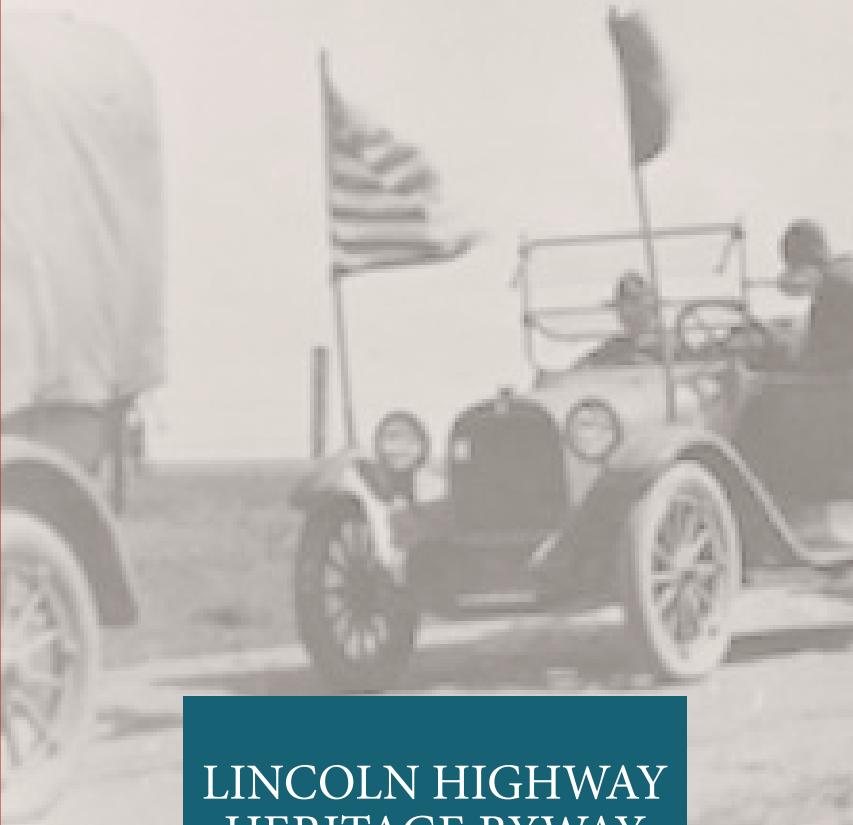




Celebrating the 1919 U.S. Army Convoy On the Lincoln Highway



LINCOLN HIGHWAY
HERITAGE BYWAY

The Lincoln Highway - First Improved Transcontinental Road

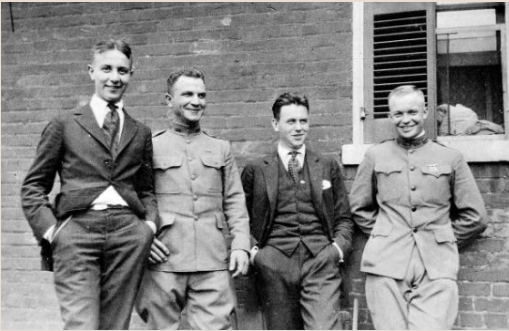


As the first improved transcontinental road, the Lincoln Highway travels from New York's Times Square to San Francisco. Carl Fisher's idea for such a road gave Americans a place to drive, boosted car sales, and increased his Prest-O-Lite Company headlight sales to most Detroit automakers. Fisher won the approval of Henry B. Joy, president of the Packard Motor Company, and of other auto leaders, without Henry Ford. Forming the Lincoln Highway Association (LHA), the route was announced on October 31, 1913. The LHA promoted the route and marked it by painting fence posts, rocks, and other objects with a rectangle of red, white and blue with a large "L" in the middle. Later, metal signs and concrete markers were installed.

Early roads in Iowa were a challenge in the springtime. "Improved" roads were still mostly gravel. Unthawing, roads quickly turned to mud or "gumbo" making travel by auto almost impossible. A "Seedling Mile" near Cedar Rapids was paved to demonstrate the superiority of concrete. When the 1919 U.S. Army Convoy traversed the nation, local jurisdictions and farmers were creating and maintaining roads. No governmental agencies existed for reliance toward good roads.

The 1919 U.S. Army Convoy

In 1919, the U.S. Army Convoy of 72 vehicles and 297 men traveled across the United States to test roads and military mobility. Included in this count were: motorcycles, ambulances, an officer's work truck, searchlight and tank trucks, a mobile kitchen, an engineering shop, civilian vehicles containing three tire manufacturers, several automobile companies, reporters, and "good road" boosters.



William Stuhler, Major Brett, Paul V. Robinson, Lt. Col. Dwight D. Eisenhower in Columbiana, Ohio during the 1919 U.S. Army Convoy.

Photo Credit: Eisenhower Presidential Library

The 1919 U.S. Army Convoy left at Zero Milestone, south of the White House, on July 8, 1919 and traveled to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, catching the Lincoln Highway bound for San Francisco.

