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THE ARROW

The national newsletter of the Yellowstone Trail Association

FOR THE BENEFIT AND
ENJOYMENT OF THE PEOPLE



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The road to 250 & beyond

Greetings Yellowstone Trail Association members,

Things continue to change with the Yellowstone Trail Association, as the organization continues to find its way in the aftermath of the departure of its long-time torch-bearer, John Ridge. John was incredibly dedicated and knowledgeable after decades documenting the YT. He is irreplaceable, but then so are all the members of the YTA. Each one is a special gift with a unique story.

YTA SEEKING ADMINISTRATOR

The Board of Directors is seeking a replacement for longtime Administrator, Kathy Cooper, who has stepped aside after serving the YT Association for many years.

This part-time position offers \$300 per month plus expenses. While we would prefer candidates located in north-central South Dakota, near Big Timber, Montana, or in the Eau Claire, Wisconsin, area, these locations are not requirements. The most important qualifications are strong organizational skills, attention to detail, and solid I.T. capability.

The successful candidate will handle day-to-day administrative duties for the Association. A one-page description of responsibilities is available upon request.

Kathy has generously offered to assist with the transition and help train her successor.

If you are interested or know someone who might be, please contact YTA President Greg Childs for more info:

- Phone: 406-696-2492
- Email: childsinnmontana@gmail.com

We are grateful for Kathy's many years of faithful service and look forward to welcoming a new team member who shares our passion for preserving and promoting the YT.

Thank you! Greg Childs, YTA President.

Individual and shared stories seem to be the main theme in this edition of the Arrow. The message comes through two narratives, both authored by Alice. The first, center's around the question of whether the story of the Yellowstone Trail reflects, and helped chart, the story of America. The second speaks to a personal relationship fostered over the years of Yellowstone Trail interest by Alice and member Dorothy Olson. Alice said she received her last letter from Dorothy shortly after John's death on March 29, 2025. One year later, Dorothy

died on the anniversary of John's death, March 29, 2026. Interestingly, Dorothy also shared a birthday with YTA founder Joseph Parmley (Dec. 12) and was married on the day today's YTA was incorporated by the Ridges, Dec. 26. By themselves those dates mean very little, but together they create new meaning and significance when considered in the context of one another. The YT, and its plethora of individual plot lines is much the same. An emerging "Yellowstone Living Legacy Trail" initiative will only make this more apparent—as our connections are more than skin deep.

Scott Tedrick, Arrow Editor

CONTACT THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

To join, make membership payments, or donate:

Web: go directly to our membership service:
<https://yta.clubexpress.com>

USPS: Send to Administrator, Yellowstone Trail Association
Box 65, Altoona, WI 54720-0065



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

Email: Administrator@yellowstonetrail.org

USPS: Yellowstone Trail Association, PO Box 65 Altoona, WI 54720



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

Email: YTA@yellowstonetrail.org

USPS: Yellowstone Trail Association
PO Box 65 Altoona, WI 54720-0065

Want to help the YT gain more exposure?

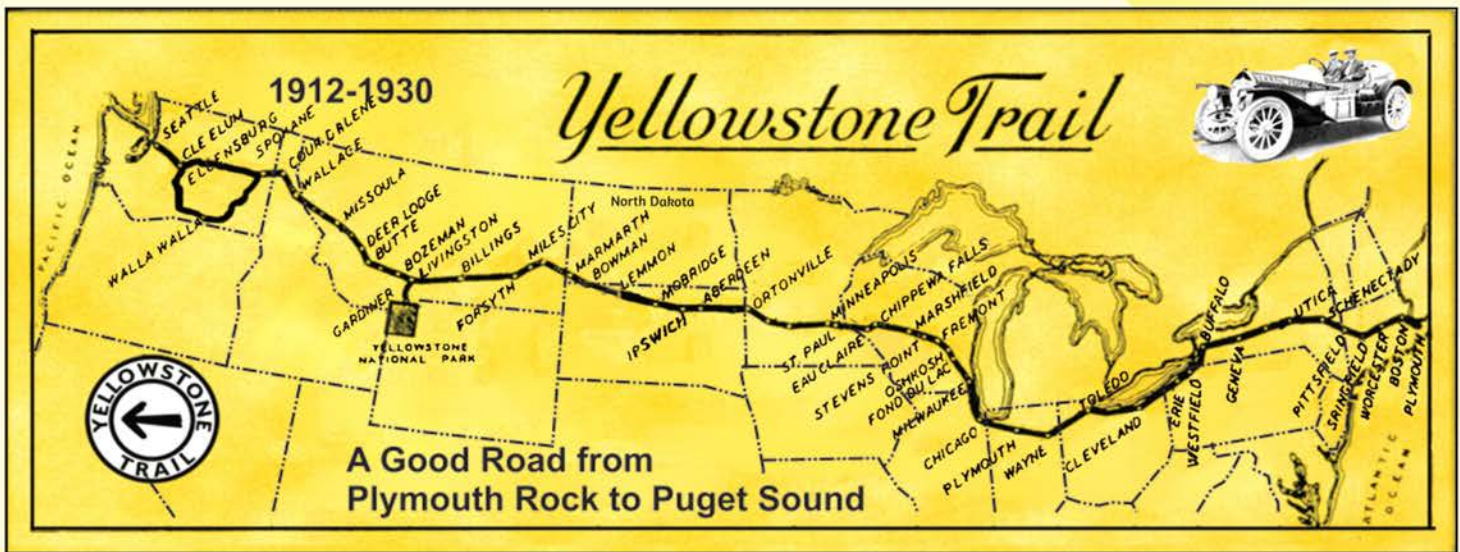
Order & place 12"/15" yellow window cards along the Trail (5 to a box).

