



Lifting Our People Out of the Mud: The Good Roads Movement in Nebraska

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Article Summary: Nebraska's early roads were unmarked trails across the countryside and were seen as the concern of individual locales rather than of the state or federal government. A nationwide "Good Roads" movement began in the 1880s with an alliance of bicycle enthusiasts and then gained momentum with the coming of the automobile. Nebraskans followed the national movement even as they struggled to build support for it in their own state.

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Photographs / Images: car with a 1925 Nebraska license plate stuck at an unidentified location; road into Belfast, Nebraska, c. 1905-1915; Charles F. Manderson; Decatur (Nebraska) Bicycle Club, 1898; Good Roads pinback buttons; cartoon from *Missouri-Kansas Highways* lamenting the plight of the farmer prevented by poor roads from taking his livestock to market; perspective view of D. Ward King's split-log drag, a mainstay of road maintenance; automobile designed and built by Charles M. Fuller at Angus, Nebraska, 1902; "electric carriage" brought by Montgomery Ward and Co. to Omaha's Trans-Mississippi and International Exhibition in 1898; parade for 103 Ford Model T owners in Hooper, Nebraska; logo of the Nebraska State Automobile Association; Polk County road crew; key to telephone pole markers that identified Nebraska automobile trails in 1918; 1913 map showing the "trans-continental road," later known as the Lincoln Highway; Henry Joy stuck in the mud near Lodgepole, Nebraska, 1915; installation of Nebraska's first highway markers, 1926

LIFTING OUR PEOPLE OUT OF THE MUD

A car with a 1925 Nebraska license plate is stuck at an unidentified location. NSHS RG3021-9-2





—BY L. ROBERT PUSCHENDORF

THE GOOD ROADS MOVEMENT IN NEBRASKA

*N*ebraska's early roads were unmarked trails across the countryside. While railroads received large government subsidies of public land and substantial private capital, public roads were seen as the concern of individual locales rather than of the state or federal government. As a result, roads remained in a primitive condition.



"A chain is no stronger than its weakest link and a road is little better than its deepest mud hole."

—Isaac B. Potter,
The Gospel of Good Roads, 1891

"Twenty-five years hence the richest county in Nebraska will be the one with the best roads."

—Joy Morton, 1892

By the mid-1920s, however, the modern system of federal and state highways and county roads was well underway, supported by a shared understanding that a massive public investment in roads was not only desirable, but also that its scale and complexity required centralized support and planning. Today this seems obvious, but the change in attitude did not happen automatically. It required years of promotion by supporters of the "Good Roads Movement." This nationwide movement began in the 1880s by an alliance of bicycle enthusiasts and then gained momentum with the coming of the automobile. Nebraskans followed the national movement even as they struggled to build support for it in their own state.

Nebraska's Early Roads

When Nebraska Territory was organized in 1854, its only roads were the routes of the overland trails. The federal government soon appropriated funds for several military roads: \$50,000 in 1855 for a road beginning at the Missouri River at a point opposite Council Bluffs, Iowa, to Fort Kearny and \$30,000 in 1857 for a road from the Platte River to the Niobrara River via the Omaha Reservation to Dakota City. This latter road followed the Missouri River for 103 miles and included thirty-nine bridges.¹ In advocating for other federal military roads, Governor Mark W. Izard pronounced in 1856, "The cost of (these) roads would be comparatively small; the face of the country through which they would pass is particularly adapted to the construction of roads, nothing being required but to bridge the streams and cast up mounds at proper distances from each other to mark the lines."²

Besides federal military roads, the territorial legislature also authorized roads. During its first session in 1855 the legislature designated ten territorial roads connecting newly-established settlements. These were Omaha City to Cedar Island on the Platte River; Plattsmouth to Archer; a suitable point on the Platte River to Dakotah; Pawnee to Nebraska Center; Brownville to Marshall's Trading Post on the Big Blue River; Tekamah to Pawnee; Florence to Fontanelle; Nebraska City to Grand Island; Bellevue to Catharine; and DeSoto to Pawnee.³ They were followed by many others. Some connected locations that were only dots on a map. Eventually 155 roads were authorized by territorial legislation.⁴

Commissioners were appointed to survey, mark, and establish these roads. Those that were realized were largely undeveloped,

consisting of ruts following waterways and land contours and connecting stream crossings and remote settlements. The legislature made no appropriations. In 1856 Nebraska's first general road law laid the responsibility on county commissioners and authorized a poll tax on able-bodied men between twenty-one and sixty of "two days' labor to be expended upon the public roads."⁵ Thus dependent upon local labor and taxes, few of these roads were actually built.

With the establishment of the territory, however, government surveyors began laying out a rectangular grid, dividing the land into 640-acre sections (one square mile each). Section lines would later be reserved for public roads. But with hundreds of sections in any given county—entailing thousands of miles of section line right-of-way—the great majority remained undeveloped for years.

The coming of the railroad did much to shape Nebraska settlement. Not only did it connect many towns, but often the towns themselves were located and founded by railroad town site companies. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the railroad became Nebraska's dominant mode of shipping and transportation, connecting not just coast-to-coast but to nearly all reaches of the state. Away from the rails, however, road construction languished. Public roads were either nonexistent or limited to trail ruts—a hindrance to farmers who needed to transport crops and livestock to markets served by the railroads.

Because the majority of traffic was local, road conditions were seen as a local concern. In addition, the Nebraska constitution forbade the state from borrowing money, thus preventing the large expenditures needed for large-scale road improvement. Even after statehood, and despite Nebraska's growing population, the legislature did little to help. In 1879 it passed a general road law granting counties the authority to build and maintain roads, and authorizing a tax levy of three mills to finance road improvement. But local governments showed little interest in additional taxation, and as a result Nebraska's roads remained in poor condition.

The Wheelmen

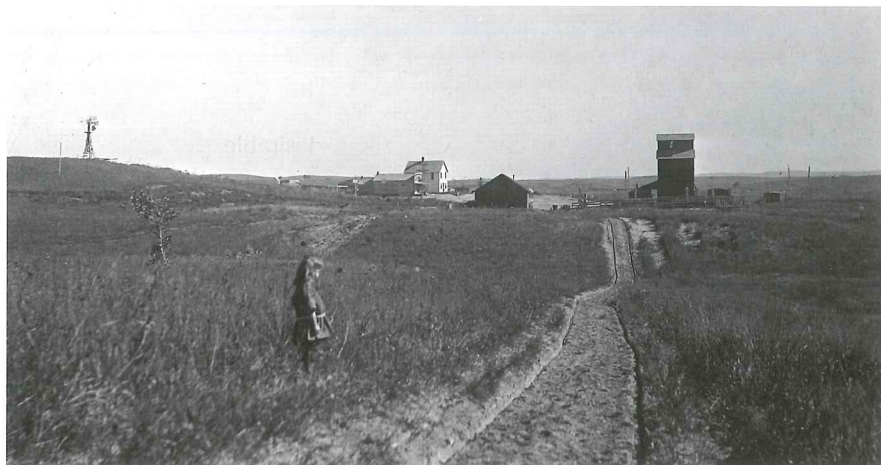
Starting in the 1880s a new fad began creating a new demand for better roads. Years before the automobile, a nationwide bicycle craze led to the birth of the Good Roads movement. The expensive, cumbersome, and dangerous high-

wheeled bicycle began to give way to the “safety” bicycle, which was chain-driven and had two smaller wheels of the same size. Mass production brought prices down, and the public began to think of the bicycle not as the dangerous toy of well-to-do young men, but as a handy means of transportation and recreation for men and women alike. Bicycling became a national obsession for the next two decades, enjoying a popularity it has not seen since. During this time the biggest challenge for “wheelmen” (as bicyclists were known) was the primitive condition of rural roads.

