



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



## The Teapot is Restored

Written by Alice Ridge, adapted from American Road magazine, winter 2008

Nineteen miles southeast of Yakima, Washington, on the old Yellowstone Trail stood the Teapot Dome gas station, complete with red handle and spout. It was not inspired by the children's song, but rather by a political scandal involving oil, bribery, and a nefarious politician. It was built in 1922 and was moved to its final resting place in Zillah, Washington in 2009 and stands today in all of its glory in the beautiful **Teapot Dome Memorial Park**. The citizens of Zillah are to be congratulated for saving and restoring this bit of history on the Yellowstone Trail. But, first, hear the whole story.

### The Teapot Dome Scandal

In late 1921 President Warren Harding ordered the transfer of oil reserves controlled by the navy to the Department of the Interior. In early 1922 Secretary of the Interior, Albert Fall, leased three oil fields to private companies with no bids, in return for which Fall received personal "loans" from the contractors of about \$400,000 (worth more than \$4 million today) with little or no interest. One of the oil fields, in Wyoming, had a rock resembling a teapot on it so the name "Teapot Dome" quickly caught on as a catch phrase for the scandal.

Leases to private companies were legal in those days, but Fall's suspicious change in lifestyle was his undoing. The U.S. Senate investigated the affair and Fall was eventually indicted for conspiracy and accepting bribes. The Supreme Court ruled that the transfer of authority was illegal and Congress directed the President to cancel the leases. Finally, in 1929 Fall was sentenced to a year in prison and fined \$100,000. Henry Sinclair, owner of the company that "won" the Teapot Dome oil field contract was charged with contempt and received a shorter sentence. The Harding administration's legacy remains tainted to this day.

The scandal reverberated as strongly as it did all across the nation because it was widely reported and lasted seven years. It also was perceived to be a symbol of government corruption which shook Americans' confidence in national leadership during the "Roaring '20s."

### The Gas Station

Lyn Dasso, owner of the station in the 1990's, claims that the builder, Jack Ainsworth, thought up the idea for the 13 foot high satirical comment late one night in 1922 when he was drinking moonshine, playing cards and talking politics with cronies.



Teapot Gas Station in Zillah, WA

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Descriptions of the gas station often employ the term “architectural folly” to denote its construction as a roadside attraction popular in the 1920's and '30's. Other “follies” included, among hundreds of others, the “Big Duck” shaped building housing a poultry store on Long Island, New York, and the “Milk Bottle” dairy in Spokane, Washington. Because everyone knew of the Teapot Dome scandal, people made the connection immediately and the station became popular.

The circular frame building is sided with wood shingles, and has red asphalt shingles on the domed roof with a glass globe at the apex. It has a decorative sheet metal handle, and a concrete spout which served as a stovepipe for the wood-burning heater. There was an outhouse in the back.



**Teapot dedication rock - 2014**

For 55 years the station stood on the Yellowstone Trail (also known as the Inland Empire Highway and now as the Yakima Valley Highway). It was positioned at a prominent spot about 2.5 miles southeast of Zillah where the Yellowstone Trail turned abruptly east, near Granger. Then, in 1977, it was moved (outhouse, historic pumps and all) to make room for I-82. Another victim of the Interstate system, the Teapot was moved about a mile closer to Zillah but still on the Yellowstone Trail / Yakima Valley Highway.

When we visited it in 2001, the small interior contained 1926 pictures of the station along with the usual gas station sales items. Lace curtains graced the windows, a backdrop to several antique tea pots on display. The historic gas pumps were capped with metal covers as protection and they were joined by modern pumps. The final owner, Keith Strader, talked easily about his historic treasure. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. However, in March of 2004 he closed the station, saying “I’ve been putting money into it for three years and there’s a point where it has got to stop.”

We returned in 2006 and saw that this remnant of times past had escaped vandalism, but it was losing shingles and its boarded up front door cast a derelict look about it. The antique pumps were missing.

### The Yellowstone Trail and the Teapot Dome

When the Yellowstone Trail entered the state in 1915, it was routed from Spokane to Seattle along a southern or “scenic” route down the eastern edge of Washington, then west to Walla Walla, Pasco, Yakima, and then over the Cascades. The Yellowstone Trail Association claimed that it was the “better road,” going through the more populated area, avoiding the “hardships of the central route.” The “central route” was the Sunset Highway from Spokane through Wenatchee, over the primitive Blewett Pass, through Cle Elum and on to Seattle. One traveler described the Blewett Pass in 1922 as “nine miles up as crooked a road as ever was made and nine miles down just a little crookeder.”

