



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



Traversing Wenas Road in a Toyota Prius

By Curt Cunningham, Washington State Correspondent
 photos and map by author

Exploring the Yellowstone Trail is a fun and enjoyable experience. Along the way there are plenty of places to refuel the car, spend the night or get a bite to eat. But there are some parts on the old trail where you should have a few days worth of food, a full tank of gas, and a four wheel drive vehicle; Wenas Road is one of those.



Before it became a part of the Yellowstone Trail in 1915, Wenas Road as it is known today was originally called the Shushuskin Road, named for an Upper Yakama man who lived at the north end. The road starts in Ellensburg, Washington, then south over Ellensburg Pass to Yakima, Washington. Shushuskin Road was built in the late 1870's as part of the Dalles, Oregon - Ellensburg, Washington Stage Road that carried people, mail and freight over the 150 mile route. This route was arduous enough to cause one stagecoach driver to conclude, "There is no hell in the hereafter; it lies between The Dalles and Ellensburg."

In 1913 Shushuskin Road became a part of the Inland Empire Highway and improvements were made to make it passable for automobiles. It has been in continuous use ever since. The road was a state highway for only 13 years, replaced by the opening of a shorter and flatter route through the Yakima River canyon in 1925. This was the same year that the Yellowstone Trail was changed to the northern route over Blewett Pass.

I have never driven the Wenas Road section of the Yellowstone Trail. Since it is almost 20 miles of dirt road and nothing but sagebrush for the entire drive, it wasn't something I was eager to take. It is one of those bucket list drives that you have to do at least once in your lifetime. Today is that time. I thought what could happen? We can just turn around and go back if it gets bad. If we get stuck we could camp out until someone comes by and helps us. Camping is fun isn't it? Don't think that would go over well with my wife. I didn't say a word to her of that possibility. If she knew that, she wouldn't have gotten in the car.

Morning came and we started off for Ellensburg. It was going to be a great day as it was nothing but sunny skies. It seemed kind of strange as it usually rains everyday in March. After we left the house we saw a bald eagle having breakfast in the neighbor's yard. We have never seen an eagle around here before. It was a good sign. In the end I realized I interpreted the sign wrong. The eagle represented the road and his breakfast was us. As we arrived in Ellensburg I was able to see Umtanum Ridge and Manastash Ridge in the distance and could see no snow on them. Wenas Rd crosses over Ellensburg Pass between these two ridges. We had a lot of snow this year and I wasn't sure if it all had melted yet. This road is miles from anything and there isn't any way to find out if the road was even passable this time of year. This gave me relief knowing that snow wouldn't be a problem crossing over the summit.

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The dirt road begins about 4 miles south of Ellensburg. When we first came upon it I let out a sigh of relief because the road was in excellent condition. It was damp so there was no dust and the road was very smooth. After a few miles we began the climb up the hill to the plateau. Once on the plateau we could see for miles as there are no trees to block the view. The rolling hills and endless sagebrush make for a picturesque landscape. The only sign of civilization was an old abandoned farmhouse. This area is so desolate with little vegetation, so I can see why nobody lives out here.



Heading down the road we both looked at each other and said that this drive should be a piece of cake. I didn't hear the road laughing at us. We just continued on driving and enjoying the view. After a few miles we came upon a sign that read, "Rough road for the next 9.4 miles". I took a gulp and looked at my wife and said, "Do you want to continue or turn around?" She told me she had no problem with us continuing. I was happy we were going to continue and I reassured her that it should be OK, really it should.



As we started up the hill toward the summit, I was thinking "this isn't so bad". The road had narrowed and it was beginning to get rough but otherwise it was good. It wasn't long before we made it to the summit of the pass. We figured we could make it the rest of the way.

Going downhill was a different story. When we started down we noticed that the road became even narrower and very rough. The road was still passable but I started to worry that we might get stuck.

A Toyota Prius Hybrid isn't the best off road vehicle. I didn't think it was going to be as bad as I made it out to be. It wasn't long before we came upon the first washout. We stopped and got out to take a look. It looked like the stream had taken the road with it as it raged downhill during the snow melt. This part of the road follows a stream down a narrow gulch. The good news is that it had been repaired. But the bad news is that the stream was still running over the road. Even more bad news is that the repair didn't look like they intended a Prius or any other non-4 wheel drive vehicle to use this road.

I convinced my wife that the road should be OK after this washout and if we make it through I will take her out to a nice dinner. She reluctantly agreed, so it was onward. We forded the stream without any problems. Thankfully the stream was shallow. I had to make sure I didn't get the car in the deep ruts as we probably would get high centered. I was able to avoid getting stuck and we made it across.

