

The Yellowstone Trail in Carver County

Researched and written by Vicki Albu for
Southwest Corridor Transportation Coalition
<http://southwesttransportation.org>

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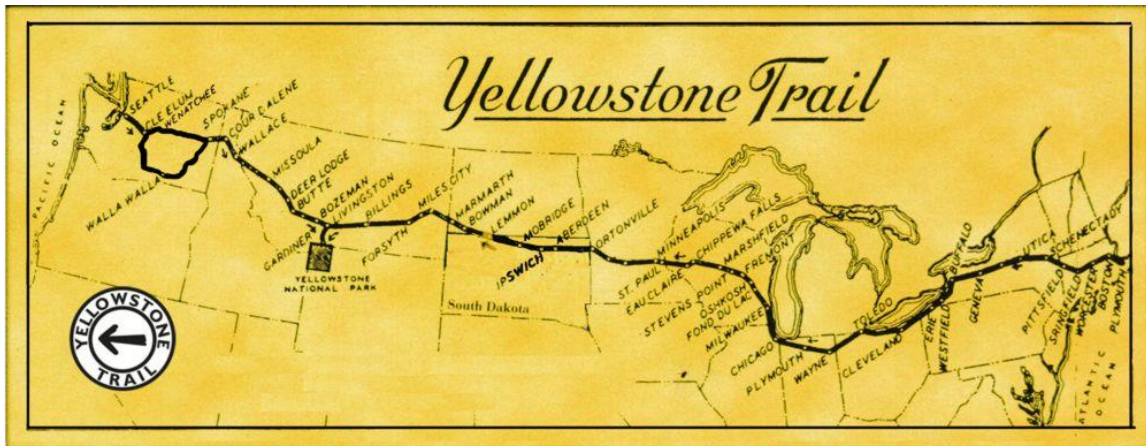
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BACKGROUND

This report was prepared at the request of Southwest Corridor Transportation Coalition to answer three questions about the Yellowstone Trail in Carver County, Minnesota:

1. What is the importance of the Yellowstone Trail as it relates to:
 - a. The United States
 - b. Minnesota
 - c. Carver County
2. Has the Highway 212 corridor ever been OFFICIALLY designated the Yellowstone Trail?
3. The trail was at one time considered to be relocated to near Chaska. Please research the details of this conversation in 1917-1919 and again in the 1920s. There seems to be a conflict between Chaska and Waconia as seen in the local newspapers.



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AYellowstone_Trail_Map.jpg

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FURTHER INFORMATION

It should be noted that the author is not an expert in the complex history and numbering of the highway systems in Minnesota. Besides the official MnDOT website, there are a number of unofficial websites of interest in this area, especially Steve Riner's "Unofficial Minnesota Highways Page" at <http://www.steve-riner.com/mnhighways/mnhome.htm>.

For information related to the history of the Yellowstone Trail, the Yellowstone Trail Association (website, <http://www.yellowstonetrail.org/>) is a recognized authority.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the section of the Yellowstone Trail that travels through Carver County. There is not a uniform understanding or agreement of the precise routes the Trail has taken over the years, but it is clear from the research that the Yellowstone Trail was originally established on the road that traveled through Waconia, it was officially registered with the Highway Department in 1917, and that official state designation never changed until 1959, when the Legislature defined the Yellowstone Trail as the entire length of Highway 212 in Minnesota. The result was that the Trail designation was removed from Waconia's Highway 5 and awarded to Chaska's 212 Corridor as part of modernization and urbanization initiatives of the 1950s.

The Yellowstone Trail was the creation of a network of existing roads through fourteen states, conceived in 1912 through a grassroots effort of private citizens and businessmen and led by the visionary Joseph W. Parmley of Ipswich, South Dakota. There were many trail associations but only three were transcontinental: National Old Trails Road (1912), Yellowstone Trail (1912) and Lincoln Highway (1913). The Yellowstone Trail was one of the most prominent private trail organizations. At a time when federal and state governments were not obligated to support road construction or improvements, through the efforts of its 8,000 members the Yellowstone Trail Association persuaded counties to join together to create the first coast-to-coast intercontinental highway, "A good road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound," becoming its motto.

Historically, there were many discussions and debates about rerouting the Yellowstone Trail, but ultimately Waconia appears to have held onto its Trail "title" until 1959. The Trail designation brought a sense of pride along with tourism and revenue to the city. A detailed discussion of the various attempts to change the trail route are discussed in the following sections. Maintaining a position on the Trail was seen as a community's commitment to its businesses and commerce and gave it notoriety, literally placing it on the map. There was competition among towns to see who could gain a place along the Trail.

The Yellowstone Trail Association and its supporters, including those in Carver County, played a significant role in the Goods Road movement that ultimately led to the establishment of our state and national highway systems. It is ironic that in the end, progress led to extinction of the early Trail associations when modern, numbered highway systems replaced the patchwork of scenic and networked historic Trails.

The legislative change that rerouted the Yellowstone Trail designation to Chaska was likely made in anticipation of development of the interstate highway system in the 1950s and a desire to channel traffic through commercial ventures being planned for the growing communities of Chanhassen (Bloomberg development) and Chaska. It seems reasonable that Carver County's representative in the Legislature, Representative Howard Ottinger (1939-1960), would have supported such a change to promote the developments of Jonathan, Hazeltine and Chanhassen.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL

Research Question: “What is the importance of the Yellowstone Trail as it relates to a) the United States, b) Minnesota, and c) Carver County?”

The Yellowstone Trail was the creation of a network of existing roads through fourteen states, conceived in 1912 through a grassroots effort of private citizens and businessmen and led by the visionary Joseph W. Parmley of Ipswich, South Dakota. At a time when federal and state governments were not obligated to support road construction or improvements, through the efforts of its 8,000 members the Yellowstone Trail Association persuaded counties to join together to create the first coast-to-coast intercontinental highway, “A good road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound,” becoming its motto.

Until the early 1900s, railroads provided the main mode of transport for most Americans; road conditions throughout the country were generally very poor. Pioneer settlers had laid out roads as they were needed, often following trails Indian, fur trader and wagon routes between important points, following the landscape that made for easiest travel. Most routes were simply rutted dirt trails. Some followed the few early mail routes or military roads established by the federal government. After land was surveyed, some townships relocated historic roads on section or half-section lines.ⁱ They also often followed the railroad lines, for convenience and adjacency to town centers.

The concept of marked motor trails to denote long-distance auto routes developed only at the turn of the twentieth century, as the result of organization and promotion by private trail associations.ⁱⁱ In Minnesota, these trails were registered with the highway commission, but the associations were responsible for determining their locations and marking the trails. Often multiple trail association markers appeared on a single stretch of road, which could be confusing for traveling motorists. The “route folders” published by these private groups served as the precursor to highway maps, and were the only guidance available to aid road travelers. These networks of trails and roads were the foundation of our present-day highway system.

There were many trail associations but only three were transcontinental: National Old Trails Road (1912), Yellowstone Trail (1912) and Lincoln Highway (1913). The Yellowstone Trail was one of the most prominent private trail organizations. In 1920 its Association claimed to be the “oldest national highway in America.”ⁱⁱⁱ The Trail was also significant for having hosted a War Department test in August 1916, when a message by the Secretary of War was relayed in record-breaking time from Plymouth to Seattle in 120 hours, demonstrating the value of a transcontinental trail for carrying war messages by automobile in times of emergency.

The Yellowstone Trail Association and its supporters played a significant role in the Goods Road movement that ultimately led to the establishment of our state and national highway systems. Succumbing to pressure from bicycle and auto associations and auto manufacturers, in 1916 the federal government passed highway funding legislation to improve road networks. To comply with and take advantage of the federal highway act, in 1917 the Minnesota Legislature passed a highway bill (Minnesota Laws, Chapter 119, Senate File 609) that replaced the old highway commission with the Minnesota Highway Department. Charles Babcock, a resident of Elk River and a promoter of Good Roads, was appointed as Highway Commissioner and served until 1932.

In 1917, Wisconsin became the first state in the country to implement a unified system of marked, numbered trunk routes. This gave Commissioner Babcock the impetus to propose a Minnesota

constitutional amendment to provide a state-maintained network of 70 numbered trunk highway routes (often referred to as “constitutional routes”). Minnesota voters approved the amendment in a vote on November 2, 1920. During the 1921 legislative session, another bill was passed (Minnesota Laws, Chapter 323) to provide funding for the new trunk highway system. By 1920, a state highway road census revealed that travel by horse was “almost a curiosity.”^{iv} Grading and paving of the trunk highways routes took place in the 1920s and 1930s.

The Yellowstone Trail provided publicity and financial advantages to cities and businesses from the tourists who traveled the route, as well as efficient transportation routes for farmers to transport goods to market. The Yellowstone Trail became so popular that competition between towns arose to see who could get on the Trail. Developed during the Progressive era of modernization and technical advancements, being a Trail city was not just a commercial benefit, but a matter of community pride. The importance of the Trail to the residents of Waconia is evidenced by the documented history of tenacious efforts to retain their position on the route. Carver County Historical Society Executive Director Wendy Petersen Biorn put it succinctly when she said, “The fact that it passes through Carver County literally put us on the map.”

The nature of the Trail designation process forced neighboring cities to collaborate. If one did not pay its membership dues, it put its neighboring towns at risk, since the Trail could be rerouted to other cities who would pay. However, historians John and Alice Ridge say that while it was threatened, the association never rerouted the Trail on account of non-payment of fees.^v

HIGHWAY 212 DESIGNATION

Research Question: “Has the Highway 212 corridor ever been OFFICIALLY designated the Yellowstone Trail? If it was, it was after 1939.”

Yes, Highway 212 was officially designated the Yellowstone Trail through an act of the Legislature in 1959. The chronology included in this report examines the history around trail route registration from 1917 until the change in 1959, which effectively removed the Trail designation from the segment of Highway 5 (which runs through Waconia) and re-designated the Trail on the entire length of Trunk Highway 212 in Minnesota (which runs through Chaska):

Minn. Stat. § 161.14, Subd. 9. Yellowstone Trail. The highway now marked and known as Trunk Highway 212 from the Wisconsin state line to the South Dakota state line is hereby named and designated as the "Yellowstone Trail," and the commissioner of transportation shall adopt a suitable marking design with which the commissioner shall mark or blaze said highway to carry out the purposes of this subdivision. (Laws 1959, Chapter 210, SF 903)

The change was likely made due to the development of the interstate highway system in the 1950s and a desire to channel traffic through commercial developments taking place in Chanhassen (Bloomberg development) and Chaska. It seems reasonable that Carver County’s representative in the Legislature, Representative Howard Ottinger (1939-1960), would have supported such a change to promote the developments of Jonathan, Hazeltine and Chanhassen.

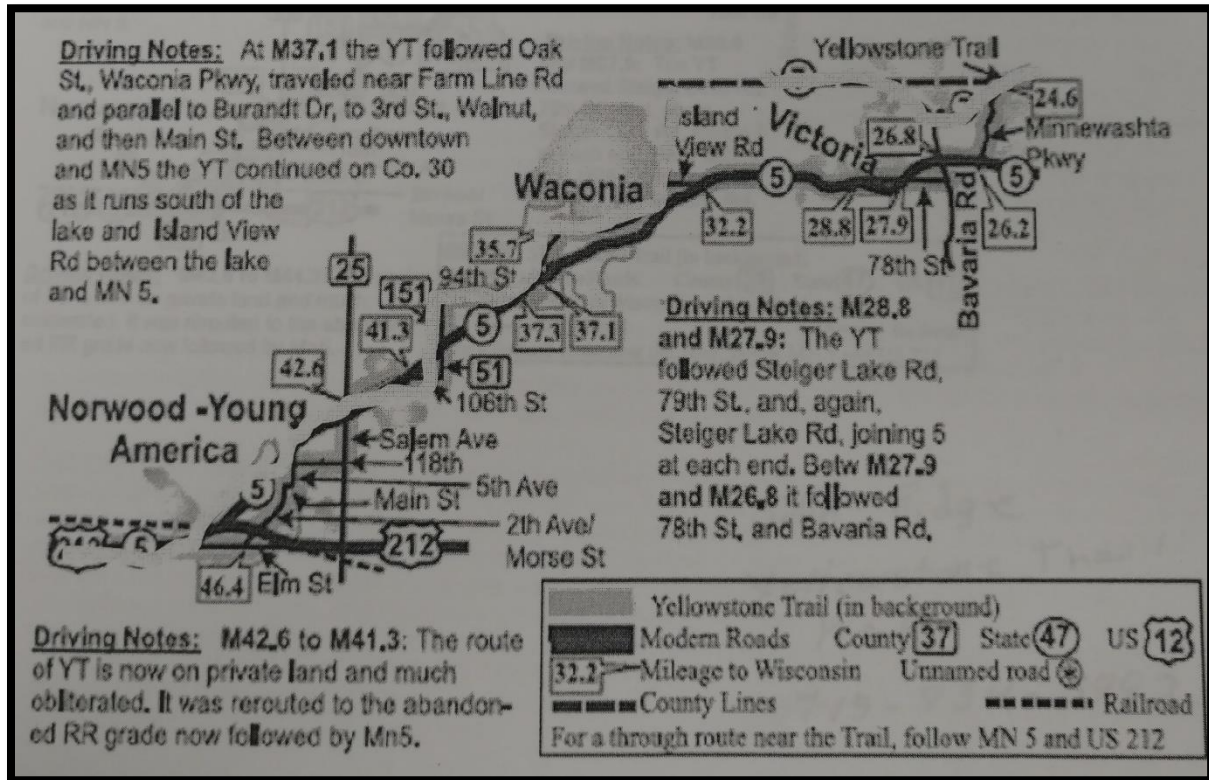
YELLOWSTONE TRAIL RELOCATIONS

Research Question: “The trail was at one time considered to be relocated to Chaska. Please research the details of this conversation in 1917-1919 and again in the 1920s. There seems to be a conflict between Chaska and Waconia as seen in the local newspapers.”