So the trail was well known to Jack Ainsworth when he put his gas station on it in 1922. By 1924 the only roads paved with concrete east of the Cascades were those around Spokane and the Yellowstone Trail from Prosser to Yakima, right past the Teapot’s door.

By May of 1925 the dreaded Blewett Pass connecting Wenatchee with Ellensburg was improved. This improvement afforded a more direct route for the Yellowstone Trail from Spokane to Seattle, saving 133 miles. Coincidentally, the Wenatchee city fathers had recently presented a persuasive petition to the Trail Association. Apparently the Yellowstone Trail Association had to eat its past disclaimers of that “central route.”

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The Teapot Dome served trail customers from 1922 until the trail moved north in 1925. Jack Ainsworth could not have been happy about potentially losing his many Trail customers. The Trail Association reported that 93,000 “motor campers” camped along the trail in 1924 from Spokane to Seattle.

Another disappointed resident was famed photographer Asahel Curtis who owned an apple orchard in nearby Grandview, also on the Trail. The irony was that Curtis was vice president of the Association when it voted on the move. Although business at the Teapot undoubtedly slacked off when the trail moved north, the gas station obviously survived as it was reportedly the oldest continuously operating gas station in the nation - 82 years - when Strader closed it down.

The peripatetic icon moves again.

Ardele Steele, Associate City Planner, reported in 2008 that the City of Zillah bought the station for \$125,000 and is working with a group called Friends of the Teapot, and also local preservationists, grant writers, and the University of Washington to move and rehabilitate the station. The teapot is on the National Register of Historic Places.

And look at it today! Moved to 117 First Avenue (YT) and refurbished finally in 2012, it serves as a visitor’s center in the new **Teapot Dome Memorial Park** on the west side of town. There, you will also find modern restroom facilities, a picnic area, ample parking and access to a biking / hiking trail. It is a quiet and comfortable spot for a true icon of the city of Zillah and the Yellowstone Trail.



Visitors Center inside the Teapot - 2014

This station is a survivor! Having been crashed into by an errant driver, pushed out by an Interstate highway, and then starved out, it now will begin a new life of service - never leaving the Yellowstone Trail. Ψ

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*Dear reader,  
I do not know when the following story was written, but it appeared in the Bowdle, South Dakota, Centennial book (1886-1986) and it gives us a peek into a time long past on the Yellowstone Trail.*

*Alice Ridge*

## **WINTER STORM By Mrs. Joe [Marie] Herman**

The following is one of the many experiences we had living near the Yellowstone Trail, now known as Highway 12.

It was about fifty years ago and winter had been with us for several weeks -- deep snow covered the fields. It was Saturday, the day farm wives went to town to do their weekly shopping, sometimes accompanied by their husbands and children. Clouds were building up in the west. We decided to make a quick trip to Bowdle. We drove the Chevrolet touring car with side-curtains to the house and loaded the 10-gallon cream can and eggcase and were on our way. Our son Victor, about four, was with us.

The road was in very poor condition which interfered with the driving. Entering Bowdle we drove to the cream station and then delivered the eggcase to Gross Bros. Department Store.

I put in my grocery order and then went through the store picking up what I needed and buying a little gift for Victor, making him very happy. After visiting with other ladies for a short time we were ready to start home.

Continued



Driving out on the highway all went well until about three miles from home when we ran into heavy snowfall and a strong northwest wind. Visibility was zero. What made it possible to know we were near home was the dim view of the two red gate posts of our gateway to the farm yard.

Driving up to the house we immediately went to check the livestock. We returned to the house and Victor took a nap while we sat down to relax. Suddenly, there was a knock at the door. Opening it we found three men standing on the steps asking if they could come in from the storm. At that time we were using only two rooms of the house, the kitchen and bedroom, and kept the other rooms closed to conserve fuel.

Knocking continued until there were 17 men and one boy about 10 in the kitchen. The boy and his father lived in Minneapolis. An hour later, again there was a loud knocking. Four men stood in the doorway saying they were badly in need of help. They said two women were in a stalled car about a quarter of a mile from our home. One lady was very ill. Several men went to the barn and hitched a team to a small sled, one carrying a quilt that I gave him.

Before coming to our house the latest visitors had hung a red sweater on the woven wire fence near the women's stalled car as a marker. The sled was driven through a field along the fence to the marker. Two men climbed over the fence and wrapped the sick woman in the quilt. They carried her to the fence and lifted her into the arms of two men who laid her in the sled. They helped the other lady over the fence and she rode in the sled to our home.