As we started down the road again I noticed the road wasn't getting any better. I was starting to wonder if this trip was a good idea. I didn't let on to my wife what I was thinking. We just continued to slowly move forward. It was about a mile and we came upon another washout. This one was as bad, or worse, than the last. My wife was by now was not a happy camper. She decided to get out and walk in front of the car to make sure I didn't get stuck. She was walking faster than I could maneuver the ruts. Once we cleared that washout the road seemed to be improving. It wasn't long after that when we came to another stream to ford. It was just one obstacle after another. We crossed the stream with no problems. Our luck was due to the fact that there was no mud.



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The road began to improve and we were starting to enjoy the drive again. Since we started on this journey we hadn't seen another car on this road. We had driven for what seemed like hours while wondering when we would see civilization again. Finally we saw some homesteads. We should be home free.

Not so fast. About a mile or so further there was another washout. Our relief began to fade. Here we go again. This washout wasn't as bad as the last ones and we were able to navigate it without trouble. By now we started to wonder how much farther we had to go. We didn't know where we were or how far we'd come. All we were thinking now is when will this end?

It wasn't long after that when we finally hit pavement again. Boy, you should have seen the smiles on our faces.

We survived the Wenas Road. Ψ



(More of Curt's great stories and photos can be found at <http://www.sunset-hwy.com/>)

Traveling the Yellowstone Trail in 1919

Ed. Note: Several years ago, 96-year-old Myrtle Nye was interviewed about a camping trip her family took from Indiana to South Dakota along the Yellowstone Trail in 1919. Myrtle was nine at the time and kept a diary of the trip. Her tale is told here by the interviewer, Karin Rettinger of the Marshall County Historical Society Museum, Plymouth, Indiana. Read the last line. Apparently the Yellowstone Trail had poorer roads than those across Illinois and Indiana.]

As a girl living in Inwood, very near Plymouth, Myrtle was familiar with the Trail which was marked by stones that were painted yellow. In October, Annon and Edna packed up their two surviving children, Myrtle and Roy, (the youngest girl had died of Spanish Flu in the spring) into their new Studebaker and hit the Trail from Indiana for Ludlow, South Dakota. Supplies were packed into a trunk which sat on the floor.

Myrtle says this was a time when there was extra room on the floor of the back seat. The family took along a stove for cooking and for heating the tent. Several nights out the stove quit, taking away the heat for the tent and hot meals. They camped at Valparaiso, Chicago, Racine and reached Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin on their eighth night out where Myrtle saw her first waterfall and buffalo. They paid 40 cents to cross the St. Croix River on a ferry into Minnesota. Sunday, Oct 13, their 12th day of travel, they arrived at Ludlow to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, sheep ranchers with 3,000 head.

A small journal kept by Mrs. Nye recounts the daily progress of the family. The poor condition of the road (trail) severely slowed the travel. Immediately upon arriving at the Johnson's home the rainy, snowy weather that had punctuated their trip and slowed it when the car got stuck, worsened. A thick snow fell that stranded them with the Johnsons for three weeks. They were housebound with their hosts. The snow not only made travel impossible due to its depth, but the roads were indistinguishable from the fields, rendering travel quite treacherous.

When the weather cleared and the roads became visible, a local party was held to wish the travelers well on the next leg of their journey. From Ludlow they turned south to Iowa and Nebraska. Their destination was the Charles Anderson home in Vail. On the way, they encountered roads of packed "gumbo" a sticky, gummy soil that caked up under the fenders until the tires could not rotate.

Just before the family was to return to Indiana, the starter went out on the new car and the family was running short on funds. Annon bought train tickets for his wife and Myrtle and sent them home to Plymouth via Chicago. Myrtle says she and her mother arrived on Monday before Thanksgiving.

Once home, Myrtle's mother wired money back to Nebraska for Mr. Nye to pay for the car repairs. By Wednesday afternoon Mr. Nye and Roy pulled into the family home. The trip that took 12 days going out, took just two to get back home across Illinois and Indiana on the better roads. Ψ

The Yellowstone Trail Through Paradise Valley, Montana

By Alice and John Ridge, Editors Emeritus
Adapted from their *American Road* article,
Spring 2009

It's almost summer and we believe that some of our *Arrow* readers may be planning a road trip. Perhaps you are going to Yellowstone National Park. If you are planning to enter the park through the north entrance, south of Livingston, Montana, we present here an itinerary to get you there along the Yellowstone Trail for a change of pace. We wrote this as a mile-by-mile guide, so set your odometer to M-0.0 and enjoy the trip.