Historically, there were many discussions about rerouting the Yellowstone Trail, but ultimately the route through Waconia appears to have held its position until 1959. A detailed discussion of the various attempts to change the trail route are discussed in the following sections.

The original Yellowstone Trail came through Chicago and Milwaukee, north to Appleton, Wisconsin, and then west to Hudson, where it crossed into St. Paul. Continuing westward through Minneapolis, Hopkins and Excelsior, it passed through Victoria, Waconia, Young America, and Norwood, and on into Glencoe and west to Yellowstone Park in Montana.

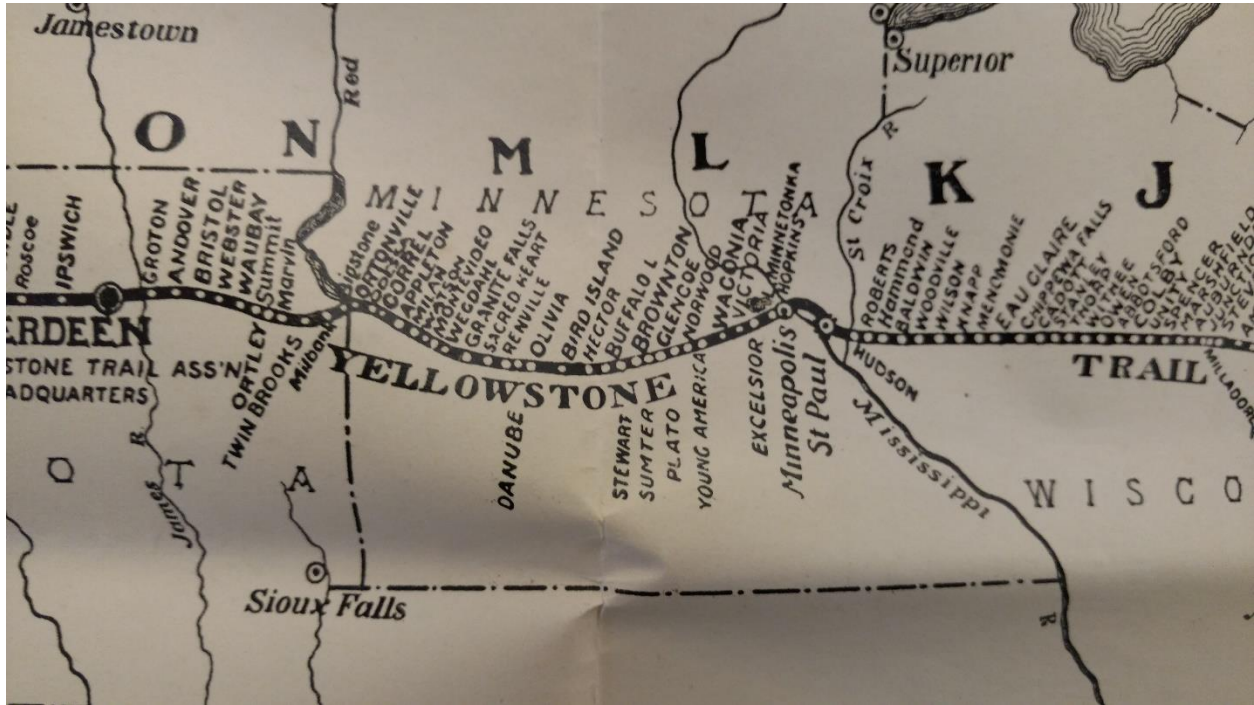
In Carver County, the original Yellowstone Trail generally followed the route of existing Minnesota Highway 5 and (west of Norwood Young America) U.S. Highway 212. The following map is courtesy of the Carver County Historical Society, used by them with permission of the Yellowstone Trail Association:



According to Wendy Petersen Biorn, the route of the original Trail can be viewed along the lake near the Waconia Event Center. From the Event Center, “Walk to the east. The original trail ran between the south side of the lake and what is now Highway 5.”^{vi}

Volunteers have mapped the original route to the best of their ability based on known sources. However, even the new Yellowstone Trail Association (est. 2003) doesn’t have documentation of the exact alignment of the early Trail and each of its variations.^{vii} Throughout the life of the Trail, the route was

subject to change, and there is no known record of every single modification. Comprehensive records of the Yellowstone Trail Association do not exist. In addition, author Harold A. Meeks pointed out that routes may have varied seasonally, due to weather and road conditions.^{viii} These are reasons why the history of the Yellowstone Trail continues to fascinate transportation historians and automobile enthusiasts.



“Yellowstone Trail Association Road Condition Map Service, Corrected Each Week”
circa 1920. MN Highway Department, Registered Trails Correspondence, Yellowstone Trail.
State Archives, Minnesota Historical Society.

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS RELATED TO TRANSPORTATION IN MINNESOTA, WITH EMPHASIS ON THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL IN CARVER COUNTY

A study of the Yellowstone Trail in Carver County necessarily includes a general understanding of transportation history. Before U.S. Highway Routes were designated in 1926, auto trails that were designated and signed by various trail associations, such as the Yellowstone Trail Association, were the primary means of marking roads through the United States. A “trail” meant a connected series of roads from one community to the next, and was the precursor to the modern-day highway. Road building and maintenance were mainly local affairs until around 1920. After the initial federal highway system and route numbering were implemented in 1926, it continued to expand for thirty years, when the Interstate Highway System was established in 1956.

The Minnesota Legislature addressed how townships and counties could approach road and bridge building from its early days of statehood in 1858. Initially its interest in roads were for military and postal delivery reasons (“stage routes”). Although a constitutional amendment passed in 1898 authorized the state to participate directly in road development, the state did not begin building roads and bridges until after the State Highway Commission was created in 1905.^{ix} Meanwhile, a Good Roads Movement had evolved, beginning with bicyclists who began advocating for improved roads in the 1880s and growing into a larger movement with the advent of the automobile in the early 20th century.

The early roads were rudimentary dirt paths, their ruts worn by repeated wagon or foot traffic. Depending on the makeup of the soil, the paths could be sandy or muddy, often impassable in dry or wet weather. Subject to materials available locally, some communities added a layer of clay, straw or hay, but those were temporary solutions. By 1917, some jurisdictions were experimenting with combinations including tar and concrete pavement to meet the demands of increased auto traffic. Brick paving and plank roads were not as popular in Minnesota as elsewhere due to costs and the ravaging effects of seasonal weather changes. Most Carver County newspaper articles describe grading and graveling as the preferred treatments, at least until the 1920s.

Before 1905

To understand the early history of roads in Carver County, this account from the *Waconia Patriot* dated 1 January 1931 is helpful:

An important road in the county led from Benton post office west to Young America and on into McLeod County, almost parallel to the railroad that came later. Young America was connected with Watertown by a route that meandered slightly, although not around lakes. It is probable that marshy areas were responsible for the deviations. It is clear from the early maps that the heavy timber, sloughs and lakes seriously interfered with the road. In fact, the routes were more in the nature of detours, than regular highways. Waconia was at first unfortunate in being off the natural route from the Twin Cities to Glencoe and Hutchinson and the western military outposts in the state. If the village had been on such a route, better roads would have been assured.

Old-timers of the Waconia neighborhood have told the writer that they traveled principally over trackless stretches and found the crudely built roads little better than none. But it is significant that the people of Waconia and the community were early interested in good roads and took advantage of every opportunity to make improvements in this line. The history of the past 30 years proves that this earlier interest grew with the years. Waconia was actively interested in the

Yellowstone Trail when the project first was launched and has been a supporter since. The village and community have indorsed and encouraged all road-building plans, including the Babcock system...^x

1905: State Highway Commission Created by Minnesota Legislature

In 1905, the Legislature created the State Highway Commission to build roads and bridges (1905 General Laws of Minnesota, Chapter 230). However the law did not provide funding for any road construction until after March 1, 1907. In his June 1907 Circular No. 3, State Highway Engineer George W. Cooley explained to county auditors and county commissioners the method of establishing state roads and obtaining State Aid:^{xi}

A county may designate any road or part thereof as a State road or may designate more than one road if they so desire. The State Aid fund is to be applied on some permanent improvement, either in grading, or preparing a suitable foundation, or surfacing with gravel or other material to the extent of not more than one-third the total cost of the work and not more than the amount allotted by the Highway Commission... Your attention is respectfully called to sections 9 and 10, chapter 163, Laws of 1905, and the Rules and Regulations in the Road Red Book."

County boards would designate the precise part(s) of the road to be improved and submit surveys and specifications to the Highway Commission for review and approval.

In its summary report to the Governor, the Highway Commission reported that in 1905, Carver County had 523 miles of road, with 14 towns, and no dedicated Roads and Bridges fund.^{xii}

1911: the Elwell Law

The period from 1911 to 1921 saw the peak of the Good Roads Movement and was very important to road building and highways. In 1911, Minnesota enacted legislation (1911 General Laws of Minnesota, Chapter 254, commonly known as the Elwell Law) to provide for the laying out and construction of "state rural highways," and specifying how they would be paid for. It mentions a state highway commission, but at that early date, it was very small. If a state rural highway was approved, the state paid half the construction cost, with the remainder to be paid by the county or local governments.

Nothing in statute pertained to registration of marked trails until 1917. According to historian Arthur J. Larsen, "The trail blazing movement of the second decade of the 20th century grew independently of state or local governments."^{xiii}

1912: the Dunn Amendment and the Inception of the Yellowstone Trail

The Dunn Amendment of 1912 called for revising the road and bridge section of the constitution and appointment of many engineers or overseers of highways. Following the adoption of this amendment, an annual one mill tax levy was passed and rural roads were divided into three classes for construction and maintenance purposes: state, county and township roads.^{xiv}

It was in 1912 that Yellowstone Trail visionary Joseph W. Parmley convened a group of businessmen to build a better road between Ipswich and Aberdeen, South Dakota, 26 miles away. That idea eventually grew into the concept for a transcontinental highway leading from the East Coast to Yellowstone Park. During a Good Roads meeting in Waconia in February 1912, it was announced that an "interstate highway" was being proposed from Yellowstone Park to Chicago." The road was planned to pass through Norwood, Young America, Waconia, Victoria, and Excelsior. In Waconia it ran on the south side of what is now Island

View Golf Course, along the east side of Lake Waconia, down Main Street and then southwest past what is now the Carver County Fairgrounds. The highway was to become the Yellowstone Trail.”^{xv}

If Parmley was the “father of the trail,” Michael J. Dowling was its “pioneer.” In 1912, one automobile party made the entire trip from the Twin Cities to Yellowstone Park in two weeks. It consisted of three “machines,” led by Dowling of Olivia, Minnesota. “In many places a faint prairie trail had to be followed,” some fences had to be removed for passage, and local guides were hired.^{xvi} For completing that tour, Dowling was declared by the Minneapolis Tribune to be “the pioneer of the new Yellowstone Trail.”^{xvii}

1913: Yellowstone Trail at Forefront of Good Roads Movement

By early 1913 the subject of federal government participation in road construction was in its infancy. Talk of road construction generally referred to postal or stage routes or “post roads.” George W. Cooley, State Highway Commissioner of Minnesota, was an advocate of the Good Roads movement. He was among the first to suggest the creation of a national highway commission.

A letter in the Registered Trail Correspondence files of the Minnesota Highway Department dated 31 March 1913 from the State Highway Engineer to Chippewa County State Bank reported that the Highway Commission met informally with Mr. M. J. Dowling and 25 others on the subject of the Yellowstone Trail. The Board was in favor of “approving the proposed route provided the location thereof in the several counties be approved by the County Boards thereof and so reported to this department.” The letter was in response to a bank official who recommended that the roadway should substantially follow the Milwaukee Railway Line.

Governor Eberhart proclaimed the first “Good Roads Day” in Minnesota on 17 June 1913. Local organizations, commercial clubs and Good Roads associations throughout the state participated by gathering together citizens to work on road improvements—dragging and grading and sometimes graveling.

The *Minneapolis Tribune* reported on 17 August 1913 that Michael J. Dowling, former speaker of the Minnesota House of Representatives had completed a 1,000-mile road trip to the park with his wife and three children. The story of that road trip, at least his second round-trip journey to Yellowstone Park, would make an interesting book topic, as Dowling was a triple amputee, having lost both legs and most of his left arm to frostbite suffered in an 1880 blizzard when he was only 14 years old. At 17, Dowling made a deal with Yellowstone County commissioners that if they would pay for artificial limbs and send him to college for a year, he would live independently for the rest of his life. His agility, spirit and determination are shown as he demonstrated how he ably performed many tasks including driving his automobile in a film clip on the Minnesota Historical Society’s website^{xviii} Dowling was responsible for legislation that established what is today known as Gillette Children’s Hospital.^{xix} An avid motorist and a Republican who advocated for Progressive reforms, he would become the president of the Yellowstone Trail Association in 1917.

On 25 October 1913 the *Tribune* reported that the National Highways Association, “the most powerful good roads organization in the world,” attended the conference of the Twin City-Yellowstone Trail Association in Minneapolis, and that there was a good chance that the Yellowstone Trail “will join hands with it and cause the ‘Yellow Trail’ to become a part of the proposed system of transcontinental highways of 50,000 miles backed by the national association.” The roads would be built of concrete and not less than 22 feet wide. The Montana representatives explained how convict labor was being used to work on their roads.