As the bicyclists organized they began to agitate for better roads. The most influential national group was the League of American Wheelmen (LAW), founded in 1880 under the leadership of Albert Pope, a bicycle manufacturer in Boston. The League launched a national campaign for better roads in 1888. It promoted the idea to farmers with an 1891 booklet titled, *The Gospel of Good Roads: A Letter to the American Farmer*, by Isaac B. Potter, chief consul of the League’s New York Division and later League president. Potter proposed that wheelmen and farmers cooperate for “a reform that benefits all and injures none.” Farmers, he argued, had much to gain from better roads and had the numbers to influence public policy. “It is reform that is now at the threshold of your State,” he wrote, “and one that will respond to your feeblest invitation.”⁶

By 1892 the LAW was pushing for federal legislation. Its first proposed bill was drafted by General Roy Stone, a prominent civil and mechanical engineer. The bill called for a national highway commission that would “inquire and report whether any form of national aid is desirable and practicable, and especially to consider the feasibility of co-operation by national, state and county authorities in a general system of road construction.”⁷ It also provided for a road-making exhibit at the forthcoming World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Stone’s bill was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives in June 1892 by Philip S. Post of Illinois, and in the Senate on July 5 by Charles F. Manderson of Nebraska. Manderson, a Republican, served as president pro tempore of the Republican-controlled Senate, and he represented a state where road improvement had languished.

The League of American Wheelmen, not coincidentally, held their annual conference in Washington in July, bringing three thousand members and staging a huge parade.⁸ Stone testified on behalf of Manderson’s bill, which passed the Senate in a much-shortened form that failed to mention federal aid—probably too



progressive a move at a time when large public works such as roads were not yet seen as the province of the federal government. The House version of the bill was held up by the speaker, an opponent, who prevented a vote by the full House; the bill died when the session ended in August.

Despite the legislative defeat, a new organization called the National League for Good Roads was organized in Chicago in October 1892. Manderson was chosen president and Stone was selected as general vice-president and acting secretary of the organization. During a meeting the following January, Manderson recommended that the group’s “effort should be in two lines: First, the discussion of that which is thought best in the way of national legislation, and, second, to suggest some uniformity in State legislation.”⁹

The federal and state governments, however, remained committed to local control. The LAW’s monthly magazine, *Good Roads*, editorialized, “Let us forever absolve ourselves from the ridiculous arguments which favor ‘local management’ of the country roads. . . . The slavery of custom has given many of us hide-bound conviction that the roads in every particular locality are, by right, the special care and property of the people who happen to live in the immediate neighborhood.”¹⁰

Manderson had by then given up on having a Good Roads exhibit at the Columbian Exposition; he now believed it would be lost among the more sensational displays. Besides, he chided in a letter to Stone, “The Exposition grounds themselves are an object lesson in good roads. When it rains mud is shoe deep where the road builder has not put in his best work.”¹¹

Not all efforts were lost. In the next session of Congress a Department of Agriculture appropriation bill provided \$10,000 to “make inquiries in regard

The road into Belfast, Nebraska, circa 1905-1915. Today few traces remain of the town, located about seven miles northwest of Greeley, but at one time a spur of the Burlington railroad ran from Greeley to Ericson by way of Belfast. Local farmers hauled their grain along this road to reach the town’s elevator.

NSHS RG3542-113-2



U.S. Senator Charles F. Manderson of Nebraska, an early proponent of the Good Roads Movement.
Library of Congress

to the systems of road management throughout the United States, to make investigations in regard to the best method of road-making, to prepare publications on this subject suitable for distribution and to enable [the secretary of agriculture] to assist the agricultural colleges and experiment stations in the disseminating of information of this subject."¹²

The secretary of agriculture was a prominent Nebraskan, J. Sterling Morton. In 1894 Morton established the Office of Road Inquiry within his department and appointed General Stone as special agent and engineer. However, Morton made clear to Stone his views on the federal government's proper role: "It must be borne in mind that the actual expense in the construction of these highways is to be borne by the localities and states in which they lie. Moreover, it is not the province of this department to seek to control or influence said action except in so far as advice and wise suggestions shall contribute toward it."¹³ Once again, federal leadership for road building would have to wait.

The Rotal Birds Arrive in Nebraska

The bicycle fad also reached Nebraska. The *Omaha Daily Herald* headlined an 1880 article, "The 'Rotal Birds,' Bicycling Coming into Vogue in the City." The article continued, "The bicyclers have been taking frequent 'spins' and speeding their rotary steeds."¹⁴ As in other parts of the nation, bicyclists broke from city streets and took to country roads, sometimes for long-distance rides. In 1892 twelve members of the Omaha Wheel Club made a one hundred-mile trip to Tekamah and back in one day, earning themselves a place in the "Century Club." The *Omaha World-Herald* reported that the cyclists walked the first twenty-seven miles of hilly roads, "that being the only tiresome part of the trip." The riders found mixed conditions near Blair; five miles of "deep dust, which proved hard pedaling, but after that the roads were hard as iron and ran smooth as a ribbon."¹⁵

In the summer of 1896 a women's cycling club in Red Cloud raised \$23 at an ice cream social to support the state's bicycle circuit races. Afterwards, four club members rode to Hastings and Minden and back, a round trip of about 150 miles. A report said, "[A]s all were beginners, it is certainly a good ride."¹⁶ In 1897 bicyclists issued a *Nebraska Hand-Book* of fifty-five cycling routes in the state, describing road conditions and distances, and providing names of local LAW

representatives and lists of League-endorsed hotels and repair shops.¹⁷ In Nebraska, a weekly journal, *The Pacemaker*, began publication in 1896. It proclaimed itself "Devoted to Cycling and Kindred Sports in the Mid-West" and reported extensively on racing meets and local bicycle clubs. Nebraska even had its own bicycle manufacturer, the short-lived Kearney Cycle Manufacturing Company, which reported turning out more than a thousand machines in 1896.¹⁸

An alliance of sorts developed between farmers and bicyclists, both realizing there was common ground for improved roads. But much responsibility still came to bear on farmers. LAW reached out. When the National Road Parliament met at Omaha's Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition in 1898, it adopted a resolution approving the work of the League of American Wheelmen. In response, an editorial in a LAW publication noted that this "is probably the first time that work of the L.A.W. for good roads has been thus endorsed at a convention made up mostly of farmers." The LAW hoped this endorsement "indicates the change of opinion among farmers" regarding good roads.¹⁹ The Nebraska press hailed the League of American Wheelmen for its efforts on behalf of farmers and rural communities. The *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln) praised one LAW publication for presenting a "complete and convincing" argument by stating that farmers and businessmen "can see at a glance that good roads are no more costly than bad ones, and that it will pay to inaugurate a system of good roads in every State of the Union."²⁰

The *Fremont Daily Herald* carried an article in 1892. "If the agitation in favor of good country roads is carried forward to success . . . the result will be directly attributable to the bicycle." The *Herald* said the country's influential journals were also adding their voices, seeking to "revolutionize the haphazard system of roadmaking that is, unfortunately, so common in the western states." If farmers would elect road overseers and commissioners committed to the movement, the *Herald* concluded, "the battle will be more than half won."²¹

In 1896 the movement even attracted the attention of Nebraska's own William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee for president. Bryan publicly endorsed the movement and promised that if elected, "I will certainly prove myself the wheelmen's friend so far as creating for him better roads and, in favoring the cyclist,



**The Decatur (Nebraska)
Bicycle Club, August
20, 1898.** NSHS RG3257-1-16

the farmer and every other class of men will likewise reap the benefit.”²²

Groups across the country organized road conventions, published material on the benefits of good roads, and lobbied to influence state and federal officials. At the 1898 National Road Parliament in Omaha, Miss Rella Harper, organizer of a Good Roads association in Missouri, promised an audience, “Organization will lead to agitation . . . and agitation to legislation.”²³

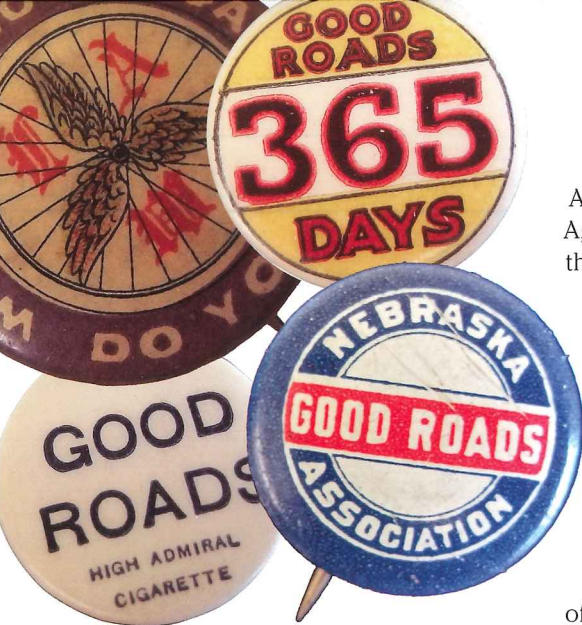
Another LAW publication insisted that it was unfair to expect farmers alone to pay the expense of better roads. “Any policy of road improvement which is not in the farmers’ interest is not our policy.” By advocating state aid for “the division of the cost of building roads among city and country taxpayers, we feel that we are relieving the farmer of the burden of the responsibility and taxes for country roads, instead of loading him up with heavier burdens, and that we are also helping to relieve him of the enormous mud tax, caused by poor roads.”²⁴ The LAW essay was republished as a circular of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Office of Road Inquiry in 1898, perhaps indicating a changing position by that office for public funding of roads.