(note: **M** denotes mile)

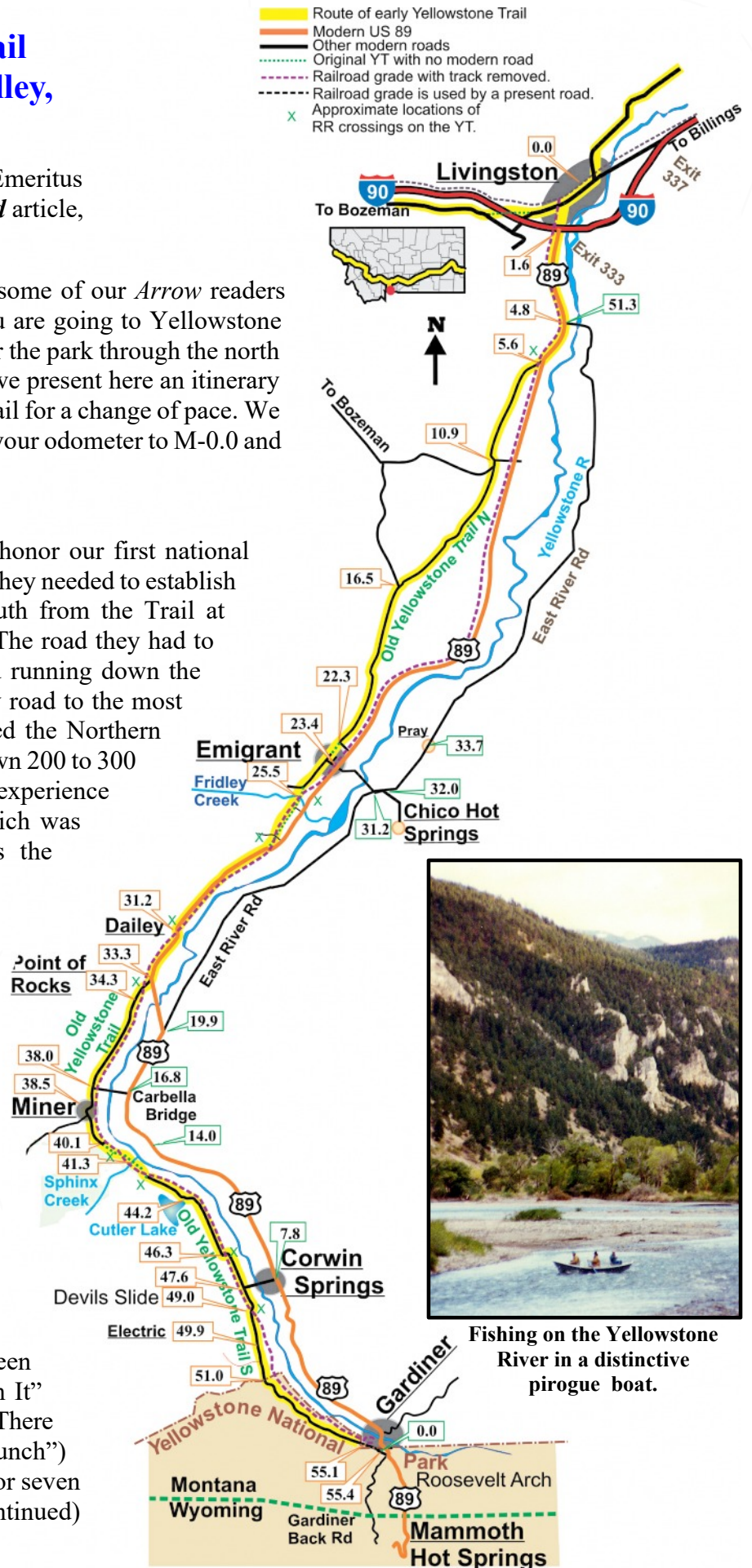
The Trail was named "Yellowstone" to honor our first national park and to usher travelers to it. To do so, they needed to establish a "splendid lateral," a spur, running south from the Trail at Livingston to the park's north entrance. The road they had to choose in 1915 was a crude wagon road running down the west side of the river, but it was the only road to the most popular entrance to the park. It shadowed the Northern Pacific Park Branch RR line; it looked down 200 to 300 feet in places to the river. Today you can experience much of the same thrill of this road which was afforded those early travelers - minus the gumbo, the ruts, and the danger.

Over the years both the YT and US 89 were routed, like braided strands of hair, on alternative sides or the same side of the Yellowstone River. This itinerary follows the original YT route south. We suggest that you access Google Earth for a wonderful picture of Paradise Valley. You can clearly see the old YT, and the old railway grade used in places by the modern road now called Old Yellowstone Trail.

First, a Visit to Livingston

Livingston. Many a western film has been shot in the area: "A River Runs Through It" and "The Horse Whisperer," for example. There is even a Sam Peckinpah ("The Wild Bunch") Suite in the Murray Hotel, his residence for seven years.