When the sick lady was brought in, her companion and I removed her outer clothing and laid her on our bed. We did all we could to make her comfortable and hours later she fell asleep. The other lady laid down beside her to rest.

It was a long night. Some men sat on the floor, some stood and some took turns sitting on the four kitchen chairs. I had a large pot of coffee on the coal and wood burning stove and on the table I placed home-baked bread, butter and jam, sliced ham and canned sausage I had heated. They all helped themselves.

What a surprise when morning came! The wind had diminished and just a few snowflakes were falling. Some of the men went to dig out their cars and some went to the barn to help milk and feed cattle. When the boy, who had slept on the bedroom floor wrapped in a quilt, heard about milking he asked to go to the barn because he had never seen a cow milked. Later when the milk was separated in the kitchen, he just could not believe what he saw -- cream going into a utensil from one spout and skim milk from another spout going into a pail on the floor!

Later one of the men shoveled a path to the chicken house. The boy did not know where eggs came from and learned when he put his hand under a hen on a nest, he found eggs.

After the men left to dig out their cars I made breakfast for our family, the two ladies and the little boy. The sick lady had improved. Neighbors and people from town came with shovels to help, and with two of our teams the cars were pulled out. The stalled cars had come from both directions and men worked most of the day to get all of the cars out of the deep snow. I had food and coffee on hand all day for the snowbound travelers.

What a story the little boy must have had to tell his family and friends when he arrived home!

The help and shelter we gave our unexpected guests was greatly appreciated by them and our hearts were warmed by their expressions of gratitude and our opportunity to help so many. There was a feeling of emptiness in the house after all had departed. Ψ

## Three Trails West

Submitted by Dave Habura, our YT Northwest Correspondent

The Yellowstone Trail, The Oregon Trail, and the Lewis and Clark trail all pass through the Walla Walla / Waitsburg / Dayton area of southeastern Washington. The 40 or so miles along the Yellowstone Trail between just west of Walla Walla at the Whitman Mission to Dayton is chock full of important history and magnificent sites to visit and enjoy, not to mention splendid accommodations and gourmet meals. I spent a day and evening in the area in early May.



**Lewis & Clark Camp near Dayton WA**

Some of the most significant stories in western history have chapters written here, including the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1805-06 and the Whitman Massacre on the Oregon Trail. And the communities of Walla Walla, Waitsburg, and Dayton are filled with historical buildings from the 19<sup>th</sup> century all lined up along the Yellowstone Trail.

Dayton residents created an extraordinary outdoor display in life size at the Lewis and Clark camp site on Patit Creek, just east of the Trail on Petit Road outside Dayton. On May 2, 1806 the party camped here, and the steel figures scattered across the bottom land capture what might have been going on that day....all in life size and

with the actual natural setting as the stage. There is Sacajwea, Captain Lewis, Lt Clark, York, Seaman (Capt. Lewis's dog) , and all the rest of the expedition, each identified, doing the tasks they might have been doing at the site.

The sign at the site notes:

*In spring 1806, the Corps followed an ancient trail between the Columbia and Snake rivers traveled by American Indian tribes. The Corps started following this trail near the mouth of the Walla Walla River and then traveled along the Touchet River. After passing through the present-day vicinity of Prescott, Waitsburg, and Dayton and crossing the Touchet, they came to this little valley and camped along Patit Creek. This overland "shortcut" shaved many miles off their eastbound trek.*



**Lewis & Clark Camp near Dayton WA**

It is hard to impress this old roadie with a recreated scene, but this one left me in awe because it placed the participants in the real setting, not in a museum, or drawing. I was alone on the site and it was the same time of year they were passing this way. Special! A must see on the Yellowstone Trail.



**Oregon Trail in Washington**

The Yellowstone Trail also passes the site of the Whitman Massacre and the Whitman Mission. The site is evocative. The mission was started by Marcus and Narcissa Whitman in 1836 and served as an important station on the Oregon Trail. In 1847 the Cayuse attacked the mission, provoked by misunderstandings and by tensions generated by the increasing numbers of migrants along the trail.

The Whitmans and several others were killed and 50 were taken captive. The ensuing retaliation resulted in the demise of the Cayuse and the removal of Northwestern tribes to reservations.

Continued



It is hard not to be moved by the monument and graves of the Whitmans. The museum was closed by the time I arrived late in the afternoon at the site of the mission. The building sites and events are marked with signs and outlines on the ground. The route of the Oregon Trail through the mission grounds is well marked, and graced by a covered wagon.

