

VAN WERT COUNTY, OHIO

Touring The Lincoln

LINCOLN HIGHWAY



100th Anniversary
1913-2013



Donors of pictures & information about the Lincoln Highway in Van Wert County:

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The Van Wert Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Lincoln Highway Centennial Committee and the Van Wert County Historical Society & Museum extend a sincere thank you to all individuals who contributed to the establishment of a permanent record of the 100th Anniversary of the Lincoln Highway in Van Wert County. Permanent Records of this event will be retained at the Van Wert County Historical Society Campus.



June 26, 2013

Lincoln Highway Centennial Committee
Van Wert Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
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OHIO LINCOLN HIGHWAY HISTORIC BYWAY

the Ohio Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor

"Touring the Lincoln"

The Lincoln Highway in Van Wert County,

Ohio—A Driving Tour Guide

East to West—From Downtown Delphos

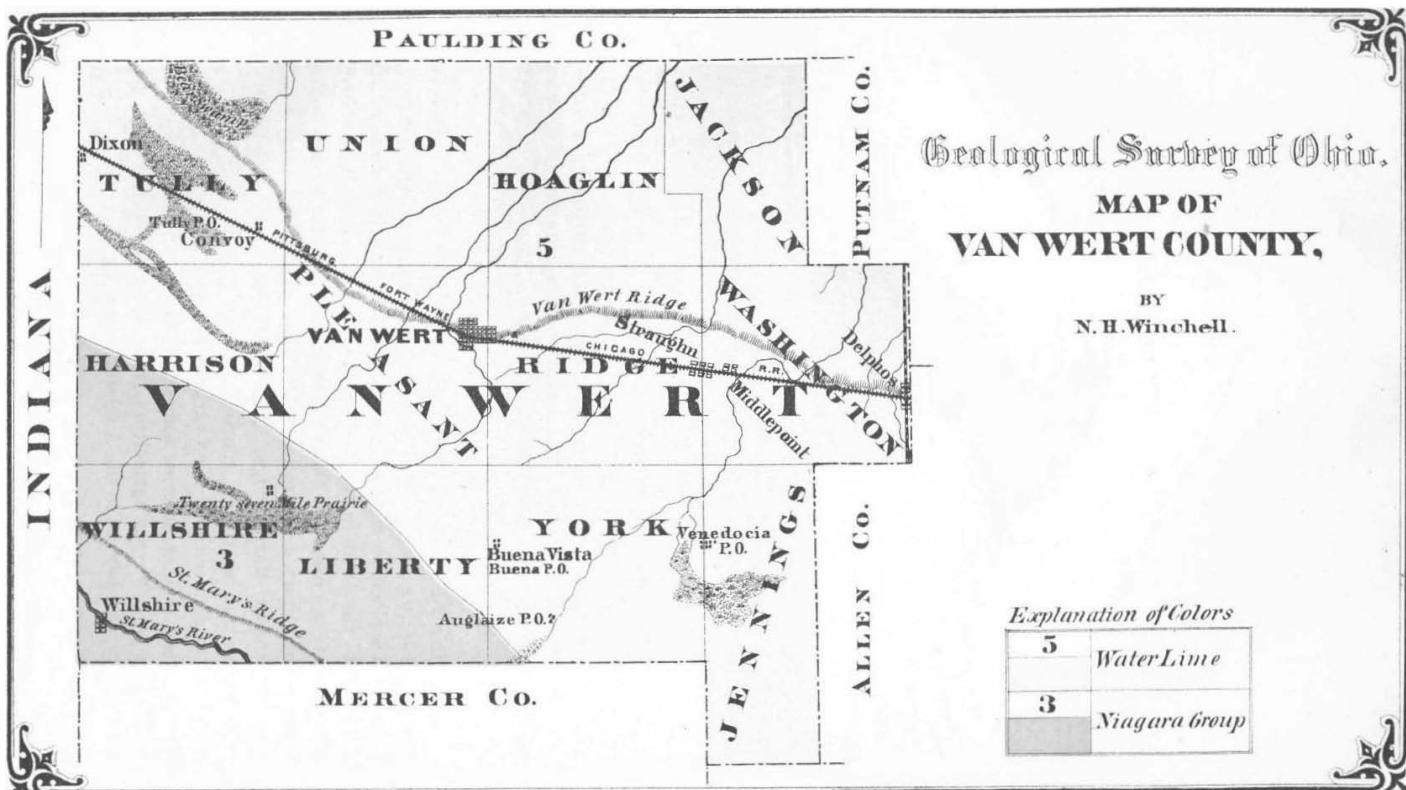
Across Van Wert County,

into Paulding County and to the Indiana State Line

During the Centennial Year of the

Lincoln Highway—2013

Van Wert County, Ohio is a lucky place. Since 1913 the Lincoln Highway has been located within the county. It is the City of Van Wert's Main Street. Why was Van Wert chosen to be on the Lincoln Highway? Only seven Ohio towns were selected to have the Lincoln Highway routed through the community in 1913. Several towns east of Van Wert lost the highway when it was moved to shorten travel distance. The answer to "why" started a very long time ago—look for the Van Wert Ridge running across the county on this map.



The ridge in Van Wert County was determined primarily by ancient sandy beach ridges formed on the shores of lakes after glacial retreat several thousand years ago. The high ridge across the county was referred to as beach road, ridge road, or other names indicating higher ground.

Note in the upper left corner, in Tully Township, the kidney shaped area. It is labeled "Bear Swamp." After Van Wert County was selected for the Lincoln Highway, this area would prove a bit difficult in the early years of the highway. The rest of the county was a good choice for the new Lincoln Highway. If you attended school in Van Wert County a history topic for most Ohio History classes was the Great Black Swamp. Starting in 1850 and over many decades the swamp was eventually drained.

Today we do not think much of the effort it took to make the Great Black Swamp productive farm ground and suitable for healthy living. Van Wert County farming benefited from its beach ridges at the southern edges of the swamp and then overall business benefited when a route was needed to build a highway through Ohio all the way to the West Coast.

The story of the Lincoln Highway starts in the year 1912. The American Automobile industry was in its infancy, having been started in 1891 when John Lambert built his Buckeye gasoline buggy in the small village of Ohio City. Henry Ford began building cars in 1896 and started his own company, the Ford Motor Co. in 1903.



Nine years later (1912), those who could afford to buy an automobile did so more for the novelty than practicality. There were almost no good roads to speak of in the United States. The relatively few miles of improved road were only around towns and cities. A road was "improved" if it was graded; one was lucky to have gravel or brick. Asphalt and concrete were yet to come. Most of the 2.5 million miles of roads were just dirt. Very bumpy and dusty in dry weather, impassable in wet weather. Worse yet, the roads didn't really lead anywhere. To get from one settlement to another, it was much easier to take the train.

Living in Indianapolis, Indiana, Carl Fisher developed a plan to make the automobile a mode of long distance transportation. Fisher was a man of grand ideas. His Indianapolis Motor Speedway was a success, and he would later turn a swamp into one of the greatest beach resorts—Miami Beach, Florida. His 1912 idea was a highway spanning the continent, from coast to coast. He called his idea the Coast-to-Coast Rock Highway. The gravel road would cost about ten million dollars. Communities along the route would provide the equipment and in return would receive free materials and a place along America's first transcontinental highway. The highway would be finished in time for the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition and would run from the exposition's host city, San Francisco, to New York City.

To fund his scheme, Fisher asked for cash donations from auto manufacturers and accessory companies of one-percent of their revenues. The public could become members of the highway organization for a donation of five dollars. Henry Ford refused to support the plan, but the country had become so enthusiastic about the highway that Fisher would not give up. Two men from the automobile industry who pledged money to the project were Frank Seiberling, president of Goodyear, and Henry Joy, president of the Packard Motor Car Company. It was Joy's idea to name the highway after Abraham Lincoln. Congress was considering spending \$1.7 million on a marble memorial to Lincoln; but Joy believed a good road across the country would be a better tribute to the late president. Abraham Lincoln received both; the Lincoln Memorial was dedicated May 20, 1922.

With these men's efforts, construction of the transcontinental highway began. Several different routes were mapped out, but the final decision rested on directness. By bypassing many scenic attractions and larger cities along the way, narrow winding roadways and congestion would be avoided. This thinking brought the Lincoln Highway to Van Wert County.

In 2013, the nation will be observing the Lincoln Highway's 100th birthday. There will be celebrations throughout the year in communities all along its 5,869 miles. There will be hundreds of classic cars in three tour groups coming through our city in May, June and July. Local celebrations are planned to match up with these tour groups as well as our own celebration to mark the occasion.

The Van Wert Convention and Visitors Bureau, Main Street Van Wert, Van Wert County Historical Society and The Lincoln Highway Centennial Committee offer you this tour guide of the Lincoln Highway in Van Wert County.

