



Nebraska History posts materials online for your personal use. Please remember that the contents of *Nebraska History* are copyrighted by the Nebraska State Historical Society (except for materials credited to other institutions). The NSHS retains its copyrights even to materials it posts on the web.

For permission to re-use materials or for photo ordering information, please see:

<http://www.nebraskahistory.org/magazine/permission.htm>

Nebraska State Historical Society members receive four issues of *Nebraska History* and four issues of *Nebraska History News* annually. For membership information, see:

<http://nebraskahistory.org/admin/members/index.htm>

Article Title: Nebraska's Changing Auto Culture, 1900-1930

Full Citation: Patricia Gaster, "Nebraska's Changing Auto Culture, 1900-1930," *Nebraska History* 73 (1992): 180-185.

URL of article: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1992Auto1900to1930.pdf>

Date: 4/16/2013

Article Summary: As automobile ownership and travel became more widespread after 1900, the rural and urban landscape began to reflect the needs of the American motorist. This article presents photos and other graphics reflecting those changes.

Cataloging Information:

Names: Adolph Boule, Val Strough, Clarence Gale, Charles A Dhooge

Photographs / Images: Ogallala Tourist Camp; *Wilber Republican*, August 8, 1930, "Tourist Camps Are Buzzing" drawing; Chris' Cozy Cabin Camp, possibly Saline County; Adolph Boule Garage in Wilber, 1914; Beatrice Ford Company garage, 1909-1910; BVD service station in Wilber, early 1920s; The Big Springs Café near the Lincoln Highway; Buffalo Bill tourist camp, North Platte; Auto campers at Elmwood Park near Omaha, 1920 (3 photos); Service station at Thirty-sixth and Center, Omaha, February 25, 1922; Service station at Eighteenth and Izard, September 18, 1925



(NSHS-K65)

NEBRASKA'S CHANGING AUTO CULTURE, 1900-1930

As automobile ownership and travel became more widespread after 1900 (and particularly after the dedication of the Lincoln Highway in October of 1913), the rural and urban landscape began to reflect the needs of the American motorist. Poorly maintained "roads," some hardly more than trails, were improved after continued agitation by local civic boosters and the good roads movement. The Federal Aid Road Act of 1916 initiated the flow of federal dollars into the nation's growing network of roads.

As the horse gave way to the automobile, garages replaced blacksmith shops and livery stables. Service stations dotted the landscape. Auto dealerships and used car lots became well established features of large and small town life. Autos ceased to be toys for the rich and became a necessity for most classes of Americans, who experienced more mobility and independence than they had ever had before. Travel for business and pleasure became routine.

New roadside facilities providing food and lodging to travelers appeared. The earliest was the "auto tourist camp," where motorists pitched their

own tents and cooked their own meals. Some were free; others were operated by a commercial businessman who sold gas, oil, and perhaps a few groceries on the site. "Pay camps" with more conveniences soon became common. Some were located in city parks and provided cooking and sanitary facilities as well as police protection for a nominal sum. Auto campers preparing to spend the night by themselves away from a commercial campground could use some of the new camping and cooking equipment offered for sale to those who preferred to "rough it."

As auto campers demanded more comforts, roadside lodgings were accordingly upgraded. Individual tourist cabins provided not only cooking and sanitary facilities but overnight privacy and shelter from severe weather. Some owners connected their cabins and arranged them around a central court to form a "motor court."

Roadside picnic lunches were no longer the only option for hungry travelers. Cafes and lunchrooms were opened, frequently near or in conjunction with campgrounds, cabins, and a service station. Some weary travellers grew to rely on food and lodging pro-