Contact: Phone:
Greg Childs 1-406-696-2492

Email: Childsinnmontana@gmail.com

Signage is *Free*





A SHARED STORY: AMERICA 250 & THE YELLOWSTONE TRAIL

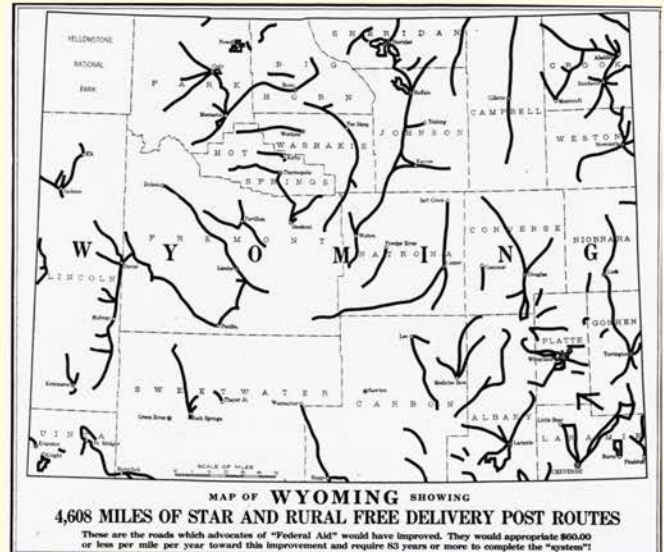
By Alice Ridge

Several years ago John Ridge, founder of the modern Yellowstone Trail Association, leaned back in his desk chair after a long day of Trail mapping, and observed that "the Yellowstone Trail's breadth from coast to coast really reflects the story of the growth of America."

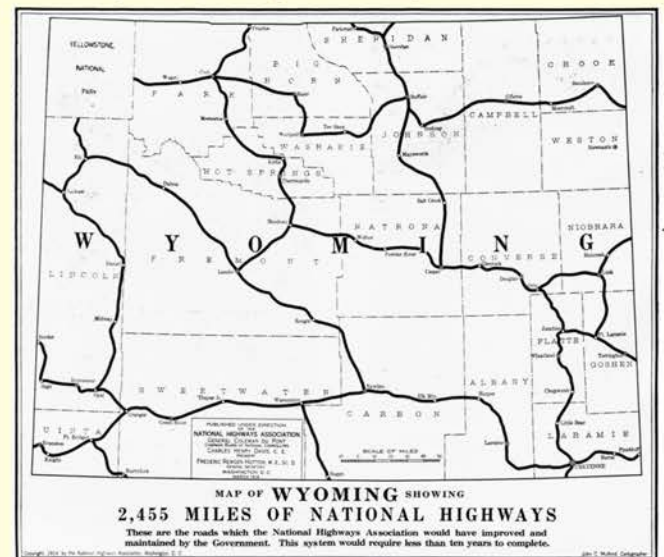


Alice Ridge

As the nation's 250th anniversary was approaching in 2026, John proceeded to map plans for museums along the Trail's route, for each to display their area's special contribution to the growth of America along the Trail. Sadly, he died before he could move on that project. But it does raise the question: did an organized, privately supported auto route, by itself, reflect or help build America's story? Does the Yellowstone Trail still reflect the story of the growth of America?



With early roads looking like the disparate bunch above...



The YT Association sought coordinated, straight routes.

The founders of the 1912 Yellowstone Trail Association (YTA) simply sought better roads, but as they slowly succeeded, the roads themselves helped open and broaden access and commerce across the country. The first step was improving that slough in South Dakota near Ipswich, home town of road advocate and Association founder Joe Parmley.

Soon, people in Mobridge, 100 miles away, sought the help of the fledgling Association in acquiring a better road. And so it went. People sought construction addressing the immediate problem of the day which usually was a muddy road or no road at all for the rural West. Membership soared.



No one wants to be stuck in the mud, providing great incentive for roads.

But first came the roads.

The upper west from Chicago was where roads were needed most. Major duress was brought about by Trail Association members who pointed to the obvious advantages of a connecting road to make a route: access to the next county seat, more towns for shopping, or the nearest train station.

They challenged county boards to find funds in their road taxes to plan a straight road that would meet a similar, straight road in the next county. Getting a route as straight as possible across the nation to avoid “splendid lateral” diversions, was important to the YTA founders.

