



## The Gliddenites are coming! Nebraska and the 1909 Glidden Tour

(Article begins on page 2 below.)

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Article Summary: In July 1909, Nebraskans witnessed firsthand the most popular and spectacular Glidden Tour. This multi-state driving tour was not a race; it was a reliability run meant to challenge the driving skills of early automobilists and the reliability of their machines. The event promoted the automobile as a practical and desirable means of travel—a message that Nebraskans were already primed to accept.

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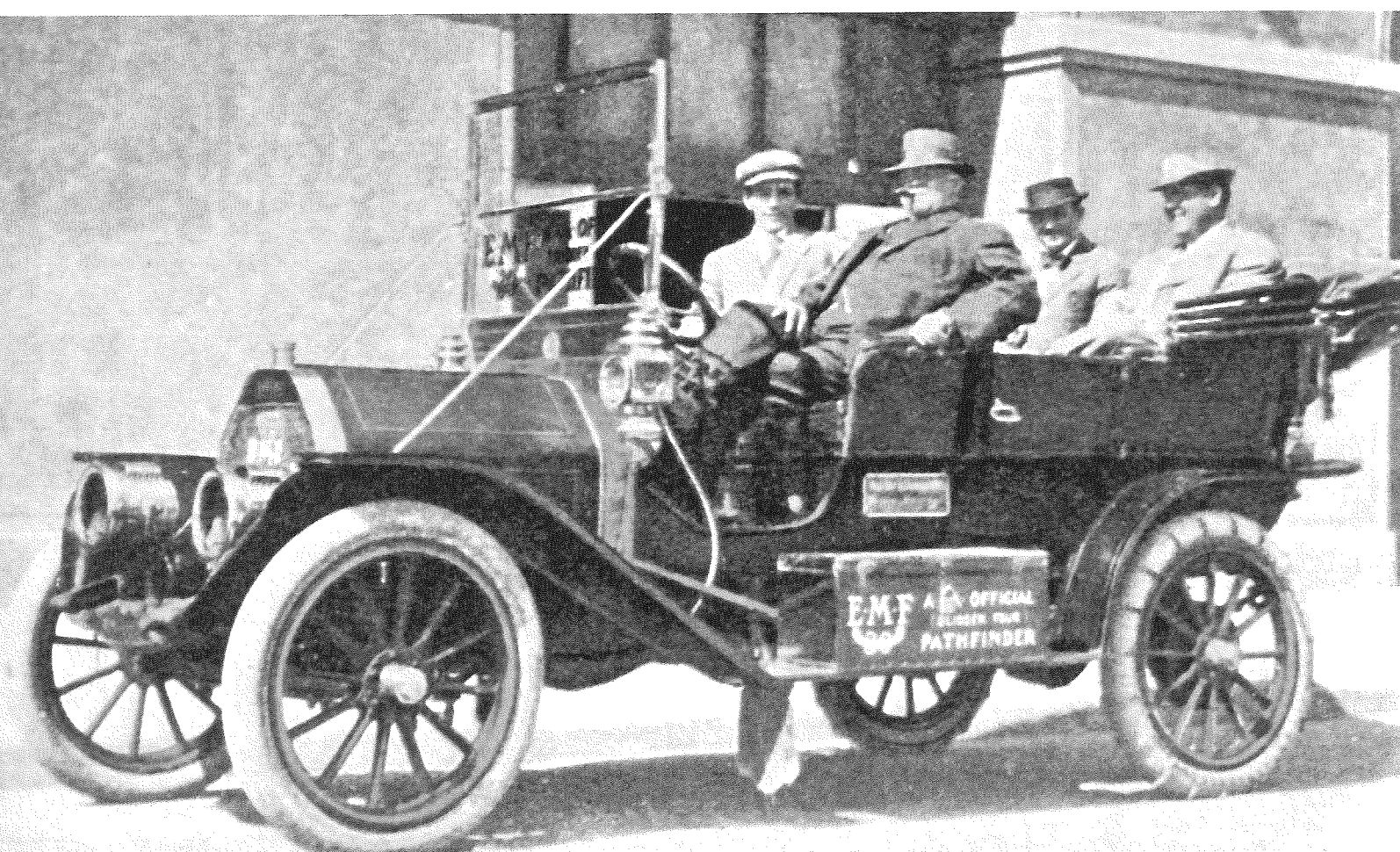
Names: Charles Jasper Glidden, Frank Hower, Dai H Lewis

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Photographs / Images: Glidden Tour's pathfinder car after arriving in Kansas City; route of the Glidden Tour (*Omaha Daily News*, July 21, 1909); Number 7 Jewel car in North Platte, July 22, 1909; advertisement for the Studebaker E.M.F. "30," the official Glidden pathfinder; Dai H Lewis making notes during his pathfinding trip in preparation for the tour; tour headlines (*Fremont Daily Herald* and *Omaha Daily Bee*, July 22, 1909); John C Moore crossing the Loup River bridge; members of Kearney Auto Club greeting racers; tour headlines (*Kearney Morning Times*, July 22 and 23, 1909); tour cartoon (*Omaha Daily Bee*, July 22, 1909); Studebaker press car crossing the Platte River; contestants checking in at Kearney; John Machesky driving a Chalmers through Ogallala

Charts: roster of contestants and scores for the Glidden trophy; roster of contestants and scores for the Detroit trophy; roster of contestants and scores for the Hower trophy



# THE GLIDDENITES ARE COMING!

## *Nebraska and the 1909 Glidden Tour*

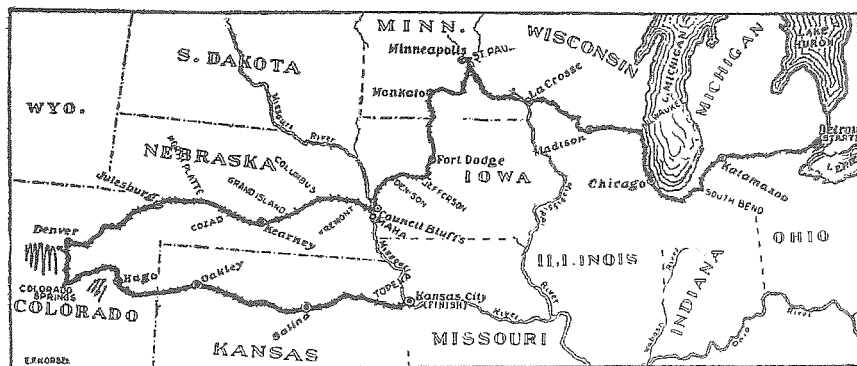
BY JOHN T. BAUER

In July 1909, Nebraskans witnessed firsthand the most popular and spectacular Glidden Tour. More properly called the Annual Reliability Touring Contest of the American Automobile Association (AAA), Glidden Tours were not automobile races; they were reliability runs meant to challenge the driving skills of early automobilists and the reliability of their machines. The events were popularly known as Glidden Tours because of the sponsorship of telecommunications pioneer Charles Jasper Glidden, who came up with the idea and donated a large silver trophy for the winner. Glidden, a former associate of Alexander Graham Bell, amassed a large fortune from his New England telephone syndicate. In 1902 he retired and began touring the world by automobile. Together with his wife, Lucy, and mechanic, Charles Thomas, Glidden racked up over 46,000 miles in 39 countries by 1907.<sup>1</sup>

