

THE NATIONAL ARROW



A Good Road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF
THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

September 2003

Number 4



WE ARE INCORPORATING!

The Yellowstone Trail Association will soon be a nonprofit corporation. The incorporation of the Association and the application for non-profit status is planned for early fall. This move is essential for the recognition and funding needed to getting the word out about the interesting history of the Trail and joys of traveling the old route in the age of impersonal Interstate highways.

We also see a formal organization as essential for recognition and inclusion in major programs such as the Scenic Byways program. A nonprofit organization can also apply for funding for major projects such as the production of tourism booklets showing the Trail in each state. Many recipients of this newsletter have asked that an organization be formed and a directory be issued so that members can acquaint themselves with others in their area.

The Association will have a set of officers and a Board of Directors. The Yellowstone Trail Association is looking for charter members beginning September 15. Join now and help set our course through an exciting future. Use the enclosed application form today.

INVITATION TO JOIN

Five purposes of the organization have been proposed: communication, promotion of heritage tourism, public education, historical research, and historical preservation.

There are five categories of membership with different activities but with the same ultimate goals.

Invitation for Individuals. Membership in the Association will provide a way for individuals interested in the Yellowstone Trail (and other named highways) to share that interest with others by communicating stories, news of related events, maps and descriptions of accessible parts of the Trail, and ideas. You will read about the Trail and share your own information in the *National Arrow*. If you would like to have an active role in the Association, consider becoming a "Trailman," and be its local representative just as in the days of the original Association.

Invitation for DMOs. Destination marketing organizations include convention and visitors' bureaus, chambers of commerce, tourism offices and related agencies. DMOs, working with the Association, are the primary means of promoting heritage travel along the Trail just as it was 90 years ago. Heritage tourism is the leading motivation for visitors to our towns along the Trail. Members will learn what other Trail DMO's are doing to promote heritage tourism in their areas. Opportunities for joint marketing efforts are plentiful: Begin with simple state or regional guides to "antiquing along the Trail" or "B and B's Along the Trail" and



This traditional Yellowstone Trail marker can now be found along the Trail in Hector, Minnesota. The rock and logo were painted by Lance Sorenson and placed on his corner lot. Nice work Lance!



Places mentioned in this issue.

work up to federal designation of state sections of the Trail as Scenic Byways. There are several opportunities for acquiring grants.

Invitation for nonprofit organizations. [Museums, libraries, historical societies, old auto clubs and similar.] One focus of the Yellowstone Trail Association is to learn about the local history of the Trail, advocate the preservation of sections of the Trail and of related buildings and artifacts, support public history efforts, encourage heritage tourism which includes visits to local and regional museums and historical attractions, and promote history-related events such as Trail Days and old car runs.

Museums, local or major, can parlay membership into good programs to integrate history of local involvement in the Trail and national history of transportation.

Invitation for small businesses along the Trail. Opportunities abound for joint promotions and guides. What ideas do you have? Something as simple as restaurant placemats to promote your business to travelers? Signs showing your support of the Trail? You will find others to help in such ideas. As a business member you will have permission to use logos provided by the Association.

Invitation for corporations. Corporations can consider two reasons for joining the Association. One is simply that the purposes of the nonprofit Association are worthy of support. Support of public history directly improves our culture. The second, which can be combined with the first, is that the Association can work with corporations, such as a motel chain, or a restaurant chain, to promote their business along the Trail and thus promote the Trail.

Join now and let your voice be heard as plans are implemented. ☺

RESEARCHING THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL

I have been researching the Trail for nearly two years now, and what an experience it has been! For every new piece of information there have been two disappointing dead ends. The purpose of this article is not to impart information about the many alignments of the trail through Idaho, but rather to list resources and methods I've used in my research. I will detail my experience with one section of the Trail as an example of how I have gone about my research and what resources I have used.

The writer, Tom Flanagan, is a science teacher at Gonzaga Preparatory School in Spokane, Washington. In this article he has captured a bit of the fun of re-discovering the Yellowstone Trail.