To be clear, the YTA did not build roads with pick and shovel. It used persuasion with county boards and Commercial Clubs, predecessors of the Chambers of Commerce. The YTA had, simultaneously, to assure Chambers that their regional identity and visual connectedness would not be lost while also presenting to them the concept of “nationhood” and travel on their eventual 13-state northern route across the entire country.

The Association, while private, and charging dues to carry on activities, supported the idea of state aid for roads. The first state on the Trail to offer state aid for road-building was Massachusetts in 1893, followed by the other 12 states between 1903 and 1916. This period saw county boards in charge of roads, and it was there where all the action was. It was to them that the YTA appealed. With state aid, local connectedness grew to state borders, but it still superseded a feeling of “nationalism.” Some federal aid came in 1916 but that was mostly for RFD routes.

That was followed by the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1921, which provided 50-50 matching funds to help states build roads in 11 rural western states. Although states appreciated that offer, finding money for any roads was still a problem. The YTA had been working to improve roads for nine years by that time.

Around 1912 another phenomenon was afoot. The sudden proliferating of the automobile was rapidly changing American life. Trainloads of autos moved into every area of America. Horses began losing their roles as providers of transportation. Dirt roads may have been fine for horses’ hooves, but autos needed gravel, culverts, bridges, width, and engineering.



Ford Cars on the road to Chelan on May 15 of 1910 (Witter Photo).

There is little doubt the Yellowstone Trail was an economic success for communities and responsible for:

- About 100 garages named “on the Yellowstone Trail” whether or not they were actually located on the YT
- Many restaurants also claimed the Trail address
- Some farm acreage along the route sold for + \$12/acre
- Many community camping parks arose in towns on the route
 - Attractions along the route reported increases in attendance, for instance, Yellowstone National Park
- Disagreements towns had among themselves to be chosen for the route of the Trail, one town even stooping to bribery

With the auto came a sense of freedom, self determination, opportunity. It was the auto that ignited the quest for the “open road” and the Association was quick to understand “tourism,” and their growing routing took on an additional, economic meaning for towns.

An obvious observation is that the advent of more roads and routes aided shipping and trade. This is true of the smallest villages like Marmarth, North Dakota, to great cities like Chicago and Cleveland, making the small more sustainable and giving the large more options. Both help build America. Before the Trail came to Marmarth, the only way to ship was via the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific railroad (the Milwaukee Road) on its schedule.

Humble as it was, the road out of Marmarth toward neighboring Montana became improved through persuasion of the YTA, enabling an alternate way to trade and travel. Another phenomenon afoot that demanded better roads was the rise of the lowly truck. According to Wikipedia, “the few trucks that existed before around 1900 were mostly novelties. The use of range-limited electric engines, lack of paved rural roads, and small load capacities limited trucks to mostly short-haul urban routes.”



The Yellowstone Garage pictured in the 1930s in North Fond Du Lac, Wisconsin, was operated by the Mowbray family for decades. Former YTA Executive Director, the late Mark Mowbray, authored “The History of the Yellowstone Garage, 1920–1966.”

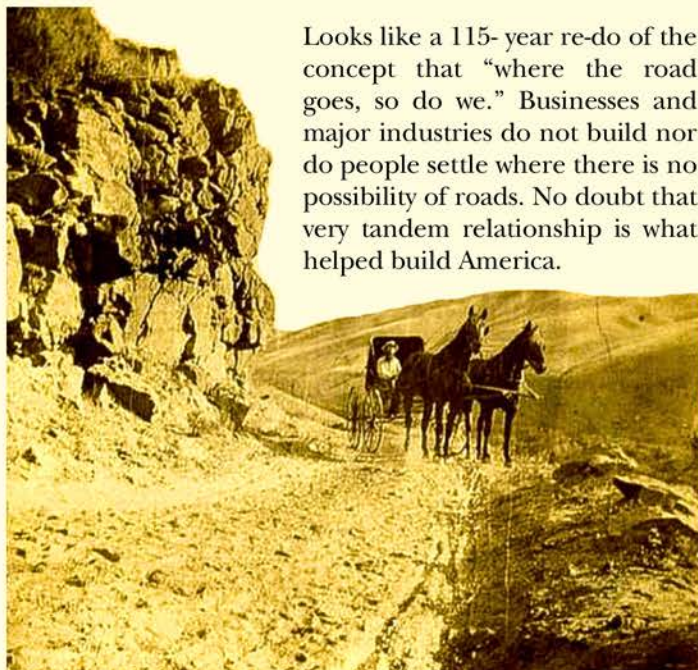
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Starting in 1910, the advent of the gasoline-powered internal combustion engine, improvements in transmissions, and the move to gear drives, allowed the truck to gain in popularity. In 1913, state laws issued weight limits for trucks arose in a few states. These laws were enacted to protect the earth and gravel-surfaced roads from damage caused by the iron and solid rubber wheels of early trucks. These “knights of the road” became advocates for better roads, as were motorcyclists.

