



# Iowa Lincoln Highway Association

Fall 2023 Newsletter | Volume 28, No. 3

## President's Corner

by Mary Helen Preston

What a summer!!!! From community events to Ragbrai to bus tours there was certainly something for everyone. Now we turn the corner for fall, hoping travelers continue to travel and visit our communities in Iowa and especially along the Lincoln Highway. It is important we take every opportunity to raise awareness and educate visitors about Lincoln Highway and Iowa's rich history. We are "Iowa Nice." There's so much we should be proud of.

I am confident everyone reading this newsletter has interest in what the future holds. News within this newsletter concerns me and I hope after reading concerns you too. It's increasing apparent we are losing our history due to deterioration, lack of attention, lack of knowledge and progress. I'm not only concerned about material items (buildings, books, pictures, etc.) but also with the knowledge within some of our members. How do we combat the potential losses? How do we educate on the significance of the Lincoln Highway's importance?

Let's first talk about the material losses. There's a possibility we may lose one of the most iconic landmarks along the Lincoln Highway - the Lincoln Highway Bridge. Garry and I are personally on a labor of love journey to save Preston's. Mike Kelly is working hard to maintain Youngville. The Ausbergers continue to save important structures. These are only a few. Yes, time has taken its toll. Yes, there will continue to be success stories but how many will we lose?

Now, let's talk historical knowledge. I think we can all agree as an Association we are getting older with few younger generations interested in what we are. Again, from personal experience - I lost my dad unexpectedly in 2011 and in turn the historical knowledge of Preston's now I'm having to rely on others to help me fill in the blanks. I know there has been talk about audio recordings from those who know about our history. Who do we know who can undertake this project? Are there grants available to us? This is something we need to consider before it's too late.

The Lincoln Highway was critical in building the groundwork for travel. As I've written and stated in our meetings, WE cannot let the lore of automotive travel disappear. WE are the knowledge keepers and must be committed to educating and promoting the Lincoln Highway. WE have so much to be proud of!

To those reading this newsletter - It will take ALL of us to plan, execute and sustain the Iowa Lincoln Highway Association and the historical significance of the Lincoln Highway.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the Lincoln Highway - the Past, the Present and the Future.

## Lincoln Highway Postcards

Kay Shelton, LHA President

September 1, 2023 Facebook Post

If anybody has an extra Lincoln Highway postcard or two, feel free to mail any postcards to the Stockton Heritage Museum in Illinois.

The museum is off the U.S. Grant Memorial Highway (Route 20 in that area of Illinois). The museum is looking to create a display of postcards in a few months and they want people to send postcards from all over.

Please send 'Greetings from the Lincoln Highway' to:

Stockton Heritage Museum  
PO Box 93  
Stockton, IL 61085

## Redbird Express Sandra Huemann-Kelly

August 27, 2023 Facebook Post

Sad news today. We have known various hoboos over time. Redbird Express was a very special fellow. Always enjoyed seeing him at Lincoln Highway gatherings. If you look at conference group photos over the years I am usually standing next to him and his big friendly wave.



# Peak Fall Foliage Viewing



From AccuWeather's 2023 Fall Foliage Forecast

After a dry, hot summer; fall is fast approaching providing a great time for a day trip along the Lincoln Highway to experience Iowa's fall beauty, festivals, vineyards, and orchards. Just really the perfect time to get out.

Due to the harsh summer we've had, AccuWeather has indicated we could be in for a dull fall since trees were under more stress this year than normal and could shed their leaves early. Let's hope not!

Other reports are indicating, by mid-October is when most counties will start seeing peak colors.



By Halloween, most of Iowa will see peak colors.

You can find an interactive map at <https://smokymountains.com/fall-foliage-map/> to plan a day trip or even a weekend excursion. So get out and explore what our great state has to offer.