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Hang around the small restaurants and you may see Peter Fonda. You'll notice the lack of chain stores and restaurants. The town has retained its western, homey look without selling out to its reputation as a "film capital." Whole blocks are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and 430 buildings qualify. Jimmy Buffet's song "Livingston Saturday Nights" reflects a view of the small town in the early 1970's.



1930s Yellowstone bus at depot

Stop at two museums before you depart on this itinerary. **The Depot Museum Center**, 200 W. Park St., is in the stunning, refurbished Italianate 1902 former Northern Pacific depot, donated to Livingston in 1985 by the Burlington Northern. It holds much railroad history in a pleasant setting.

The **Yellowstone Gateway Museum of Park County**, 118 West Chinook St. is the starting point of this itinerary. It is home to an extensive collection of artifacts and exhibits featuring Yellowstone Park, railroad, and Old West history, plus geologic history. Especially see the "Tally-Ho" stage coach which transported Yellowstone Park visitors before 1915 when private autos were finally admitted to the Park; see the only surviving tent of the many used by the Yellowstone Trail Association as portable travel bureaus in the 1920s.

M-0.0 Yellowstone Gateway Museum. We begin our tour here. Leaving the museum, go south on Chinook St., turn left on 5th St., and right onto W Park St. Follow it for about 1 1/2 mi.

M-1.6 Cross Business I-90 and follow US 89 (S). Campers might note the friendly Rock Canyon RV Park, which is right on the Yellowstone River.

M-4.8 Avoid the East River Rd. It leads to the east side of the Yellowstone River over Carter's Bridge. Continue on US 89 on the shelf between the base of Wineglass (Canyon) Mountain and the Yellowstone River.

M-5.6 Turn onto Old Yellowstone Trail North on the west side of the road. This is a tricky turn. Watch carefully for the small street sign. You are now on the original route of the YT. This and many other parts of the YT you will follow remain in relatively original condition because the main route was moved to the east side of the river in the late 1920s.

M-16.5 Do not follow Trail Creek Road, an easy-to-drive scenic back road to Bozeman.

M-22.3 Join US Hwy 89 S. Yellowstone Trail is blocked to the south by the Park Branch Canal (irrigation.) We must follow US-89 which has overlain much of both the old YT and the RR grade.

M-23.4 Emigrant. Gold was discovered near here in the shadow of Emigrant Peak in 1864, flooding the valley with hopeful miners and tent villages. The Old Saloon, built in 1902, was closed for about 30 years of the past century but today it is a popular watering hole still with the Old West atmosphere of dark, cool, wood interior. Unfortunately, it is for sale. Great hamburgers. The old Yellowstone Trail ran more or less parallel to US 89 through Emigrant. It can be explored along Story Rd for a mile south until it is blocked by private land and, likewise, for a few blocks north along Counts Ln.



Old Saloon in Emigrant, Montana

M-25.5 Continue south from Emigrant on US 89 to Fridley Creek. Just south of Fridley Creek is a driveway to the west. About 400 feet in is the hard-to-discern YT and then the RR grade. Park here, but remember that much of the area is private property. Walk another 400 feet north to find an original but overgrown small concrete YT bridge and a bigger RR bridge with a much faded old YT marker: a yellow swatch with a hand-drawn black arrow. Use the picnic table for lunch and contemplate the history, but be tidy.

We will continue to follow the Old Yellowstone Trail on US 89.

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M-33.3 US-89 splits off and leads to Gardiner on the east side. Stay on the Yellowstone Trail for 1 more mile.

M-34.3 The YT crosses **the Point of Rocks**. Have your camera ready for the view of the river, the RR, the road and the mountains.

M-38.0 The Tom Miner Creek Road to the east crosses the Yellowstone River over the Carbella Bridge. Don't turn.

M-38.6 1909 stone house on west side of road.

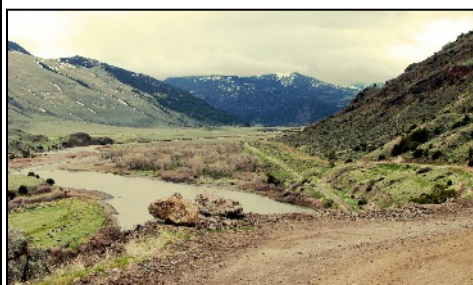
M-40.1 About 2 miles past the Carbella Bridge we enter **Yankee Jim Canyon**, named for James George, one of the most memorable

characters in Paradise Valley. George arrived in the valley from the East in 1873, hence the name "Yankee." Yankee Jim took over a crude wagon road, built a way station and charged a toll, a common procedure in those days. Tolls ranged from 5¢ a head for horse or cattle to \$2.50 for wagon and team. The toll gate stood between his house and barn at the south end of the canyon and effectively stopped traffic to and from the park.