Start of the Lincoln Highway tour across Van Wert County

The tour starts at an original Lincoln Highway Control Station in Delphos, Ohio. Look for the sign on the Firestone store building, northeast corner, at N. Main St. and 5th St. (Lincoln Highway). Mileage readings start at zero at this intersection. (0/28.4)



Memorial Park looking northeast.

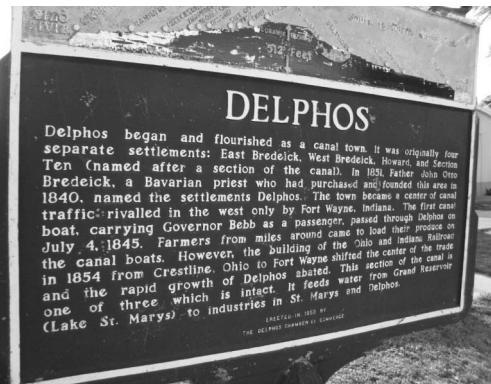
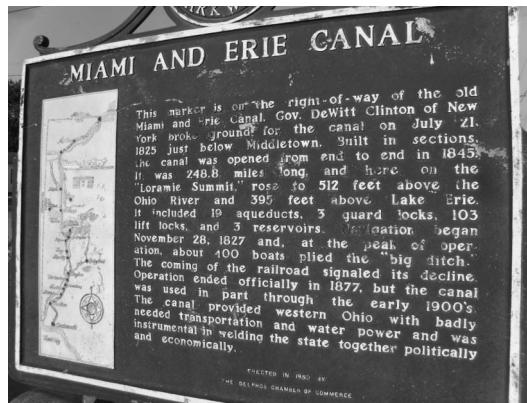
The brick Firestone building has the control station sign mounted on the corner at the road intersection.

The original Lincoln Highway marker is on the southside near the canal bed. The canal looking south from the road.

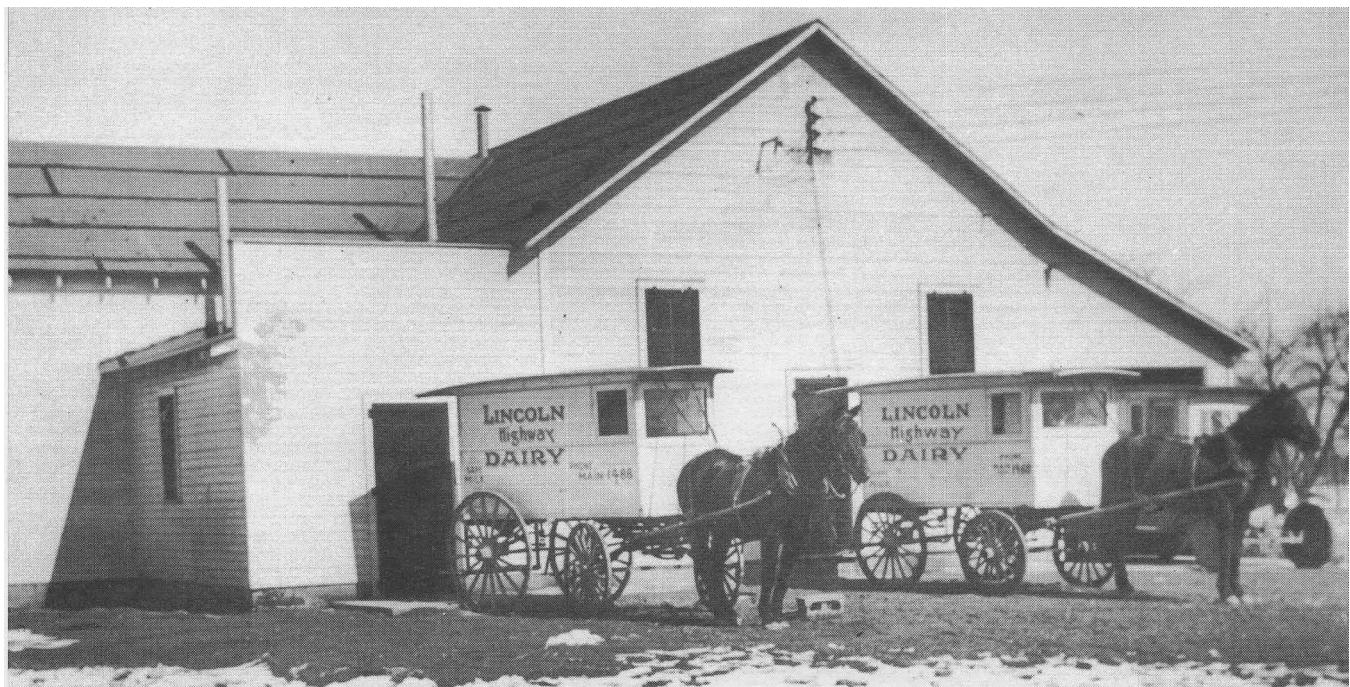
The Delphos Canal Museum and the Delphos Museum of Postal History are located a short distance south in Delphos.

Mileage is shown as (28.4/0) with the first number the miles from zero in Delphos, westward to the Indiana State line. The second number is the miles from the Indiana State line at zero, eastward, to Delphos, Ohio. Set your trip odometer to zero at the west or east side of Van Wert County to follow the mileage notations.





This section to the west side of Delphos is also Route 66 until it turns north at the edge to town. Continue straight west out-of-town over the East Jennings Creek Bridge. On the north side of the road in a cluster of homes, past a barn, is the location of the very early Lincoln Highway Dairy, circa 1915-1956. (0.7/27.7)

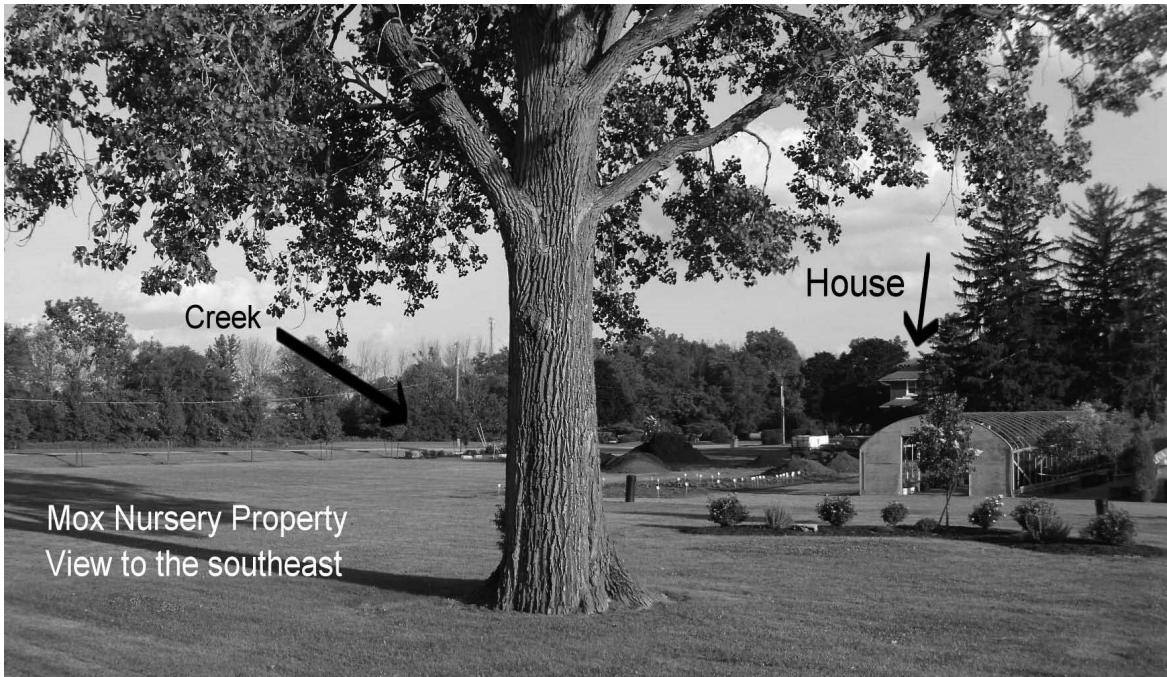


The dairy's location is where the West Side Electric (green building) is located, 24333 Lincoln Highway. Just a bit further is the Old Lincoln Inn, where a motel has been operating for many years. The West Jennings Creek bridge (1.3 /27.1) and Mox Nursery, south side of road (1.4/27.0) are the location of a reconstruction and moving of the original road and the creek. The Lincoln Highway passed in front of the home at Mox Nursery, crossing the creek on the east side.

Both sides of the historical marker on the northside of the road at the canal in Delphos.

As you drive west through Delphos there are unique homes on both sides of 5th Street.

The road ran south of the current highway for some distance. This was called the Mox Curve. The only trace of the old roadbed is a grass strip between the house and the creek. The creek was moved to the northside of the current road as it was originally on the south side, or north of the original highway. A short road, Nomina Rd., runs north at the west edge of the reconstruction area. (1.5/26.9)



The drive to Van Wert is a very scenic and peaceful stretch of road. Beginning in this area (1.7/26.7) is a line of utility poles diverging on the north side that shows the original and present day right-of-way line. This is a good way to imagine where the road used to be, before reconstruction in the 1940s. Many trees planted within the right-of-way are a result of the highway beautification plan for that reconstruction project.