## Mission Statement

The Lincoln Highway Association shall identify, preserve, interpret and improve access to the Lincoln Highway and its associated sites, pursue the appropriate measures to prevent further deterioration, destruction or alteration of the remaining sections, publicize and seek public awareness of its goals and activities for preserving and developing the LH, facilitate research about the LH, and publish a magazine for articles and news of activity relevant to the LH, work with local communities and businesses to promote the LH as a tourism destination, and be exclusively charitable and educational within the meaning of the Internal Revenue Code.

## ILHA Officers, Board of Directors, County Consuls, & Staff

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## Stay in the Know!

Visit our website to read the minutes from our last meeting.  
[www.iowalincolnhighway.com/latest-news](http://www.iowalincolnhighway.com/latest-news)



@IowaLincolnHighwayAssociation  
@LincolnHighwayHeritageByway

# "The King is deal! Long Live the King!"

Charles Betz

August 11, 2023 Facebook Post

In preparation for the King Tower's imminent demolition, King Tower's iconic Native American Head signs have been removed from the grounds. Hopefully someone has also taken care to remove the Native American murals that graced the walls of the King Tower since its glory days.

### Editor's Note

During the August 21, 2023 Tama City Council meeting, attendees were informed the sign, which was been recently restored, was in a safe place.



Photos from August Facebook post. Top photo posted by Rob Smith. Bottom photo posted by Charles Betz.



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## Shelby Tour Stops At Preston's



On September 9, a group of Shelby Cobra driver's touring the Lincoln Highway from Dekalb, Illinois to Medicine Bow, Wyoming stopped at Preston's Station in Belle Plaine. They were stopping at many of the Lincoln Highway attractions they could while following the Lincoln Highway. The group was made up of Shelby enthusiast and Lincoln Highway Association members from across the country. Their goals was to reach Medicine Bow by Wednesday, September 13.

One couple stated they had to read a book and watch a movie so they knew Lincoln Highway history.



## Montour Gas Station Update

Joyce Ausberger reported Bob got the Phillips 66 sign up at the gas station.

Richard Dunsmore from Toledo donated the sign.

## Annual Dues

Iowa Lincoln Highway Association dues are \$15.00 annually. You may pay up to three years. Make checks payable to Iowa Lincoln Highway Association. Please send membership info and payment to:

ILHA  
P.O. Box 224  
Grand Junction, IA 50107

If you have any questions, please write to the above address or contact:

Membership Coordinator - Dean Parr  
(319)366-0552 or drparr51@gmail.com

# Tama Bridge's Future Remains Unclear

## Council hears opinions about Lincoln Highway landmark

*Jeff Morrison, Between Two Rivers*

A side rail of the Lincoln Highway Bridge is faithfully replicated in wood atop a trophy case in the hallway of the Tama Civic Center.

On August 21, in that building, following an hour of public comments, the Tama City Council voted to seek \$1 million in federal funding to modify the bridge. How much of the original structure can be retained, and even its status as a vehicle or pedestrian bridge, remains unknown. Completion could take up to two years.

Other bridge-related actions taken at the meeting were to prepare for closing the present contract with Boulder Construction, including the issue of detour signs, and to continue the current contract with Snyder & Associates to determine the next steps.

Use of federal money requires satisfying Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966, proving “that there are no feasible and prudent alternatives to the use of certain historic bridge structures to be replaced or rehabilitated with federal funds and that the projects include all possible planning to minimize harm resulting from such use.”

The Lincoln Highway, the nation’s first transcontinental highway, runs from New York City to San Francisco. The Tama bridge, built in 1915, is the only one of its kind in the country. A rehabilitation project, nearly a decade in the making, stalled soon after work began this spring as the condition of the concrete deck was found to be worse than expected.



North side of the Lincoln Highway Bridge on August 21, 2023  
Photo by Mary Helen Preston

Those in attendance wanted the bridge on Fifth Street to be saved, but the differing goals of historic preservationists and present-day businesses were on full display in the public comment session.

Shellie Orngard, project manager with Prairie Rivers of Iowa, explained \$92,000 from various sources had been raised in the 2010s for the “express purpose of rehabilitating the bridge and repairing it,” and “not for creating a truck route or replacement bridge.” If not used for rehabilitation, the money should be returned to the donors, she said.