Jim was a wiry mountain man with a full, white beard. This colorful prevaricator was an entertaining companion at any bar (as long as you were buying the double shots for 25¢). This life-long liar regularly gave outrageous, contradictory "facts" about his life, many involving attacks of wild animals. One of the oft-quoted whopper tales has Jim claiming that President Teddy Roosevelt asked Jim to meet him at Gardiner when he visited the park in 1903, but that Jim just scoffed, "If the president wants to see me, he knows where I live." In 1914 when the automobile was making its presence known, the road from Point of Rocks and through Yankee Jim Canyon was improved greatly by 40 convicts from the state prison at Deer Lodge. They blasted a lower road, widened seven miles of Yankee Jim's crude work, and generally relocated the road closer to the river. This wider, improved road was the route of the Yellowstone Trail from about 1913 into the 1920's.



Fridley Creek Bridge



Yellowstone River, Railroad, and YT

The road you must follow turns left here, but before you do, park and explore on foot the YT which continues straight on. It is a scenic, interesting walk. Just a few years ago we were able to drive our Jeep on the original route, albeit with fear and trembling, and emerge at **M-41.1**. Imagine the Model T and the touring car negotiating through here. And keep your eyes open for rock retaining walls built by those prisoners. Yankee Jim's route was still further from the river; to see any remains requires some exploring. Return to your car and continue toward the river.

Turn right. This road follows the RR grade through Yankee Jim Canyon.

M-41.5 Here is the unmanned **Sphinx Creek Interpretive Center** created by the National Forest Service just a few years ago. Park and use the big interpretive sign to guide your exploration of the area. Allow at least an hour; more is better.

M-41.6 The YT crosses the RR grade road that you are driving on and goes through the hills to the west for three tenths of a mile. If you didn't walk this part of the old YT as part of the Interpretive Center stop, do so now. See old advertising signs and part of Yankee Jim's road.

M-41.8 Park here to see more rock work built by prisoners. The YT continues just feet to the west of the RR grade on which you are driving.

M-42.1 Your road now leaves the RR grade and follows the YT to Gardiner

M-46.3 Location of RR trestle. Only sparse remains of the trestle can be seen where the RR crossed the Yellowstone Trail at a creek.

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M-47.0 Headquarters Road follows the RR grade and leads to the offices of the non-mainstream religious group, Church Universal and Triumphant. Reportedly, while the Church prepared for their predicted nuclear war on April 23, 1990, the world was averted from annihilation through their prayers, they said. The church owns and operates a very large ranch and various businesses in this area under the name of the Royal Teton Ranch.

M-47.6 Corwin Springs Bridge. There once was a Northern Pacific depot here. People could alight from the train and walk across the river on this bridge's 1909 predecessor to a hot springs resort. Don't cross the bridge. Keep on the YT.

49.1 Devil's Slide. See that redish streak up the side of Cinnabar Mountain? The red color marks where a coal seam burned out of the Triassic period sedimentary rocks. Early prospectors erroneously thought the red came from concentrations of cinnabar, the mineral source of mercury, and gave the mountain its name. The Devil's Slide is the trough between erosion-resistant igneous dikes just to the left of the red.



Devil's Slide at Cinnabar Mountain

M-51.0 Yellowstone National Park Boundary. Very near here was the town of **Cinnabar** which is no more, but which actually served as our nation's capital April 8-24, 1903, when Teddy Roosevelt arrived to view the park and to dedicate the arch at the north entrance. The Northern Pacific tracks had gotten this far, 4 miles short of Gardiner. Cinnabar was the last place with a "Y" to turn the train around. While Teddy was roughing it in the back country of the park, the press cooled their heels and played baseball at Cinnabar.



Roosevelt Arch at Yellowstone National Park North Entrance - Dedicated 1903

Park Branch RR ceased to run on Sept. 3, 1948. Today bison and elk roam the school yard, often forcing faculty out to shoo them away.

Gardiner is at the only park entrance open year round. Gardiner is the headquarters for many outdoor sports and serves as a jumping-off point for park visitors. Businesses with names such as The Antlers or Rusty Nail pubs or the Yellowstone Mine restaurant give added flavor to the town.

After exploring Gardiner, the wonders of the Yellowstone National Park await you. Enjoy your visit, Ψ

Dragging on the Yellowstone Trail

By Dave Habura, YTA Board Member and Northwest Correspondent

Photos by author

Did you think this would be about a couple of hot cars in a neck to neck race down the Yellowstone Trail? Not so! This is about the most popular and widely used piece of road equipment in the early days of the Yellowstone trail, the split log road drag, pulled behind old dobbin.

To get a “feel” for how important the drag was, consider this quotation from the 1917 Automobile Blue Book.

