

THE
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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:
RIDGES REVITALIZE THE YTA
BECK'S TOURIST CABIN
ON THE 'BRINK' IN OHIO
DRIVING THE YT IN A
1953 LAND-ROVER
THE MULLAN MILITARY
ROAD CONFERENCE
US SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL
AND MORE...

AN ICONIC YELLOWSTONE TRAIL MARKER WAS PHOTOGRAPHED BY
STEVE OWEN (SEE PAGE 9) ON STATE RD. 76 NEAR OSHKOSH, WISCONSIN.



A LIVING LEGACY PROPELS THE YTA

Apologies to John and Alice Ridge, who—much to their chagrin—are featured predominantly in this edition of the *Arrow*.



The Ridges aren't so interested in the lime-light, and prefer to keep the focus on other aspects of the organization. Their story on the following page, however, is a tie that extends from the original YT Association and binds everything in this issue together. And so, against their wishes, I insisted on its placement.

The truth is, I'm not sure any kind of Yellowstone Trail organization would exist without John and Alice. The amount of groundwork those two have laid over the past three decades is incredible. From the painstakingly detailed recording of the YT's history to the revitalization of the long dormant YT Association, the Ridges have established both the context and platform for individuals and organizations to advocate for the interests of the trail and its communities.

What does that legacy look like in action? To start, I would point to the first edition of the *Minnesota Arrow*.

It so happens that this month marks the anniversary of the first edition of the *Arrow* I produced with John and Alice under the title of Editor. By happenstance, this month also marks the launch of the first *Minnesota Arrow*, produced in tandem Minnesota YT community members. As a border-to-border, monthly publication, the state level *Arrow* differs from the national *Arrow* in a variety of ways. While the publication does work to promote and preserve the history of the YT and its champions, it also seeks to promote, preserve and connect the history of YT communities themselves. This is accomplished by featuring contemporary arts, cultural and recreational assets alongside key figures and events that embody the community's identity and story. These assets and story, marketed and cross-promoted across the YT, have the potential to benefit the individual and the collective through the shared YT brand.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

HOW JOHN & ALICE REVIVED THE YTA, YT DAYS IN WISCONSIN
- PAGE 3 & 4 -

BECK'S CABIN, TRAIL-O-GRAMS
- PAGE 5 -

EVENTS & TRAIL-O-GRAMS CONT.
- PAGE 6 -

YT INITIATIVES GAINING TRACTION IN OHIO
- PAGE 7 -

'TIN CAN TOURING'
- PAGE 8 -

TRAVELLING THE YT IN '53 LAND-ROVER
- PAGE 9 & 10 -

THE MULLAN MILITARY ROAD CONF.
- PAGE 11 -

MULLAN MILITARY ROAD CONF. (CONT.), OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICA
- PAGE 12 -

Continued page 12



YTA BOARD

Board members:

Greg Childs, Laurel, MT
childsinnmontana@gmail.com
(406) 628-2345

Sheila Nyberg, Loyal, WI
sheila@clarkcountynedc.org
(715)-305-7222

Alice Ridge, Altoona, WI
ridgeaa@yellowstonetrail.org
(715) 834-5992

Dr. John Ridge, Altoona, WI
jridge@yellowstonetrail.org
(715) 834-5992

Scott Tedrick, Granite Falls, MN
Stedrick@yellowstonetrail.org
(541) 543-9975

Dr. Earl Cater, Waterville, Washington
efcater@gmail.com
(515) 371-3535

Administrator

Kathy Cooper, Eau Claire, Wisconsin
administrator@yellowstonetrail.org

Interested in becoming a member of the board?

Email:

Stedrick@yellowstonetrail.org

CONTACT THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

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USPS: Send to administrator, Yellowstone Trail Association
Box 65, Altoona, WI 54720

There is a printable application form at:
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Or, to join, renew, donate, use the form on page 12

For questions about membership, address changes, or Arrow receipt questions:

Email: Administrator@yellowstonetrail.org
USPS: Yellowstone Trail Association, PO Box 65 Altoona, WI 54720

For Trail information and editorial communications (our corporate office):

Email: YTA@yellowstonetrail.org
USPS: Yellowstone Trail Association
PO Box 65 Altoona, WI 54720

For YT related signs and merchandise (not part of the YTA):

Web: www.yellowstonetrail.org
Email: YTP@yellowstonetrail.org
USPS: Yellowstone Trail Publishers
PO Box 65, Altoona, WI 54720-0065

HOW JOHN AND ALICE RIDGE REVITALIZED THE YTA

A GOOD ROAD: THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL (PART ONE)

Editor's Note: The Ridges were interviewed by Eau Claire Leader-Telegram journalist Patti See in May. Patti and the Leader-Telegram were kind enough to grant permission to print the first installment of her two-part article here.

By Patti See
Eau Claire Leader-Telegram

Altoona, Wisconsin residents John and Alice Ridge became intrigued by the legendary Yellowstone Trail after both of their fathers told stories of travelling west in the 1920's on a road marked with big yellow rocks. John says those tales—almost Wizard-of-Oz-like—were “cryptic enough to be compelling.” After the Ridges retired from the University Wisconsin-Eau Claire (UWEC) in 1996, they drove that mysterious route while doing their own research. At the time, there was very little information on this old highway.



