



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



## YTA Director attends the LHA Conference

Earlier this year, the Lincoln Highway Association (LHA) invited our Executive Director, Mark Mowbray, to attend their 2018 National Conference. The Conference was held June 20-24 in Iselin, New Jersey. Mark was able to attend this event with the purpose of exploring ways for the LHA and our Association to share information and cross-promote our historic routes.



Mark Mowbray at LHA conference



LHA Conference attendees at Hudson City New Jersey

Mark was able to meet a number of the attendees individually and participate in some tours of the area. He also had a display table of Yellowstone Trail information and was set up to show our 24-minute video in a "book room" set aside for displays of various visitors and vendors. Scheduling conflicts all three nights did not allow much time for the attendees to visit with Mark and view the video, but at least some of those attendees learned of our Trail and were given brochures, stickers, and contact information.

Next year, the LHA Conference will be held in Rock Springs, Wyoming and we are hoping to again have a presence there and hope to further inform LHA members there of the history and mission of the Yellowstone Trail Association and to learn more about their historic road. Ψ

## YTA Minnesota Chapter is being formed

By Alice Ridge, Arrow Editor Emerita

We are happy to announce that the YTA is forming a Minnesota state chapter: The Yellowstone Trail Association–Minnesota Chapter. Members of the YTA who live in Minnesota are now also members of that Chapter.

Folks from several towns along the Yellowstone Trail (present US 212) had previously formed the Yellowstone Trail Alliance of Western Minnesota (YTAWMN). Their membership included people with an interest in the Yellowstone Trail as well as members of the Mainstreet organization, various art groups, a preservation group and historical societies. They are hoping to publicize the route for economic and cultural development using the Yellowstone Trail as a brand.

Your YTA President, John Ridge, Secretary, Alice Ridge, and Executive Director, Mark Mowbray, went to a meeting in Olivia, Minnesota, with those who had been selected to set up a Minnesota chapter of the YTA. It is understood that the Alliance and the Chapter are separate organizations but that they are closely aligned in support of promoting the Trail. A Chapter president will soon be selected and ideas for Chapter activities will be solicited.

The YTA stands ready to assist this first state chapter in any way that it can with membership communications, Trail maps, and, of course, advice! We hope to see the Minnesota members support the Alliance in regard to matters of promoting the Trail as a brand and, of course, support all Minnesota YTA members across the State in their efforts and interests related to the Yellowstone Trail.

Welcome aboard, Minnesotans! Ψ

## Trail-O-Grams

By Alice Ridge and Arrow staff



Trail Fest info table

\* Well, the **Yellowstone Trail Fest in Hamlet, Indiana**, August 17-19, was so successful that we feel pictures would tell the tale better than words. Here are a few pictures, but you really need to mouse on over to [www.facebook.com/yellowstonetrailfest](http://www.facebook.com/yellowstonetrailfest) to see for yourself. The Yellowstone Trail theme was visible, but so were many other things. Note the many vendor tents, note the great weather. The video of music by the group called 2 Past Midnight and other musical groups reminds one that local talent can be just as entertaining as professional. See the scrap metal sculpture winners.



Trail Fest car show winners



Classic cruising at Trail Fest

See the two high school marching bands. See the pony rides. Doesn't this remind you of your youth at the county fair? The video of the history of the Trail also drew the curious. You must remember that Hamlet has a population of fewer than 800 people, but 5000 people attended! The committee (and Juanita Ketcham, our Yellowstone Trailwoman of the Year 2017) pulled all of this off!



Car parts sculpture

\* Member Don Popejoy has been super active the last six months spreading the word about the Yellowstone Trail in the **Spokane, Washington**, area. Last December he gave a presentation to the Spokane Westerners Corral, a history club since 1955. This presentation led to the well-attended July 26, 2018 tour of the Trail, first winding around beautiful Lake Coeur d'Alene then to Appleway and Sprague Ave. in Spokane then south on US 195 through Trail towns Spangle, Thornton, and Colfax, all on the Trail.



Old YT pavement near Thornton, Washington

His article about the Trail for *Nostalgia Magazine*, July/August of 2018, which will become a three-part series, brought another invitation to a presentation in August and a field trip in summer of 2019.

Don discovered that many in his western audiences hold a preconception of the word "trail," thinking it to be a pack trail through Yellowstone National Park. Many mid-western audiences think of a hiking, snowmobile, or bicycle trail. This is a lesson for would-be Trail speakers. Make sure the announcements are clear about the topic.



YT Route near Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

\* Quick Note: **Hudson, Wisconsin**, will hold its **Yellowstone Trail Heritage Day on October 13, 2018**. Previous years have seen their Heritage Day held in the early summer. They are the ones who hold antique car runs on the Trail along with a car show, popular cemetery walks, yummy ice cream socials and all-around fun on YT Heritage Day.



\* **Ipswich, South Dakota**, home of Joe Parmley and the YT, had its annual **Trail Days** June 8-10. They whooped it up again with their signature event of saddle bronco and bull riding. Our eastern readers may puzzle over such events, but we're "Out West in Ipswich" and these tests of manhood were actually held back in the YT days. Their annual parade, car and antique tractor and motorcycle show, and other festivities all occurred under the watchful eyes of the Parmley House Museum and his Land Museum, both of which always welcome visitors. There was more whoopin' going on during the country-rock concert by "A Thousand Horses".