The 26 October 1913 edition of the *Tribune* reported that tensions were high at the conference, which was attended by Minnesota state highway commission engineer George W. Cooley. Fearing that their “Yellow Trail” was being abandoned in favor of a “Northern Branch” through Minnesota, the Twin City-Yellowstone Trail Association “called a halt on proceedings...(and) finally decided to enter the Highways Association on one condition—that the executive officers immediately recognize the ‘Yellow Trail’ and place it on its maps.” The debate centered on whether the Yellowstone Trail would “become part of a system of roads through the United States or just one road.” Mr. Cooley of the highway commission would not give his official approval but encouraged groups to work with county commissioners to have the road in the individual counties selected and designated as part of the Yellowstone Trail. He “declared that organization was the only way to accomplish anything and that a system of roads was far better than one road.” At this same meeting the committee on road blazing recommended use of chrome yellow “and that the indicator be of black on the yellow. They are to be boulders a mile apart painted yellow with black arrows pointing the way or black R’s and L’s denoting which way to turn.” The application of towns on the so-called “North Branch” (Willmar, Litchfield, Benson, Morris, Graceville, Browns Valley, and Sisseton) was turned down.

1914: Waconia Gets its First Road Grader

The issue of financing was always urgent to the Yellowstone Trail organizers. On 19 April 1914 the *Minneapolis Tribune* reported that Good Roads organizer W. C. Conway was arrested on fraud charges for falsely representing the U.S. government as an official of the National Highways Association, and for pocketing money raised to promote the Yellowstone Trail. This situation forced Yellowstone Trail promoters to hone their membership recruitment and marketing skills.

In 1914, the city of Waconia acquired a road grader. Also that year, Main Street became a state road, part of what was then called State Road 3.^{xx}

1915: Twin Cities, Aberdeen and Yellowstone Trail Association Renamed

“Yellowstone Trail to Be Transcontinental Road,” announced the *Minneapolis Tribune* on 19 February 1915. The paper reported that the Twin Cities, Aberdeen and Yellowstone Trail Association held its third annual meeting in Montevideo, Minnesota on February 18. “Yellowstone Trail was adopted by unanimous resolution as the official name of the automobile touring route, with the phrase, ‘A good road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound’ as a definitive.” Delegates from many towns and cities along the route of the trail including organizational representatives voted on the resolution. On February 20 the *Tribune* added that the Association established dollar memberships and reorganized at that meeting, now calling it the Yellowstone Trail Association. It said Joseph W. Parmley, “father of the trail,” was reelected president and besides planning to advertise the trail as “the most attractive transcontinental touring route,” he intended to address the organization’s deficit. A resolution was adopted to urge the Interior Department to admit automobiles to Yellowstone Park, where only non-motorized vehicles were then permitted.

In May 1915, the Association was making plans to inspect the Yellowstone Trail from Minneapolis to Seattle. J. W. Parmley prepared to travel 350 miles of the Trail across South Dakota in only sixteen hours, a daring feat for the times. After a month of road work following inspection, on June 15 they planned to hold a dedication run. “No other great national roadway is in better condition than the Yellowstone Trail,” bragged the Minneapolis Automobile Club in the 9 May 1915 edition of the *Tribune*. A deal had finally been reached with Yellowstone Park officials to permit automobiles “in a manner that would not scare the horses drawing carriages.” The Yellowstone Trail Association planned to carry a letter from Chicago to

Seattle, a distance of 2,400 miles, in under 100 hours. Although the record was “smashed” by two hours and 51 minutes, one man died and two were killed in the race, underscoring the danger of early road travel.

In 1915, J. W. Parmley recommended reforms including the hiring of skilled road engineers in place of farmers and volunteers, use of prison labor for heavy construction, placement of proper signage, and conversion to a property tax system so that governments could build “great transcontinental highways, and aid to states in building laterals that will become parts of a system connecting state capitals.”^{xxi} He advocated the use of sand clay roads for the Midwest.

1916: Road Conditions Bad; Carver County Votes to Improve Yellowstone Trail

“Yellowstone Trail to Be Opened by Close of Year, Is Promise,” proclaimed the *Tribune* on 3 February 1916, explaining that the Yellowstone Trail Association would focus its annual convention on delegates’ route proposals. Minneapolis was expected to benefit most from tourism once the route was laid out.

Carver County Commits to Road Work after Threat to Move Route

On 9 April 1916, the *Tribune* said that the past year had brought to completion many of the roads laid out under the 1911 Elwell Law. It said the Yellowstone Trail west of Minneapolis had been graded and the counties had arranged for graveling from Carver County to Granite Falls. “Carver County has not laid out any substantial work on this line for the coming year, but with the system of maintenance on previously constructed roads in this county a good road will be found on the line directly west.”

On May 2, 1916 the Carver County Commissioners decided to spend \$4,000 on improvements to the Yellowstone Trail, with each community assessed its share. “The length of the trail thru this county is 25 miles, the townships intersected and the mileage of highway being, viz: Chanhassen, 3-1/2 miles; Laketown, 7 miles; Waconia, 7; Benton, ½ mile; Young America, 7 miles.^{xxii} Auto dealer O. J. Kuntz of Waconia persuaded the Waconia Commercial Club to join the Yellow Trail Association, also in May 1916.^{xxiii} He was likely involved in the discussions that same month to form a Carver County Yellowstone Trail Automobile Club, with autoists living within five miles of the Trail encouraged to join.^{xxiv} Also that month, the Yellowstone Trail Association met in Minneapolis to confer with auto enthusiast groups to urge membership in the Association and to map out the Trail’s eastern route from Chicago to Plymouth.

In August 1916, the War Department made arrangements with the Yellowstone Trail Association to carry a message by a system of relays along the Trail, from Plymouth to Seattle in 120 hours.^{xxv} The purpose was to demonstrate the value of a transcontinental trail for carrying war messages in times of emergency. The trip was touted as having been completed in record time, faster than any train.

But by the end of August, the *Waconia Patriot* was reporting that Carver County had been neglecting road maintenance and there was talk of moving the Yellowstone Trail not just out of Waconia, but out of Carver County.

The several parts of the road running through Carver County have been grossly neglected, so much in fact that the State Highway Commissioners have had numerous complaints as to the impassable conditions of the roads, particularly between Waconia, Young America, and also east of Victoria. These road conditions have been so well advertised as to cause a move to be made by towns north of the trail to make an attempt to re-locate the Yellowstone Trail out of Carver County. This action prompted a bunch of the live and enthusiastic businessmen residing along the trail from Norwood to Hopkins to call a meeting...

Transcontinental routes are a rare thing and to lose one due to absolute neglect of road maintenance would be at once a disgrace and sorrow to the citizens of the county," the newspaper report continued. The meeting was held at Victoria where 45 citizens met to appoint a committee to petition county commissioners to make immediate repairs and to develop a membership campaign.^{xxvi} The commissioners decided to have the district road engineer and the county auditor meet with the local association to traverse the route to inspect road conditions. They travelled in a group of fifteen automobiles and took many photos, noting where ruts needed filling and graveling, after which the commissioners "promised that extensive repairs would be made to the trail at once." They appointed a committee to appear before the state highway commissioner to argue for federal aid, and planned to complete the work in the fall.^{xxvii}

In October 1916, the Yellowstone Trail Association entered into a novel new service, that of providing "road condition maps" to travelers.^{xxviii} These were the precursors to road maps issued first by service stations and later by state transportation authorities. 1916 was also the year when the U. S. government enacted legislation requiring states to establish highway commissions if they wished to receive federal funding for roads. This legislation would be improved upon under the 1921 Federal Highway Act.^{xxix}

1917: Federal Road Aid Drives Creation of Department of Highways; Yellowstone Trail Officially Designated in Minnesota; Pledges Hard Surfaced Trail by 1920

Department of Highways Created

The State Highway Commission was abolished in 1917, and the Legislature created the Department of Highways. The first commissioner of the new agency was Charles M. Babcock of Elk River. He was empowered to employ staff and a deputy commissioner "who must be an engineer as well as road builder."^{xxx} The transition to a professionally organized, state-run highway system was underway.

Twelve thousand autos were expected to cross the Yellowstone Trail in 1917, after 4,219 the preceding year. In one week during July 1917, more than 1,850 automobiles including 236 trucks were counted passing the Cedar Lake Ice House on the Yellowstone Trail east of Waconia. Also in 1917, the Yellowstone Trail was designated as one of four military highways to be used to transport troops and equipment.^{xxxi}

Minnesota was to receive its first annual installment of \$142,000 in federal road (Federal Aid) funds in 1917. Carver County applied for \$15,000 for its section of the Yellowstone Trail. The main requirement was for counties to cover half the cost of any road improvements.^{xxxii} The Carver County Board planned to conduct work in 1917-1918 and proposed that each town would pay a portion of the county's costs, payable on July 1, 1917 and July 1, 1918: Victoria, \$250; Young America, \$750; Norwood, \$1,000; and Waconia, \$1,500. Subsequently the total amount needed for the repairs, mainly grading and graveling, was adjusted upwards to \$75,000. The County Board resolution calling for donations from the towns affected by road improvement was controversial, since there was no direct solicitation of the villages for funds. The issue of concessions toward a public road building fund was left with each town to meet with its county commissioner.^{xxxiii}

The Yellowstone Trail Association considered applications for changing the trail route in March 1917, not in Carver County but specifically related to the section of the route from Montevideo to Granite Falls.^{xxxiv} At that same meeting, H. O. Cooley, general agent of the Yellowstone Trail Association, criticized the manner of giving road repair contracts to farmers rather than experienced road builders as wasteful. Also, resolutions were adopted to pledge Minnesota's efforts to have a hard surfaced Trail from coast to coast by 1920, and that members confer with county commissioners on ongoing road maintenance issues. It

also “deplored” the U.S. government’s commercialization of Yellowstone Park, which is curious since the Association was promoting its tourism.^{xxxv}

Trail Marking Legislation

In April 1917, a new Minnesota law (Chapter 318, Laws of 1917) regarding trail markings allowed trail associations to apply to register with the highway commissioner the “name, detailed route, color, combination and design used in marking said highway as a trail.” The required fee for an application was \$5. The highway commission held the power to determine priority of right in the use of the trail name and marking colors.^{xxxvi} This is the first mention in state statute concerning registered trails. The need for legislation was probably due confusion among motorists by the numerous signs posted along trails, and the lack of a uniform, regulated marking system.

Rather than specifying each trail designation in statute, the commissioner in the Department of Highways maintained a register or log book of approved trail marking applications. That original bound volume today resides in the MnDOT Library adjacent to the Capitol, and includes the original Order signed by Commissioner Charles Babcock approving the application of the “Yellow Stone Trail Association.” Its application submitted on 26 July 1917 was approved by the Commissioner of Highways on 10 September 1917. (See Appendix A.) It should be noted that a description of the precise trail route is omitted; however, correspondence in the Highway Department’s files at the Minnesota Historical Society indicate that a map was submitted along with the application.^{xxxvii} The application reads:

“...Therefore, it is ordered that the said Highway Trail be registered in the office of the Highway Department, as starting from E. Line Washington County at Vil. of Lakeland, and thence via West to Big Stone County, and terminating at West Line Big Stone County at Ortonville, to be known as Yellow Stone Trail.”

Examination of early maps and route guides produced by the Yellowstone Trail Association and other documents show that the original route of the Trail passed through Waconia in Carver County.

Carver County Still Slacking

In May 1917, M. J. Dowling of Olivia, Minnesota was elected president of the Yellowstone Trail Association at its annual convention at Aberdeen.^{xxxviii} Later that month, a Yellowstone Trail Information Office was established in the Dyckman Hotel in Minneapolis. Other changes were a plan to distribute revised route folders, as well as proposing a new marking system for the Trail, to consist of iron markers in bright yellow and black, 9-1/2 inches in circumference. “State by state, section by section this strong organization is gradually making a better road,” the organization announced. However they also complained that in Minnesota, “the only poor portion of road runs through Carver County...”^{xxxix}

By October 1917, the Carver County portion of the trail was reported to be in somewhat improved condition “from the Geo. Hartman farm to the skimming station.” The federal government had approved the road repair plans, which included elimination of most railroad crossings as a safety measure, and there was “considerable talk of a bridge at Victoria. As soon as the approved papers arrive from Washington the county board will advertise for bids and work probably will be commenced late in fall.”^{xl}

1918: United States at War

Yellowstone Trail Receives Federal Funds

Because the United States had entered the World War, there was an interest on the part of government officials to relieve railroad freight congestion and encourage the use of trucks to transport goods. It

appears that some federal road aid was supplied to several communities across the United States to make improvements to the Yellowstone Trail in 1918 under the auspices of Federal Aid Project No. 14, and additional research may yield more specifics.

Carver County awarded its road repair contract to A. J. Martens of Deephaven in May 1918. "Mertens will commence at both ends of the trail which will be built under the supervision of the U.S. government," the papers reported. A bridge would be built by the railroad at Victoria, thereby eliminating all railroad crossings but for the one at Norwood. At the skimming station west of town, the road would run direct west and north of Hyde Lakes in order to avoid three dangerous crossings. A contract for metal culverts went to A. D. Hohle and the Winona Concrete Co. received a contract for concrete culverts.^{xli}

The County Board minutes read, "On motion that part of State Road No. 3 known as the Yellowstone Trail heretofore changed and relocated and the same is hereby abandoned as a State Road and that maintenance work cease on that part of the road which is described as follows: Beginning at the section corners of Sections 28, 29, 32, and 33, Township 116, Range 25, and running thence South and Southwesterly through Sections 31 and 32, Waconia Township; Southwest through Section 36(?), Benton; thence west on the Section line between Sections 1 and 12, Young America Township; thence south to the village limits of the Village of Young America."^{xlii} On May 22 the county auditor invited bids for "Federal Aid Project No. 14, State Road 1 and 3, Yellowstone Trail, total length 26.5 miles" for loading, hauling and placing gravel.^{xliii} The contract was awarded to Hendrickson and Hohle, who had commenced work by November 8. The work was supervised by Engineer W. H. Tischer who lived in Waconia.^{xliiv}

Official Stuck in the Mud in Carver County

As if more evidence was needed to show that the road needed improvements, the *Lonsdale Times* of 14 June 1918 reported that Secretary of State Julius Schmahl got his car stuck in the mud after a rainfall in Carver County, and had to pay five dollars to an enterprising farmer to pull his car out.