A total of eight tours were held, from 1905 to 1913 (a 1912 tour was planned but cancelled). The fifth tour, in 1909, was the first to travel west of the Mississippi River. Capturing the nation's attention, it was the most grueling tour ever, a 2,637-mile adventure beginning at Detroit and passing through Chicago, Madison, Minneapolis, Omaha, Denver, and Colorado Springs, finally ending at Kansas City nineteen days later. Thirty cars competed for trophies in three classes: the Glidden trophy, for full-size touring cars; the Hower trophy, for runabouts; and the Detroit trophy, for toy tonneau cars. Drivers were penalized, using an elaborate point system, for any repair made to their car and for failure to arrive at the daily destination within the allotted amount of time. The driver who completed the contest with the lowest score was declared the winner. It was a grueling and treacherous

**The Glidden Tour's Pathfinder car after arriving in Kansas City.**  
Courtesy of the David Cole Collection, Santa Maria, California

## ROUTE OF THE GLIDDEN TOUR



*Omaha Daily News*,  
July 21, 1909

challenge. Only two drivers finished with perfect scores. Six others withdrew along the way and one was disqualified.<sup>2</sup>

Glidden Tour contestants spent two days in Nebraska, traveling a 400-mile route that closely paralleled the transcontinental Union Pacific Railroad. The same route was traveled a year earlier by the New York-to-Paris "Great Race" and would later become the Lincoln Highway.<sup>3</sup> Contestants spent the night of July 21 in Council Bluffs and departed the next morning for Kearney, passing through Omaha, Fremont, Columbus, and Grand Island.<sup>4</sup> After an overnight stay in Kearney, July 23 was spent in western Nebraska, passing through Lexington, Gothenburg, North Platte, and Ogallala. Contestants rested for the night in Julesburg, Colorado, before continuing on to Denver the following morning.<sup>5</sup>

This article focuses on the tour's experience during those two days in Nebraska. Specifically, it examines the reactions of local Nebraskans to the event and to the publicity that it brought to their state, and also the impressions made on tour participants and the journalists that accompanied them. Secondary literature on the Glidden Tours is scarce. There are no books, and less than a handful of articles, all of which come from automobile enthusiast literature. Primary sources for this research come from period newspapers, both large and small, and automobile trade magazines such as *Motor Age*, *The Automobile*, and *Horseless Age*.

### Route Lobbying and Speculation Begins

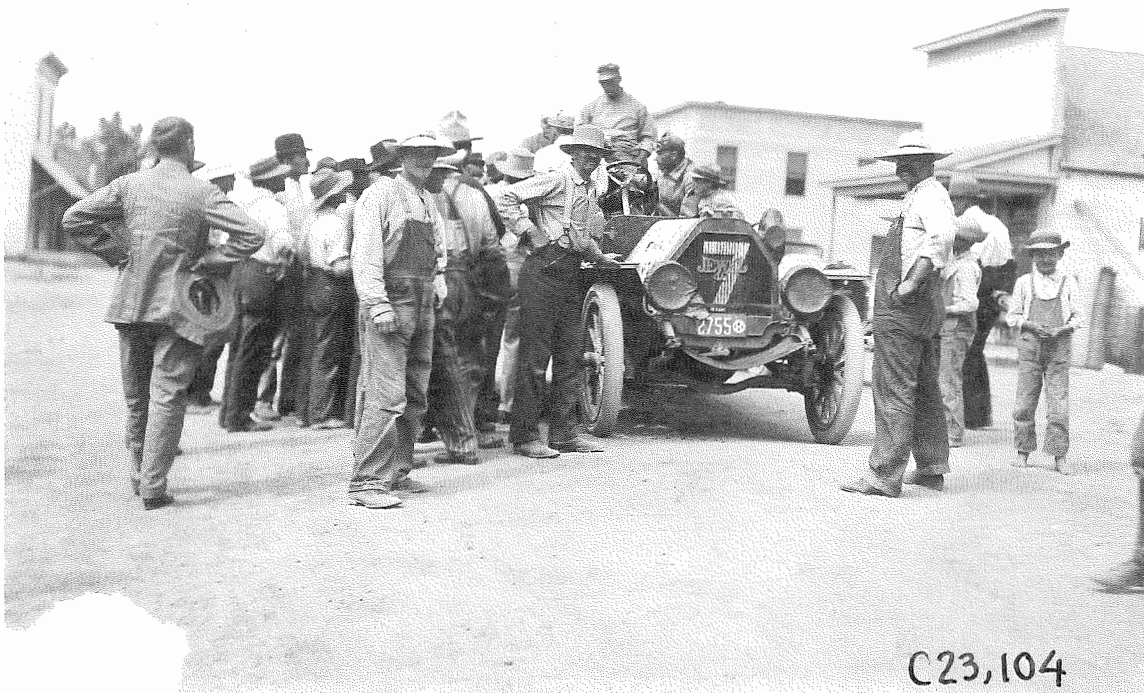
Planning for the 1909 Glidden Tour began in February at the Eighth Annual National Association of Automobile Manufacturers tradeshow in Chicago. Frank Hower, chairman of the contest board of the AAA, held several meetings to hear ideas for that summer's tour. Since the Chicago show was attended by midwestern manufacturers, cities from that region lobbied hard to include midwestern states.

Delegations from Omaha, Denver, Kansas City, Minneapolis, and St. Louis all pressured the AAA to include their metropolis.<sup>6</sup> The AAA was resistant at first. Apparently, the contest board thought automobiles could not reliably travel west of the Mississippi River. The territory was still too "wild" and the roads impassable, they argued. The trade journal *Motor Age* reported the delegates "asserted that the west was far from being 'wild,' that Indians and buffalo no longer roamed over the prairies, that the roads were passable at any time of the year and that there was no reason to fear that the tourists would not be able to reach Denver. All this made a big impression on Hower, it is said, and it is confidently believed by the westerners that the big tour will touch at least Minneapolis and Denver."<sup>7</sup>

The AAA brass also thought automobiles were still too novel for the western farmer and underestimated their appeal to Plains people. In past tours, the AAA contest board routed the contestants through populated regions of the Northeast, which boosted participation because manufacturers wanted to demonstrate their cars before the widest possible audience. In 1909 the contest board thought that the auto market in the West was simply not large enough to make it worthwhile planning a tour there. The delegates from western states, however, disagreed. Nearly fifty members from the Omaha Automobile Club presented letters of support from Omaha manufacturers and dealers, statistics showing Nebraska's high rate of automobile ownership, and pointed out that years of bumper crops had filled the wallets of farmers eager to purchase automobiles.<sup>8</sup>

The efforts of the midwestern cities paid off. A month later, on March 22, the contest board announced that the 1909 tour would begin at Detroit and go west, including Chicago, Minneapolis, Denver, and end at Kansas City.<sup>9</sup> The speculation and lobbying only increased after this announcement as cities between the start and finish clamored for inclusion. Nebraskans were overjoyed. Any route from Detroit to Denver, they reasoned, must pass through Nebraska. The only question, though, was what route would it be?