\* Kevin Wolford of Plymouth, Indiana, recently placed a sign (right) in his yard marking the Trail through that area. Ψ





# Hettinger, North Dakota's Yellowstone Trail Commemorative Area Dedicated

By Bonnie Smith, Hettinger, North Dakota

It's true. It's real. And it's here, now, at last, on permanent display for time to come -- one of the three remaining, original, Yellowstone Trail (YT) sandstone obelisks in Adams County embedded in concrete above a winding stone wall on the far southeast corner of the Adams County Courthouse lawn.

Editor's Note: The "sandstone obelisks" referred to in this article are often called "hoodoos."

A large crowd spanning four generations gathered Wednesday, September 5, at dusk on the newly installed pavers for the dedication of this Yellowstone Trail Commemorative Area. Before the ceremony began, folks enjoyed ice cream cones and music by the Hettinger Cowboy Band, MacKenzie Hicks, director, led for this event by Josh Ranum. It was a throwback to the mid-20th Century days of ice cream socials on the Courthouse lawn.

Committee chair and MC for the evening, Allen McIntyre explained that the vision for the commemorative area had come through the work of the Dakota Buttes Visitor's Council, the Dakota Buttes Historical Society/ Museum, the Adams County Development Corporation and the Beauty of Hettinger organization, with generous donations from city, county and civic organizations, businesses and individuals.



Funded by the national Yellowstone Trail Association, the historical sign with the map stands to the east side of the recently dedicated historical area on the southeast corner of Adams County's Courthouse lawn.



Left to right: Committee members Loren Luckow, Bonnie Smith, Betty Svihovec, Al McIntyre, and Mike Marion

Hettinger Mayor Shawn Hanna welcomed the group to the gathering, citing the importance of volunteerism in community life.

Committee member Betty Svihovec thanked the County Commissioners for believing in the project and allowing the creation of the commemorative area on Courthouse lots. She also elaborated on Adams County's three structures on the National Register of Historic Places described in the other historical marker to the west.

Loren Luckow, treasurer of the committee, thanked all who donated to the project, who worked on the project - especially Dan Boxrud, Mike Marion, Seth Hofland, and others who supported the project. Bonnie Smith, another committee member, shared historical background material on construction of the Trail through this area.

Special recognition was given to John and Alice Ridge and to the national Yellowstone Trail Association that created the design and donated the cost of the YT historical marker.

The Yellowstone Trail was built on J.W. Parmley's dream of a shorter route from Aberdeen to Yellowstone Park. That dream soon led to a smoother, graveled roadway from Minneapolis to the Park, and later, from Plymouth, MA, to Spokane, WA. It was the first transcontinental highway in the Northern tier of states.

It exists today, as US Highway 12, the only place in North Dakota through which the Yellowstone Trail ran. Ψ



The Hettinger Cowboy Band in full regalia performs on the rise of lawn immediately behind the newly installed, original sandstone obelisk that served as one of the Yellowstone Trail markers in the Adams County area.

## The Road Less Traveled - Yellowstone Trail expands to the east

By Roger Bailey, Courtesy of the Baldwin (Wisconsin) Bulletin



The Hudson Gateway Arch, entrance to the causeway that originally led to the now removed toll bridge.

If Horace (“Go West, Young Man”) Greeley was alive today he might be suggesting, “Go East” from the Hudson banks of the St. Croix River.

That’s the mission of a group of St. Croix County residents in their effort to expand the efforts of the Yellowstone Trail effort. “We still think the Yellowstone Trail is important,” said Evy Nerbonne, one of four Hudson residents, along with Linda White, Starla Enger and Jacki Bradham, who are spearheading the effort to take the entire county along Highway 12 and County UU into the Yellowstone Trail fold. The foursome is working with the Central St. Croix Chamber of Commerce in the plan. “We would like to get people from Baldwin,

Hammond and Roberts (areas) involved so we cover the parts of the county that the original Yellowstone Trail encompassed,” Nerbonne said.

A little history: Interest in the Yellowstone Trail was started in 1912 by a group of small-town South Dakota businessmen who sought to establish a marked national roadway from the east to the west coasts of the nation. “You have to remember this was just at the time that cars came into existence,” Nerbonne reminds readers. “And it was mostly just a trail,” she said. “The roads weren’t marked or not very well-marked, they weren’t very good and there weren’t many maps,” she said. The idea was to promote the trail “from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound,” said Nerbonne.

A number of people in Wisconsin bought into the concept which would follow the “as-such highways” from Kenosha in southeastern Wisconsin, to Appleton, through Stevens Point, on to Eau Claire and then through the communities of Menomonie, Wilson, Hersey, Woodville, Baldwin, Hammond, Roberts and Hudson. The effort to promote the Yellowstone Trail was derailed by the Depression of the late 1920s and 1930s but was revived in the late 1990s. The focus changed somewhat in the later effort as the advent of the Eisenhower Interstate Highway System was actually nearing completion. The Yellowstone Trail Association (YTA) then adopted a plan to encourage people to get off the Interstate highways and return to the “back roads” – including U.S. Highway 12 in Wisconsin which passes through St. Croix County.

