Iowa's Lincoln Highway: The Social and Political Transformations of Automotive History and the Economic Impacts of Small Town Iowa

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Iowa’s Lincoln Highway:  
The social and political transformations of automotive history and the economic impacts of small town Iowa

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Major: History

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Ames, Iowa

2011

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Transportation history is one of the more underrated studies in the field of history. Americans take for granted that there will be good quality roads taking them wherever they want to go. In the early 20th century when automobiles first came to Iowa, roads—as we know them—were nonexistent. There was no pavement, there were no street signs, and if it rained, the driver of one of these early American automobiles quickly became the walker. Through agricultural need to move the harvest to grain elevators and public unrest about the isolated nature of farm communities, in 1904 Iowa established a commission to address the challenges of roads in a largely rural state. This coincided with the larger movement that led to the formation of the U.S. highway system.

Fortunately for Iowa, one of the most influential highways in the United States bisected the state from east to west. U.S 30, the so-called Lincoln Highway, began at Times Square in New York City, ferried across to New Jersey, went all the way to Oakland, California and ferried across to San Francisco. America’s “road” and the resulting traffic offered economic opportunities to its small towns. Unfortunately for some of small town Iowa, economic opportunities faded away, due to the same transportation ideologies that had once created them. The Lincoln Highway ran through towns and cities in Iowa, and traffic slowed as the road moved from countryside to town and city, to stop signs and traffic lights. Through traffic wanted to move faster and with fewer interruptions, yet businesses in these towns and cities relied on this moving feast of vehicles and the people in them for their
economic vitality. It is this intriguing paradox, and the notion that a highway bypass can completely transform a town that are the underlying topics of this study.

This study examines “small town Iowa” and uses Jefferson, Iowa as a case study of a town that once economically thrived and then suffered economic loss when the Iowa Highway Commission relocated the Lincoln Highway around town. This type of transportation history also involves the economic and social impact of change on a community and can be a model for other similar studies, especially as the state Department of Transportation continues to construct four lane highways bypassing many communities and likely speeding the exodus of economic activity to larger retail centers. Historical studies directly relating to Jefferson, Iowa are even more rare—aside from short excerpts in secondary source coffee table books. This study looks to place Jefferson within the broader context of transportation history in the 20th century United States, and to discuss the larger implications of the transformations surrounding the small town, and hopefully, how those transformations shaped the way motorists drive today.
CHAPTER 2. THE IOWA STATE HIGHWAY COMMISSION

Iowa leaders and residents became conscious of road improvement as early as its territorial days in the 1830s. In December 1838, Iowa’s first territorial governor, Robert Lucas, approved legislation to create the first state road to run from the Mississippi River in the east to the Des Moines River roughly in mid-territory. That same year, the territorial legislature approved the electing of three commissioners to levy taxes from local businesses to pay for the new road. Over the next twenty years, Iowa built many roads under this new act, and in 1860, fourteen years after Iowa joined the Union, the legislature granted county commissioners the legal power to oversee construction and maintenance of roads in their particular jurisdictions. Unfortunately, these separate governing bodies responsible for road maintenance in the various jurisdictions created inconsistency among road maintenance and quality.

Motor vehicles had yet to appear on Iowa roads near the turn of the century; there were only horse, mule and oxen-powered wagons, spring wagons, and buggies. These wagons often provided transported food from local farms, and farmers relied heavily on well-maintained roads to move their goods from farm to market. A study published in the *Iowa State Register* in January of 1883 expressed great concerns for poor road conditions around the state. The article stated that farmers suffered economic losses due to poor roads,

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potentially undermining Iowa’s status as a leading agricultural State. Critics blamed this paradox on Iowa’s poor road laws, the resulting lack of consistent standards, and the reality that each county had to maintain its own roads on its own resources.

During the late nineteenth century, the U.S. government did not mandate road standards, and few states had laws to bring uniformity to road quality. Many roads not immediately in an urban environment had deep ruts and were not suitable for travel in inclement weather. Bicyclists—not farmers—prompted road improvements at the federal level. In 1880, disgruntled cyclists formed a new interest group, The League of American Wheelmen (LAW), which lobbied for development of roads more suitable for riding. A member of LAW proposed legislation to create a national highway commission in 1892 and created the National League for Good Roads to promote the bill. Although the highway commission bill failed, Congress appropriated $10,000 for the Department of Agriculture to study major issues in road construction and maintenance. The plan created a new agency, the Office of Road Inquiry, charged with addressing national problems of road quality and proposing solutions to improve access and conditions of travel.

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3 John E. Brindley: *History of Road Legislation in Iowa*, (State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, IA, 1912), pp. 184-5. Dry, rutted roads and wet, muddy roads wreaked havoc on farmers’ horse-drawn buggies. Despite farmers’ general anti-urban sentiment, it was in their best interest to have smooth, all-weather roads on which to transport their goods.


5 LAW also began publishing *Good Roads* magazine to further publicize their cause.

6 *Building the American Highway System*, p. 12.

7 The Office of Road Inquiry, later the Office of Public Roads, then the Bureau of Public Roads, then the Public Roads Administration, then to the current Federal Highway Administration. The Lincoln Highway Association: *The Lincoln Highway: The Story of a Crusade That Made Transportation History*, (Dodd, Mead & Company, New York, NY, 1935), p. 4; *Building the American Highway System*, pp. 46, 90, 218.
Although the United States still had no federal organization to create and supervise a national road program, the current conditions of roads in their state sufficiently frustrated Iowans that they demanded drastic changes. In April 1904, state leaders established a new body, the Iowa State Highway Commission, which Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (now Iowa State University) would manage. Engineering dean Anson Marston served as the first highway commissioner. Many Iowa State College students showed interest in road improvement at the turn of the century; their research theses signified great need for better roads. With so many potential road engineers at the college, it only made sense to headquarter the Commission in Ames. The duties of the Iowa State Highway Commission (IHC) were:

1. To devise and adopt plans and systems of highway construction and maintenance…and conduct demonstration in such highway construction… for the instruction of county supervisors, township trustees, superintendents, students of the college and others.

2. To provide information and instruction to county supervisors, and other highway officers; answer inquiries and advise such supervisors and officers on questions pertaining to highway improvements, construction and maintenance, and provide public demonstrations of road construction free of charge.

3. To create advisory rules and regulations for the repair and maintenance of highways.

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8 *Iowa Roads*, pp. 8, 11.
4. To keep a record of all the important operations of the highway commission, and report same to the governor at the close of each fiscal year.\textsuperscript{9}

This new legislation gave birth to a new generation of Iowa roads. The newly created state agency drastically changed the way Iowans managed roads; counties faced new state regulations on road construction and maintenance, which created a uniform standard of road quality across the state.