Two competing routes were proposed, both beginning at Omaha. The first, published within a feature article in *Motor Age*, was part of the "transcontinental" route. After leaving Omaha, the route traveled southwest to Lincoln and then west to Grand Island, where it joined the Union Pacific Railroad. It then followed the Platte River valley to Denver.<sup>10</sup> The second, also published in *Motor*



The Number 7 Jewel car stops in North Platte, Nebraska, July 22, 1909. After colliding with an onlooker's car later that day in Ogallala, the Jewel driver drove off "without apology or regret," according to the *Keith County News*. The driver was apprehended near Brule and forced to pay damages. Courtesy of the National Automotive History Collection, Detroit Public Library

Age, followed a more southern route, from Omaha, to Lincoln, Hastings, McCook, Imperial, and then west to Denver through Sterling, Colorado.<sup>11</sup> This route is approximately what is now U.S. Highway 6. The former offered towns with the greatest population while the latter offered a more direct path. It is unknown if the feature article was written by a Nebraskan, but the presence of several photographs of Nebraska clearly indicates that it was intended to put the state in a positive light. The second route may have been proposed by someone from Imperial because its article quotes a resolution passed by the Imperial Commercial Club guaranteeing "beds and food for at least 200" if the tour were to stop in the Chase County seat.<sup>12</sup>

### Pathfinding and the Route

Although the contest board decided the start, finish, and major cities along the way, the task of determining the exact route, over specific roads, fell to the tour pathfinder. This person was Dai H. Lewis, the secretary of the Buffalo, New York, Automobile Club.<sup>13</sup> Lewis was a veteran pathfinder, performing the task for multiple tours in the Northeast and also for the three previous Glidden Tours. A native of Wales, he was considered the best in the business. As he linked together roads and recorded detailed notes of turns and distances, he

also made logistical arrangements such as hotels, food, and gasoline.

Dai Lewis started his pathfinding trip from Detroit on April 12.<sup>14</sup> Progress was slow and difficult, causing the entire journey to last nearly forty days.<sup>15</sup> Lewis would later write that the road conditions in Wisconsin and northern Iowa were the worst that he had ever encountered in his many years as pathfinder.<sup>16</sup> After nearly a month of travel, he arrived in Omaha the evening of May 7. Since it was Mr. Lewis, not the members of the AAA contest board, who had the final decision on the route and the cities that would or would not be included in it, he was continually lobbied along his journey. Everywhere he stopped, townspeople tried to wine, dine, and impress Lewis. Local automobile owners and business people escorted him in and out of Omaha, Grand Island, Kearney, Lexington, and Gothenburg.<sup>17</sup> Sometimes, this just added to the difficulty of his job. For example, a prominent Omaha automobile dealer, H. E. Frederickson, drove a pilot car from Omaha to Kearney in an effort to show Lewis the best way. After leaving Columbus, Frederickson took a wrong turn and ended up in Stromsburg instead of Central City, costing the party valuable time.<sup>18</sup>

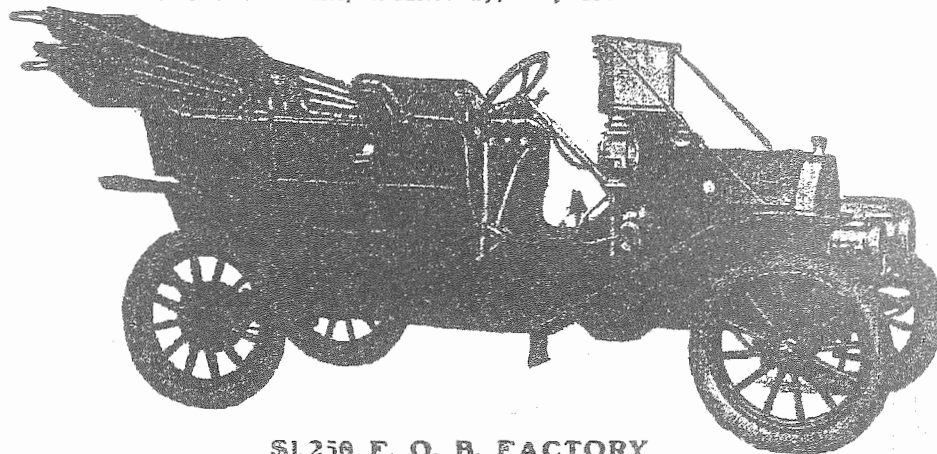
Newspapers announced Lewis's impending arrival with anticipation. The *Kearney Daily Hub*,



# Studebaker, E. M. F. "30"

## Official Glidden Pathfinder

This Car and Studebaker E. M. F. "30" Glidden Tour Confeiti Car Will Pass Through Omaha and Council Bluffs, Wednesday, July 21st. See Them.



\$1,250 F. O. B. FACTORY

30-Horse Power. 5 Passenger. 5 Lamps. Horn. Magneto. Only Extras: Top, Windshield, Speedometer

"The best value for \$2,500 and under on the market."

An output of 12,000 cars this year made this price of \$1,250 possible.

An output of 18,000 cars next year will make the car better for the same money.

The Studebaker E. M. F. 30 Pathfinder is the Official Pilot Car of the 1909 Glidden Tour. The work this car did as Official Pathfinder in routing the Glidden Tour established beyond a doubt the fact that the Studebaker E. M. F. 30 is the peer of the medium priced cars.

This car is the sensation of the year. It jumped to first place in three months and stands there today both in volume and performance. The entire output of 12,000, including Kansas City's allotment of 1,100 cars was sold three months ago and will be delivered by September 1st.

After September 1st the output will be 18,000 cars and Kansas City will positively get and deliver 3,000 of them.

We are closing agencies daily and want a live one in every county. 835 of next year's cars are already sold.

# Studebakers

Call or Write Today at Rome Hotel, Omaha, or Grand Hotel, Council Bluffs, Iowa, where our General Traveler, C. A. Whitaker, and Neb. Traveler, Mr. Burbank, Will Be July 19-22 to Close Contracts With Neb. Dealers.

1620-1622 Grand Avenue, Kansas City, Mo.



Dai H. Lewis stops to make notes during his pathfinding trip in preparation for the 1909 Glidden Tour. Lewis was secretary of the Buffalo, New York, Automobile Club. Courtesy of the David Cole Collection, Santa Maria, California

for instance, ran four stories about Lewis before he even arrived in the city.<sup>19</sup> When he finally did arrive, on Sunday afternoon, May 8, a large crowd gathered to see his car and hear him speak. He stayed just thirty minutes, wanting to reach North Platte by nightfall.