Just before the bridge at the Little Auglaize River is a wooded section on the south side (3.3/25.1) with many beehives visible and an old shed sized building. On the north side was a truck stop, the building now modernized.

The river bridge (3.4/25.0) starts an area of climbing, curving road to the north through (3.7/24.7), resuming alignment with the beach ridge of the Maumee Glacial Lake. straightening out to a high point. (4.3/24.1)

Another utility pole line area diverging to the north. (4.9/23.5) The now famous Van-Del Drive In theater is on the south side (5.3/23.1) The first drive-in theater in the Van Wert area was opened here in June 1948 and was called the Star-Lite Theater. The opening movie and thus the first shown in the Van Wert area at a drive-in was "It Happened on Fifth Avenue" (made in 1947) and there was space for 525 cars at the new Star-Lite.





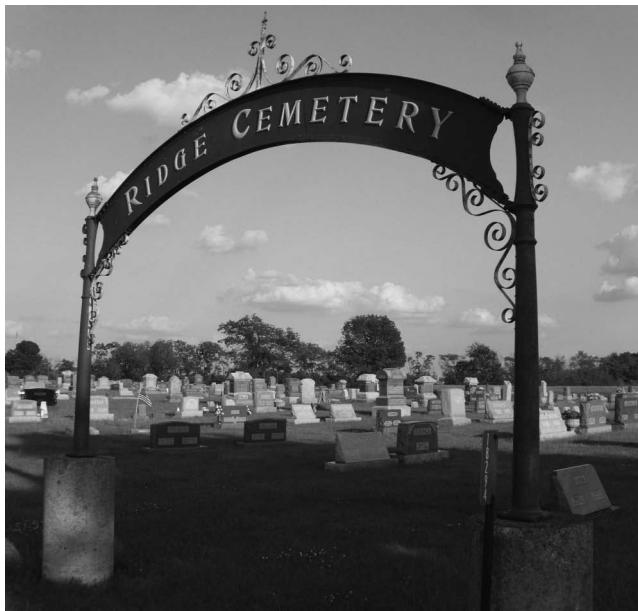
About one mile west of the drive-in (southside) an old road remnant can be seen in front of the abandoned "Dutch Mill" building which formerly housed a restaurant, bar and gas station. (5.8/22.6)
You are at the Middle Point Road intersection ready to go over the overpass.



After you are over the "new" U.S. 30 via the overpass (6.0/22.4) you will arrive at the location (south side) of the former Cactus Restaurant. (6.2/22.2) It has been torn down and there is only a paved area that shows in the photo on the right. This is the old roadbed. This area saw much activity due to the two restaurants with bars being located here. Some robberies and other assorted activities made the area somewhat infamous, but locals knew good food and an enjoyable outing happened here 99% of the time.



A family farm on the Lincoln Highway. (6.4/22.0) This location today is P&L Fertilizer, 18963 Lincoln Hwy. There is the home and main barn with at least 15 out-buildings/structures. To the top right (east & northeast) is Dog Creek Road & Dog Creek. Major General Anthony Wayne's march to (present day Defiance) in August 1794 followed the Dog Creek area north. There were 2,800 soldiers and the march resulted in Wayne's victory at the Battle of Fallen Timbers (Maumee, OH) (There is a Historical Marker on the road)



Ridge Cemetery is after the gradual curve of the highway on the south side. (7.1/21.3) Originally a church cemetery it is now maintained by Ridge Township.

This is an attractive ornamental entry gate from its early years. It is now on display only—not an entrance.

From the west side of the cemetery the Lincoln Highway veered south and was located in the front of upcoming properties on the south side of the current highway. It crossed the next north-south mile road, Ringwald Road, (7.5/20.9) immediately in front of the home there and continued on west and passed in front of the old county home. This home today (2013) is a private hospital and you are advised not to enter their property. (7.6/20.8)

(photos at the bottom of this page)

Before passing further west there is a truck stop on the north side. (7.3/21.1) Conrad Better Truck Stop had a



very good location on the Lincoln Highway before the new four lane U.S. 30 opened in the late 1960s.

Truckers still find this station and a large campground on Ringwald Road keep the store busy.

These 3 photos to the right show the old roadbed off Ringwald Rd. (7.5/20.9) and the road remnant directly in front of the old Van Wert County home location. The building you see there today is the 2nd county home to be constructed



on the property. It is now a private hospital. The original Lincoln Highway ran in front of the county home (7.6/20.8), in front of the homes you see south on Ringwald Road and angled up to the Ridge Cemetery.



Peony Gardens—one of Van Wert's well known claims to fame from the early 1900s and on. This location (8.4/20) was one of the largest growers of peonies. All you can see today is this metal sign post keeping watch and brick columns on each side of the driveways that made a U-shaped entrance to the property. In 1930, a local resident, Charles Wassenberg, began growing peonies. Each June his home gardens were visited by thousands of people and he soon expanded his gardens to a 30-acre farm along the Lincoln Highway called the Wassenberg Peony & Iris Farm. His farm and numerous other flower growing farms, most on the Lincoln Highway, when combined with the annual Peony Festival that started in 1932, earned Van Wert the title of "Peony Capital of the World."

10 • Touring The Lincoln | Van Wert County, Ohio

Take notice of the old church (formerly the Ridge United Methodist Church) on the north side of the highway about a half mile past the peony farm. (8.7/19.7) The east-west driveway in front of the building is an old road remnant. This was another section of original road that was straightened. Knowledge of this would have been lost if not for the road remnants that have been left along this area. (5.3 to 8.7~/19.7 to 23.1) A wide easement with utility poles set back also are evidence.



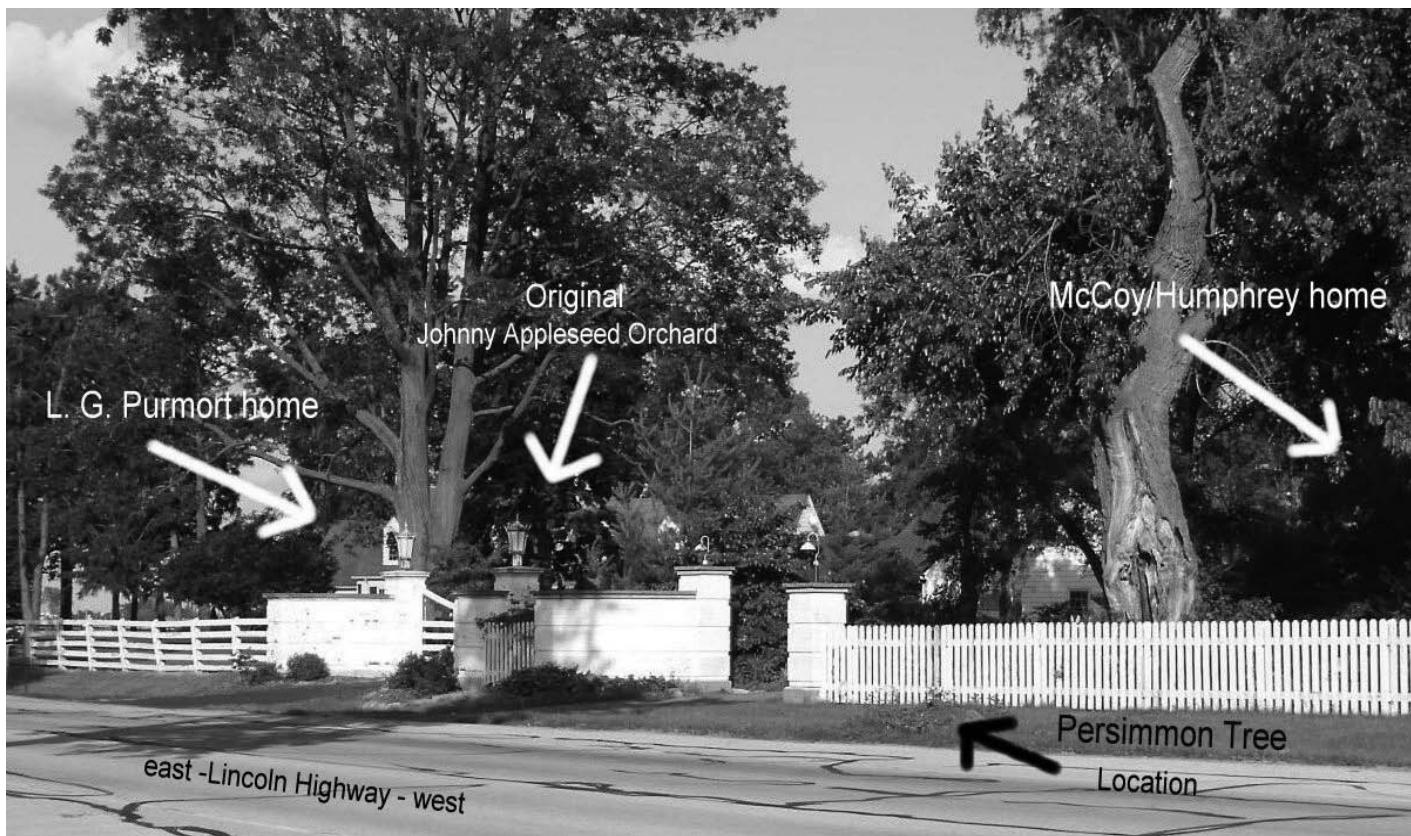
You now approach the overpass interchange (10.0/18.4) with the four lane U.S. 30 that bypasses the City of Van Wert to the north. At the southwest corner of this interchange is a single brick post that marked the boundary corner for a roadside rest on the Lincoln Highway. It is well off the roadway to the south along the fence line. It was left standing after the area was removed when the bypass was built in the 1960s. (10.1/18.3) It has stood solitary and isolated for 45 plus years.