In the late 1800's and into the time of our Yellowstone Trail, merchants and building owners often embellished their establishments with cast iron ornamentation that made plain brick structures appear quite lavish. While the most popular and widely used were produced by the Mesker foundries, just about any good sized town had a cast iron foundry and produced iron decorative and structural pieces. The Yellowstone Trail is a path leading to the door of many cast iron front buildings that were busy businesses serving locals and travelers on the Trail. I topped at four nice examples, including two hotels that served Trail travelers. The 1899 Baumeister building on Main Street in Walla Walla is a good example of cast iron fronts.



**Baumeister building in Walla Walla, WA**

One of the advantages of our heritage road trails like the Yellowstone is that they are blessed with heritage accommodations. Jacob Weinhard, a nephew of the famed brew master, built the Weinhard Hotel and bar in Dayton in 1890. It has been beautifully restored, and the historic Waitsburg Rail Station is just behind the hotel. I spent the night in a comfortable room at the hotel and enjoyed the authentic period ambiance. The Weinhard Cafe across the street has a gourmet dinner menu, and I enjoyed a locally sourced salad with fresh berries, and a halibut main dish with asparagus and wild rice.



**Weinhard Hotel in Dayton, WA**

I didn't attempt to explore the many sections of

the original Yellowstone Trail that were evident as I drove the modern paved US12. But I couldn't resist taking a photo of the Columbia School. Coming into Dayton from the south in 1919 the Trail followed Columbia School Road, turning left (north) at the school. The school, built in 1903, was a waymark in the 1919 Automobile Blue Book describing the route of the Trail in those days.



**Columbia School in Dayton, WA**

Modern-day travelers will find these and many more points of interest along this convergence of the "Three Trails". Ψ

## Jim Kershner's This Day in History

We thank Jim Kershner of the Spokane, Washington *Spokesman-Review* for selecting this item from 100 years ago to share with his readers. His interest in the history of travel and of the Yellowstone Trail is appreciated.

January 24, 2015

Jim Kershner's This Day in History

Jim Kershner Correspondent

The Spokesman-Review

From our archives, 100 years ago.

A campaign was underway to persuade tourists from the east to drive through Spokane over two highly publicized highway routes: The Northwest Trail and the Yellowstone Trail.

The Northwest Trail was an auto route from Chicago to Seattle, via Butte, Missoula and Spokane. The Yellowstone Trail was a route from St. Paul to Seattle, using many of the same roads, and it, too, went through Coeur d'Alene and Spokane. These "trails" were intended to make auto travel easier by using good signage and maps to mark out long-distance routes. The associations backing the routes also attempted to improve the roads and bring them up to a certain standard.

The Spokane Chamber of Commerce and the local Good Roads Association were working as part of an "organized campaign" to get the roads in shape by the summer tourist season. They also were assisting in the publicity campaign, which was necessary to persuade eastern drivers to even attempt what probably seemed like a daunting trek in the rickety autos of the day. The local associations were "working on the assumption that a great many visitors to the Panama Pacific Exposition (in San Francisco) will come from the east in touring auto parties." They hoped many would use these two northern routes to get to the coast.

A road near the north shore of Lake Coeur d'Alene still retains the name Yellowstone Trail. Ψ



### Historic Bridge of Plymouth, Indiana

Technology is wonderful (when it works). It has allowed us to learn from a blogger, called "Hoosier Reborn," that Plymouth, Indiana has five bridges over the Yellow River which winds around town. One of those bridges carried the Yellowstone Trail. Technology (Google) also allows us to see a map of the small town to ascertain for certain that the bridge was on the Trail. One can even get a view up close and personal with the bridge that "Hoosier Reborn" has described.

The blogger reports that the Michigan Road (YT) bridge was constructed between 1916 and 1917. It was built by Daniel Luten who patented his concrete bridge designs which made him famous. "The Luten Bridge is the Michigan Street bridge and was constructed in place of the early metal Michigan Road bridge, probably in keeping with the construction of the Yellowstone Trail following the alignment and bringing additional vehicular traffic across the bridge.

The bridge was renovated in the 1970s widening the deck and removing the historic handrails. This year (2008-09) the bridge was restored with handrails similar to the original design . . ."

Visit <http://hoosierhappenings.blogspot.com/2009/09/historic-bridges-of-plymouth.html>. Bridge number four in his report is the one of interest. Ψ



# Trail-O-Grams

It must be spring. Towns on the Yellowstone Trail are planning summer events to celebrate their area's history and the Yellowstone Trail.