The years of World War I (1914–18) spurred rising truck use and development. During the busy war years, the increased congestion of railroads exposed the need for alternative modes of transporting cargo. The first long-distance trucks and pneumatic (inflated) tires were developed which enabled trucks to drive higher speeds. By 1914, there were almost 100,000 trucks on America's roads. By 1920, there were over a million.

One can see profits accruing to individual towns with a preeminent and acknowledged national route running through. Note today's trend of towns moving to meet the Interstate highway, pulling their chain stores behind them.



A sample of early roads near Dusty in eastern Washington.

Looks like a 115-year re-do of the concept that “where the road goes, so do we.” Businesses and major industries do not build nor do people settle where there is no possibility of roads. No doubt that very tandem relationship is what helped build America.

Let's look at three examples of how the Yellowstone Trail helped build Washington state.

The summit of Snoqualmie Pass (3022 ft) was crested by a wiggly Yellowstone Trail in 1915, opening an auto route through the beautiful northwest to travelers to Seattle. The route of today's Interstate 90 is similar to the old Trail, but it is smoother and master of the terrain - although the weather still dominates all.

The lack of a decent road over Blewett Pass in central Washington forced the Yellowstone Trail Association to adopt a more southerly route across the state. Rather than crossing the Cascades through Blewett Pass, the trail followed Washington's southern and eastern regions.

From Walla Walla to Spokane, the Yellowstone Trail led travelers through the fertile Palouse, where small communities such as Dusty, Delaney, Steptoe, and Rosalia welcomed motorists and prospered from the additional business they brought. Rosalia's Texaco gas station, now the Rosalia Visitor & Interpretive Center.



Charles Hall, built this Texaco Central Service Station in 1923 on the site of his former blacksmith shop, on the main street of Rosalia, WA. The station operated until 1980. In 2000, Hall's family donated the property to the Chamber of Commerce. It was remodeled and is now the Rosalia Visitor Resource and Interpretive Center.

After the Blewett Pass was finally opened in 1925, the Trail moved north. It ran between Wenatchee and Waterville, preceding the modern US2 and US97. The Trail wound through Pine Canyon, allowing Waterville and Wenatchee to grow, especially since Wenatchee was at the confluence of the Columbia and Wenatchee Rivers. The fruit industry of Wenatchee had a new, although difficult, market path. Waterville served as a gateway between western Washington and the agricultural areas of the Columbia Plateau to the east.

Also in Washington, in 1922, after years of cogitation by two cities, and persuasion by the Yellowstone Trail Association, the “Green Bridge” crossing the Columbia River between Pasco and Kennewick was finally opened.



The historic Green Bridge (right, 1922–1978), stands beside its modern successor, the Ed Hendler Cable Bridge (left).

To the YTA, it meant completion of their auto route in Washington. This bridge obviated the need to use the small, slow ferry and was considered a giant step toward the future of transportation.

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Let's move east for more examples of the Trail helping to build America.

In Idaho, between Coeur d'Alene on the west and Wallace on the east in the narrow neck of northern Idaho, lay the Bitterroot Mountains with its 4th of July Pass at 3,163 feet. Speed limits of 20 mph were posted; trucks struggled. A 1919 map, and a 1930 tunnel under the pass, testify to the difficulty here.

The old 1860s Mullan Road through this area was an immediate success for miners, residents, herds of cattle, and light wagons. Then, around 1915 the YTA's persuasion caused improvement for parts of that decaying 55-year-old trail. Today, the Interstate highway follows the Trail route. Much mining still occurs in the area and the small towns of Kellogg, Smelterville, Silverton and especially Wallace survived and were beneficiaries of the Yellowstone Trail, as they were no longer isolated islands in a vast forest.

Of all the natural wonders Montana has to offer along the Yellowstone Trail, Yellowstone National Park was, and still is, the most attractive. The US Army operated the Park and private companies offered horse-drawn carriage tours from around 1902 until, supremely pressured by state officers, governors, the YTA, and about every auto organization in the country, the Army gave up its embargo and autos were allowed in August 1, 1915. The first 10 days saw 321 cars enter the park.

Why so few? One reason was that the roads within the Park were designed for horses, and roads within the Park had to be re-routed for autos. Perhaps it was the lack of a decent road from Livingston south 53 miles to the Park's north entrance.



Livingston, Montana, to Yellowstone Park.



The Iconic north entrance to Yellowstone Trail Park.

Formerly "owned" by Yankee Jim George and his toll gate, then by the Northern Pacific Railroad, that route was hardly fit for the auto, and the train only went as far south as Cinnabar, about 4 miles short of the famous north entry Arch.

Park County Board was put upon by the YTA to improve the road, which it did somewhat with the help of convict labor. With an improved road to the Park's northern entrance and lower entrance fee, in the summer of 1920, attendance by auto outstripped the train: 9,000 by train, 26,000 by auto. Ordinary Americans could see this icon of America on their own schedule. Here the YTA's efforts helped build on Americans' wonder and pride in their country.