In March 1918, the Yellowstone Trail Association announced plans to complete marking of the Trail east of Chicago. The markers were described as square, each bearing a black arrow and the words, "Yellowstone Trail," and would be placed by the middle of summer.

1919: Babcock Advocates for Relocating Yellowstone Trail through Shakopee and Chaska

The 1919 Automobile Blue Book, Volume 5 shows the Trail going through Waconia: "Keep ahead. Through 4 corners at cemetery," it notes.

Charles W. Babcock was the state highway commissioner who proposed a statewide Good Roads amendment to the Legislature in 1918. One of the components of his plan was to relocate the Yellow Trail designation, away from the south shore of Lake Minnetonka via Excelsior to Norwood, in favor of a more direct and efficient route via Shakopee and Chaska. A delegation of Carver County protesters traveled to Minneapolis, where they were successful in persuading the Civic & Commerce Association and the Hennepin County Board to recommend that the Legislature "give careful consideration of the proposed change of route" before including it in the legislation.^{xlv} (A map illustrating the Babcock proposal in Carver County is found later in this report.)

The Yellowstone Trail Association officers were moved from Aberdeen to Minneapolis in April 1919, with H. O. Cooley as manager. Cooley had also organized and served as a member of its executive committee,

the Associated Highways of America, which included “every marked and organized highway that traverses at least five states.”^{xlvi} There were thirty roads or trails forming the association.

In June 1919, transcontinental motor travel from Chicago on the Lincoln Highway (which normally went through Iowa) had to be sent through Minneapolis over the Yellowstone Trail, on account of heavy rains that caused numerous automobiles to be stalled during the heaviest tourist season. A “pathfinder” (one who charted the best routes) for a Chicago motor club recommended the route change, and added that “the cement highway is the only road that gives universal satisfaction. The only trouble he observes is that some early builders constructed the 12-foot cement highway, which is too narrow for a much-traveled road.”^{xlvii}

1920: Rivalry between Waconia and Chaska; Babcock Plan is Passed; Auto Ownership Explodes

In Waconia, Paul A. Herrmann and Walter C. Johnson, local Ford dealers, rented the Yellowstone Trail Garage from Frank Beiersdorf, for use in repairing cars, while their existing garage will be used for storage. Presumably the business was more lucrative along the Yellowstone Trail.^{xlviii}

In May 1920, the Yellowstone Trail in Carver County was reported to be in fair condition west to Waconia, but then in poor condition due to road construction. By June it was considered “fair to good” along the entire route.^{xlix} On July 3, 1920 the *Minneapolis Tribune* reported the road through Excelsior, Victoria, Waconia, and Stewart...” to be “in good shape. The road is graded and graveled practically all the distance now and sheds the rain very readily.” On July 17, 1920 the Automobile Club of Minneapolis reported, “This is still the best road to Chicago. Yellowstone trail west good with a few spots near Waconia.”^l By August, conditions were reportedly excellent.^{li}

In November 1920, the Yellowstone Trail Association in Minnesota met at Glencoe. Waconia was entitled to ten voting delegates at this state convention; those delegates were elected by the Waconia Commercial Club. This newspaper article reflects the democratic process that was utilized by the trail association to administer its business.

Waconia and Chaska Vie for County Seat

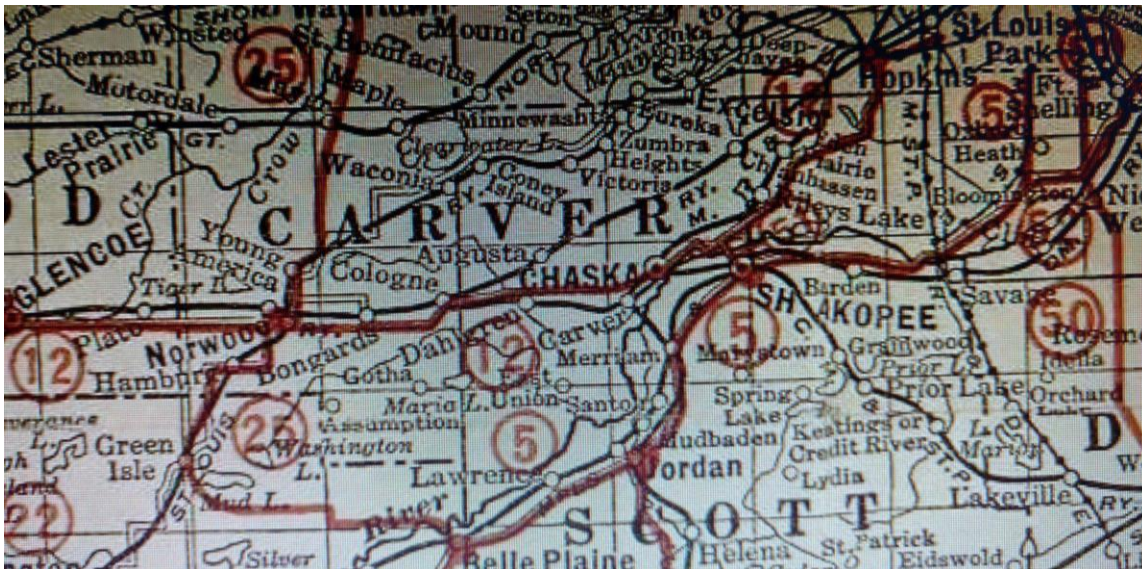
Rivalry sprang up between Waconia and Chaska in June 1920 amid a movement to move the county seat from Chaska to Waconia, which was more centrally located. In the end, Chaska retained its county seat title and Waconia remained on the Yellowstone Trail, but not until some accusations had been thrown. “If she is not negligent in living up to past promises, what could the people of Carver County expect in case she won Friday’s election? We hardly believe the people of Carver County will take a chance. You take no chance when you vote NO at the election tomorrow,” the newspaper editorial taunted. Chaska claimed that Waconia had not paid its Yellowstone Trail pledge made in 1917, even though the Trail “has been under construction for a year at least,” but Waconia retorted with the headline, “Chaska Tells a Big One.”^{lii} Apparently Waconia paid only \$750 of its \$1,500 pledge in January 1920 with the understanding that the balance was to be paid when construction was completed. Chaska argued that the Waconia city council only conceded to pay the remaining \$750 after what it called “the county seat fight,” which went to the polls on June 8, 1920.

The Babcock Plan and the Fate of the Yellowstone Trail

On November 2, 1920, Minnesotans voted and passed state constitutional amendment no. 1, the “Babcock Plan,” which called for a system of 70 trunk highways called “legislative routes” to be financed

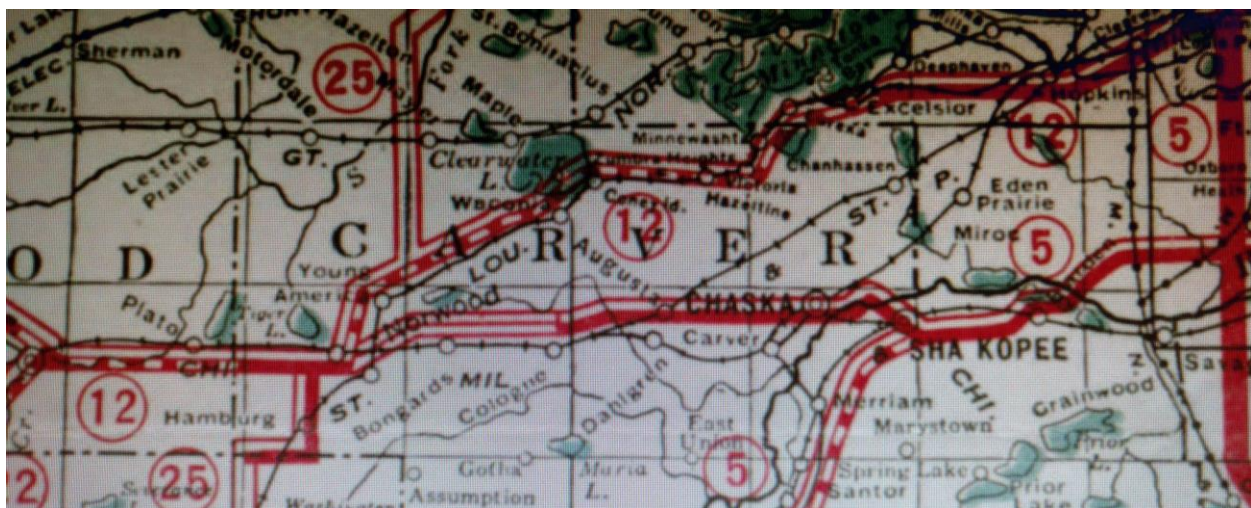
by automobile registration taxes and bonds.^{liii} The tax averaged \$18 per vehicle and was expected to raise \$5 million.

A 1919 map was used to show Minnesota voters the proposed trunk highways to be established under the Babcock Plan. It shows proposed state Trunk Highway 12 going through Chaska; however the map does not designate marked trails such as the Yellowstone Trail (which at that time went through Waconia), nor does it specify whether that trail designation would be impacted.



From "Map of Babcock Plan for a Trunk Highway System in Minnesota," Minnesota Highway Improvement Association, 1919, McGill-Warner Co. View entire map at <http://umedia.lib.umn.edu/node/898604>

However, the official 1923 state highway map ultimately shows the Yellowstone Trail traveling through Waconia and numbered as state trunk highway 12, so it appears that the Waconia protestors were heard by the Legislature, and its Yellow Trail designation prevailed despite the Babcock Plan. This is discussed in further detail under the section outlining events of 1924.



Minnesota Digital Library website, <http://cdm16022.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/mdt/id/215>
Minnesota Department of Transportation, Mn/DOT Library

Historian Harold A. Meeks wrote, “Also at that time (1920s-1930s) the Trail was relocated to U.S. 12 across the state.”^{liv} He does not cite a source for that statement.

This author theorizes that Highway 12 was designated through Waconia as a temporary measure until the highway around Chaska was improved, at which time Highway 12 (the forerunner of 212) was permanently designated there. But did the Yellowstone Trail designation go hand-in-hand with the Highway 12 status? Probably not. The Trail history in Carver County is a bit nebulous in the 1920s and 1930s, but it can be argued that no formal document related to the Yellowstone Trail was recorded with the State from its original establishment with the Department of Highways in 1917 (in which the Trail traveled through Waconia) until the legislation of 1959 which assigned it to Highway 212 (placing Chaska on its path). And relevant records, if any, of the Yellowstone Trail Association are not known to survive. Additional study of highway construction and renumbering might shed additional light on this subject.

Additional legislation in 1921 (General Laws of Minnesota, Chapter 323, HF No. 535) advanced the trunk highway plan by authorizing the commissioner of highways to acquire right of way, locate, construct, reconstruct, improve and maintain the trunk highways, let necessary contracts, buy needed material and equipment, and expend necessary funds. The commissioner was authorized to hire two assistant commissioners, one of whom was to be an experienced highway engineer.^{lv}

Explosive Growth of Motor Vehicle Ownership

There were just 920 motor vehicles registered in Minnesota in 1903, and by 1920 there were 324,166, an explosive growth.^{lvi} Accordingly, later in the 1920s, Highway Commission Babcock fought for and won an amendment to the state constitution to use taxes on gasoline solely to build and maintain roads. The organization of the Highway Department reflected the need for a roadway system able to handle the growing popularity of motor vehicles.

1921: Federal Aid Highway Act

In 1921 the Federal Aid Highway Act was passed. It provided federal 50–50 matching funds for state highway building up to 7 percent of roads statewide. By the end of 1921, more than \$75 million in aid had been given to the states. This legislation created a vast network of interstate highways. The designated interstate routes did not always follow the Trail designations, and were renumbered using only United States Highways markers by 1926.^{lvii}^{lviii}

Manner of Marking Highways to Change

Among the provisions of the 1921 Minnesota law previously cited concerning the creation of the office of commissioner of highways and a Highway Department, was the responsibility of the commissioner to “adopt a suitable marking design with which he shall mark or blaze the routes so selected (as trunk highways), and as the definite final location of each route is opened to traffic the markings shall be changed to such location.” Section 78 addressed “Marking of trails by associations.” This amendment to the original trail marking law said that any corporation or association could apply to the highway commissioner for permission to mark or blaze “any continuous highway” it wished to promote. However, a fee of \$25 was required and the commissioner had the right to “move, remove or change any such markings on the trunk highways,” anticipating the new trunk highway numbering system. [Note that 1924 correspondence in the Commissioner of Highways files at MNHS told a trail association that no markings of trails would be permitted except to those who had duly registered prior to the establishment of the Trunk Highway System in 1921.^{lix}]

1922: Auto Travel as Commodity; Trail Route at Issue as Highway 12 Arrives

“Highways between Excelsior and Norwood – both the north road through Waconia and the southerly road through Chaska – always will be first-class, well-maintained highways regardless of which is designated as State Trunk Highway No. 12, Charles M. Babcock, state highway commissioner, late yesterday told representatives of the Yellowstone Trail Association. He took under advisement, pending further investigation, their application for permanent designation as Trunk Highway No. 12, the present temporary route through Waconia, after citing constitutional provisions held to favor the location through Chaska,” reported the *Minneapolis Tribune* on 11 January 1922.

In 1922, an alternative route to Yellowstone was promoted by a rival to the Yellowstone Trail Association. “No one will take a long road who knows a short one,” argued I. J. McGinty of Lebanon, South Dakota. He promoted a “direct to Yellowstone Park highway” following a direct “bee-line” route due west from the Twin Cities, through Litchfield and Willmar, then Montevideo and Madison into North Dakota, claiming it would save 300 miles.^{lx} There did not appear to be any immediate reaction by the Yellowstone Trail Association.