Orngard suggested a “bold proposal” of creating a new truck route, with a new bridge in a new location, and using the previously dedicated money to restore the old bridge for pedestrians and bicyclists. Other commenters favored that idea. David Kingsley, a grandson of the bridge builder, came to the meeting from his vacation in Minnesota. He said he had met many people who had seen the bridge, and hoped the community “will treasure your treasure.”

Joan Hayward Helm, president of the Tama County Historical Society, said many people had stopped at the Tama County Museum while visiting the bridge. “I think there’s a lot of people here who are willing to live with some discomfort for a while knowing that the end result is something all of us can be proud of.”

Iowa Lincoln Highway Association President Mary Helen Preston also spoke. She is the granddaughter of George Preston, whose gas station in Belle Plaine is also a Lincoln Highway landmark. The bridge is one of the most photographed places on the Lincoln Highway, she said. “It’s something we need to save.”

Randy Zimmerman of Z-Line Trucking on the east side of Tama said he “almost agreed” with a proposal for a second bridge, but said a truck route is needed sooner rather than later. There is no good way to get from that part of town to the other while the bridge is closed, he said, and “something needs to be done.” Zimmerman pointed out that a 24-month period until a connection was restored would span three harvest seasons.

Farmer Ken Bidwell urged an “immediate bypass” of the area. Jason Lakin of Tama Livestock Auction told the council, “I know it’s not your fault the bridge is bad,” but the city needs to move forward in a timely fashion. Nearly half of the auction company’s business comes from south of Tama, he said, and the closed bridge is an obstacle to livestock owners who are trying to get there. Lonnie Upah couldn’t understand why people were still talking about what to do with the bridge after Tama spent millions of dollars to repair and upgrade Fifth Street. He said he didn’t know the right answer to satisfy everyone, “but we have to have that road.” “I don’t know how we can’t crane” the bridge out, he said.

That method could result in severe damage if not instant disintegration.

The option of replacing the deck alone depends on the condition of concrete in the abutments. Tama resident Charlie Betz asked Kelli Scott of Snyder & Associates if that remained an option. Scott said it’s possible the abutments could be reused, but the concern is getting in there and finding more bad concrete.

Replacing the deck would take 12 to 18 months to complete, and even then, it would be a 20-year fix at most. A full modification/rebuild of the bridge would take up to two years. If the rails become part of the new bridge — and there’s no guarantee the entirety of both rails would be usable — a modern guardrail would be needed in front of them.

Building a new road to connect Fifth Street to Business U.S. 30, bypassing the bridge, would require acquisition and demolition of a mobile home park – or a completely different route – before construction could begin. The bridge deck would still need rebuilding before pedestrians could use it.

The bridge appears prominently in marketing for the Tama-Toledo area, including in large welcome signs along U.S. 30, a mural at the Toledo Hardee's and the logo as an overnight stop for RAGBRAI in July.



The council have their work cut out for them. Allan Richards, the Tama County consul (a sort of ambassador) for the Iowa Lincoln Highway Association, said during the comment session that if the council decided to move the bridge, "we [should] just as well put up a tombstone and each of you can put your names on that tombstone as making it happen."

The south side of the Lincoln Highway bridge in Tama, Iowa, is shown July 15, 2023. The "AY" at the west end already was slated for repairs, but the area received further damage in the winter of 2022-23. Photo by author.

This article was originally published in the Between Two Rivers newsletter on Substack, [betweentworivers.substack.com](https://betweentworivers.substack.com).