**Joseph
 Parmley**

In the 1910's, long-distance roads were often called “trails” because they looked like it. Made of dirt or gravel, they got so muddy in wet seasons, that they were often impassable. The Ridges wrote that long before federal or state agencies offered financial support, “Private organizations emerged to push counties to build ‘their’ road and to get tourists to travel it for their towns’ economic success.” This was part of the “Good Roads” movement, started in 1880, by users of that newfangled means of transport: the bicycle. In 1912, entrepreneur Joseph Parmley established the Yellowstone Trail Association in Ipswich, SD, at first to create one good road the 25 miles to Aberdeen. Within a few months, the plan quickly expanded east and west. Parmley and his cohort named the Trail to both honor Yellowstone National Park and to lure visitors there. The YTA's some 8,000 dues-paying members pressed officials to build a single road that connected county to county, then state to state, and eventually Pacific coast to Atlantic.

After all, automobiles were becoming more popular and affordable. Trains were restricted to specific schedules and stops, but cars offered the sort of autonomy people craved. The association's battle cry, “get out of the mud” was to help drivers, then called autoists, avoid deep road muck which Alice says was like maneuvering through gumbo. Cars were not enclosed then—many resembled modern-day golf carts—so goggles were needed to see through the thick dust kicked up while driving a top speed of 15 miles per hour.

Within five years, this grassroots effort led to the Yellowstone Trail stretching through 13 states, 3,600 miles from Puget Sound in Washington state to Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts. The route most often followed railroad tracks, so when a car broke down drivers could flag a train for help.

In Wisconsin, the YT sliced the state in half like a jagged hunk of Colby cheese. 403 miles of good roads, through 61 small towns and big cities. Hudson to Eau Claire, Chippewa Falls to Abbotsford, Marshfield to Waupaca, Weyauwega to Appleton, Oshkosh to Milwaukee, Cudahy to Kenosha.

The association offered maps and route suggestions, like an



Today's YTA exists due to pioneering historic and organizational efforts of YT champions, John and Alice Ridge.

early version of AAA's “TripTik.” The YTA also served as a pseudo travel agency, pitching tourist attractions from Seattle to Schenectady. Back then, no McDonald's Golden Arches or Kwik Trip's familiar red KT beckoned drivers off the next exit. Roads were not numbered, but the Trail's boulder-sized yellow stone markers guided tourists through unfamiliar deserts, prairies, and farmland to the next town over.

The history of the Yellowstone Trail might have been lost if not for the Ridges. I recently met them on a warm May evening at Lake Hallie Golf Clubhouse to chat about the last nearly 30 years of their mission to document this national treasure. In the early years, they recall arming themselves with a tape recorder, a global positioning system, a scanner and computer.

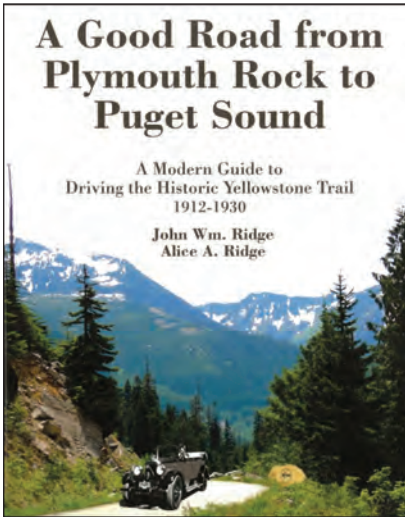
John and Alice set out to interview people who once knew the Trail or who might still have some of the old roadbeds in their backfields or pastures. They prowled through libraries, museums, attics, and university archives focusing on the Trail's active years, 1912 to 1930. Along the route, they often stopped at small town newspapers and spent many afternoons looking through what Alice says were “crumbling pages” for any details about the Trail long before articles were digitized.

Somewhere on a pitstop in Montana, they came across a 1914 Yearbook of the Yellowstone Trail. Almost 3 decades after discovering such a gem, John tells me, “Once you read that, you're stuck.” This was a hobby that grew into an obsession. They've traveled the trail coast-to-coast several times, camping along the way as many early tourists did. They turned their passion for this topic, and the people, into three books, a website [<http://www.yellowstonetrail.org/>], and a newsletter, which goes out to 1,000 Trail enthusiasts around the nation.



THE RIDGES' LASTING LEGACY, COUNTY TRIPECTA HOLD YT DAYS

As a new highway system was built across the US, the original Yellowstone Trail Association dissolved, in part because drivers no longer needed yellow rocks when they could rely upon a numbered route. Also, the Great Depression meant little extra cash for dues. Some 90 years later, the Ridges co-founded the modern Yellowstone Trail Association, a 501(c)3 organization, to bring awareness to this lost highway. Like the first one, this YTA is sustained by everyday people who care about preserving stories of the Trail.



The Ridges' magnum opus can be purchased on the YTA website: yellowstonetrail.org.

John and Alice's most recent book, "A Good Road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound: A Modern Guide to Driving the Historic Yellowstone Trail, 1912-1930," is a 482-page tome filled with maps, fascinating tidbits, photos, and old time Trail ads.