For many years there was a well pipe with a hand pump at the rest stop that supplied very cold water to thirsty travelers. Even locals knew of it and would stop for a drink. A tin cup was always hanging on the pump. The well was part of a family's property (Stageman) that was removed for the new interchange.

The Starr Commonwealth is on the north side of the road. (10.3/18.1) It was a campus for youth working through troubled times. It is currently closed. This property was originally the Beckman's Auglaize Gardens. They offered 20 acres of peonies and oriental poppies. They had a "Gate House Store" with luxury gift items. The Beckman's built the large home located on the property.

On the south side are two homes and the restored Meadow Lane barn (10.4/18.0) The oldest home is the one directly across from the Starr Commonwealth and was built by the McCoy family. A Humphrey, of Van Wert downtown business fame, married a McCoy and the home is often referred to as the Humphrey home. The house to the east was originally a Johnny Appleseed orchard. The house there today was not built until later years by L.G. Purmort. Directly in front of the McCoy home was a Persimmon tree, well cared for as it was believed this tree was also planted by Johnny Appleseed. The "derecho storm" of 2012 took this tree down.





The Meadow Lane Farm, south side (10.4/18.0), a beautiful barn that was restored in recent years.



For many years there has been a gift shop at this barn (11.0/17.4) with Lincoln Highway collectibles. There are several Lincoln Highway signs on the outside.

Hipsley's Lincoln Highway Country Store,
14514 Lincoln Highway
On the south side of the highway.



(11.2/17.2)

At the second property past Boroff Road (north side) was Bowen's Camp.

Today, there are two cabins joined together and one single cabin in the backyard.

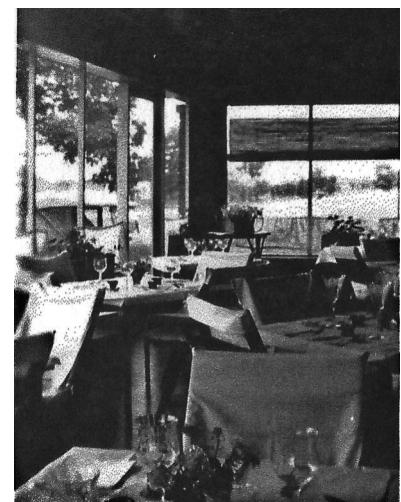


Lincoln Ridge Farm circa 1940. (11.4/17.0) View is east along the Lincoln Highway. The farm is on the south side of the highway, between Mendon and Boroff Roads. The curve to the northeast at the top left-hand of the photo starts a short distance after Boroff Road. The farm buildings are gone. George & Carrie Duprey and son Rei & Berneace Duprey operated this farm of 130 acres. It was in the Duprey family circa 1890 till 1985.

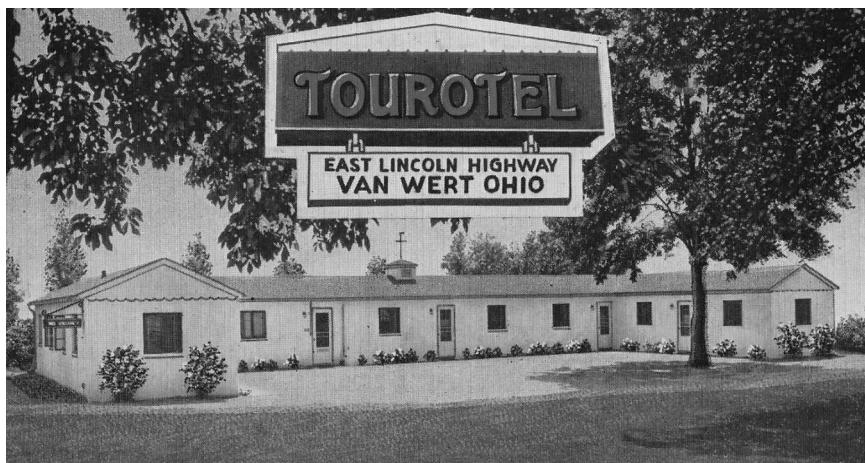


Brothers Wilson & Richard Duprey, circa 1926.
In 2013, They are standing by
The White Hen sign at their
house.

The White Hen tea room operated by Berneace Duprey, circa 1926. (11.5/16.9) The tea room was on the backside of the home at the southeast corner of Mendon Road and the Lincoln Highway. This home was built in 1920 by Rei & Berneace Duprey. Today this home is across Mendon Road from the WERT radio station property. The home was on the west boundary of the Lincoln Ridge Farm. The Duprey's sold the home in the late 1930s to Milford L. & Esther Landis, who opened the Tourotel Motel just east of the home. He was an attorney for Central Manufacturers Mutual Insurance Company. By the early 1950s at the latest, new owners, Mr. & Mrs. C. E. Bates were operating the motel. Today all that is left is a concrete slab where the motel was located.



The White Hen tea room served lunches and dinners. The menu included chicken sandwiches, fruit salad, white cakes with coconut icing, and cookies. The Duprey's also offered take home fresh chickens.



the tourist cabins up on a trailer. It is awaiting a new home via the Van Wert County Historical Society.

The Mendon Road intersection today is home to Van Wert's WERT radio station. It is locally owned. Across the highway is the Dr. Wilkin veterinary office. This corner (northwest) used to be a tourist cabin & Hi-Speed gas station business. Behind the vet office you will find one of

The Marsh Foundation



The Marsh Foundation is at the east edge of the City of Van Wert. (12.1 to 12.3/16.1 to 16.3) It was built in 1923. The Marsh Foundation was a gift to the community from early Van Wert Industrialist George H. Marsh, who in his last will and testament wrote, "I depart this life in the hope that the Foundation shall become an instrument of enduring and ever increasing benefit to mankind." According to local lore, Marsh and his family were returning home from Fort Wayne, Indiana on a winter night and saw two impoverished children, and consequently his wife Hilinda suggested dedicating their estate to children such as those two. The Marsh was a unique home for children, 2nd grade through high school. The children attended high school at local schools. Most often there was a parent the children stayed in regular contact with. Today the Marsh is an alternative school for youth.

The Marsh Foundation campus is extensive. The Lincoln Highway at the Marsh is beautiful when the trees are at their summer fullness. It is a reminder of what many areas of the highway looked like 50 plus years ago.

The Marsh homestead is the last building on the north side as you enter Van Wert. It serves as a museum of sort for the entire campus. The home has been restored and is kept to look like the Marsh family still lives there. Take a drive through the campus or an easy stroll. There are not many properties like this one in a small population county such as Van Wert. The main campus is on the north side. The Marsh is also located on the south side of the Lincoln Highway.

You now come to a stop sign at N. Wayne St. in Van Wert. (12.4/16.0) You will be looking at a wooden fence (in 2013) and try to imagine what this intersection was like years ago. The highway turns left (south) for one block, crossing the old Pennsylvania Railroad tracks and then makes a right turn (west) onto E. Main Street. It was congested to say the least. A good place to sell gift items, provide car service, etc., as this is the first mandatory stop on the highway since Delphos. Here is one such couple who took advantage of the potential shoppers from all over the country. Ted & Clara Adams started selling lollipops in 1947 on the northwest corner of E. Jackson St. and the Lincoln Highway. Instead of looking at the fence you would be looking at scores of lollipops mounted in the yard. Small, big and huge up to a 50-pounder that sold for \$35 in 1961. They had the exclusive on the entire Lincoln Highway for Frances Gordon Lollipops, Jamestown, NY.