The Hudson community became involved in the YTA a few years ago, Nerbonne said, with the sponsorship of the tourism committee of the Hudson Area Chamber of Commerce. “And now we want to get the other places involved, too,” she added. “This will be a collaborative thing,” she said of the effort to get the other communities of the county involved. “We have conversations taking place. We want to partner with all the other communities,” she added.

In Hudson, the annual observance has been held in the early summer for the past five or six years. This year the date is Saturday, October 13. In the past, it has included a 5K foot race, a car show including vehicles from the early part of the last century to hot-rods of today, according to Nerbonne. She also sees a possible tie-in with some of the architectural gems of the late 1880s and early 1990s, including early structures such as the First Baptist Church, Dick’s Bar and the structure housing the San Pedro restaurant and Eckberg Lammers law firm on Hudson’s Second Street.

“We’d like to offer a historical view for people who appreciate the historic architecture of buildings that were actually on the Yellowstone Trail a hundred years ago,” Nerbonne said.

The communities in eastern St. Croix County also have historic buildings which could be shown during the event in October along with other activities. As the planning on the county-wide event continues, the committee will be issuing further reports as the plan evolves. Ψ



# One Couple's Adventures on the Yellowstone Trail – Part 4

By Bill von Tagen, Boise, ID

Editor's note: this is the fourth installment on Bill & Linda von Tagen's trek on The Yellowstone Trail last summer. The entire chronicle of their adventures can be found at: [www.afordonthelincoln.blogspot.com](http://www.afordonthelincoln.blogspot.com)

From Ipswich, South Dakota, we traveled west to the Missouri River. We crossed the Missouri at Mobridge. The morning was crisp and the view crossing the river was good. But for much of South Dakota and the corner of North Dakota that we crossed, the day consisted basically of miles and miles of miles and miles.



Van Horn Auto Museum



In Western North Dakota we came upon the town of Marmarth. The town's unusual name comes from the fact that a railroad official wanted to name it for his daughter, Margaret Martha. Since Margaret Martha would not work as a name of a town it was shortened to Marmarth. Marmarth has the oldest cinema in North Dakota. It is still operating, although from appearances much of the rest of the town is not. At the western edge of Marmarth is the Van Horn automobile Museum. Jim Van Horn has assembled quite a collection of beautifully restored vehicles. The price of the tour includes a dish of ice cream at the end of the tour.



Mystic Theater

From Marmarth we proceeded into Montana. At the western edge of North Dakota and the eastern edge of Montana we found ourselves in the Badlands. We were awed by the scenery, but I'm glad we don't live there. Not long after entering Montana, we rolled into Miles City. Miles City was the site of the first annual Yellowstone Trail meeting on February 19, 1913. We came to Miles City for lunch at the Montana Bar. My last visit to Miles City was in May 1974. Two buddies from college invited me to come to Miles City for the Bucking Horse Sale. They said if I really wanted to experience Montana culture, I needed to go to the Bucking Horse Sale. They promised that I would probably end up drinking too much and that we might end up in a couple of fights. To a 19-year-old college freshman, this sounded like heaven and something I definitely needed to experience. I probably ended up drinking too much, but I managed to avoid any fights.

The bucking horse sale is where all the saddle Broncs for the rodeo circuit are purchased. One of the bars that we visited during the sale was the Montana Club, now the Montana Bar. I have fond memories of the bucking horse sale. I remember that on that Saturday night in May 1974 the Montana Club was very crowded and very noisy. It was difficult to get from one end of the bar room to the other. It was much quieter for this visit. My college buddies were right, no visit Montana is complete without a visit to Miles City, and no visit to Miles City



Linda von Tagen at the Montana Bar



Pompey's Pillar, East of Billings, Montana

is complete without a visit to the Montana Bar.

After Miles city we traveled to Forsyth, Montana and then on to Pompey's Pillar. Pompey is the nickname that William Clark gave to the son of Sacajawea. His full name was Jean Baptiste Charbonneau and he was the youngest member of Lewis & Clark's Corps of Discovery.

Following Pompey's pillar, we traveled west to Billings. We spent the night in a motel as the heat we experienced in South Dakota and North Dakota continued. Before leaving Billings, we discussed where we would end our trek. Originally, we planned to drive the entire Yellowstone Trail all the way to Puget Sound. However, the difficulties we experienced in Oakland, California and the need to retrieve our Rancho made that goal impractical. We decided to end our journey at Yellowstone National Park, which was an early destination of the Yellowstone Trail and where it ended in the first years.

