including line maps of the routes and photographs, were reprinted by newspapers and magazines. One dated April 29, 1928, was titled:

United States Route 40 –  
Great East and West Motorway –  
Traces Paths of the Pioneers.

It began:

Westward, in the path of empire, along routes traversed by the pioneers of American from the Atlantic to the Golden Gate, and including, in the Ohio Valley, the longest stretch of practically straight road in the country, United State route 40 crosses 14 States, and offers to the transcontinental motor tourist a panorama of the mid section of the country that epitomizes the westward expansion of the Nation from colonial days to the present.

The news release emphasized the history of the areas the road passed through, including the history of the National Road from Maryland to St. Louis.

On June 21, 1931, BPR released:

U.S. Highway No. 66 From Chicago

It began:

United States Highway No. 66 is an all-year round route from Chicago to Pasadena, California. Several excellent thoroughfares connect Pasadena with Los Angeles, 11 miles to the west. United States Highway 66 is 2,2430 miles long and for practically the entire distance is an improve highway. Almost half the distance is hard surfaced; the remainder is improved with low-type surfaces such as gravel and crushed stone and oiled gravel, according to the Bureau of Public Roads, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Although Fairbank, in his two replies, tried, diplomatically, to discourage Hosterman, these press releases, which covered much of the National Old Trails Road, provided information that would have been of interest to anyone attempting to publicize the old named trail.

On September 15, 1932, U.S. Representative Clifford R. Hope of Kansas wrote to Chief MacDonald:

The Secretary of the Garden City Chamber of Commerce has just been in to inquire of me as to whether or not there has ever been any provision under any of the highway laws or appropriations made thereunder to mark the National Old Trails Highways. I know of no such provision but thought that possibly something might have been done in that connection.

The occasion for making the inquiry at the present time is that an organization known as the National Old Trails Road Association is soliciting funds from chambers of commerce along the old Santa Fe Trail for the purpose of erecting markers along the route of this highway. As far as Kansas is concerned the route which they are marking does not conform exactly with any federally designated highway or even state designated highway at the present time and my understanding is that these markers are to be erected as near as possible along the line of the old trail.

I will appreciate it very much if you will advise me as to whether the federal government has ever made any provision along this line.

Acting Chief P. St. J. Wilson replied on September 21:

Referring to your letter of September 15, I know of no provision in the Federal statutes under which distinctive markers could be erected on the National Old Trails Highways. In fact, no authority for official recognition of named highways reposes in the Federal government at present.

Recognizing the need of marking the main interstate and transcontinental highways to simplify tourist traffic, the American Association of State Highway Officials in 1926 adopted a series of warning signs and highway markers, the latter carrying an identifying number. These signs were approved as standards by the Secretary of Agriculture and upon request from the State highway departments Federal aid may be extended to the proportionate costs of purchase and erection on the same basis as any other item in a Federal aid agreement.

The enclosed copy of the manual and specifications carrying illustrations of the signs and markers in this series may be of interest to the Secretary of the Garden City Chamber of Commerce.

We are also enclosing a map showing the system of interstate and transcontinental highways as adopted by the American Association of State Highway Officials upon

which the numbered markers are erected. The caution and warning signs obviously have a more extended application and are in general use. [National Archives at College Park, Maryland]

## **Monuments on the Move**

The D.A.R. and the National Old Trails Road Association under Harry S. Truman went to a great deal of trouble to find ideal locations for the Madonna of the Trail monuments. As Professor Cynthia Culver Prescott explained at <https://pioneermonuments.net/highlighted-monuments/madonna-of-the-trail/>, the selections were based on such criteria as:

- Town located on designated National Old Trails route;
- Local business community supported National Old Trails effort;
- Town meets population threshold
- Town has D.A.R. chapter
- Town's D.A.R. chapter contributed to the statue program

These criteria sometimes were ignored due to local circumstances. As discussed, some of the locations, such as in Arizona, violated at least one of the criteria, regarding a town with a D.A.R. chapter, while in New Mexico, objections from the arts community in Santa Fe prompted selection of what was likely a second choice, Albuquerque.

Regardless of the basis for the 12 locations, Mrs. Moss, Judge Truman, and the others involved in the selection process had every reason to think the monuments would remain in place for all time.

As Professor Prescott pointed out:

Nearly a century has passed since these statues were first erected across the United States. In some cases, the surrounding area has changed dramatically, while in others it remains relatively unchanged. Five (Bethesda, Maryland; Springfield, Ohio; Vandalia, Illinois; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Springerville, Arizona) have been relocated to accommodate urban growth . . . . Most of the Madonna statues have been restored at least once. Because these were local restoration efforts done at different times and utilizing different methods, the resulting appearance of the statues (particularly the color) differ noticeably.

Popular attitudes toward the statues are mixed. Eight of the twelve statues have been rededicated since the nation's 1976 Bicentennial helped to spur interest in pioneer statues. Several are now featured prominently in local tourism advertising campaigns. But others have been pushed aside to accommodate road construction, or have been forgotten by local residents.

Her Website, Pioneer Monuments in the American West, provided information on the status of the monuments.

## Springfield, Ohio

Following its dedication on July 4, 1928, the Madonna of the Trail remained in its original location until 1956-1957 when it was moved a quarter-mile west on U.S. 40 to the south end of Snyder's park to make room for a highway interchange. The monument was rededicated in 1988 and 2003; it was restored in 2011. That same year it was moved again, 2 miles east:

Once pushed aside to accommodate highway expansion, in 2011 the Ohio *Madonna* statue was moved into the heart of downtown Springfield as part of a downtown revitalization program. It became the centerpiece of the new \$2.5 million National Road Commons, developed by the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce's Community Improvement Corporation.

## Vandalia, Illinois

The monument was moved a short distance to a corner site. It was rededicated on November 4, 1978, and restored in 1990. According to the city's Website, the monument originally "stood at the south entrance of the former Old State Capitol. For aesthetic reasons, the state moved the monument to its present location in 1939." <https://www.vandaliaillinois.com/for-visitors/explore-vandalia/madonna-of-the-trail/>

## Albuquerque, New Mexico

At the time of the dedication, the monument was placed in McClellan Park facing the Old Santa Fe Trail section of the National Old Trails Roads. The monument was moved 100 feet in 1998 to accommodate construction of a new courthouse. That same year, it was restored and rededicated on November 27, 1998.

According to the National Park Service:

It was placed in the city's McClellan Park, facing Route 66, the main highway through the city. The statue looked out on Route 66 when a new alignment moved the highway south to Central Avenue.

In 1996, the sculpture was in need of cleaning and repair. Restoration work included removal of the soot and dirt and repair of holes and gouges with mortar. Following its restoration, the statue was relocated approximately 100 feet north of its old location, due to the construction of a new Federal courthouse on the block. The monument was rededicated at its new site on September 27, 1998.

Although moved a short distance, the monument continues to be oriented toward the 1926-1937 era roadbed of Route 66 through the city. The Albuquerque monument retains its integrity of setting, design, and feeling. The only other Madonna that has retained its integrity is the one in Upland, California. The Albuquerque Madonna of the

Trail was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2006. The Albuquerque statue remains a local landmark, a physical remnant of 1920s ideas about the connection between trans-Atlantic automobile travel and western settlement, and a tribute to the women who helped move the country westward along its earliest roadbeds.  
[https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/route66/madonna\\_of\\_the\\_trail\\_albuquerque.html](https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/route66/madonna_of_the_trail_albuquerque.html)

### Springerville, Arizona

The monument was dedicated on September 29, 1928. Professor Prescott stated:

Circa 1957: moved to 100 yards east to accommodate the town's first traffic light;  
1987: moved from North to South side of Main Street . . . . Today it stands on a small island squeezed between a shopping center parking lot and a McDonald's fast food restaurant.

As Judge Truman had explained, other cities in Arizona had a stronger claim to the monument than Springerville based on the stated criteria. However, the town prevailed because of its longstanding strong support for the National Old Trails Road. As Professor Prescott explained:

Springerville did not fit the established site criteria, because the nearest DAR chapter was 150 miles away in Flagstaff. Some believe that the Arizona statue was "stolen" from Kingman, which met the selection criteria (*Arizona Capitol Times*, 10/30/2009).

### Bethesda, Maryland

The dedication ceremony for the Madonna of the Trail took place on April 19, 1929, in a tree lined setting before a crowd of 5,000 people.

A U.S. Post Office building was erected during the New Deal, opening in 1938 to the monument's left. (In 2012, the post office moved out of the building, leaving it for commercial uses.) As development began to surround the monument, it had to be moved to accommodate a road widening and construction of the Bethesda Metro Station. A crane lifted the monument, gently, onto a flatbed truck that took it to the police academy in Gaithersburg, Maryland, "for its own safety." State Senator Howard A. Denis said, "I miss it. It's one of the closest things we have to a county treasure." When construction was completed 3 years later in 1986, the monument could not be returned to its original location. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority had built a Metro elevator shaft at the monument's original location. The monument was moved to a new location with the Post Office building on its right and a new Hyatt Regency Hotel on its left.

The rambles of the 5-ton monument were not over. On December 11, 2004, *The Washington Post* reported on "Listing Madonna Rescued in Bethesda":

This week, she began to lean a little forward and a little to her left, in ways that” prompted comparisons to a tall building in Italy. It seemed as if the Madonna might topple over . . . .

