

Lincoln Highway News

News about America's premiere coast-to-coast highway.

A.L. Westgard visits Frenchman's Station



Looking west at Frenchman's Station, aka Bermond's Ranch, Nevada, 1922. University of Michigan Special Collections Library, lhc0819.

LINCOLN HIGHWAY NEWS IS A BLOG BY BRIAN BUTKO

Here's a fun and fascinating story by Anton L. Westgard from his 1920 book "Tales of a Pathfinder" about Frenchman's Station, a tiny outpost on the Lincoln Highway east of Fallon, Nevada. It was named for its French proprietor, Aime Bermond, who opened the stage station in 1904. The USPS named the site Bermond, with the Frenchman himself as postmaster. The business survived into the 1980s, when the building was sold to the Navy — the area is used for air warfare training by the Fallon Naval Air Base. It was demolished in 1987; only a few scattered remnants mark the site, which you can see at <https://goo.gl/maps/yX50c> (<https://goo.gl/maps/yX50c>).

"FRENCHMAN'S STATION"

One moonbright midsummer's evening our party arrived at Frenchman's Station, located in the most arid part of Central Nevada near the trail that in former days was the Pony Express route and two generations later became the Lincoln Highway. The station was kept by a Frenchman who made a living by hauling water from a spring, twelve miles distant, and selling it to freighters hauling ore and supplies between mining camps to the South and the railroad at Eureka. He also had sleeping accommodations in one of the two rooms in his cabin and furnished meals to travelers.

As the hour was late and my wife somewhat tired, we thought, that rather than take the time to pitch the tent and prepare camp, we would look over the accommodations of the station. I was deputized to examine these and report. I found that the double iron bedstead in the "guest room" occupied every inch of space necessitating undressing in the other room or perform the feat in the bed somewhat in the manner necessary in a Pullman berth. The facts were promptly reported back to the car.

Friend wife thought she had better have an individual peep and after looking the situation over thought it would do if the host would furnish clean linen. After having this cryptic word explained to him as meaning clean sheets and pillow cases he rolled his eyes and sputtered a flow of protestations assuring us that we need have no worry about the linen as the people who slept in that bed last were perfectly clean people, in fact as he put it: "as clean as Bill Taft." Mr. Taft at that time was our President.

Eventually we succeeded in inducing the production of satisfactory bedding and proceeded out into the lean-to shed of a kitchen in anticipation of



something to eat. Here my wife discovered a luscious-looking watermelon partly covered by a wet cloth to keep it cool and at once made a requisition on a generous slice. Our host, however, held up his hands in protest and with many apologies maintained that to grant this request would be out of the question and entirely impossible as he had had it brought all the way from Reno in anticipation of the visit of the "great pathfinder" who was expected over the route on an inspection trip as stated in the Reno papers and this was intended as a pleasing surprise to the great man. To encounter a luscious watermelon in the most arid part of Nevada, a hundred miles from a railroad, would be sure to convince him that after all this route had its advantages and should be advocated as a National touring boulevard and thus bring lucrative business to the station.

When my wife asked who this great man was he produced a copy of a Reno newspaper a few days old which contained an account of the expected visit of her husband. The half-tone photograph accompanying the article was taken when I wore city clothes and thus he had not recognized me. We chose not to enlighten him and enjoyed a fair meal sans watermelon. Our host in the meantime volubly set forth his bright prospects of future profits from travel over the expected boulevard. He was so earnest and enthusiastic that we did not have the heart to discourage him.

Now on the door of my car was a small brass plate on which was engraved my name and official position. Next morning when I went out to the car to see if everything was all right, I found the watermelon on the tonneau floor covered by the wet cloth but our host was nowhere in sight. In fact we prepared our own breakfast and only when we were ready to depart did he come from behind a nearby small hill and with tears in his eyes uttered his profound mortification over the fact that he had not recognized me, and his hopes that I would not let "this unfortunate demonstration of his absurd stupidity" influence me against "locating the boulevard" past his station.

While the boulevard is still only on the maps this route has attracted such a share of the transcontinental motor traffic that it is safe to assume that our host is reconciled for the lack of the boulevard by the increased flow of revenue from the tourist traffic. At least I hope he is as he was a cheerful, good old soul, residing alone out there in the barren and burning desert.

Tags: [Fallon NV](https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/fallon-nv/) (<https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/fallon-nv/>), [Frenchman](https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/frenchman/) (<https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/frenchman/>), [highway history](https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/highway-history/) (<https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/highway-history/>), [Lincoln Highway](https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/lincoln-highway/) (<https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/lincoln-highway/>), [Nevada](https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/nevada/) (<https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/nevada/>), [Road trip](https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/road-trip/) (<https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/road-trip/>), [roadside attraction](https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/roadside-attraction/) (<https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/roadside-attraction/>), [travel](https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/travel/) (<https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/travel/>), [US 50](https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/us-50/) (<https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/us-50/>), [Westgard](https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/westgard/) (<https://lincolnhighwaynews.wordpress.com/tag/westgard/>)

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