The IHC’s headquarters at Iowa State College (in the main Engineering building, now called Marston Hall) provided many opportunities for students to build careers in the transportation industry. Professors created specific “Road Making” courses to train future road designers and state engineers. The entirety of the IHC’s $3,500 annual budget was divided evenly between the civil engineering department and agricultural department; Dean of the Engineering Department, Anson Marston, lobbied for funds for the IHC, as there was no funding in the original legislation.\textsuperscript{10} Student interest in road development and maintenance turned out to be crucial to the development of the IHC. College leaders established a new institutional home for road research and the education of experts, who would go on to create a system of roads around the state that adhered to identical standards of design and maintenance.\textsuperscript{11} Similarly outside of Iowa, the American Road Builders’ Association was created in 1914 and began publishing periodicals regarding ideal state highway administrations, thus creating continuity among professionals in the road industry.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{9} \textit{Iowa Roads}, pp. 8-9.
\textsuperscript{10} Marston successfully had funds appropriated to the IHC from the Iowa State College budget, citing “good roads experimentation work.” \textit{Iowa Roads}, pp. 9-11.
\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Iowa Roads}, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Building the American Highway System}, p. 34.
In 1906, the Iowa Legislature appropriated $5000 annually to the IHC to meet the increasing expenses of highway development and repair. Each year, the state added new miles of roads, which more motor vehicles used as well as older types of traffic. In 1907, Iowa began requiring drivers to pay an annual registration fee of $5, intended to help defray expenses of the IHC.¹³ The increasing popularity of automobiles highlighted the urgent practical need for expanding the state’s road network and improving its quality, which gave the Iowa State Highway Commission greater power and prominence. An act of Iowa’s legislature granted the IHC full independence from Iowa State College in the spring of 1913 to allow the Commission to acquire state funds, rather than Iowa State College-appropriated funds. The new state agency consisted of three commissioners as its governing body: Dean Anson Marston of Iowa State College’s engineering department, and two Governor-appointed men from opposing political parties.¹⁴ The Lincoln Highway’s official dedication took place in October of 1913, so the IHC’s independence could not have come at a better time.

¹³ Iowa Roads, p. 21.
¹⁴ Iowa Roads, p. 25.
CHAPTER 3. THE LINCOLN HIGHWAY

The automobile industry was expanding in the 1910s. Intrastate travel became more streamlined and improved state roads connected towns. Interstate travel was another issue, since federal road funding had not yet been established, and automobile manufacturers, and car enthusiasts were among many who demanded better roads allowing for faster, safer, and longer travel.

At about this time, in 1900, French tire manufacturer André Michelin began producing flyers for French motorists—the Michelin Guide. The guide, which became widely popular among restaurant-goers, featured reviews and offered coveted Michelin Stars to worthy establishments. These guides not only brought in more business to restaurants, but also encouraged motorists to drive more, thus wearing out their tires faster. Though they changed from their famous blue color to red, Michelin Guides are still available recognizing outstanding restaurants in more than a dozen countries.

Among those pressing for improved nationwide travel conditions was businessman Carl G. Fisher, who worked for the company, Prest-O-Lite, producing headlamps, and helped develop the Indianapolis Speedway, the famous home to the Indianapolis 500. With

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15 8,000 vehicles were produced in 1900, and by 1920 there were nearly 9 million registered vehicles. “1920’s Cars,” last modified 2011, http://www.squidoo.com/1920cars.
16 LHA: The Lincoln Highway, p. 9.
18 LHA: The Lincoln Highway, p. 9.
automobiles becoming more affordable and reliable\textsuperscript{20} by 1912, Fisher believed long-distance, or even cross-country travel—a journey few dared to attempt\textsuperscript{21}—would only be possible with “a network of reliable, all-weather roads”.\textsuperscript{22} He envisioned such a new network, proposing to start by building one transcontinental road that would start in New York City and end in San Francisco.

Fisher estimated the transcontinental road would cost $10,000,000 to construct.\textsuperscript{23} In order to pay for the road, Fisher consulted his personal friends—many of whom were company owners in the automobile industry—to help foot the bill. He requested that automobile-related companies donate 1\% of their gross yearly revenue to the road fund.\textsuperscript{24} Henry Ford was a notable owner who refused to donate to the transcontinental road fund, saying that he believed the government—not private individuals or companies—should pay for national roads.\textsuperscript{25} Company owners other than Fisher’s friends were eager to help as well. Fisher also believed private citizens would be interested in donating to the fund, so he and his

\textsuperscript{20} Henry Ford’s Model T was a revolutionary vehicle that transformed driving from a wealthy activity to something many people could afford to do. Not only was the vehicle revolutionary, but so too was the production method; Ford pioneered the assembly line, which also changed the way consumer goods were manufactured. Ford referred to his Model T by stating the greatest automotive need was “a light, low-priced car with an up-to-date engine of ample horse power, and built of the very best material”. John Heitman: \textit{The Automobile and American Life}, (McFarland & Company, Inc., Jefferson, NC, 2009), pp. 32-6.

\textsuperscript{21} LHA: \textit{The Lincoln Highway}, pp. 7-8.

\textsuperscript{22} Leah D. Rogers, Clare L. Kernek: \textit{The Lincoln Highway Association’s “Object Lesson”: The Seedling Mile in Linn County, Iowa}, (Iowa Department of Transportation, Linn Co., IA, 2004), p. 1.

\textsuperscript{23} LHA: \textit{The Lincoln Highway}, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{24} LHA: \textit{The Lincoln Highway}, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{25} (Weingroff: \textit{The Lincoln Highway}).
“associates” created an association to unite advocates; members would pay annual dues of five dollars at the lowest level, up to one hundred dollars at the top level.

The association had the task of naming the transcontinental highway. They quickly vetoed the name, “Fisher Highway”, and instead, chose the name “Lincoln Highway” as a memorial to Fisher’s hero, Abraham Lincoln. In addition to the name, they also had to choose the route. The newly founded Lincoln Highway Association (LHA) agreed that the highway should start in New York City and end in San Francisco, following the straightest route possible. They claimed the eastern portion of the route would be easy to map out, as roads east of the Mississippi were more established than western roads. Fisher, along with members of the LHA and the Hoosier Motor Club, set out on what they called a “Trail-Blazer” tour from Indianapolis to San Francisco, to scout out the best choice of route. The trip took 34 days and a lot of patience on the travelers’ part. The rough or non-existent roads and lack of service stations in the west created massive travel headaches for the Trail-Blazers; car breakdowns were common and with service stations being a rarity, the Trail-Blazers experienced long delays before they could have their automobiles repaired. Members who had previously made the westward journey knew what to expect and prepared the group accordingly.

Shorty after its expedition, the LHA chose the Lincoln Highway route, proposing that much of it follow existing trails, including the Mormon trail from Council Bluffs, Iowa to Salt Lake City, which had taken Brigham Young and members of the Church of Jesus Christ

26 Weingroff: The Lincoln Highway.
27 LHA: The Lincoln Highway, p.11.
28 Weingroff: The Lincoln Highway.
29 Weingroff: The Lincoln Highway.
30 LHA: The Lincoln Highway, pp. 31-3.
of Latter Day Saints to Utah; the Overland Stage Line; a trail along the Pony Express line; all of which ran along the Platte River into Wyoming and thereafter crossing into Nevada and then California over the Donner Pass, which brought drivers into California through the Sierra Nevada.\textsuperscript{31} The Lincoln Highway was officially dedicated on October 31, 1913 and was the first transcontinental highway, spanning the country from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. There were no federal road funds; the LHA, along with its private funding, was the engine that kept the transcontinental project running. There were many ceremonies along the route, including one in Jefferson, Iowa, where the IHC Chief Engineer, Thomas H. MacDonald, said the Lincoln Highway represented an exciting modern development, “the first outlet for the road building energies of this community”\textsuperscript{32}.