The LAW boasted in 1896 that “the ‘bicycle craze’ and the ‘good roads fad’ will, no doubt, go on and on, as they are now doing.” League membership peaked at 102,636 in 1898, but thereafter declined rapidly, down to 76,944 members in 1900 and only 8,629 in 1902.²⁵ Although the bicycle craze did not “go on and on” as the LAW had predicted, other factors would keep the Good Roads movement alive in the coming years.

The “Mud Tax”

Bicyclists had led the initial charge, but the Good Roads movement soon brought together diverse coalitions at the local level: farmers, local officials, merchants, doctors, bankers, and newspapermen under the often used phrase, “lifting our people out of the mud.” Townspeople favored good roads to expand their trade areas. And farmers supported good roads to accommodate access to rail service, local markets, and trade.²⁶ Failure to get their crops and livestock to market when prices were high was sometimes called a “mud tax.”

Some people even claimed that by inhibiting access to schools, churches, and the general amenities of towns, bad roads led to the isolation of farm wives and the ignorance of farm children.



Good Roads organizations distributed pinback buttons to promote their cause. "We Want Good Roads. Do You?" asks a circa-1896 League of American Wheelmen button; High Admiral Cigarettes offered Good Roads pins with their product; "Good Roads 365 Days" emphasizes the need for all-season roads; the Nebraska Good Roads Association was founded in 1909.

An 1899 Department of Agriculture bulletin presented this argument in stark terms:

Bad roads constitute the greatest drawback to rural life, and for the lack of good roads the farmers suffer more than any class . . . Life on a farm often becomes, as a result of "bottomless roads," isolated and barren of social enjoyments and pleasures, and country people

in some communities suffer such great disadvantage that ambition is checked, energy weakened, and industry paralyzed. . . [Good roads] are a potent aid to education, religion, and sociability.²⁷

Rural Free Delivery (RFD) provided another incentive for better rural roads. Instituted by the U.S. Post Office Department so that farmers could receive mail and parcel post at home instead of having to come to town, RFD was transformative in the way it made news and correspondence

more readily available. RFD came to Nebraska in 1896, with most services being offered statewide by 1904. But the early post roads were often in bad condition.

Of the local organizations that took up the Good Roads cause, perhaps the most active were the commercial clubs, which promoted events and community improvement projects as well as the general upbuilding of local business and industry. Some of these clubs established Good Roads committees, which raised funds for road equipment, hosted demonstrations on the techniques and use of the road drag (see sidebar), and sponsored road building "bees" in which rural and town volunteers labored on sections of roads.

Funding remained local. Even by 1905 Nebraska law still held to the poll tax for improving county roads, which was assessed to landowners in the road district at an amount not to exceed five mills.²⁸ Half of the tax could be substituted for labor at \$1.50 for an eight-hour day. The tax could also be offset by furnishing horses to work the roads, also at \$1.50 a day. For counties not under township organization, the tax was paid in cash.²⁹ Men of the general vicinity often opted to provide labor to work off the tax but opposed additional taxation or assessments to property abutting roads.

A cartoon from the *Good Roads* booster publication *Missouri-Kansas Highways* laments the plight of the farmer who is prevented by poor roads from taking his livestock to market when prices are high. Seeking to overcome the reluctance of farmers to be taxed for road improvement, Good Roads boosters dubbed this situation the "mud tax." Kansas State Historical Society



Nebraska had 79,462 miles of public roads in 1904, mostly following section lines. However, only seventeen miles were “improved” with stone surfacing, and six miles were improved with sand and clay as binding agents.³⁰ Five years later, a national survey of roads reported 80,338 miles of public roads, 249 miles of which were improved, mostly with a sand-clay roadbed. Seventy-seven Nebraska counties had no improved roads at all. The report noted that a considerable amount of the state’s total mileage consisted of section lines that had not yet been opened for use as roads.³¹ A report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Office of Public Roads explained:

It was generally believed at the time when railroad building was first undertaken in this country that the railroad would supplant the wagon road, and this line of reasoning accounts in a large measure for the neglect of common roads from 1835 until about 1890. It is now clearly demonstrated that . . . the necessity for the improvement of our common roads is impressing itself upon the people more now than at any time in the history of the country. Our mileage of public roads is greater now than it has ever been, and the extension of the railroad and trolley lines has induced such an amazing development of the country’s resources as to bring about a remarkable increase in traffic over the common roads. The heads of the great railroad systems are now seriously directing their efforts toward securing the improvement of the common roads, which they recognize as feeders to their railroad lines. In this connection it is interesting to observe that for every mile of railroad we have about ten miles of wagon road.³²

Nebraska fell close to this ratio, with 5,685 miles of railroad in 1900 and 7,879 miles by 1910.³³

Though state and federal support were still lacking, by the early twentieth century the Good Roads movement was creating pressure for change. The pressure would continue to grow thanks to the spread of a new innovation—the automobile.

The Automobility

In 1900 automobiles were rare and seen as expensive toys of the wealthy. That year, however, a writer for the *American Monthly* predicted that average people would soon become auto owners and “that horses must disappear from our streets ere long But first, we must have the beautiful, smooth highways now only dreamed of.”³⁵ Twelve years later the *Hebron (Nebraska) Champion* noted

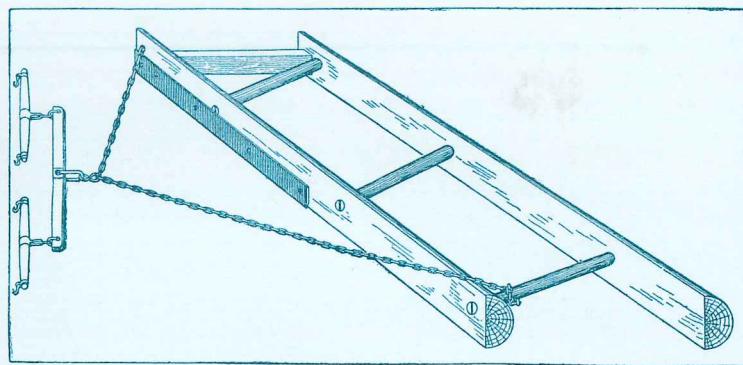


FIG. 2.—Perspective view of split-log drag.

Drag, Brother, Drag!

