

### Carson City to Reno

Up to this point, the driving directions have been from east to west, but on this last thirty-mile stretch of our adventure, travelers will be on the west to east route, (south to north for thirty miles), on a road we have arbitrarily called the “Southern Branch,” for lack of any other name. It is, of course, an early leg of the Pioneer Branch, which, from east to west, extends around the southern shores of Lake Tahoe, to join the Truckee River Branch in downtown Sacramento.

This is an old road, as old as any in Nevada. Lee Schegg has learned that convict labor was used to grade portions of it as early as 1912. On Sept. 22, 1913, Reno’s *Nevada State Journal* reported that several employees of Packard Motor Car Co. left Reno the day before for Carson. W. A. Peck of that group was quoted: “I want to say before leaving this state that the roads from Fallon to Reno are the best we have encountered since we left Indiana. We found some of our hardest going in Wyoming and we are strong for that Lincoln Highway stuff that will assure a good through road for tourists.”

The motorists were using a Model 30 Packard and reported only tire trouble on their trip.

There was a Good Roads meeting in Reno on April 25, 1914, when it was agreed that men armed with “picks, shovels, and sledge hammers” would leave both Reno and Carson on Sunday, May 3, to repair all the bad places in the road. Teams with scrapers would handle the heavy work, following the Reno men. Lunches were prepared for the volunteers, who enjoyed a bountiful repast at noon.

Fat lot of good that did. The *Daily Appeal* of July 8, 1914, reported that there are places on the road east of Washoe Lake where the settling water produced “a regular quagmire.” (That road was used alternately with the western road.) “Autos over the road and attempting these mudholes have sunk to the axles, and assistance has had to be called to release them from their predicament.”

The road was a dangerous one in the early years. In 1915 the Virginia and Truckee Railroad was asked to install bells at their grade crossings. Signs were to be put up along the Lincoln Highway, advising routes to be taken to avoid deep sand. Carson’s *Daily Appeal* announced that boards were going up to keep Reno-bound people from making the wrong turns.

The 1920 *Blue Book* advises that the road from Carson to Lakeview was in gravel, as opposed to mud, “then rather rough and in places poor road to Reno.”

But concrete paving was on the horizon. In August 1921 *Nevada Highway News* reported that less than two miles remained to be concreted between Steamboat Springs and Bowers, and heavy concrete mixers were on site between Bowers and Lakeview, just north of Carson City.

Okay, let’s head north now from Carson City. Zero the odometer at US 50 (Williams Street) and US 395 (Carson Road), driving north to Reno. At 3.7 miles pass the old junction with the East Lake Boulevard at Lakeview, staying on US 395. The new junction, the Lakeview Interchange, is .3-mile ahead. Follow the signs to leave US 395 there on Nev. 429 and zero the odometer. The road extends along the west side of US 395 for .8- mile. Then it will slant off to the northwest, and .8-mile ahead the Lincoln Highway turns to the left on the Franktown Road, Nev. 877. Zero the odometer again and at a reading of 2.7 miles, the

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Franktown Road turns to the north and rejoins 429 at the settlement of Franktown, about three miles farther north. Zero the odometer again at this point.

Franktown, a dozen miles north of Carson, had a population of 400 people in 1916. But no overnight accommodations. About all Franktown could offer were a “railroad station, telegraph, drinking water, and radiator water.”

Turn onto northbound Nev. 429. At a reading of .9-mile, the Bowers Mansion is passed. Lemuel “Sandy” Bowers got rich quick—in the Comstock, Virginia City. He and his wife, Eilley, built his mansion in 1863 for a cool \$400,000, several millions in today’s dollars. He died five years later and his widow lost the property to foreclosure. It eventually became a resort, and closed in 1946. It is now a property of Washoe County Parks.

Somewhere along this road Claude Farlinger, driving a “cutdown Ford,” evidently was rejoicing the advent of the new concrete roadway, and floored the little Tin Lizzie. The Model T swerved toward the edge of the road, probably hitting a rock that tore a tire loose. Farlinger lost control and the car rolled several times, throwing out Farlinger and his passenger, August Bucchianeri. Minutes later both unconscious men were rushed to a Reno hospital, and the passenger, with broken ribs puncturing his lungs, was not expected to live.

The 1913 Lincoln Highway is proceeding along the western shore of shallow Washoe Lake, 3.5 miles north-to-south and two miles wide.

Drive two miles north of the Bowers Mansion and the road will come to a T at US 395. Turn left there and zero the odometer. Washoe City is off to the right, 1.7 miles ahead. The 1916 *Road Guide* gave it a population of 29, with the same amenities as Franktown, except that it had a campground for Lincoln Highway tourists. Zero the odometer there again.