In Omaha the day before, the competition for Lewis's attention was fierce. The tour's inclusion of eastern Nebraska had been determined months earlier. The overnight stop, however, had not. Automobile clubs in Omaha and Council Bluffs wanted the tour contestants in their city for the night. When word arrived to the Bluffs club that Lewis was nearing the city, they sent a party to escort him to a downtown hotel where a large reception and dinner were waiting. The Omaha club also sent a party with plans to escort Lewis into their city, but they turned back after meeting a contingent of Bluffs members who explained that Lewis had broken down and would be delayed a day. Omaha club members learned later that evening that Lewis had not broken down, but rather had dined in Council Bluffs and then drove to Omaha, unescorted, where he was staying for the night. The Council Bluffs club explained that the mix-up was just a friendly joke.<sup>20</sup> Needless to say, Omahans were not laughing. They understood what was happening. The *Omaha Daily News* explained, "The Bluffs is trying to steal the right to be regarded as a Glidden station from Omaha . . . [but] Omaha is still on the Glidden map."<sup>21</sup> Undoubtedly, shenanigans like this occurred often as Lewis performed his duties.

The automobile industry followed closely news from the pathfinding party and was encouraged by what it heard. Their success in Nebraska, Colorado, and Kansas provided the evidence it needed to support the decision to go west and validated the desires of the western cities. Lewis's party showed that the AAA had no need to regret its decision. An editorial in *Motor Age* explained,

With the western Glidden for this year the unexpected is coming true. Before the [pathfinder] left Detroit it was predicted by many that it would be impossible to make progress between Omaha and Denver. The inaccuracy of these predictions is well demonstrated by the fact that the pathfinding car made its biggest days' runs from Omaha west. It is well . . . that long tours are made on this part of the trip . . . because . . . the running of the cars over the trail [near] Fort Morgan will be a good demonstration to many makers who are ignorant of the west.<sup>22</sup>

In early June the AAA contest board announced the tour's official route and itinerary. In previous tours, contestants, journalists, and other tour personnel stayed in hotels at each overnight stop. Since over half of the 1909 tour was to pass through small Plains towns with insufficient hotel space, the contest board arranged for the tour to be met in Fort Dodge, Iowa, by a chartered train of Pullman cars. The train would meet the contestants at each

# GLIDDEN TOURISTS WILL GO AT TOP SPEED THROUGH FREMONT

## ONLY PILOT'S PARTY, IN EARLY MORN' CAN STOP

### Rest of Cavalcade Will Not Have Time for Second's Delay, Though They Express Regret to Dan V. Stephens, Fremont's Emissary.

Dan V. Stephens threw disappointment into the camp of the contestants a dinner at the Wolz parlors and show them around the town. In

**Fremont Daily Herald,**  
July 22, 1909

overnight stop west of Fort Dodge and provide them with food and lodging. The contest board chose the transcontinental route through Nebraska for this reason. However, due to continued lobbying by the Iowa Association of Automobile Clubs, Chairman Hower changed a scheduled overnight stop from Omaha to Council Bluffs on June 27, just two weeks before the start of the tour.<sup>23</sup> Curiously, I was unable to find any mention of or reaction to this decision in the Omaha newspapers.

#### The Glidden Tour is On!

On Monday, July 12, at exactly 10 a.m., the mayor of Detroit ceremonially fired a cannon signaling the start of the Glidden Tour. The event was the

culmination of four days of festivities, which included a banquet, manufacturers' reception, street parade, baseball game, steamboat excursion, and two band concerts.<sup>24</sup> Thousands of spectators lined the streets of Detroit. It was the most spectacular Glidden send-off to date. By the time the contestants reached Council Bluffs nine days later, on July 21, they had traveled 1,279 miles, averaging about twenty miles per hour. Exactly half (fifteen) of the cars experienced mechanical trouble along the way, with four withdrawing from the contest altogether. Rain, wind, mud, excessive heat, thirst, and exhaustion all took their toll on the drivers.

Journalists filed daily reports of the tour's progress, which contained common themes. Reports often began with discussions about road conditions. Tour participants were always excited whenever they encountered improved roads. If a county or community improved its roads, it was dutifully praised by these journalists' reports. Contestants were happy to leave the muddy gumbo clay roads of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa behind for the drier, hard-packed roads of the Plains. Throughout the region, drivers were able to consistently reach forty-five miles per hour or faster and travel more than two hundred miles in one day. Both these feats were unheard of in previous Glidden tours. But often these conditions meant that the roads were not really roads at all, but rather two tire tracks splitting the prairie. And while the menace of gumbo clay was gone, sand had taken its place.

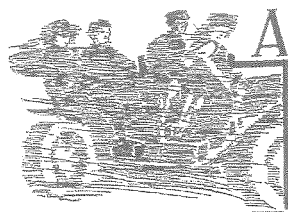
The daily reports also included insightful descriptions of local agricultural conditions and products. Journalists and other tour participants were particularly fascinated with the irrigated corn, wheat, and alfalfa in the Platte valley between Kearney, Nebraska, and Fort Morgan, Colorado.

PART TWO  
**AUTOMOBILES**  
 PAGES 11 TO 12

## THE OMAHA DAILY BEE

VOL. XXXIX—NO. 31      OMAHA, THURSDAY MORNING, JULY 22, 1909.      SINGLE COPY TWO CENTS

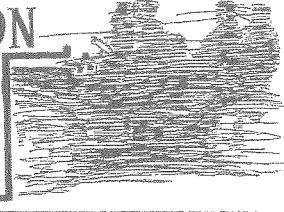
THE OMAHA BEE  
 a clean, reliable newspaper that is  
 reading to each and every home.



# AUTOMOBILE SECTION

# GLIDDEN TOUR

# NUMBER



## HOSPITALITY OF THE WEST DELIGHTS THE TOURISTS

The Bee's Special Representative with the Glidden Tour Writes of the Impression on Eastern Drivers Made by the People and the Roads of the Transmississippi Region.

CONTESTANT IN THE GLIDDEN TOUR.

CONTESTANT IN THE GLIDDEN TOUR.

**Omaha Daily Bee, July 22, 1909**





John C. Moore crosses the Loup River bridge, probably at Columbus. Courtesy of the National Automotive History Collection, Detroit Public Library

A *Motor Age* writer boasted that irrigated sugar beet farmers near Fort Morgan spent \$20 per acre and turned an \$80-per-acre profit.<sup>25</sup> To tour participants and journalists, all this agricultural bounty signaled that wealth and progress had reached the Plains. And they knew that wherever wealth and progress could be found, booming automobile sales were close behind.