The LHA had popular support and also actively pursued federal funds to build and maintain roads.\textsuperscript{33} In 1916, 25 years after federal road funding was first introduced, the Federal Aid Road Act was passed, which provided federal funding toward road construction and maintenance. The bill appropriated $75,000,000 to be divided up among states over a period of five years, with Iowa receiving $146,000 per year.\textsuperscript{34} The new bill delegated construction and maintenance of highways to the states, subject only to federal inspections.\textsuperscript{35} The 1919 Primary Road Act replaced the previous legislation of 1917 and included 6,500 miles of Iowa “primary” road in the bill. The bill sought to begin hard surfacing (“paving” or

\textsuperscript{31} Weingroff: *The Lincoln Highway.*
\textsuperscript{33} John Heitman: *The Automobile and American Life*, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{34} Iowa Roads, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{35} *Building the American Highway System*, pp. 47-8.
any other form of the word does not appear in the Act) of major state highways, which included the Lincoln Highway for Iowa and any other state along the route.36

The First World War delayed implementation of these new plans due to man and materials shortages, but within a few years after war ended, more travelers began to enjoy long distance journeys on the Lincoln Highway. The route was still not completely hard surfaced in the west and proved to be troublesome for motorists. Fully aware of this impairment, the LHA began to publish Official Road Guides to give travelers advice on coping with poor sections of the route. Versions published as late as 1924 still warned readers, “Don’t forget colored goggles”, and “Don’t wear new shoes”, among a long list of cautions.37

The 1924 Guide noted that traveling the full NY-SF cross-country route remained a time-consuming undertaking, advising, “the usual pleasure party, however, with easy driving and only a nominal amount of sight-seeing at the different points, can make the trip in twenty to thirty days with ease, driving approximately seven hours per day.”38 Reflecting the fact that travelers might still have difficulty finding car repair facilities or even basic accommodations in remote areas, the book gave readers a comprehensive three-page packing list. It advised drivers to carry their own supply of numerous car tools, two extra mounted tires, plus a 2-quart coffee pot, 3 bars of Ivory soap, egg carrier, cork screw, camphor ice

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37 Road Guide, p. 41.
(skin balm), Vaseline “for guns and burns”, and a Lincoln Highway lapel button (to show solidarity and patriotism), just to name few.\footnote{Road Guide, pp. 50-1.}

Each state had its own driving laws, which in 1924 were quite primitive and basic compared to present-day laws. The \textit{Guide} contained all 13 states’ laws, including Iowa’s:

License front and rear; speed must be careful and prudent; traveling more than thirty miles per hour is presumptive evidence of carelessness. Direct rays from lights must not rise more than 3 ½ feet above level road surface at 75 feet in front of vehicle. Spot lights [sic] must not be thrown in face of driver of approaching vehicle nor to the left of the center of the road.\footnote{Road Guide, p. 67.}

In addition to giving advice on travel preparations, the \textit{Guide} provided important information for motorists while traveling, including the location of lodging (hotels or campgrounds), service and fuel stations, general stores, restaurants, mileage information between each town along the route, and even points of interest. In Jefferson, Iowa, for example, the 1924 Guide listed two hotels, two garages, three banks, and the local Lincoln Memorial monument.\footnote{Road Guide, p. 364.} This resource was invaluable for motorists traveling along the Lincoln Highway, especially those making the journey for the first time. It is easy to forget that highways did not always have road markers, or that cars could not travel more than 20 miles per hour, or that fuel stations and food stores were not in abundance; because of this, each and every town along the Lincoln Highway was vital for motorists to ensure a memorable and safe cross-country experience.
The Roaring Twenties proved to be roaring for auto sales as well. American vehicle factory sales were valued over $3 billion in 1926 and motorists spent over $10 billion on vehicle operating expenses.\(^{42}\) Additionally, car manufacture accounted for “80 percent of the rubber industry’s output, 75 percent of glass, 25 percent of machine tool purchases, and 20 percent of steel, while the more than 17 million cars plying America’s roads consumed 90 percent of the nation’s gasoline output”\(^{43}\) in the 1920s. Automobile recreation also increased in the 1920s, a hobby promoting new popularity of transcontinental travel. By the early part of the decade, businessmen and local promoters established nearly 1000 campsites along popular roads.\(^{44}\) Entrepreneurs around the nation also developed more roadside attractions, such as drive-in restaurants in the 1920s beginning in Dallas, Texas\(^{45}\), which catered to on-the-go drivers who wanted a quick bite, or people who wanted to experience the novelty of eating in their cars.\(^{46}\)

The automobile industry in the 1920s would not have been what it was without Henry Ford and the Model T. By the end of its run in 1927, a Model T only cost $290, allowing any middle class family to afford reliable transportation.\(^{47}\) Henry Ford relied on the moving assembly line, a small product line (initially any color as long as it was black!), and continual refinement of his production methods to achieve great economies of cost, and thus to bring

\(^{44}\) *Cars and Culture*, p. 60.
\(^{46}\) *Cars and Culture*, p. 61.
automobile ownership within the reach of most middle class families. Model T’s were so popular that Ford decided to halt advertising in 1917, and relied on local dealers to advertise themselves—which they did.\(^{48}\) Starting in 1920, Ford aimed to reinvent its production process by eliminated “smiling, laughing, and sitting,” which workers abided by due to the lack of labor unions.\(^{49}\) What hurt automobile manufacturers the most was the used car industry. Other companies, such as General Motors which William Durant and Charles Stewart Mott founded in 1908, combated this by restyling their vehicles each year to make previous models look old. The Model T’s styling went virtually unchanged in the 1920s, thus leaving it vulnerable to used car pricing or other new car styling. Ford, however, knew how to effectively win over the competition: lower the price of the vehicle.\(^{50}\) The undeniable reliability of the Model T, coupled with its amazing affordability, created an attainable form of transportation that sent more people on the road, which eventually led to more road legislation.


\(^{50}\) *The Model T: A Centennial History*, pp. 89-91.
CHAPTER 4. POST-WWII EXPANSION

The auto industry roar of the twenties deflated with the onset of the Great Depression and the Second World War. The Depression devastated the American economy, industrial production dropped dramatically, and consumers struggled with unemployment rates above 25%. Families who had to work to make enough in order to pay for their cars\(^{51}\) did not partake in the leisure activities associated with travel. Once the United States declared war after Japan’s Pearl Harbor raid, many auto manufacturers moved from producing automobiles for the civilian economy, to making planes, tanks, trucks and other mechanized products, which aided the war effort. After Japan surrendered and the millions of American soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and merchant mariners returned home, the American economy gradually returned to civilian production. With the beginnings of the baby boom, the long economic expansion, and the rise of suburbia, car culture entered a new phase.

The post-WWII economic boom translated to the baby boom and also the car boom (once again).\(^{52}\) Veterans returned home and to the work force, and society pressed women back to the home to raise a family. Americans were more likely to marry and more likely to have more children, reversing the trend of the 1930s. New homes were easily accessible for military families because of the GI Bill, which provided VA loans for war veterans. Many other couples qualified for FHA loans. In either case, one had to purchase a new home, not an existing home. Such developers as William Levitt, famous for his community on Long

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Island, constructed sprawling tracts of small and cheap homes outside major metropolitan areas to appeal to young, growing, single-income families. Levitt, taking a page from Ford, used assembly line techniques to produce thousands of virtually identical homes on thousands of acres of former potato fields.