So the statue’s owner, the Maryland Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, had her hauled from her sidewalk perch and into storage yesterday, acting in concert with a phalanx of county and state officials and numerous representatives of utilities and public agencies.

Montgomery County’s Fire and Rescue Service set up an “Incident Command Post,” leaving passersby to wonder if a calamity had occurred. Police stopped southbound traffic on heavily used Wisconsin Avenue to allow a crane to lift the monument. The problem was a water main break in front of the Hyatt hotel. The *Post* summarized the monument’s history, quoting Faith Stuart Libelo, a retired high school physics teacher and chair of the Maryland D.A.R. committee:

In 1986, to accommodate the widening of Montgomery Lane, Bethesda’s Madonna was moved from one end of the post office to another. In both cases, she looked east, Libello said, so passersby would see her face, not her backside.

The crane set the monument down, gently as usual, on a flatbed truck. For once, as the *Post* observed, “she faced west.”

[“Pioneer on the Move? No So Fast,” *The Washington Post*, April 20, 2001; “Madonna of the Trail Statue at 7400 Wisconsin Avenue,” Bethesda Historical Society; Barr, Cameron W., “Listing Madonna Rescued in Bethesda,” *The Washington Post*, December 11, 2004]

Although the monument had found its final location (as of this date), it was not for lack of interest in moving it. In 2001, officials in Cumberland, Maryland, argued that the monument should be moved to their city, the starting point for the historic Cumberland Road. Instead of sitting in the midst of Bethesda’s urban landscape where no one knew why it was there and lacked time to find out, in Cumberland it would symbolize the city’s transportation history.

The president of the Bethesda Chamber of Commerce, Jack Alexander, objected. “Not in my lifetime. You are welcome to come look at it, but you’re not leaving with our Madonna.” It stayed in Bethesda.

In 2018, a group of Bethesda residents proposed to move the monument from its relative obscurity to the Farm Women’s Co-operative Market on the east side of Wisconsin Avenue. Advocates for the Bethesda location overcame the proposal, remaining in front of the former post office and hotel.

The Bethesda monument remains between the former post office and hotel.

One problem facing the statues in some cases is that they are part of the infrastructure that residents ignore. To counter that reality, the Indiana D.A.R. rededicated the Richmond monument, still in its original location along U.S. 40 in Glen Miller Park, on its 75th anniversary in 2003. An article in Richmond's *Palladium-Item* by Rachel E. Sheeley, explained:

For 75 years, the Madonna of the Trail has watched over the National Road in Richmond. From her pedestal at the entrance to Glen Miller Park, the statue has seen automobiles evolve, trees rise and fall and families come and go.

In honor of its 75th anniversary, the monument will be rededicated at 3:30 p.m. Saturday by the Indiana Daughters of the American Revolution, which will be having their state meeting that day at First English Lutheran Church in Richmond . . . .

DAR members from many of the state's 94 chapters are expected to attend the rededication.

Marianne Hughes of Greensboro is coordinating the event. She said the DAR wanted to mark the 75th anniversary and having the state meeting in Richmond made it convenient to do it in August rather than wait until October for the actual dedication date

"It's been there a long time, and through the years, people forget about it," Hughes said . . . .

Hughes said the statue also will need attention in the near future. In 1988, the DAR spent about \$12,000 to restore the monument but it is time again for more conservation improvements to battle the effects of acid rain and other weathering. State DAR dues go into a fund for the Madonna's care.

The Ohio Madonna of the Trail in Springfield recently was restored, and Hughes said the Indiana DAR is contacting the people who did that restoration to learn more about what is needed for the Madonna in Richmond.

The rededication was to include the singing of the National Anthem, a speech on the history of the Madonna of the Trail by Indiana DAR State historian Patricia Fitzgerald Jaracz, speeches by local politicians, and the presentation of a wreath:

Since plans for the ceremony have been announced, Hughes has heard personal memories of the Madonna from several people.

"One lady said before (Interstate) 70, the family would drive by and the dad would say, "Wave at grandma." It took a longtime to figure she wasn't really grandma," Hughes said.

Although the Madonna is a familiar figure to area residents, there are travelers who make seeing her a destination.

“We get calls regularly about where the exact location is and how to get to it,” said Stan Lambert, Richmond Parks & Recreation director, “People regularly stop in the park and want information. Most of the people are out-of-state people.

“We just feel really fortunate that we can host this event. It’s another national tie of the community that’s significant,” Lambert said. [Sheeley, Rachel E., “Madonna Rededicated,” Palladium Item, page B4, August 5, 2003]

Although the National Park Service considers the monument in Uplands, California, to retain its integrity, it has had its share of adventure. Like several others, it was moved slightly to accommodate road construction.

*Route 66 Times* reports:

This statue has seen some tough times, having been knocked down by a falling tree in 1957 and years later being damaged so significantly by an earthquake in 1991 that she had to be taken down and restored. The restoration went well and she's back on the pedestal where she belongs paying tribute to the courage, strength, and resilience of women everywhere. <http://route66times.com/l/ca/upland-madonna-of-the-trails.htm>

Professor Prescott added:

In contrast to most of the other DAR statues, Upland’s *Madonna* features prominently in local popular culture. In 1930, a historical pageant made a pilgrimage to the statue. In 2014 it served as the starting and ending point for a protest demanding more crossing guards for a nearby school. And local columnist John Weeks mocked a parental warning issued for a nearby Shakespeare festival by encouraging readers to imagine the Madonna of the Trail nude.

### **Historic Old Trails – D.A.R. 1931**

On April 20-25, 1931, the D.A.R. assembled in Washington for the Fortieth Continental Congress. On the third day, Mrs. Moss reported on the activities of the National Old Trails Road Committee. Following the dedication of the final Madonna of the Trail monument in Bethesda, Maryland, the committee had broadened its scope to historic trails around the country.

Mrs. Moss began by commenting on “The Covered Wagon Centennial” promoted by the Oregon Trail Memorial Association. She observed, however, that “in the east, in the north, and all through the southern part of the country, interest has been revived in the study of old roads, old routes, and old trails, dating back to the early pioneer times.”

The committee's plan for the previous year "was to follow the program of former years, the chapters in each state to study the old trails that lie within the border of their states respectively":

Each state was asked to make a search for old maps of value, historical sketches, and fine papers containing valuable data that had been stored away for safe-keeping since before the World War. Chapters were asked to bring these forth and renew the fascinating study of the old trails. Each state chairman was requested to do her very best to send in a complete list, first, the names of each one of the old pioneer trails in her own state, second, a list of markers erected by Daughters of the American Revolution chapters on these aforesaid trails, where these markers are located, and third, the historical data recorded on each marker. Response has been general, and through the national vice-chairmen very splendid reports have been received from each division.

During a lengthy discussion of the results from around the country, she mentioned the States along the National Old Trails Road that had the Madonna of the Trail monuments. For example, during her discussion of the old trails in California, she said:

California has one of the Madonna of the Trail monuments, located on Euclid Drive, in Upland. It is in a beautiful location, overtopped with a canopy of branches of the lovely pepper trees.

The pioneers of California have never had a tribute paid to them such as the organizations of Upland, sponsored last September, when they staged a "Pioneer Pilgrimage" to the statue, "The Madonna of the Trail," erected to the memory of the pioneer mothers who followed the Santa Fe Trail into California. The two local chapters, the San Antonio chapter of Upland, and the Los Serranos chapter, Ontario, took the leading part in the program. John Stevens McGroarty, California historian, gave the tribute to the men and women who made California the great empire of the west. All the modes of transportation in California's many eras were portrayed, from the weary Padre, the horsemen, the ox team, the pony express, the mud-wagon, the Butterfield stage, the Mormon riders, the steam train, the automobile, and the airplane. The men allowed their whiskers to grow and took on the rough appearance of pioneers. Prizes were given for the greatest growth of whiskers. The women of Upland and Ontario donned the garb of the days of '49 and appeared on the streets with quaint costumes, much to the astonishment of the tourists.

After the morning parade, everyone joined in the family picnic, and in the afternoon the pioneers gathered for the concerts of the old fiddlers, as well as several contests, such as "horse-shoe flinging," etc. The Pioneer Pilgrimage Day honoring the Madonna of the Trail will be celebrated in September each year, in Upland.

After summarizing the activities of the State chapters, Mrs. Moss turned back to the Madonna of the Trail:

A resolution was unanimously adopted at Congress, April, 1930, to have a small replica of the Pioneer Mother monument made in the form of a statuette. An order for 1000 was given to a firm in Pittsburgh. Owing to several delays, those statuettes were not placed on sale until after December 1. They are to be sold for \$5 apiece. These statuettes are perfect replicas of the Madonna of the Trail, as nearly perfect a copy as anything so small (8½ inches) can possibly be of a monument that stands 18 feet above the ground. The miniature model is the work of a Chicago sculptor, and is without a doubt a little gem and a work of art. Order blanks have been sent to each state chairman to distribute to her chapters, and 25,000 order blanks have been sent out through the organization. The statuettes are in burnished antique silver finish, and may be used on the table as ornaments, or may be used in the pair as book-ends. One of these statuettes should be purchased by each chapter.