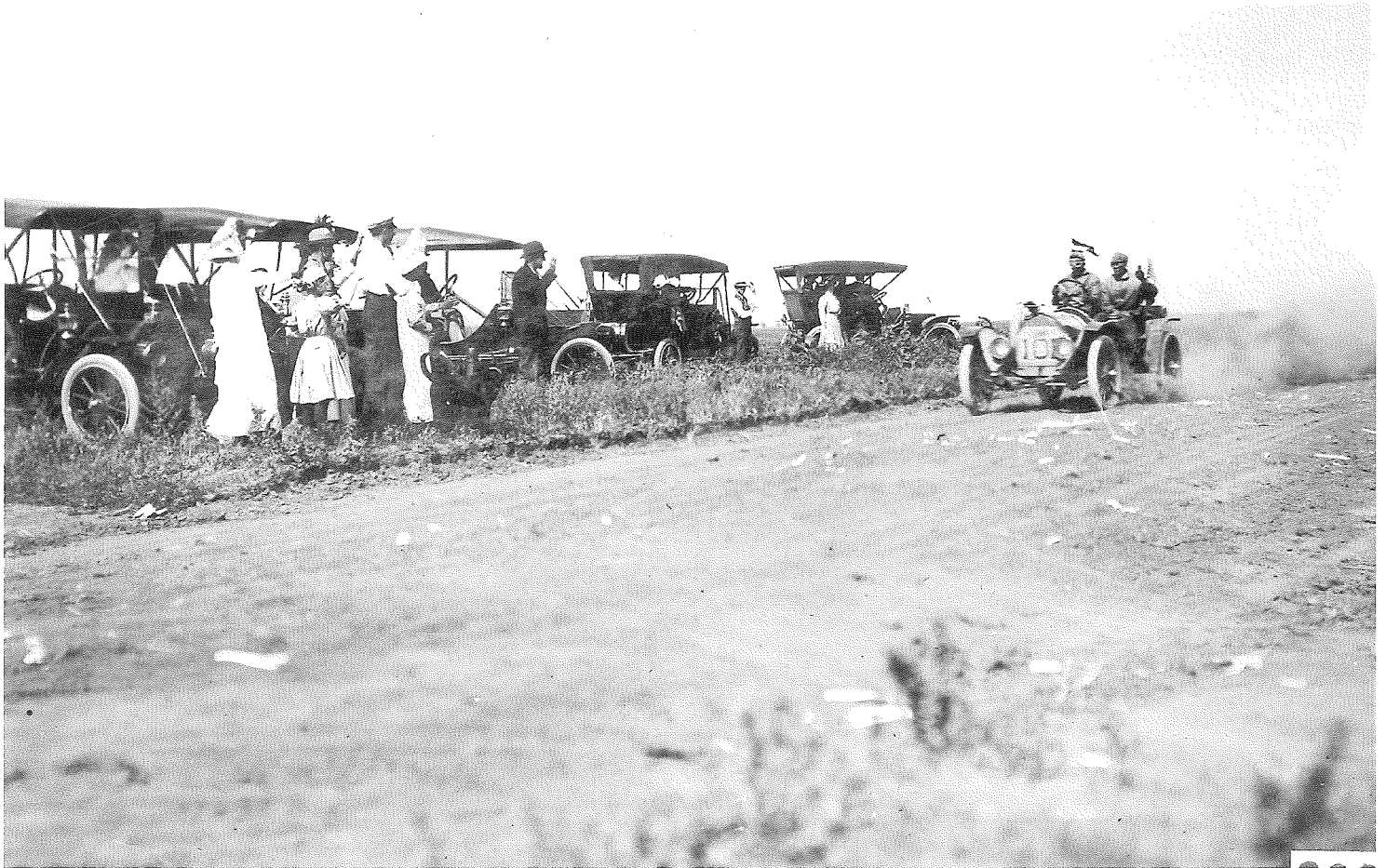
These two themes of road conditions and agricultural productivity are part of a much larger turn-of-the-century narrative found in the period literature about the tours. This narrative held that the West was a land that needed to be tamed and civilized. And the Glidden Tour participants were convinced that they were witnesses of this process. After all, with civilization came improved roads, agricultural success, and technological innovation like irrigation. The *Motor Age* writer expressed this perfectly:

It was common gossip before the start of the tour that once Omaha was left behind the run to Denver would simply be a jump over the plains with not a possibility of passing through lands where cars could be sold . . . but these doubters . . . have been convinced and tonight know that there is no such thing as a jumping off place

between Omaha and Denver, but that civilization, with an exception of 80 miles, extends unbroken from New York to Denver, and thanks to the motor car and irrigation, what were once plains have been conquered.<sup>26</sup>

Cars began arriving in Council Bluffs around two in the afternoon and were greeted by thousands of people crowding the streets. Members of the Council Bluffs Auto Club kept the streets clear for the contestants as they made their way to the Grand Hotel to check in. Afterwards, many of the hot and dirty drivers took a cool swim in nearby Lake Manawa. As was the case at all overnight stops, the contestants were treated that evening to a banquet, and Glidden, Hower, and Lewis indulged the crowd with speeches praising the local people for their hospitality.<sup>27</sup>

The Omaha Automobile Club was not about to let the contestants drive through their city without showing their own hospitality, so they invited every Omaha automobile owner to line the streets on Thursday morning to cheer the contestants as they departed for Kearney. However, that day's drive was the longest of the tour, so the tourists departed early, some as early as five a.m. Most of Omaha was still in bed and few people saw the contestants roar through the streets.<sup>28</sup>



Members of Kearney Auto Club greet a Glidden contestant. Courtesy of the National Automotive History Collection, Detroit Public Library

<p>KEARNEY, NEBRASKA, THURSDAY MORNING, JULY 22</p> <h2>GLIDDEN TOURISTS WILL ARRIVE TODAY</h2> <p>CONTESTANTS FOR THE GLIDDEN TROPHY WILL BEGIN TO ARRIVE IN KEARNEY AT 3 P. M.---BAND CONCERT, SHOWER BATHS AND SMOKER AT CITY HALL---MANY COMING FROM SURROUNDING TOWNS</p> <p><small>Today the Glidden tourists will arrive at the scene of a smoker where refreshments will be served. The scene will be on second street from seven to eight o'clock.</small></p>
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*Kearney Morning Times, July 22, 1909*

The weather during these legs of the tour was dry and extremely hot, with temperatures reaching one hundred degrees. Contestants suffered from dehydration and heat stroke. Frank Hower was so sickened because of the heat that he made the trip from Omaha to Kearney in his chartered Pullman, instead of riding in the chairman's car, as was his custom.<sup>29</sup> The dry weather, combined with the flat terrain along the Platte River, made for fast roads and the contestants sped along at speeds nearing forty-five miles per hour. A Central City farmer remarked that several contestants went by his farm "as if the people expected to eat supper in Denver."<sup>30</sup> They made such good time that the pilot car forced the entire tour to stop just east of Kearney for fear that they would arrive in the city too early.