Automobiles were a necessity for families living in suburbia in the 1950s. Without the centralization of a city, cars played an essential role in moving from one place to the other among the sprawl. Modern communities required schools, religious establishments, movie theaters, shopping areas, and even babysitters. Because of this decentralization, Americans were yet again in need of better roads outside the city centers.53

In addition to the necessity of roads, America was fearful of Communist threat. The Cold War seemed somewhat distant and perhaps theoretical until the Korean War sent Americans into harm’s way on distant shores. A 1951 issue of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists suggested that geographic decentralization of American living could help protect the population against a large-scale Soviet attack.54 President Dwight Eisenhower, who commanded the European Theater of Operations during the war, admired the German autobahn system that Adolph Hitler had developed in the 1930s; he contrasted the ease of moving military convoys across Germany with the difficulty of doing the same across the U.S. highway system. He thought the United States could benefit from an efficient highway system, especially in the event of Communist attack; this prompted the president to launch an investigative study of the nation’s highway system.55 This study led to the Federal Highway Act of 1956 and created the present system of interstate highways. The federal bill called for

53 Crabgrass Frontier, p. 248.
54 Crabgrass Frontier, p. 249.
55 America in the Fifties, pp. 117-8.
development of a 42,000-mile system, for which the federal government would cover 90 percent of the cost and states the remaining 10 percent cost. Increased gasoline taxes and a dedicated highway construction trust would help cover the cost of this new highway system. The plan called for federal highway expenditures to increase from $700 million per year, to an additional $5 billion per year for the next ten years.\(^{56}\)

Interstate highways allowed people to “flee to the suburbs” via quick routes that bypassed small cities and towns; even if there was no threat of nuclear attack, highway bypassing was convenient for drivers.\(^{57}\) The principle that roads should help motorists move from point A to point B as fast as possible was not a new theory, however. Before the First World War, planners for the Lincoln Highway aimed to make travel easier by creating the straightest route possible. As actually developed, the Lincoln Highway went through many small towns, where cross-streets, local traffic, and other factors slowed down long-distance motorists. The reason why the Lincoln Highway route traveled through towns instead of bypassing them was out of necessity and due to travel inefficiencies brought on by primitive road and automobile designs.

Even as the Eisenhower administration planned the construction of a vast new highway network, the old Lincoln Highway route (now renamed U.S. Highway 30) remained popular with travelers.\(^{58}\) But those who supervised Highway 30 began to consider ways to modify the route by adding new bypasses to make travel more efficient and safer for drivers who demanded higher-speed travel.

\(^{56}\) *America in the Fifties*, p. 118.

\(^{57}\) *America in the Fifties*, p. 118.

\(^{58}\) Weingroff: *The Lincoln Highway*. 
CHAPTER 5. JEFFERSON

The Iowa State Highway Commission approved a proposal in 1955 to relocate U.S. 30 through Greene County, altering its path to bypass the town of Jefferson, whose local businesses thrived on their transportation economy. The highway’s old path ran right through the center of Jefferson, cutting the town in two. This was not only important to Jefferson business owners who benefited from heavy traffic, but also to motorists who needed Jefferson as a destination for food, fuel or supplies. The new plan proposed shifting the highway to the north edge of town, essentially cutting off any motor vehicle traffic from the hustle and bustle of downtown Jefferson. Many Jefferson residents sharply criticized this plan, with one saying, “the relocation of U.S. 30 from the main street of Jefferson would do irreparable damage to the economy of the city.” The consensus in Jefferson regarding the bypass was firmly negative.\(^{59}\) Despite displeasure and fears regarding how local business would survive the bypass, many drivers considered U.S. 30 in and around Jefferson to be treacherous.

Danger Hill and the Buttrick’s Creek Bridge were both notoriously dangerous transportation landmarks among the Green County community, and they each garnered the moniker of “death trap.”\(^{60}\) The twisting, narrow, tree-lined death traps sat approximately four miles east of Jefferson. It was nearly impossible to drive on one without driving on the other, thus creating a disastrous outcome if combined with adverse weather or improper driving. If


\(^{60}\) “To Improve Buttrick’s Bridge Approach, Danger Hill Curve,” \textit{The Jefferson Bee}, August 9, 1955, 1.
driving west along U.S. 30 toward Jefferson, the motorist first had to take a tight left curve, where he or she encountered the meagerly narrow Buttrick’s Creek Bridge. After traveling across the bridge, the driver had to navigate a second curve—this time a right hand curve. After careful navigation of the second curve, Danger Hill sat less than a mile west where both east and west-bound traffic drove uphill to reach the apex, which left motorists blind to oncoming cars if they dare to pass.  

Figure 1. Courtesy: Google Maps

*The Jefferson Bee*, the local newspaper, documented many instances when Danger Hill and the Buttrick’s Creek Bridge wreaked havoc on motorists. One article highlighted a

61 According to Bridgehunter.com, the Buttrick’s Creek Bridge, built in 1928 and razed in 1994, was 84ft total in length and 20ft total in width. At only 10ft wide per lane, 2-way traffic moving at highway speed across the bridge would be considerably hazardous. “Bridgehunter.com: Historic Bridges of the U.S.,” last modified March 1, 2009, http://bridgehunter.com/ia/greene/25790/.
death trap when four accidents occurred in only a span of four days along U.S. 30 near
Jefferson. One woman, Mrs. Ada Wright, was thrown from her vehicle and hospitalized due
to a collision with another vehicle on Danger Hill. 62 Another documented case involved four
vehicles on the last curve prior to the Buttrick’s Creek Bridge westbound. Three of the four
vehicles were forced into the ditch, while the fourth vehicle fled the scene. 63 A lawsuit was
filed in November of 1955 for an accident that occurred in June of that year, which claimed
the life of a young driver. Twenty-year-old Michael Conway was killed when he was driving
eastbound up Danger Hill. A tractor-trailer driver was traveling in the opposite direction and
unable to negotiate a tight curve when the jackknifed trailer went into the path of Conway’s
vehicle. Schmellick Warren Transportation Co. was sued for $62,500. 64

63 “Four Vehicles Involved in Mishap on Highway 30 Curve,” The Jefferson Bee, April 12,
1955, 1.
64 “Conway Administrators File $62,500 Damage Suit Here,” The Jefferson Bee, November
22, 1955, 1. According to “The Inflation Calculator,” $62,500 in 2010 would equal over
Public safety was at the forefront of the Iowa State Highway Commission’s concerns, so despite fiscal concerns from Jeffersonian business owners, the relocation was approved near the end of 1955. The goals of the IHC in rerouting U.S. 30 were to straighten out the highway and to eliminate dangerous curves, specifically those near the Buttrick’s Creek Bridge. The estimated cost to reroute a nine-mile stretch between Grand Junction and just west of Jefferson was near $655,000.\textsuperscript{65} Construction began in 1956, and the new, relocated U.S. 30 was open to traffic in October of 1958.\textsuperscript{66}

Jefferson residents were right to worry about their local economy. A week after traffic was rerouted out of downtown, the Jefferson Bee reported business owners “feeling pretty

\textsuperscript{66} Influence of the U.S. 30 Relocation, p. 1.
blue,”67 and rightfully so: Before the highway was relocated, Lincoln Way through Jefferson carried average daily traffic of 5,000 motor vehicles in 1958.68 The following year, after the bypass opened, average daily traffic dropped to less than half—only 2100 motor vehicles. Traffic volume dropped steadily, and by 1962, studies showed average daily traffic of only 1,800 motor vehicles passing through town, with the difference using the bypass to speed their way around Jefferson.69

Figure 3. Buttrick’s Creek Bridge, circa 1915; replaced in 1994. Courtesy Iowa Department of Transportation, all rights reserved.