Alice wrote the copy, and John created the many maps. "It was a job," Alice says now. A fitting one for a retired communications professor and her husband, a former director of institutional research.

Today these octogenarians call themselves "very senior senior citizens," which is to say, like other Trail lovers, they enjoy life in the slow lane. The two admit they have five file cabinets full of research still looking for a purpose. At one point they had so much material that they added a room onto their home to hold it all.

The Yellowstone Trail was always more route than road. The Ridges' book is the only guide to driving the whole thing, as they say, "by auto or armchair," to promote heritage tourism for car enthusiasts and history buffs. In fact, travelers still call John and Alice's home phone and ask to drop by when they pass through the Chippewa Valley, by way of the Yellowstone Trail.

* Retail Opportunity *

As the Ridges move to retirement from positions with the YT Association, the YT retail "shop" needs a new entrepreneurial steward.

While it has been suggested that an antique shop or museum on the Trail might be interested in handling the physical items and online store, potential new owners will have the opportunity of further developing it to their vision. The shop's depleted inventory can be viewed at www.yellowstonetrail.org/shop

If any of our YTA readers know of a realistic, possible operator for a shop, please contact us at: YTA@yellowstonetrail.org or write to Yellowstone Trail Publishers, PO Box 65, Altoona, WI 54720

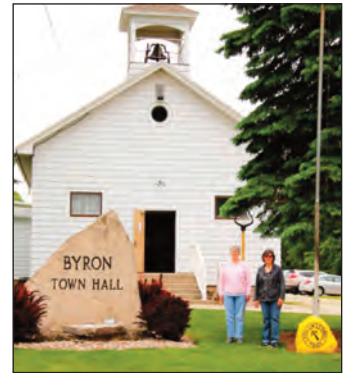
Trio of counties host YT Day along stretch of Wisconsin YT towns

Yellowstone Trail Day was a celebration of the Yellowstone Trail and local history in communities along a 25 mile section of the Yellowstone Trail (present day St. Hwy. 175) in Washington, Dodge, and Fond du Lac counties. Byron, Lomira, Theresa, and Slinger historical societies were open to visitors from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Route instructions written in the style of a 1920's automobile tourist guide pointed out existing landmarks from the Yellowstone Trail era and showed scenes along the route from a century ago while guiding travelers to the historical society in the next community.

Local news articles prior to the event built up interest and raised awareness of the Yellowstone Trail. A Yellowstone Trail tent at the Theresa Historical Society grounds offered information and Yellowstone Trail merchandise to visitors.

In spite of rain, a steady stream of curious visitors was found at each of the historic sites, making Yellowstone Trail Day a success. Several Model T Ford enthusiasts braved the weather in true Yellowstone Trail spirit! Stay tuned for another Yellowstone Trail Day to be held in the future.



Byron Historical Society VP Nancy More, left, and President Maureen Betz welcome visitors to Byron Town Hall.



Byron Historical Society display. (Photos by Shawn Gerrits)

*** SITE TO SEE ***

Beck's Tourist Cabin in Theresa, Wisconsin

**By Jim Rodell
YTA Member**

Theresa Historical Society is the caretaker of several pieces of Yellowstone Trail history including an original Yellowstone Trail tin sign and a tourist cabin. The tourist cabin is the lone survivor of a group of four which were rented out by the Beck family on the south edge of the village.



Louis Beck's auto dealership and garage. Overland dealer, and later changing to Dodge and Plymouth. Four cabins were constructed south of the garage to offer accommodations to automobile tourists as the first "motels". As the story goes, each cabin had two beds with a nightly rate of \$1.50 per bed or \$2.50 for both. A curtain through the middle of the cabin made it possible to split the cabin in half for two single accommodations. Over time, the cabins were no longer rented and some were sold off for other uses such as chicken coops.

Louis Beck built a fine automobile dealership garage in 1925 on the Yellowstone Trail, starting as a Willys-Knight and



The Beck cabins as pictured in the 30s.

to the home of Solomon and Josette Juneau, founders of Milwaukee and Theresa, Wisconsin. The Beck cabin has been restored and furnished, and was open to visitors on Yellowstone Trail Day.

Grandsons of Louis Beck, Robert Beck and Wayde Beck, are members of Theresa Historical Society and welcomed visitors to the cabin on June 1. Along with guest registers from the 1930's, the original "Tourists Cabins" sign which hung outside the Beck home north of the dealership has survived.



Grandsons of Louis Beck, Robert and Wayde Beck, welcomed visitors to the cabin in Theresa, Wisconsin during the annual June 1 Trail Day.

*** COMING EVENTS & TRAIL-O-GRAMS ***

50th Annual Indianhead Swap Meet & Car Show

The 50th Annual Indianhead Swap Meet & Car Show will be held along the YT at 225 Edward St., in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin on **Sunday, Aug. 4** at 7 am. Expect to see 500-600 cars amidst the display of cars—for show, for sale and for swap. Food varieties and a variety of new, celebratory activities will be offered.