You are on Van Wert's East Main Street heading west. This side of town has numerous vacant, or converted for other use, small family business buildings on either side. After about 5 blocks you will enter an older section that at one time had large residences. Many are gone. One well known property was the Whitehall Inn on the northwest corner of Main & Tyler St. The picture was taken April 20, 1952. Today you see the City of Van Wert Municipal Bldg. and Fire Dept. in its place. (12.9/15.5)

The next two blocks contained some families with wealth for that time. A current home that is well restored is on the southeast corner of Harrison and Main. George Marsh also left his mark by building a YWCA when another well-heeled gentleman sponsored the building of a YMCA first. The "girls Y" is on the southeast corner of Cherry & Main. It was completed at a cost of \$110,000 in 1916. Stop in for a visit as it is worth the time. There is exquisite furnishing and construction for a "Y", girls or boys. The Van Wert Post Office is across Cherry St. It is not vintage but a good stop to send some local postcards back home. Here is what used to be there in the Lincoln Highway's heyday:



The Hotel Inn, southwest corner of Cherry & Main. (Picture is July 25, 1955.) It offered just about everything including a service station on the west end. Until interurban passenger service was discontinued in the mid 1930s, the interurban depot was located across Main St. (north) on the corner. There is no trace of the depot. The DWG Cigar Corp. was just west of the depot and the building is still there. (13.0/ 15.4)

You are finally at Balyeat's Coffee Shop on the east corner of East Court St. & Main. (13.1/15.3) It truly has been "nationally famous since 1924." Almost every Lincoln Highway guide lists Balyeat's. The same name has been on the business since it started. While there were older businesses in this location, Balyeat's start date of 1924 means the vast majority of Lincoln Highway travelers knew of them. Be sure to stop here and enjoy a hearty, home-style meal or just a milkshake, prepared in the metal container and brought to you, with a piece of pie. Counter service on a stool or at a table—its all Balyeat's style here. Across the street is the Marsh Hotel, also in all the highway guide books. It was a control station for the Lincoln Highway.



Balyeat's at the right with their famous sign advertising "Young Fried Chicken, Day or Night." The Marsh Hotel at left with the Lincoln Highway control station signage.





and substantial in construction. The architecture is a combination of Gothic and Romanesque with turreted towers and a Ludowici tile roof. Dedication of the building took place on January 1, 1901. If you are at the Library during their open hours this is another stop worth an inside visit.



The new Main Street Bridge over Town Creek (13.2/15.2) in downtown Van Wert during the official ribbon cutting ceremony in 1930. At the May 17, 1929 planning meeting between the State of Ohio and local officials, the bridge specifications called for it to be built of concrete construction and its cost was estimated at \$25,000. The bridge was built in 1929-1930. This bridge was replaced in 1999. Its parapets were placed at the ends of the new bridge. The original dedication plaque can be seen on the northeast parapet by the Library.

Brumback Library 215 W. Main Street

The Brumback Library is the first County Library in the United States. Built to resemble a castle, the library was a gift to the community from John Sanford Brumback. He was the principal owner and president of the Van Wert National Bank and also president of the Central Manufacturer's Mutual Insurance Company. The corner stone was laid in 1899 and no expense was spared in making the building both handsome in appearance

There are two of these welcome sign/markers on the Lincoln Highway at the Van Wert city limits. The east side marker is located just past the Marsh Foundation as you enter Van Wert. You will see the west side one just before arriving at the Brookside convenience store. They were installed in the mid 2000s.



The Lincoln Highway downtown Van Wert—1938 Peony Festival

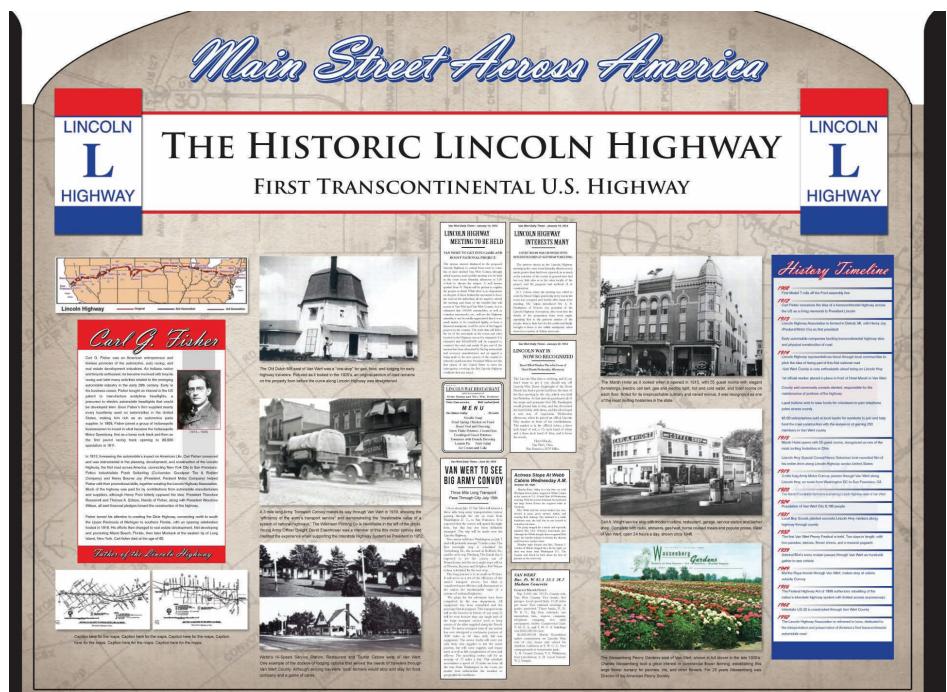
This festival remains Van Wert's top community pride event, still showing itself off to the rest of the United States. Without the Lincoln Highway the peony may have never became established as a tourist attraction for Van Wert County. Plan a visit to Van Wert for the Peony Festival.

Learn more at: www.vanwertpeony.com

The Van Wert Peony Festival Began in 1932 on the Lincoln Highway

Van Wert would become known as the "Peony Capital of the World" by the late 1950s. The large peony farms located both east and west of Van Wert on the Lincoln Highway attracted thousands of people to see the peony blooms. In 1932 the first Peony Festival was held and was a big success. The Lincoln Highway allowed people easy access to Van Wert County. The Grand Parade of the Peony Festival was held on the Lincoln Highway, starting at the Marsh Foundation and proceeding through town. Today the Peony Festival weekend has expanded to include additional activities, attracting thousands to Van Wert. The Grand Parade is held on Saturday of each Festival weekend.

For the 100th Anniversary of the Lincoln Highway a new kiosk was installed in Fountain Park in Downtown Van Wert on June 26, 2013. The kiosk is located across the street from the Brumback Library on West Main Street, the Lincoln Highway.





The Van Wert County Courthouse

Located on “Main Street USA”

remains a symbol of strength in Van Wert

County. In 2012-2013 the upper floor
courtroom rotunda was renovated to its
beautiful, original condition, providing a good
example of community leadership promoting
historical preservation.



Rising above the front of the courthouse is a
clock tower crowned with a statue of
Justice. Made of zinc, the statue is 8 feet
tall. Before it was sent here, it was
exhibited on the grounds of the
Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876.





Snow Cruiser, "Penguin", October 1939, Main Street, Van Wert, Ohio. Heading east on the Lincoln Highway. The Snow Cruiser just passed over Jefferson Street and is heading downtown in the 100 block, W. Main St. The Snow Cruiser traveled on the Lincoln Highway through Van Wert County to Delphos.

Note: In this area the interurban rails have already been removed from the center line of the roadway.



The Snow Cruiser just crossed Market Street as it continues east on the Lincoln Highway. Above the rear of the Cruiser is the Masonic Temple entrance on S. Market Street, where it is located today. This was the building of the J. C. Penny store on Main St., today Mengerink's Source for Sports. The trip goes well until it runs off the road near Gomer, Ohio. It takes days to get the big behemoth back on the road.

The Antarctic Snow Cruiser was to be used on the Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd's 3rd Antarctic Expedition in 1939. The big, smooth tires did not perform well in Antarctica's snow and ice. The vehicle was under-powered and was abandoned. Due to the movement of Antarctic ice, its location is unknown.



Fountain Park, 200 block of West Main Street, south side. (13.2/15.2) This park has a bandshell and is used in the summer months for Concerts in the Park on Friday evenings. It has been a city park since before 1900 and has been part of every event on the Lincoln Highway, either passing by or held in the park.

The new Lincoln Highway kiosk will be located here in June, 2013.



YMCA Postcard sent Apr. 1921 showing original appearance.

It's unusual that a city the size of Van Wert has both a YMCA and a YWCA but through the generosity of a German-born harness-maker who lived in Van Wert it does! John Strandler was born in Germany in 1841, came to Ohio and at age 16 and moved to Van Wert in 1867. When he died he left one-third of his estate for a building and an endowment fund to establish a local YMCA. The site was purchased for \$25,000 and the total cost of the building and equipment was \$60,000. Dedication of the YMCA took place on April 15, 1917. Several additions have been made to the building, including the McMillen gymnasium and the Kemper Natatorium.