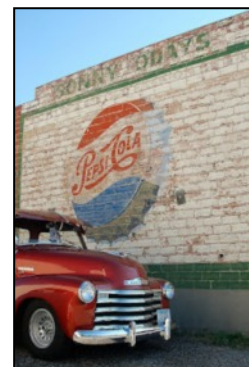
Continued



Laurel, Montana's Chamber of Commerce

From Billings we drove to Laurel, Montana where the Laurel Chamber of Commerce has an interpretive sign for the Yellowstone Trail. We left Laurel on US Highway 10 which runs between Interstate 90 and the Yellowstone River. This is about as close as you can get to the old Yellowstone Trail. We drove US 10 until the road ran out. Then, we were forced back onto the freeway which we took to Livingston.

Livingston is another old railroad town and was also Northern Pacific's "Gateway to Yellowstone National Park". The Northern Pacific Railroad Depot in Livingston was designed by the same architect that designed Grand Central terminal in New York City. Livingston escaped the fate of so many railroad towns by transforming itself into a tourist destination where people make a living by taking care of the wealthy clientele that come to Livingston to enjoy the splendor of Montana's Big Sky Country. From Livingston we drove south along Highway 89 towards Gardner Montana and Yellowstone National Park.



Seen along the way



Camping near Yellowstone National Park

The scenery on this stretch of roadway is spectacular. That night we camped at a state campground along the river. While we were not on the Yellowstone Trail, we were darn close. As soon as the sun went down the highway went quiet. We were lulled to sleep by the sound of the Yellowstone River. It was nice to be camping again. We awoke on July 12 at our campsite. We were just north of Gardner, Montana along Highway 89. After a light breakfast and a cup of coffee we headed south towards Gardner and Yellowstone National Park.

As we drove south along the river, we were once again taken by the incomparable beauty of the area. We could see what we believe to be the old Yellowstone Trail route carved into the hillside. It looked rugged and it appeared that visiting Yellowstone National Park by automobile in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was not for the fainthearted. The formal name then of the old Yellowstone Trail was "The Twin Cities – Aberdeen – Yellowstone Park Trail". Later the name was shortened to simply Yellowstone Trail.



We picked up enough groceries in Gardner for tonight's dinner and tomorrow's breakfast. Our plan was to make a quick tour of some of our favorite sites in the park and then drive home to Boise. Such a short visit to Yellowstone is undoubtedly a sin. However, we have been on the road a long time (44 days) and I need to get back to California to pick up the Ranchero which is in a garage in San Ramon. In other words, we're homesick.

Yellowstone National Park is the world's first national park. My first visit to Yellowstone was in 1957 and I've been back to Yellowstone many times since then. It is said to be one of the best ideas that America ever gave the world. That is really saying something, considering the many good ideas that originated in America.

Our national parks were the product of the conservation movement in America, but, were also a product of the railroads. Of the two, it was probably the Railroad that did the heavy lifting in the creation of Yellowstone National Park. Had it not been for the intense lobbying by the Northern Pacific Railroad, Yellowstone

National Park would not have come into being when it did. The Northern Pacific Railroad lobbied Congress for the creation of the National Park. It undoubtedly also assisted in drafting the legislation which created the park. It seems that the Northern Pacific Railroad needed a destination for its Eastern passengers to visit.

Continued





Roosevelt Arch at Gardener's North Entrance

The Northern Pacific carried well-to-do easterners to the park, which was advertised heavily in Eastern papers and magazines. It billed Yellowstone and other parts of the Pacific Northwest as "Wonderland". None of this diminishes the national parks' position in American history or Yellowstone's place as the crown jewel in America's national Park system.

The automobile is a relatively late comer to Yellowstone. Private automobiles were not admitted to the park until 1915. The Yellowstone Trail Association and other automobile organizations lobbied for cars to be let into the park in much the same way that the Northern Pacific Railroad lobbied Congress for the creation of the park. Yellowstone Trail Organization and other automobile organizations demanded "Let Us In". Finally, the government relented. Whatever one might think of park overcrowding, letting automobiles into the park truly has made the park a place "For the Benefit and Enjoyment of the People", as engraved on the Roosevelt Arch at Gardiner.

During our short stay at Yellowstone, we were struck by the large numbers of foreign tourists. Visitors from Europe and Asia have embraced Yellowstone. Last year 4.5 million visitors saw the sites of the park. It seemed to us that approximately 40% of the visitors we saw were foreign. These foreigners also wanted to enjoy the park in the way that they understand Americans to enjoy the park.

July 13 brought this wonderful adventure to a close. We started the day as we began so many others with coffee percolating on our one burner Coleman stove and a cup of coffee at the campsite. It was now time to break camp and head for home. It has been a wonderful vacation. We were away for 44 days and traveled 7783.5 miles, using 307 gallons of gasoline.



Old Faithful, as viewed through the window of the Old Faithful Lodge



I would not trade the experiences we've had for anything in the world. This is a big beautiful country. The people we've met have been without, exception, extremely kind, thoughtful and polite. Folks went out of their way to ask if there was anything they could do to help, and I can't begin to count the number of times we were wished "happy trails" or told that we were "a long way from home". It was fun to add some of the people we met to our blog.