YT Heritage Day is Aug. 10 in Wisconsin

Still time to make plans to see Yellowstone Trail Heritage Day **Saturday, Aug. 10** at historic Hudson, Wisconsin. Three (yes, three) car shows happen: vintage and classic cars, Britfest British cars, and model A club show. Special activities include a dance demonstration of dances from the 1920s and 30s by Dance and Entertainment Studio, a history speaker, and history



displays. Play the Poker Run with stops in Hudson, Roberts, Hammond, Baldwin and Woodville for a chance to win \$100. Many of the stops on the poker run are historic buildings, have connections to the Yellowstone Trail or will host history displays.

Washington Mural set to make its debut

A large mural depicting the coast-to-coast legacy of the Yellowstone Trail will be unveiled in **Sunnyside, WA at 11:30 a.m. on Saturday Aug. 10** at 426 South Sixth, St. The project is the vision of entrepreneur and YT enthusiast Ignacio Ramos Jr., while the mural itself is being painted by Miguel Cuevas. The mural is still in its infancy depicted here, and has expanded significantly since initial ideas with a far more elaborate mural that visually depicts iconic elements of each YT state.



Continued page 8



* TRAIL-O-GRAMS

YT Fest is Aug. 17-18 in Hamlet, Indiana

Mischief and Magic will happen at the Yellowstone Trail Fest in **Hamlet, Indiana, Sat. - Sun., August 17-18.** That is this year's theme.

Yup. Harry Potter rules. Quidditch matches, broomstick making, Hogwarts Express and many other "mystical" things will happen. But the Yellowstone Trail is not forgotten. Scavenger hunt along the Trail, Yellowstone Trail quiz, and parade harken back. See the whole list of activities at <https://yellowstonetrailfest.com>



Yellowstone Trail Days held in Ipswich

Ipswich, SD, birthplace of the Yellowstone Trail, held its annual Yellowstone Trail Days on Fathers' Day weekend, June 14-17. This year drew Saddle Bronc and Bull Riding champions, a big car show and country/western singers on a big stage entertaining hundreds. But the beauty is that it is still called Yellowstone Trail Days and yellow was the color of the day. There still is Grandma's Garden and the Pie Social and the parade. JW. Parmley would be proud.



Historic Westover Garage is no more in Billings

Sad news from Billings, MT. The historic Westover Garage on the Trail at 2313 1st. Ave. N has been

torn down. The 1921 American Blue Book mentioned the garage as "best for wrecker service." Most famed for Charles Lindbergh working there as a mechanic for a short period in 1922

Dowling School celebrates 100 years

Former YTA President (1917-1919) Michael Dowling, made his impact on the world in spite of being a multiple amputee. "The Dowling School for the Crippled" was built in downtown Minneapolis in his honor. The Dowling Elementary School, as it is known today, celebrated its 100th anniversary

May 18. The school continues to serve a large percentage disabled students and also has a potent environmental curriculum.



Discovering the trail in Geneva, Ohio

Member Jeff Fox of Painsville, Ohio, recently discovered a bit of the Trail in use today in Geneva, Ohio. It seems that a street now named West Main Court was the Trail at one time. He writes, "This small section at one time had a utility line run down the middle



and it was patched with concrete and later with asphalt, and a poor job at that. This small section veered off to the right and dead ended at the railroad tracks." Jeff's friend, YTA member Curt Cunningham, figured that "It might be a small section of the original bricks as were on Hwy 20 (previously the Yellowstone Trail).

The original Trail, indeed, continued on, and was not stopped by that railroad track. Surface crossings of railroad tracks was a major problem for the Trail Association. Because of the danger of those intersections, the Association worked diligently to re-route the Trail slightly, avoiding tracks whenever possible, and it accomplished that in many places.

Fagen Fighters WWII Museum acquires White Model 706 Yellowstone Park visitor bus



The largest World War II Museum in Minnesota recently acquired a vintage White

Model 706 Yellowstone Park Tour Bus to be exhibited at the museum. It is now available view at WWII Museum. The museum is located three miles south of YT's midpoint near Granite Falls, adjacent the city airport.

Welcome Dr. Cater

New YTA Board member, Dr. Earl Cater, currently the Director of Douglas County Historical Museum, Waterville, WA, recently gave a presentation about the geology and history of the Yellowstone Trail and Sunset Highways in



that area at the meeting of the Wenatchee Valley Erratics Chapter of the Ice Age Floods Institute. Cater clearly traced the Trail's route through incredible geological difficulties, especially with basalt walls in Pine Canyon, near Waterville.

FORESIGHT, COMMITMENT AND COLLABORATION IN OHIO

Ohio organizational effort on *Brink* of success



Fulton County Visitor's Bureau Director Julie Brink.

By Julie Brink
Fulton County Visitor's Bureau, YTA Member

In the spring of 2022, Michael Buettner (Lincoln Highway member and avid supporter of the Yellowstone Trail) contacted John Swearingen, Museum of Fulton County, Director, asking if he would be interested in promoting the revival of the Yellowstone Trail in Ohio. John then recruited me, Julie Brink, Fulton County Visitors Bureau Director.



First Steps...

We studied the very detailed maps and information of our area provided by Michael Buettner.

I ordered and researched John and Alice's book, "A Good Road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound."