Spray's Service & Auto Repair Station Van Wert, Ohio 1938

West Main Street at Burt Street & Lincoln Street



This building is in use today as a rental property. This business developed a good reputation for automobile radiator repair. (13.7/14.7)



Hillie Cordell's Open Air Market, W. Main Street at Burt St., northwest corner. (13.8/14.6) Hillis Cordell built this open air grocery store and market on the old Burt family property. The Burt family home is just behind the market, where the Cordells lived. Today the market is gone and a large slab of concrete still fills the corner. The Burt home was renovated in the early 2000s. This market is one of the more famous businesses in Van Wert. This was due to Cordell's personality and unusual marketing of seasonal and holiday items. Children were always tempted with a free piece of candy. The open air market idea was also unique for the type of temperatures and weather occurring in Van Wert County. At the left side of the picture is the Dairy Queen just down the street.



A view back to the east from about (13.9/14.5) with Shaffer Street to the left and Sibley Street to the right. Note the B&K Root Beer stand & Crow's Main St. Market (today Wild Hare BBQ). The B&K sign & business are still operating and the market is now Wild Hare BBQ. It was also Dempsey's Aquarium circa 1960s.



Chrysler-Plymouth Dealership on northwest corner of W. Main St. & Shaffer St. Circa 1951. Darwin Frederick moved to Van Wert from Indiana and purchased the dealership creating Frederick Dodge, 1963-1986. (13.9/14.5)

Stripe Motel, later Stripe's Westgate Motel, 1133 W. Main St., north side of the highway. Brothers Bob and Dick Stripe built the motel in 1950. Later Vi Penrod owned it, then others operated it until it closed a few years ago as the Economy Inn. (14.0/14.4)



Aeroquip circa 1951. (14.2/14.2) This company has been a steady employer in Van Wert County for many years. Today you will see a very large plant and the name is Eaton-Aeroquip. In this area of the Lincoln Highway you are approx. at the middle of driving distance to Indiana or Delphos.



Carl Wright Cities Service (14.3/14.1) offered cabins, restaurant, gas station and repairs. Also a truck stop. These buildings are gone. Wright started years before on East Lincoln Highway in a single stall sized building. Today the businesses located here are a used car lot and Century Trading/scrap yard.

Brookside Convenience Store at John Brown Road is the last Van Wert City business on the Lincoln Highway heading west. (14.6/13.8) It has a long and important history in Van Wert County starting with the milk business in the early 1900s. It started as a dairy operation with local delivery. Today it is a very busy 24/7 convenience store and gas station.



The first new delivery truck in 1934. Surviving the depression and WWII was not easy for the Block family. They have been operating "Brookside" since 1930 at this location.
Below: A 1963 expansion of the ice cream store with car-hop service.



A snapshot history of this Lincoln Highway business begins in 1930 when Emmet Block moved to Van Wert from Hamilton, Ohio, after purchasing The Brookside Grade A Dairy Farm from Charles M. Robinson, consisting of a dairy and a herd of cows. Mr. Block married and raised three daughters while living at this location. He expanded the operation adding delivery trucks and capacity. He was the first to pasteurize milk in Van Wert County. In 1951 a small ice cream store was built. In 1963 it was enlarged and a Tela Tray System was installed. A large restaurant was built in 1964. In 1983 the property was converted to a carryout store.

The Restwell Motel (14.7/13.7), south side of highway. "16 attractive rooms with bath." Enlarged by the 1960s. Was "L" shaped when first built. First motel outside the Van Wert city limits on the west side.



As you cross Maddox Creek, immediately on the north side is the Van Wert Cinemas. This area of the Lincoln Highway (14.9/13.5) was crossed by a F4 tornado on November 10, 2002. The Cinemas made national news when the tornado struck the building while it was open with people in it. Just west of the Cinemas was a long standing drive-in movie theater, the Ridgeway. It was "wiped" away, leaving only the ticket booth and roof, still standing all by itself.



(14.9/13.5)

The original Lincoln Drive-In Theater, about 1949. The double feature playing was Johnny Angel (1945) and Deputy Marshal (1949). This theater was destroyed by a major storm. This later became the Ridgeway Drive In Theater that was wiped away by the 2002 tornado.



This is how the Ridgeway Drive-In entrance looked before the 2002 tornado. As you go by, pull in and see what was left after the tornado.

The owners of the two businesses, as well as the Van-Del Drive-In Theater you passed earlier, lived just west of the Ridgeway and their house also was destroyed by the tornado.

As you leave the City of Van Wert and the last of the homes along the Lincoln Highway close to town, you come to a stop sign at the intersection of U.S. 224. This intersection is the result of routing 224 north to new U.S. 30 approximately 1966-68. This provided a bypass around Van Wert for U.S. 224. (15.4/13.0)

There is an original highway motel on the south side at the Liberty Union Road intersection, just past the location of Alexander & Bebout, Inc., a Van Wert based construction company. (15.6/12.8) The motel still looks much like it did many years ago when it was the Motel Ridge Way. This motel was built in the early 1950s by a local Van Wert builder, Moses Wise. The postcard advertises: "knotty pine interiors, Beautyrest mattresses and boxsprings, hot water baseboard heat, cross ventilation, tile and carpeted room." Those reading this under, say 40 years old, "cross ventilation" would let you know there was "no air conditioning."



This picture is a postcard mailed in 1954 from a family traveling the Lincoln Highway. They were heading east and spent their first night on the road at this motel. They left at 6:30 a.m. and mailed the postcard from Delphos back home to Washburn, Illinois, 270 miles to the west.



Near the Richey Rd. intersection (16.8/11.6) the original roadway angled sharply to the south passing the north edge of the cemetery (south side of the current road) just west of the church. Remains of an original, small culvert are visible in the grassy area at the southeast corner of this intersection. The church on the southwest corner was originally called the Dix Church, after a small village in the area.

This is an intersection with a rich history. The church today is still in operation as the Pleasant Chapel Church. Long before the



Lincoln Highway, a narrow gauge railroad followed the beach ridge west of Van Wert and turned north at Richey Rd. It was George Marsh's railroad for bringing timber into the Van Wert area for his barrel stave factories. You saw his legacy as the Marsh Foundation just east of Van Wert.

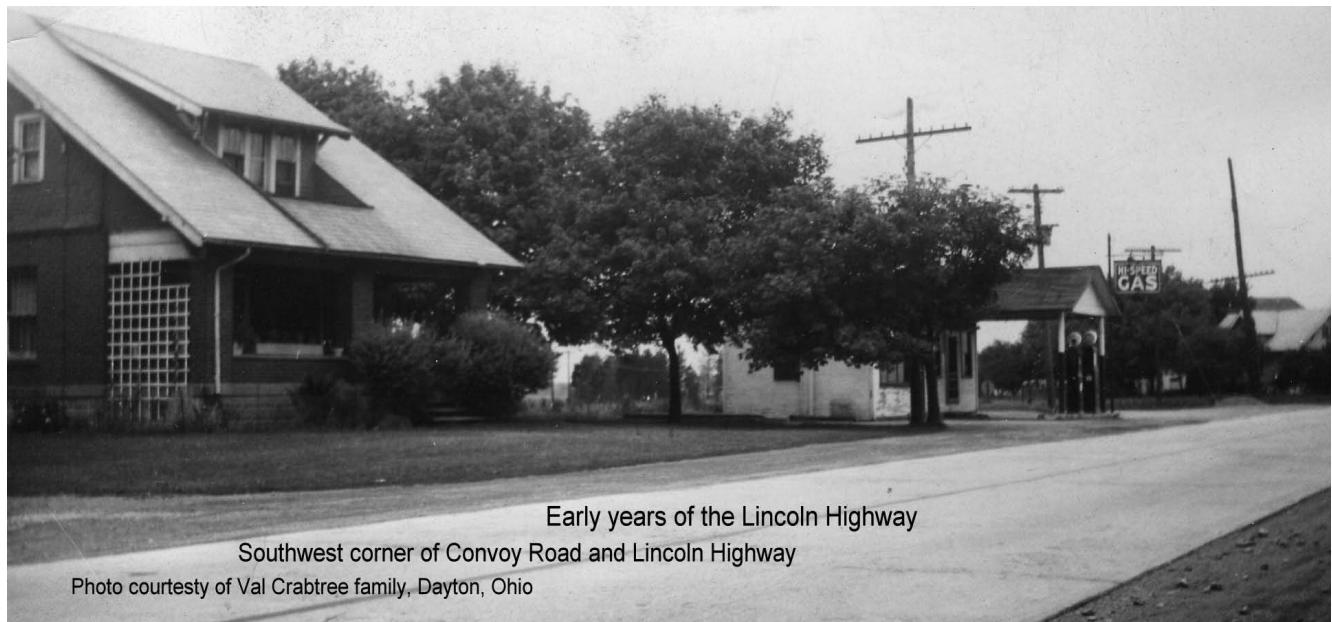
The Lincoln Highway crosses the east-west railroad tracks at (18.9/9.5), the old Pennsylvania Railroad, so closely connected with the highway in Van Wert County.



A short distance ahead, on the north side there is the old Foster's service station, at Colwell Road. (19.4/9.0) Clarence Foster and his mother, Mrs. Foster, operated this service station for many years. They even cooked up breakfast for truckers. Mrs. Foster kept chickens inside too—only a few people seemed to mind. Gas was 27.9¢ a gallon when this picture was taken of Clarence and his mother.