Route 394—Mobridge to Aberdeen, S. D.—104.5 m.

Reverse Route 318.

Via Ipswich. This is a section of the Yellowstone Trail. Excellent dragged dirt road to within a few miles of Aberdeen, where gravel is encountered. There are also some stretches of gravel entering and leaving towns. This route follows the railroad all the way. There are numerous places where supplies of all kinds may be obtained. There are also several long straight stretches of excellent dragged dirt, principally across Edmunds County, making this a very fast road.

Reading mid teen 20th century (1912-1917) automobile magazines, by far the most discussed and debated piece of road equipment was the road drag. It was so important to our Yellowstone Trail that I suggest the early Trail would not have existed without it. Why? Because the Trail was mostly dirt.

What's wrong with dirt? Dirt is mud in the winter and ruts can be a foot or more deep, and absolutely impossible to navigate when they dry out. And dirt develops dust filled ruts even in the summer, especially if the roads also carry horse and wagon solid-tired freight or harvest traffic, as they did. And with automobiles also on the road, dirt develops washboard, and chuck holes deep enough to truly destroy an automobile.

Unmaintained dirt or earth is so poor as an automobile roadbed, it was common to find dozens of relatively parallel unimproved road tracks across a flatland, each replacing one so awful to drive it had to be abandoned. The road drag was the common solution. And the citation about the Yellowstone Trail noted above attests to its importance.

The photo on the right from the 1914 Yellowstone Trail Year Book (available in reproduced edition from our website) is none other than that of J. W. Parmley, second President of the Yellowstone Trail Association. He is standing beside a split log road drag, also known as King's drag for the Missouri man who popularized it.

David Ward King, a Missouri farmer, is said to have invented the split log road drag, and there is no question that he popularized it. He used it on the half mile of road in front of his property, and in a few years his neighbors did the same. It became the defacto standard and essential piece of equipment to maintain dirt roads.

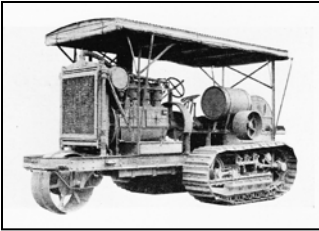
So important was his road drag, he made a good deal of his living lecturing to packed audiences nation-wide on the design, construction, and use of his type of drag.



Joe Parmley and road drag

The road drag had been around for many years, perhaps lending its name to the “main drag,” in reference to a town's main street. But King's split log drag had the advantage that it created a crown, or higher center in the middle of the road, all important in draining water off the road bed.

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Holt Caterpillar

Obviously the road drag was not the only piece of road construction and maintenance equipment. By 1914-15 the Holt Caterpillar tractor of the day was used in road work, as were steam tractors.....if the jurisdiction had the money. But roads outside cities in 1912 or 1915 were most often county or locally funded affairs (not state, and certainly not federal), or even up to the farmers along the route to maintain.

These are the roads the Yellowstone Trail followed in the early days.

An interesting description of road building between Aberdeen and , a few miles south of our Trail today, appears in the 1911 Minnesota Farmers' Institute Annual, pg 310.

The road drag was something a county or a farmer could build, and pull with one or two horses. If you review county expenditures in old newspapers, entries for paying “Mr. Jones” to drag the county roads (or road) are common.

Consider this. The 1915 Good Roads Yearbook reports that the State of South Dakota, where the Yellowstone Trail was born, had 56,354 miles of roads, 286 of which were improved!! And you can bet the improved roads (e.g. graveled) were in and near bigger towns and cities. Once on the prairie, or sagebrush flats, concrete, brick, macadam, and gravel yielded to dirt.

The entire 55 miles was thoroughly disked, harrowed and then smoothed by the King drag. Sods were thrown to the side of the road, ruts were filled and packed, approaches to culverts and bridges were carefully filled level with the planks, all stones and pieces of broken glass were picked up by hand. Rocks were dug out, and the holes filled and packed. Low places, where water might settle after a rain, were drained by small open ditches. This work having been accomplished, nothing further was done than to maintain the road in good condition by the use of the King drag from one end of the county to the other. Each district superintendent, who worked without remuneration, knew just where his work began and left off; and although heavy rains preceded the Aberdeen run, and our soil is as slippery when wet as any in the state, by running the King drags over this road in the early morning of the day when the automobiles went through, it made the surface as smooth and nice as a city street.

The details and subtleties of road drags are probably not of much interest today. But basically they usually involved a cross beam in front that scraped the road, and a cross beam in back that leveled and distributed the loose dirt to fill holes and ruts. These are evident in the Parmley photo above. The cross beams were often a split log. The “operator” stood on a flat platform, or on the cross beams, and held the reins of the one or two horsepower hay-fed power source. The June 14, 1914 edition of the Department of Agriculture Farmer's Bulletin gives a terrific description of the use and construction of the road drag. It is available on Google Books.