## Yellowstone Trail Heritage Days in Hudson, Wisconsin



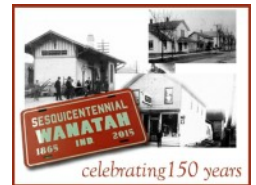
**Bruce Elliott and his "Jitney Bus"**

In celebration of the historic Yellowstone Trail the annual Yellowstone Trail Heritage Days is set for the weekend of **June 6 and 7** in Hudson, Wisconsin. The Yellowstone Trail was a historic transcontinental automobile route that ran from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound (1912-1930) and entered Wisconsin via the Hudson Toll Bridge. You can take on a drive along the historic Yellowstone Trail, marked with signs, at any time. Spot some local landmarks, explore the trail, and experience Wisconsin heritage.

This community celebration will highlight vintage vehicles and classic cars on display at Lakefront under the Hudson Arch on Saturday, June 7 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Guests can get a close up look at the vehicles and learn about the Yellowstone Trail. In the event of rain the Car Show will held on Sunday, June 7.

Join us on Saturday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. for a Non-profit Community Fair and connect with local organizations to see how they make a difference in your community. Several other activities are planned for the weekend. The schedule of events is available at <http://www.hudsonwi.org/events/yellowstone-trail-day> Ψ

**Wanatah, Indiana's Sesquicentennial June 12, 13, 14.** Features a beard growing contest (their growin' 'em already), historic Wanatah trivia contest, kids' fun run, old tyme demonstrations, and a parade. Mark your calendars and help spread the word. See Wanatah Sesquicentennial on Facebook. Ψ



Juanita Ketcham reports that **Hamlet, Indiana** will be holding their **Yellowstone Trail Fest August 15-16**, focusing on years 1912-1930 this year for the car show. They are searching for anyone with cars of that vintage to participate. Come on, readers! Surely there are some of you near Indiana who would love to show off your old buggy.

For more information, visit <http://www.yellowstonetrailfest.com/> Ψ

Things seem well in hand early for **Fremont, Wisconsin's Yellowstone Trail Festival August 21-23**. See <http://wolfriveroptimistclub.com/Yellowstone-Trail-Festival.php>

Activities already planned are: Wisconsin fish fry, street dance, food all 3 days, old car/truck/tractor/bike show- parade to follow, petting zoo, helicopter rides, outhouse races, pie contest, horse drawn carriage/wagon rides. We trust that some of those activities will happen on the Yellowstone Trail. After all, the Trail ran right down the main drag, Wolf River Drive. Ψ



Faithful readers might recall that **West Richland, Washington**, last fall was creating a Yellowstone Trail Park on an empty piece of land at Austin Drive (the YT). Here's the kicker: it is now a community garden with 42 raised beds for rent for \$10 for the entire season! The beds were built by the local Mormons as a community service. Most renters plan to plant veggies, but anything legal goes (except perennials). And to think this all happened on the Yellowstone Trail! Ψ

Trail-O-Grams Continued on next page



**Tia Kober** (left) and **Fritzi Idleman** (right) have been members of the Yellowstone Trail Association FOREVER. We have never met them, but we admire their loyalty. Now here they are featured on a popular travelogue series on Montana PBS! Who knew that they had secret lives in Park City, Montana as “Cake Ladies” who baked the best angel food cakes around.



**Carol Bernhardt**, long-time YTA member from Billings is also a “cake lady,” specializing in gorgeous wedding cakes. What is there about the Yellowstone Trail that makes ladies bake cakes? Ψ



**Fort Keogh Bridge Gone.** Yet another structure related to the Yellowstone Trail has disappeared. Just west of Miles City, Montana, is Fort Keogh, the site of the bridge over the Yellowstone River. The bridge was built in 1902 and carried the Yellowstone Trail. The Billings Gazette reported that “ice, heavy runoff and debris collaborated to collapse one of the bridge’s abutments, dooming the closed historic structure to the scrap heap.” It was demolished in 2012. Ψ

## “Interpretive Sign Fund” Created for the Yellowstone Trail

Over the years the Yellowstone Trail Association has helped several individuals or groups acquire an outdoor interpretive sign to display along the Trail in their area. The sign summarizes the history of the highway and gives graphic meaning to its route from “Puget Sound to Plymouth Rock.”

It has been used as an introduction to that historical route and an invitation to learn more about the Trail and the pleasures of traveling it today. Placed in front of a museum, it motivates the viewer to go in and ask questions. Along the Trail, it invites the reader to visit the Yellowstone Trail website.

The YT Association is establishing an “Interpretive Sign Fund” to help erect additional signs across the country. The cost of each is in the neighborhood of \$550 plus the costs of shipping and purchasing two 4x4 posts. Installation can be done by volunteers.