Joseph Parmley

South Dakota was the home of the YTA. Ipswich in north central South Dakota was an unlikely place for the hub of a national organization. But it was the home of the organization's founder, Joe Parmley. Joe was a visionary. Back in 1907, he was laughed out of his seat in the SD legislature for his lectures on the need for state funding for roads. (State funding in SD was approved 1908.)

As a land agent he was out in fields every day showing farming acreage to newcomers and seeing a grand future for a land with better roads. This vision culminated in the transcontinental YT, ultimately allowing ordinary people to visit American historic destinations on their terms.

Flour mills in Minneapolis, Minnesota, used the power of the falls of the St. Anthony River. Every day approximately 175 railroad cars of wheat were processed. During the approximately 45 years between the beginning of the Pillsbury mills and the 1915 Trail, these flour mills changed the way food was produced, marketed, and distributed. The finished product required transportation. But trains, highly efficient in themselves, could only deliver that freight to centralized urban centers for distribution by horse-drawn transport. Trucks and better roads were needed to build a better America here. In Minnesota, US highways 5, 7 and 212 today follow the Trail and there is an active association along US 212 preserving the memory of the Trail.

If you look at a Yellowstone Trail route map of Wisconsin, you will see something that looks like a big 7. It went straight east from Minnesota, hit Lake Michigan and dropped south through Milwaukee and Kenosha toward Chicago. Why didn't it go diagonally across the state from Minnesota to Kenosha which would be more direct, which was their goal? That southwest area of the state was predominantly marshy. Today cranberry bogs occupy some of that land. Population was sparse and the land unreliable. Need more be said? Today's state highway #32 runs along the Lake Michigan shore. It brings the population up and down that busy thoroughfare, as did the Yellowstone Trail in 1915.

We must note that the eastern part of our nation was well ahead of the west in road building. They were even experimenting with concrete in Ohio early in the century. And there was the old Boston Post Road, and short eastern "trails." When the YTA tried to place road signs in New York state in 1914, they were refused because 11 other New York route clubs already had signs up. The YTA persisted with a temporary alternate route to Massachusetts and to their goal of reaching Plymouth the most direct way.

Because the east had more roads and routes in general, the YTA turned to offering tourism advice for both directions along the Trail. The Yellowstone Trail presented the concept of better travel for leisure and business across the upper third of the nation 1912-1930.

The Yellowstone Trail Association's 17 information bureaus sprinkled about in hotels and Chambers of Commerce along the Trail helped travelers by handing out current weather reports, highway conditions, maps, and lodging suggestions along the route of the Trail.



The Lincoln Highway and Yellowstone Trail cross paths in one location in Valparaiso, Indiana.



Above, is an interior photo of the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Auto Museum.

After seeing the wonders of Indiana such as in Valparaiso where the Yellowstone Trail and the Lincoln Highway crossed paths, and seeing another Plymouth where five highways met (and are now commemorated in the Marshall County Museum), tourists could move on to Fort Wayne. They could go a little north to Auburn to view the 1926 factory which hand assembled the Cord automobile (and is still there as the Auburn Cord Duesenberg Auto Museum).

Toledo, Ohio, offered views of Willys Overland Auto manufacturing and the new (1912) Toledo Museum of Art. In Cleveland, the eastern 1922 YT Headquarters on Euclid Avenue could be visited for a refreshing rest stop. Or view covered bridges while moving on to the state line to the widely advertised Gaukel Brothers Camp Ground at East Conneaut.

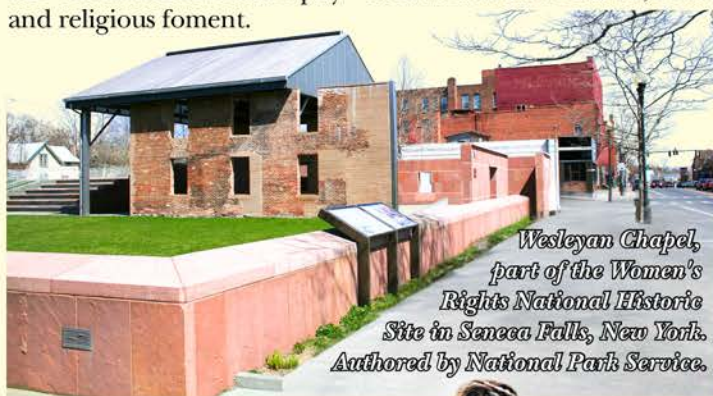
The Trail occupied only about 42 miles of northwestern-most Pennsylvania. The traveler today is urged to view the Erie Maritime Museum, in Erie, PA, to see Admiral Perry's ship, the Niagara, War of 1812 hero. They can also enjoy a piece of concrete road there built by the Erie Concrete Co. in 1925.



Pictured: The Erie Maritime Museum in Erie, PA, home of Admiral Perry's ship Niagara, hero of the War of 1812.