Signs were ordered, first for our curiosity, then signs were ordered for all the Fulton County towns located on the Yellowstone Trail.

Raising awareness across community sectors:

Before we could expect towns to actually display the signs we knew we had to do extensive education to make the public officials and communities aware of the Yellowstone Trail's actual existence and significance to our area.

Mostly via Powerpoint presentations, I shared the story of Joe Parmley and the practical reasons the YT was built: better roads for new automobiles being manufactured, roads that made it easier for farmers to get their produce to the rails, better roads for bicyclists. I then shared the current benefits of promoting the YT including: encouraging people to get off the expressways, slow down and enjoy small town hos-

pitality, quaint shops, Ma and Pa restaurants, experience a "sense of place" and encourage the idea of unity amidst neighboring communities.

These presentations were made to civic and community organizations such as Rotaries, Lions Clubs, history/ heritage organizations, Senior Centers, libraries and even a winery. Community leaders were often present at these talks along with newspaper reporters.

We now have signs up in all the Fulton County towns on the YT as well as two cities that are close by.

Ohio DOT Byway designation effort underway:

To further promote the Yellowstone Trail and NW Ohio, John Swearingen and I thought it would be beneficial for our project to be "The Yellowstone Trail Historical Byway", a designated byway through the Ohio Department of Transportation. If this were to happen the YT Byway would be promoted on



ODOT's website and publications along with the other Ohio byways. The ODOT Byways are automatically included in the National Byways organization information.

The document we submitted, which took a lot of time and effort, just took the YT Byway route to Sandusky where it merges with the Erie Shores Scenic Byway. While the ODOT committee liked our presentation, they asked if we would take the Yellowstone Trail across all of the Northern part of the state as there are places the YT deviates off the Erie Shores Scenic Byway. This project so far has taken two years to get as far as we have gotten, so to take the trail across the entire state will probably take a few more years, which we will continue to pursue.

Plan B: America 250 and a brilliant idea



In the meantime, America will be celebrating its 250th Birthday in 2026. America 250-Ohio is encouraging all Ohio counties to be a part of this celebration by offering opportunities which commemorate the Semiquincentennial. It

just so happens US-250 runs through Ohio and merges with the Yellowstone Trail in Sandusky. Therefore we will be implementing "250 Experiences on the NW Ohio Yellowstone Trail and US 250-OH" which will include 8 counties. We have been awarded grant funds through America 250-OH which will cover much of the printing costs of the "250 Experiences on the NW Ohio Yellowstone Trail and US 250-OH".

Hopefully this will make many more people aware of the National Yellowstone Trail, especially our friends in Central and Eastern Ohio, which should make taking the trail all across Northern Ohio easier.



FROM HELENA, MT TO THE RV HALL OF FAME IN ELKHART, IN

'Tin Can Touring' ideal for slow rolling the YT

By Dal Simile
YTA Member

Last summer I drove to the RV Hall of Fame (HOF) Museum in Elkhart, IN to co-host a vintage trailer rally. The rally was part of a celebration honoring Forrest and Jeri Bone who were inducted into the HOF for giving new life to the Tin Can Tourists (TCT) club and, essentially, kickstarting the vintage



RV Hall of Fame Museum

wanted to take a route that fit with the period of time my truck and trailer (1946 Model 1 Curtis Wright) represented. I knew it would be slower, but more fun.

I chose the first transcontinental highway, named the Yellowstone Trail (YT). Many tourists have used it to cross the Great Plains and vacation in the American West. I love old roads and this is one I've spent quite a bit of time on, including hosting a TCT vintage trailer rally for several years in Livingston, MT.

My plan was to traverse the YT between Jefferson Island, MT, where I have attended the Big Sky Vintage Trailer Rally for the past several years, to Plymouth, IN. From Plymouth, I planned to jog north to South Bend to take a stretch of the Dixie Highway and finally, a short stretch of the Lincoln Highway would get me to Elkhart.

I left home a few days early allowing time to linger along the way.

Things went well until I got to the Lewis & Clark Expedition's Pompey's Pillar site where I started experiencing fuel feed problems. I limped into Miles City and spent a day getting things back in shape, which included returning home to Helena with the Studebaker in tow and swapping it for my Toyota



Van Horn's Western & Antique Auto Museum in Marmarth, North Dakota.

trailer movement in the US.

The rally site is over 1600 miles from my home in Helena, MT.

Considering I was towing with a 1948 Studebaker pickup, this took some planning. I



YT founder JW Parmley's Historical Home and Museum in Ipswich, South Dakota.

Tacoma (382 miles each way!). This false start ate up a bit of my touring time, but my spirits remained high.

At Marmarth, ND, I wandered into Van Horn's Western and Antique Auto Museum. It featured a YT marker at its entrance, a good sign (pun intended)! It is a truly interesting and unexpectedly high-quality museum in a small town. It occupies several buildings and has an ice cream parlor, a welcome addition on a hot day!

Every few miles across SD, it was nice to see YT markers. One of my goals was to visit the J.W. Parmley (the YT's founder) Historical Home and Museum in Ipswich, SD. The home was not scheduled to be open during the time I could be there. I called the SD State Park System and was sent to Tom Hamrlich who is in charge of the home. Tom bent over backwards for me. I arrived well after dark in a pouring rain and Tom didn't even complain about me camping in the backyard of the Parmley home. He gave me a great tour. Thank you!