Referring to this Pioneer Mother memorial, your national chairman has had many requests for printed material and information regarding these monuments. The request for loan of cuts for printing purposes have been received from Historical Societies, schools, authors, and a number of magazines have written very fine articles. Of very recent date, April 1, the Bell Telephone Company issued their "Bell Telephone News." The cover carries a picture of the Madonna of the Trail, of Illinois. This is erected in Vandalia, Illinois, in front of the Old Court House, where Abraham Lincoln at one time held court. The original plan of placing these Pioneer Mother monuments on the Ocean to Ocean Highway, marking specifically the pioneer progress from east to west, will be strictly adhered to. Many requests from other states have come to the national chairman for a Pioneer Mother monument, but any deviation from the original plan would be a serious mistake, and these 12 monuments marking the National Old Trails Road must stand as the sacred shrine erected to the pioneer mother of the past. In due course of time, however, if the demand is justifiable, a further distinctive plan of marking these other trails might be considered by your national committee.

Your national chairman . . . gave a number of addresses over the radio on Old Trails, and through the courtesy of the National Old Trails Road Association, she was able to send out, upon request, 75 copies of the book, "The National Old Trails Road," by Judge Lowe. One circular letter was sent out the first of October to state chairmen and National Officers, and over 1,000 letters were written during this year. A number of maps were sent upon request, and 25,000 order blanks for the Madonna of the Trail statuettes were sent out in December, from the house of the national chairman. (Applause.)

[*Proceedings* of the Fortieth Continental Congress of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, April 1931, pages 216-227]

The following year, Mrs. Moss's report in April 1932 to the Forty-First Continental Congress was similar in covering research on old trails around the country. However, she began with a look back:

"There are peaks as well as plains" and the work of the National Old Trails Committee is one of the highest "peaks" attained in the history of the National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution. Daughters, you may point to this "peak" with justifiable pride.

This committee has reached the mature age of 21 years, for it was organized in 1911 in a very simple way as the "Missouri D.A.R. Good Roads Committee." It was the enthusiasm and the inspiration of this committee that awakened interest in locating, exploiting and advertising old historic roads, and in a very short time, this committee became of state and national importance.

A bill known as the D.A.R. Bill, was introduced in the House of Representatives by the Hon. A. P. Borland of Kansas City, January 15, 1912, providing for a national ocean to ocean highway over the pioneer trails of the nation, asking the government to aid the states through which the highway herein described ran, in extending, reconstructing, building and also repairing same.

Today this historic "National Old Trails Road," conceived by George Washington and following civilization westward under various Acts of Congress [in the 19th century], and sponsored as a national memorial for the past 21 years by the D.A.R., reaches from ocean to ocean, and in the 12 states through which the National Highway passes, have erected 12 beautiful monuments, a national shrine that is not only representative but a distinctive memorial to those pioneer mothers of ours whose granite virtues were so outstandingly great.

Your National Chairman caught the vision of a pioneer mother clad in homespun, clasping her babe to her breast, this mother showing fortitude, perseverance and energy in her bearing, in the act of going forward, expressing firm determination, her face to be of strong character, beauty and gentleness, the face of a mother who realizes her responsibilities, and trusts in God. Collaborating with her son, John Trigg Moss, Jr., a graduate artist and architect, your Chairman worked out the vision into the design for our memorial monument. A St. Louis sculptor, catching the real spirit of our dreams, fashioned them into the beautiful memorial we have today. These 12 monuments, erecting and dedicating them, cost approximately \$50,000, and is a great credit to the organization. The actual money expended by the D.A.R. chapters was approximately \$13,000. Of this sum, \$580.24 was transferred in 1930 to the current fund of the National Society D.A.R. To the "National Old Trails Road Association," a national organization of Road Men, we owe a debt of gratitude, for it was through their efforts in financing the erection of the monuments, that we were able to complete the project for the above amount.

We all know that transportation marks the foot-steps of time from the beginning of civilization. Twenty-one years ago we had come to a time when the insignificant wagon roads of the country demanded a place on the stage of progress. At that time, statistics showed that less than 5 per cent of the public roads of America were improved for travel. People were appealing to State Legislatures for assistance; State and Federal Highway Commissions were formed, and the automobile was bringing about a radical change greater than was ever expected or dreamed of. Railroads and steamboats carried the greater percentage of passenger and freight traffic, when now the automobile, bus and truck skim over the nation's highways and have the right of way, with the aeroplane fast coming into its own.

The Daughters of the American Revolution, true to their pioneer instinct, knew that they had work to do. They wanted “good roads” above all else, but they wanted these “good roads” in course of construction to be built upon the old historic trails. To this end, they have ever worked diligently, ardently, and without ceasing. For 21 years they have played a big part in the progress of the “good roads” program of the nation. They have played a bigger part in the preservation of historical data pertaining to the Old Trails, the Old Traces, Old Post Routes and Mail Routes in different sections of the country. The boulders, tablets and markers of every description that have been erected by them number up in the thousands, all recording accurately many historical facts that would be lost to the coming generations but for their patriotic effort to keep sacred and intact these bits of Pioneer History.

The program of this committee has moved steadily forward for 21 years, and commendable indeed is the effort that has been made to thwart the oncoming trend of the times to modernize road marking by dropping the old sacred names of our pioneer pathways for the system of numbers. Let us continue this stand we have taken and insist that these old names remain as a part of a marking system for the road of our country.

Our pledge to erect a memorial on the National Old Trails Road – stamping it forever as the great Transcontinental Memorial Highway – has been fulfilled: our dream has been realized, but we still have much work to do in the interest of history and our sacred Old Trails in every other section of our country, and in many ways it has been demonstrated that the desire is still great within the hearts of the Daughters for definite knowledge of patriotic lore attached to the Old Trails of our land.

After going through activities of State committees to gather information on old trails, Mrs. Moss concluded:

Your National Chairman records an ever increasing desire on the part of historians, teachers, and speakers to become better informed in the history and romantic tales of the early pioneer trails. The requests that have come to your National Chairman for information regarding the Pioneer Mother Monuments have numbered into the hundreds.

Extensive publicity is still given to our beautiful “Madonna of the Trails.” Pictures are printed of her in magazines, pamphlets, folders and guide books. In prose and poetry she is given dignified recognition by the press everywhere, and this program of ours, though idealistic and inspirational, seems to continue to appeal to the innermost hearts of our thinking men in the publicity world. Their editorials and their comments, far and wide, show that our “Madonna of the Trail” has created an atmosphere of love and peace wherever she stands.

In the course of the past 9 years, over 50,000 pieces of mail have been sent to all parts of the country and abroad from the residence of Your National Chairman. Letters of instruction, invitations to dedications, order blanks, photos, pamphlets, reports, letters, cards, books and maps have been sent out, all under the personal supervision of your

National Chairman.

The small statuette in metal with antique silver finish is an exact replica of the larger Pioneer Mother Monument. These were made by order of [the Continental] Congress, April 1930. They can be purchased for \$5, sending \$4 to the Treasurer General's Office and retaining \$1 in your chapter treasury. Two of these statuettes make beautiful book-ends to ornament your library table.

Mrs. Moss concluded her report with a fitting summary of the history not only of her committee but of the National Old Trails Road itself:

Twenty-one years ago, Gov. Herbert S. Hadley of Missouri said we were "The Pioneer Road Builders, Trail Markers and Trail Makers of the Nation." We have lived true to the panegyric he offered us in tribute that day. Let us look forward to another "high peak" of 21 years hence. Let us in good time memorialize the "Great Homing Trail" of the Northwest, the Old Oregon Trail, and let us keep close to our hearts the thought that we shall in some suitable manner place enduring monuments on the "Great National Highway to the Southwest." This road, the Spaniards recorded as the "Camino Real" and is 400 years old, and let us continue to the end of time to be heralded as the Trail Markers and Trail Makers of our Nation. (Applause.)" [*Proceedings of the Forty-First Continental Congress of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, April 1932, pages 674-687*]

In 1933, the separate National Old Trails Committee disappeared. It was combined into a Committee on Preservation of Historic Spots, including National Old Trails. The chairman was Miss Lucile Foster. Despite financial problems stemming from the Depression, the proceedings identified extensive State activities on old trails.

### **Going Out With a Big Splash**

By the late 1920s, the U.S. numbered highway system had rendered the named trail associations obsolete. The U.S. numbered highway system did not come with special funding for improving the roads. However, the State highway departments recognized them as their most important roads – the roads most likely to be included in the Federal-aid primary or interstate system. Therefore, the States were using Federal-aid highway funds, matched on a 50-50 basis with State funds, to upgrade the roads throughout in the 1920s and 1930s to form the country's first interstate highway system clearly marked with uniform signs.

The advocacy that was the hallmark of the named trail associations to improve their route – as reflected in Judge Lowe's activities at the State, county, township, and road district levels – was no longer necessary. Further, the Joint Board and AASHO had intentionally divided the trails among several U.S. numbered routes to discourage their backers' continued advocacy.

As the U.S. shields went up along the newly designated roads, officials of the named trail associations began to realize their days were numbered. Each named trail association – whether big or small, famous or fly-by-night – came to its own unique end. They depended on

membership dues from individuals, chambers of commerce, or towns. As these sources of revenue dried up, activities gradually came to an end.