Onlookers greeted contestants all along the route. Crowds gathered in every town, with some spectators coming from neighboring towns and countryside. Many people were disappointed, though, because the contestants were separated

by large intervals and did not stop. The pathfinder car, pilot car, supply truck, and press cars often did stop, even for just a brief moment, but those competing did not. Central City citizens, for instance, expected the contestants to "pass through in a slow and stately procession."<sup>31</sup> The Fremont Commercial Club even sent a person to Omaha the day before to convince the tour to stop in their city. The club intended to treat them to dinner and show them around town. Dai Lewis had to explain that even though every town wanted the contestants to stop, there was simply not enough time. Lewis did agree to stop in Fremont for breakfast, an offer that apparently eased the club's disappointment.<sup>32</sup>

As the overnight stop on July 22, Kearney was the only Nebraska city to host the contestants for an extended period of time. The Kearney Commercial Club was very proud of this fact and in mid-May started making plans.<sup>33</sup> Roads along the route were dragged, and decorated poles were erected to inform the contestants when they entered and exited Buffalo County.<sup>34</sup> Six showers were installed in the back room of a downtown hardware store so that the contestants could clean up.<sup>35</sup> The club's goal was clearly to prove to the nation that Kearney was the best city in Nebraska. The *Daily Hub* even remarked, "Kearney is a dandy little city and the Gliddenites will say so when they come."<sup>36</sup> The visitors were indeed impressed, but not because of the poles, roads, or other hospitalities. Contestants raved about the showers, so much so that national newspapers and magazines featured them prominently in their Glidden news reports from Kearney.

Contestants began arriving in Kearney around three in the afternoon. As in Council Bluffs and other cities, they were greeted by large crowds.

Local newspapers described the scene with headlines such as "Glidden Tour Makes Kearney Mecca of Automobilists" and "Kearney Engulfed in Gasoline."<sup>37</sup> Hundreds of automobiles visited from towns in the region, thirty from Hastings alone. The *Hastings Daily Tribune* reported that they came "from all directions—from the sandhill towns northwest, from Hastings, Holdrege and in fact a score of towns south and almost as many north, and there are several motor parties here from the north of Kansas."<sup>38</sup> Later that evening, the city treated them to a band concert, supper, and a smoker, where Glidden, Hower, and Lewis each spoke.<sup>39</sup>

The next morning at seven, contestants departed for Julesburg, Colorado. The roads were in excellent condition, except for some deep sand west of North Platte, and the contestants made the 203-mile journey with time to spare. Crowds of people and automobiles greeted the tour in Lexington, Gothenburg, North Platte, and Ogallala. With a few exceptions, the contestants did not stop in any of these towns.

One contestant, though, would have been wise to stop in Ogallala. The Number 7 Jewel car, driven by O. P. Bernhart, collided with an onlooker's car. The *Keith County News* reported the incident. "One of the Glidden cars . . . came through Ogallala at about 40 mph . . . and ran into Dr. Likens car . . . smashing the side fenders. The Jewel man backed up and made a new start without a word of apology or regret. Sheriff Beal secured Clayburne Young with his fast Overland and started in pursuit overhauling the outfit near Brule where Constable Lookabill had stopped them and at the point of a gun held the outfit until the sheriff arrived. The [driver] of the Jewell entered into contract to pay the damages."<sup>40</sup> To add insult to injury, Number 7

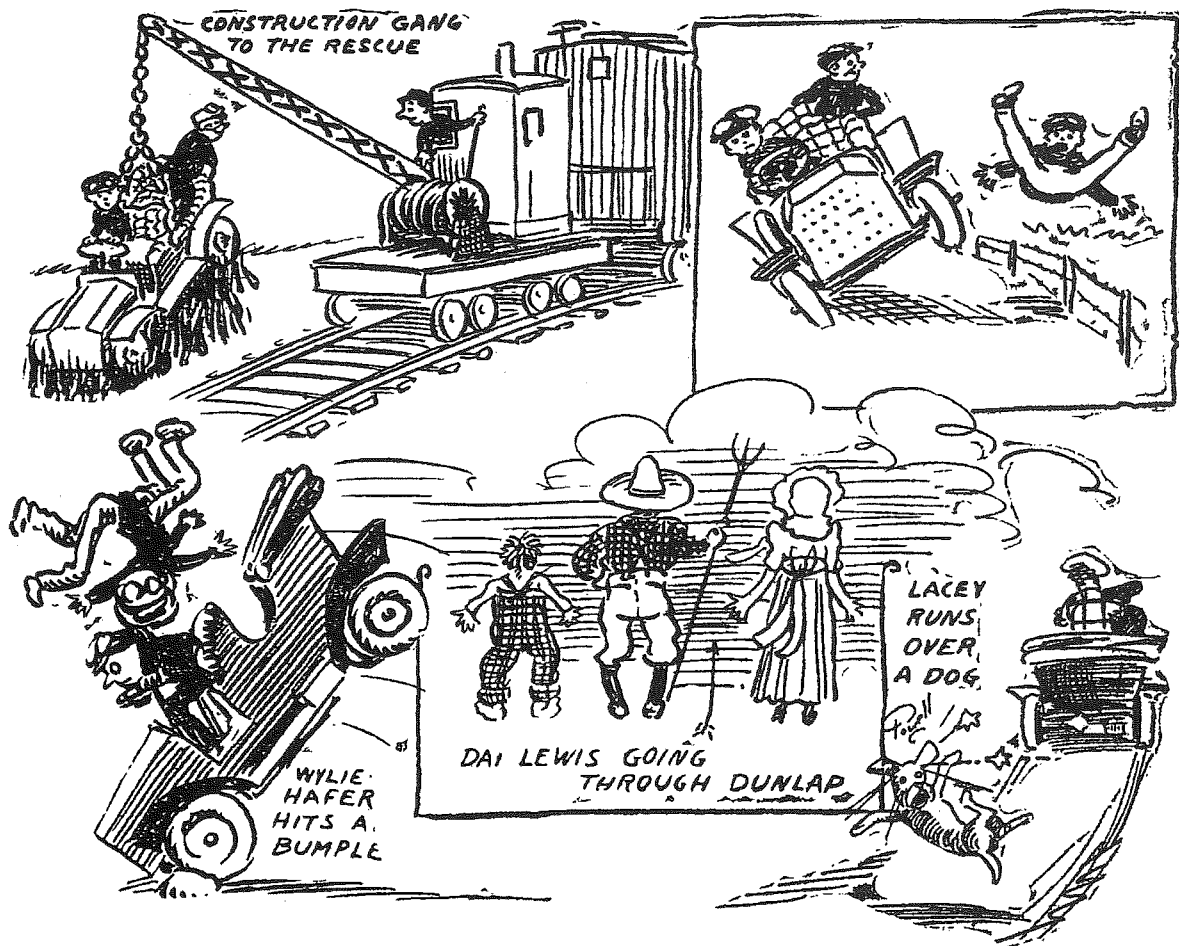
## GLIDDEN TOURISTS CAPTURE THE CITY

CHUGGING, DUSTY CARS WITH TIRED DRIVERS ARRIVE IN KEARNEY  
AHEAD OF SCHEDULE TIME---ENTERTAINED LAST EVENING---  
WILL GO TO JULESBURG TODAY---PENALTIES PAID

If you did not own an automobile, or at least have a friend that did, you were not in the running yesterday in	ed the second day out, however, they and it was a pleasure to welcome are going with the crowd to the fin-	up to the gasoline station four abreast and creating much enthusiasm. The touriss had better roads yester-
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Kearney Morning Times,  
July 23, 1909

## SIDELIGHTS ON THE GLIDDEN TOURISTS



Near Gothenburg, a Studebaker press car crosses the Platte River on a wooden bridge strung with telephone wires. After crossing to the south bank, the route continued by "stair steps" (going west, then north, then west, etc.) as it followed the river to the city of North Platte. The Lincoln Highway followed the same route several years later. Courtesy of the National Automotive History Collection, Detroit Public Library





was also penalized one point by tour officials for fixing the damage to his fender.