Your gifts to the not-for-profit Yellowstone Trail Association will provide needed assistance to local historical societies, museums, businesses, or individuals to erect and display the history and importance of the highway. The YT Association received a very generous unsolicited gift from a member from the State of Washington which provided most of the funding of the interpretive sign in front of the museum in Waterville, Washington. The remaining amount from that gift will be used as seed money for more signs.



Gifts of any amount can be sent to:

**Interpretive Sign Fund**  
Yellowstone Trail Association  
340 Division St. North  
Stevens Point, WI 54481

Suggestions about locating the sign would be most welcome, along with the identification of individuals or groups willing to take local responsibility for installation, installation costs and maintenance. Cost sharing by the recipients would be appreciated.

Thank you sincerely,  
John W. Ridge, President,

## ON THE TRAIL...with Mark

### Another Old “Named Road” or an imposter?

On a recent road trip I crossed the Mississippi River from LaCrosse, Wisconsin into LaCrescent, Minnesota. I was westbound on US Highway 14, one of our old main cross-country roads. Just after I was over the bridge, a sign caught my eye. It said “Welcome to Minnesota’s Historic Black and Yellow Trail”. At least that’s what I think it said, but traffic was heavy and there was no easy way to turn around, but I figured that there certainly would be another sign along the way. Nope, I never saw another one

OK, my question to you Arrow readers is this: Have you ever heard of it? Do you live near it or on it? Is it an imposter trying to use our colors for their gain? Can you send me a picture of the sign? Help us out here and write something up for our next Arrow. Ψ

### Open Forum is a success!

This past February, we sent an email to everyone on our database announcing that our YT Forum is no longer restricted to only YTA members. Quite a few folks responded and have either visited to read others’ posts and comments, or have signed up to post info and comments themselves. For example, are you aware that there were yellow painted “hoodoos” along the Yellowstone Trail? You would know that if you followed the Forum, and you would know lots of other neat stuff too. If you have not visited this informal, interesting and fun exchange of ideas, photos, and experiences, go there now, check it out, and bookmark it and visit it often.

Here’s the address: <http://yellowstonetrail.ipbhost.com/> Ψ

### New Software

You may have noticed that this *Arrow* arrived in your inbox via MailChimp. It’s a bulk-mail service and is free to us as a non-profit group. This is the first *Arrow* that I have sent using it. The learning curve was a bit steep for me, but I think I have it figured out, and I hope it’s working well on your end. This is also the first *Arrow* that was produced using a great software package called PagePlus. If you have noticed improvement in the layout and appearance, I am very pleased. If you have any suggestions or comments, please email me. Ψ

### Postcard Mailing Update

We told you in the last *Arrow* that we were mailing postcards to our “lost” YT friends. So far, we have sent out a bit over 500 cards and have been contacted by 80 formerly “lost friends”. It was well worth the cost and effort and we welcome them back. Ψ

### Write an Article, Please

It is somewhat a struggle to present a wide variety of interesting articles and news in each of these *Arrow* newsletters. If you can, please write something for us, whether it’s about a memorable road trip, a roadside attraction, YT news in your area, all are good. Send photos too. We hear from some of you but we always welcome new writers, even if you feel that your skills are not good enough, take a chance, and we’ll help. Ψ

Mark Mowbray, Executive Director [mmowbray@yellowstonetrail.org](mailto:mmowbray@yellowstonetrail.org)

## JOIN NOW - MEMBERSHIPS ARE DUE JUNE 1

JOIN THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL ASSOCIATION!	
Use this form and mail with a check OR Apply at <a href="http://www.yellowstonetrail.org">www.yellowstonetrail.org</a> and use either the online form with PayPal or the mail-in form with a check.	
<b>APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP</b>	Cut off and mail this form with your payment. OR apply online at <a href="http://www.yellowstonetrail.org">www.yellowstonetrail.org</a>
Name: _____	Send to: Treasurer Yellowstone Trail Association 340 Division Street North Stevens Point, WI 54481
Address: _____	<b>Membership category and annual dues:</b>
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____	___ Regular (Individual or small business) ----- \$15
An e-mail address is required because the <i>Arrow</i> newsletter is sent via email. If you need yours printed we'll make special arrangements.	___ Not for profit (museum, car club, historical) ----- \$25
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If this membership is for a business or organization:	
Organization: _____	Enter Amounts: Dues for 1 year (June -May) - \$ _____
Your Position: _____	Gifts are tax deductible. Dues for 2nd year - \$ _____ Same rate. Optional.
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	Total = \$ _____
VISIT <a href="http://WWW.YELLOWSTONE-TRAIL.ORG">WWW.YELLOWSTONE-TRAIL.ORG</a>	