68 Iowa State Highway Commission: Service Station Sales in Eight Iowa Cities (Traffic and Highway Planning Department, Division of Planning, in cooperation with the Bureau of Public Roads, United States Department of Commerce, 1963), p. 44.
69 Service Station Sales, p. 44.
Jefferson’s transportation economy suffered, as was expected. Affected businesses included service stations (fuel stations; auto repair shops; and parts and accessory stores) and cafés (food and non-alcoholic beverages). Data from a report by the IHC showed a staggering decline in the amount of money funneled into Jefferson’s local economy after the relocation of the highway, as critics had anticipated. Service stations had formerly been accessible pull-off stops, convenient for long-distance travelers who used to pass through the center of town. But for those service stations located directly on Lincoln Way,\(^70\) gross sales declined 15% from 1958 to 1959, and then fell another 15% in 1960.\(^71\) Additionally, of the seven stations that were open in 1958, four shut down and three had changed ownership as of

\(^70\) Current roads that were once part of the old Lincoln Highway still claim the name Lincoln Way.

\(^71\) *Service Station Sales*, p. 44.
Service stations had to now completely rely on Jefferson residents for business, and the city’s population remained relatively constant around 4,500.

Cafés along Lincoln Way in Jefferson experienced similar economic difficulty; after opening of the new U.S. 30, café sales fell 12.5%. In 1957, Jefferson had seven cafés situated along Lincoln Way. As of 1960, two had shut down, one had moved to a different location and shut down just nine months later, three had changed ownership multiple times, and one was converted into a tavern. After losing out-of-town customers, cafés had to survive with patronage by locals. Since they could no longer draw travelers who stopped by spontaneously mid-trip on their way to somewhere else, businesses had to become attractive destinations in their own right or move out of downtown to the new highway routes.

The travel industry (classified as service stations or cafés) along Lincoln Way in Jefferson suffered greatly from the highway relocation to the north of town. Realizing how much loss of traffic could affect their city, local officials sought to mitigate the economic harm. Realizing that the opening of the new U.S. 30 route created new possibilities for business development, Jefferson leaders created the City Planning and Zoning Commission in late 1956. Since Jefferson could no longer rely on business from intercity travelers, the city wanted to reinvent itself as a destination site for industrial companies and agriculture. This approach proved to be successful: between 1959 and 1960, commercial construction

72 *Service Station Sales*, p. 50.
increased by 256%\textsuperscript{76}, due mostly to industrial buildings on the north side of Jefferson, along the new U.S. 30.

Jefferson’s City Planning and Zoning Commission, in cooperation with the Jefferson Chamber of Commerce and the Jefferson Industrial Development Corporation, created an “eye-appealing” brochure in late 1956, which outlined possibilities for future industrial growth to companies who might have wanted to build a business along the undeveloped land north of Jefferson where new U.S. 30 would be constructed.\textsuperscript{77} The brochure featured many of Jefferson’s Midwest qualities: tax advantages, fine churches and schools, and “semi-skilled labor of a high type”, just to name a few.\textsuperscript{78} To advertise skilled labor as a positive aspect of a town implies either the town has citizens who are out of work, or implies citizens will soon be out of work.\textsuperscript{79} The City Planning and Zoning Commission seemed to have great foresight as to the economic implications the U.S. 30 bypass would soon have on Jefferson.

Fortunately for the economic success of Jefferson, the new bypass created a geographical gold mine of industrial possibilities. Future companies would gain from automobile traffic exposure driving east-west along new U.S. 30 as well as driving north-south along Highway 17 (now Iowa Hwy 4).\textsuperscript{80} Not only would the industries gain important

\textsuperscript{76} *Influence of the U.S. 30 Relocation*, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{78} *Ibid*, 2.
public exposure, but also the intersection of two highways created an easy process for trucking freight. Rail freight was also a possibility for future companies as there was access to the Milwaukee Railway and the Northwestern Railway. The land north of Jefferson was prime for industries looking for public exposure as well as convenient methods of importing and exporting goods; several companies agreed.  

With the impending economic hardships among Jefferson businesses, efforts of the City Planning and Zoning Commission and the Industrial Development Corporation to draw in other industries were successful. The first new company to establish itself along new U.S. 30 was the National Manufacturing and Stamping Company. What makes this a remarkable feat is that the new highway was a year away from opening. National took a risk on a small Iowa town with hardly any large-scale commercial business experience. This was pleasant news for Jeffersonians, as many local companies put out advertisements in *The Jefferson Bee* to congratulate the new addition to the community. Dick and Jim’s Hardware referred to National Manufacturing and Stamping Company’s Jefferson establishment as a “smart move.” A clothing store, Oppenheimer and Durlam, exclaimed it was “happy and proud” of the new addition. Even automobile industry businesses, including Tesch Motors and Service Oil Company welcomed National to Jefferson.  

It seemed as if the people of Jefferson were eager to move from the identity their town once held. While the new highway might not bring direct travelers, it would bring new business and likely help the local population increase.

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More companies soon flocked to north Jefferson to take part in the industrial boom. Realizing their businesses could be more profitable up north versus along old U.S. 30 within the downtown area, two local lumber companies announced their merger and their intent to stake claim on the new, valuable land. Ferguson-Deihl Lumber Company and Milligan Brothers merged to create Tri-County Lumbermart. The “new, modern plant” would be designed to handle more building materials for the expanded market. One business partner claimed that the “consolidation will bring reduced overhead, increased buying power and streamlined operation, which will make possible new services and lower prices for building material purchasers in the area which the company will serve.”

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A brand new store takes the stage and warmly invites you to attend its...

**GRAND OPENING**

**Monday, July 29**
Coffee and Doughnuts – Free – All Day

*Lumber Jack Sez:*

The new TRI-COUNTY CASH LUMBERMART recognizes the modern trend — that YOU, OUR CUSTOMERS, want to buy quality building materials at the lowest possible prices. This calls for high volume sales and low mark-up, just like the grocery SUPERMARKETS.

So Milligan Bros. and Ferguson-Diehl Lumber, your two largest lumber yards, have merged to reduce operating costs and increase buying power. ALL OF THESE BIG SAVINGS will be passed on to you.

Business will be carried on for the present at the Ferguson-Diehl yard east on Lincolnway. Later, when the new Highway 30 is paved, a new and completely modern yard will be built at the intersection of new Highway 30 and Highway 17.

We hope you’ll come in and see us anytime — You’ll be glad you did!