## Fall/Winter Iowa Travel Guides Available

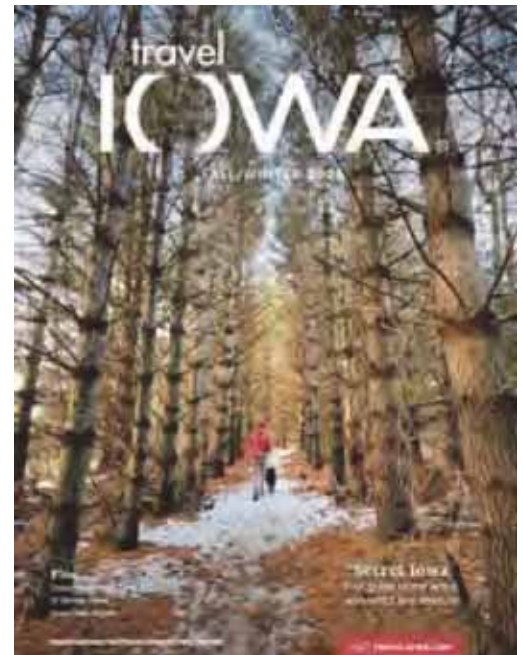
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As you travel along the Lincoln Highway be sure to stop in Grand Junction to visit the Museum, Lincoln Highway Garden and the Green Gable Cabin.

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# Celebrating 100 Years of the Reed/Niland Corner

*Jeanie Hau, Lincoln Highway National Heritage Byway Coordinator*

## 100 Years of the Reed-Niland Corner

The Reed/Niland Corner sits at the crossroads of the Lincoln Highway (the West-East motor route officially announced in 1913), and the Jefferson Highway (the North-South motor route officially announced in 1915) meet, join, and eventually separate in the center of the United States.

To celebrate the 100 years of the Reed-Niland Corner, the Colo Historical Association hosted an open house at the Reed Station Museum in June. Visitors ranged from local citizens to a caravan of motorcyclists who took cover under Charlie's awning and visited with the historians. Additionally, Kelsey Reed, who manages Niland's Café and the Colo Motel also held a celebration on August 5.

## The Beginning

In 1923, a soft-spoken, kind-hearted, generous man, Charlie Reed needed to supplement his small farming income to support the farm and his mother, whom he cared for until she passed away at 95. He saw an opportunity where the Lincoln and the Jefferson Highways meet, which happened to be at the SE Charlie started selling gas to travelers and set up a small gas station on his property.

He called his station the Lincoln-Jefferson Station (the L&J for short). It was not long before Charlie allowed travelers to camp on his land and to make them more comfortable, he added several "cubby hole" tourist cabins. To feed all of the travelers, Charlie soon started to sell sandwiches and cool beverages next to the small station. There is little chance that Charlie knew at the time he had just started what was to become known as the traveler's "one stop." The corner may hold the claim that it was the first one-stop on the Lincoln Highway in Iowa, and it quickly became one of the first that was open 24 hours as well.

## The Gas Station

The L&J Station relocated to the west side of the one-stop in 1930 (the original location was east of the current motel). Charlie renamed the station Reed's Standard Red Crown Service Station. The architect of the station is unknown but the design shows design details of the Arts & Crafts movement of the early twentieth century with its awning and pillars.

Charlie's gas station sold gas, oil, tires, batteries, cigarettes and cigars, soda pop, and candy and until 1940, the station offered oil change and tire repair services.

Charlie Reed could be seen at the station most days until he passed away on June 26, 1967, at the age of 91. The Station closed and has not been open on a regular basis since then.



Early days of Reed's Standard Service Station - Colo Historical Association Photo



## The Café

In 1926, Charlie decided to build a building for his lunch sandwiches and located it across from the L & J Station on the south side of the Lincoln-Jefferson Highway and fittingly called it, the L & J Café. Charlie's nephew, C. Reed Niland helped Charlie run the station and C. Reed's wife, Florence, ran the café. In 1930, when Charlie moved the Standard station to the west, he relocated the café to the north side of the road at the present-day location, and he enlarged the kitchen and seating areas. The café was renamed Niland's Café. In 1932, C. Reed Niland passed away unexpectedly so another one of Charlie's nephews, Claire Niland, helped at the station and Clare's wife, Margaret, ran the café. Later, the

husband/wife team took over the café. In 1952, Herb Owens reported the couple still ran the café and described there was, "a counter, booths, and a 100-selection jukebox; seven people were employed, and an extra girl worked in the summer." The café was run by the Nilands until their son John took over and decided to close the café in 1995.