But, it's nice to be home and to enjoy the wonders of indoor plumbing. We are still planning to complete the trip from Yellowstone to Puget Sound someday, hopefully soon. Ψ

Join with us – just \$15/year

## Yellowstone Trail Association

"A Good Road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound"

[www.yellowstonetrail.org](http://www.yellowstonetrail.org)



Drive the Trail  
Explore History



[info@yellowstonetrail.org](mailto:info@yellowstonetrail.org)

## The Old Blewett Pass Wagon Road

By Curt Cunningham, YT correspondent, Washington State

Many Yellowstone Trail fans are familiar with the Old Blewett Pass Highway, built in 1922 with its 248 curves on a narrow 13 mile stretch of highway. The 13 miles that became a part of the Yellowstone Trail in 1925. But, well before that old highway was built, there was an earlier road over Blewett Pass.



In the early days, there was an Indian Trail over Blewett Pass that was used by people who were traveling north and south between the Columbia River and British Columbia. They used this trail over the past hundreds of years or longer. Fur Trappers began to use this trail in the early 1800's. In 1858 gold was discovered on the Thompson and Frazier Rivers in Canada. The miners who went in search of this gold started from Seattle and took the Cedar River Trail from Renton and followed the Cedar River to Yakima Pass and then down into Cle Elum. Miners coming from The Dalles on the Columbia River took the old Military Road from Rockland that was on the opposite side of the river from The Dalles. This road ran north to Fort Simcoe and then it was by pack trail to Cle Elum. This is where these trails merged and continued north to Canada. This northern route from Cle Elum would eventually become the route of U. S. Highway 97.



1891-1921 Wagon Road in black,  
1922 Old Blewett Pass Road in red

In 1861 a group of prospectors was on their way to the gold region and as they were passing by Ingalls Creek near Wenatchee, they stopped to pan gold. Sure enough they struck pay dirt. They quickly made camp and decided to stay there and not to continue on to Canada. Sheriff Russell, who was running mail between Seattle and the Canadian mines, was also carrying word that Lincoln was elected president to the American miners who were there. As he was passing by Ingalls Creek he encountered the pack train and the miners. After hearing and seeing what they had found in the creek, the Sheriff resigned his post. Kellogg was sent back with the mules to Seattle for more supplies. The sheriff gave Kellogg his letter of resignation saying he was making good enough money and urged his friends to get on up here. He also sent the mail ahead to Canada with his brother while he stayed to pan for gold. When word got back to Seattle it started a rush to Wenatchee. Seattle was cleaned out of all available supplies and every mule and horse was taken as pack animals. Yesler's Mill in Seattle had to shut down because the lead sawyer and foreman took off for Wenatchee gold.

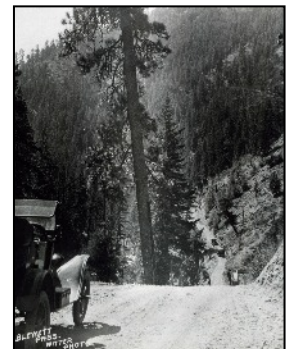
Ingalls Creek is located on the north end of Blewett Pass. The boom town of Blewett sprang up 3 miles south of Ingalls Creek and was known as the most violent town in the region. In 1891 the miners at Blewett, volunteered some time each month and a wagon road was eventually built from Cle Elum north to Blewett. This wagon road was crude and had steep grades. The people of Seattle were calling for a road to be built between Seattle and Wenatchee for the miners. The merchants wanted to have this road so the migration of gold seekers would purchase their supplies in Seattle instead of The Dalles. This wagon-road was finally completed to Wenatchee and to Spokane and was designated State Highway No. 7 in 1908, the precursor to the Sunset Highway.

This is the road that had the 30% grades and there are stories about cars having to attach logs to the rear to help slow it down while going down the hill. There is another story where the daughters jumped out and dad rode the car down the hill the rest of the way when the brakes failed. Everyone came out OK.

This hill is located on the southern side of the pass. The switchbacks of 1922 eliminated this steep hill. The grade was in the area of 20% to 30%. Once you reached the summit the road going north continued down the Peshastin Creek Gulch and followed the creek bed to where it meets Scotty Creek.

At Scotty Creek the old wagon-road follows National Forest Road No. 7324 to where it meets the 1922 road, now National Forest Road No. 7320.

Continued



Blewett Pass in 1920



In 1919 the Old State Highway No. 7 became a section of the Sunset Highway. In 1922 the old wagon-road along Peshastin Creek and the steep hill over Blewett Pass was bypassed by the new-old road, along with it's hundreds of curves, switchbacks and Echo Point. In 1925, the Blewett Pass route became part of the northern route of the Yellowstone Trail.



Old Wagon Road over Blewett Pass today

This summer my wife and I took a trip to Blewett Pass to see this hill. We were able to drive on the old dirt highway for about a half a mile after it left the 1922 road. Just before this road ends at the clearing, the old wagon road veers to the left and continues up the hill. It is faint and



Old Wagon Road today

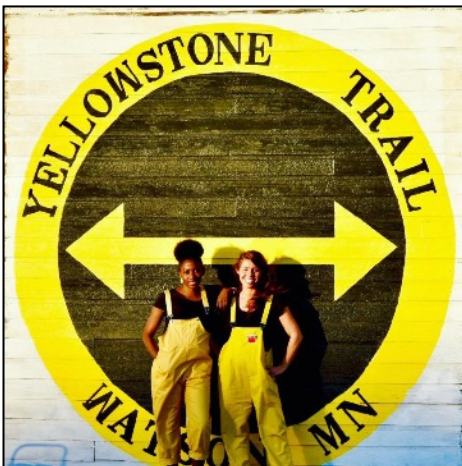
hard to see. I was able to walk to a point just below the infamous hill climb. There was so much brush it had completely blocked the way. We were so tired from all the walking in the 100 degree heat that we forgot to drive to the top and look down. Oh well, maybe next year.