New York offered the tourist many pleasures from the staggering 8-floor tall buildings in Buffalo and its Great Lakes touring ships, east to the cream colored state capitol building in Albany. Or to small spots like the Jell-O factory at LeRoy.

Right on the Trail in central New York sits Seneca Falls, site of the Women's Rights Convention in the mid 19th century. Now called Women's Rights National Historical Park, it was part of the "Freethinkers Philosophy" - a hotbed area of radical, social and religious foment.



Freethinkers and progressive thinkers these women were, along with religious "freethinkers" such as Robert Green Ingersoll who lived in nearby Dresden. Incidentally, a favorite late 20th-century Christmas movie, "It's A Wonderful Life," was filmed here.



"It's a Wonderful Life," filmed in Seneca Falls, New York.

The Chautauqua Institute in Westfield was yet another avenue for the expression of ideas. However, these ideas were more conservative and of a more accepted religious bent. Theologians, musicians, artists, and speakers were all featured either here or throughout the nation. No doubt, Trail travelers were guided to a Chautauqua event by the Trail Association. Central New York offered exposure to some new thinking for the westerner.

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And through it all ran the Erie Canal. Reportedly, 80% of New York's upstate population lived within 15 miles of the Erie Canal. Beginning in 1817, the New York State Canal System joined rivers and lakes into a complex chain of waterways, mainly for transport of goods by 1918. But a tourist on the YT could still ride on it for a fun experience.

At the far eastern edge of NY is the Mount Lebanon Shaker Village and, only five miles further to the east and just inside Massachusetts, is the Hancock Shaker Village. This society may be new to those from the west and certainly served to spread a new cultural experience.



Longfellow's Wayside Inn near Sudbury, Massachusetts. The Yellowstone Trail once ran literally up to the front door. It was later backed up a few feet to allow early motorists to alight from their cars.

Here is an interesting tidbit. The Trail once ran literally up to the front door of Longfellow's Wayside Inn near Sudbury, Massachusetts. Later, the Trail was backed up a few feet to allow for visitors to alight from those newfangled autos. Then came US 20, which is about 1/4 mile from the front door. Today, when you leave the parking lot and head for the front door, pause a few feet from the front door and look around. You are standing on the Yellowstone Trail, which brought visitors there more than 100 years ago.

The Trail did not go through central Boston but skirted it, dropping south to Quincy on its way to Plymouth. This seems odd, missing such a major city from 'Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound' until you remember that the purpose of the YTA was to move people in the most direct way (just like skirting Niagara Falls).

Of course travelers would, no doubt, take a detour to see the symbols of the birth of our country - the Old North Church, Bunker Hill, Boston harbor, site of the famous Tea Party, or perhaps trace Paul Revere's ride.

Instead of Boston, we see Trail tourists encouraged to stop at Quincy, just south of Boston, to visit John Adams' home, about 150 years old by 1920.

If you travel from Quincy to Plymouth on the Trail today, you will travel along the eastern edge of that peninsula, going through small towns like Hingham, Cohasset, Situate, and Daniel Webster's home in Marshfield.



Plymouth Rock.

The more direct route to Plymouth would have been through the center of that peninsula. However, there were few communities there of note in 1920, and little prospect of growth.

These tales of the way the Yellowstone Trail and its creator, the YTA, interacted with the growth of our country, first as a road-builder, then as a tourism association, may seem quaint to the modern reader. But they may reveal a way of building our nation which is foreign to us today. More than one hundred years ago everybody seemed to have "some skin in the game."

We all know what came next - federal laying out of roads and marking them with numbers. Localization and personalization left the scene. Dues paid to people you knew were replaced by taxes paid to a mail box. And all were replaced by attention to the Great Depression and the huge dust storms in the west.

"More than one hundred years ago everybody seemed to have 'some skin in the game.'"



Alice and John Ridge, champions of the Yellowstone Trail.

But, for a time, the YTA was responsible for addressing the vexing problem of, and the improvements in, transportation for Americans. And the places we all think of as related to our country's birth and growth were made more available to everyday Americans thru the growth of the Yellowstone Trail.

Yes, the Yellowstone Trail actually did reflect and help build upon our nation's story. And it still does today. **END**



Trail Days – Ipswich, South Dakota

Ipswich Trail Days celebrated its annual hometown event on the YT June 19 – 21. Above, the Saturday morning parade featured the Ipswich Historical Society's elaborate float, an afternoon Bulls & Broncs rodeo, and an evening concert headlined by country artist Aaron Watson. Visit ipswichtraildays.com for details.



'Are We There Yet?' – Olivia, Minnesota

Randy Sabien received a standing ovation following his Saturday, May 16, world premiere of his original 12-song, visually supported performance chronicling YT champion Michael Dowling's three-car motorcade from Olivia to Yellowstone Park in 1913. Additional shows are planned. Visit randysabien.com for more information.