In June 1922, general manager of the Yellowstone Trail Association, H. O. Cooley, wrote that the commercial value of the long distance travel industry was just beginning to be realized. He cited figures such as 9 million registered automobiles in the U.S., with the potential to travel 200 miles in twelve hours (not even 17 MPH). Cooley, ever the marketer, explained the direct services that organized trail associations performed for motorists in connection with automobile clubs and civic organizations and in partnership with highway officials and road builders. “Through this organized effort a certain road, and the towns it touches, are placed on the maps of the country showing long distance travel routes and its advantages and conveniences brought to the attention of the auto traveling world.”^{lxi}

H. O. Cooley also served on the executive committee of the Associated Highways of America, where he proposed a system of national trunk highways for approval at their fourth annual convention in 1922. The proposed system included 33,000 miles, of which 1,000 were in Minnesota, and would be voted on by delegates from each state, appointed by governors, mayors and commercial clubs.^{lxii}

1923: Yellowstone Trail Association Still Governs Route

A May 1923 edition of “The Arrow,” the official publication of the Yellowstone Trail Association, reported on its “eleventh consecutive year” of inviting travel on its route. It reported on its National Executive Committee meetings and pleaded for an increase of memberships to infuse revenue into the program. This newsletter illustrates the process that was used to decide changes in trail routes, and reinforces that route decisions in 1923 remained within the purview of the trail association, although the Highway Department may have been required to ratify them.^{lxiii}

1924: Highway 12 Temporarily Routed through Waconia

The Yellowstone Trail reported to the Minnesota Highway Department in February 1924 the names of its officers. It enclosed “one of your official Minnesota state trunk highway maps on which we have noted in black ink the route of the Yellowstone Trail across the state.” It also recommended annual registrations of designated trails, reasoning that “there would be an elimination of those highways that are registered and pass out of existence.” (The accompanying map shows a dark black line running along Highway 12 from Excelsior to Waconia to Norwood. See photo.)^{lxiv}



Yellowstone Trail Association confirms its trail designation to MN Highway Department, Feb 1924

“Our Number 12 Has Been Changed”

In a July 14, 1924 letter from the Assistant Construction Engineer at Minnesota Highway Department to Minneapolis Automobile Club,^{lxv} the author wrote, “In reply to your letter... kindly be advised that the Yellowstone Trail covers practically the same territory as our Trunk Highway No. 12. Our No. 12 has been changed from Excelsior thru (sic) Waconia to Norwood to Excelsior, Chaska, Cologne to Norwood. We expect to change the road between Sumter and Brownton, in McLeod County, to the south side of the track, thus eliminating two railroad crossings as well as considerable distance.” Reading this along with a 1926 letter (described in the following section of this report and included in Appendix B) which says that the trail was never considered to be moved to Chaska, and focusing on the word “practically,” leads to the conclusion that Highway 12 was changed, but the Yellowstone Trail designation remained routed through Waconia. This theory is supported by a description of a “circle tour” in 1928 where it says Chaska is on Highway 12 and Waconia is on the Yellowstone Trail.

The aforementioned correspondence implies that Highway 12 was designated as the highway running through Chaska sometime around 1924. Perhaps while it was under construction it was known as 12-A, but it was not the same as the Yellowstone Trail, which continued to have its route through Waconia.

A July 1924 newspaper article describes one of two “equally delightful and inspiring” Sunday drives from the Twin Cities, first from Excelsior to Chaska, which it says is on “the new road” which is marked as “highway number 12-A”, and then west to Cologne and Norwood, “where the homeward trip begins. At Norwood the driver swings to the northeast, leaves highway 12-A and takes the Yellowstone Trail and journeys through Young America, Waconia, past beautiful Lake Waconia, through Victoria and back to Excelsior.”^{lxvi}

1926: Obsolete Trail Marker Signs Come Down as Highways Re-Numbered

A letter in the Highway Department files from 1926 confirms that the Yellowstone Trail was originally run through Waconia, and also removes any debate about whether the Trail designation was moved to Chaska before 1926: It had not. In a March 1, 1926 letter addressed to Hon. C. H. Klein of Chaska, the Commissioner of Highways wrote that he wished “to state that to the best of my recollection you have never suggested to this Department that the route of the Yellowstone Trail should be changed to go through Chaska, nor do I remember any attempts along this line by other people from Chaska...”^{lxvii} (See Appendix B for a copy of the letter.) It is not clear what transpired, but Cooley of the Yellowstone Trail Association must have accused Klein of having made the statement.

The relationship of the trail associations and the state Highway Department was for the most part collaborative, but letters circa 1924 to 1926 in the Trails Correspondence folders show how the Yellowstone Trail Association would prod the Highway Department for improved road maintenance when they received complaints from drivers of poor road conditions. For example, “It would be a comparatively small job to put enough gravel on this new piece of grade to insure its being good road in the spring,” suggests H. O. Cooley in one such letter. In another he wrote, “You will note by last Sunday’s Chicago Tribune that Andy Gump gives the Yellowstone Trail the credit of being the smoothest and best highway in the country, and while I can’t say that at other times Andy has many brains, in this case his judgment is good and I am simply appealing to you to see if something can’t be worked out to make Andy’s word as good in Minnesota as it is in Illinois.” The Highway Department was the official “keeper” of statistics on road mileage, but the trail association produced maps and guide books, and would contact the department to verify correct mileage for their road publications.

Federal highway numbering signs were installed, based on the 1921 legislation and adoption of the U.S. highway numbering system in 1925. The obsolete trail markers came down as the new markers went up. Parts of the Yellowstone Trail would be signed as US 20 in the East and US 10 and 12 in the West. “Significant portions of the Yellowstone Trail were not initially designated as interstate routes, but except in one case, were assigned state highway numbers,” Meeks noted. “Some non-designated stretches of road included... most of Minnesota, which subsequently became US 212.”^{lxviii}

1928: Yellowstone Trail Route Remains in Waconia; Highway 12 Now through Chaska

William Lipp of Waconia was chosen as a member of Yellow Trail Association’s National Executive Committee in 1927. Waconia’s share of its 1928 budget was reported to be \$195; Victoria, \$45; Excelsior, \$95; Hopkins, \$65; Young America, \$65; and Norwood, \$95.^{lxix}

Here is another item to support that Waconia retained its place on the Yellowstone Trail even after Chaska became part of the new Highway 12 route. In July 1928, the Minneapolis *Star* printed a map and article about an “80-Mile Circle Tour” from Minneapolis, similar to one it published in July 1924. “Lake Minnetonka is passed both on the outgoing and returning trip. The entire tour is less than 80 miles in length, made over well-graveled or paved roads.”

Leave the Gateway building on Nicollet avenue and drive south to Lake street. Turn right on that street, following trunk highway No. 12 markings past Lake Calhoun and to the city limits at the end of the brick pavements. This highway is also known as the Yellowstone Trail. Continue on No. 12 to Excelsior, following around the outskirts of the town on the trunk highway... At a point just 13 miles from Minneapolis, highway no. 12 and the Yellowstone Trail separate. Follow the Yellowstone trail at this point, turning right. The trail leads past Lake Minnewashta, through the village of Victoria and on to Waconia...^{lxx}

1929: Yellowstone Trail Authority Fades in New Transportation Era

A meeting of the Yellowstone Trail Association was announced on July 25 in Waconia under the headline, "Future of Yellow Trail Thru Waconia at Stake." It emphasized that a course of action would be decided if "all of the towns can unite on a constructive basis."^{lxxi} Waconia representatives were J. J. Braunwarth, William Lipp, Martin Braunwarth, and G. C. Stoner. Most attendees felt that the Yellowstone Trail should continue along its present route which included Waconia, "at least for the time being" (an ominous threat). The Waconia paper reported on August 2, "The present route will be maintained as long as the towns along the route will continue to pay the assessments to maintain the association... As long as towns along the present route take enough interest in the association, the route will never be changed." The towns from Minneapolis to Montevideo were assessed \$1,000 as their share of the expenses incurred in maintaining an office and tourist bureaus along the route. Accordingly, each of the towns in Carver County—Victoria, Waconia, Young America, and Norwood—were assessed \$250.^{lxxii}

However, Chaska aimed to keep Waconia on its toes. On August 1, the *Weekly Valley Herald* warned that the State Highway Department planned to reroute the trail. "Waconia, Victoria, Young America and Norwood may lose the Yellowstone Trail if the efforts of the Carver County towns are not successful... Meetings are being held, and an organization against the plan has been formed," it said.^{lxxiii}

1931: Yellowstone Trail Association Disbanded

By 1931, the Yellowstone Trail Association had disbanded. By this time, numbered interstate routes had been created, which eliminated the need for named roads and the private associations that promoted them.

1933: State Absorbs Yellowstone Trail into Trunk Highway 212

According to the Waconia Heritage Association in 1986, "In September of 1933 the state announced that it would take over the Yellowstone Trail and absorb it into Trunk Highway 121 (sic)."^{lxxiv} It is believed that the authors intended to say that the Yellowstone Trail would be absorbed into Highway 212. If this was officially done, and the stretch of highway including Waconia had its Trail designation removed, no documentation has been found to support it.

Major legislation in 1933 had added hundreds miles of new highways to the state's Trunk Highway System on top of the backbone of highways authorized in 1920. The new highways were added as "legislative routes" rather than constitutional routes. They could be modified, added, or deleted by legislative action. Many of the new routes were just gravel roads, previously under county or local jurisdiction. The Great Depression affected the funding available and so only minor improvements were made. Major construction would have to wait until after World War II.

1934: Minnesota's Highways Re-Numbered; Highways 5 and 212 Established

In May 1934, highways in Carver County and elsewhere around the state were renumbered, and Highway 5 and Highway 212 were authorized. "Engineers of the Minnesota Highway Department have just pieced together the state's biggest jig-saw puzzle," the Waconia paper announced.

The Chaska newspaper reported:

Under the new plan, the stretch of pavement coming in from the west, formerly No. 12, and the stretch going east, formerly 51, become No. 212, straight through from western Minnesota to Wisconsin. This is also federal highway No. 212. The old No. 12 between here and Excelsior becomes No. 41, and the pavement coming through Shakopee is No. 169.”^{lxxv}

In Waconia papers, it was described this way:

In Carver County, Trunk Highway No. 12 from Chaska-Cologne-Norwood is officially designated as Trunk Highway No. 212. The new highways in Carver County taken into the trunk highway system at the last legislative session have been designated as No. 26 and No. 66. TH No. 26 is routed from Young America to Waconia to Victoria and connects with a trunk highway in Hennepin County. TH No. 66 follows the route of the Shirt-Cut (sic) Trail in the northern part of the county.”^{lxxvi}

The Waconia Heritage Association said that Highway 26, which ran through Gaylord, Waconia and Victoria, was renumbered as Highway 5. And Highway 66, formerly known as the Short Cut Trail, was renamed Highway 7.^{lxxvii}

State Highway 5 serves as a northeast–southwest route between Gaylord, Norwood Young America, Chanhausen, Eden Prairie, Bloomington, Richfield, downtown Saint Paul, and Maplewood. The highway is officially marked as an east–west route by its highway shields from beginning to end. Legally, State Highway 5 is defined as legislative routes 45, 52, 102, 109, 111, and 121 in the Minnesota Statutes. The route is not marked with those numbers.^{lxxviii}

1939: “A World of Tomorrow” Envisions Interstate Highways

General Motors produced its Futurama Exhibit at the 1939 World’s Fair in New York City, with the overall theme of “A World of Tomorrow.” The exhibit was viewed by over five million people and portrayed a futuristic vision of fast auto travel over a network of interconnected highways. People were enthused about the prospects, and after World War II there was tremendous public support for building interstate highways.^{lxxix}

1956: Federal-Aid Highway Act Creates National Interstate System; Minnesota Passes Constitutional Amendment

President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, which led to the creation of the national interstate highway system, officially the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. This authorized the federal government to fund 90% of the cost of the interstate system in each state. Also in 1956, Minnesota voters approved a constitutional amendment to distribute state road user funds. The percentages established were 62% state, 29% county and 9% municipal.

1957: Yellowstone Trail along Lake in Waconia Vacated

The old beach road on the southeast shore of Lake Waconia was closed in 1957, after many years of discussion. According to a published history, “Main Street in Waconia was part of the Yellowstone Trail... to the east edge of Waconia. Yellowstone Trail (later Highway 5) continued along the shoreline of Lake Waconia up to the Scandia Baptist Church where it swung easterly along the south boundary of the present Island View Golf Club toward Victoria. When Highway 5 was relocated southeasterly in 1957, this road along the lake became County Road 30.” The author went on to explain that in 2005, Main Street would be extended from the Trinity Lutheran Cemetery southeast to the intersection with the new

Highway 5 south of the Kwik Trip station. This action made it possible to remove the road between the beach and the park.^{lxxx}

1959: MN Legislature Declares Highway 212 Official Yellowstone Trail Route

Presumably the patina of a Yellowstone Trail designation had dulled in the years between 1930 and the late 1950s. While automobile buffs and trail historians may have known and cared about the Trail and its significance, there was little attention paid to the Yellowstone Trail in newspaper records of this time period.

In 1959, legislation was passed to designate all of Minnesota Trunk Highway 212 as the Yellowstone Trail. It was codified as Minn. Stat. § 161.14, Subd. 9, and it reads today just as it did in 1959:

Minn. Stat. § 161.14, Subd. 9. **Yellowstone Trail.**

The highway now marked and known as Trunk Highway 212 from the Wisconsin state line to the South Dakota state line is hereby named and designated as the "Yellowstone Trail," and the commissioner of transportation shall adopt a suitable marking design with which the commissioner shall mark or blaze said highway to carry out the purposes of this subdivision.