Is the Old 1922 Blewett Pass Highway actually the New Blewett Pass Highway? In 1956 the 1922 road over Blewett Pass was bypassed with a newer road over Swauk Pass. The name never really caught on and people just called it Blewett Pass anyway. The highway department renamed Swauk Pass to Blewett Pass in 1992 and the 1922 Blewett Pass Highway became the "Old Blewett Pass Road" (National Forest Road No. 7320).

Should the 1891-1921 wagon-road over Blewett Pass be called the "Really Old Blewett Pass Road"? Ψ

## New Yellowstone Trail Mural in Minnesota

By Jess Gorman, YT Minnesota Alliance Correspondent



Olga Nichols, left, and Jess Gorman

"Follow the Yellowstone Trail" has landed in Western Minnesota with a big splash of color in the small town of Watson. What started as one artist's photo documentary has now become a collaborative effort using art and history to bridge connections between communities along the Yellowstone Trail.

Jess Gorman was awarded a grant in spring of 2018 by the Southwest Minnesota Arts Council to produce a photo series covering the Western Minnesota Portion of the Yellowstone Trail. "While driving, photographing the trail, I just couldn't stop thinking about the original trail towns painting markers, the pride they took in being a trail community and the travelers they encouraged." Wanting to revive that tradition Jess partnered with Painter Olga Nichols to expand a small idea into a big beacon.

The two artists met in the rising western Minnesota arts scene and both joined the Yellowstone Trail Alliance of Western Minnesota at its emergence in spring of 2018. The Alliance is a collaborative effort between eight Minnesota communities to use the YT to bring economic growth and asset promotion to their region. The Artists have completed the first in what they hope grows to be a cross country mural and discovery effort.

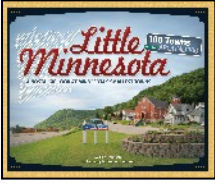
The recent YT Marker painted in Watson Minnesota is 10 feet by 10 feet, bright yellow and black with a twist. The arrow goes both ways. The team says, this is because the trail has the power to connect communities to their neighbors and because "there so much to explore in both rural and urban America, we want to encourage exploration in every direction." Editor's Note: the symbol used in the mural is the Alliance's and is not intended to be the same as the YTA's.



Former railroad depot in Watson, Minnesota

## Little Minnesota: 100 Towns Around 100

By Mark Mowbray, Arrow Editor



*“They're Minnesota's smallest towns, but they have huge character! Experience the rich stories, histories and cultures of 100 charming small towns, with populations from 5 to 141. And meet the friendly people who call these places home. Each entry in the book features folks who know what it means to help their neighbors and locales that range from quaint to historic. It's one book, and it's one hundred towns to love.”* Amazon.com

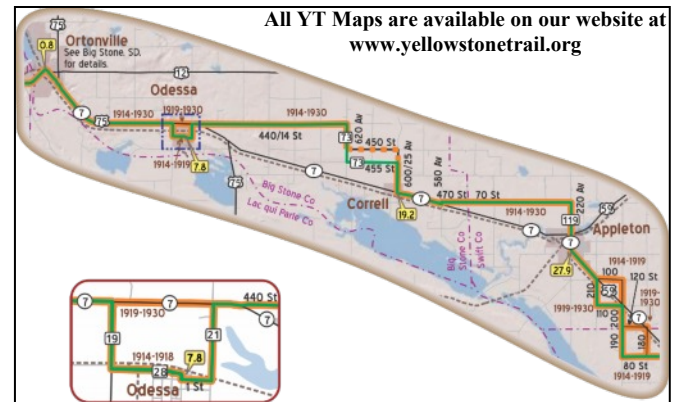
Thanks Amazon, that is a far better description of this great book than I can write. I came across this book entirely by accident. For over a year, I have been following the work of Melinda Roberts, a YTA member. She is the author and creator of the [Wisconsin Historical Markers](#) Facebook page. She recently announced that she is writing a book titled [Little Wisconsin](#) and it is already available for pre-order on Amazon.



When I contacted Melinda about her new book, she told me that I may also enjoy another book: [Little Minnesota](#), by Jill Johnson and Deane Johnson. Melinda then contacted Jill, who sent me the following articles about two towns along the Yellowstone Trail in western Minnesota.

We hope you enjoy these brief glimpses into small towns along the Trail, and it's a good bet that we will be enjoying some more “Trail Towns” in Melinda's book next year.