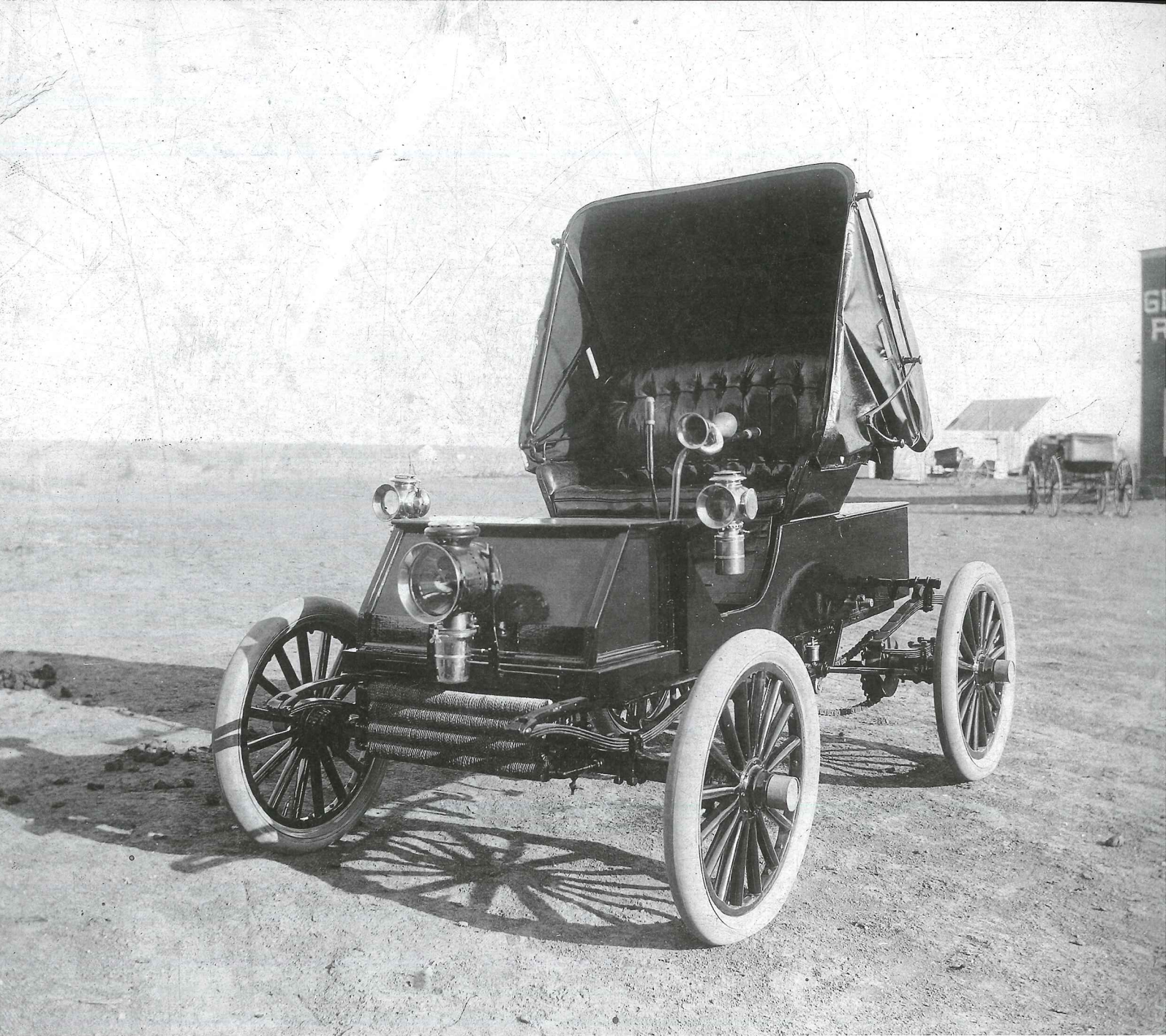
How does one improve the surface of a dirt road without modern road-grading equipment? D. Ward King of rural Missouri perfected a simple yet effective tool, the “King Split-Log Drag.” It could be made from the halves of split logs or from planks of seven to eight feet in length; the planks were shod with a strip of iron and held together by wooden struts. King boasted that the most elaborate of drags cost only a few dollars in material and labor. More important, “one man and team can operate it successfully under all usual conditions.”³⁴

The “King” system became the mainstay of road maintenance for years to come. The Nebraska Legislature adopted the method in 1907; the bill was introduced by Thomas J. Lahners, a prominent Thayer County farmer and booster of good roads.

*A jingle was attributed to King:
If your road is soft or rough,
Drag, brother, drag;
Once or twice will be enough,
Drag, brother, drag;
Wheels won't sink into a rut,
Every time you strike a cut;
Teams won't worry if you'll but
Drag, brother, drag . . .*

—Hebron Champion, June 2, 1911

Illustration above: D. Ward King advocated the use of road drags pulled by a team of two or four horses, with the driver standing on the frame. A good drag should be light enough for one man to lift, and works best when the soil is “moist but not sticky.” The dragged surface would dry hard and even, with fewer ruts and mudholes, and less dust in dry weather. D. Ward King, *The Use of the Split-Log Drag on Earth Roads* (U.S. Department of Agriculture, “Farmers’ Bulletin” 321. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1908)



Automobile designed and built by Charles M. Fuller at Angus, Nebraska, in 1902, with Fuller's building in the background. Fuller is credited with building the first automobile made in Nebraska in 1898-99. He operated the Angus Automobile Company from 1907 to 1910, producing about 600 cars.

NSHS RG3463-1

that since the automobile's arrival, "the subject of good roads has been a much mooted one. It has been left to this machine to advance the idea that the country in general will be benefited by this move."³⁶ The rapid development of the automobile, in other words, gave new momentum to the movement first inspired by bicycles.

Visitors to Omaha's Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition in 1898 probably had their first look at an automobile, an "electric carriage" exhibited by Montgomery Ward & Co. A reporter described "the great surprise depicted on every face as this mysterious vehicle crept along through the crowds."³⁷ It wasn't long before Nebraska

mechanics were experimenting with their own machines. In 1933 the *Omaha World-Herald* recalled, "Old-timers say that one of the first gas automobiles in Omaha was built right here by a man named Sharp . . . the car, which looked like a buggy and sounded like a threshing machine, roared out onto the streets. While standing, with engine chugging, in front of Ed Maurer's restaurant on lower Farnam street, it blew up. The cushion from the seat landed on the restaurant's roof. Other parts were scattered about the vicinity."³⁸

Other amateur auto builders included Charles M. Fuller of Angus, who built an automobile in his father's blacksmith shop during the winter of

1898-99. Adapting a traditional buggy frame, he installed a gas motor connected to a chain drive, and controlled the vehicle with a hand-brake and steering tiller.³⁹ In Kearney T. H. Bolte—a machinist, inventor, and bicycle builder and dealer— assembled a gasoline-powered automobile in 1900. With no more than one horsepower, it was obviously not intended for use on poor roads.⁴⁰

Commercially-manufactured automobiles soon arrived, and bankers, doctors, and businessmen were among their earliest buyers. Traveling salesman E. E. Field bought a Foster “steam carriage” in 1900 to use in his Kearney-based sales territory. Mr. Field, said a local newspaper, “has joined the automobility.”⁴¹ That year a prominent implement dealer named Gustavus Babson “excited much attention” by bringing a steam-powered automobile to Seward.⁴² Another steamer, a “Stanhope mobile,” was brought to Hastings in 1901 by bicycle dealer Charley Jacobs. With six gallons of gasoline to heat an eight-gallon boiler, the car was said to have a range of 150 miles.⁴³ Jacobs bought it in Lincoln and it was reported that he and a friend made the 135 mile trip back to Hastings in six hours, reaching speeds of thirty to forty miles an hour on “level stretches.”⁴⁴ Given the condition of Nebraska’s roads, this was perhaps an exaggerated claim.

Other early Nebraska motorists included E. M. Huntington of Norfolk, a land investor and banker, who purchased a gasoline-powered, curved-dash Oldsmobile to oversee his farm lands in 1902. When the Oldsmobile arrived in the city, the local newspaper said that the vehicle “skimmed over the ground rapidly and gracefully and was given right of way by those who were on the streets.”⁴⁵ In York, Dr. O. M. Moore’s imagination was captured by a gasoline-powered Oldsmobile runabout he saw at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. He bought one later that year for use in his practice.⁴⁶

The automobile created somewhat of a rift in the Good Roads movement as motorists took to country roads. To farmers, automobiles were reckless, speeding intruders that scattered their chickens, frightened their horses, raised plumes of dust, and damaged the roads that were maintained by the farmers themselves. However, in 1902 the *Omaha Daily News* editorialized, “Out in the country . . . it is difficult to see what objection can be urged against a self-propelled vehicle traveling as rapidly as a carriage drawn by horses, which frequently attains a speed of fifteen miles an hour.”⁴⁷

But farmers eventually became motorists themselves. Affordable, rugged, and (relatively) reliable automobiles—such as the Ford Model T, introduced in 1908—helped put farmers on the road. In 1911 the *Nebraska Farm Journal* editorialized, “[i]f anyone on earth needs the motor car, it is the farmer. He lives a distance from town. All the city folks can use the street cars or attend meetings or go to business easily, but we, the people of the farms, are the people who need these distance annihilators.”⁴⁸

Nebraska passed its first automobile laws in 1905. A law requiring motor vehicles to be registered with the secretary of state led to 571 registrations by the end of the year.⁴⁹ Highway speeds were limited generally to what was “reasonable and proper, having regard to the traffic and use of the highway,” and more specifically to 10 mph in “the closer built up portions of a city, town, or village,” 15 mph elsewhere in town, and 20 mph on rural roads.⁵⁰ The law also required that when approaching “a person riding or driving a restive horse or other draught or domestic animal, bring such motor vehicle immediately to a stop.”⁵¹