The *Star Tribune* reported, "The senate yesterday passed a bill that would designate highway 212 as 'the Yellowstone Trail.' Sponsors hope to persuade eastern tourists to travel through Minnesota on the way to Yellowstone National Park."^{lxxxi}

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

Here it is necessary to insert some explanation about the 1959 legislative history.

Current Law

Current Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 161.14 contains a long list of specially named highways in Minnesota, one of the earliest (in 1959) being the Yellowstone Trail. The heading in the 2017 Minnesota Statutes language can be confusing where it refers to repealed law. It reads:

2017 Minnesota Statutes

161.14 MS 1957 [Repealed, 1959 c500 art 6 s 131]

161.14 NAMES AND DESIGNATIONS OF CERTAIN HIGHWAYS.

In consultation with a staffer at the Legislative Reference Library, it was determined that the reference to repealed legislation relates to a previous law codified under 161.14, pertaining to logging railroads. Nothing about the Yellowstone Trail designation was ever repealed; it was in the process of codifying the 1959 session laws, that the Revisor decided to use the same number (161.14) for the new 1959 legislation related to designated highways, as had been used for the repealed 1957 law related to logging railways.

Therefore, we know that the designation of Highway 212 as the Yellowstone Trail was first made in statute in 1959, and it has not been changed since.

A 1961 MnDOT publication tells us that Trunk Highway 212 from the Wisconsin state line to the South Dakota state line was named the Yellowstone Trail by the legislature in 1959. It explained that the Trail was part of a long-used tourist route to Yellowstone National Park. The act initiated a new policy by directing that the commissioner of highways, "... shall adopt a suitable marking design with which he shall mark or blaze said highway to carry out the purpose of this section."

It went on:

Signs on Memorial and Trail Highways: It has been noted above that in 1959 the legislature directed the commissioner of highways to adopt a suitable sign to mark the Yellowstone Trail. This policy was continued in the act designating a Sioux Trail in 1961. The Highway Department, in 1961, decided to select a suitable standard marker for all the memorial highways and trails designed by previous legislative acts. All memorial highways and trails were marked with a sign standardized to the following specifications:

Size: 16" x 16"
Shape: Square
Color: White legend and border – green background
Legend: Name of Memorial Highway or Trail.

"...The signs marking Memorial Highways and Trails are affixed on existing route marker posts as a part of normal operations... The original purchase of Memorial and Trail signs was made in 1959. \$11,661 was spent for 3900 signs at \$2.99 each. 2000 of the 3900 signs were for the Great River Road. The following table shows the mileage of each route on state trunk highways and county roads, and the number of signs bought for each route. About half of the signs were affixed immediately, with the remainder kept on hand for needed replacements.

For Yellowstone Trail, the chart shows 197 miles on state highways; 0 miles on county roads; 197 total miles; 500 signs purchased."^{lxxxii}

What became of the 500 signs that were purchased and presumably installed on Highway 212 across the state of Minnesota remains a mystery. John and Alice Ridge wrote that by 2000, those signs were few.^{lxxxiii}

1959 Changes and the History of Trail Marking Regulations in Minnesota

The question arises as to why the Minnesota Legislature would designate the entire length of Highway 212 as the Yellowstone Trail in 1959. This had the effect of removing the stretch of highway that runs through Waconia from its longtime place along the Yellowstone Trail, and placing Chaska on the designated Trail route instead.

A search of the Journals of the Senate and the House for 1959 provided key information needed to search in historical files of the Legislature, housed at the Minnesota Historical Society. The author of Senate File 903 was Sen. Lauerman of Olivia, a member of the Public Highways and Transportation Committees. The bill passed through committees and was voted on and passed unanimously (65-0) in the Senate on March 19, 1959. The companion file in the House was House File 1104 (authors Reps. Jungclaus, Ottinger and Warnke), but was later abandoned in favor of SF903, also passed by the House on April 6, 1959. Governor Freeman signed the bill into law on April 10. The minutes of the Senate and House hearings^{lxxxiv} do not provide any details about testimony on the bills, so apparently there was no disagreement about the Highway 212/Yellowstone Trail designation in the Legislature.

Of the House authors, Rep. Howard Ottinger was from Chaska in Carver County where he was secretary of the Chaska Co-Op Creamery.^{lxxxv} He served in the House from 1939 to 1959. The only newspaper article about the legislation was short and sweet. The Minneapolis *Star Tribune* on 20 March 1959 merely said, "Sponsors hope to persuade eastern tourists to travel through Minnesota on the way to Yellowstone national park."

Between 1917 and 1959, the agency now known as Mn/DOT had the authority to approve registrations of trail routes and their route markers. The first reference to trail markings in Minnesota Statutes was in

1917. The law permitted trail associations to apply to register with the highway commissioner the “name, detailed route, color, combination and design used in marking said highway as a trail.” While at least in the early days, the applicant or trail association had the ability to determine the route of a trail (usually by a vote of its delegates), and county boards were supposed to approve, the highway commission held the power to determine priority of right in the use of the trail name and marking colors. The original applications and approved route designations were kept in a Register book which is now housed in the Mn/DOT Library. The Yellowstone Trail designation (number 5 of 35) was recorded by the Commissioner under Order No.138 on 15 September 1917. The last requested trail designation included in the Register (number 35) is from the Red Star Trail Association, dated 15 June 1931.^{lxxxvi} No specific mention of the Yellowstone Trail designation was codified in Minnesota Statutes until 1959.

Between 1921 and 1959 the state Highway Department promoted the use of highway numbering systems rather than the trail naming systems. As noted elsewhere, some 1924 correspondence in the Commissioner of Highways files at MNHS told a trail association that no markings of trails would be permitted except to those who had duly registered prior to the establishment of the Trunk Highway System in 1921. Some minor exceptions may have occurred. Ultimately the naming, or rather numbering, and maintenance of highways became the sole responsibility of government transportation authorities, and the need for trail associations gradually faded away.

CONCLUSION

It appears that the “true” route of the Yellowstone Trail remained primarily within the purview of the Yellowstone Trail Association throughout its existence, although county boards and the state highway departments had some administrative oversight. The route was adapted as needed based on membership vote. From 1912 to 1930, the Yellowstone Trail Association likely made numerous route designation changes, and while we can identify some of those, it may be impossible to document them all. We know with certainty that the original route brought the Trail through Waconia, and that it officially remained there until 1959. It has been reported that many of the Yellowstone Trail Association records were lost to history, so the full story may never be known.

The official state designation of the Yellowstone Trail was confirmed by the Minnesota highway commissioner in 1917. We have seen that there were several movements to change the Trail designation from Waconia to Chaska over the years. The record is clear that the people of Waconia held tenaciously to their Yellowstone Trail “title” for decades. Since no official notice of a route change to the Highway Commissioner has been located, it can be argued that the original 1917 Waconia route designation to the Commissioner was still in place when the Legislature re-defined the route in statute as the entire length of Minnesota Highway 212 in 1959.

The change stemmed from the establishment of the federal interstate highway system of the 1950s, the corresponding development of the 212 corridor, and a desire to resurrect the Yellowstone Trail heritage as a means of gaining publicity and attracting tourism along the new highway route. If anyone in Waconia resisted the 1959 Yellowstone Trail route designation change, the record is silent.

Brief History around Trunk Highway 212

This report is intended to be a study of the history of the Yellowstone Trail, but the story is closely intertwined with the history of Highway 212 and the broader history of transportation in Minnesota. Further research on the Highway 212 Corridor and the commercial development around Chanhassen and

Chaska may yield a fuller account of what transpired over the years in the transportation history of Carver County, Minnesota.

The road that is now Highway 212 was acquired by the Minnesota Highway Department when the state trunk highway system was established under the Babcock Plan in 1920. It was graded and surfaced with gravel in 1923, and was paved with concrete in 1929. This section of road became a U.S. highway, in addition to its state highway status, around 1934.^{lxxxvii}

In 2008 the Chaska *Herald* said that in 1957, when a group was formed to petition the state for Highway 212 improvements, “the organization also had hopes of reviving the former YTA which years ago extensively advertised Trunk Highway 212 as the arterial highway across Minnesota to Yellowstone National Park.” Author John Ridge, who today operates the historical The Yellowstone Trail Association, was quoted as saying, “In a real sense, the Yellowstone Trail was the grandfather of 212.”^{lxxxviii}

ENDNOTES

ⁱ “Highways Instead of Public Roads,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, 4 April 1915.

ⁱⁱ “Today’s Guide to Yesterday’s Auto Route West, the Yellowstone Trail,” Yellowstone Trail Association website, <http://www.yellowstonetrail.org/index.html> (accessed 18 Dec 2017).

ⁱⁱⁱ “Yellowstone Trail Boasts New Features,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, 1 February 1920. The Yellowstone Trail Association was highly skilled in marketing. This article states, in addition to being the oldest national highway in America, the Trail was “the heaviest travelled transcontinental highway in 1919 in America, (its Association) gives the greatest amount of neutral help and encouragement to automobile travel, and that the association has the most direct, democratic, and economical government in proportion to the work it does.”

^{iv} “95 Percent of Traffic is Motor Driven,” *Minneapolis Tribune*, 10 October 1920.

^v Ridge, Alice A. and John Wm., “Introducing the Yellowstone Trail, A Good Road from Plymouth Road to Puget Sound,” Yellowstone Trail Publishers, Altoona WI, 2000, p. 38.

^{vi} Biorn, Wendy Petersen, “The Yellowstone Trail: A Good Road from Plymouth Road to Puget Sound,” in the vertical files of the Carver County Historical Society, Waconia, Minnesota

^{vii} Yellowstone Trail Association website, <http://www.yellowstonetrail.org> (accessed 7 November 2017).

^{viii} Meeks, Harold A., *On the Road to Yellowstone*, Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, Inc. (Missoula, Mont., 2000), pp. 74-75.

^{ix} “A Brief History of MnDOT,” Minnesota Department of Transportation website, <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/information/history.html> (accessed 29 November 2017).

^x “Carver County Trails Traced: Writer Checks Up on Early Roads in Days of Dense Timber and Marshy Areas,” *Waconia Patriot*, 1 January 1931. The article is attributed to Midland Feature Service and says that the author was preparing an article titled, “Carver County Pioneer Trails.” No record of an article by this name has yet been located.

^{xi} “Biennial Report of the Commissioner of Highways of Minnesota to the Governor,” Minnesota Department of Highways, accessed online from Google Books at <https://books.google.com/books?id=DCIxQAAMAAJ&pg=PA186&lpg=PA186&dq=mn+%22state+road+no.+3%22&source=bl&ots=f0HOK70RGc&sig=IH6xnH-njBRTszm1J2Fr9b7Eo1A&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjotLrb5ZvYAhVJ44MKHUJfD-4Q6AEINzAE#v=onepage&q=mn%20%22state%20road%20no.%203%22&f=false> (accessed 21 December 2017). This was the first annual report of the newly-established Highway Commission in 1907, and it contained a number of recommendations for refinements of the transportation laws as well as reports from other states and Minnesota counties.

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- ^{xii} *Ibid.*, p. 15
- ^{xiii} Larsen, Arthur J., *The Development of the Minnesota Road System*, Minnesota Historical Society, 1966, p. 430. There is an excellent section on Trail Blazing history on pp. 430-435.
- ^{xiv} 1911 General Laws of Minnesota, Chapter 254, S. F. No. 350.
- ^{xv} Waconia Heritage Association, "Waconia: Paradise of the Northwest, Vo. I: The Lake and Its Island," Waconia, 1986, p. 186.
- ^{xvi} "Long Distance Touring Grows in Popularity," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 5 February 1922, recalling the first trip which took two weeks in 1912. It said that in 1921, the trip could be made in only four days.
- ^{xvii} *Minneapolis Tribune*, 17 August 1913.
- ^{xviii} A video of Michael J. Dowling at the Minnesota Historical Society website <http://discussions.mnhs.org/collections/2011/06/michael-j-dowling-silent-film/> (accessed 7 December 2017) shows Dowling writing a letter, walking, driving a car, and performing other day-to-day activities.
- ^{xix} "Legislators Past and Present," Minnesota Legislative Reference Library, <https://www.leg.state.mn.us/legdb/fulldetail?id=12589> (accessed 18 December 2017). Michael J. Dowling was born in 1866 in Massachusetts and died on 25 April 1921. He attended Carleton College for one year, and among his political offices he represented Renville County in the MN Legislature 1901-1902. His wife, Johanna "Jennie" Bordewick helped found Camp Courage.
- ^{xx} "Waconia: Heritage of the Northwest, Vol. II: The Town and Its People," Waconia Heritage Association, Waconia, 1986, p. 66.
- ^{xxi} *The Duluth Herald*, 6 November 1915.
- ^{xxii} Biorn, Wendy Petersen, "The Yellowstone Trail: A Good Road from Plymouth Road to Puget Sound," in the vertical files of the Carver County Historical Society, Waconia, Minnesota (citing the *Waconia Patriot*, 5 May 1916).
- ^{xxiii} "Waconia Boosted in Trail Magazine," *Waconia Patriot*, 5 May 1916. The Trail Association commented, "We expect to see Waconia grow and prosper, for its citizens show the spirit which builds real cities."
- ^{xxiv} "May Organize Yellow Trail Auto Club," *Waconia Patriot*, 12 May 1916.
- ^{xxv} War Department to Test Auto Use Across Continent," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 20 August 1916.
- ^{xxvi} "The Yellowstone Trail Association of Minnesota: Road Enthusiasts Want Yellow Trail to Receive Attention," *Waconia Patriot*, 31 August 1916.
- ^{xxvii} "Committee on Resolutions," *Waconia Patriot*, 31 August 1916.
- ^{xxviii} *The Duluth Herald*, 21 October 1916.
- ^{xxix} Meeks, Harold A., *On the Road to Yellowstone*, Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, Inc. (Missoula, Mont., 2000), pp. 67-68.
- ^{xxx} "A Brief History of MnDOT," Minnesota Department of Transportation website, <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/information/history.html> (accessed 29 November 2017).
- ^{xxxi} Biorn, Wendy Petersen, "The Yellowstone Trail: A Good Road from Plymouth Road to Puget Sound," in the vertical files of the Carver County Historical Society, Waconia, Minnesota
- ^{xxxii} "U. S. Good Roads Aid to Be Distributed," *The Mantorville Express*, 3 November 1916.
- ^{xxxiii} *Waconia Patriot*, 22 February 1917.
- ^{xxxiv} "Change in 'Yellow' Trail Route Sought," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 28 February 1917.
- ^{xxxv} "Fifty Percent of Road Tax Money Declared Wasted; Yellowstone Trail Agent Criticizes Attempt to Build All Highways at Once," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 11 March 1917.
- ^{xxxvi} Minnesota Session Laws 1917, Chapter 318, H. F. No. 616.
- ^{xxxvii} Minnesota Highway Department. Registered State Trails Correspondence. Order No. 138 signed by Charles M. Babcock. Folder "RT Registered Trails – Yellow Stone Trail" (MNHS Location no. 107.H.5.2F.)
- ^{xxxviii} "Yellowstone Trail Association Meets," *Waconia Patriot*, 10 May 1917. Dowling had been its vice president for the past two years.
- ^{xxxix} "Yellowstone Trail Improvement," *Waconia Patriot*, 14 June 1917.
- ^{xl} "Yellowstone Trail in Better Condition," *Waconia Patriot*, 4 October 1917.
- ^{xli} "Yellowstone Trail Contract Awarded Tuesday," *Waconia Patriot*, 16 May 1918.
- ^{xlii} "Board Opens and Lets Yellowstone Trail Contracts," *Waconia Patriot*, 23 May 1918.
- ^{xliii} "Notice to Contractors," *Waconia Patriot*, 30 May 1918.
- ^{xliv} *Waconia Patriot*, "'Commenced Graveling Yellowstone Trail," p. 1, c. 4, 8 Nov 1918.