About two years ago, I was hiking down to the Mullan Tree at Fourth of July Pass, just east of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. This tree has always been along or near the Yellowstone Trail. Along the way, I came upon an historical sign stating that the path I was walking along was an old alignment of US Highway 10 (originally the Yellowstone Trail) and that motorists traveled through a tunnel, built in 1932. The sign also stated that the tunnel was bypassed in 1958 and removed in 1988-1989.

Relying on the dates on this historical sign, I began going through old newspapers at various libraries in the area. This is a time-consuming task, as there is no index usually for such papers. I spent many hours going through microfilm searching for articles in 1932 and 1958 and 1988 about the tunnel. I found that I had to also search one year before each date, as that was usually when information about planned and actual construction was reported. I did find articles, but often the information was wrong. The only way I knew that information was correct or wrong was by comparing the articles to similar articles in other local papers. What a task!

After gathering all the information from newspapers, I then headed over to the local State Department of Transportation. While they didn't have records back to 1932, they did have more recent maps related to realignment and reconstruction. This was gold! I actually could pinpoint the location of the tunnel and the maps also had earlier dates of realignments/grading/paving of many other sections of the Trail. This led me to other maps. Some were old highway maps I bought from collectors and some were old USGS and Metsker maps I found at local libraries and museums.

Still, I did not have a sense of that tunnel. So off I went to postcard collectors and eBay. I bought many postcards of the tunnel, which gave me a good idea of its location and what it looked like.

Finally, I talked to some locals in the area who remembered the tunnel. Such people are a wonderful resource, but often their memories are flawed. For example, one woman told me that the tunnel was blown up. Was that true? Is that how it was removed?

In the end, I talked to a man who worked for the National Forest in the area and he was there when the tunnel was removed. It was actually filled in, which means it is still there, buried near a current exit ramp of Interstate 90.

After all of this - signs, newspapers, maps, highway documents, personal recollections, and other sources - I am just about ready to write about the various locations of the Yellowstone Trail through North Idaho. But I've just discovered that a local museum has been given someone's home movies of journeys along the Yellowstone Trail...the search continues!☺



The tunnel in the 1940s

SOUTH MILWAUKEE, WIS. IS ALL "SIGNED UP"

Abstracted from an article by Nels Monson.

South Milwaukee is not just a southern part of Milwaukee. It is an independent town of 21,256 with a close connection to the Yellowstone Trail. There were still dirt roads in South Milwaukee when the Yellowstone Trail first came through town in 1915.

From 1915 to 1930 South Milwaukee was a well-known stopping point on one of America's first transcontinental auto routes, a 3,754-mile long amalgamation of roads known as the Yellowstone Trail. In the early 1900's, with automobile travel still in its infancy, there was no numbering system of roadways. Long distance routes were known by names instead. Standardized maps were non-existent at the time and these roads were identified by using colored markers to show the way. Hailed as being "A Good Road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound," the Yellowstone Trail began as a 25-mile stretch of road near Ipswich, South Dakota. In October 1912, J.W. Parmley formed the Yellowstone Trail Association, later headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota. By 1917 the Yellowstone Trail had grown to become the main auto route for those traveling from the East Coast to Yellowstone National Park and the Pacific Northwest. While the Association did not build roads, it did lobby local governments in towns along the Trail to help promote the fledgling automobile tourism industry by building and maintaining "good roads." Trail towns paid the Association a small fee or "assessment" to help cover advertising expenses and upkeep of the Trail.



South Milwaukee Mayor Dave Kieck (left) and "Trailman" Nels Monson

City leaders were quick to realize the importance of improving street conditions to meet the increased traffic demands. In South Milwaukee, drainage was improved and in 1917 the city purchased a new steamroller to help with road maintenance. Some streets were widened, and new gas-filled ornamental streetlights replaced the old magnetite arc lights along Milwaukee Avenue. Local "Trailmen" R.H. Knoll, Leo Joerg, or Charles Franke routinely appeared before the South Milwaukee Common Council. On May 21, 1921 the city paid its \$50 "assessment" to the Yellowstone Trail Association.

On September 4, 1920, South Milwaukee's newspaper, *The Journal*, reported the opening of a new, modern design Deep Rock filling station, noting that "Few cities have more through traffic of automobile tourists than ours."