The Lincoln Highway Association was an example. While the Joint Board was developing its plan, BPR's E. W. James had approached the association, as he recalled many years later:

Having assisted the Lincoln Highway Association in the First World War, I next went to Detroit to their headquarters and laid my scheme before them, very frankly telling them that it would mean the end of the Lincoln Highway Association, the Dixie, and all others. They understood it all; said they were for a big plan for roads across the U.S.; would be with my scheme if I would give the Lincoln Highway recognition so far as possible in the No. 30. I agreed to do all I could to put it across, and so had their support toward washing out all the named routes. They were the strongest of all the Associations and with them with us, who could be against us? [Letter, "E. W. James on designating the Federal-aid system and developing the U.S. numbered highway plan," February 21, 1927, on this Website]

Virtually the entire Lincoln Highway from Philadelphia to Granger, Wyoming, was assigned to U.S. 30 (Atlantic City, New Jersey, to Astoria, Oregon), but its eastern and western ends carried different numbers.

From formation of the Lincoln Highway Association in 1913, the leaders wanted a hard surfaced road across the country, a goal that eluded them, but also wanted the Lincoln Highway to inspire similar highways around the country. The success of the Lincoln Highway inspired many similar associations, and now the country was embarked on a Federal-aid plan that would result in an interstate system of two-lane paved highways criss-crossing the country.

The Lincoln Highway Association had achieved its goals. Its leaders were successful businessmen in the motor vehicle industry who had many other activities to occupy their time. It was time to close operations.

But before closing, they wanted to mark the Lincoln Highway with longer-lasting signs than the signs posted by the Automobile Club of Southern California, the California State Automobile Association, and others. They decided to formally end the association, but to do so with one last publicity stunt.

They decided to mark the Lincoln Highway formally, regardless of U.S. number, and dedicate it to the memory of Abraham Lincoln. As the association's official history explained:

Everything, in fact, seemed favorable except that to begin operations the Lincoln Highway Association must first design and manufacture and transport the monuments. They could find no method of financing this work and so the project languished . . . until the end of 1927. Then the Association, about to discontinue major activities, found \$66,600 on hand, the unexpended portions of the Willys-Overland and General Motors trust funds. Roy D. Chapin suggested this balance be drawn on to finance the permanent marking.

The directors approved, as did the donors of the money. The plan involved the Boy Scouts, and the scouting organization was enthusiastic.

The association designed and manufactured the signs and monuments. The signs carried the Lincoln Highway insignia, a bronze medallion ("This Highway Dedicated to Abraham Lincoln") and a directional arrow. With the support of the State highway departments, scout cars were dispatched to identify locations for them:

Shortly after the caravan had completed its trip, the Scouts dug the holes and, on September 1, 1928, on official word from their headquarters, placed the monuments.

Several of the troops set monuments on more than 100 miles of the highway on that one day. The troop at Fallon, Nevada, covered the greatest section of the route, from Austin almost to Sparks, a total of approximately 175 miles.

The only serious gap left was in Illinois, where a misunderstanding prevented the Association from obtaining immediate official permission. Later, special legislative authority was granted to the Association and the monuments were set by the Scouts.

Approximately 3,000 monuments were used. Two were placed at each important crossroad, one at each minor crossing, and others at sufficient intervals to assure the motorist that he was traveling the right road. They were set at the outer edge of the right of way to avoid interference with highway markers placed by the states.

Their permanence, and the value placed on them by the state highway departments, is evidenced by the fact that six years after they were set, less than 5 percent of them had been destroyed or removed. As a rule, when improvements were made, the highway department's maintenance men took up the monuments to keep them from being damaged by construction equipment, then replaced them in proper relation to the newly constructed road.

For all practical purposes, the Lincoln Highway Association came to an end, except for publication of its official history:

*The Lincoln Highway: The Story of a Crusade That Made Transportation History*, Dodd, Mead and Company, 1935 [pages 217-221]

Long after the Lincoln Highway Association ceased operations, the Lincoln Highway remained part of the country's cultural heritage. For the highway's 25th anniversary in 1938, NBC Radio broadcast a program that featured interviews with Lincoln Highway Association officials, and a message from Carl Fisher, the highway's founder, read by an announcer:

The Lincoln Highway Association has accomplished its primary purpose, that of providing an object lesson to show the possibility in highway transportation and the importance of a unified, safe, and economical system of roads . . . . Now I believe the country is at the beginning of another new era in highway building [that will] create a system of roads far beyond the dreams of the Lincoln Highway founders. I hope this anniversary observance makes millions of people realize how vital roads are to our national welfare, to economic programs, and to our national defense ...

He apparently was referring to the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1938, which called on BPR to prepare a report on development of a network of toll superhighways. (The result in 1939, *Toll Roads and Free Roads*, found that a toll network financed by bonds to be retired by toll revenue would not work. However, BPR added a lengthy section on “A Master Plan for Free Highway Development” that was the first formal statement of what became the Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways.)

In March 1940, NBC Radio introduced a Saturday morning drama called the *Lincoln Highway*. In the words of its introduction, the program featured stories that reflected “the heartbeat of America [...] the loves, thrills, pathos of the lives of the people who travel the country’s greatest traffic artery – The Lincoln Highway.” Many of the era’s top stars appeared on the show, which came to an end in 1942.

In April 1988, the University of Iowa Press published *The Lincoln Highway*, an excellent text-and-photo essay by Drake Hokanson about the history and meaning of the highway. Several other books have been published on the subject since then, including:

Anderson, Mary Elizabeth, *Link Across America: A Story of the Historic Lincoln Highway*, Rayve Productions, 1997. (A children's book about the Lincoln Highway.)

Butko, Brian, *Greetings from the Lincoln Highway: America's First Coast-to-Coast Road*, Stackpole Books, 2005. (A history of the Lincoln Highway with State-by-State information on history, routings, and travel.)

Roe, Bill, *All the Way to Lincoln Way: Coast to Coast Bicycle Odyssey*, Rowhouse Publishers, 2000. (Narrative of a bicycle trip across the country, west to east, on the Lincoln Highway, or parts of it. Excellent photography.)

Wallis, Michael, and Williamson, Michael S., *The Lincoln Highway: Coast to Coast from Times Square to the Golden Gate*, W. W. Norton, 2007. (Wallis, author of one of the most popular books on U.S. 66, and Williamson turn to the Lincoln Highway for what the book calls "The Great American Road Trip." Each Lincoln Highway State receives its own chapter.)

The renewed interest prompted creation of a new Lincoln Highway Association in 1992. Its mission:

Our present-day association has the responsibility to protect the heritage left to us by those courageous transportation pioneers of nearly ninety years ago. Today our mission is to identify, preserve, and improve access to the remaining portions of the Lincoln Highway and its associated historic sites.

In October 2021, author Amor Towles published a novel titled *The Lincoln Highway*, which went on to become a major bestseller. Amazon.com's plot summary reads:

In June, 1954, eighteen-year-old Emmett Watson is driven home to Nebraska by the warden of the juvenile work farm where he has just served fifteen months for involuntary manslaughter. With his mother long gone, his father recently deceased, and the family farm foreclosed upon by the bank, Emmett plans to pick up his eight-year-old brother Billy and head to California to start a new life. But when the warden drives away, Emmett discovers that two friends from the work farm have stowed away in the trunk of the warden's car. They have a very different plan for Emmett's future, one that will take the four of them on a fateful journey in the opposite direction – to New York City.

Bursting with life, charm, richly imagined settings and unforgettable characters, *The Lincoln Highway* is an extraordinary journey through 1950s America from the pen of a master storyteller.

In addition, many histories and biographies of President Dwight D. Eisenhower describe his experience on the Lincoln Highway in 1919 as a participant in the U.S. Army's first transcontinental convoy of army vehicles. The trip began at the site of the Zero Milestone (then a temporary marker) on the Ellipse south of the White House, to Gettysburg where the convoy reached the Lincoln Highway and followed it to San Francisco. In later years, he cited his 2 months on the convoy and his observations of Germany's autobahn network of superhighways during World War II as the reason he promoted development of the Interstate System when he became President – one of his proudest accomplishments.

One chapter of Eisenhower's memoir, *At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends*, was devoted to the 1919 convoy (Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1967). The chapter is titled "Through Darkest America with Truck and Tank." For a detailed account of the Army's 1919 convoy's transcontinental journey, see:

Davies, Pete, *American Road: The Story of an Epic Transcontinental Journey at the Dawn of the Motor Age*, Henry Holt and Company, 2002.

By contrast, the Jefferson Highway is largely forgotten, but in its day, it was one of the best known north-south named trails, taking motorists from Winnipeg to New Orleans. The Jefferson Highway Association (JHA) had sought a single number from the Joint Board on Interstate Highways and from AASHO. But as with all the multi-State named trails, its efforts were in vain. As Lyell D. Henry, Jr.'s history of the Jefferson Highway explained:

In sum, segments of no fewer than thirteen numbered highways – several ending in one state only to reappear in a more distant, noncontiguous state – had abruptly displaced the

Jefferson Highway. In these results were major implications for the content of road maps and the signage motorists would now encounter in driving the old route and – even more important . . . the prospects for the continued recognition of the Jefferson Highway.