During periods when the Lincoln Highway became very wet northwest of the Village of Convoy the highway was detoured off the official route. One especially bad year was 1916. During that driving season, a route was temporarily marked that passed through Convoy and Dixon, Ohio, and Monroeville, Indiana, before rejoining the route directly north of Monroeville. This long detour avoided a notorious "mud strip" northwest of the Village of Convoy. (Bear Swamp area)

The Village of Convoy is west of the Lincoln Highway. Convoy Road intersects the Lincoln Highway and is called Tully Street in the Village of Convoy. At this intersection, southwest corner, there used to be a service station. It was owned by Calvin & Faye (Shambarger) Crabtree. The family home was just south of the station. They are both shown in the picture on the next page. The station was demolished circa 1955. The home is still there, owned by Donnie Crabtree. (19.8/8.6)



Early years of the Lincoln Highway

Southwest corner of Convoy Road and Lincoln Highway

Photo courtesy of Val Crabtree family, Dayton, Ohio



Lincoln Ridge Farm

This photo shows the Lincoln Ridge Farm during the heyday of the Lincoln Highway. Today only the house remains from the buildings shown. Jeff Thomas, the owner of Lincoln Ridge Nursery on the other side of the overpass, was raised here. His father was Marlin Thomas and his grandfather was Henry Thomas.

At Sugar Ridge there is a family business called Lincoln Ridge Nursery. The Thomas family operates this business and during the years of the Lincoln Highway their family farm was located here, called Lincoln Ridge Farm. Originally established in 1919 it was once known for a prized herd of registered Guernsey cattle and as a grower of field tomatoes. The tomatoes would be transported on the Lincoln Highway into Van Wert and processed at a canning factory.

Today, Lincoln Ridge Farms is operated by the 4th & 5th generations and is known for production of fruits and vegetables, orchard and vineyard, Lincoln Candle Shoppe and special events. Each fall on weekends during the month of October their annual Fall Mum and Pumpkin Festival is held, the largest agri-entertainment festival in the tri-state area. It has become a family tradition for many and provides great family fun on the farm.

Shingle Inn (20.9/7.5) – Lincoln Highway era motel, still stands as private property just before the overpass at US 30. In the 1940s and 1950s this motel was owned by Gaylord Foley and along with his brother, Gene, who owned Gene's Bar in Convoy, where well known businessmen.

As you cross-over the four lanes of U.S. 30 (21.2/7.2) on the right side (east) of the road is an area known as Sugar Ridge. (21.4/7.0) Maple trees were once common here, hence the Sugar Ridge name due to the harvesting of maple sugar. The Native American Indians were established in this area when it was being settled in the later 1800s. This is a good location to turn off on Pollock Road (to the east) and view the church and cemetery here. This is the road to Lincoln Ridge Nursery. It is also where you park to view the Ohio Historical Marker.

The Marker notes the upcoming terminus of the Lincoln Highway. It is located on the curve at Sugar Ridge as the road turns northwest. Travelers will see a notice of the Marker ½ mile ahead, driving in either direction. This blue and white sign is mounted above a Lincoln Highway marker. On the reverse of the Ohio Historical Marker is information about the naming of the Village of Convoy.



As the Lincoln Highway nears its terminus in Ohio, it joins Ohio 49 for a short distance of about 1.25 miles. (21.8/6.6) On the southeast corner of 49 (Convoy Heller Road north of U.S. 30) and the Lincoln Highway you will see a residential property. For many years it was Webb's Hi-Speed Service Station and Tourist Cabins. This was a very busy corner! One of the more famous people to visit the station was Martha Raye, the hollywood actress. The Webb family made a home movie of her visit to their business. Roy Rogers also visited once, as well as many other celebrities. Larry Webb (his parents operated the station and cabins) reports there wasn't a thought that someday it would all be gone and a record of famous guests would be of interest to future generations. Many Lincoln Highway historians know Larry as a local contact for Van Wert County Lincoln Highway history. It has been one of his hobbies for many years.



Webb's Hi-Speed Service Station and Tourist Cabins. There are two buildings left at this location that was made into a residence over the years. There was a row of small cabins behind the service station. There is still evidence on the property from the years of this station's successful years on the Lincoln Highway.



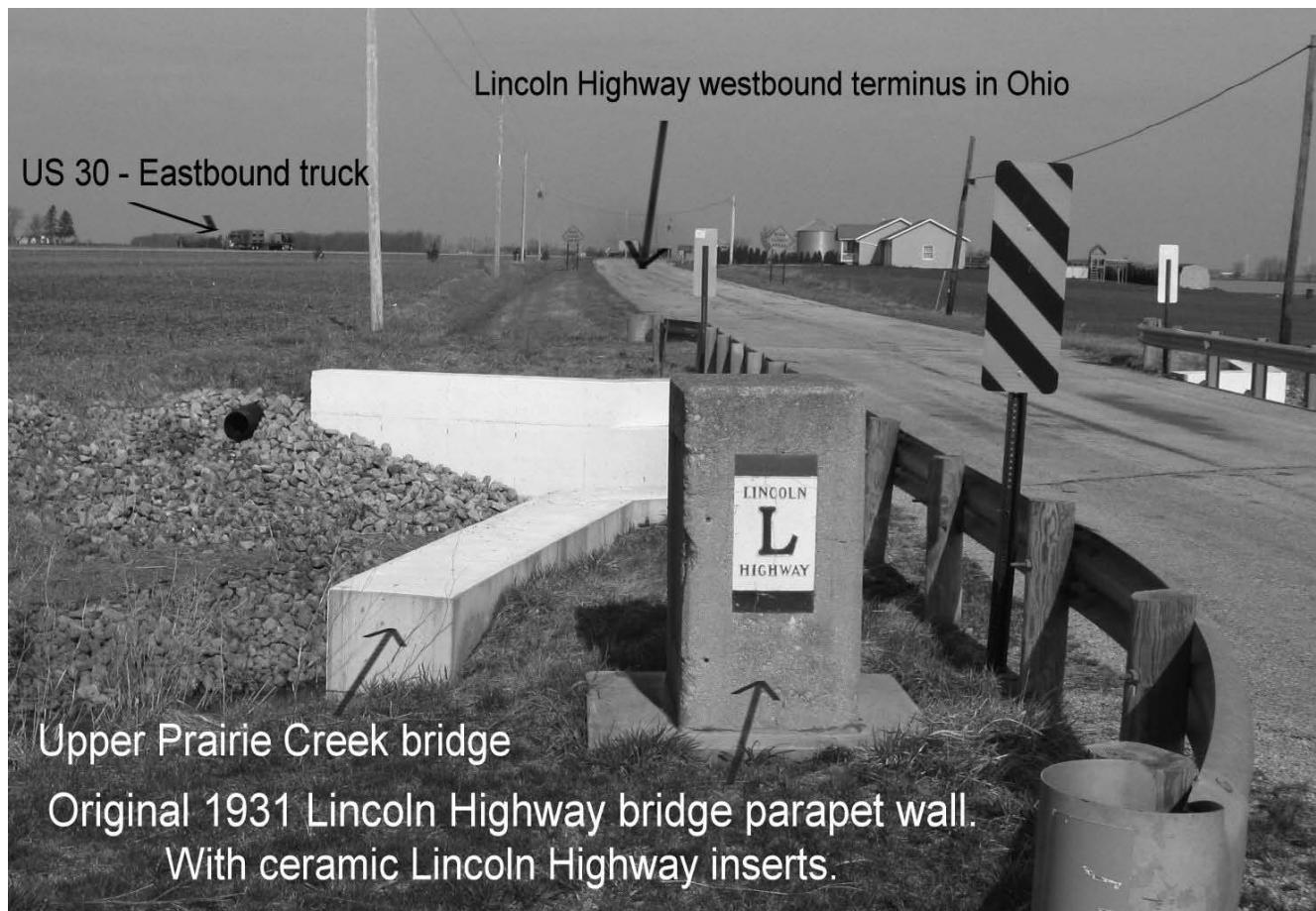
WEBB'S HI-SPEED SERVICE STATION AND TOURIST CABINS

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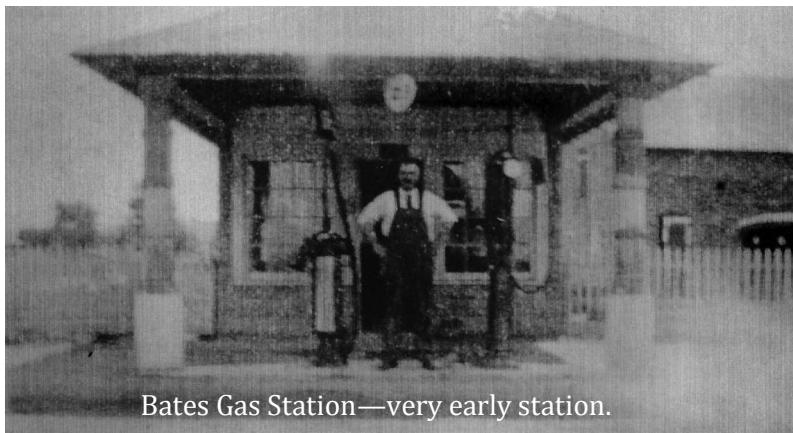
A postcard of Webb's Hi-Speed Service Station and Tourist Cabins. This location on U.S. 30 at the junction of State Route 49 was midway between Lima, Ohio and Fort Wayne, Indiana. The business was started in 1931 by Noah Poling. The Webb family purchased the business in 1946 and operated it until 1966. This was the year the new 4 lane U.S. 30 was opened.

