



THE TRAVELER

LINCOLN HIGHWAY ASSOCIATION—CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

www.lincolnhwy.org/ca/traveler

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Restoring the Lincoln Highway Bridge Railings in Nevada

We're the ones who care, so we're the ones who need to take care.

BY NORMAN ROOT

Back in 1913, everyone was anxious for their town to be on the Lincoln Highway, the “Main Street of America.” Being connected to the national highway would mean easier access to a broader market for increased trade, additional visitors buying goods and services, and an improved standard of living. If the Abraham Lincoln Memorial Highway would pass their way, it meant recognition and prosperity. Municipalities all across the country were advertising and marking the route. But somehow, the citizens of Washoe County, Nevada didn't seem to be doing their share in this nationwide marketing campaign and were criticized for it.



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The Lincoln Highway bridge rails in Nevada, before (top) and after restoration.

Next Chapter Meeting:
January 10, 2 PM
Northminster
Presbyterian
Church
3235 Pope Ave
Sacramento

The President's Message

Our next chapter meeting is on Saturday, January 10 at 2:00 PM, at the Northminster Presbyterian Church in Sacramento. (Directions are below.)

This will be a business meeting, and we will have election of officers for the coming year. Please come to help the new officers plan the direction the chapter for the coming year and discuss what we need to accomplish to preserve the history of the Lincoln Highway in California.

We will have reports on activities related to the Mapping Committee, the San Francisco terminus signing project, the national web site, and the national organization.

Following the meeting we will have refreshments and time to socialize.

I wish you all a very Happy New Year. See you there!

— Mary Ramsey

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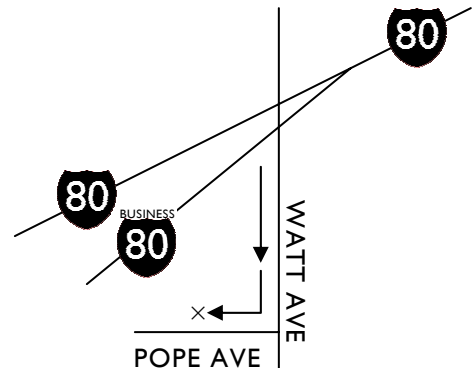
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Directions to Northminster Presbyterian Church

3235 Pope Ave
Sacramento, CA 95821

- From either **I-80** or **Business I-80**, take the **Watt Avenue** exit and turn south.
- After about 1¼ miles, turn right onto **Pope Avenue**.
- The church is 1½ blocks later on the right.



From the Editor

As the new editor of *The Traveler*, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself.

I have been a member of the Association since 1998, although I have been interested in the Lincoln Highway ever since I picked up a copy of Drake Hokanson's book *The Lincoln Highway* about 5 years before. That inspired me to create the first web site about the Lincoln Highway in 1996. I still maintain that web site, although now I also maintain the web sites for the Lincoln Highway Association and the California chapter.

Apparently, that wasn't enough, since I have now

volunteered to be the new editor of *The Traveler*. The previous editor, Wesley Hammond, did a wonderful job, and I plan to maintain and improve the newsletter's level of excellence. For this issue, Norm Root's article on restoring the bridge rails in Nevada made my job easy.

However, we need contributions from you, our readers, for future issues. If you have a topic you would like to see included, or if you simply have questions or comments about *The Traveler*, please e-mail me at jlin@ugcs.caltech.edu. I look forward to hearing from you.