**Tri-County Cash Lumbermart**
(Owned by the merger of Milligan Bros. Lumber and Ferguson-Diehl Lumber)
800 E. Lincolnway
Phone 999

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Figure 5. *The Jefferson Bee*, July 16, 1957, 1.
In addition to the new commercial gains, Jefferson’s agriculture industry—especially corn—prospered after the relocation of U.S. 30. The estimated cash value of Jefferson’s corn, oats, and soybeans combined was just over $13 million in 1955. The estimated value of area-produced corn alone was $8.3 million that same year. Five years later, in 1960, only two years after the highway relocation, the estimated value of the combined crops had risen to $15.5 million, and corn alone had increased to $10.6 million. The Iowa State Highway Commission reported that within two years after completion of the bypass, Jefferson had gained investments of over $660,000 in the construction of complexes directly relating to agriculture, plus another $200,000 for a manufacturing facility. The Jefferson economy had changed from tourist-driven to agricultural and industrial.

Some entrepreneurs realized that the relocated highway offered new potential for serving both tourists and these rapidly growing new business centers. By 1961, three service stations had opened up along a frontage road parallel to the new U.S. 30. As with the earlier, once-prosperous Lincoln Way stations, these savvy business owners took advantage of the new traffic flow, aiming to catch the eye of long-distance travelers ready to make a short stop. These new gas stations also served local needs, as rising agricultural sales and the construction of industrial buildings brought a number of people pouring into Jefferson.

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86 Influence of the U.S. 30 Relocation, p. 19.
87 In addition to these other facts and figures, it was reported that the Ralston co-op (located about 10 miles west of Jefferson in Ralston) would relocate to land near new U.S. 30. The plan would be to build a $500,000 storage facility; to put that in perspective, a new motel—featuring advanced technology, 100-occupant capacity, and swimming pool—cost $200,000. “Ralston co-op plans $500,000 facilities,” The Jefferson Bee, February 3, 1959, 1; “Building plans announced for new 30 motel, café,” The Jefferson Bee, May 26, 1959, 1.
88 Influence of the U.S. 30 Relocation, p. 18.
Entrepreneurs took advantage of the new area north of Jefferson and built motels along the frontage road adjacent to new U.S. 30. One motel in particular, which began construction in May of 1959, departed from the old idea of only hosting travelers passing through the community for just one night, as motels along old U.S. 30 had once practiced. This new motel consisted of 20 units, furnished with stereophonic music in each room, along with individual thermostats to control both heat and air conditioning. The motel would also include a restaurant with ample parking in the back, a children’s playground, a meeting and conference room, and a heated swimming pool. This new motel was not meant for people passing through town, but rather for people seeking Jefferson as their final destination. New companies now located in north Jefferson could meet in the new motel and hold a multi-day conference while remaining close to the company’s site. Similarly, companies or families hoping to relocate to Jefferson could also stay for multiple nights in full comfort and remain conveniently close to the city for exploration during the day. This is another example of how Jeffersonians transformed not only their business practices, but also shaped the way people lived and visited Jefferson. It was not a town where one passed through to get gas or change a tire, but a town where one found employment and a home.

Though the new capital brought to Jefferson by new industries and companies, there was fear that the community grew too fast for what the city could sustain. In April 1959, Jefferson City Council issued new zoning ordinances, which regulated land and buildings for industrial, commercial and residential use, and limited height of buildings, either erected or remodeled. This ordinance was in an effort to,

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lessen congestion in the streets; to secure safety from panic, fire and other dangers; to promote morals, health and general welfare; to provide adequate light and air; to avoid undue concentration of population; to prevent the overcrowding of land; to facilitate the adequate provisions of transportation, water, sewerage and schools, parks and other requirements; and to conserve the value of property and encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the city…

While the city was high for introducing new industry to Jefferson after the economic and morale slump of the bypass, Jeffersonians wanted to simplify their town, returning it to the way it used to be—consisting of families with high moral standards and adequate facilities to suit their needs. City officials lost sight of what was important to the people of Jefferson, and instead focused on economic gain. Quality of life attributes to the overall happiness of a town, however a rapidly growing commercial landscape does not always attribute to a good quality of life.

On balance, experts concluded, the new bypass had significantly improved traffic flow, safety, and efficiency in Jefferson. Yet the sudden shift in traffic patterns had caused economic chaos; while some business owners adjusted and even gained by taking advantage of the new highway route, others struggled or failed. While Jefferson’s local economy as a whole did not suffer dramatic consequences, its travel economy crumbled. It was those negative consequences that aroused public concern.

As the Iowa Highway Commission began to discuss the construction of bypasses in a number of other towns, critics again warned that the changes would destroy local economies. In 1959, one year after the new U.S. 30 opened to traffic north of Jefferson, the Iowa State

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Highway Commission produced a special film highlighting the Jefferson construction. *Highway Relocations* sought to address public concern about local economic losses by reframing bypasses as a positive necessity for the state. The film argued that Iowa needed to modernize its aging roads, especially U.S. 30, to ensure safe roads and to meet the needs of an expanding economy. It noted that the old Lincoln Highway in places like Jefferson had suffered traffic congestion heavier than anywhere else in Iowa, with bottlenecks at intersections and pedestrian crossings. Travel in town was both unsafe and inefficient, highway traffic had to slow down to avoid parked cars on city streets, while there were only eight school zone crossings alone on a 50-mile stretch just west of Jefferson. Traffic engineers criticized the old Lincoln Highway as inherently dangerous, with many sharp and winding sections, plus steep hills—all common frustrations among motorists wanting to pass slow-moving vehicles.  

In its film, the Iowa Highway Commission particularly documented dangers and inconveniences of highways that intersected commercial entrances and exits, driveways, city streets and alleys. Businesses on the old Lincoln Way were located right on the road, which made entering and exiting hazardous (and slow) for cars traveling along the highway, or turning onto the highway from the drive. Long haul truckers faced a real challenge, needing more time and room to slow down or to maneuver around such hazards. Ironically, that immediate off-road location, which made driving conditions so hazardous, was the very feature that made those businesses so appealing to motorists seeking easy access to fuel, food and supplies. While all intersections posed a certain threat to traffic safety, new highway

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91 Iowa State Highway Commission: *Highway Relocations* (film, IHC, 1960); 0:07:34; 0:09:38; 0:11:07.
bypasses sought to minimize the danger by using a “planned access” approach\textsuperscript{92}, where right-of-way distances separated high-speed drivers from those pulling on or off, and frontage roads offered safe entrances and exits to local businesses.

The Commission argued that by creating a more direct route for high-speed motorists and increasing number of semi-trailers, bypasses promoted both efficiency and safety. The featured stretch of U.S. 30 in Iowa went through many small towns (just west of Marshalltown and just east of the newly-created Jefferson bypass); towns were believed by experts to be either “a welcome relief to the day’s drive, or an interruption to a planned travel schedule”.\textsuperscript{93} During the 1920s, towns were considered a welcome relief, but in the 1950s, towns quickly became an interruption to planned travel. In promoting the rerouting of traffic away from small towns, Iowa highway experts followed a key assumption that the nature of long-distance travel in the United States had changed. They believed that by the late 1950s, the novelty of pleasure driving had run its course, and motorists preferred speed to leisure. Fewer travelers felt inclined to stop at local cafés and enjoy experiencing small-town Iowa; more drivers simply wanted to get from point A to point B without the hassle of slower speeds, windy roads, and traffic congestion.