Lieutenant Colonel Dwight Eisenhower joined this convoy in Frederick, Maryland, on the first stop outside of Washington, D.C. Hoping to travel 18 mph, there were problems with equipment, inexperienced mechanics and drivers, as well as poor roads and bridges, allowing for travel averaging at 5.66 mph. After Gettysburg, the pace accelerated. Henry Ostermann traveled a few days ahead to arrange large doings and facilitate promotions. Crossing the Mississippi River, they entered Clinton, Iowa, on the afternoon of July 22nd where they were entertained with a ballgame, band concert, a round of speeches, and a dance at the city's Coliseum.

The next day, having traveled on the Seedling Mile, they arrived in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Edward Killian, a local consul for the LHA, provided a chicken dinner from his Killian Company Tea Room. The local Y.M.C.A was open for soldiers to swim and exercise.

Continuing the convoy journey in Iowa, overnight stops in Marshalltown (Riverview Park) and Jefferson (Fairgrounds) provided the same entertainment. In Tama and Marshalltown, the soldiers were treated to home-cooked meals. In Ames, as Main Street was a block off the route, the convoy unknowingly bypassed a downtown celebration.



Lincoln Highway - Tama
Eisenhower Caravan
(Bridge still stands today)
Photo Credit: Iowa Department of Transportation



1919 U.S. Army motorcade through Tama
Photo Credit: Lincoln Highway Association Archive,
Transportation History Collection, Special Collections
Library, University of Michigan

In Glidden, the soldiers paid tribute to Merle D. Hay, the first member of the American Expeditionary Forces killed during WWI. The group rested in Carroll and listened to the Convoy's Goodyear Band. Denison (Washington Park) was host for two nights and a full day. The city supplied facilities for Saturday night showers.

Sunday brought church services, a baseball game, and a near-riot when a local badmouthed some of the men on the convoy. In Logan, it was lemonade and cigars. Eisenhower and his friend, Major Sereno Brett, demonstrated a one-man tank, carried on a trailer.

In Missouri Valley, it was lunch and a short rest and then off to Council Bluffs where they swam in Lake Manawa. The plan was to cross the Missouri River by pontoon boat, but the shifting channel prevented it.

Instead, they crossed via the Douglas Street Bridge into Omaha, Nebraska. Every piece of equipment reached its destination in San Francisco; covering 3,310 miles in 62 days (4 more than scheduled) at an average rate of 10 miles per hour. The convoy broke and repaired nearly 100 bridges.

The trip proved the immediate need for good roads in America. In Iowa, due to the dust, the convoy stretched out as far as 10 miles. Wherever it traveled, farmers, townspeople, and boys and girls watched while waving and saluting the flag. Iowa was praised for its concrete bridges.

Nebraska Sandhills
Photo Credit: Eisenhower Presidential
Library



In Eisenhower's convoy report, "*The truck train was well received at all points along the route. It seemed that there was a great deal of sentiment for the improving of highways, and, from the standpoint of promoting this sentiment, the trip was an undoubted success.*"

Henry Ostermann



Henry Ostermann:
Adventurer, Leader, Visionary
Photo Credit: Lincoln Highway Association
Archive, Transportation History Collection,
Special Collections Library, University of
Michigan

The idea for the 1919 U.S. Army Convoy came from Henry Ostermann. He first traveled across the nation in 1908 and again in 1912. The thought of a transcontinental road did not exist until 1913, when the Lincoln Highway was designated. He accomplished quite a bit in his 46 short years. He was a newsboy at age six, joined the Navy at age 14 for a three-year hitch, then traveled around doing odd jobs including working promotions in the Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. He was hired by the Lincoln Highway Association in 1914 to be the first Field Secretary to help promote the road.

In the winter of 1917, he was leading military convoys up and down the east coast. Locals were accustomed to the roads and found road signs unnecessary. However, those unfamiliar with the area needed escorts as America moved supplies and men to the east coast for shipment to France during WWI.

He merged his two occupations - Lincoln Highway Association Field Secretary and Military Convoy Escort - into one idea for a military convoy to cross the nation on the Lincoln Highway.



Henry Ostermann First Field Secretary
of the Lincoln Highway Association.
Photo Credit: Lincoln Highway Association
Archive, Transportation History
Collection, Special Collections Library,
University of Michigan

Upon his suggestion, the U.S. Army Convoy left Washington, D.C., in the summer of 1919 and joined the Lincoln Highway at Gettysburg, and headed to San Francisco.

Henry drove ahead of the 1919 Convoy and talked to residents about the Convoy, the vehicles, and the men that would arrive soon. He used his skills in promotion gained while with the Wild West Show. Later, in Dwight Eisenhower's report, he called the Convoy a "success in promotion."

LINCOLN ROAD OFFICIAL DIES

Henry C. Osterman Was
Killed in Automobile Ac-
cident in Iowa.

