

# ALONG THE LINCOLN HIGHWAY

The Newsletter of the Iowa Lincoln Highway Association

December 1997

Volume 2 Issue 5

## OUR NEW CO-PRESIDENTS

**M**argaret Elbert-Benson was elected President and Jeff Benson elected co-President of the Iowa Lincoln Highway Association at the Fall Meeting in Missouri Valley on Friday, October 10th.

The election capped a productive, active, informative meeting of the Board of Directors of the ILHA the night before the annual autumn get-together. A story about the Fall Meeting appears on this page.

Margaret will be ably assisted in her new position by her husband Jeff. Both are enthusiastic Lincoln Highway supporters. They have complimentary talents which will bring a new vibrancy to the office.

The new Executive Board thus becomes Margaret as President, Ann Schoonover as Vice President, Joyce Ausberger as Secretary, Judy Wallace as Treasurer, and Bob Ausberger as past President.

Margaret and Jeff live in Ames where Margaret grew up and attended grade school and high school. She graduated from Iowa Western Community College with a degree in their Interpretive Training Program (sign language). She also graduated from Iowa State University with a B.A. in Speech and Communication Disorders. She currently assists with education of deaf students of all ages.

Margaret has been a terrific supporter of the Lincoln Highway Association since its inception in the fall of 1992 at the char-

ter meeting in Ogden. In the group photo of the first *Forum*, her smiling face appears in the center of the photo between that of Ruth Frantz and Carol Algren and just in front of the bearded Andy Bock. Margaret has attended national conferences in Ames, Cheyenne, and Reno.

Jeff is a licensed landscape architect and

*(Presidents, Continued on page 7)*

## ILHA Fall Meeting Recap

**T**he ILHA Fall Meeting was held October 10th and 11th. The Board meeting was brought to order by President Bob Ausberger Friday night in the conference room of the Super 8 motel in Missouri Valley. It was a long, fun, and spirited meeting.

The most excitement was created when Margaret Elbert (after some nudging from husband Jeff) announced that she would be a candidate for President. It was an emotional moment as Board members considered that, for the first time, the state association would be run by someone other than Bob Ausberger. All of the members were extremely proud that Margaret and Jeff made this commitment, and enthusiastically

*(Meeting, Continued on page 4)*

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# The LINCOLN HIGHWAY in LOWDEN

by Jan Olive Nash

(Reprinted by permission from *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*, Spring 1997 issue)

*Iowa Heritage Illustrated is a history magazine published by the State Historical Society of Iowa. The Spring 1997 issue includes an article on the Lincoln Hotel, a National Register of Historic Places property in Lowden. Located on a Main Street of the Lincoln Highway, the hotel was among the first of several downtown Lowden businesses established to serve the automobile trade and traveler. Iowa Heritage Illustrated can be ordered by calling Publications Sales, SHSI, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, IA 52240-1806, (319)335-3916. Part three concludes the article below.*

**F**inding gasoline in Lowden would not have been difficult for overnight tourists at the Lincoln Hotel; just as travel lodging was evolving in response to auto tourists, so was gasoline distribution.

Historian Kenneth Jackson traces five stages in the evolution of service stations, and the changes in Lowden echo those early stages.

"The first stage was clearly the worst for the motorist, who had to buy fuel by the bucketful at a livery stable, repair shop, or dry goods store" and pour it through a funnel into the tank, a messy and sometimes dangerous maneuver, Jackson writes.

The second stage (1905-1920) began with the invention of an inverted gasoline storage tank and pump for directly fueling the automobile. These single-pump "filling stations" were often operated by retail stores, at the curb right outside the stores.

By 1920, the third stage, service stations provided "under one roof all the functions of gasoline distribution and normal automotive maintenance," Jackson says. "These full-service structures were often built in the form of little colonial houses, Greek temples, Chinese pagodas, and Art Deco palaces. Many were local landmarks and a source of community

pride."