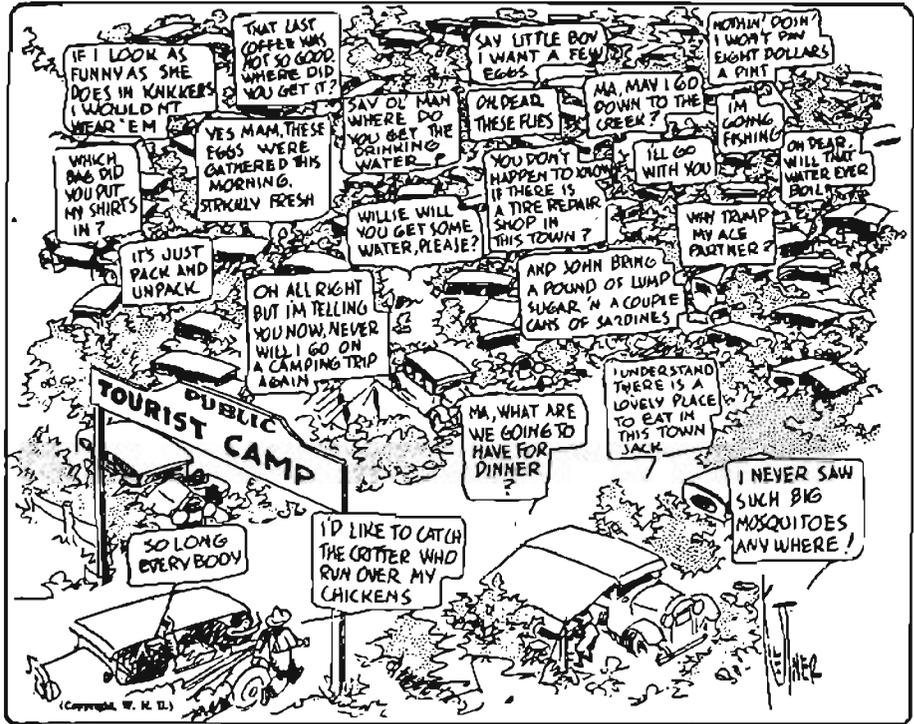
vided under one roof — a furnished room with prepared meals in a private or commercial "tourist home." Such facilities were similar to the "bed-and-breakfast" homes popular with motorists today.

Roadside tourist "attractions" of various types became almost as widespread as tourist lodgings. Some, such as historical sites or local industries, were of genuine significance; others, such as roadside zoos, rock shops, and souvenir stands, did little more than provide a break for weary motorists. Travel, especially when vacationing, became an occasion to shop for mementos and post cards for friends at home.

The automobile changed the way Americans traveled, worked, and played. It gave rise to what has been called the drive-in culture, in which most of life's needs and wants can be satisfied from behind the wheel of a car. The American landscape, modified by a network of roads and roadside facilities to minister to the traveler and his machine, was never the same. — Patricia Gaster, Assistant Editor, Research and Publications Division.

Tourist Camps Are Buzzing

Wilber Republican, August 8, 1930
... (below) Auto camp, possibly in
Saline County. (NSHS-S165)





Adolph Boule Garage in Wilber, 1914. Overland cars are lined up outside. (NSHS-K90-222) (top right) Beatrice Ford Company garage, 1909 or 1910. Ford driver is Val Strough. Photo by Clarence Gale. (NSHS-G151.3-33) . . . (below) BVD service station in Wilber, early 1920s. Charles A. Dhooge was proprietor in 1926. (NSHS-K90-177)

Changing Auto Culture

The Big Springs Cafe near the Lincoln Highway was "a welcome place for tourists." An early travel trailer is being towed behind a car at left. (NSHS-R718)



Buffalo Bill tourist camp, North Platte. (NSHS-P252-6-p. 1)





Auto campers at Elmwood Park near Omaha, 1920. From the Bostwick-Frohardt Collection owned by KMTV and on permanent loan to the Western Heritage Museum, Omaha.



Service station at Thirty-sixth and Center, Omaha, February 25, 1922. From the Bostwick-Frohardt Collection owned by KMTV and on permanent loan to the Western Heritage Museum, Omaha.



Service station at Eighteenth and Izard, Omaha, September 18, 1925. From the Bostwick-Frohardt Collection owned by KMTV and on permanent loan to the Western Heritage Museum, Omaha.