Henry Ostermann Death Notice
Photo Credit: Sacramento Union Vol
214, Number 51 - June 20, 1920

As the Field Secretary for the Lincoln Highway Association, Henry visited each local city and county consul twice a year totaling over 500 visits and logging more than 15,000 miles behind the wheel. By 1919, he had driven the New York to San Francisco route 20 times.

Four months after the passing of his first wife, Henry married Sarah Simms of East Liverpool, Ohio. Sarah and Henry's honeymoon was delayed. He and Sarah had been married for seven months, when the time came for their honeymoon. It was Henry's first trip in 1920 and his twenty-first time crossing the nation.

On this fateful trip, as his wife was waiting for him to return to Tama from an early morning meeting in Marshalltown, he took a curve east of Montour too fast and his car tipped over, losing his life in an instant. He knew the road better than anyone, so it is ironic that the Lincoln Highway is where he lost his life.

Dwight “Ike” Eisenhower



Dwight D. Eisenhower
Photo Credit: Eisenhower
Presidential Library

Dwight Eisenhower, the 34th President of the United States, has ties to the Lincoln Highway as he was on the 1919 U.S. Army Convoy as a young Lieutenant Colonel. He grew up in Abilene, Kansas, one of six sons of David and Ida Eisenhower. Dwight David, born on October 14, 1890, was known as “Little Ike.”



Front Row (L/R): Father (David), Brother (Milton), Mother (Ida)
Back Row (L/R): Dwight, Edgar, Earl, Arthur, Roy
Photo Credit: Eisenhower Presidential Library

Home life revolved around Bible study. Dwight spent summers growing and selling vegetables. He loved fishing, hunting, golf, and football. At the age of 20, Ike enrolled in the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. After graduation, he trained officer candidates at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. He then moved to Camp Colt in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, to transform a derelict outpost into a major training ground for men to be shipped to France during WWI.

Ike married Mamie Doud in 1916. They had two sons: Doud Dwight “Icky” Eisenhower died of scarlet fever at the age of three. Their second son, John Eisenhower, served in the United States Army. John married Barbara Jean Thompson. The couple had four children: David (after whom Camp David is named), Barbara Ann, Susan Elaine, and Mary Jean.



Dwight Eisenhower, as 5 Star General.
Photo Credit: Eisenhower Presidential Library/U.S. Army

As he moved up the ranks, Ike’s career took them around the world from Panama to Paris, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland. As part of General Douglas MacArthur’s entourage, he helped construct the Philippine Army and prepared the Islands’ defense. After Pearl Harbor, Ike was sent to Washington, D.C., where he sketched out the European Theater of Operations. He became the Commander of Allied Forces and served for three years. Later he was the first commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Although he was an unwilling politician, he saw no one better suited for the Presidency and served in that role from 1953-1961. In 1956, Ike signed the Federal Aid Highway Act which created the interstate system. Traveling on the 1919 U.S. Army Convoy and on Germany's Autobahn, these experiences developed his support for the bill. Ike suffered a heart attack while in office and a second one in 1965. He collapsed after a golf game in Colorado in 1968 and was transferred to Walter Reed Hospital.



Ike & Mamie

Photo Credit: Eisenhower Presidential Library

Dwight lived at Walter Reed for a year. Mamie moved there during his last few months. He died March 28, 1969 with his doctor, son (John) and grandson (David) at his bedside. His final resting place is at the Dwight Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum in Abilene, Kansas.

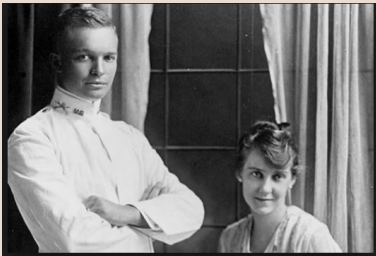
Mamie died November 1, 1979 in Washington, D.C. She is buried beside Ike in Abilene, Kansas.

Mamie Doud Eisenhower

Marie Geneva “Mamie” Doud was born November 14, 1896 in Boone, Iowa, and her family first moved to Cedar Rapids, then to Denver, when she was a young child. Mamie grew up enjoying the finer things: household help, jewelry, and fine clothing. Her father taught her budgeting and finance skills and she became an expert at saving money. A finishing school taught her how to run a household. Mamie played the piano, bridge and enjoyed dancing. Helping her parents entertain, Mamie became a proficient hostess.



Mamie in Paris 1929
Photo Credit: Eisenhower
Presidential Library



Ike & Mamie
Photo Credit: Boone History Museum

Ike met Mamie Doud while stationed in San Antonio in 1915. Her family was wintering there as her father, John, had made his fortune in the meatpacking industry and retired at age 36. Her mother, Elvira, found the weather at their main home in Denver, Colorado, too inclement. Ike and Mamie married in 1916 at her parents' home in Denver.

During World War II, Ike and Mamie did not see each other for three years but wrote to each other often. His duty to the Army and country came first. Mamie once said, “I had a career and his name was Ike.”

Her birthplace in Boone, Iowa, was relocated across the street to 709 Carroll Street in 1975. The home, carriage house, and grounds are operated by the Boone County Historical Society.

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