The JHA leadership could take pride that “the highway so carefully selected that the Jefferson Highway for practically its entire distance was placed on numbered United States highways forming a part of the main trunk line system of highways.” But what role was left for the JHA? Henry explained:

[T]he organization continued through the rest of the decade. At a meeting in April 1929, the JHA advisory committee, still pondering the future of the organization, decided to once again recommend keeping it going, and a month later, the JHA headquarters, still located in St. Joseph [Missouri], announced that twenty thousand Jefferson Highway maps were ready for free distribution. Accompanying the announcement was a somewhat wistful statement from JHA president George McIninch: “Despite the present day system of numbering roads, sentimental and historical significance attaches to the name of the Jefferson Highway. It is the aim of our association, through publication of maps and by many other organized efforts, to retain the identity and prestige of the Jefferson Highway.” The 1929 map was the last one issued by JHA, and what those “many other organized efforts” may have been, if any, remains unknown. President McIninch did show up for the event in October 1930 that celebrated the completion of paving the highway’s route in Iowa and much of Minnesota, but ready evidence of any further significant activity by JHA is virtually nonexistent, and presumably the organization, whether by formal dissolution or mere withering away, was soon gone . . . .

What realistic prospect could there be for anchoring the Jefferson Highway in the collective memory in the absence of distinctive trail signs posted along the highway, or of a name affixed to a route on road maps, or of an organization dedicated to publishing route guides and otherwise publicizing the Jefferson Highway? [Henry, Lyell D., Jr., *The Jefferson Highway: Blazing the Way from Winnipeg to New Orleans*, University of Iowa Press, 2016, pages 71-74]

The Yellowstone Trail Association, backing a transcontinental route from “Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound” (Plymouth, Massachusetts, to Seattle, Washington, via Yellowstone National Park), similarly had to face reality. The association, like many others, had sought a single number for its famous highway, but without success. Harold A. Meeks, in his history of the trail, summarized the result:

Parts of the Yellowstone Trail were signed as U.S. 20 in the East and U.S. 10 and 12 in the West. Significant portions of the Yellowstone Trail were not initially designated as interstate routes, but except in one case, were assigned state highway numbers. Some non-designated stretches of road included most of New York state (State Route 5); that portion of the Trail from Cleveland, Ohio, to Fort Wayne, Indiana; a small section in Wisconsin; most of Minnesota, which subsequently became U.S. 212; and finally most of

Washington, which may in part explain the trail relocation which took place there in 1925 . . . .

On the surface, the Yellowstone Trail Association seemed to be struggling along, but it was certainly not the dynamic organization that had previously existed.

A history of the Yellowstone Trail by Alice A. Ridge and John Wm. Ridge provided the stark numbers of the decline:

The group had been plagued with financial problems its whole life. The year 1921 was a period of national recession and the Trail association survived. But in the late 1920's, almost a year before the Joint Board of AASHO and Bureau of Public Roads engineers replaced names with numbers, a desperate bulletin was issued by General Manager H.O. Cooley to the membership at large. In it he stated that he would feature one town each week in the bulletin that was in arrears in paying its assessment. He called it the Debt Paying Bulletin and likened paying debts unto a game in which he was the scorekeeper and would publish names of debtors for the featured town of the week. He proceeded to do so, in which process he probably embarrassed and alienated more than he shamed into paying up. In August of 1927 a financial report showed that almost \$16,000 had been collected and spent in eight months, leaving a debt of \$1338 in spite of a membership of 7789. The report also showed a cancellation of membership by 155 people. At the end of 1929, the financial report showed receipts and expenditures of about \$11,500. The good news was that they were out of debt with a balance of \$11.99 to carry forward. The previous year they had a balance of \$18 to carry forward. The organization never expected to see a profit, but the annual fight for solvency must have been wearing.

The end came in March 1930 when, as Meeks wrote, Cooley informed the association's president, A. J. Dahlman of Lemmon, South Dakota, that, "On Saturday, March 15 (1930) I am going to close the office of the Yellowstone Trail Association, permanently," signaling the end

of the old organization founded with such high hopes in 1912. Cooley explained:

It is March 15th, the state meetings have not been held, and there is no money to hold them. There is no basis for making plans for 1930. The total indebtedness of the Association is \$6176.45 . . . . Most of this has been carried for several years, but I cannot carry it any longer . . . . I have no idea what I am going to do, but I will have to do something to earn my living . . . . I have carried on as long as I could, and see no possible hope to carry on any further.

The Yellowstone Trail managed to last over two years longer than the Lincoln Highway, but the outcome was inevitable, a bitter end to be sure. [Meeks, Harold A., *On the Road to Yellowstone: The Yellowstone Trail and American Highways 1900-1930*, Pictorial History Publishing Company, 2000, page 175; Ridge, Alice A., and Ridge, John Wm.,

*Introducing The Yellowstone Trail: A Good Road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound*,  
Yellowstone Trail Publishers, 2000, pages 64-65]

Unlike the Lincoln Highway, the National Old Trails Road Association did not announce its end or stage a well-planned final publicity stunt. However, dedication of the Madonna of the Trail monuments in the route's 12 States served that unstated purpose. It created a transcontinental monument that, unlike the Lincoln Highway's posts, remains in place today.

Some remnants of the National Old Trail Road remain around the country, and its history is sometimes mentioned in accounts of the southwestern end that became part of U.S. 66.

Perhaps the National Old Trails Road should best be remembered today as part of the life of Harry S. Truman. Truman biographers mention his presidency of the National Old Trails Road Association, but usually as a minor detail that was not worth researching. For example, David McCullough's masterful 992-page biography mentions Truman's role on two pages. The first reference narrates how Truman earned a living after losing his reelection bid as a Jackson County judge:

In the intervening time, he became something of a man of affairs in Kansas City. From an office in the Board of Trade Building, he began selling memberships in the Kansas City Automobile Club, working on commission, which, after expenses, came to approximately five dollars for every new member he recruited. In a year he had sold more than a thousand memberships and cleared \$5,000, which, with a family to support and debts to pay, he greatly needed. Roads, highways, the new age of the automobile had become his specialty. He was named president of the National Old Trails Association, a nonprofit group dedicated to building highways along the country's historic trails and to spreading the concept of history as a tourist attraction. (Writing from Kansas during one of many trips in behalf of the group, he told Bess, "This is almost like campaigning for President, except that the people are making promises to me instead of the other way around.")

In September 1933, Truman participated in the dedication of the county courthouse he had built, one of his many accomplishments as Presiding Judge. In the second reference, McCullough quoted the *Jackson County Examiner* newspaper coverage of the opening in 1933 that cited Truman's work, including:

During these years of strenuous service to Jackson County he has found time to serve as president of the National Old Trails Association, an office he still holds. [McCullough, David, *Truman*, Simon and Schuster, 1992, pages 171, 202; the quote is from the *Examiner* of September 7, 1933]

Like McCullough, other authors saw little need to explore Truman's activities on behalf of the National Old Trails Road Association. Even his daughter Margaret seemed to have little interest in the subject. Her biography of her father mentioned his role after citing his success with the Automobile Club of Kansas City:

He became president of the National Old Trails Association, a perfect job for Solomon Young's grandson. He traveled extensively around Missouri and many other states, marking famous roads and urging local governments to see the value of their history as a tourist attraction.

She added:

I was never very conscious of him as a politician, during these early years, but I did know he was a highway builder. He often took me with him on inspection tours of the new roads, and sometimes on longer trips, when he dedicated or inspected an historic road, as part of his still continuing presidency of the National Old Trails Association. [Truman, Margaret, *Harry S. Truman*, William Morrow and Company, 1973, pages 68, 77]

If she accompanied him to dedication ceremonies for Madonna of the Trail monuments, she does not say.

She gave two pages to the subject in her biography of her mother, mostly to illustrate that Bess resented her husband's travels for the "National Old Trails Association." She wrote, "Its goal was to encourage auto travel by persuading local officials to set up historic markers and build tourist facilities." As noted earlier, she quoted some of his letters from the road, such as his letter describing Mayor Ham Bell of South Dodge to illustrate Bess's disinterest. "Bess did not find such pieces of living history as interesting as her husband did. More to the point, he was enjoying himself too much – while he was several hundreds [sic] miles away from her." [*Bess Truman*, pages 102-103]

Neither author seemed to understand what the National Old Trails Road was, its history, or Truman's activities as president of its association – or its full name.

The association had only two presidents in its active years, and their roles were very different. Judge J. M. Lowe had devoted his last years, from 1912 until his death in 1926, to securing a hard surfaced road from coast to coast. He did not accept payment for his services, and at times, used his own funds to support the association. His advocacy included speeches, intervention in county and road district votes, publication of bulletins and books, and testimony before Congress and other bodies, always in support of the National Old Trails Road and improvement of the main roads around the country.

In 1925 he found that even his home State, Missouri, did not respect his hard work in laying out a cross-State highway by leaving part of it off the new State road scheduled for improvement. In 1926, by the time of his death, he could see that the National Old Trails Road was about to be broken up by the new U.S. numbered highway system. His work had not been in vain, but he would be forgotten by the highway community as it began in the 1920s to build an interstate highway system of two-lane paved highways under the Federal-aid highway program that he had initially opposed.

Unlike Judge Lowe, the second president, Truman, could not devote all his time and resources to the National Old Trails Road Association. He had a family to support and a job – a paying job – as one of Jackson County’s presiding judge.

Truman traveled the road to maintain support for the association’s work and to secure a stable financial future for it. He may not have realized it, but the 12 Madonna of the Trail monuments he helped Mrs. Moss to install and dedicate were the final statement of the National Old Trails Road Association. The National Old Trails Road may be forgotten, but the monuments remain today as reminders of the first presidency of Harry S. Truman.