This road was one of the earliest legs of the Nevada Lincoln Highway to be paved, concreted about the same time as the road from Reno to Verdi. When construction was going on, Lincoln Highway traffic occasionally was routed over an eastern variant, reached at Lakeview, a few miles north of Carson City. East Lake Boulevard, Nevada Highway 428, skirts the eastern shores of Washoe Lake. Its northern juncture is reached at a reading of 1.4 miles. Turn off there, to the right, and park. There is an nice remnant of the old Lincoln Highway there, paralleling 395 back to the west. Closed to vehicular traffic at both ends, it is an ideal hiking leg.

Zero the odometer at that junction, and continue on US 395. Drive northeast for .7-mile, turn off onto the shoulder of the highway and stop. Climb the hill to the east for a long stretch of broken pavement, also hike able.

Pass Steamboat 4.5 miles ahead, and see a remnant down below on the right. It comes back in at 4.9. Broken concrete dating to 1913 may be seen at the right from time to time. This was known as Steamboat Springs in Lincoln Highway days, with a population of 23, a railroad station, a hotel, telephone service, and a free campsite.

Near the end of the drive to Reno, the road name changes to Virginia Street. There is a freeway exit to the right—avoid it, and stay straight ahead. Pass the famous Riverside Hotel on the left, and immediately cross the Truckee River.

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There were accidents on the Lincoln, and all other highways, as soon as the dawn of the automobile age. This one was reported in Carson City's *Daily Appeal* on July 3, 1914. Jack Lewis, 11, whose parents had recently moved from Carson to Reno, was run down here, at First and Virginia. Jack was "the second kid in a week to sustain injuries from a machine driven by a woman." The boy got a broken arm and many bruises when one of the front wheels passed over him. The driver stopped the car immediately, right over the kid. She pulled him from beneath the car and tried to calm him, as he was yelling his head off. The driver had honked at the boy, but being somewhat deaf, he didn't hear the "000-gah."

Reno, at first, was enthusiastic about the arrival of the Lincoln in their fair city. When the Lincoln Highway Association urged cities and towns along the road to have a big toot on Oct. 31, 1913, Reno complied. There was a downtown automobile parade of more than 60 cars, which formed at 3 o'clock. The town band was carried on a truck, leading the parade. Many of the cars were decorated with bunting, some completely obscured by it. The parade was followed by talks by Governor Taskar Oddie, Mayor Fred J. Shair, and former senator W. A. Massey. School children were transported to Powning Park to sing patriotic songs.

But the Reno Lincoln Highway experience wasn't all sweetness and light. The *Ely Record* of May 2, 1924, reported that the "Reno Crowd is Still Knocking Lincoln Highway." Eastbound people were being told that the Lincoln was impassable east of Reno, that they should take the Victory Highway (later US 40) to Elko, and then south to Ely.

One who suckered for that line said that for forty miles on the Victory, they were unable to make more than six to eight miles an hour. "It's the same old fight against the Lincoln highway that Reno and Salt Lake City had carried on for several years past," the paper reported.

A similar story was carried in the July 12, 1924 edition of Fallon's *Churchill County Eagle*, headlined "They Continue to Lie About Lincoln Way."

Arrive at Second Street and Virginia, the heart of town and zero the odometer. Turn right and drive east for two blocks, then right again on Lake Street. Drive south for two more blocks and drive beneath an earlier Reno arch—"Reno—Biggest Little City in the World."

Once back in Reno, our readers will have traversed all the major routes of the Lincoln Highway in Nevada. There may have been a flat tire or two on those gravel/dirt roads. Some of the paint from the cars may be lodged on the manzanita. There may have been some awful meals in greasy spoons. But the memories probably will be of the clean air, the breeze in the faces, the purr of a modern automobile as it traveled those historic roads.

When it is over, the authors hope the readers will have a renewed appreciation for those intrepid people who established those routes, and those who came later to make the Lincoln Highway an indelible part of American transportation history. Remember Henry Boume Joy. Remember Henry C. Ostermann. Remember Gael Hoag. And remember the nameless tens of thousands who traveled these same roadways when they were new— possibly including our parents and grandparents. People who occasionally got stuck, but who almost always persevered to arrive at their destinations: Lincoln Park, Times Square, or any place in between.

And finally, realize that these routes, and the historic structures nearby, must be preserved, for our

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children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren to enjoy in the twenty-first and twenty-second centuries. That can happen only with involvement, and the most effective way to be involved is by supporting the wonderful Lincoln Highway Association. There is membership information in the back of this volume. Please join. The future definitely needs you.