I detoured a bit to avoid some of the Chicago area traffic, then I went on to Christos Family Dining in Plymouth, IN. It's a place with walls covered in old pictures and mementos from the area, including a mini museum for the YT, Lincoln Highway, Dixie Highway and the Michigan Road. Plus, Plymouth had hosted a TCT regional convention early on.

Truly a historical juncture of my favorite type!

I left the YT to travel north to South Bend on the Dixie Highway, where I toured the world class Studebaker National Museum. After the museum, I enjoyed a burger and root beer at the historic Bonnie Doon Drive-In (85 years in business).

From there I headed East on the Lincoln Highway to Elkhart, where I camped on the grounds of the RV Hall of Fame Museum. That museum is another place that shouldn't be missed. It has a great collection of RVs dating back to 1913 and representing every decade since, as well as an extensive archive. The Museum also welcomes campers to stay on their grounds.

My wife met me in Elkhart for the Bones' induction ceremony, the original purpose of the trip.

It was a great trip, even with hot August weather in the Midwest and a mechanical challenge. Traveling the historic two-lane highways allowed me to experience so much of America. It's even more fun with a vintage trailer and tow vehicle. People often waved and I felt like I was my own little parade!

TRAIL TRAVELLER TALES FROM OSHKOSH TO ALTOONA

Driving the YT in a 1953 Series1 Land-Rover

By Steve Owen
YTA Member

A quick article about my recent drive from Oshkosh, WI to Altoona WI on the YT.

A little background history to start.



Steve Owen

I moved to the USA from the UK in 1992 and reside in Oshkosh, WI. My first “hint” of the Yellowstone Trail was the small park and signage in North Fond du Lac around 2000. But I could find very little

information about the Yellowstone Trail and it stayed in the back of my mind, one of those things I would “look into later.”

Fast forward 20 years and I had bought and restored a vintage 1953 Series One Land-Rover. These are very rare in the USA and mine is one of only 169 known to have been imported from the factory. During a trip to upstate New York in 2023 I saw one sign for the trail. Where? I cannot remember. But it did have a website address. This led me to the YTA and the purchase of John and Alice Ridge's book *A Good Road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound* and a membership to the Association.

There was a slight hiccup, to begin with, as when I got the book at least 10 pages were missing. A quick email was sent and an even quicker reply came back from John & Alice. I received a new book within days. A string of emails followed between us and my interest in the YT became a passion.



A notable YT marker on State Rd. 76 near Oshkosh, WI.



Steve Owen's '53 Series1 Land-Rover looking at home in a Wisconsin campground during a recent YT excursion heading from Oshkosh to Altoona.

I decided that I would drive the trail in its entirety from Seattle to Plymouth in my Land-Rover. But first I needed a trial run and inquired about meeting with John and Alice to discuss the route in person. Being the wonderful people they are, a plan was hatched and I tied my trip with a Car show at the Cinder City Days in Altoona on June 8th and 9th, 2024.

A little planning is needed as my Land-Rover is small compared to modern vehicles and SLOW, with a top speed of 40 mph and cruising happily at 35 mph. Almost perfect speeds for the YT. Not so much for the modern roads. Luckily as we know most of the YT is now back roads. There are a few spots on US Hwy. 10 around Waupaca and Fremont area. For almost all these I found alternate routes that bypassed US 10, the exception being between Co. Rd. T and Bucholtz Rd., Mile marker 222.5 in the book, which involved a 3/4 mile or so run on US10. I will include detailed directions of the alternate route at the end.

Using the Book—or should it be encyclopedia?—I transferred the route to Google Maps and printed off the step-by-step directions.

As a side note, I have now done this for all thirteen states. It is a book in itself! I also found a magazine printed in 2012 that covered the Wisconsin section of the trail and I assume a precursor to the book. All most helpful.

Now the drive.

Leaving early Friday morning I headed through Oshkosh and onto State Rd. 76 northbound. As you motor along you can't miss the very large yellow painted boulder marking the route.



TRAVELLER TRAIL TALES FROM OSHKOSH TO ALTOONA

Then a turn onto Lind Ln. and continuing onto Julius Dr., the route clearly marked with the Yellowstone signs. Traveling along 96 west bound I was able to see deer and turkey in the fields. Entering into Fremont, a quick break to look at the Wolf River and its many fishermen in their boats. It was now decision time, stay on the YT, which meant going onto US Hwy. 10, now a major four lane highway with a 65 mph speed limit, or a detour. For the safety of me and other road uses, I opted to take the detour.



Dirt roads were not uncommon while following historic trail paths.

Setting out, I found Weyauwega to have a simple downtown with some restored buildings before it was on to Waupaca, with its wide main street and nice little park by the river. After that a slow amble to Amherst and the Central Water Brewing Company.