### **Senator Harry S. Truman**

In the November 1934 mid-term elections, President Roosevelt’s already large Democratic majorities grew in the House and Senate. Among the increases was Harry S. Truman, who secured 59 percent of the vote to defeat incumbent Roscoe C. Peterson.

A few days later, *The Washington Post* began a series on “New Faces in the Senate.” The third installment was about Senator-elect Truman. The profile began:

After a lapse of 16 years, the once dominant “rebel democracy” of Missouri is to be in complete control of the State representation in the United States Senate. The election last Tuesday of Harry S. Truman, of Independence, a suburb of Kansas City, gives the Democrats the two Senate seats. The other one has been held the last two years by Bennett Champ Clark, son of the former Speaker of the House [Champ Clark (1911-1919)] . . . .

Now comes another Democratic Senator from the rural part of the State, Harry S. Truman, to reunite the broken line of Democratic Senators. He hails from rural Jackson County, one of the bloodiest spots in the border warfare between Missouri and Kansas just before and during the Civil War.

The article recalled his early years on the family farm before coming into prominence during the World War. As a member of the 35th Division, he “helped to organize Battery B, 129th Field Artillery, a volunteer outfit” and made an enviable record in the Battle of Argonne. He had been commissioned as a first lieutenant, but during the war “was promoted to captain, and came out of the war a major.”

As for his Senate run, the *Post* recalled:

Clark induced Representative Jacob L. Milligan, a former captain in the Thirty-fifth Division and war buddy, to become a Democratic candidate for the senatorship. Truman was thrown on the opposite side of this [primary] contest by a force of circumstances, which resulted in the luckiest break of his life.

Thomas J. Pendergast, Democratic boss of Kansas City, who two years ago extended his political control over much of the State, is responsible today more than any one else for Truman's elevation to the Senate. The new Senator-elect had engaged for a time in the retail business in Kansas City. Ten years ago Pendergast was looking around for a candidate for county court judge from the rural Jackson County district. He was attracted to Truman by the fact of his good war record, and his ability to make friends.

Pendergast was under attack from politicians across the State in St. Louis who had made the "boss" a target in the 1932 gubernatorial race, although Pendergast's candidate, Guy B. Park, won:

The direct challenge to Pendergast's political control of Missouri came without warning. The St. Louis Democratic organization brought out Representative John J. Cochran. The leaders boasted that if he were put over for Senator, the way would be cleared for St. Louis to grab the governorship and political domination of the State in 1936.

Then Pendergast, hard pressed for a senatorial candidate to meet the St. Louis challenger, turned to his county judge, Harry S. Truman, who was popular at home, but little known in the rest of the State. A battle royal between the Kansas City and St. Louis organizations ensued. Truman won the nomination easily, as a result of a record-breaking primary vote in Kansas City and Jackson County.

The Senator-elect would arrive in Washington "with little more than a local background." The profile discussed his accomplishments:

As a member of the county court he was largely responsible for carrying out a \$10,000,000 county road program. Probably his next greatest achievement on the county court was the building of the new \$4,500,000 courthouse in Kansas City. Truman is a former president of the National Old Trails Association, and a good roads booster for many years.

His education was "limited to that which is acquired in the public schools, supplemented by reading later in life":

He is not considered brilliant, either as an orator or as a scholar, but has great personal charm and is a tireless worker. He has never had time to develop hobbies.

During the campaign, Truman pledged 100-percent cooperation with President Roosevelt, and defended the New Deal:

However, like the party organization of the State, Truman is a conservative and has little in common with the new school of socialistic theorists who have risen to prominent places the last two years. Yet in his campaign he favored old age pension legislation and unemployment insurance, a part of the new Roosevelt program. Truman also pledged

himself for immediate payment of the soldier bonus. In his campaign he defended the processing tax and the AAA program of farm relief.

The profile, accompanied by a caricature of Truman in a grim, even sad and tired, look that contrasted with his personality, ended:

Truman is married and has one child, Margaret, 10 years old. [Alford, Theodore C., "New Faces in the Senate – Harry Truman of Missouri," *The Washington Post*, November 12, 1934, page 9]

Truman had campaigned by car, traveling Missouri's back roads. He told reporters he felt as if he were on a vacation. "Fact is, I like roads. I like to move. ..."

Originally regarded as a lightweight sent to Washington by "Boss" Pendergast, Truman made his reputation as a determined investigator of financial finagling by the railroads. After the United States entered World War II in December 1941, he applied his dogged, common sense investigative skills to military procurement. The investigation began unofficially when he left Washington in his Dodge and drove to Florida, then to the Midwest, and finally to Michigan, stopping at Army installations and defense plants – and finding waste and fraud along the way. Based on the abuses he found during his tour, the Senate established the Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program, commonly called the Truman Committee after its chairman.

In this new and highly visible position, Truman gained national stature. Although many still thought of him as the lightweight political hack he had appeared to be when he arrived in Washington in 1935, his success gave him the opportunity to be considered for the position of Vice President in 1944.

(Senator-elect Truman may have received a lucky break, as the *Post* put it, because of the cross-State political rivalries in the 1934 mid-term election, but of course no one could have predicted that the luckiest break of his life would come 10 years later during the 1944 presidential election when he was selected unexpectedly as the Vice Presidential nominee for President Roosevelt's fourth term in the White House.)

Historians may have little interest in learning about the National Old Trails Road Association, but Truman never forgot his time traveling the road despite the many more urgent matters he would consider as a Senator, Vice President, and President. But after becoming a United States Senator, he and his family drove the old road, now mostly U.S. 40, between Independence and Washington many times – seeing places and people he knew from his days as president of the National Old Trails Road Association.

That his memory of those days was strong became evident during his famous whistle stop election campaign event in 1948. No one, except President Truman, thought he could beat Governor Thomas E. Dewey of New York in the November election. That summer, President Truman, Bess, Margaret, and their entourage embarked on a nationwide railroad tour of the

country, delivering speeches from the back platform of the train to large crowds in many towns, as well as major speeches in the big cities. He had planned to deliver written speeches from the train platforms, but he found that speaking extemporaneously was more effective, even though one of his aides had to record his words in shorthand for history.

In June 1948, his railroad tour passed through several of the National Old Trails Road cities. In mid-June, after a big speech in Los Angeles, he was on his way home to Independence. He gave brief speeches in Winslow, Arizona, and Gallup, New Mexico. In Albuquerque, he recalled:

I was here once as the President of the National Old Trails and Roads Association, and we set up a monument to the Pioneer Mother here in Albuquerque. Had a great time on that trip, and I met a lot of people in New Mexico. It looks as if they are all here today.

The trip continued through Las Vegas and Raton, New Mexico, then paralleled the National Old Trails Road. On June 16, in Dodge City, Kansas, he began his remarks:

It looks as if Dodge City really wanted to see what their President looked like. I used to come over here to Dodge City on road matters for the National Old Trails Association. I was the director of that organization, and I have been through here on numerous occasions on work for that organization. Those were the days when we didn't have the roads we have now, and when it used to take the Santa Fe Railroad a little longer to go from Kansas City than it does now.

The tour continued through Hutchinson and Newton, Kansas. In Emporia, Kansas, he recalled:

I see one of my very old friends here in the audience, Bill Young. He used to be Mayor of Council Grove, Kansas, and a member of the National Old Trails Association. I have been from one end of Kansas to the other with Bill Young, and other members of the Association.

The campaign train continued through the States of the National Old Trails Road on June 17, including Terre Haute, Indiana, where he said:

I am certainly glad to see you, and happy to see so many of you out here today. I have been through this city and stopped here on numerous occasions. When I was in the Senate, and I was there for 10 years, I used to drive back and forth from Independence, Missouri, to Washington by way of highway number 40 – usually always stayed on that highway in Terre Haute going one way or another, so I am very well familiar with your city and its environs.

On the other side of Indiana, in Richmond, he said:

I am happy to be here this morning, and I want to assure you that this is not my first visit to Richmond. I came here once as President of the National Old Trails Road Association

and helped the Daughters of the American Revolution to set up a monument in one of your parks to the pioneer mother.

The text for the Richmond speech is from the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum. The American Presidency Project had a different version of the text:

It certainly is a pleasure to see all these smiling faces in Richmond. You know, I have through here at least a hundred times, and nobody paid any attention to me. When I was in the Senate, and even before that, I always used to drive through Richmond, and sometimes stayed at the Richmond-Leland Motel. I ought to get something for that plug, don't you think? [Laughter]

Of course, he won the 1948 election and served until January 1953.

His name remained on the letterhead of the National Old Trails Road Association into the late 1940s.

In June 1941, Senator Truman received a letter dated June 15, 1941, from William L. Young, president of the Kansas Highway 50 and National Old Trails Association. The letter began:

Dear Senator Harry:

We read of you often and think of you considerable [sic] more and which makes us feel the old world is not so big after all, congratulations and our best wishes as you continue onward up the ladder of fame . . . .

He added, "Regardless we have the road and only road that can be depended upon at all times, you continue and will always by our President and I presume I still carry on as Executive Chairman, you will also notice some time ago we reorganized the state association at Lyons Kans with myself as state chairman."