— James Lin

Restoring the Lincoln Highway Bridge Railings

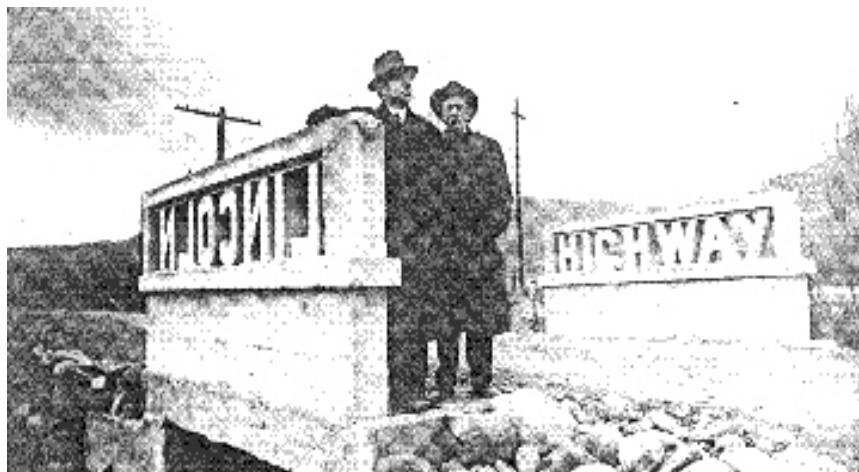
(Continued from page 1) About this time, 1914 to be more exact, contractor A. J. Niedt was building a road culvert for the state of Nevada about five miles west of Reno, on the road to California. Niedt could see the value of advertising and promoting the Lincoln Highway, so he took it upon himself to do his part by building rails on the side of that culvert whose balusters spelled out the words “Lincoln” and “Highway.”

H. E. Frederickson (pictured right), the Lincoln Highway Consul-at-Large, was so impressed upon visiting the site that he proposed this bridge rail design for use on all Lincoln Highway bridges clear across the country. However, his proposal apparently didn’t meet with much enthusiasm, since only one other set of bridge rails of this type was ever built, in Tama, Iowa in 1915.

Anyway, those very first Lincoln Highway bridge rails are still in existence. In later years, the Lincoln Highway in this area became U.S. Route 40 and was eventually realigned, leaving the old bridge rails to languish in the sage. Then during the 1970s, U.S. 40 succumbed to Interstate 80. At that time, the Nevada Department of Transportation resurrected those old bridge rails from amongst the weeds and put them on display at a nearby truck turn-out.

Now those bridge rails have been exposed to the elements for 89 years—it’s a wonder that anything recognizable of them is left at all. Furthermore, a couple of years ago, a truck using the turn-out inadvertently backed into the “Lincoln” rail, breaking the end post and cracking several of the baluster letters.

So what? What do you expect after all of this time? And who cares? What is the Lincoln Highway anyway? Well, you and I care, or ought to, and it behooves us to remind our progeny and others about the importance of what the Lincoln Highway did for our well-



H. E. Frederickson inspecting the new bridge rails in Nevada in 1914



The bridge rails along the abandoned U.S. 40 right-of-way

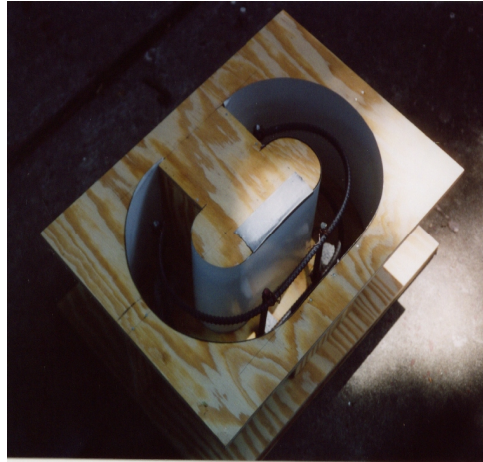
being and the lifestyle that we enjoy today.

So, who’s going to keep those unique artifact bridge rails in good repair? The state, of course. They’re on state right-of-way property, and it’s the government’s job to take care of us all, isn’t it? Well now, think about it. The state’s job is to provide safe and efficient transportation for its citizens. Maintaining roadside artifacts is about the lowest priority there is. Then who? Those who care: us. That’s who.

(Continued on page 4)

Maintaining roadside artifacts is about the lowest priority there is. Then whose job is it? Those who care: us.