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- xlv "Yellowstone Trail Removal is Protested," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 4 February 1919; "Object to Changing Yellowstone Trail," *The Duluth Herald*, 4 February 1919; *The Pine Island Record*, 20 February 1919; and others.
- xlvi "Yellowstone Trail Office Moved Here," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 6 April 1919.
- xlvii "Cross-Country Autos Go Through Minneapolis," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 20 June 1919.
- xlviii "Rented Yellowstone Trail Garage," *Waconia Patriot*, 11 March 1920.
- xlix "Motor Guide; State Roads of Minnesota," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 30 May and 6 June 1920.
- l "Motor Guide; State Roads of Minnesota," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 17 July 1920.
- li "Motor Guide; State Roads of Minnesota," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 14 August 1920.
- lii "When it Comes to a Show-Down," *Weekly Valley Herald*, 7 June 1920 and "Chaska Tells a Big One," *Waconia Patriot*, 10 June 1920.
- liii Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislative_route_\(Minnesota\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislative_route_(Minnesota)) (accessed 18 December 2017). "A legislative route is a highway number defined by the Minnesota State Legislature. The routes from 1 to 70 are constitutional routes, defined as part of the Babcock Amendment to the Minnesota State Constitution, passed November 2, 1920. All of them were listed in the constitution until a 1974 rewrite. Though they are now listed separately in §161.114 of the Minnesota Statutes, the definitions are legally considered to be part of the constitution, and cannot be altered or removed without an amendment. Legislative routes with numbers greater than 70 can be added or deleted by the legislature. Until 1933 Constitutional Routes corresponded exactly to the number marked on the highways, but this is no longer necessarily the case. In fact it's common for CR highways to be composed of several different trunk highways. When the U.S. Highway system was created in 1926, many of these roads were made up of one or more U.S. highways. Today, they now use a mix of Minnesota state highways, U.S. highways, and Interstate highways."
- liv Meeks, pp. 72-73.
- lv "A Brief History of MnDOT," Minnesota Department of Transportation website, <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/information/history.html> (accessed 29 November 2017).
- lvi "A Brief History of MnDOT, Minnesota Department of Transportation website, <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/information/history.html> (accessed 29 November 2017).
- lvii Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Aid_Highway_Act_of_1921 (accessed 27 November 2017).
- lviii Meeks, pp. 171-173.
- lix Minnesota Highway Department. Registered State Trails Correspondence. Letter from Minnesota Highway Department, Commissioner of Highways to Mr. W. M. Shirley, Secy., Twin City Black Hills & Yellowstone Trail, Watertown, South Dakota. February 20, 1924. Folder "T Trails, Twin City Black Hills & Yellowstone Trail." (MNHS Location no 107.H.5.2F.)
- lx "Willmar on Big Yellowstone Road," *Willmar Tribune*, 8 March 1922.
- lxi "State Center Long Distance Tourist Travel... Future of Organized Highway Travel is Seen as Tremendous," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 4 June 1922.
- lxii "Highway Group to Study Huge Roads System," *Minneapolis Tribune*, 6 August 1922.
- lxiii Minnesota Highway Department. Registered State Trails Correspondence. "The Arrow" Newsletter, May 1923. Folder "RT Registered Trails – Yellow Stone Trail" (MNHS Location no. 107.H.5.2F.)
- lxiv Minnesota Highway Department. Registered State Trails Correspondence. Letter from H. Cooley to Minnesota Highway Department, February 14, 1924. Folder "RT Registered Trails – Yellow Stone Trail" (MNHS Location no. 107.H.5.2F.)
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- lxvi "Golden Beauty of Grain Fields Lure to Motorists From City: Two Suggested Sunday Drives Will Take Urban Dweller Through Area Where Wealth of Soil Adds to Nature's Artistry," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, 13 July 1924.
- lxvii Minnesota Highway Department. Registered State Trails Correspondence. Letter from Minnesota Highway Department, Commissioner of Highways to Hon. C. H. Klein dated 1 March 1926 in Folder "RT Registered Trails – Yellow Stone Trail" (MNHS Location no. 107.H.5.2F.)
- lxviii Meeks, p. 172.
- lxix "Attended Yellowstone Trail Meeting," *Waconia Patriot*, p. 1, c. 1, 15 March 1928.
- lxx "Interesting Communities to Be Found on 80-Mile Circle Tour," *Minneapolis Star*, 7 July 1928.
- lxxi "Future of Yellow Trail Thru Waconia at Stake," *Waconia Patriot*, 25 July 1929.

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- ^{lxxii} "Attended Yellowstone Trail Meeting," *Waconia Patriot*, 2 August 1929.
- ^{lxxiii} "Week's News of Nearby Communities in Brief," *Weekly Valley Herald*, p. 1, c. 1, 1 August 1929.
- ^{lxxiv} *Waconia: Paradise of the Northwest, Vol. II: The Town and Its People*, Waconia Heritage Association. 2007(?), p. 68.
- ^{lxxv} "Local Highways Will Be 212, 41 This Week," *Weekly Valley Herald*. Included was a 1934 map of Minnesota's new trunk highway system.
- ^{lxxvi} "County Gets Trunk Highways 26 and 66; Trunk Highway No. 12 Will Be Officially Numbered T. H. No. 212," *Waconia Patriot*, 4 January 1934.
- ^{lxxvii} "Waconia: Paradise of the Northwest, Vol. II: The Town and Its People," Waconia Heritage Association. 2007(?), p. 68.
- ^{lxxviii} Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minnesota_State_Highway_5 (accessed 18 December 2017).
- ^{lxxix} Cavanaugh, Patricia, "Politics and Freeways: Building the Twin Cities Interstate System," Center for Transportation Studies, University of Minnesota, October 2006. Regarding the 1939 Futurama exhibit, Cavanaugh cites Norman Bel Geddes, *Magic Motorways* (New York: Random House, 1940).
- ^{lxxx} Waconia Heritage Association, "Waconia: Paradise of the Northwest, Vo. I: The Lake and Its Island," Waconia, 1986, p. 188(?).
- ^{lxxxi} "Limited License Bill Supported," *Star Tribune*, 20 March 1959. Explains content of Senate bill.
- ^{lxxxii} Minnesota Highway Department, Office of Public Information, St. Paul, Minn. 55101 (undated, est. 1960s), pp. 2-4, located in the files of Minnesota Historical Society (Pamphlets Related to Roads in Minnesota, MNHS call no. HE341-HE372, 2 folders).
- ^{lxxxiii} Ridge, Alice A. and John Wm., "Introducing the Yellowstone Trail, A Good Road from Plymouth Road to Puget Sound," Yellowstone Trail Publishers, Altoona WI, 2000, p. 85.
- ^{lxxxiv} Minnesota Legislature, Committee Books for 1959 Senate (MNHS location 108.J.4.2F, SF903) and House (location 108.H.4.7B, HF1104 & SF903). Government Records. Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, MN.
- ^{lxxxv} Minnesota Legislative Reference Library, Legislators Past and Present, <https://www.leg.state.mn.us/legdb/fulldetail?ID=11092> (accessed 27 November 2017).
- ^{lxxxvi} "Registered Trail Index," barcode no. 3 0314 00033 9852, Mn/DOT Library, 395 John Ireland Blvd., MS-155, Room 175, St. Paul, MN 55155.
- ^{lxxxvii} "Chaska Wayside Marker," 3-ring binder in MnDOT Library, call no. F 607 .c53 2009.
- ^{lxxxviii} "Before 212, There Was Yellowstone," *Chaska Herald*, pp. 1 and 2, c. 3-all, 10 July 2008.

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APPENDIX A: YELLOWSTONE TRAIL 1917 DESIGNATION

The Order designating "Yellow Stone Trail," 1917, from MnDOT Library follows this listing of over thirty early registered trails in Minnesota.

LIST OF REGISTERED TRAILS	
NAME	ASSOCIATION
1 Black Diamond Trail	1 Duluth Fargo Association
2 Red Ball Route	2 Red Ball Association
3 Jefferson Highway	3 Jefferson Highway Association
4 Minnesota Scenic Highway	4 Minnesota Scenic Highway Association
5 Yellow Stone Trail	5 Yellow Stone Trail Association
6 Black and Yellow Trail	6 Chicago Black Hills and Yellowstone Park Ass'n.
7 National Park Highway	7 National Park Highway Association
8 The Nelson Trail	8 Iowa, Minnesota and Itasca Park Highway Ass'n.
9 Glacier Trail	9 Glacier Trail Association
10 The Burlington Way	10 Burlington Way Good Road Association
11 Yankee Doodle Highway	11 Winona Association of Commerce
12 Cooley Highway	12 Cooley Highway Association
13 Sioux Historic Trail	13 Sioux Historic Trail Association
14 King of Trails	14 King of Trails Association (Minnesota Division)
15 Southern Division of Burlington Way	15 Burlington Way Good Road Association
16 Theodore Roosevelt International Highway	16 Theodore Roosevelt International Highway Ass'n.
17 Pershing Way	17 Pershing Way Association
18 East and West Highway	18 East and West Highway Association
19 Woodrow Wilson Way	19 Woodrow Wilson Way Association
20 Southern Minnesota Air Line	20 Southern Minnesota Air Line Association
21 The Hammond Highway	21 The Hammond Highway Association
22 North Star Trail	22 North Star Trail Association
23 Red Cross Trail	23 Red Cross Trail Association

24 Mississippi Valley Highway	24 Mississippi Valley Highway Association
25 Mississippi River Scenic Highway	15 Mississippi River Highway Association
26 Wilson Highway	26 Wilson Highway Association
27 Indian Trail	27 Indian Trail Association
28 Lake Region Highway	28 Lake Region Highway Association
29 Sherman Highway	Sherman Highway Association
30 Little Crow Trail	Sunberg Citizens Club Association
31 Big 4 Lakes Trail	The Big 4 Lakes Trail Association
32 Lake Superior Highway	Lake Superior International Highway Ass'n.
33 Dvorak Highway	The Dvorak Highway Association

STATE OF MINNESOTA HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

I, Charles M. Babcock, Commissioner of Highways, after investigation of the application made by Yellow Stone Trail Association. on the 26th day of July 1917, do find that the application is meritorious and the Highway Trail therein described is worthy of registration and protection under the provisions of Chapter 318, Laws of 1917.

Therefore; it is ordered that the said Highway Trail be registered in the office of the Highway Department,

as starting from E. line Washington County at Kil. of Lakeland
and thence via West to Big Stone County
and terminating at West line Big Stone Co. at Otterville
to be known as Yellow Stone Trail

With the following color combination and design hereby authorized to be used in marking said highway as a trail:



In witness whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my name and affixed my official seal, at St. Paul, Minnesota, this 10th day of September 1917

Order Certificate No. 138
Recorded Sept 15 - 1917 -
Application # 7

Charles M. Babcock
Commissioner of Highways.

From the MNHS Files of the Highway Department, Registered Trails Correspondence, comes the application that generated the Commissioner of Highways' Order:

To the Commissioner of Highways,
State of Minnesota.

The Yellowstone Trail Association being an association organized to promote the improvement, marking or blazing of the following described continuous highway, not less than twenty-five miles of which is in the State of Minnesota does hereby make application for the registration thereof under the provisions of Chapter 318, Laws of 1917, as hereinafter described, to-wit:

Proposed Name The Yellowstone Trail

Location (Give starting and terminal points, State Road, numbers where possible and Counties.)
From the Hudson (Wis) bridge across the St. Croix River, to Ortonville, Minn., through the counties of Washington, Ramsey, Hennepin, Carver, M^cLeod, Sibley, Renville, Chippewa, Swift and Big Stone, the same being a part of a continuous single line highway from Plymouth, Mass to Seattle, Wash.