By 1935, the fourth stage, the standardized "corporate look" gas station would take over, but by the fifth stage, in the 1970s, these would be replaced by major oil companies' "super stations" and locally owned "mini-mart" convenience stores.

In Lowden, some residents recall the town's pharmacist selling the first gasoline, but by 1915 the general mercantile store, Freund's, sold gasoline, too - as well as Buicks. Single-purpose filling stations eventually opened to compete with Freund's.

In the 1920s Kemmanns replaced their blacksmith shop across the street from the Lincoln Hotel with a Standard station, and the Victorian house next door was replaced by Gade's Garage, with a gas pump and a mechanic on duty. By the late 1930s three more gas stations would open within three blocks of the hotel.

In the mid-1920s the Lincoln Highway was re-routed. Instead of turning north at the Lincoln Hotel, it now continued straight past the hotel down Clinton Street. Thought this meant no loss of visibility for the hotel, it did bring the highway traffic through the heart of the original 19th-century commercial district.

Anticipating the new route, the town renamed its streets in 1924. Clinton Street, the east-west corridor through town, became Main Street. The former north/south Main Street became Washington Street. When the new route - which included a rural segment west of town - was opened in December 1925, the town paper boasted, "The new relocated Lincoln highway west of town was offi-

...buy fuel by the bucketful at a livery stable, repair shop, or dry goods store and pour it through a funnel into the tank...

(Lowden, Continued on page 5)

## ILHA County and State Update

**T**he Calamus Pony Truss Bridge has been officially turned over to the Clinton County Conservation Board and will be managed by a non-profit organization. This important Lincoln Highway landmark will become a pedestrian attraction and part of a trails system.

Heartiest congratulations are extended to Elmer Ketelsen and the other Clinton County helpers! How about a bridge dance and barbecue in May to celebrate?

\*\*\*\*\*

### *Media Report...*

The Lincoln Highway was featured in a National Geographic segment on public television and mentioned in another PBS program called *Divided Highways*. We continue to have good support from local media and newspapers.

\*\*\*\*\*

Keith Edwards will be our consultant to finish the requirements for our Iowa Department of Economic Development grant. He will focus on organization of the Merchants' Association and increasing our membership. Keith is an RC&D coordinator for the six county area of Crawford, Carroll, Greene, Sac, Audubon and Guthrie counties. Resource Conservation and Development is a product of the Department of Agriculture. Other Lincoln Highway counties in RC&D areas include Pottawattamie, Harrison, Cedar and Clinton.

We received an Iowa Woods Products Grant through an RC&D application. This grant will result in the development of a line of Lincoln Highway wood items to be sold through our Merchants' Association. The Wood Committee and workers include Clare and Marge Robson, Bob Owens, Wayne and Jean Taylor, and Cecil and Phyllis Stewart. We are always looking for new ideas for sale items so let us know of your

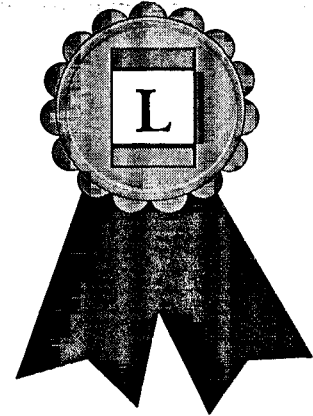
skills and talents. \* \* \* \* \*

The Lion's Club tree park interpretative project is moving ahead with design teams now organized and meetings held between the historians and the design people. We hope to start construction this summer.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Youngville Station project continues to plow through red tape but the owners say they hope to get the windows in yet this year. Anne Schoonover has done a magnificent job of keeping that project moving forward. One of the main strengths of our organization is the ability of individuals and groups to create projects and then moving them forward.

\*\*\*\*\*



Reports keep coming in that Cathy Pottoff may have the Lincoln Highway lawn display of the year. The Pottoff's live on the original Lincoln Highway west of Carroll. Because of the US 30 detour, her quiet country road has once again become a national highway.

