

## Excerpt from “A Picture of Progress on the Lincoln Way,” 1920

### Iowa Now in Progressive List

“Iowa,” to the motorist, has long been synonymous with “gumbo,” which in turn denotes a particularly vicious and viscous and generally impassable brand of mud peculiar to that state. While a real start has not yet been made upon an adequate system of improved roads in Iowa, great strides have been accomplished toward removing fundamental difficulties which stood in the way of progressive action.

Iowa is not yet out of the mud, but she has definitely placed herself in the list of progressive states systematically undertaking to accomplish worthwhile results.

The good roads proposition has had to be fought out to a finish in the State of Iowa, where for some years it was the football of politics. The campaign for the governorship of Iowa in 1916 was fought out almost entirely on the road question. There was the “mud roads” candidate and the “paved roads” candidate and to show the then relative strength of the two forces in that great state, which had one motor car to every seven of its population, and at that time had scarcely 400 miles of its 100,000 miles of highways improved with any form of permanent surfacing, the state legislature voted a tie on the question of assenting to the provision of the federal aid act of that year which offered to the State of Iowa for road improvements some \$2,000,000.00.

The legislature was evenly divided on the question of whether to accept the Government’s \$2,000,000.00 or not because the state had to put up another \$2,000,000.00. In that year the legislature even wanted to abolish the State Highway Department - the “mud roads” governor was elected.

### Iowa to Pave the Lincoln Way

Times have changed since then. Iowa is the one state west of the Mississippi, through which the Lincoln Highway passes, which is fully capable of itself financing the adequate and permanent completion of the road. Antiquated legislation, which was the main barrier to proper highway improvements in Iowa, was superseded by a new law during the past year, which provided for a primary road system of inter-county hard-surfaced roads about 6000 miles in extent and embracing about one-third of the old country road system. The question of paving the various sections of this state primary road system has been put up to the counties and it has now become a question for local decision as to whether the available road funds in each county shall be permanently invested in proper lasting improvement, or dissipated as in the past in work of no lasting benefit.

Nine counties out of the thirteen traversed by the Lincoln Highway in the State of Iowa have so far voted on the question of permanent paving and of this total five voted favorable. In those counties which voted against the paving of the primary routes, the question at issue and the one which defeated the proposition was largely one of petty local jealousy as to the location of the routes selected by the State Highway Department.

A broader vision in the connection with highway matters is bound to come. The general sentiment of the state is for permanent work, as is indicated by the comments of the state press in regard to those counties which have failed to ratify proper construction. Within another two years the questions will again come before the votes of the counties which have failed to pass the measure, and it then practically assured of acceptance.

### **State Has Ample Road Funds**

No argument as to whether they should or should not permanently pave all of Iowa's primary road system came to light during the last session of the State Legislature. The Chairman of the joint-subcommittee of the Iowa Legislature, charged with the preparation of the state highway law, brought out that the state could produce a revenue of about \$8,000,000.00 a year for "permanent highway construction" and added "this fund will be devoted exclusively to paying for drainage, grading and *hard surfacing* of the primary road system, and to the retirement of any bonds which may be issued for such purposes."

The Lincoln Highway across Iowa has been established as one of the primary state highways.

Iowa being a rolling country, expensive preliminary grading work has necessarily preceded any paving on main routes, and the majority of Iowa's expenditure on the Lincoln Highway in 1919 were for this form of work and for the construction of lasting concrete bridges. Over 22 miles of permanent new grade was established on the Lincoln Highways and more than 12 miles of it graveled for the temporary accommodation of travel.

The trans-Iowa road now as in the past is a boulevard in dry weather, but should not yet be attempted while wet. Next year will see an increase in the gravel strip which is gradually reaching across the state and lifting the travel out of the gumbo.

A little over a quarter of a million dollars was put into permanent work on the Lincoln Highway during 1919. The funds available for next year in the thirteen counties traversed by the route are, according to F. R. White, Acting Chief Engineer of the Iowa State Highway District, \$2,226,837.00. In addition to these funds, which represent motor licenses fees and equivalent federal aid, Clinton County, the first county west of the Mississippi, passed a bond issue for \$1,800,000.00 which will provide for the complete paving of the route across the county, and Green County in the central part of the state passed a bond issue for \$1,000,000.00 in which is included a project already surveyed, for the paving of the Lincoln Highway for about six miles east of Jefferson.

## 1920 To Bring Great Improvement

In a letter to the Lincoln Highways Association under date of October 20, 1919, Chief Engineer White says: "It is safe to say that by this time next year we will have undersoncrate or complete about 65 miles of paving and about 75 miles of finished grade work on the Lincoln Highway. It is unfortunate that a number of counties along the Lincoln Highway have voted against hard surfacing. However, we should view these reverses as temporary only. I feel sure that as rapidly as the work can be reasonable done the Lincoln Highway will be hard surfaced and that we can look forward confidently to a paved Lincoln Highway across the state in a few years."

Mileage of new construction complete on the Lincoln Highway in Iowa, 1919:

COUNTY	MILEAGE	TYPE	LOCATION
Clinton	7.7	Graded	Clinton west
Linn	.8	Brick	Cedar Rapids east
Story	7.0	Gravel	Nevada and Ames
Boone	5.5	Gravel	Boone west
Carroll	.75	Gravel	Carroll east
Crawford	.6	Graded	Dennison east
Total	22.35		