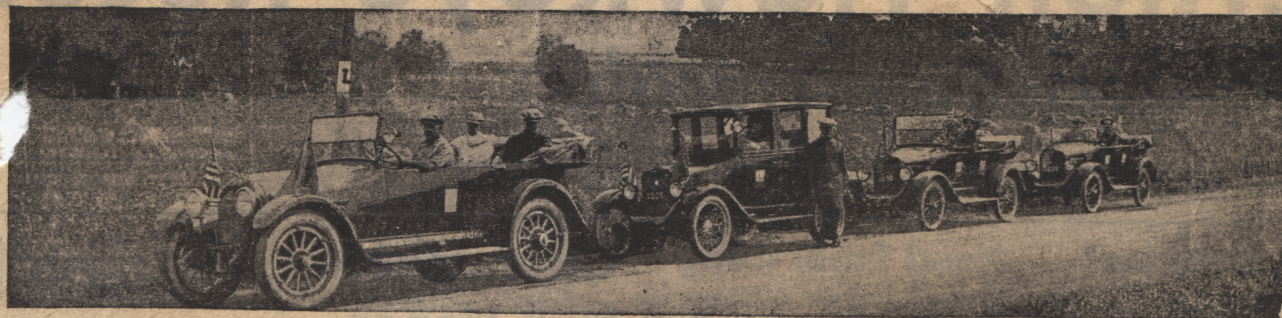


Merrily We Roll Along On The Old Lincoln Highway



Remember; when ?? Nothing was more festive on a fourth of July holiday, or a Sunday, or really most any day, than a little cruise in the gas buggy. You had dust in your eyes, wind in your hair, and maybe cigar smoke in your nostrils if you were in the back seat, but "autoing" was the big sport way back when!

National Highway Week was observed in the U.S. in May. At that time the Iowa Highway Commission information department sent out a story which contained considerable factual material about Iowa's first paved mile of the Lincoln Highway outside of city limits.

Present day residents may wonder what the old timers are talking about when they refer to the "seedling mile."

It is a mile of pavement 6 miles west of Mt. Vernon on old 30 from near the driveway to the Mrs. H. G. Caraway house, west to the point where the Marion road leads off, a point commonly called "the Midway."

Carl Fisher, the fire ball who built up the old Prest-O-Lite Co. before the days of the automobile storage battery and electric auto lights, and who conceived the plan for the Indianapolis Speedway, promoted the Lincoln Highway, the idea of a marked highway across the U.S.

A promotional plan was made of building "seedling miles" of concrete at various intervals along the Lincoln route across the nation, each of these units to be built six miles from some town, selected at random. Cement companies agreed to donate the cement. The idea was to promote building of other permanent roads to connect with the "seedling miles."

In the summer of 1918 the Linn county supervisors agreed to pay for building of the road with the cement which was donated.

Mike Ford Paving Co. of Cedar Rapids bid on the construction at over \$50,000 a mile and this bid was rejected. Later a price of \$2.84 per yard for a one course gravel and cement was accepted on Aug. 7, 1918.

Cement was shipped into Mt. Vernon and hauled for storage to barns along the mile to be paved. A steam shovel was brought in to help with the grading.

Harry Stoneking recalls the building of this seedling mile, which passes his residence.

Most of the work was done by hand as compared to use of the power machinery of today. The lunch cabin and tents for workers were located in the pasture back of the house at the Midway.

Material was shoveled into the mixer by hand and run out onto the road. A boiler was set up to power the pump which took water for the cement from a creek.

Concrete was poured on alternate days, as two days were required to haul enough material to operate the mixer for one day.

A snowstorm at Thanksgiving stopped the work until spring. This was unfortunate because construction was nearly done and a few more good days would have enabled the mile to be completed. Blame for the unfinished project was placed on Mr. Ford, who had poked along with the work at first, using only two trucks. Later a third was added.

The day the mile was opened to traffic, June 18, 1919, was greeted with fanfare and enthusiasm.