She decided to keep in the spirit of things by painting poles, planting red, white, and blue (LHA) flowers, and letting travelers know that they are on the nation's first transcontinental highway. **L**

How about a bridge dance and barbecue in May to celebrate?

*(Meeting, Continued from page 1)*

cally voted their approval of the new leadership.

The Directors' reports were informative and inspiring. It was fun to hear activities in the various counties. Actually it turned into a show-and-tell session as some of them had examples of their activities.

Two items of business that received the most attention were the Merchants' Association and the walking tour guides. It was decided to continue with both projects. The Merchants' Association folder and Greene County prototype program will be expanded to our thirteen-county Lincoln Highway Corridor. It is our goal to have at least one merchant in each of the counties selling our line of Lincoln Highway products by the end of 1998, and at least as many other merchants will be involved in various phases as outlined in the folder.

The walking tour architectural/historical guide prototypes will be developed by

...this brick exterior and hand-hewn oak and walnut post-and-beam interior was the highlight of the tour...



License plate spotted at the Fall Meeting of the ILHA in Missouri Valley. Have a Lincoln Highway theme on your plate? Submit it to *Along the Lincoln Highway* and we'll post it!

Ogden and Woodbine. These will be individualized for each town but will follow a general pattern developed by Evanston, Wyoming. An effort will be made to involve school children in the research and sketching phases.

Both of the above projects are designed to bring interaction between a tourist/visitor and Lincoln Highway communities, and thus become both economic development and preservation initiatives.

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The Saturday tour began with foreboding clouds covering this Loess hills county. However, it turned out to be a beautiful sunny, windy day - perfect for exploring the Lincoln Highway and the surrounding

hills and valleys.

We started at the Welcome Center east of Missouri Valley. Here 30 participants got a good look at the center and museum and had coffee and donuts. A special treat was exhibited by some Council Bluffs people who had wooden bricks that were once part of the Lincoln in Council Bluffs.

Lincoln Highway visits were made to a Pennsylvania Truss steel bridge, and a Bailey Bridge (World War II surplus). Both bridges are extremely rare. The group also walked to some culverts in a farmer's pasture at an abandoned section in Harrison County. A favorite site for all Harrison County LH visitors is the brick main street of Woodbine, and today was no exception. Woodbine residents Elaine Ehlert and Linda Dickman treated us to refreshments at the Merrybrook School on the brick section.

The group left the Lincoln to visit the Dunham Barn. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this brick ex-

terior and hand-hewn oak and walnut post-and-beam interior was the highlight of the tour for some members. It was built by Harrison County's first settler and the tour was conducted by his great grandson. The barn overlooks the highway and Boyer River Valley at Dunlap. The lunch hour was spent at the Dairy Sweet and Dunlop's town museum.

On to the Loess Hills Scenic Drive and stops at Moorhead for a visit to their cultural center where paintings, sketches and photos of the Loess Hills were displayed.

Can we get space in a Lincoln High-

*(Meeting, Continued on page 7)*

*(Lowden, Continued from page 2)*

cially opened this week. The new road is much better than the old highway, and the distance is shorter. There are ruts in it but they are not so deep as those on the old highway."

In the same decade Celia Clemmens increased the family's living quarters with a small ground-floor addition. She managed to keep the hotel operating through the Great Depression, but once widowed she finally sold it in 1946.

A series of owners continued to operate the hotel until 1981, although by the mid-1950s a new section of Highway 30, as the Lincoln Highway was then numbered, had been completed south of Lowden. It bypassed the town and diverted all but local traffic away from the hotel. An ad for the hotel in the town's centennial publication indicates that by 1957, rooms could be rented on a nightly or weekly basis. The hotel's slow conversion to residential housing had begun.