In its 1960 film, the Iowa Highway Commission claimed that modernizing the current U.S. 30 would be an “impractical expenditure” for taxpayers.\textsuperscript{94} Rather than trying to update outdated roads, the experts said that the only feasible solution would be to build many more new roads on undeveloped land, with wider lanes and safer, straighter routes. The film acknowledged townspeople’s concern that rerouting could undermine their economic well

\textsuperscript{92} Highwa\textsuperscript{93}y Relocations, 0:04:13.
\textsuperscript{93} Highwa\textsuperscript{94}y Relocations, 0:02:35.
\textsuperscript{94} Highwa\textsuperscript{95}y Relocations, 0:05:00.
being, but suggested that good highway design could easily avoid any problems. Experts promised that building an arterial highway on the outskirts of town would fix any safety and efficiency problems and still leave access to the town’s center.\textsuperscript{95} Yet many in Jefferson felt that the reality was more complex; long-distance motorists hesitated to interrupt their journey to drive into the slow-moving center of an unfamiliar town, inevitably taking traffic away from established businesses.

Far from ignoring this issue, leaders in Iowa sought to analyze the question of whether highway relocation posed real economic dangers to small towns. In 1959, the state created a new group, the Iowa Highway Study Committee, which produced a 1959 report, \textit{Iowa Highway Needs 1960-1980}.\textsuperscript{96} That report sought to forecast how the state’s transportation requirements would change over the next two decades, and how traffic engineers could meet those needs while being conscious of local concerns. It required annual reports from all municipalities to help facilitate future changes.\textsuperscript{97} The authors of \textit{Iowa Highway Needs} prioritized the message that the state urgently needed to rebuild its roads, to create a safer means of travel. To meet this goal, the report recommended:

1. A proposed rural and urban freeway system—the safest highway design;
2. Improved design standards, on all roads and streets, encompassing the best known safety features economically feasible;
3. Proposals for improvement of highways to those standards;
4. Greater planned consistency of route development;

\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Highway Relocations}, 0:05:36.
\textsuperscript{96} \textit{Report of the Iowa Highway Study Committee: Laws of the 58\textsuperscript{th} General Assembly, March 24, 1959}, (State of Iowa, Des Moines, IA, 1959), p. i.
5. Special studies of traffic operation needs for improved maintenance, signs, signals and other control devices;

6. Management proposals that would aid in improving coordination and action on highway development for maximum safety.\(^{98}\)

The report projected that it would cost $716 million dollars over 20 years to rebuild Iowa’s rural highways alone along these modernized safety standards.

It was not uncommon for the Iowa Highway Commission produced a film to educate—or rather pacify—a local community. A film produced by the IHC was shown in Jefferson in September 1957 to show the future needs of Iowa highways. The film, entitled, *The Iowa Highway Quiz*, explained how Iowa highways “do not meet standards of modern transportation needs,” and what the IHC needed to do to fix the problem.\(^{99}\) It is not difficult to see through this façade; the IHC wanted to use more tax money to update Iowa roads. One could argue their film method in two separate lights, the first being that the IHC made a dedicated effort to educate the public about how their tax dollars were going to be spent and why they had to be spent that way—a refreshing reminiscent idea, departed from today, where ignorance most often is perceived as bliss. Another way to look at the Highway Commission’s method of education is to view it as patronizing propaganda. The schoolyard title suggests a juvenile question and answer game in which cheap prizes are given out to the first person to guess correctly. With no way of viewing the film, or having not been to the

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\(^{98}\) *Iowa Highway Needs*, p. 8.

September viewing in Jefferson, there is no way to judge the demeanor of the Highway Commission.\(^{100}\)

The Iowa Highway Commission’s public image has not always been positive, thus another reason to produce films for public viewing. In March 1957 an IHC employee severed 200 telephone cables while performing roadwork near the maintenance engineers’ office in town. The action cut off telephone service for half the town and crews from the telephone company were forced to dispatch “in bad weather” to remedy the problem. The Jefferson Telephone Co. sent a bill to the Commission for nearly $268 in damages. As of September of that year, the IHC had yet to pay the bill, and the phone company eventually disconnected phone service from the IHC offices. To make matters worse, the Commission hired an attorney to settle the dispute, avoid paying the fine, and restoring their phone service.\(^{101}\) It is important to note that the *Jefferson Bee* looked solely from the perspective of the Jefferson Telephone Co. in a subjective manner. Every detail of the event came from telephone company officials, while no contact was made with the Iowa Highway Commission. While this painted the IHC in a poor light, the actions of the *Jefferson Bee* spoke volumes as to what Jeffersonians thought of the state agency. To not include both parties’ opinions was either deliberate or bad journalism; seeing as the IHC maintenance engineers’ office was merely eight blocks from the *Bee’s* office, it seems difficult to believe IHC personnel were

\(^{100}\) Having worked in the Iowa Department of Transportation archives room, I can safely say there is no evidence of a film entitled, *The Iowa Highway Quiz*. The room contains media—photos and film—as well as documents from as early as 1913. The original 16mm film of *Iowa Highway Needs* sits safely in the archives, and was re-mastered and digitized in 2009 for public use on the DOT Historic Archives website. The fate of *The Iowa Highway Quiz* is unknown.

not be available for comment, and if they were not, the article should have stated as such. Additionally, the town’s people were most likely going to believe, or at least take pride, in their local newspaper, considering it began publication in 1871 and ran until 2004.\textsuperscript{102} The subjectivity of the \textit{Bee} against the Iowa Highway Commission added to their tainted public image—at least in Jefferson—and also grew discontent among the populace. Whether the \textit{Bee’s} actions were instigated by the bypass—as well as the many local business owners who were put out of work—is an unknown, but plausible conclusion.

There were other tensions between the Iowa Highway Commission and the City of Jefferson in the late 1950s. Guy Richardson, a farmer in Jefferson, owned land on the western edge of Highway 17 near the intersection of new U.S. 30. In order for Richardson to get his equipment from his storage shed to his farmland, he had to travel along 17. He petitioned the city to allow him access to his land via an access road off of Highway 17. Jefferson allowed the action and Richardson constructed the access point. The IHC stepped in, claiming the access road was “a nuisance and hazard to the traveling public.”\textsuperscript{103} The City, who originally gave Richardson clearance to construct the access road, claimed ownership of that portion of Highway 17, citing an agreement with the Highway Commission, while the IHC claimed ownership due to roadwork in which the highway was widened.\textsuperscript{104} Similar to the actions against the Jefferson Telephone Co., the Iowa Highway Commission filed suit in District Court against Guy Richardson, with the City of Jefferson as a co-defendant. The IHC

\textsuperscript{103} “Richardson files motion city be included in suit,” \textit{The Jefferson Bee}, September 1, 1959, 1.  
sought to have the courts require Richardson to remove the access and “permanently restrain
him from having it.”105 This type of publicity was not helpful for the IHC’s public image.
From a Jeffersonian’s perspective, a local farmer who was only attempting to access his
farmland—his livelihood—was unable to do so in a productive manner because of the state
government. One could also argue that an access road, which would allow Richardson to
travel a minimal distance along Highway 17, is far safer than driving farm equipment a
longer distance along 17.