Please buy these books and support the authors who do a superb job of telling us the stories. Ψ



### Odessa, Minnesota Big Stone County Population 135

By Jill Johnson and Deane Johnson

No single event made a bigger impact on the citizens of Odessa than the disastrous train wreck on December 18, 1911, at 4:28 a.m., when a new all-steel train of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad, carrying silk worms, crashed into the rear of a Columbian Flyer bound for Chicago. The silk train was traveling at 70 miles per hour around a curve when the engineer saw the passenger train standing on the tracks. The engine crushed the sleeper car, killing twelve passengers and injuring another dozen. The sound of crushing steel awakened the community who rushed to the aid of the injured. Three more train accidents occurred over the next sixty years, but none as dramatic as the crash of 1911.



Odessa Town Park

Now located on Highway 7 near the Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge, Odessa first settled as a city in 1879 when the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad opened a depot and post office under the direction of A. D. Beardsley. Although Odessa Township is named after the Russian city, Odessa, where the wheat seed used in the area originated, it is believed that the city is named after Mr. Beardsley's daughter, Dessa, who died from diphtheria at age three.

By the time the city incorporated in 1895, Odessa thrived with the Empire

Elevator, the Crown Elevator, a lumber yard, and the Odessa House serving the local citizens. A local flour mill opened to produce “Odessa Best Flour”, an extremely popular brand of the era, before the flour mill exploded just after World War I and burned to the ground.

A man with many lives, J. W. Lenz opened a furniture store and also worked as the town barber, the town Marshall, the night watchman and manager of the Odessa baseball team. Both the Menzel and Kollitz families opened general merchandise stores that served the community for over 60 years.



Odessa Post Office

Continued





Odessa Fire and EMT Station

After struggling with low land and water in the original school, a new brick school was built on top of a hill in 1914. Although the high school consolidated with Ortonville in 1966, students in kindergarten through grade 6 continued to use the building for several more years.

Leander Strei, former owner of the gas station, gained local fame as a top notch basketball player at the high school. In 1883, Herman Kollitz opened his new general store on Main Street and continued in business until 1971 when his sons sold the business. The building remains, a proud reminder of a once prospering

Main Street. Richard Menzel built the town lumberyard in 1902, and later added a hardware store. The white frame building still stands. In 1952, the Herman Ellingson family moved to Odessa and opened a honey business. Ellingson's Incorporated closed the honey business, but their Wax Rendering business remains in the community. Over 120 years old, the Agassiz of Odessa Mutual Insurance Company formed in 1888 when a small group of 25 farmers established their own insurance business and remains a vital business.

Odessa has spawned many churches over the years but only Trinity Lutheran Church, a German speaking congregation for many years, remains after serving the community over one hundred years. Today Odessa is home to American Legion Post 520, Tom's Service and Repair, the Agassiz of Odessa Mutual Insurance Company, the Farmer's Elevator, the Refuge Bar, the Post Office, Ellingson's Wax Rendering, the Club 7-75 and a new red and gray metal sided fire hall.

Be sure to check out Big Stone Western Art in the former Methodist Church. The Odessa Jail, a Minnesota Historic Site, was built in 1900 and functioned as a jail until 1924. A square brick structure with a flat roof, the historic building housed its fair share of ne'er-do wells.

The Yellow Bank Church Campground Bridge over the Yellow Bank River is also one of Minnesota's historic bridges. Built in 1893 by the King Bridge Company in Cleveland, the single-span through truss steel structure is significant as an example of experimentation with bridge truss configuration during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ψ

Sources: Andersen, Tony. *Small Town Minnesota A-Z*. Afton: Afton Historical Society Press, 2000; Janssen, Arlo T. *Parsonage in a Pear Tree*. Xlibris, 2009; Shelsta, Norm. *Musings from the Museum*. *The Northern Star*, 2008; Wulff, Lydia Sorensen. *History of Big Stone County*. Ortonville, MN: L.A. Kaercher, 1959.



The Refuge Bar, near the Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge

## Correll, Minnesota Big Stone County Population 33

By Jill Johnson and Deane Johnson

The Correll High School basketball team made history by defeating Appleton 26 to 23 for the 1936 District Championship, and still ended up losing the game. During half time, identical twin forwards, Dale (No. 4) and Dean (No. 1) Knoll switched jerseys to confuse the already confused Appleton guards. During the second half, one of the Appleton players noticed that Dale Knoll's eyes watered. He knew that Dean's eyes watered, not Dale's eyes. Also, No. 4 scored most of the points in the first half, while No.1 scored the majority in the second half. The Appleton team protested and the officials ruled that the game would be replayed behind closed doors. Correll lost the title 29-11, but are hometown heroes forever. By the way, Correll never returned the original District 11 Championship trophy.