The Nebraska State Automobile Association was founded in 1910 as a state affiliate of the American Automobile Association. By 1912 the Nebraska association boasted fifty-five county organizations and a membership of four thousand.⁵² Despite his organization’s rapid growth, however, Association Secretary W. J. Kirkland cautioned that “[s]tate aid

Montgomery Ward and Co. brought this “electric carriage,” the first automobile seen in Nebraska, to Omaha’s Trans-Mississippi and International Exhibition in 1898. Omaha Public Library





The Ford Model T put millions of people on the road. In Hooper, Nebraska, a local Ford agency organized a parade for local Model T owners. After the 103-car parade, the motorists rallied at the school grounds and posed for a photograph.
 NSHS RG3347-3-33

in the proper sense is not expected for Nebraska, at least for the present." The association's main agenda for that year was to lobby the legislature to establish a state highway commission.⁵³

The push for state assistance was gaining momentum. A 1911 bill allowed a county to appoint a "practical and experienced road builder" as county highway commissioner with oversight of construction, maintenance, and expenditures for bridges, roads, culverts, and ditches. Commissioners would supervise road overseers who were responsible for each road district in the county.⁵⁴ That same year, the state established the State Aid Bridge Fund to construct county bridges over waterways of 175 feet or more in width. It was funded with a one-fifth of one mill levy on assessed property with the cost of bridges matched by the counties.⁵⁵ Demonstrating a shift of emphasis, the legislature changed the name of the State Board of Irrigation, first created in 1895, to the State Board of Irrigation, Highways, and Drainage. But four more years passed before the legislature required that the secretary of the board be a civil engineer and "practical road builder" with the title "state highway engineer."⁵⁶ Still, roads

remained a local responsibility. Limited funding was raised by registration fees and automobile taxes, and by allowing inheritance taxes to go to a "permanent" county fund for highway improvements.⁵⁷ Property taxes remained the principal revenue source for roads.

Motor vehicle registrations, meanwhile, were growing by exponential figures. In 1912 the number of registered motor vehicles stood at 23,939, more than forty times the number reported in 1905.⁵⁸ The *Norfolk Daily News* called the rapid change "a fitting commentary upon the progress of man."⁵⁹ The *York Republican* marveled that if "all the automobiles registered at the secretary of state's office were formed into one continuous line, they would make a parade seventy-five miles long."⁶⁰ And a Geneva newspaper reported that Nebraska ranked first among all the states in per capita ownership of automobiles, with one vehicle registered for every forty-five people, or one for every ten families.⁶¹ The number of motor vehicles in Nebraska topped the 100,000 mark in 1916.⁶² A report from Hamilton County claimed a 300 percent increase in automobile sales and ownership from 1916 to 1917, and boasted that the

county was “the champion of the country” in motor car ownership with one auto for every six residents. It was reported that this was a sufficient number of automobiles to transport the entire population of the county in a single trip.⁶³

In 1917 the imaginary parade of Nebraska automobiles was claimed to extend three hundred miles, a distance from Omaha to North Platte. And in 1918 Nebraska’s per capita ownership was again reported to top all U.S. states with one automobile for every 6.7 persons.⁶⁴ With some doing it could be said that the entire population of the state could be transported in a single trip all at one time. The “automobility” had indeed arrived in Nebraska, but the Good Roads dream of a quarter-century past was still unfulfilled.

Automobile Trails

If Nebraskans took to that fictional road trip, they might travel on “automobile trails.” As the automobile became more reliable and affordable it opened greater distances to more people. Some of the same Good Roads coalitions began to emphasize the promotion and improvement of roads for long-distance travel. This led to organizations that promoted “automobile trails,” the forerunners to today’s highway system. These routes were initiated by private interests comprising local, state, and regional associations that cooperated to develop their own cross-country roads. These new road associations then took up the Good Roads cause, pushing for centralized governmental support for highways.

The idea of a national road system was not new. General Roy Stone, special agent and engineer for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Office of Road Inquiry, envisioned a national network of roads in 1897. It might be called “The Great Road of America,” he suggested. First it would span the states of the Atlantic seaboard, and then strike “across the country on a central line, say from Washington to San Francisco, joining there another line which connects the States of the Pacific Coast.” Such a network of roads would be built not by the federal government alone, “but by the States, under such arrangements as they may make within their own borders, and by the government through the territories and its own lands and reservations.”⁶⁵ Stone’s main interest was not in favoring the automobile, which was still a rarity at that time, but in creating a national movement: “Such a scheme would arouse great interest among the whole people of the United States; it would be



From *Official Road Book, Nebraska State Automobile Association* (Fremont: Nebraska State Automobile Association, 1913)

something worthy of the Nation; something worthy of the beginning of the twentieth century.”⁶⁶

Even without Stone’s Great Road of America, some adventurous motorists took to the open road before a system of routes was established or mapped. One intrepid trio crossed the length of Nebraska in July 1903. Dr. Horatio Nelson Jackson of Vermont, Jackson’s driver, Sewall K. Crocker, and a bulldog named Bud completed the first transcontinental drive from San Francisco to New York. Jackson reported:

When we crossed into Nebraska it became worse instead of better. Here it rained constantly. The mud was a cementlike mass that stuck to things like the best Portland. And it seemed to have no bottom. The car sank in it clear up to the battery boxes—that is, nearly to the tops of the wheels; and then we would get out the block and tackle and haul it out. One day we repeated this performance eighteen times; other days it would be from three to eight times. These places were locally termed “buffalo wallows.” We wallowed in them, sometimes tearing down a section of fence or using sage brushes where there were no fences, and put them under the wheels to make a foundation.⁶⁷

Polk County was known for its good roads, which were overseen by a county highway commissioner and this road crew. NSHS RG2407-5-3



Another early cross-country motorist described the peculiarities of Nebraska mud after struggling across the state in the spring of 1906: "Nebraska is another state where stone is scarce and mud deep. To make matters worse in this state, there is more or less alkali water, and the mud made with alkali water and Nebraska soil, becomes even worse than 'gumbo.' It comes nearer to mortar than mud. . . . We made thirteen miles in twenty-four hours of hard running, our axles and entire machinery dragging in the deep—yes, almost bottomless—mud."⁶⁸

By 1910 early automobile routes were being mapped and promoted by a diverse range of, organizations. Three of the earliest automobile trail associations, all organized in 1911, promoted routes crossing Nebraska: the Meridian Road from Winnipeg, Canada, to the Gulf of Mexico at Galveston, Texas; the Platte Valley Trans-Continental Route from Omaha to Cheyenne and Denver; and the Omaha-Denver Trans-Continental Route.⁶⁹

The Nebraska State Automobile Association published its *Official Road Book* in 1913, with more than two hundred pages of county maps highlighting "principal" roads as prepared by the respective county surveyors. For the more adventurous motorist, the book also included line maps of regional routes such as Omaha and Lincoln to Kansas City, the Omaha-Topeka Road, the Meridian Road, Omaha to Minneapolis-St. Paul, Omaha to Chicago, and Omaha to Denver.⁷⁰

The coast-to-coast Lincoln Highway was mapped the same year. Its route from New York City to San Francisco crossed the length of Nebraska. In its zeal the Lincoln Highway Association perhaps overstated the highway's condition in its first road guide published in 1915. Between Omaha and Kearney "the tourist will encounter many sections of roads of varying degrees of excellence, depending entirely upon the weather." Between Kearney and Big Springs the "tourist encounters dirt roads subject to some care. During the summer months, and given fair weather, these roads are in excellent shape and afford good touring." The roads

leading to Cheyenne, Wyoming, were "[n]atural dirt roads; good in summer."⁷¹ "Fair weather" was the watchword when motoring through Nebraska.

The new automobile trails associations were well-organized and included national or regional officers, state chapters, and representatives of counties and towns along the route. Many members had long been active in the Good Roads movement: merchants, lawyers, doctors, local officials, bankers, and newspapermen—people with an interest in the civic benefits and economic potential of highways.