In Julesburg that evening, the Commercial Club, aided by the Chappell, Nebraska, Automobile Club, extended their High Plains hospitality to the contestants. The only newspaper story does not mention any band concerts, suppers, smokers, or showers. It does say, though, that the contestants remarked that "it was the nicest reception that they had received from a small place."<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Julesburg had only 962 people in the 1910 census and was missing many of the comforts available to contestants in the East. Several days earlier, tour officials had inquired about the shower facilities in Julesburg, and were told that there were only two bathtubs in town, but the river was nearby.<sup>42</sup> And with that the two days of the Glidden Tour in Nebraska were over.

## Conclusion

Amid much fanfare, the tour finally arrived in Kansas City, Missouri, on July 30. The three winning drivers were determined the following day, after technical inspections were completed on each vehicle. Jean Bemb, John Williams, and Walter Winchester won the Detroit, Hower, and Glidden trophies, respectively.<sup>43</sup>

Some Nebraskans continued to follow news of the tour after it left their state. Newspapers in Omaha, Lincoln, and Kearney ran stories of the tour's progress through Colorado and Kansas and its finish in Kansas City. Papers in smaller communities, however, did not. For Nebraskans in those towns, the Glidden Tour was a single-day event, a chance to wait patiently along the road to get a glimpse of the daredevil drivers as they passed by. Perhaps if

**Contestants checking in at Kearney. The location is probably East Twenty-fifth Street (present U.S. 30). The Number 9 and 108 cars in front went on to win trophies.** Courtesy of the National Automotive History Collection, Detroit Public Library





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one wished hard enough, a contestant would stop and chat for a short while.

The 1909 Glidden Tour was different than previous tours. Never before had communities lobbied so hard to be included on the tour route. Never before were contestants met with such wild excitement. For previous tours, the AAA contest board simply selected a route that contained large to medium-sized cities and then made preparations, with little fanfare.<sup>44</sup> People in those communities were

accustomed to seeing wealthy men from the East Coast drive around in their expensive machines. Nebraskans, however, were not. Yes, they were familiar with automobiles, and some were even owners themselves, but the sight of an easterner driving one from such a long distance away was still a rarity. Nebraska communities and residents alike fundamentally misunderstood the purpose and intention of the Glidden Tour. Cities lobbied hard because they saw the tour as a way to

## ROSTER OF CONTESTANTS AND SCORES CONTESTED FOR THE GLIDDEN TROPHY

Car No.	Car Manufacturer	Car Owner	Car Driver	Final Score
1	Premier	H. O. Smith	Webb Jay	16.9
2	Premier	George A. Weidley	H. L. Hammond	1.5
3	Chalmers-Detroit	William Bolger	William Bolger	WD
4	Marmon	Frank E. Wing	Frank E. Wing	10.5
5	Marmon	W. C. Marmon	Howard Marmon	7.3
6	Maxwell	E. G. Gager	E. G. Gager	13.1
7	Jewel	O. H. Bernhart	O. P. Bernhart	406
8	Pierce-Arrow	Charles Clifton	F. S. Dey	1.6
9	Pierce-Arrow	Charles Clifton	Walter Winchester	0
10	Glide	A. Y. Bartholomew	A. Y. Bartholomew	688.9
11	Thomas	Gustav G. Buse	Gustav G. Buse	WD
12	Midland	A. E. Montgomery	E. O. Hayes	35.6
14	White	Walter C. White	H. N. Searles	45.5

## CONTESTED FOR THE DETROIT TROPHY

<b>Car No.</b>	<b>Car Manufacturer</b>	<b>Car Owner</b>	<b>Car Driver</b>	<b>Final Score</b>
51	American Simplex	W. G. Isbell	Walter A. Woods	52.2
52	Chalmers-Detroit	Jean Bemb	Jean Bemb	23.8
53	Premier	H. D. Smith	Cliff Waltman	34.3

## CONTESTED FOR THE HOWER TROPHY

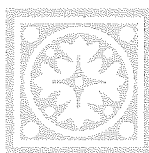
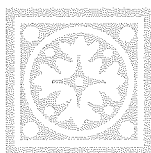
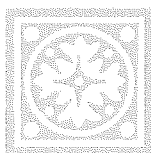
<b>Car No.</b>	<b>Car Manufacturer</b>	<b>Car Owner</b>	<b>Car Driver</b>	<b>Final Score</b>
100	Moline	W. H. VanDervoort	Charles H. VanDervoort	8.3
101	Moline	W. H. VanDervoort	J. A. Wicke	1.1
102	Moline	W. H. VanDervoort	W. S. Gregory	49.4
103	Brush	Frank Briscoe	F. A. Trinkle	WD
104	Brush	Frank Briscoe	D. B. Huss	WD
105	Chalmers-Detroit	John Machesky	John Machesky	DQ
106	Hupmobile	Frank A. Steinman	Frank A Steinman	WD
107	Maxwell	Charles Goldthwaite	Charles Goldthwaite	43.6
108	Pierce-Arrow	Charles Clifton	John S. Williams	0
109	Pierce-Arrow	Charles Clifton	Charles A. Schofield	10.2
110	McIntyre	W. A. McIntyre	Frank Goodwin	WD
111	Jewel	O. H. Bernhart	John Shimp	107.8
112	Mason	F. S. Duesenberg	Roy Snyder	344.8
114	Lexington	Fred N. Coates	John C. Moore	3.8



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**Driving a Chalmers, John Machesky passes through Ogallala while local residents watch from the auto dealership. Machesky would be disqualified on the last day of the tour for repairing his car with a borrowed wheel.** Courtesy of the National Automotive History Collection, Detroit Public Library

advertise their communities. City leaders thought the free publicity would bring business and prosperity. The residents thought that the contestants were coming to see them, as vacationing tourists. In reality, Glidden Tours were organized for automobile manufacturers. The events served as a way to test cars and introduce them to the general public. Although tour contestants and organizers from the AAA were always gracious and appreciative of the hospitality extended to them by local citizens, they were not seeking fun and relaxation. To them, automobiles were a business, and the Glidden Tours were an important tool for expanding that business.