After sitting vacant and deteriorating from water leaks for a dozen years, the hotel was purchased and rehabilitated in 1994 and 1995 by Sue Licht and Brad Norton of Lincolnway Hotel, Inc., and converted to apartments. The public lobby was reduced in size, and several upstairs hallway doors were eliminated. The small rear wing added by Clemmens in the 1920s was removed, and a third rear door and ramp were added for a group-floor, handicapped-accessible apartment.

Because the exterior stucco was too water-damaged to repair, new stucco of matching color and texture was applied using the original technique. The sagging and rotting front porch was dismantled and rebuilt. New wood storm windows were fabricated to fit in the original window frames, and the original sashes and panes were carefully preserved. New asphalt shingles replaced rolled asphalt roofing paper, which had been simply tarred at the seams.

The project benefited from two grants - from Iowa's Resource Enhancement and Protection Act-Historic Resources Development Program; and from Home Funds (Housing and Urban Development funds available through the Iowa Department of Economic Development) as one of their first preservation projects that also created low- and medium-income housing.

Now in excellent condition and fully occupied by tenants, the building exemplifies adaptive reuse of a historically significant building. (Because the building is now private residential space, the interior is no longer accessible to the public.) In 1996, the Lincoln Hotel was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and won the residential Preservation At Its Best Award from the Iowa Historic Preservation Alliance.

Clearly, Lowden's physical environment was changed with the coming of the automobile and the Lincoln Highway. The Lincoln Hotel stands as reminder of early travelers who chose the independence and adventure of their own automobiles over the smoother, faster, and surer transportation of the trains. **L**

*Jan Olive Nash is an architectural historian and a partner in Tallgrass Historians L.C. in Iowa City.*

**The Lincoln Hotel won the residential Preservation At Its Best Award from the Iowa Historic Preservation Alliance.**

**Want to share your recollections of the Lincoln Highway with association members? Find some old clippings from your local newspaper regarding the early years of the Lincoln Highway?**

**Along the Lincoln Highway is accepting submissions for publication. Please direct them to any board member, or contact newsletter editor Paul Walker. We'll try to include them in future issues.**

## "Legends of the Fall" (new members in autumn)

It's nice to see a collection of new members from far and wide, from all over the state - and from other states!

**The Bike Barn (7/97) ... Ogden**  
(sorry for not recognizing you in past issues!)

**Dale and Joan Finch (10/97)**  
... Jefferson

**Kevin Koepnick (10/97)**  
... Iowa City

**Tim Reinders (10/97) ... Des Moines**

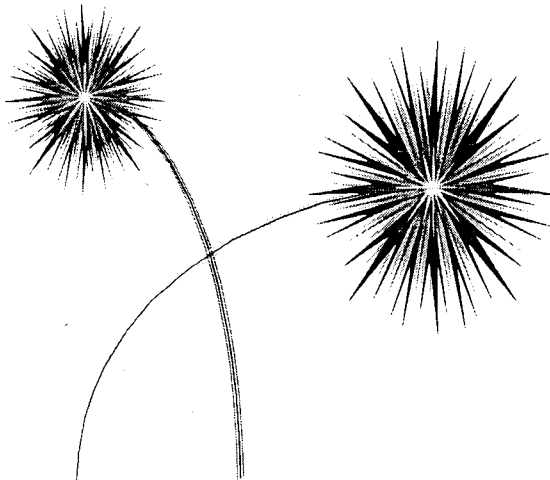
**M.W. Simonsen (10/97)**  
... Cherokee

**Carol Day (11/97)**  
... Papillion NE

**Dr. Paul and Robyn Greteman (11/97)**  
... Carroll

**James and Joyce Hiebert (11/97)**  
... Ogden

**Ted and Betty Liautaud (11/97)**  
... Carroll



## ILHA OFFICERS, BOARD OF DIRECTORS, AND STAFF

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Margaret & Jeff Elbert-Benson

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Anne Schoonover (515) 233-1445  
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#### Secretary

Joyce Ausberger (515)386-4521

#### Treasurer

Judy Wallace (515)275-2917

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#### Iowa National Lincoln Highway Director

Bob Ausberger

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*(Presidents, Continued from page 1)*

has the unusual distinction of receiving his license *before* his degree. He attended Carlton College in Minnesota, Des Moines Area Community College, and has worked with an engineering and architectural firm in Ames. Jeff became a licensed landscape architect and then received his landscape architect degree from Iowa State University. He currently works for ISU Landscape Architectural Extension.