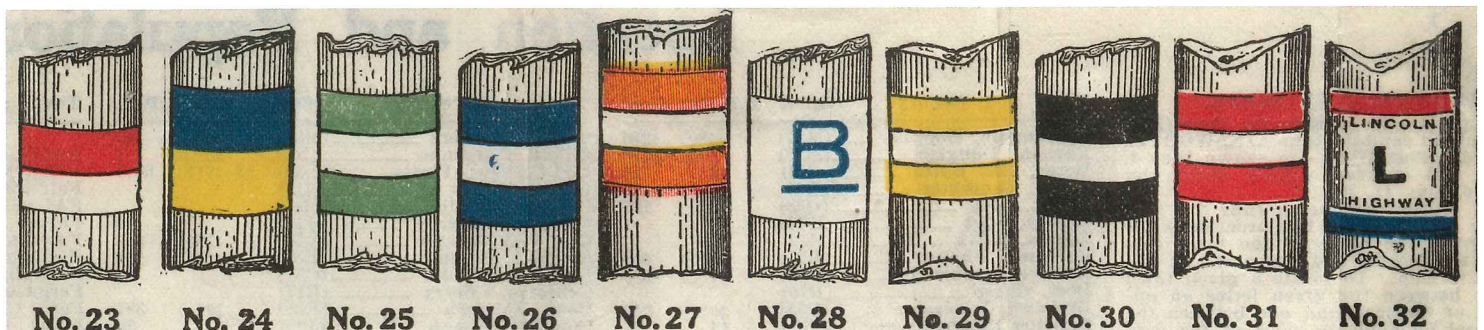
Communities vied to be on the new roads. Even some farmers saw the benefits. For example, when the Meridian Road Association proposed a route that bypassed Cedar County, the local newspaper reported on a "stirring speech" an outspoken farmer made to the Hartington Commercial Club: "This great highway means more to us than you seem to realize. It means our school house will become a high school and the high school a college. We farmers are tired of living in the brush. It will increase our land values too. We want it."⁷²

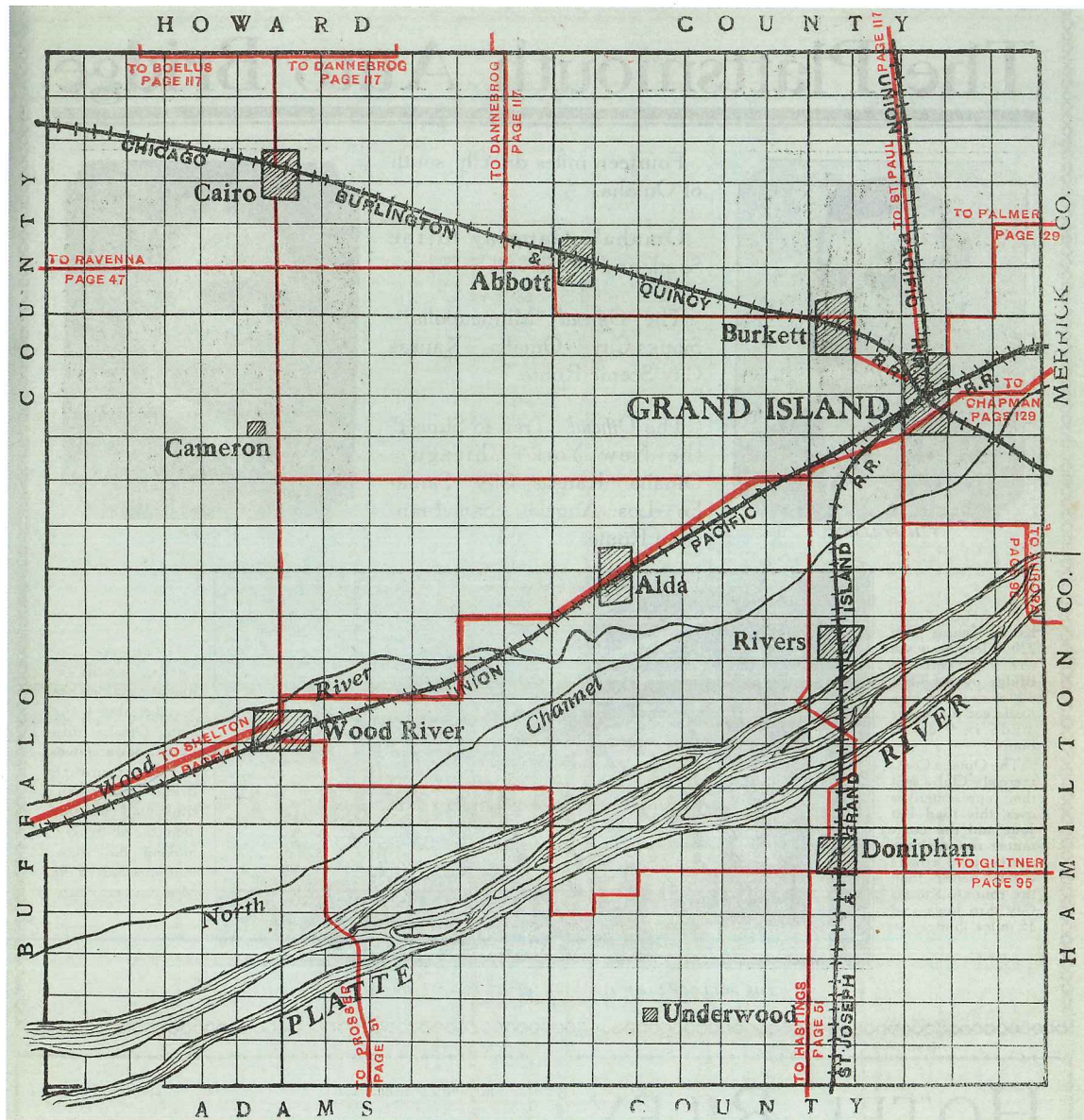
The *Hebron Champion*, meanwhile, encouraged farmers to improve the "trunk" highways that connected to the main routes. "The farmers will get better service, they can haul more to a load and do it quicker and with less cost, and all will be rejoiced when this proposition gets down to a reality."⁷³ Some farmers objected to this focus only on thoroughfares. L. S. Herron, editor of *Nebraska Farmer*, wrote that while he was for good roads, "I want a general distribution of good roads and not the concentration of our good roads efforts on a few main traveled highways."⁷⁴

By 1914 three major highways were well established through Nebraska—the Meridian Road, the Lincoln Highway, and the Omaha-Lincoln-Denver (O-L-D) Highway. Like all early automobile routes, they followed existing roads, including a zigzag maze of section-line roads. Maps of the period were inadequate to show the exacting routes to be followed. Instead, the *Automobile Blue Book*, the "bible" for long distance travel, gave

By 1918 some thirty-eight automobile trails were being promoted in Nebraska. Navigating these trails required a good map to interpret telephone pole markers, a sample of which are shown here (see inside front cover for map detail): 23. Black Hills Loop of Lincoln Highway; 24. North Platte Valley Highway; 25. Alliance, Chadron, Hot Springs; 26. Alliance, Angora, Bridgeport & Sidney; 27. Alliance, Broadwater, Oshkosh & Sidney; 28. Bee Line (Missouri Valley, Iowa, to Fremont, Nebraska); 29. Alliance Scottsbluff; 30. Alliance Haysprings; 31. Alliance, Crawford, Hot Springs; 32. Lincoln Highway. From *Map of Nebraska with Names of Townships* (Des Moines, IA: Kenyon Co., 1918)

NSHS M782-1918-K42





Early Nebraska automobile trails tended to follow section lines or railroads. This map's thickest red line marks the "trans-continental road," soon to be known as the Lincoln Highway; today U.S. Highway 30 follows a streamlined version of that route, with Interstate 80 running parallel a few miles to the south.