## Contemplations about the Yellowstone Trail and its Precedents near Columbus, Montana

from John Ridge

A few months ago a YT Association member from Montana asked us for information that would enable her to correct local publications which reported that Columbus, Montana, started as a stage stop on the Yellowstone Trail. The Montana book of the WPA's Federal Writers' Project also makes that claim. That question (see 1, below) led us to several discussions including the problems of having an auto highway called a *trail*. Another publication she cited, a 1931 county commissioners' report, mentioned a need to abandon a section of the Yellowstone Trail. That raised a discussion of obtaining rights-of-way for the Yellowstone Trail (see 2, below.) Her last concern was about an error in the reporting of the location of the stage stop (see 3, below.) And finally, her questions led to a lot of thinking about the flow of events as Americans settled the West (see 4, below.)

1. Well, Columbus was founded in the late 1800s and the YT was founded in 1912. It certainly is at least misleading to say that Columbus started as a stage stop on the YT! Our conclusion is that this is primarily a problem of carelessness of language use, a problem nagging many a discussion. Answer: a) there was a road, (no doubt created by use and not engineered) upon which the stage was routed in the late 1800s. Other wagon roads came into use and some roads were improved enough (that means they were at least graded) to allow use by the new-fangled autos. Those improvements were probably made by the township or county. When the Yellowstone Trail Association decided to route the YT through the area they, with the guidance of local members, simply chose the best combination of roads they could find. They didn't build a new road. The language problem is simply that when we refer to the "stage road" or to the "Yellowstone Trail," we are not clear as to whether the road or route is the referent. We can assume or hope that the statement that "Columbus began as a stage stop on the YT" was meant as "Columbus began as a stage stop on the section of the road that was later called the YT." Having a stage stop on the Yellowstone Trail is a bit like having people chased by dinosaurs.

One other explanation was that the road was called the Yellowstone trail in the 1800s because it lead to Yellowstone National Park – along the Yellowstone River. This explanation would have more merit, it seems to me, if the stage road had not been recorded (as shown on the map) as *Billings and Bozeman Stage Rd*, in part, and *Road to Tongue River* in another part.

2. According to a document sent to us by our Montana correspondent, the 1931 county commissioners wanted to abandon the right-of-way of the Old Yellowstone Trail between two specified points. There is no doubt that the YT Association had no involvement with right-of-way questions. The Association just established a route on whatever road was available. We might note that the stagecoach route was established before the area was surveyed, and seems to have used a road of their own creation, probably on public land, probably without the grant of a right-of-way by the county. With the survey of the West, of course, came standards of road placement and governments to record ownerships and rights-of-way.