2026 YELLOWSTONE TRAIL EVENT CALENDAR

Freedom Festival

July 3 - 5 – Mina Lake, South Dakota

Multi-day patriotic family celebration listed by the YTA. Expect fireworks, games, music, food vendors, kids' activities, and Independence Day events at the lake. Recurring favorite with a strong community focus; ties into the 250th anniversary spirit through freedom-themed programming. Schedule typically posted on Visit Aberdeen SD or festival Facebook page.

Yellowstone Trail Heritage Day

August 8 – Hudson / St. Croix County, Wisconsin

Free, family-friendly event celebrates the historic YT with three car shows (YT Vintage & Classic Car Show, BrittFest Car Show, and Twin Cities Model A Ford Club Show), a Poker Run & Sociability Drive, history displays, and museum tours. Classic, vintage, and military vehicle owners invited to participate in auto displays (registration starts at 9 a.m.). Visitors can enjoy an up-close look at the vehicles at Hudson's Lakefront Park from 10 a.m.–12 p.m. More info: Linda White @ 715-386-8332 or linda57thbird@hotmail.com
Facebook: St Croix County Yellowstone Trail

America 250–Ohio YT Fulton Co. & US 250 Corridor

Heritage Driving Experiences in Northwest Ohio

Self-guided historic driving tour along the Yellowstone Trail route. Visit train depots (e.g., Wauseon, Stryker), attractions, and sites; collect "Pit Pass" stamps for prize drawings. Ties directly into Ohio's America 250 programming with presentations on the trail's history. New for 2026: Expanded "250+ Experiences" map and brochure. Perfect for road-trippers commemorating the 250th. Details: america250-ohio.org or Fulton County tourism.

***For a full up-to-date events list or to submit your own to our calendar**

GO TO: www.yellowstonetrail.org/events/
OR scan the QR Code with a smartphone



Scan me

Yellowstone Trail Festival

Aug. 15 - 16 – Hamlet, Indiana

Major annual festival with a huge car show, parade, Saturday-night fireworks, live music, food trucks (including famous "Bobcat Ears"), party bingo, cash games, scavenger hunt, escape rooms, and family games. 2026 theme: USA 250th anniversary—includes Yellowstone National Park photo ops (Yogi Bear/Boo Boo, geyser entrance sign), historical displays, and vendors. New emphasis: Explicit commemoration of the national 250th with trail history. Very community-oriented and fun for all ages.

Yellowstone Trail Auto Gathering

September – Kellogg, Idaho

Classic car, hot rod, and motorcycle show with music, food, and historical displays (typically mid-September). 2026 confirmation pending but recurring annually along the trail. Typically 3rd week in September.

Dorothy knows ‘there’s no place like home’

Remembering long-time YT Association member, forever-friend Dorothy Olson

By Alice Ridge

Dorothy Olson of Montana died this spring, and it mattered. I can’t even remember when John and I first met Dorothy, but she was the kind of comfortable soul you remember as having always been your friend, even though we lived 1,000 miles apart.

Perhaps we met that time when we were invited to speak about the Yellowstone Trail at the Museum of the Beartooths in Columbus, Montana, around 2005. We pulled a nice trailer with a side pull-out that gave us more room. We used that and other such trailers to house our computers, printers, and cameras (no cell phones yet) while researching the 3,600-mile Trail in detail. We happened to arrive at the museum early, so we parked outside and waited. Soon we heard a knock on our trailer door. Standing outside was someone who had arrived too early to hear us speak. Almost immediately, we heard more knocks. Somehow, it seemed logical to assume that we, the speakers, were inside waiting for the museum to open. We had to pull out the slide to accommodate all of our visitors.

It just so happened that we had spoken in Washington state wine country just a few days earlier and had received seven bottles of their finest. Needless to say, the party grew. Sadly, we had to break it up to enter the museum for our presentation. Dorothy was most likely one of our unexpected guests. I hope so, because that would have been the first of many pleasant visits we shared with her.



Dorothy’s close friend for 22 years, Luke Harnish, reported that she introduced him to the Yellowstone Trail. She was always interested in history. She could trace her ranch history back to 1879, a time before homesteaders and fences. She had albums and files to substantiate her research. In fact, her home was on that property. Museums were always a source of enjoyment for her.

The story of the Yellowstone Trail intrigued her. She studied closely any information she could find, including John’s and my YT books. She spent time comparing sources and information. I didn’t know that at the time, so I never asked her about her conclusions, which would have been very interesting to this researcher.



Olson and a makeshift sign she created with Luke Harnish.

The Trail ran close to her ranch, and she drove it to get to Columbus. The Trail was later replaced by a gravel road from Highway 10 to her driveway. Dorothy said that “the Y in the road about a half mile past her driveway always needed a YT sign.” She and Luke actually made YT signs to honor the Trail in their part of the country.

The transcontinental Trail did pass through five states east of Illinois, but those states’ relationships with the Trail were more tenuous because they already had fine established routes. There was less interest in the Trail and, thus, less information available. Decades of research seemed to draw us west more than east. This was fortunate because it gave us more opportunities to visit Dorothy and her big, fluffy dog.