At one-time from this point westward to the Indiana border there were seven gas stations.

Before you enter U.S. 30, note the bridge (22.6) of newer construction just after this turn-off for U.S. 30. This was originally a 1931 bridge. Its parapets were saved and are now on either side of the road just before the new bridge over Upper Prairie Creek. The ceramic Lincoln Highway insert on the southside parapet is shown in this picture:



The Lincoln Highway can be followed to a dead end if you do not turn (22.5/5.9) on Dixon Cavett Road to come to a stop at U.S. 30. Drive straight and you will come to the westbound terminus of the Lincoln Highway in Ohio. (22.9 ends) The next location you can drive on the Lincoln Highway is in Indiana a short distance after the state line.

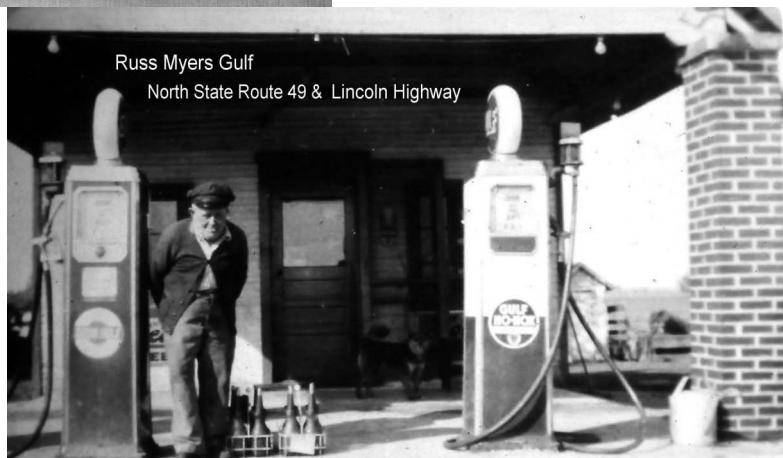


Bates Gas Station—very early station.

The westbound Lincoln Highway terminates in Ohio and the westbound traveler turns onto U.S. 30 at Dixon Cavett Road, a left hand turn (22.5/5.9) just before the bridge. The intersection of Dixon-Cavett Road and the Lincoln Highway was known as Bates Corner. The Bates family operated a service station here. It was on the southwest corner of the original highway intersection. Today with the entrance onto U.S. 30 the station would be on the southside of Dixon-Cavett Road.

The modern day intersection also allows the eastbound U.S. 30 traveler to exit and travel on the Lincoln Highway in Van Wert County. (22.6/5.8)

A small cemetery remains on the U.S. 30 north side easement. The McNeal Cemetery is an unusual reminder of the Lincoln Highway—very close to the old and the new highways. (25.7/2.7)



Ohio 49 leaves U.S. 30 and runs north into Paulding County. (23.4/5)

On the north side of U.S. 30 a section of the original Lincoln Highway is still intact. (25.9/2.5) There is driveway access off westbound U.S. 30 onto the private property. The original roadway extends both east and west of the driveway. There is a single red barn located north of the roadway to the northwest. Its older cinder block foundation shows how close the barn was to the Lincoln Highway. An automobile crashed into the barn off the Highway. The repair of the blocks is easily seen. U.S. 30 was completed in 1966 in this area, dating the foundation damage and repair to more than 50 years ago. This barn is owned by the Henry Dealey family.

The original Lincoln Highway hangs on



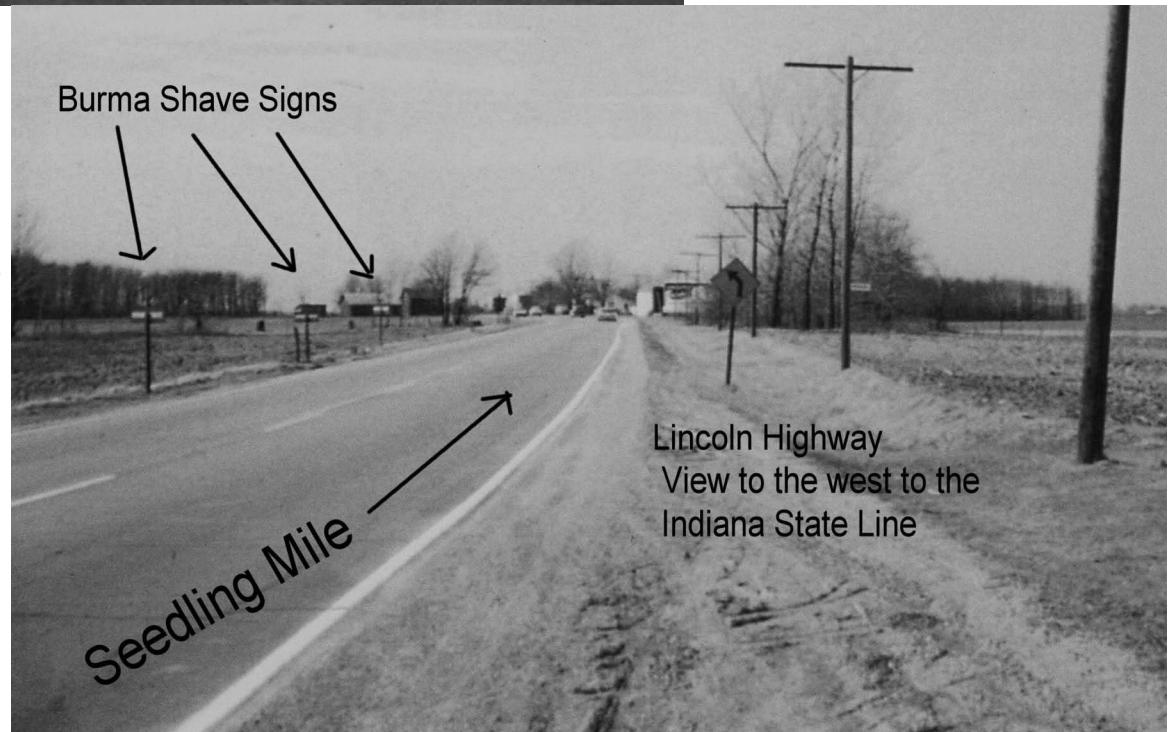
Repaired damage from a vehicle



U.S. 30 intersects Van Wert – Paulding County Line Road (E-W), Klinger Road to the south in Van Wert County and Road 11 to the north in Paulding County. This is where U.S. 30 exits Van Wert and enters Paulding County, Ohio. (27.2/1.2)



A farm near the beginning of the seedling mile in Paulding County on the Lincoln Highway before entering Indiana. Note the red "Burma Shave" sign. The construction of U.S. 30 required the removal of all this property.



These photos were submitted by Rita Adams. Her grandparents, John & Mintie Baker owned this farm at the time of the photo. Her great grandparents, Oswell & Sara Baker also resided in this area.

This last mile in Paulding County was a "seedling mile." These were Lincoln Highway Association sponsored concrete sections of roads used as promotion for local communities to raise funds to further pave the highway in their area. A "seedling mile" was specified as "a concrete road bed 40 feet (12 m) wide and 10 inches (254 mm) thick to support loads of 8,000 pounds (3,600 kg) per wheel."

The construction of U.S. 30 as a four lane road in the 1960s obliterated this section. It was one of only two "seedling miles" in Ohio on the Lincoln Highway. The construction of U.S. 30 started on the west side of Van Wert County in the early 1960s and was completed past the City of Van Wert by approximately 1968. Construction continued eastward to Beaverdam, Ohio, over the next few years and stopped there. Travel eastward was then on the original Lincoln Highway to Mansfield, Ohio, for many years.

Highway 30 continues northwest in the southwest corner of Paulding County to the Indiana State line. (28.4/0)

The current local opinion is the south side of U.S. 30 from the Indiana State line to the Dixon-Cavett Road exit to the Lincoln Highway (driving east) does not contain any structures that were located on the original Lincoln Highway. (0 to 5.8 miles)

***We hope you enjoyed your tour of the Lincoln Highway!
Thank you for visiting Van Wert County, Ohio!***



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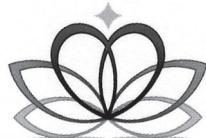
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