Young pointed out that as a result of recent flooding in the Midwest, he had written to Governor Payne Ratner and Highway Director D. J. Fair about the resulting road problems. The letters were enclosed. Young continued in disjointed manner:

Senator Harry note that part from a military standpoint, for illustration would'nt we be in a pickle in such an emergency, the following is a correct list of the east and west roads that were out, No 36, 24, 40 50 South, 54, 160 that leaves the road you are piloting No 50 North the N.O.T. the only east and west road open across the state, even R I and UP trains detouring from Herington through Council Grove to Kansas City, and these above mentioned roads were out several days.

He got to the point:

I am so in hopes you are in position to stick in the right kind of plug, more especially while the water is muddy for I am very well satisfied our Governor would like to move towards such an improvement if he was bolstered or touched up by the proper source, Missouri and Kansas papers filled with flood conditions as you will have noticed.

My personal thanks to you for what you do and best wishes to yourself, wife, and the girl.

Young appears to have been seeking Truman's help in having the National Old Trails Road declared part of a strategic highway network that was under consideration as Congress debated what became the Defense Highway Act of 1941.

Truman replied on June 19:

Dear Bill,

It was certainly a pleasure to get a good letter from you dated June Fifteenth, and of course I am just as interested in the National Old Trails as I ever was. I am also interested in this military highway business.

I believe there is a good chance of our road being designated. You did the right thing in taking it up with the Governor of Kansas and the Kansas Highway Commission, because in the long run their decision will have a lot to do with what the Federal Government does.

You can rest assured that if there is an opportunity for me to put in a good word for our road I will be glad to do it. [Correspondence courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum]

### **Senator Truman's Crash**

Senator Truman was driving to Washington on U.S. 40, the former National Old Trails Road, on Sunday, March 27, 1938, with Bess and 14-year old Margaret. In Hagerstown, Maryland, Truman's car crashed into a car driven by Robert Potts of Hagerstown, then struck a telephone pole. Margaret described the incident in her biography of her father:

Our trips to and from Independence were quite an ordeal . . . . On this semiannual commute, we always went by car. My father did most of the driving, and this always made for interesting family discussions. My mother was convinced that he drove too fast, and she was absolutely right. I don't think Mother ever really saw any of the scenery between Missouri and the District of Columbia. She always had at least one eye on the speedometer.

Our route usually took us through Hagerstown, Maryland, and over the mountains to Cumberland. In 1938 we came to grief in Hagerstown, and another chapter in the history of Dad's unbreakable, unlosable glasses was written. It was a Sunday morning, and a

stop sign at a key intersection was obscured by a parked car. A man in another car plowed into us as we went through the intersection. Our car was completely wrecked. It was almost a miracle that we escaped alive. Dad had a cut on his forehead, and Mother had a badly wrenched neck. Sitting in the back, I escaped with nothing more than a bad fright.

As I was pulled out of the car window, I saw Dad's glasses on the floor, surrounded by upended suitcases – intact. He had flung them over his shoulder at the moment of impact.

First the police were inclined to give the Trumans a very hard time for missing the stop sign. But Dad pointed out that the stop sign was obscured by the parked car . . . . Dad called his secretary, Vic Messall, and he got dressed in record time and drove down to pick us up. We never did go back for the car. I guess it was towed to the nearest junk heap. [*Harry S. Truman*, pages 97-98]

*The Washington Post* reported:

The Senator received minor bruises when his head struck the windshield. Mrs. Truman and the daughter suffered severe shock.

According to police, Senator Truman's car passed through a boulevard stop sign and the other auto, driven by J. Robert Potts, of Hagerstown, skidded 40 feet before coming to a halt. No charges were placed against either driver although police obtained a writ of foreign attachment for \$90 on the Senator's car, pending further investigation. ["Truman Hurt In Auto Wreck At Hagerstown," *The Washington Post*, March 28, 1938, page X9]

According to *The Evening Star*, Truman's car was "virtually demolished" in the crash. At the application of Potts, Magistrate John Dunn "issued a foreign attachment for \$90 against the Senator's automobile." In other words, Truman paid Dobbs \$90 for the crash. ["Three Crashes Are Fatal to Two; Three Badly Hurt," *The Evening Star*, March 28, 1938; page 17]

### **The Last Road Trip**

Shortly after President Eisenhower took office in January 1953, citizen Harry S. Truman went to Union Station for the train ride home to Independence, Missouri. He shook hands with his Secret Service escort and said goodbye – in those days, former Presidents did not have government protection.

Back home, he bought a two-tone green Dodge coupe for himself and a four-door black Chrysler for Bess. In May 1953, he received an invitation to address the Reserve Officers Association in Philadelphia on June 26. As a former reserve officer, Truman decided to accept the invitation – and drive to the meeting to give the Chrysler "a real workout." He and Bess would visit friends in Washington before driving to Philadelphia; after the speech, they would drive to New York City, where Margaret lived, before driving home to Independence.

Not having driven the road for 8 years, he planned the trip carefully. “I took out the road map and figured the distance – exactly 1,050 miles from my garage door to the door of the Senate garage. I decided on the best places to stop over on the way, as I always used to do.” From Independence, they would take U.S. 24 to Hannibal, Missouri, on the Mississippi River. They switched to U.S. 36 to Indianapolis, where they visited friends. From Indianapolis, they took U.S. 40, the former National Old Trails Road to Washington.

As Matthew Algeo put it in his book on the trip:

He couldn't have been happier. “I like to take trips – any kind of trip,” he wrote. “They are about the only recreation I have besides reading.” [Algeo, page 35]

To convince Bess to go, Truman had to convince her they could travel without being recognized – and promise that he would obey the speed limits.

They left Independence on June 19, with 11 suitcases in the trunk and the back seat of the New Yorker:

As Independence faded in his rearview mirror, Harry Truman might have been the happiest man in Missouri, if not all forty-eight states. He loved to drive. Back when he was a county judge, he'd driven thousands of miles touring country courthouses from Colorado to New York before the construction of the new courthouse in Independence. When he ran for the Senate in 1934, he campaigned by car, crisscrossing the Show Me State in his shiny new Plymouth. He enjoyed it so much, he said he felt like he was on vacation. As a Senator, he drove thousands of miles investigating fraud and waste on military bases throughout the South and Midwest and, of course, he regularly drove between Independence and Washington. He always preferred the freedom of the road to the plush confines of a Pullman car. Even when he was president, he would occasionally take the wheel of his limo, much to the consternation of his Secret Service agents.

Driving not only satisfied his need to keep moving; it also helped him gauge the country's mood. “You have to get around and listen to what people are saying,” he said.

He fancied himself an excellent driver, naturally, but in reality, riding shotgun with Harry Truman could be a hair-raising adventure. As his longtime friend Mize Peter once told an interviewer, rather diplomatically, “I have driven with him when I was a little uneasy.”

By far his biggest vice was speed. Bess was right: Harry drove too fast. [Algeo, pages 40-41]

Margaret Truman, in her biography of her father, told about the start of the trip:

They weren't on the road more than an hour, when Mother asked, "What does the speedometer say?"

"Fifty-Five."

"Do you think I'm losing my eyesight? Slow down."

As they slowed down, other motorists passed them and quickly began recognizing the ex-President:

Soon they heard people shouting, "Hi, Harry – Hey, wasn't that Harry Truman? Where are you going, Harry?"

"Well," Dad said, "there goes our incognito – and I don't mean a part of the car."

Everywhere they stopped along their route, Dad was instantly recognized by motel owners or filling station attendants. Local reporters were notified, and police chiefs rushed to escort or guard them. The trip became almost as well publicized as a whistle-stop campaign.

Truman, on November 29, 1953, replied to a letter from an Army friend, Vic Housholder, by describing his trip:

Mrs. T and I thought we'd solved the problem when I bought a Chrysler car and we started for Washington. When we'd crossed the Missouri River at Waverly on highway 24 on our way to Hannibal, the "boss" said to me, "Isn't it good to be on our own again, doing as we please as we did in the old Senate days?" I said that I thought it was grand and that I hope we'd do as we pleased from that time on.

We stopped at Hannibal, Mo. for lunch at the junction of highways 61 & 36. Everything went well until a couple of old time County Judges, came in and saw me. They said, "Why there's Judge Truman" and then every waitress and all the customers had to shake hands and have autographs. We went on to Decatur, Ill and stopped for gas at a Shell station where I used to stop when I was a Senator. The old man kept looking at me as he filled up the gas tank and finally he asked me if I was Senator Truman. I admitted the charge and asked him if he could direct me to the good Motel in the town. We'd never stayed at one and we wanted to try it out and see if we liked it. Well he directed us but he told everybody in town about it. The Chief of Police got worried about us and sent two plain clothes men and four uniformed police to look after us.

They took us to dinner and escorted us out of town with a sigh of relief.

At Greenfield, Indiana, the State police had set up a roadblock to give traffic safety brochures to passing motorists, as Algeo explained:

The Trumans had passed through the roadblock unnoticed, but as they were pulling away, a state trooper named R. H. Reeves recognized them. Harry was done in by his fastidiousness. "It" – his car – "was so clean that my attention was attracted to it," Reeves said.

Reeves shouted for Truman to pull over. He did, and got out of the car. “What’re you selling here?” he asked the trooper. Reeves explained the traffic-safety program and asked the former president to pose for a picture to promote it.

“I’m running about two hours late, but I’ll take time for that,” Harry said. “I certainly endorse your program.”