Proposed color combination and design to be used in marking and designating above described highway as a "Trail." A black arrow as shown in mark attached on a field of yellow. "R" and "L" in black on yellow fields. This association is now purchasing an iron marker, made in black and yellow as above, in the form as attached hereto. This being the official trade mark.

Executed at Abbeville, S. Dak. this 24 day of July 1917

This application accompanied by Registration fee of \$5.00 to be returned if application is not granted.
(A map should be attached showing location of proposed trail.)

The Yellowstone Trail Assn President.
M. J. Bowling
H. C. Cooney Secretary.


STATE OF South Dakota } ss
COUNTY OF Brown

Notary Public

On July 24 1917, before me a
within and for said County, personally appeared
and H. C. Cooney to me personally known,
who, being each by me duly sworn, did say ~~that~~ respectively the President and the Secretary
of The Yellowstone Trail Assn the association named
in the foregoing instrument, and that the seal affixed to said instrument is the corporate seal of said
association and that said instrument was signed and sealed in behalf of said association by authority
of its board of Executive Committee and said H. C. Cooney and
acknowledged said instrument to be the free act and deed of said association.

J. W. Meyer
Notary Public Brown County.
State of S. D. My Commission expires July 26th, 1918

See attest to signature of M. J. Bowling on the back hereof.



ORDER NO. 138

It is hereby ordered that the application of the Yellowstone Trail Association for registration of the Yellowstone Trail under provisions of Chapter 318, General Laws 1917, be approved as requested in the application filed as No.7, and the route and markings of the same are hereby established as described in said application and shown on the map accompanying the same and in the certificate as provided for in Section 3 of the Act. The counties through which the Yellowstone Trail is established are as follows:

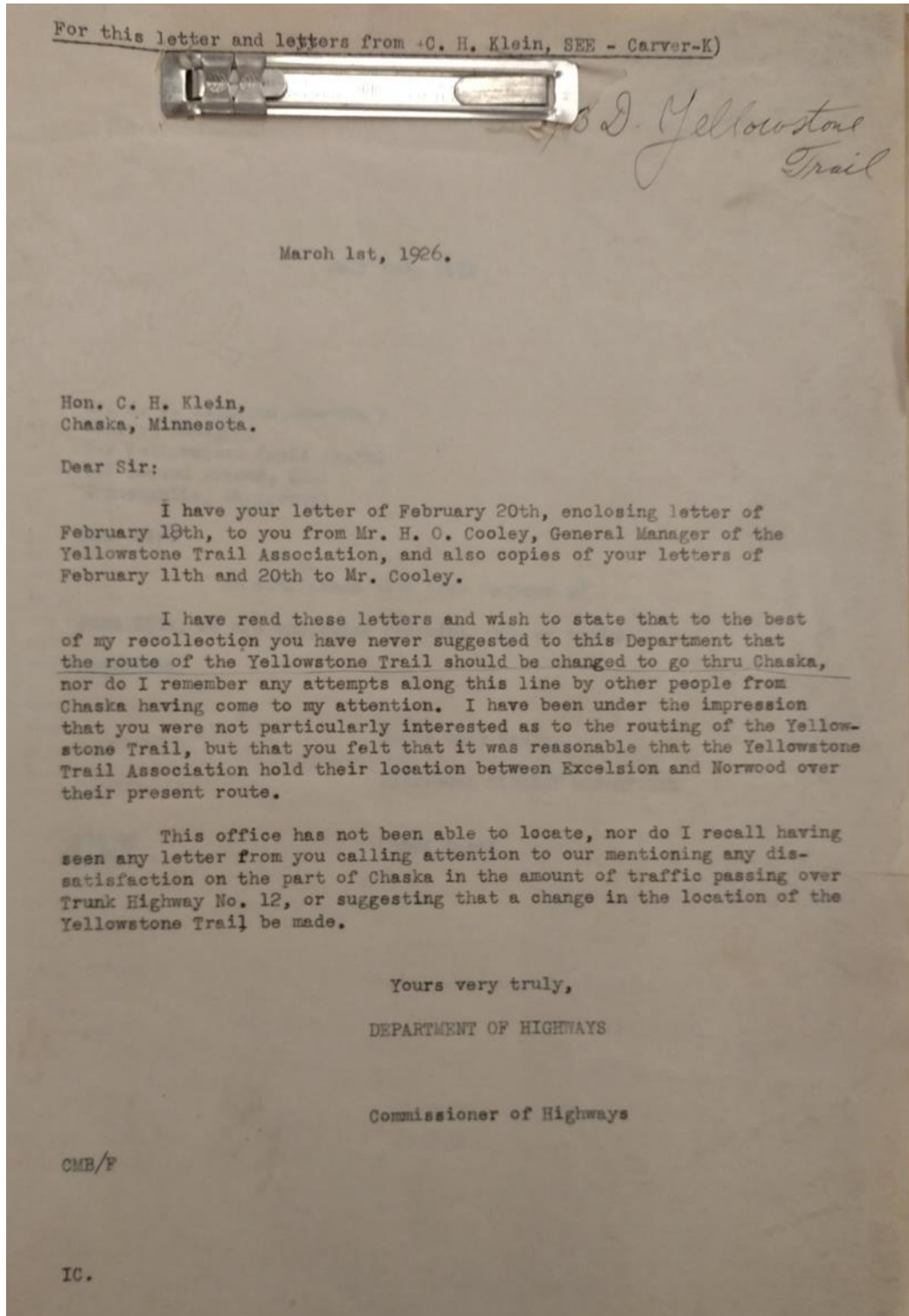
Washington	Sibley
Ramsey	Renville
Hennepin	Chippewa
Carver	Swift
McLeod	Bigstone
	Yellow Medicine

Charles M. Babcock
Commissioner of Highways

Dated September 10, 1917.

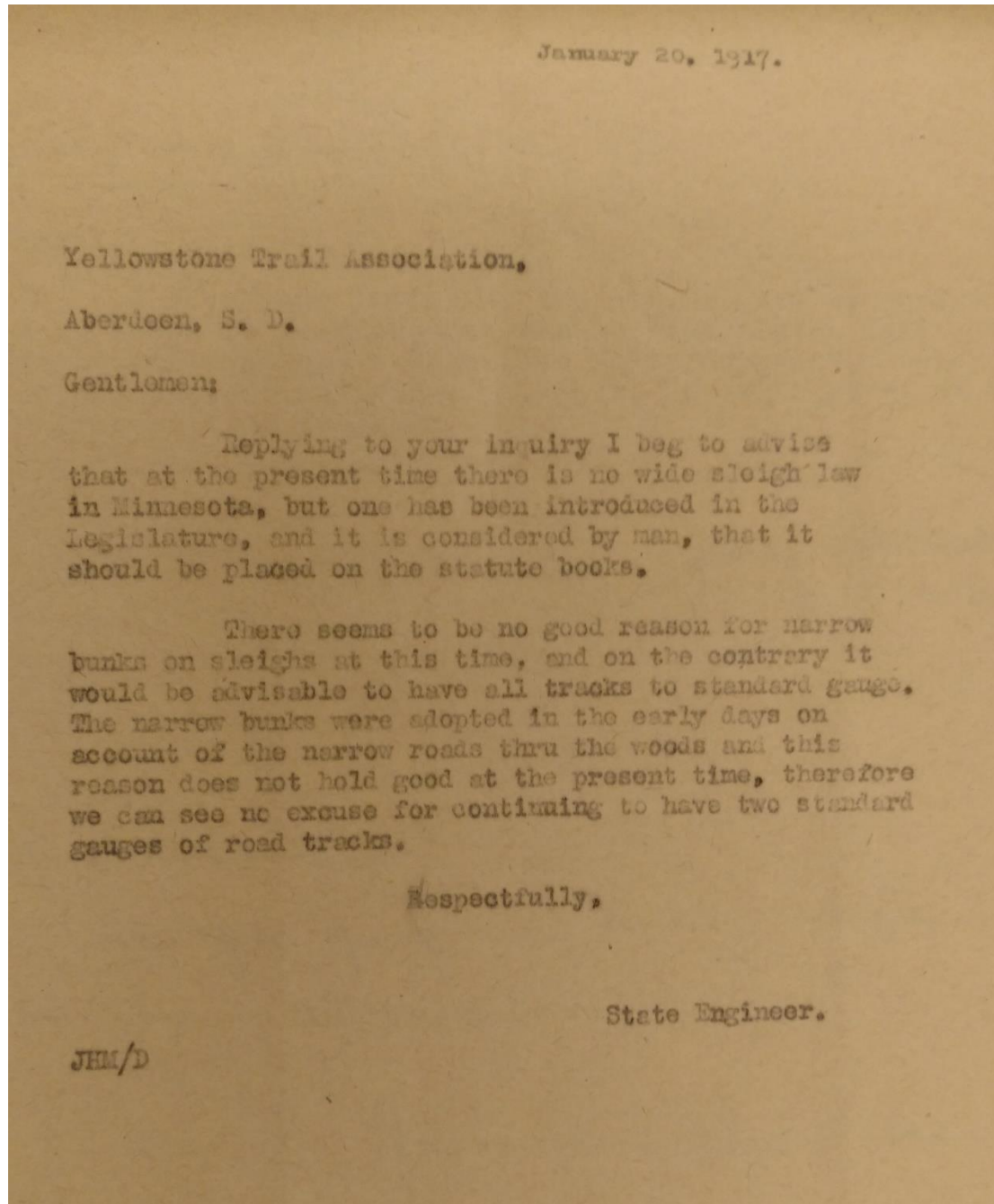
APPENDIX B: 1926 LETTER TO HON. C. H. KLEIN OF CHASKA

This letter is included to show that in 1926 the Yellowstone Trail continued its route through Waconia, but it also demonstrates the sensitivity to the notion of rerouting the trail. (Minnesota Historical Society, Registered Trails Correspondence.)



APPENDIX C: 1917 – “NO GOOD REASON FOR NARROW BUNKS ON SLEIGHS”

This letter from the State Highway Engineer to Yellowstone Trail Association officials illustrates what a watershed moment had occurred in 1917, when horse and sleigh travel had just given way to motorized transportation. The State Engineer argued that it made no sense to continue to have two standard gauges of road tracks to accommodate narrow and wide sleighs. There was “no good reason for narrow bunks on sleighs at this time,” he emphasized. (Minnesota Historical Society, Registered Trail Correspondence.)



APPENDIX D: YELLOWSTONE TRAIL 1921 ROUTE FOLDER

Page 22 describes Lake Waconia as "one of the most beautiful lakes in the state" of Minnesota. (Minnesota Historical Society, Pamphlets Related to Roads in Minnesota, call no. HE341-HE372, 2 folders.)

#HE356.T9

1921 ROUTE FOLDER 1921


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Minneapolis, Minn.....	Dyckman Hotel
Aberdeen, S. D.....	Sherman Hotel
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MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

"A good road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound"

STATE OF MINNESOTA

Through Minneapolis and St. Paul, the Yellowstone Trail will be found thoroughly marked. But ten miles apart, these two metropolitan cities are so thoroughly built together that the stranger will have difficulty in knowing when he leaves St. Paul and when he enters Minneapolis. Minneapolis and St. Paul alone offer plenty of compensation for an auto trip for any distance surrounding them as they are built by beautiful lakes which the public spirit of the two cities have improved and helped make enjoyable.

A visit of from a day to a week in Minneapolis and St. Paul will tend to give the traveler a vision of the progressiveness they have made,—these commercial centers of the Northwest, although they are really one community of nearly three-quarters million population—what they are.

St. Paul, the state capital, and Minneapolis, the flour city of the world, starting with a nucleus of the waterpower from the Mississippi river, have managed to retain the delights of this section of the world and by carefully planning have added to the unusually beautiful surroundings which nature gave. Many beautiful drives and boulevards connect the two cities and either city has half a dozen lakes and bathing resorts within thirty minutes' drive of its downtown district. Minnetonka, west of Minneapolis, and White Bear, northeast of St. Paul, are two larger lakes, both being nearly surrounded by summer homes and, in addition to all of these attractions, there is a warmth of welcome on the part of the people which adds to the enjoyment of a visit to the Twin Cities.

The Yellowstone Trail leads almost directly west across the state of Minnesota from Minneapolis through the richest agricultural section of the state skirting the lake district to the south. For the first forty miles, the Trail leads through a typical lake country touching beautiful Lake Minnetonka at Excelsior, the largest city on the lake and striking from there to Waconia on Lake Waconia, one of the most beautiful lakes in the state. Minnesota is the state of 10,000 lakes and skeptical people are invited to count them if they don't believe it. Westward from Waconia, the Trail strikes through the great wheat belt. Prosperous and thriving towns are passed through each ten miles or less and a study of the country will tell why the Northwest is known as the bread basket of the world. The road is part of the trunk line system of the state of Minnesota and is already a well constructed highway, graveled practically the entire distance. It is maintained under the supervision of the State Highway Department and it is, in fact, a good road. The construction and maintenance each year more than keeping pace with the traffic demands which are placed upon it. Big Stone Lake at Ortonville is one of the most popular summer resorts on the Trail. The Minnesota river is very closely followed from Ortonville to and through Appleton, Montevideo, and Granite Falls offering a beautiful drive. Montevideo is half-way on the Yellowstone Trail between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and this city has been one of the leading factors in promoting the Yellowstone Trail. The home of one of the greatest characters of the entire nation was at Olivia, Minn., until his death this year, in the person of Michael J. Dowling, whose history is known far and near. In the early days of the Trail, Mr. Dowling was one of its firmest sponsors, a position which he held until his death. The Yellowstone Trail Association's information bureaus will be found at St. Paul, at the Ryan

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