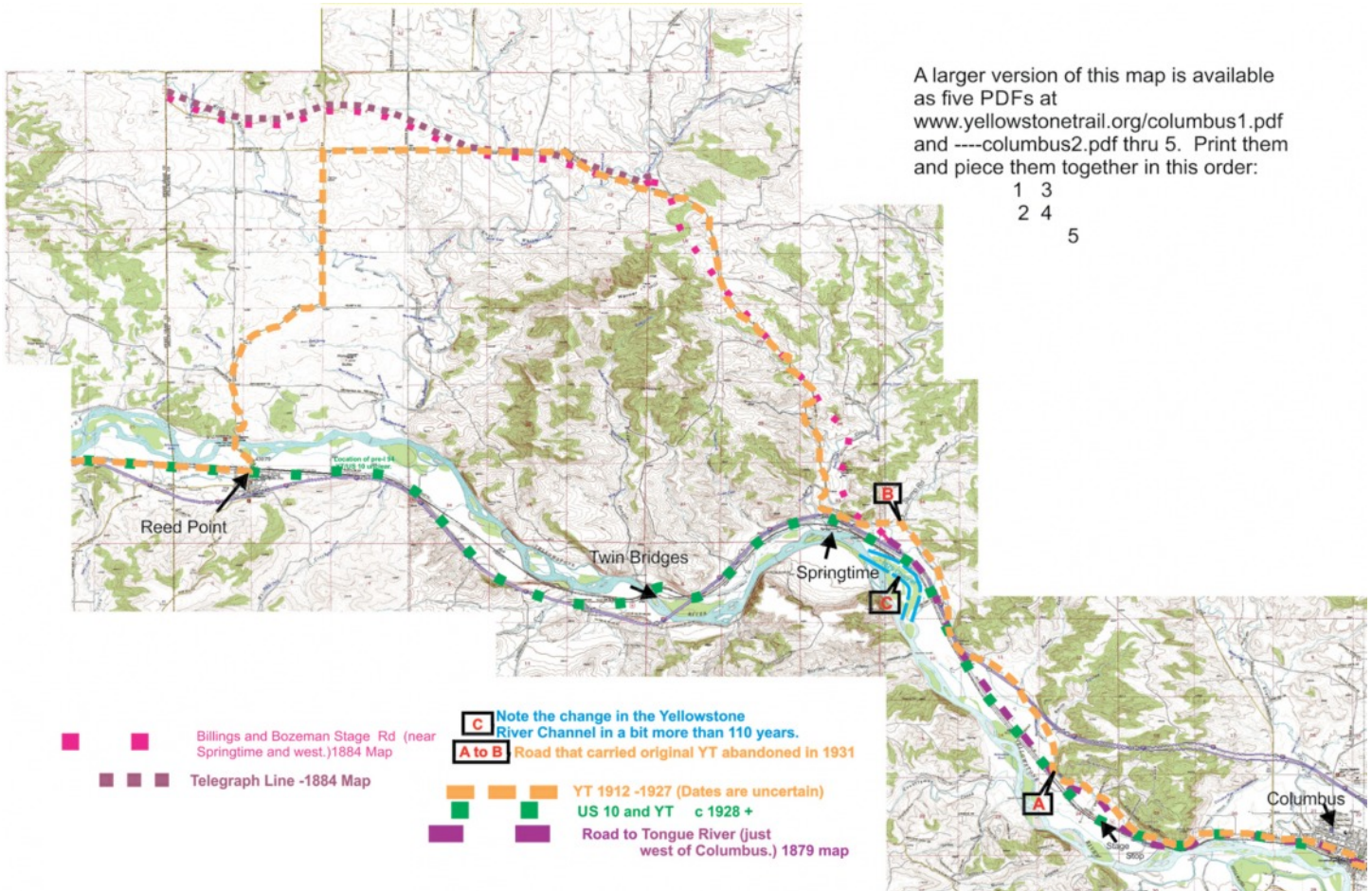
The referenced abandonment seems to be the road between points A and B on the map. Modern maps show no road there, but irrigation ditches were there, and, in places, I-94 is seen to have hidden the old road. Keep in mind that that road was probably graded dirt which would quickly fully recede to nature.

3. We can be of no help in determining the correct location of the referenced stage stop. Our correspondent seems to have that nailed. The ranch at location S on the map is known as Stage Stop Ranch. Seems like a good location for a YT interpretive sign?

4. The area of Columbus records a great deal of transportation history. I assume that wagons were the first to haul settlers' goods into the area. We have solid evidence of the stagecoach route established before 1879. And in 1884, a telegraph line along parts of the stage road is clearly evident. The map refers to the 1879 and 1884 sections of the stage road; those dates are dates of the map. The date of beginning of the road were not found by me. The Northern Pacific Railroad seems to have appeared c. 1882-3. This needs confirmation. The YT found a route through the area in 1913, presumably located as marked on the map.

Continued





Highway route US 10 was designated in 1926, but probably instituted in 1927. The US 10 bridge (one of the Twin Bridges a few miles southwest of Springtime) was built at just about that time, so I do not know if US 10 was ever routed on the northern road from Springtime to Reed Point along with the existing YT route. Moreover, information from Jon Axline of the Montana Department of Transportation, states that state money was dedicated in 1930 for building that bridge, whereas the state map and gasoline maps show the southern Twin Bridge route being used in 1928 and 1929. We need a research volunteer here!

We do know that the route of US 10 west of Columbus did not quite follow the original YT. Assuming the road used in that area by US 10 was new when the Twin Bridge was built, the YT would have followed that re-alignment from c. 1928 on. Another little research project!

Another enigma: In that same area, the old Road to Tongue River followed an alignment that was very close to the alignment followed later by the railroad. US 10 followed the railroad closely. Why, then, did the YT use a road that in most places is back further from the river?

An unrelated observation: the 1897 channel of the Yellowstone river differs a great deal in the indicated area with the channel on the 2009 base map.

More questions than answers. Maybe a Columbus high school student or class or the nice local history museum might take these history questions on as a project? Ψ

**DON'T FORGET, MEMBERSHIPS ARE DUE JUNE 1.**

**PAY ONLINE AT [http://www.yellowstonetrail.org/mem\\_appl\\_online.htm](http://www.yellowstonetrail.org/mem_appl_online.htm)**