As President, Truman had launched a major highway safety initiative, so it was an issue he fully endorsed. (For information on President Truman’s safety program, see “President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Federal Role in Highway Safety” and “A Moment in Time: President Harry S. Truman’s Highway Safety Crusade” in the General section of the Highway History page on this Website.)

While Bess sat and waited inside the sweltering Chrysler, Harry spent about twenty minutes at the roadblock, standing in his shirtsleeves, chatting and signing autographs. Then they were off again. [Algeo, pages 82-83]

Leaving Wheeling, West Virginia, Truman continued on U.S. 40 across the Allegheny Mountains in southwestern Pennsylvania:

Truman later said he was “impressed with the way the highway over the mountains had been improved from the old blacktop hairpin curves” that he had driven as a senator. [Algeo, page 96]

Driving through Frostburg, Maryland, Truman was flagged down by a passerby, Dr. Martin Rothstein:

Looking for a place to eat, Harry had just turned onto a side street when he saw a man in a suit waving him down. Bemused, he stopped the car . . . .

“I’m sorry, Mr. Truman,” Doc said a little sheepishly. “But you’re going the wrong way.”

“What do you mean?” Truman said.

“This is a one-way street,” Doc explained, “and you’re going the wrong way.”

Bess leaned across the front seat to the driver’s side window.

“He never listens to me,” she said to Rothstein. “I thought he was making a wrong turn.”

Truman asked about a place to eat and was directed to The Princess:

Truman was familiar with the Princess. He’d stopped there a couple times when he was a senator making the trip between Independence and Washington . . . . Harry and Bess sat in a booth near the front and ordered the Sunday supper special: roast chicken with

stuffing, lima beans, mashed potatoes, coleslaw, rice pudding, and coffee – for seventy cents.

The word was soon out that the former President was in Frostburg:

The Trumans did not enjoy a quiet repast. Children badgered Harry for his autograph. The adults weren't much better behaved, constantly interrupting the couple's lunch to shake hands.

Howard Ward, a reporter for the *Cumberland Evening Times*, observed the Trumans. "Through it all," Ward reported, "they remained gracious and were not annoyed":

"We lunched at Frostburg," Truman later recounted, "at the Princess Restaurant . . . . I had been there before, but in those days they didn't make such a fuss over me. I was just a senator then." [Algeo, pages 100-101]

That Sunday, June 21, the Trumans reached the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C. at 5:40 p.m. Margaret, who had arrived from New York, greeted them. [Algeo, page 111]

Truman took the train to Philadelphia on Friday, June 26, for his speech. He then took the train to New York City, where he met Bess and Margaret who had driven the Chrysler to the city.

McCullough, who described the trip in his biography of Truman, concluded his account with the following incident:

Heading home for Missouri, "perking along" on the Pennsylvania Turnpike, Truman was signaled to pull over by the police. According to what State Trooper Manly Stampler told reporters, "Mr. Truman" had twice cut in front of vehicles trying to pass him. "He was very nice about it and promised to be more careful." But according to Truman, who had never had a traffic violation, the young man had only wanted to shake hands.

It was his last venture with Bess on their own by automobile. Thereafter, they would go by train, plane, or ship. [McCullough, page 935]

They reached Washington, Pennsylvania, where the Trumans turned onto U.S. 40 for the ride home.

On July 7, they were in Richmond, Indiana, as recounted by Algeo:

On the morning of Tuesday, July 7, Ora Wilson, the sheriff of Wayne County, Indiana, got a call from a friend at the Ohio State Highway Patrol. His friend advised Wilson that Harry and Bess Truman were headed his way, and helpfully supplied a description of their vehicle and an ETA . . . .

Wilson called his son Lowell, one of his deputies, to help keep the Trumans safe and get a

picture with them while they were at it. With a *Palladium-Item* photographer in the car, the Sheriff and Deputy waited for the Trumans to drive into town:

Around noon, Ora and Lowell Wilson spotted the Trumans' Chrysler heading into Richmond on East Main Street. They pulled it over.

“Sheriff,” asked Harry with some exasperation, “what did I do wrong?”

“We just wanted to welcome you to Richmond,” said the elder Wilson, who added that it would be awfully nice if Harry and Bess would pose for a picture with him in front of the Madonna of the Trail statue. Harry had come to Richmond to help choose the site for the statue back in 1928, when he was president of the National Old Trails Road Association. He had been scheduled to return to Richmond later that year for the dedication of the statue, but, just a few days before the October 28 ceremony, he sent his regrets, saying he was “very busily engaged in politics” at the moment.

As Vice President, Truman had been scheduled to visit Richmond to address a soil conservation conference in Richmond on May 9, 1945, but his responsibilities after the death of President

Roosevelt on April 12 prevented him from making the trip:

So, by stopping in Richmond (albeit involuntarily), Harry was making good on unfilled obligations. The Wilsons escorted the Trumans to Glen Miller Park, where the *Palladium-Item* photographer snapped a picture of Ora, Harry, and Bess posing in front of the larger-than life Madonna . . . . Afterward, the Wilsons escorted the Trumans to the Leland Hotel in downtown Richmond, where Harry and Bess had lunch. [Algeo, pages 193, 197-198]

Harry remained on U.S. 40 through Indianapolis, where the Trumans again stayed with friends, and on to Independence, arriving home to 219 Delaware Street around 9 p.m. on July 8, 1953. They had driven 2,600 miles over the course of 19 days. They were recognized throughout the trip home. “Harry,” as Algeo commented, “never took another long car trip.” [Algeo, page 217]

### **Place in History**

The National Old Trails Road Association, founded in 1912, was one of the first of the major named trails, providing a template for the 250 or so named trails that came after it. The Lincoln Highway Association, established a year later, was better funded from motor vehicle industry executives and had stronger public relations elements – it was more famous in its day than the National Old Trails Road. Both, however, were among the most popular interstate roads during the named trails era.

The major named trail associations supported a Federal program – generally preferring Federal construction to a Federal-aid program with State construction – to improve the country’s roads, and, of course, they thought the money should be spent on their road. In the advocacy by private interests, they helped build the groundswell of support for what became the Federal-aid highway

program in 1916 and the revitalized Federal-aid highway program in 1921.

Judge J. M. Lowe, the first president of the National Old Trails Road Association, was a well-known national leader in the good roads movement, as well as an active fighter for his road in an era where funding had to be secured county-by-county and road-district-by-road district. At the time of his death in 1926, the National Old Trails Road was nearly as well-known as the Lincoln Highway and better known than any other named trail – even as it was about to be replaced by the U.S. numbered highway system. The road's importance is reflected in the fact that large portions of the National Old Trails Road were included in two of the best known of the U.S. numbered highways, namely U.S. 40 and U.S. 66.

Harry S. Truman, the second president of the association, was energized by the National Old Trails Road Association at a low point in his life. It gave him opportunities to enjoy several of the things he most liked to do, namely travel by car, meet people, and get things done. Even as he moved ahead in the political world of Missouri, he continued his work with the association.

Starting in Missouri, the Daughters of the American Revolution helped create the National Old Trails Road and continued to advocate for it well into the 1920s. Although the Madonna of the Trail monuments were not meant to mark the end of the National Old Trails Road, they served that purpose as it turned out. The name would continue to pop up in travel articles for many years, and the occasional restaurant or other facility named after it remained on the map.

But in the end, the National Old Trails Road represented a stage in the country's transportation history that had to pass out of the present and into memory – same as mountain men, covered wagons, stagecoaches, and the pony express – as the country moved on to the next stage that the National Old Trails Road Association had helped generate.

Historians and biographers research every detail of their subject. And yet, as noted earlier, they generally don't feel compelled to find out what the National Old Trails Road Association was or how it affected the country. Even in books about President Harry S. Truman, the topic is usually confined to a sentence or two, in passing, as if it were of little importance in his life, without accurately explaining what the road was or what he did for it.

Historians may not have believed the National Old Trails Road Association deserved much attention, but Harry S. Truman never forgot it, as reflected in his informal speeches during the whistlestop campaign tour. Former President Truman, in interviews with Merle Miller, discussed, briefly, how the National Old Trails Road Association helped him overcome his ill feelings about the battles between Kansas and Missouri stemming from the expansion of slavery in the mid-19th century. Truman told Miller:

But the bad feeling that these things cause dies a very slow death. I had to overcome some of that hatred when I was president of the National Old Trails Association, which has branches from Baltimore to Los Angeles, and I had to go over to Kansas on many occasions and got to know the people over there. And I found out that they didn't have horns and tails. They were the same kind of people as we have over here . . . . I've always felt that people were pretty much the same everywhere, but isn't it a pity that we

have to be *taught* that?

Miller, in his 1974 compilation of the interviews, provided this helpful footnote to explain what the National Old Trails Road Association was:

In 1925, after Mr. Truman's defeat in his second race for county judge, he needed a job; he was forty-one years old and, as he has said, "completely broke and without much prospect of being any other way." He first got a job selling memberships in the Kansas City Automobile Club and later became president of the National Old Trails Association, which involved traveling all over the country to promote the idea of building highways over the famous trails that had been so important in the various historical moves West. [Miller, Merle, *Plain Speaking: An Oral Biography of Harry S. Truman*, Tess Press, 2004, pages 65-66]

As usual, he didn't bother getting this one detail right.