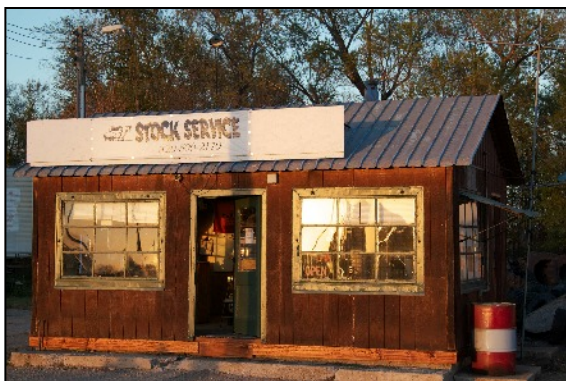


Farmer's Elevator in Correll

In 1879 surveyor David N. Correll of St. Paul, platted a new village for the Hastings and Dakota Railroad Company. Named in his honor and incorporated as a city in 1881, bad weather and isolation garnered a slow and shaky beginning for this railroad town. For a number of years, the only residents of Correll were the employees of the railroad who lived in the depot. One long winter, the citizens of Correll had no communication with the outside world for five months. Apparently, the impossible weather forced the Thomas F. Koch Land Company to sell the town site to Charles Woods, who saw a future in grain and developed the Farmer's Elevator in 1893.

When a new brick school opened in 1914, students were bussed by five horse drawn vehicles complete with foot warmers and wool blankets. The high school continued to serve area students until consolidation with Appleton in 1943, and the grade school remained open until 1977.

Continued



Stock Service Station, Correll, MN

Correll celebrated the state centennial June 14, 1958 with a home parade and a program in the school auditorium. Once again in 1981, Correll celebrated their city centennial July 17-19 with a Kittenball Tournament, beard judging contest, a tug-of-war contest and a talent show. Correll's oldest resident, 93 year old John Grutzmaker, led the parade as Grand Marshall. Mayor George Korstjens presented the key to the city to Eugene L. Correll, grandson of David Correll, the founder of the city.

The 10-member United Methodist Church of Correll, built with money borrowed from the Congregational Church Building Society in New York City maintains the original structure from

1897. About 12 miles north of Correll, Artichoke Baptist Church, one of the oldest churches in Big Stone County, is the second Norwegian Baptist church in Minnesota.

The first pastor, Hans Hanson, sailed from Tromso, Norway, in 1864, to Quebec, Canada, one of only two ships to ever sail this direct route. As terrific storms and winds stretched the journey to over nine weeks, passengers ran out of food. When they weren't longing for food from the wealthier passengers, they argued religion with the Mormons. Finally arriving in Lacrosse, Wisconsin by train, their boat ran aground on a sand bar on the Mississippi River. While the crew attempted to dislodge the boat, Gaard's brother Jens decided to swim, was caught in a treacherous current and swept away. He was never seen again. Built in 1889, the church celebrated their centennial in 1989.

Once a boomtown on the western plains of Minnesota, Correll now maintains Stock Service Station, the fire and town hall, Dick Wiese Building and Ronglien Excavating.



Correll has one of the smallest Post Offices in Minnesota

One of the smallest post offices in Minnesota, Correll has only one active mailbox in town. Lobby hours are 9:00 -11:18 each morning. The original bank building, recently a café, awaits a new owner. The elevator is no longer used, but the train still rolls through town and homes remain on both sides of the track. Ψ

**Sources:**

- Correll Centennial Committee. *The Correll Chronicle 1881-1981*. Milan MN: Standard-Watson Journal, 1981.
- Jorgenson, H.G. *A History of the Artichoke Baptist Church: In Commemoration of its Sixtieth Anniversary 1877-1937*. Ortonville: Ortonville Independent, 1937
- Koepp, Diane Mayor. Phone interview by author, 25 October 2010.
- Shelsta, Norm. "Musings from the Museum." *The Northern Star*, 17 July 2008.
- Wulff, Lydia Sorensen. *History of Big Stone County*. Ortonville, MN: L. A. Kaercher, 1959.

**JOIN THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL ASSOCIATION!**

Use this form and mail with a check OR Apply at [www.yellowstonetrail.org](http://www.yellowstonetrail.org) and use either the [online form with PayPal](#) or the [mail-in form with a check](#).

**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

An e-mail address is required because the *Arrow* newsletter is sent via email. If you need yours printed we'll make special arrangements.

e-mail address : \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ (Required if you do not use email.)

If this membership is for a business or organization:

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Position: \_\_\_\_\_

VISIT [WWW.YELLOWSTONETRAIL.ORG](http://WWW.YELLOWSTONETRAIL.ORG)

Cut off and mail this form with your payment. OR apply online at [www.yellowstonetrail.org](http://www.yellowstonetrail.org)

Send to: Treasurer  
Yellowstone Trail Association  
340 Division Street North  
Stevens Point, WI 54481

---

**Membership category and annual dues:**

Check one:  Regular (Individual or small business) ----- \$15

Not for profit (museum, car club, historical) ----- \$25

Tourism Promotion Agency ----- \$50  
(C of C, CVB, Econ Development, similar)

Corporate (Contact the Exec. Director for sponsorship details. [mmowbray@yellowstonetrail.org](mailto:mmowbray@yellowstonetrail.org)) \$100

---

Enter Amounts:

Dues for 1 year (June -May) - \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Gifts are tax deductible. Dues for 2nd year - \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Same rate, Optional.

Additional contribution - \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
We are a nonprofit 501c3 corporation.

---

Total = \$ \_\_\_\_\_