### The Corner

In 1930, when the Jefferson Highway (US 65) was paved from the corner to the north, a sweeping curve was built on the north side, or backside, of the building. This curve created a triangle form of roadways around the buildings. The corner or, “the operations on the triangle,” as Owens called it, had become known as the Reed-Niland Corner. Three generations of the two related Colo families had served auto travelers for more than seventy years because a small, quiet man needed to supplement his income and in doing so had discovered that he enjoyed the interaction and service to others



### Keeping the Historic Corner Historic

In 1995, the Reed/Niland Corner became the property of the City of Colo. The Colo Development Group was formed and appointed to plan a renovation to preserve the history of the corner and plan for the operation of the café and motel. A Des Moines architectural firm was hired. It was decided the station, the café, and the motel would be restored to a 1940s-1950s design. A pedestrian walk was added to the corner with several interpretive signs to tell the Reed/Niland story.

Reed’s Standard Service Station and Niland’s Café were renovated in 2003, and the motel finished renovations by 2008. You cannot get gas at Reed’s but it is now a museum outfitted with vintage Red Crown gas pumps, the original cash register, and other small items left from the working station. Signs for the bus station and the historic Lincoln and Jefferson Highways can be found inside. The station museum was only open to visitors by request or during special events until recently. Several bus tours and many visitors from nearby and abroad have stopped by the restaurant and received a special tour of the Station.

### The Future

Early in 2022, the Reed Station was opened to visitors by the Colo Historical Association as their local history museum. The Association’s main focus is displaying the history in and throughout Colo. The Association states, “*With the Reed-Niland Corner being a complete one-stop complex left in the Nation along the Lincoln Highway, the museum has been pleasingly overwhelmed with the number of visitors and their wonderful comments and support for having the Station opened to view, not only for the station history and artifacts but those of the Lincoln and Jefferson Highways, Niland Café & Colo Motel, the nearby railroad and our vast local Colo history!*”

Kelsey Reed, current manager, said travelers can expect a traditional homemade dining experience that includes homemade pies and hot beef sandwiches. Reed would also like everyone to know, “*I have had great support from the community and welcome any and all ideas to continue to make the business successful.*”

The motel’s six rooms rent out per night, week, or month. Reed says she is almost completely booked out until winter with many of her customers being construction workers, migrant workers, and travelling nurses. Additionally, the City of Colo manages four apartments on the corner. Motel rooms can be reserved in advance by calling 641-377-3662

The Colo History Museum/Reed Station is open the last Saturday and Sunday of every month from 10-2 and for special events. Café hours May 1 - Oct 31: Tues-Fri 11-8, Sat 8-8, Sunday 8-2 , Nov-April closes, at 7 p.m.

Thank you to the Colo Historical Association for the history and to Herb Owens, for the January 25, 1952, Des Moines Tribune article.

### The James H. Andrew Railroad Museum and History Center

at the Boone and Scenic Valley Railroad

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The next ILHA meeting will be  
October 14, 2023 beginning at 9:30 am  
at Main Street Guest House in Arcadia, Iowa

The Guest House is located at 114 Main Street in Arcadia. Driving directions are simple: Drive to Arcadia from Highway 30; the Guest House is on Main Street just off the center of town. Coffee and pastries will be served starting at 9:00 am. A light lunch consisting of make your own sandwiches, fruits and veggies will be offered at noon. **We will need a headcount by September 29 if you will be staying for lunch.** Please let Mary Helen Preston or Barbara Hackfort know if you'll be staying for lunch. Don't forget to stop at the M&M Divide to see all of the improvements.

Upcoming Iowa LHA Meetings

January 13, 2024

Location: ZOOM

April 13, 2024

Location: TBD

FIRST CLASS

Iowa Lincoln Highway Association  
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