Jeff and Margaret are the parents of two children, Peter and Nora. **L**

*(Meeting, Continued from page 4)*

way town for a Lincoln Highway Cultural Center? How about the Lisbon gas station?

Next our buses took us to the "Crow's Nest," a newly developed scenic overlook at Preparation Canyon. It was beautiful - and windy. Can we develop some view areas for our Lincoln Highway bridges or sections of highway? How about the view photographed by Drake Hokanson and used for the cover of his book?

The Lewis and Clark campsite at the confluence of the Little Sioux and the Missouri was an emotional experience. Almost 200 years ago the expedition camped there and complained of "Moskitos." The current of the Missouri is swift as observed from the observation platform and it looked like a lot of work to push a boat upstream. Fortunately the wind kept any "Moskitos" descendents far away from the tour!

We finished the day at Small's Orchard and enjoyed pie and ice cream and a tour of their apple market and pumpkin patch. It was a great day and we are looking forward to the "Ames Experience" at our Spring meeting. **L**

Can we develop some view areas for our Lincoln Highway bridges or sections of highway?

Have a -  
Merry Christmas  
and  
Happy New Year!

Bob Ausberger

Joyce Ausberger

Lila Lawton

Jeff + Margaret Elbert-Benson

**We are seeking sponsors for the newsletter. If there are businesses, events, or individuals who would like to provide copy that can serve as advertising in *Along the Lincoln Highway*, please contact Bob Ausberger, or Margaret and Jeff.**

## LINCOLN HIGHWAY EVENT CALENDAR

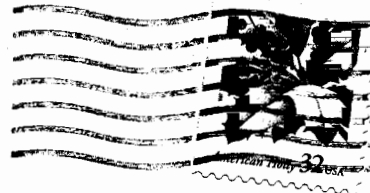
- June 17-20, 1998: National Conference in Salt Lake City - Let's get lots of Iowans there!!
- On the Lincoln Hwy. in Ogden, Christmas Tree Sale - LHA has a tree! Leonard Good Center, Dec 13, 7 - 9 p.m. Tour of Homes, Dec 14, 2 - 4 p.m.
- Greene County LHA Open House at Peoples Trust Comm. Room, Jefferson, Dec. 18, 1 - 4 p.m. Program - 2 p.m.
- Nevada Lincoln Highway Days - Aug. 28-30

## LINCOLN HIGHWAY CONTACT PERSONS

- Committees:
  - Database or list of all Iowa Lincoln Highway markers - call or write John Carver, 2501 Falbrook Drive NE, Cedar Rapids IA, 52402, (319)393-4295.
  - Walking Tours of towns: Helen Miller is working on this for the town of Ogden
  - Merchants Association information: call LeeAnna Ausberger (515)386-4694
- Parade and Float Committee: call Ty Casotti (515)432-2796, or Bob Owens (515)386-3419
- Interpretive Sites: state, regional or local, contact Bob Ausberger
- National Education and Curriculum Committee: Sue Jacobson, RR 3, Box 347A, Jerico Road, Aurora IL, 60506
- Newsletter and Web Site: Paul Walker, (319)358-7056, paul-walker@uiowa.edu
- Wood Products Committee: Clare Robson, 738-2690, and Wayne Taylor, 386-8373

*Contact Bob & Joyce Ausberger (515-386-4521) if you are interested in a Bus Tour to the Nat'l LHA Conference in Salt Lake City - June 17-20th.*

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