A similar instance regarding highway ownership occurred that same year. Jefferson
intended to construct a frontage road adjacent to new U.S. 30 where companies could
construct new facilities. The road was to be called Gallup Road, named after Jeffersonian and
internationally famous polltaker, George H. Gallup.106 Concern for the road first arose when
the City of Jefferson was forced to use its own funds to pay for the road, instead of state
subsidized dollars. Both the City and the Iowa Highway Commission cited confusion on the
part of frontage road policy.107 More concern arose when the IHC barricaded the newly
constructed Gallup road, citing it was “wrongly placed” and violated “site-distance rights”,
meaning motorists along Mulberry Road and new U.S. 30 had to appropriately see each other
at the intersection.108 The reason why Gallup Road was constructed was because businesses
were not allowed to be situated directly along U.S. highways, as per the “limited access” law,

105 “Richardson files motion city be included in suit,” The Jefferson Bee, September 1, 1959, 1.
107 “Iowa road official explains state frontage road policy,” The Jefferson Bee, December 1,
1959, 1.
108 “Hearing on Gallup Road being held by Commission,” The Jefferson Bee, September 22,
1959, 1.
which was mandated by the Iowa Highway Commission.\textsuperscript{109} To label the City of Jefferson as frustrated would be an understatement. Eventually, Gallup road would be un-barricaded and used as its intended purpose—a frontage road.\textsuperscript{110}

![Diagram of Highway 30, Gallup Road, and Mulberry Road]

Figure 6. *The Jefferson Bee*, September 22, 1959, 1.

Despite drastic changes made to Iowa roads from the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century through the 1950s, the goals have remained relatively the same; create driver-friendly roads that are safe and convenient. The IHC was formed to study the Iowa’s road problem, which was harming the local agricultural economy due to poor road conditions. Then the transportation innovator, Carl Fisher, thought of a way to interconnect people with series of roads, which sparked a transportation revolution. Not only was the Lincoln Highway the first transcontinental highway, but it could also be credited with the creation of a successful federal road program; a catalyst for 1920s consumerism boom and the rise of the affordable

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid, 1.
\textsuperscript{110} Gallup Road still exists as of Fall 2011. One can access the Morton Buildings facility or the Redwood Motel, among other businesses.
automobile; and a model for the U.S. Interstate system of the 1950s. With highway bypassing causing Jefferson to lose out on its transportation-fueled revenue, it may seem like the Lincoln Highway and the original values of the transportation industry have digressed through the years; however, like any other technology, automobile transportation continued to improve itself, and when something new is introduced, the old must make concessions. Jefferson, Iowa is a prime example of this transportation evolution. It once prospered economically due to cars traveling through the heart of the town. Motorists in the 1920s relied on towns like Jefferson in order to complete their long journeys, including transcontinental trips along the Lincoln Highway. After WWII, cars were more efficient than those in the roaring twenties, and motorists opted for convenience, and federal and state legislators opted for safety. Roads underwent drastic transformations in the first half of the 20th century, however, not much has changed from the mid-1960s to the 2000s; motorists are still driving on interstate highways and agencies such as the Iowa Highway Commission (now the Iowa Department of Transportation), are constantly looking to improve driver convenience and safety. Unfortunately for small towns like Jefferson, there is no need for towns that specifically cater to long-distance travelers. Though the transportation economy-driven town is obsolete, the transportation economy is thriving. New innovations such as the hybrid car and airbags are continually improving safety and efficiency in the industry. The aforementioned paradox is what figuratively fuels transportation.

This case study of Jefferson, Iowa and the U.S. 30 bypass illustrates many different facets of study, including business economics, social structure, public opinion, and political debate. One of the largest implications of the bypass was the change in town dynamic from an automobile traveler-focused economy to an industrial and agricultural-based economy.
Businesses in town—especially along old U.S. 30 (now Lincolnway St.) suffered dramatic losses, and those that could not sustain from local patrons alone either had to relocate or shut down business. This created a dramatic shift of Jefferson’s identity and how Jeffersonians identified themselves. Residents were no longer there to serve coffee to travelers, or service out of state vehicles, or house long distance vacationers. They were forced to provide labor for incoming businesses among new industry that would supposedly breathe new life into the town. While the new economy may have looked good on a balance sheet, the people of Jefferson are who define the greatness of a town—and a family-owned business is a legacy that cannot be replaced.

There were obvious tensions between the City of Jefferson (both residents and the organization) and the Iowa Highway Commission. The City and the people of Jefferson both thought they knew what was best for their own town. Not only did the bypass act as the IHC’s wrecking ball, but also Jefferson had to tiptoe in regards to road transportation, or else face a lawsuit. Residents likely viewed the IHC as an overpowering source of control from the outside. There are and have been countless political debates that center around municipality versus county rights, county versus states rights, and state versus federal rights. The City of Jefferson and its residents sought for what was in their best interest, while the Iowa Highway Commission looked through a greater lens and advocated for what was beneficial for multi-state travelers. Whether it was right or wrong, the IHC followed President Eisenhower’s Interstate Highway model and made safety a priority, even if it meant inconveniencing a local farmer. Though the U.S. 30 bypass was a relative slight change on a map, the drastic changes that it brought would forever change small town Iowa.
CHAPTER 6. EPILOGUE

As of November 2011, Jefferson, Iowa’s moral standard has remained constant since the mid-twentieth century. Its current mission statement is, “…to Provide High Quality Leadership and Service to Meet the Current, Changing, and Future Needs of our Citizens.”\textsuperscript{111} Additionally, the town’s population has also remained constant, with the 2000 Census Bureau reporting a population of just over 4,600—a mere 3% increase from 1960.\textsuperscript{112} As in the late 1950s, Jefferson’s highest priority is quality of life for its residents.

Jefferson’s official website features a letter from Mayor Craig Berry, in which he boasts the town’s “small town quality of life” and encourages people to live in Jefferson. Berry highlights the quality of Jefferson’s schools, churches, and childcare; accentuates the family activity offerings and Jefferson’s proximity to Ames and Des Moines; showcases new and affordable housing available; and he also welcomes entrepreneurship.\textsuperscript{113} In addition to Berry’s colorful portrait of Jefferson, he also states, “We have room and resources for your business to relocate!”\textsuperscript{114} These ringing sentiments are quite similar to those first mentioned in the late 1950s prior to the opening of new U.S. 30.

The town has two major projects currently in progress: a downtown restoration project, complete with creating a historic district, as well as building an Iowa Highway 4 (formerly Hwy 17) overpass, which would allow motorists to drive over the railroad tracks,

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
versus stopping for frequent trains.\textsuperscript{115} Despite the historic district containing a small portion of the old Lincoln Highway, and the advent of a major road change, the 1958 U.S. 30 bypass was not acknowledged by Mayor Berry or the City of Jefferson in their literature. This comes, however, as no surprise, as highlighting business loss and public outcry is not effective when promoting a town. Additionally, the Iowa Highway 4 overpass is not detrimental to businesses like the U.S. 30 bypass was, but rather the overpass will most likely aid local businesses, in that it will expedite and make traveling through Jefferson safe by eliminating the railroad crossing. This notion of safety and convenience is once again, reminiscent of early road transportation history.

Few people probably remember the hardships initiated by the U.S. 30 bypass fifty-three years ago. While it may seem deep in the past, a simple bypass has a greater impact on small towns versus larger metropolises because a small town’s resident is completely dependent upon on the town for their livelihood. Change echoes louder for small communities like Jefferson, but like most small mid-western towns, people come together, support one another, and make do.

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