Official Road Book, Nebraska State Automobile Association (Fremont: Nebraska State Automobile Association, 1913)



Henry Joy, president of the Lincoln Highway Association, got stuck in the mud on the Lincoln Highway after leaving Lodgepole, Nebraska, on June 7, 1915. It took a team of horses to get his car unstuck. BL000197, Henry B. Joy Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan

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Installation of Nebraska's first highway markers, June 5, 1926. Left to right: David F. Meeker, secretary to the governor; Burt A. George, legislative Representative of Nebraska Good Roads Association; Charles H. Roper, president of D.L.D. Highway Association; Mont C. Noble, chief of Bureau of Roads and Bridges; A. A. Jones, manager, Outdoor Advertising Company; R. L. Cochran, state engineer; Adam McMullen, governor of Nebraska; Frank C. Zehrung, mayor of Lincoln.
Courtesy of Nebraska Department of Roads

narrative instructions, for example, describing the northbound Meridian Road route between Norfolk and Pierce as it existed in 1912: "Turn left from business center and at the fork . . . bear left, following the angling road straight out of city through edge of Hadar . . . bearing right with road . . . Jog left and take first right. Turn left 1 mile, then right ½ mile. Turn left 1 mile into Pierce."⁷⁵

The Post Office Department Appropriations Act of 1913 authorized \$500,000 to be expended by the secretary of agriculture, in cooperation with the postmaster general, to aid in the improvement of rural post roads. The act also provided for the establishment of the "Joint Committee on Federal Aid in the Construction of Post Roads." The committee concluded its work in 1914 and released a report entitled *Federal Aid to Good Roads*. The report showed that only ten states, including Nebraska, had no state highway department. As of 1913 Nebraska had 1,068 rural mail routes consisting of 28,420 miles of post roads, only 47 miles of which were improved with surfacing such as gravel.⁷⁶

The time for major legislation had finally come. Although the committee did not make specific recommendations, it expressed support for federal funding of road construction, and not just postal roads. The committee defended the constitutionality of this plan by arguing that it would aid in establishing post roads, regulating commerce, providing for common defense, and promoting the general welfare.

With the committee report setting the stage, the Federal-Aid Road Act of 1916 established a

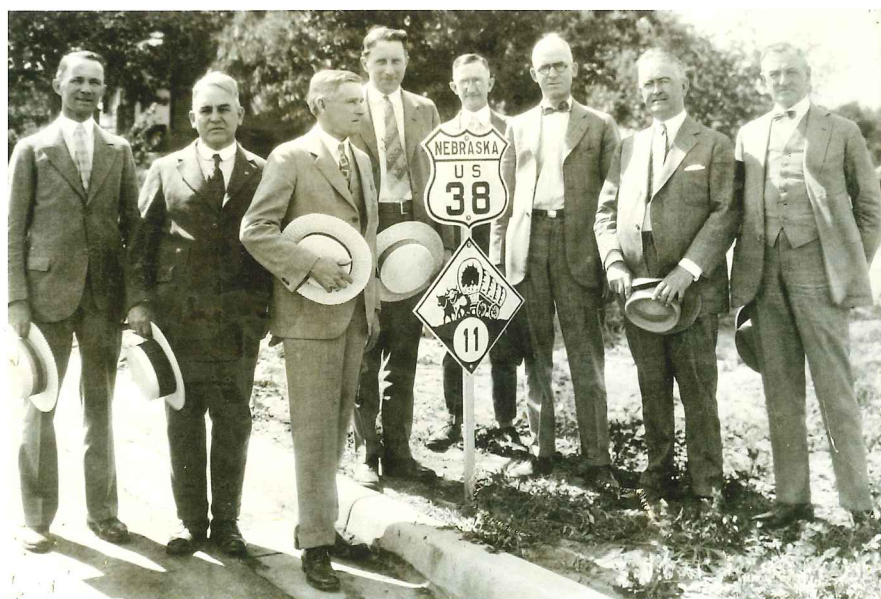
precedent for state and federal roads funding, providing matching funds to states for road construction. Nebraska accepted the provisions of the act in 1917 and the legislature appropriated \$640,000 to match its 1917 and 1918 federal appropriations.⁷⁷ Counties identified the roads for which they desired state and federal aid. The state highway engineer approved 80,272 miles of roads, and Nebraska was finally propelled into full-scale development of highways.⁷⁸

The 1917 legislation also authorized the state engineer to lay out a system of state highways. As later recalled, "This, in itself was a difficult piece of legislation, as there were so many people interested in the location of every road, that it was almost impossible to get them to forget personal feelings and get them to look at the proposed system as a State System, and not as a local unit."⁷⁹ In 1919 approximately 4,500 miles of roads connecting county seats and other major cities were designated, consisting of eighty-eight routes that constituted a "state highway system."⁸⁰

Federal aid was reauthorized by the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1921, requiring states to concentrate federal funds on no more than 7 percent of all roads that states had previously identified. Of Nebraska roads, 5,619 miles were made eligible under the "seven percent system."⁸¹ But Nebraska had difficulty raising its share of the funding with property tax revenues—and voters were opposed to property tax increases. The legislature solved the problem in 1925 by authorizing a gasoline tax.

A federal system of numbered U.S. highways was adopted in 1925. East-west highways were given even numbers; two national cross-country routes through Nebraska were designated: U.S. 20 and U.S. 30, the latter the route of the former Lincoln Highway as it passed through the state. North-south highways were assigned odd numbers. U.S. 81, the Meridian Highway, was designated as the nation's only continuous route from Canada to the Mexican border.⁸² The automobile trails with their colorful names would now be known to travelers by impersonal numbers.

Thus at last, after decades of influence by coalitions including bicyclists, farmers, the general citizenry, and finally automobile owners, a crucial part of modern infrastructure was in place, supported by the understanding that this network of highways and local roads would be developed and maintained by federal, state, and local governments. The dream of the 1890s Good Roads visionaries had finally come to pass.



NOTES

¹ From a message by Acting Governor Thomas B. Cuming in *Journal of the House of Representatives Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Nebraska* (Brownville, Nebraska Territory: Robert W. Furnas, 1857), 19-20. The point opposite of Council Bluffs is today's city of Omaha.

² From a message by Governor Mark W. Izard in *Journal of the Council at the Second Regular Session of the General Assembly of the Territory of Nebraska* (Omaha City, Nebraska Territory: Hadley B. Johnson, 1856), 11-12.

³ *Laws, Resolutions and Memorials Passed at the Regular Session of the First General Assembly of the Territory of Nebraska* (Omaha City, Nebraska Territory: Sherman & Strickland, 1855), 329-34. Many of these locations no longer exist or never became actual "towns." Spellings are taken directly from this source.

⁴ *Nebraska Blue Book* (Lincoln: Nebraska Legislative Reference Bureau, December 1922), 330.

⁵ *Laws, Joint Resolutions, and Memorials Passed at the Second Session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Nebraska* (Omaha City, Nebraska Territory: Hadley B. Johnson, 1856), 217-18.

⁶ Isaac B. Potter, *The Gospel of Good Roads: A Letter to the American Farmer* (New York: The Evening Post Job Printing House, 1891), 58-59, published by the League of American Wheelmen.

⁷ *Good Roads* 1, No. 3 (March 1892): 166.

⁸ "National Affairs, Meeting of the Wheelmen's League," *San Francisco Call*, July 19, 1892, California Digital Newspaper Project.

⁹ *Proceedings of a Convention of the National League for Good Roads Held in Washington, D.C., January 17 and 18, 1893*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Experiment Stations, *Bulletin No. 14* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1893), 14.

¹⁰ *Good Roads* 2, No. 6 (December 1892): 351.

¹¹ Letter, Charles F. Manderson to General Roy Stone, May 12, 1893, quoted in *FHWA By Day: A Look at the History of the Federal Highway Administration* (Washington, DC: Federal Highway Administration, June 1996), 44.

¹² *Good Roads* 4, No. 3 (September 1893): 122.

¹³ "State Laws Relating to the Management of Roads," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, *Bulletin No. 1* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1894), 6.

¹⁴ "The 'Rotal Birds,'" *Omaha Daily Herald*, June 13, 1880, 8:2.

¹⁵ "A Great Century Ride," *Omaha (Morning) World-Herald*, Oct. 3, 1892, 8.

¹⁶ *The Pacemaker* 1, No. 30 (July 25, 1896): n.p.

¹⁷ *The Pacemaker* 2, No. 96 (Oct. 30, 1897): n.p.

¹⁸ *The Pacemaker* 1, No. 52 (Dec. 19, 1896): n.p.

¹⁹ "A Hopeful Indication," *L.A.W. Bulletin and Good Roads* 28, No. 18 (Oct. 28, 1898): 326.

²⁰ *Good Roads*, 1, No. 2 (February 1892): 110, as quoted from the *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln).

²¹ *Fremont Daily Herald*, Sept. 6, 1892, 4.

²² "Bryan Favors Good Roads," *The Pacemaker* 1, No. 30 (July 25, 1896): n.p.

²³ "Good Roads Parliament," *Omaha (Sunday) Bee*, Oct. 9, 1898, Sec. 1:6.