The 1909 tour in the West was so successful, and the journalists and organizers so impressed with the territory west of the Mississippi River, that there quickly arose talk of a possible coast-to-coast tour for 1910. Even Mr. Glidden entertained the idea of a transcontinental tour running between San Francisco and New York.<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately, though, Mr. Glidden did not plan his namesake tours—he only donated a trophy. The AAA contest board decided to route the 1910 tour south, from Cincinnati to Dallas, then back north to Chicago.<sup>46</sup> The conclusion of the tour was disputed and the winners and losers fought in court. The legal battle left much heartache and bitterness in its wake, souring the public's view and effectively bringing the series to an end. Tours were run in 1911 and 1913, but they were small, disorganized, and never lived up to the glory year of 1909. ■

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Joe Sherman, "Around the World in Six Years," *Automobile* (June 2004): 82-86; Sarah Harding Hunter, "I Knew the Gliddens," *Antique Automobile* (Jan./Feb. 1976): 35-38.

<sup>2</sup> John A. Heilig, "The Glidden Tours: When Touring Was Truly Grand," *Automobile Quarterly* 30.3 (1992): 14-29. See also the chapter on the Glidden Tours in Bellamy Partridge, *Fill'er Up! The Story of Fifty Years of Motoring* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1952).

<sup>3</sup> For the Great Race see Carol Ahlgren and David Anthone, "Bad Roads and Big Hearts: Nebraska and The Great Race of 1908," *Nebraska History* 73.1 (Spring 1992): 12-17; for the Lincoln Highway in Nebraska see Carol Ahlgren and David Anthone, "The Lincoln Highway in Nebraska: The Pioneer Trail of the Automotive Age," *Nebraska History* 73.4 (Winter 1992): 173-79; Gregory M. Franzwa, *The Lincoln Highway: Nebraska* vol. 2 (Tucson, AZ: The Patrice Press, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> "Tourists Leave the Gumbo Roads Behind," *Motor Age* 16 (July 29, 1909): 4-5.

<sup>5</sup> "Following the Valley of the Platte River," *Motor Age* 16 (July 29, 1909): 6-9.

<sup>6</sup> "Aftermath of Chicago's National Show," *Motor Age* 15 (Feb. 18, 1909): 14-16.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>8</sup> "Nebraska Asks for Glidden Recognition," *Motor Age* 15 (Mar. 25, 1909): 12-13.

<sup>9</sup> "Glidden Tour Starts from Detroit," *The Horseless Age* 23 (Mar. 24, 1909): 414.

<sup>10</sup> "Chicago to Denver, Glidden Suggestion," *Motor Age* 15 (Mar. 4, 1909): 1-3.

<sup>11</sup> "From Omaha to Denver," *Motor Age* 15 (Apr. 1, 1909): 23.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> For Lewis's autobiography, see Dai H. Lewis, *America Bid Me Welcome* (self-published, 1943).

<sup>14</sup> "E-M-F Starts to Blaze the Glidden Trail," *Motor Age* 15 (Apr. 15, 1909): 8.

<sup>15</sup> "Pathfinding on the Plains," *Motor Age* 15 (May 20, 1909): 4-8.

<sup>16</sup> Lewis, *America Bid Me Welcome*.

<sup>17</sup> "Pathfinder Car Reaches Kearney," *Omaha Morning World-Herald*, May 10, 1909, 3.

<sup>18</sup> "Pathfinder Car Was in Kearney Sunday," *Kearney Daily Hub*, May 10, 1909, 3.

<sup>19</sup> "Glidden Car to Come Here," *Kearney Daily Hub*, Apr. 27, 1909, 3; "Pathfinder Car Delayed," Apr. 30, 1909, 3; "News of Pathfinder Car," May 7, 1909, 2; "Pathfinder Car is Coming," May 8, 1909, 2.

<sup>20</sup> "Pathfinder for the Glidden Tour Arrives," *Omaha Morning World-Herald*, May 8, 1909, 1.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> "1909 Glidden Lessons," *Motor Age* 15 (May 20, 1909): 10.

<sup>23</sup> "Council Bluffs Preparations," *Motor Age* 16 (July 1, 1909): 11.

<sup>24</sup> "Detroit Gives Gliddenites Enthusiastic Sendoff," *The Automobile* 21 (July 15, 1909): 81-83; "Sixth Annual A.A.A. Reliability Tour," *The Horseless Age* 24 (July 14, 1909): 49-53; "Auspicious Start of the Sixth Annual Glidden," *Motor Age* 16 (July 15, 1909): 4-5.

<sup>25</sup> "Following Valley of Platte River," *Motor Age* 16 (July 29, 1909): 7.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> "Hospitality of the West Delights the Tourists," *Omaha Daily Bee*, July 22, 1909, 11-12; "Thousands Welcome Glidden Tourists," and "Coastless Event is the Glidden Banquet," *Omaha Daily News*, July 22, 1909, 7.

<sup>28</sup> "Glidden Tourists Pass Through Omaha," *Omaha Daily News*, July 22, 1909, 7.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*; "Hower Delayed by Illness," *Omaha Daily Bee*, July 23, 1909, 2.

<sup>30</sup> "Glidden Tourists Come and Go Quietly," *Central City Republican*, July 25, 1909, 1.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> "Glidden Tourists Will Go at Top Speed Through Fremont," *Fremont Daily Herald*, July 22, 1909, 6.

<sup>33</sup> "Commercial Club Directors Meet," *Kearney Daily Hub*, May 19, 1909, 3.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*; "Would Prepare the Roads for Big Tour," June 25, 1909, 3; "Roads Ready for Tourists," July 21, 1909, 5.

<sup>35</sup> "Roads Ready for Tourists," *Kearney Daily Hub*, July 21, 1909, 5.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> "Glidden Tour Makes Kearney the Mecca of Automobilists," *Hastings Daily Tribune*, July 22, 1909, 1; "Kearney Engulfed in Gasoline," *Kearney Democrat*, July 29, 1909, 5.

<sup>38</sup> "Glidden Tour Makes Kearney the Mecca of Automobilists," *Hastings Daily Tribune*, July 22, 1909, 1.

<sup>39</sup> "Glidden Tourists Capture the City," *Kearney Morning Times*, July 23, 1909, 1.

<sup>40</sup> "Glidden Tour," *Keith County News* (Ogallala), July 29, 1909, 1.

<sup>41</sup> "The Glidden Tour," *Julesburg Grit-Advocate*, July 30, 1909, 2.

<sup>42</sup> "Two Bathtubs for Gliddenites," *Omaha Daily Bee*, July 22, 1909, 5.

<sup>43</sup> "Winchester in Pierce-Arrow Wins Glidden," *Motor Age* 16 (Aug. 5, 1909): 1-7; "Big Tour Ends with Three Winners," *The Automobile* 21 (Aug. 5, 1909): 205-12; "At Kansas City," *The Horseless Age* 24 (Aug. 4, 1909): 121-124.

<sup>44</sup> "Rivalry Concerning the Glidden Tour Route," *The Horseless Age* 23 (Jan. 13, 1909): 54.

<sup>45</sup> "Next Glidden Tour to be Still Longer," *Omaha Daily News*, July 22, 1909, 7; "Madison to La Crosse," *The Horseless Age* 24 (July 21, 1909): 58.

<sup>46</sup> John A. Heilig, "The Glidden Tours," 14-29. See also the chapter on the Glidden Tours in Partridge, *Fill'er Up! The Story of Fifty Years of Motoring*.