Of course there were other forms of equipment used to build and maintain roads. The horse drawn grader and roller were common. It might go without saying that the wagon, and dump wagon, were in wide use. Disks, harrows and plows were common, to break up packed surfaces. And power equipment, where it could be afforded was used during those years. One of my favorites is the model 75 or 120 (also their horsepower) Holt Caterpillar Tractor, the granddaddy of the modern Caterpillars, some today with 600 horse power.



American Big Winner No. 33

Whenever I am in Eastern Washington, I like to stop in Colfax and look at the old horse drawn grader in front of the Whitman County Road Department facility, The American Big Winner No. 33!! It was pulled by 5 or 6 horses or a power tractor. Behind a power tractor, a rig like this could grade 1.25 miles of new road over sage brush country in a 10 hour day at a cost of \$75 (in 1920).

If we turn to the human element, in the mid teen years convicts were used in almost every state. Hard Labor was a not an infrequent sentence, and usually meant working on the road gang. The 1914 Good Roads Yearbook spends a chapter on how best to use convicts.

Beyond the interest in history, recognizing how roads were constructed and maintained helps identify old roads with more confidence. If your equipment was a horse powered grader you definitely did not build roads with large cuts and fills. You followed the contour of the land, and you moved as little dirt as possible. There are many ways we distinguish a vintage road from a modern road. One obvious way is if the road involves large cuts, big fills, leveled grades, and smooth curves, it isn't vintage!!

We will post a brief description on the Yellowstone Trail Forum of road surfaces common in the early years. Ψ

Trail-O-Grams

Compiled By Alice Ridge and others

* We'd like to call your attention to a book that you'd enjoy. Chuck Flood's *Washington's Sunset Highway* is one of those Images of America series books that you've seen. You know, the ones full of pictures with four lines of caption for each. Flood's is a delight with 127 pages and about 250 pictures that take you back (if you are of a "certain age.") Most are of post-Yellowstone Trail era - 1930's and 1940's, but there are some priceless ones in the 1920's of sights and sites along the Trail. The Sunset Highway and the Yellowstone Trail ran together in spots, both eventually partially submerged by I-90. Pay attention to Flood's Introduction. It is a fine, focused description of highway development in Washington. Yellowstone Trail Association friend Lori Ludeman, Director of Douglas County (Washington) Historical Museum, contributed information to the book.



* **Hudson, Wisconsin**, is charging ahead with its annual **Yellowstone Trail Heritage Day** June 11. Those energetic folks have planned repeat favorite activities such as the Cemetery Walk with actors portraying the spirits of former Hudson citizens, the vintage vehicle show, museum tours, and tours along the Trail. Oh, and the ice cream and pie social!!

* **Rhame, North Dakota**, Sat. June 25 **Rhame Gala Days** sponsored by the Community Club. We don't know what is featured this year, but "western" activities have been featured in the past such as bull riding and calf roping. The "Dirty Word"

band concert lights up the night. Rhame is one of only 10 towns on the Trail when it sliced through the very southwest corner of the state.

* **Hamlet, Indiana's Yellowstone Trail Fest** at the Fairgrounds Aug. 20-21 will feature geocaching along the Trail. Geocaching is like a treasure hunt. Trail friend Ralph Edwards hid objects all over Wisconsin's portion of the Trail a few years ago. And here's something new and creative - metal sculpture. But here's the catch - at least 50% of the sculpture must be made from auto parts such as springs, gears or anything from a car! Crazy, huh? There will also be a Battle of the Bands, a zucchini cook-off, and other good stuff.

* **Ipswich, South Dakota**, home of Yellowstone Trail founder, Joe Parnley, is having its annual **Trail Days** June 10-12. This little city has been having annual Trail Days FOREVER. We know when they started in 1914 and we've known about its annual event for the past 20 years, but what about the rest of the years? Come on Ipswichites. Do some research. Their web site says: "This year Arts in the park is held in the Ipswich Library Park, food vendors set up downtown, a car show, and many more family events are offered. Later on Saturday, head over to the Trail Days complex for concerts and watch the rodeo and mutton busting." [Ed. Note: mutton busting?]

* The **Dairyland Tin Lizzies Model T Ford Club** will tour the Yellowstone Trail from Gumm's Corners, south of Jackson, WI to the Fond du Lac area on June 4, 2016. They will be joined by members of other area Model T clubs. Upon reaching North Fond du Lac, Mark Mowbray of the Yellowstone Trail



Tin Lizzies at Fond du Lac's Lakeside Park in 2011

Association will give a brief presentation on the history of **Yellowstone Corner**, former location of the Yellowstone Garage, Yellowstone Tavern, and Yellowstone Auto Sales. The site is adjacent to the recently developed **Yellowstone Trail Park**. The group will then travel to Lakeside Park, on Lake Winnebago in Fond du Lac for a picnic lunch. Lakeside Park was the location of a free campground in the Model T days.