²⁴ "Must the Farmer Pay for Good Roads?" U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, *Circular No. 31* (1898): 1, 9, printed under the auspices of the League of American Wheelmen.

²⁵ "A Growing Interest," *L.A.W. Bulletin and Good Roads* 24, No. 9 (Aug. 28, 1896): 295; *Cycling Handbook* (Chicago: League of American Wheelmen, Inc., 1947), 20.

²⁶ See, for example, an editorial in the *Hebron Champion*, Jan. 19, 1912, 1. (See also note 36).

²⁷ Maurice O. Eldridge, "Good Roads for Farmers," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, *Farmers' Bulletin No. 95* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1899), 7.

²⁸ Joseph E. Cobbey, comp., *Cobbey's Annotated Statutes of Nebraska, Supplement of 1905* (Lincoln: Jacob North & Co., 1905), 183.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 177-78.

³⁰ Maurice O. Eldridge, "Public-Road Mileage, Revenues, and Expenditures in the United States in 1904," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Public Roads, *Bulletin No. 32* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1907), 8.

³¹ J. E. Pennybacker Jr. and Maurice O. Eldridge, "Mileage and Cost of Public Roads in the United States in 1909," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Public Roads, *Bulletin No. 41* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1912), 84-85.

³² Eldridge, "Public-Road Mileage," 11.

³³ James C. Olson, *History of Nebraska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955), 267.

³⁴ D. Ward King, "The Use of the Split-Log Drag on Earth Roads," U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Farmers' Bulletin No. 321* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1908), 11.

³⁵ Cleveland Moffett, "Automobiles for the Average Man," *The American Monthly* 21, No. 6 (June 1900): 704, 710.

³⁶ *Hebron Champion*, Jan. 19, 1912, 1.

³⁷ "They Are All Right," *Omaha Sunday Bee* (Morning Edition), Aug. 7, 1898, 5.

³⁸ "Omaha's First Car Blew Up," *Omaha (Morning) World-Herald*, Jan. 21, 1933, 16.

³⁹ *The Family Background of Charles Marion Fuller, Jr.*, manuscript attributed to Frances Fuller Beilharz, RG3463, S.2, F.2, Nebraska State Historical Society.

⁴⁰ "First Kearney Automobile," *Kearney Daily Hub*, Aug. 30, 1900, 3.

⁴¹ "Bought an Automobile," *Kearney Daily Hub*, Nov. 12, 1900, 3.

⁴² *Seward Reporter*, May 10, 1900, 5.

⁴³ "The First Horseless Carriage in Hastings," *Hastings Tribune*, Mar. 1, 1901, 1.

⁴⁴ *Hastings Daily Republican*, Aug. 23, 1901, 4.

Madison County, Nebraska, organized Good Roads Days at the governor's call in 1913. That year Gov. John Morehead called on citizens to work on roads on such days. A York, Nebraska, newspaper reported that in two days "old and young, rich and poor, farmer and banker, worked side by side and no one thought of complaining or resting." Even the governor donned overalls and worked a section of road near Lincoln. The crew shown here worked an intersection of the road to Enola and the new Meridian Road automobile trail. Courtesy Madison County Historical Society, NSHS RG2186-7-20

⁴⁵ *Norfolk Daily News*, Apr. 29, 1902, 3.

⁴⁶ "Autos in York Co. Pioneer a Steamer," *York Republican*, Apr. 10, 1914, 1.

⁴⁷ "Auto Legislation," *Omaha Daily News*, Jan. 16, 1902, 4.

⁴⁸ J. O. Shroyer, "The Motor Car on the Farm," *Hebron Champion*, Sept. 8, 1911, 1, as reprinted from the *Nebraska Farm Journal*.

⁴⁹ Motor Vehicle Registrations, Vol. A, June 14, 1905, to June 24, 1907, RG002, Nebraska Secretary of State, Nebraska State Historical Society (microfilm).

⁵⁰ *Automobile Laws of All States of the United States*, Automobile Club of America, Aug. 1, 1905, 148-49.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁵² "Official Road Guide of State to be Out Soon," *Omaha Sunday World-Herald (Sunrise Edition)*, July 28, 1912, Good Roads Section, 2.

⁵³ W. J. Kirkland, "Nebraska Auto Club Works for Good Roads," *Omaha Sunday World-Herald (Sunrise Edition)*, July 28, 1912, Good Roads Section, 6, 7.

⁵⁴ *Revised Statutes of the State of Nebraska* (Lincoln: State Journal Co., 1914), Article XI, 857.

⁵⁵ James E. Potter and L. Robert Puschendorf, eds., *Spans in Time: A History of Nebraska Bridges* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1999), 29.

⁵⁶ Nebraska Secretary of State, *Laws, Resolutions, and Memorials . . . Passed by the State Legislature of Nebraska at the Thirty-Fourth Session* (Lincoln: Jacob North & Co., 1915), 145.

⁵⁷ American Association for Highway Improvement, *The Official Good Roads Year Book of the United States* (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1912), 103.

⁵⁸ Clinton Warne, "The Acceptance of the Automobile in Nebraska," *Nebraska History* 37 (September 1956): 235.

⁵⁹ "First Auto Came Ten Years Ago," *Norfolk Daily News*, Apr. 27, 1912, 8.

⁶⁰ *York Republican*, Aug. 9, 1912, 5.

⁶¹ "Nebraska Automobiles," *Nebraska Signal* (Geneva), Sept. 26, 1912, 5, as reprinted from the *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln).

⁶² Warne, "The Acceptance of the Automobile in Nebraska," 235.

⁶³ "Enough Cars to Carry the County," *Beatrice Daily Sun*, Feb. 24, 1918, Automobile Section, 4.

⁶⁴ "Nebraska's Auto Parade," *New Teller* (York, NE), Aug. 8, 1917, 2, as reprinted from the *Twentieth Century Farmer*; "Nebraskans Buy 27,000 New Cars during Year 1918," *Lincoln Daily Star*, Jan. 3, 1919, 5.

⁶⁵ League of American Wheelmen, "The Great Road of America," *L.A.W. Bulletin and Good Roads*, Nov. 19, 1897, 605.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ "Dr. Jackson Arrives," *The Motor World* 6, No. 18 (July 30, 1903): 668.

⁶⁸ Percy F. Megargel, "Trans-Continental Travel," *Good Roads Magazine* 7, No. 9 (September 1906): 704.

⁶⁹ M. Huebinger, *Huebinger's Map and Guide of the Omaha-Denver Trans-Continental Route* (Des Moines: Iowa Publishing Co., Inc., 1911), 9.

⁷⁰ Road Book Department of the Nebraska State Automobile Association, *Official Road Book* (Fremont: Ray W. Hammond, 1913).



⁷¹ *The Complete Official Road Guide of the Lincoln Highway* (Detroit: Lincoln Highway Association, 1915), 100, 106, 110.

⁷² "Report on the Meridian Line," *Cedar County News* (Hartington), Feb. 15, 1912, 1.

⁷³ "H.B.M.A. Meeting," *Hebron Champion*, Jan. 12, 1912, 1.

⁷⁴ Leonard S. Herron, ed., "In the Editor's Confidence," *Nebraska Farmer* 43, No. 52 (December 27, 1911): 1206.

⁷⁵ *Automobile Blue Book*, Vol. 5 (Chicago and New York: The Automobile Blue Book Publishing Co., 1912), Route 533, p. 379.

⁷⁶ U.S. Congress, Joint Committee on Federal Aid in the Construction of Post Roads, *Federal Aid to Good Roads* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1915), 151, 182, 204.

⁷⁷ "History of State Road Construction," *Monthly Report* (Lincoln: Nebraska Department of Public Works, April 1921): 4.

⁷⁸ *Fifteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works, 1923-1924* (Lincoln: Capital Bindery), 14.

⁷⁹ "History of State Road Construction," 4.

⁸⁰ "Nebraska's New Road Laws," *Monthly Highway Report* (Lincoln: Nebraska Board of Irrigation, Highways, and Drainage, May 1919), 15; "History of State Road Construction," 4.

⁸¹ *Fifteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works*, 14.

⁸² The Meridian Road was renamed the Meridian Highway and its route was extended to the Mexican border at Laredo, Texas.



Good Roads Day, North of Enola
WINTER 2015 179
Photo By Else
Madison Neb