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She was generous to a fault. Once she babysat our trailer in her yard for several days while we went to a Jeep event in Colorado (well off the Trail). Another time she treated us to lunch at a nearby place called The Apple, I believe. Coffee or tea were always available during our visits.

Once, in an effort to understand western ranchers, I inquired about the size of her property. I learned very quickly that this is something you do not ask. Apparently, it is equivalent to asking directly about one's income. This seemed strange to us Midwesterners, proud owners of two acres of forest surrounding our home in Wisconsin.

Dorothy surprised us with a trip to Wisconsin. She was visiting relatives not in our hometown of Eau Claire, but in a town about an hour away. "Did we have time to drive there?" Of course we did. We joined the group for an afternoon of jovial visiting and laughter. We were honored to be included.

Dorothy always had time for us and our lengthy discussions about the Trail. We had no idea that she had been, at various times, a busy mother, an employee of the Stillwater Abstract Co., a life-long member of the Stillwater Homemakers Club, and a rancher. In recent years, when we found it difficult to continue traveling the Trail, we kept up our friendship through correspondence. Her last letter came just after John died — a sad closing to a wonderful relationship.

To me, Dorothy will always be remembered as a generous, vitally interested member of the Yellowstone Trail Association. **EID**



A letter sits on Dorothy Olson's couch that is addressed to the Yellowstone Trail Association.

CROSSROADS OF AMERICA CONF. BRINGS TOGETHER JHA & ROUTE 66 Joplin, Missouri – Sept. 19–22, 2026

(pre-conf. motor tours/road rallies Sept. 17–20)

A special joint conference hosted by the Jefferson Highway Association (JHA) in partnership with the Route 66 Association of Missouri and other Route 66 groups will take place Sept. 19–22 with pre-conference tours and road rallies Sept. 17–20. The occasion celebrates the historic crossroads where the Jefferson Highway intersects with U.S. Route 66 in Joplin—the “Crossroads of America.”



The event is timed for Route 66's 100th anniversary (designated in 1926) and ties into broader 2026 commemorations, including the centennial of the federal highway numbering system and America's Semiquincentennial (250th birthday). Highlights include exploring the overlap of historic routes (much of the Jefferson Highway in the area was incorporated into Route 66), preservation efforts, road-tripping culture, and Joplin's role as a hub for multiple early auto trails.

PRE-CONF. EVENTS FEATURE SEPARATE SOCIABILITY RUNS AND MOTOR TOURS:

- *JHA's "Prize Drive through: The Ozarks"*
Sept. 17–19, NW Arkansas & SW Missouri)
- *"Miner's Drive" (ends in Joplin)*
- *JH/MO Route 66 Road Rally (Sept. 18–19).*

Coordination with the Missouri Route 66 Association's Fall Motor Tour (Sept. 18–20), allowing a seamless transition into the main conference. The main program (hosted by the Joplin Convention & Visitors Bureau) will include tours, presentations, networking, and celebrations focused on highway history. Registration is not yet open (as of early May 2026), but full-conference and day-ticket options for members/non-members, plus pre-caravan registrations, will be available soon via jeffersonhighway.org. Contact the registrar at hansfordnewton@gmail.com for details. Host hotel and full schedule coming shortly—check jeffersonhighway.org or Joplin CVB for updates.



Yellowstone Trail Association

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

To join the Yellowstone Trail Association or renew your membership, either go to yta.clubexpress.com to join online or print this form, fill it in, and mail with check as directed below.

FIRST

First, the really important information needed for us to correspond with you:

Your name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____

Email address : _____

An Email address is required to receive the Arrow newsletter or notifications. If you do not have an email address, let us know. Printed Arrows can be mailed at a reasonable cost.

Phone: _____

Optional, but required if you do not use email:

For business and organization memberships:

Organization name: _____

Your position: _____

*The Yellowstone Trail Association is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 association which depends on **tax deductible donations** for its long-range activities, such as roadside history kiosks, museum displays, other research or educational projects and grant matching. Please consider a generous donation now added to your dues payment.*

SECOND

Second, choose a membership level and length of 1 or 2 years.

1-Year Memberships:

Basic - \$25	(\$25 Dues)
Family - \$35	(+ \$10 Donation)
Supporter - \$50	(+ \$25 Donation)
Advocate - \$75	(+ \$50 Donation)
Champion - \$100	(+ \$75 Donation)
Patron - \$400	(+ \$375 Donation)

2-Year Memberships:

Basic - \$50	(\$50 dues)
Family - \$70	(+ \$20 donation)
Supporter - \$100	(+ \$50 Donation)
Advocate - \$150	(+ \$100 Donation)
Champion - \$200	(+ \$150 Donation)
Patron - \$800	(+ \$750 Donation)

Membership dues are for the year beginning when you join or on the anniversary of the date of joining.



THIRD

Check the box for 1 or 2 year membership and then indicate membership amount

MEMBERSHIP

☐

1 year

☐

2 year



Amount: _____

And finally... enclose payment with form and mail to:

Yellowstone Trail Association
PO Box 65
Altoona, WI 54720-0065