"The mile makes a splendid roadway," said a news story in the Mt. Vernon Record for that week.

The road from the Midway to Cedar Rapids was paved a year or two later. This was known as the Cedar Rapids "short cut."

Originally, the old Transcontinental route, predecessor of the Lincoln Highway, was routed through Marion to Cedar Rapids.

In an effort to retain this route through Marion business men bought land west of the Scott's Mill bridge over Big Creek to eliminate the steep hill towards what is now the Horace Hedges farm. However, Cedar Rapids got the route changed anyway, and the Marion men were stuck to pay for the land at boom prices.

Animosity stirred up over paving of the short cut to Cedar Rapids and the current effort to obtain the Linn County Court House, at that time located in Marion, resulted in delaying for several years other permanent road construction in Linn County.

In those days it was necessary to vote county road bonds for paving. Several Linn county bond issues were defeated. Finally the Cedar Rapids Chamber of Commerce, in desperation, agreed to have a county road committee appointed with only 3 of its 12 members to be from Cedar Rapids.

This committee drew up the road program which brought paved roads to Linn county.

It was not until 1925 that the six mile gap in the highway from the end of the seedling mile to Mt. Vernon was paved. The term "Lincoln Highway" was dropped later in favor of U. S. 30. Today this stretch between towns has become "Old 30".

The pavement in the seedling mile is still in use today, 43 years later. The 16 feet were widened a foot and 2 inches on each side in 1952 with concrete 9 inches thick. The entire roadway was then resurfaced with asphaltic concrete.

During the early days of paved roads, part of the cost, we believe 12½ per cent, was assessed to the abutting land. This naturally resulted in most land owners bitterly opposing permanent road construction.

"Why should they help pay for a highway for city folks to use?" they protested. This writer heard a property owner on the boulevard between Cedar Rapids and Marion say, "I can never afford an automobile because the pavement has cost so much."

Later on, the legislature recognized the unfairness of this plan and the law was changed. Money was appropriated by the legislature to refund the assessment paid by land owners on the first paving projects.

The method of special assessment is still followed on financing of city paving projects. In fact the heavy cost to individual property owners was an important factor in upholding the appeal in the Mechanicsville paving controversy.

Men well posted on municipal finance state as their opinion that this special assessment of paying for paving is not fair and some better plan should be devised.

U.S. 30 was rerouted from the Cedar-Linn county line to south of Cedar Rapids and the new highway was opened to the public in the fall of 1952.

A preliminary survey was made of this route in 1945 and field work was done in the late summer of 1950 so that plans could be completed. Such a project was first mentioned in Hawkeye columns in 1937.

The approach to the Cedar River bridge was graded late in the fall of 1951 so that equipment could be moved in to work on the bridge. Contract for the bridge was let in August 1951 to the Iowa Bridge Co. of Des Moines.

Contract for grading the new route was let to R. B. Burch Inc. of Cedar Rapids on Dec. 27, 1951, for \$538,288.29.

The paving contract was let to the Fred Carlson Construction Co. of Decorah on Aug. 11, 1953, for \$1,034,331.52. The work was completed and the new highway opened to use at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 10, 1953.

About the middle of that morning Mayor Art Kudart said he hadn't seen a truck go past his barber shop for an hour. Vehicles all tried out the new highway and life was quiet along Main Street. Those days are gone; now there is plenty of truck traffic through Mt. Vernon on Main Street and many, many commuters prefer "old" 30 to "new".

COLONISTS USED ENGLISH FOR PATTERN

American colonists were simply taking a page out of English history when they declared their independence on July 4, 1776. Many of the ideas contained in the Declaration of Independence had been used by the English to justify their own revolution of 1688, explains World Book Encyclopedia.

"The Glorious Revolution", as the English called it, sent James II fleeing to France and brought to the throne William and Mary.

The "self-evident truths" and "unalienable rights" noted in the Declaration, recall the "true, ancient, and indubitable rights" of the English document.