The next stage I had several options and chose the “southern” route along Hwy. B to Plover. Encountering a slight hiccup at Plover, Co. Rd. B was closed while the detour south on I-39 was a BIG NO NO for me. I managed to drive a few yards through the construction zone and into a shopping mall parking lot, weaving my way thru the lots and back on to Co. B. A quick stop at the Steven's Point Brewery and a rest at the Veterans Park brought me to the park's Soo Line Steam Locomotive on display. Crossing the Wisconsin River it was onto



Owen's Land-Rover in downtown Waupaca, WI.



The Bunny Hop Cafe in Junction City, Wisconsin.

what used to be US Hwy. 10, but has since been re-named to Co. Rd. HH to Junction City and thereafter Co. Rd. P.

A lunch break at the Bunny Hop Café, revealed a small family run café with only four tables and home cooked meals. One of my great loves of traveling back roads are long forgotten places like this.

Following Co. Rd. P brought me to the new US 10 Freeway. With Smokey Hill Rd. no longer accessible (WI Mile marker 180.5), I took Blenker Rd. in Blenker to Tresik Drive before finally turning onto Yellowstone Rd., which runs all the way to Marshfield.

Once passed Marshfield it was a simple drive north on Hwy. 13 passing through the home of the famous Colby Cheese. Upon reaching Abbotsford I went a few miles north on Hwy. 13 and then onto Willow Rd. to avoid Hwy. 29. This was part of the original YT and very much to me and the Land-Rovers liking. Not only is it a gravel road for miles and miles, but better still, there is NO traffic. I stayed on Willow Rd. and onto Co. Rd. X. Finally it was time to find a camp for the night and I dropped off the YT to the Coon Fork Lake Campsite in Augusta WI .

A 200 mile trip at an average speed of 30 miles per hour. Tired and dusty from the Gravel roads. One of those beers I picked up from the Brewery stops went down well.

The next day, I attended a car show in Altoona and talked about the drive over from Oshkosh via the Yellowstone trail. Afterwards I was very happy to meet Alice and John and discuss the aspects of driving the trail out west in Washington and Montana. I cannot say “THANK YOU” enough to them, for taking time out to have this eccentric Englishman, driving a Vintage Land-Rover, descend upon them with questions. Their hospitality was above and beyond. Their knowledge and first hand accounts of driving the YT is second to none. Many Notes were made and I am sure there will be more questions.

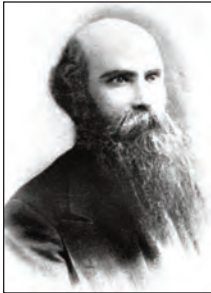
My plan is to ship the Land Rover to the Seattle area in the spring of 2025 and start the journey East. Stay tuned !

THE MULLAN MILITARY ROAD CONFERENCE

Mullan Military Road opens path for YT

By Bill von Tagen & John Ridge

Bill von Tagen, from Boise, Idaho, representing the Yellowstone Trail Association, attended this year's Mullan Military Road Conference in

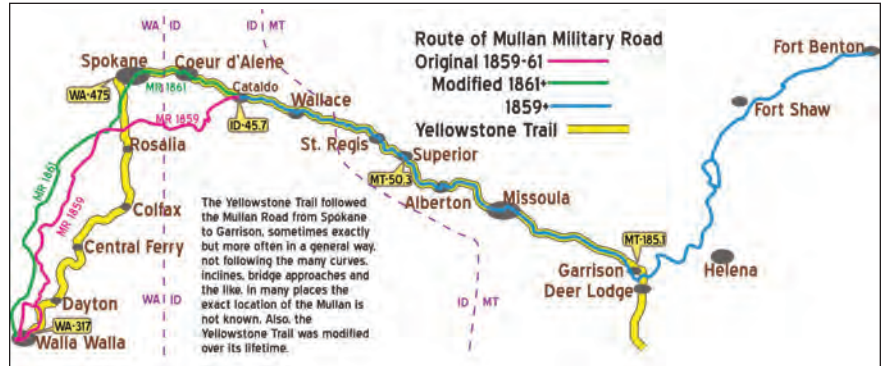


Spokane, Washington. Those attending were a nearly unique blend of interested and knowledgeable citizens and professional historians and the program was a blend of paper presentations, discussions, and delightful tours.

John Mullan

Here is the background story: Beginning in 1912, the founders of the Yellowstone Trail designated existing connected roads with the intent to create that "Good Road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound." By the end of 1914 they had pieced together a route over bits of road, (bits not always good), from St. Paul, Minnesota, past the spur to the Yellowstone National Park at Livingston, Montana, and on to a spot just east of Three Forks, Montana. But to continue west on a line to Seattle presented a problem: the Rocky Mountains with few useable auto roads could not be avoided. Frustration reigned. But the just formed Montana Highway Department (with just one employee) came to the rescue by announcing that a Montana state route would follow the route of the existing Yellowstone Trail in Eastern Montana and then follow the old Mullan Military Road to Idaho. A way would be opened. The Yellowstone Trail route was therefore established along the Mullan leading to Spokane, and road building by the states and locals was undertaken in earnest, even though things were rough going for many years.

What was the poorly maintained (and often not-maintained) Mullan Road? The Mullan Road was a 625 mile



The above road map depicts the original and modified paths of the Mullan Military Road as well as where the path of the Yellowstone Trail overlaps.



Conference-goers absorb historical monuments and narratives at the Mullan Road Historical Site in Cataldo, Idaho.