Restoring the Lincoln Highway Bridge Railings



Letter "C" form ready for concrete



Dustin Ramsey and Norman Root set the new "C" in place



Lloyd Johnson patching concrete



Ellis Nelson applying slip coat



Geno Oliver (Nevada State Director), Ellis Nelson, and Jim Bonar (President of the Nevada Chapter)



Norman Root and Mary Ramsey (President of the California Chapter)

Restoring the Lincoln Highway Bridge Railings

Several individuals and organizations, including the Society for Commercial Archeology and the Lincoln Highway Association, were concerned about the condition of the rails. The recently revived Sierra-Nevada Chapter of the Lincoln Highway Association was concerned enough about those valuable but damaged artifacts sitting alongside the road that they began making plans to repair them. Unbeknownst to the Nevadans, the equally concerned California Chapter of the Association was also planning to repair the rails, just over the state border.

So upon learning of their common goal, the two chapters of the Association joined forces and took action, under an occupancy permit from the Nevada Department of Transportation, to repair and rehabilitate the nearly ninety years of wear, install bumper guard posts to prevent future truck collisions, and install an interpretive plaque that describes the Lincoln Highway and the value of these unique artifacts.

Even though maintenance of roadside historical artifacts is a low priority of any state highway department, those same departments are known to respond positively when given the opportunity to partner with local organizations. When Nevada DOT learned about the Lincoln Highway Association chapters' willingness to

conduct work on the Nevada bridge rails, they eagerly provided support by assigning Jason Beard, a maintenance foreman, to the job site. He provided traffic control and some materials, and also recruited the help of a Nevada Division of Forestry fire crew, between fires, to do the heavy work of installing the bumper guards.

Fortunately, the two Lincoln Highway Association chapters each had members experienced in construction work and cement finishing, and they performed the actual concrete repair work and painting. The project took place during seven partial days over a two-month period. Besides myself, Association volunteers who gave their time include Geno Oliver, Jim Bonar, Ellis Nelson, Lloyd Johnson, and Mary and Dustin Ramsey. Thanks to their dedication, more people will have an opportunity to learn about this valuable piece of American history. •

Norman Root is the California State Director of the Lincoln Highway Association, and Vice-President of the California Chapter.



The interpretive plaque next to the rails. The contents of the plaque are on the back cover of this newsletter.

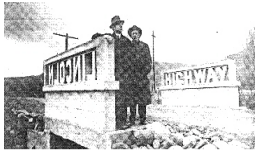


The finished rail, including bumper guards

VISITING THE BRIDGE RAILINGS

The bridge railings are at the truck turn-out off of I-80 East near Verdi, Nevada, between Exits 5 and 7.

The Lincoln Highway Bridge Rails



THE "COAST TO COAST" LINCOLN HIGHWAY



These are the first Lincoln Highway bridge rails ever built on the nation's first transcontinental highway. The Abraham Lincoln Memorial Highway ran from Times, New York to Lincoln Park, San Francisco, from 1913 through 1927.

Towns all across the nation were anxious to have the "Main Street of America" pass their way and went all out to advertise and mark the route. Washoe County had been criticized for not marking their part of the route. So in 1914, contractor A. F. Niedt, when building a new culvert about 0.9 miles east of here took it upon himself to mark the highway with these unique rails.

H. E. Frederickson, (pictured) Consul-at-Large, of the Lincoln Highway Association was so impressed with the rails that he proposed this design for all Lincoln Highway bridges clear across the country. However, only one other such set of bridge rails were ever built, at Tama, Iowa, the following year in 1915.



In later years, when the highway numbering system replaced named highways, this route became U.S. 40 and was eventually realigned.

During the early 1970s, when Interstate 80 replaced U.S. 40, the Nevada Department of Transportation salvaged the old bridge rails from the long abandoned Lincoln Highway and put them on display here.



These are the contents of the interpretive plaque that was installed next to the newly restored Lincoln Highway bridge railings in Nevada west of Reno. The story of the bridge railings and their restoration begins on page 1.

**LINCOLN HIGHWAY ASSOCIATION
CALIFORNIA CHAPTER**

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