Contact Jim and Colleen Rodell, 262-629-9734, jcerodell@hiercommnetworks.net

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More Trail-O-Grams

* This just in: the **Yellowstone Historical Society in Billings, Montana** has been working with the city on and off for several years to get the Trail marked through Billings. The late Dave Bernhardt began the process which was carried on by Marlene Saunders. Their efforts finally paid off. Soon YT travelers will see 20 yellow and black signs guiding them along the route. Thanks for your support folks!

* Readers! If your town is having a celebration that involves the Yellowstone Trail in any way, let us know at info@yellowstonetrail.org. We'll publish your story and photos. Ψ

Chasing Old Style Burgers, Malts and Root Beer on the Trail

By Dal Smilie, roving vintage camper

We were heading to a Vintage Camper Rally in Issaquah, Washington, and we joined the Yellowstone Trail at Kiona, WA, near Benton City. In this area, I-82 has replaced US 12 and the old named roads here, so you have to hunt a bit to find them. Searching out the old drive-ins and burger joints was a pleasant attraction along the way.



Dal's Vintage Rig

The locals I talked to know the old route as "The Old Inland Empire Highway" and the stretch from Benton City to Prosser and beyond is still named that. From Prosser to Sunnyside it follows the Sunnyside Canal, once was (and maybe still) the largest irrigation canal in the state. There are a lot of fruit and wine-grape vines that need that water in this dry country.

That highway came about in 1913 linking many of the Central and Eastern Washington towns. The same boosters and businessmen also welcomed the Yellowstone Trail designation around 1915 for basically the same route. The Trail looped south from Spokane WA to Spangle,

Rosalia, Colfax, Dusty, Dayton, Walla Walla, and on to Kiona where we rejoined it on this trip.

The first burger stop, **TNT Burger**, in Benton City was a bust, as they had closed the doors for good. So, onward to **Davy's** in Prosser that is a great "old school" stop for 40 flavors of premium hand dipped ice cream and real malts and shakes. We camped in the Ki-Be (Kiona – Benton City) Middle School grounds right on the route. There was a fund raising car show there and host Dan let us camp for free. Love these small towns with big hearted people.

Towards Zilla the Trail seems to be mostly designated as the Yakima Valley Highway now and the famous Zillah Tea Pot gas station in all its restored glory is great to see...Real American Roadside Art



Our next "old-school" burger and shake was found at the **Pepp'rmint Stick Drive In** at Union Gap with great burgers, 14 ice cream flavors and tasty shakes. Nice old time feel with room to park our vintage camper. Just a bit further down the road in Yakima is **Miners**, a local old-time burger landmark. They pump out so many to the crowds that it sort of feels industrial, but good though. There is a billboard at the edge of Yakima that declares it to be "The Palm Springs of Washington". I've been to both but I don't see it, there is lots of sun in each, but . . . ?

The Inland Empire Highway connected to the old Sunset Highway that ran over Snoqualmie Pass and replaced the earlier 1870s Stage Road. The earlier southern route and the later northern route of the Yellowstone Trail came together around Cle Elum and followed the same route as the Sunset Highway to Seattle. But first, our quest was for historical burgers, and the **Campus U-Tote-Em** is the place to go in Ellensburg. How did people survive on the Trail before these places came along?

(Continued)



We followed the Trail to Fall City where the Trail parted ways from the older Sunset Highway. We followed the older route to Issaquah where one of two remaining **Triple XXX Root Beer Drive-ins** is still open and doing lots of business (the other is in Indiana). <http://www.triplexrootbeer.com/>

Triple XXX referred to imprints on the earliest barrels back in the 1890s which signified the highest quality. It's off the Trail also, but a great burger (including an interesting option with a dollop of peanut butter). The Issaquah Triple XXX has a 409 Chevy engine sitting inside the door, memorabilia everywhere, and the Sunset

Cruisers Car Club hosts over 31 cruise-in car shows a year in their parking lot. Everyone with an interesting set of wheels cruises up for root beer, burgers and some "tire kicking".

We were there for the pre-1970 Triple XXX Vintage Camping Trailer rally. Bring your cash; the Triple XXX does not take credit cards. And you had better be hungry, because some of the burgers are bigger than your head! A legendary place!

No visit to Issaquah would be complete without visiting the historic Hailstone Feed Store and Shell station. This 1890s building is restored as it looked in 1944.

Yellowstone Trail, good roads and good road food! Ψ



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