A close up of the John Mullan monument.



An exhibit of old engineering and surveyor instruments John Mullan would have employed in his time.

engineered wagon road. It was completed during the Civil War by a military group under the command of Capt. John Mullan. Mullan was a West Point graduate and West Point was the premier engineering school in the United States during the 18th and 19th centuries. The Mullan Road ran from Fort Benton, Montana on the Missouri River (giving access to the Midwest and the Eastern States) to Fort Walla Walla, Washington near the Columbia River (giving access to the Pacific Ocean). The Mullan Road was the link which completed the "Northwest Passage", the fabled water route between East to West. In addition, John Mullan's associated survey work benefitted several railroads looking to transverse the Northwest: Northern Pacific, the Great Northern and the Milwaukee Road.

The Mullan Road thus became a vital route for building the Far West and, of course, for fighting the Native American wars. While used little for military purposes, the road was used by settlers and the burgeoning mining industry, but parts of it became impassable in a few years.





The Cataldo Mission is the oldest building in the state of Idaho.

Late in the 20th Century, a small number of local citizens, area historians, and university historians joined together in an annual conference. They shared information and interest of the Mullan Military Road, about John Mullan, about the building of the road in this extremely rough terrain, and to document the location of the road where nature and disinterest had concealed it.

The conferences continue annually, mixing report presentations, discussions, and exploratory tours of known parts of the original road. They are held in varied locations along the Mullan, very often in towns along the Yellowstone Trail. This year the conference of some 40 people was held in

Spokane, Washington. On display were old survey instruments and tools of the kind used by Capt. John Mullan and his crew in surveying and laying out the Mullan Road. There were also field trips to Fourth Of July Pass in Idaho to view original sections of the road, to the Cataldo Mission, the Oldest building in Idaho, and to several of the Mullan monuments.



A Spokane Co. Pioneer Society monument records several historic events at this singular site, including completion of the Mullan Road.

YTA seeks ideas on how to commemorate the 250th Anniversary of America in 2026

On July 4, 2026, our nation will commemorate and celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The journey toward this historic milestone is an opportunity to pause and reflect on our nation's past, honor the contributions of all Americans, and look ahead toward the future we want to create for the next generation and beyond.

The YTA Board is actively brainstorming ways that we can celebrate and utilize this event to share the Yellowstone Trail's story as well as encourage coordinated activities and initiatives in Yellowstone Trail communities.

Additionally, we are presently in the planning stages to co-host a joint conference with the Jefferson Highway Association where the two trails intersect near University Ave. in Minneapolis in 2026.

In Ohio, YTA member Julie Brink is aiding the launch of a 250 for 250 initiative, which seeks to collect 250 stories across the state for the 2026 date (pg. 6). What might we do across the trail to garner individual and collective value, greater than the sum of its parts?

Comments are questions can be directed to YTA President Scott Tedrick via email: stedrick@yellowstonetrail.org



Continued from page 2

In truth, this publication is only possible because of the trail blazed by the Ridges. And this idea is reinforced time and again in light of other emergent initiatives detailed in the preceding pages of the Arrow.

Take for instance, Julie Brink, who, in her role as Fulton County Visitor's Bureau Director, is working to blaze news trails and bolster the YT by obtaining Scenic Byway status (see pg. 7) And who, furthermore, is already looking to 2026 while instituting initiatives to collect stories and promote the trail in the context of the coming semiquincentennial (250th Anniversary) of America. Or, there's Steve Owen (pg. 9 & 10), who found himself inspired to follow the original YT's course in all it's gravel road glory and to share the fun through photos and story.

They are indeed all different ways to celebrate and utilize the trail, but they were each inspired by a remnant legacy of the trail—which was subsequently brought into the clear present by John and Alice and their book, *A Good Road From Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound: A Modern Guide to Driving the Historic Yellowstone Trail 1912-1930*.

I really do wonder if ANY of the YT happenings would be happening without their work. But perhaps, more importantly, the happenings are happening—and they unmistakably showcase how the reemergence of the YT, as sparked some 25 years ago by the John and Alice, is just getting started.

At times, John and I have discussed a grand vision for the YT, one in which the trail serves as the basis of an integrated coast-to-coast cultural heritage tourism exhibit. Here, the individual stories of YT serve to tell the story of America through the communities along its path. One story leads to the next, and through them we experience greater connection.

That connection comes from a common spirit that seeks to serve a community beyond the individual self. It is the same spirit from which the initial vision of the YT emerged, and is the force that motivated men like Michael Dowling get up in the morning, push through the grind, and make a difference.

How do we promote that indomitable spirit of adventure, cooperation and joy? How do we take stock of the values required to accomplish such monumental feats? How do we never forget what we can do when we decide to work together? As we approach the 250th Anniversary of America, I would invite our readers to consider these questions with us.

Apologies to the Ridges for continuing to sing their praises, I am sure to their dismay. But I also know loyal readers of the *Arrow* share the sentiment. Thank you to all those contributed content to this edition. This, also, would not be happening without you. I have appreciated the patience as I've worked to get up to speed and in position to serve the YT legacy. It is a pleasure be travelling this road with all of you.