In an effort to help deal with this influx of travelers, in March, 1921, the Wisconsin Highway Commission asked the city to establish a campground for "automobile tourists." That summer, the Grant Park Tourist Camp was opened. Due to its superb location near the wooded, path-lined bluffs of Lake Michigan, the free Tourist Camp soon became very popular with travelers. Park superintendent Frederick C. Wulff reported that 850 people stayed at the campground that first year. Attendance peaked in 1929 with 2,502 registered guests. Then came the Depression, and attendance began to dwindle.

Located across the street from the Railroad Depot, the Hotel Rogers was South Milwaukee's premier hotel during the Yellowstone Trail's heyday. Listed as South Milwaukee's "Tourists' Headquarters" in the 1927 city directory, the hotel cited "Special Attention Given to Auto Parties" in its advertisements.

Now seven Trail markers grace the route through the town, guiding tourists once again.☺

These two reports of Yellowstone Trail Days will appear in the magazine, *American Road*. Don't forget to subscribe and see the Yellowstone Trail in the perspective of all the old named roads. Visit www.mockturtlepress.com/americanroad.html

PLOVER, WISCONSIN GETS A TRAIL CABIN

The vintage cars were all shined up, the beer tent was up (root beer, that is), the old time musicians were fiddling away, and the historical society docents were attending their posts. Folks crammed into the one-room school building to see digital slide shows about the history of the Yellowstone Trail. June 14 was a first "Trail Day" for Plover, Wisconsin! Heritage Park is on the old Trail and is the site of several preserved historic buildings, including a newly acquired Yellowstone Trail cabin.

Picture courtesy Joe Koehler



Nine decades ago "Trail Days" were designated days when whole communities went out to help build the Yellowstone Trail and have picnics and camaraderie. No road work today, but lots of camaraderie and a bit of historical education.


The cabin was the last survivor of the Yellowstone Trail Hotel and Cabins establishment, popular with Trail tourists. The Hotel was built when the Trail was dying, 1930. Cabins could be rented for \$1.50 or \$2.50 a night. Improved cabins were added to the grounds into the 1940's. When the hotel was torn down in the 1970's, the cabins were dispersed. This last one lives again, preserved, and still on the Yellowstone Trail.

Heritage Park is just a couple of blocks from present county highway B, and old U.S.51. That was the route of the Trail about 1915-1918. Then the Trail moved north 9 miles to Stevens Point on what is now U.S.10. It was that site that the Yellowstone Hotel and Cabins occupied. So, that cabin simply moved from one Trail site to another.

Tom Barrett, Director of the Stevens Point Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, said, "We have wanted to place an annual event

that commemorates the Trail here in Portage County and the Yellowstone Trail Association Wisconsin Chapter agreed."

Portage County Historical Society, the Plover Business Association, and the Convention and Visitors Bureau hosted the event.

You shoulda been there! 



Picture courtesy Joe Koehler

YOU MISSED THE MUSEUM DEDICATION, YOU SAY?

There was bull riding, a famous country singer, 20 craft booths, a pie contest and there was a parade. And there were about 1300 people in the little town of Ipswich, SD celebrating "Trail Days" again, something they have done on and off for the past 90 years.

Ipswich is the home of Yellowstone Trail founder Joe Parmley. To publicize the Trail years ago, citizens of member towns along the 3800 mile Trail were asked by the Yellowstone Trail Association to get out on the same day and work on the road. Towns closed for the day and all participated, bringing shovels, teams and picnic baskets. Those were called "Trail Days."



Great-grandson Richard Parmley cutting ribbon.

Nowadays, only the social aspect is retained.

This year was special in Ipswich because Parmley's land office was unveiled as a museum dedicated to the founding of the Yellowstone Trail and to local history. The 103 year old building served as the first headquarters of the Trail Association and Parmley's land office. It has since served many purposes, most frequently as a bar.

Three generations of Parmleys gathered from four states to cut the ribbon on the new museum and share stories about their famous relative.

You missed it! 

THE NATIONAL ARROW

The National Arrow is designed in the tradition of *The Arrow*, the newsletter of the original Yellowstone Trail Association early in the 20th century. *The Arrow* was sent to members of the Yellowstone Trail Association. These members had paid dues to the Association to support its efforts to improve the highway and attract tourists to services along the route.

The National Arrow is published sporadically as time and resources permit.

You are receiving this newsletter to thank you if you are one of many people who helped ferret out information about the Trail or as an invitation to become part of the effort to rediscover the Yellowstone Trail.

The purposes of *The National Arrow* are to:

- promote the Yellowstone Trail and to increase knowledge about and interest in the Trail;
- provide a communication service among interested people;
- report events, government initiatives, grants, marketing efforts and plans related to the Trail;
- encourage and support tourism efforts and events along the Trail.

Questions, stories and news items about the historic Trail and current related activities may be directed to:

The Yellowstone Trail Association, John or Alice Ridge, 7000 South Shore Drive, Altoona, WI, 54720, **Phone** 715-834-5992

E-mail: arrow@yellowstonetrail.org

Web site response: www.yellowstonetrail.org

Questions or suggestions about the Yellowstone Trail Association, Inc. or about opportunities for DMOs may be directed to:

The Yellowstone Trail Association, Tom Barrett, 340 Division Street North, Stevens Point, WI 54481. **Phone:** 715-344-2556 or 800-236-4636 ext. 16

E-mail: tbarrett@spacvb.com ☺

AVAILABLE AGAIN AFTER 90 YEARS

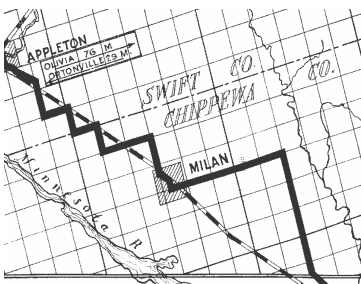
When the Yellowstone Trail Association was founded, it had the really long name of the Twin Cities-Aberdeen-Yellowstone Park Trail. In 1914, when the Trail Association was only two years old and still had that long name, Secretary O.T. Peterson and others decided that a publication of some sort was needed. Perhaps it was to legitimize the group as an organization; perhaps it was to forge together the membership by giving it a history.

Whatever their motives, the result was an interesting book, a conglomeration of promotional hype and "boosterism" by Trail towns, maps of the 1914 route, minutes of Association meetings (warts and all), and fascinating advertisements with pictures of hotels, cars, and towns. Imagine getting a hotel room for \$1.50 or \$2.50!

The old maps are gems of information. The book only covers the Trail as it was in 1914 - from St. Paul, Minnesota, to Three Forks, Montana, and Yellowstone Park. The maps are blow ups of small sections of the route. Therefore, one sees exact streets the Trail

took in big cities and the prevalent "stair step" mode of road-building in rural areas as it followed section lines.

The original 96-page books are very rare. One sold for \$500 recently on eBay. It was reproduced because it gives valuable insight into the early days of the Trail and also of the development of the West.



Jim Mowbray

THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL LOSES A TRAILMAN

Jim Mowbray of North Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, passed away in April after a short illness.

His was a unique relationship with the Trail for he owned the Yellowstone Garage on the Yellowstone Trail, now Minnesota Street, in North Fond du Lac. The garage was built in 1909 and was already standing when the Trail came to Wisconsin in 1915. The earliest pictures of it as a Yellowstone Garage date from the 1920's. Various owners ran the garage until Jim acquired it in 1949. Well after highway numbers were used and the Trail had faded nationally, he kept the name until he sold it in 1966.

In a delightful visit with Jim, he related many a tale about that garage. The best one was about the garage's furnace. It was an old klunker standing in the far corner. They burned drained auto oil in it, and an old car fan blew heat from it through the garage. (Where was OSHA?)

Jim had a great interest in the Trail and knew its route well in his town. He knew of business establishments that once stood on the Trail,



including a popular bar. He also had a concept of the Trail's national importance and was proud that his village had been on it. So proud, in fact, that he was a mover and shaker in a recent project. North Fond du Lac named a small park "Yellowstone Trail Park" at Jim's urging. This newsletter featured the story in last spring's issue.

Jim's son, Mark, is writing the history of the Yellowstone Garage and we will carry that news when the work is finished.

We will miss our Trailman, Jim Mowbray. ☺



\$29.95 plus \$3.00 P&H.
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Available from
Yellowstone Trail Publishers
7000 South Shore Drive
Altoona, WI 54720.