## Starke County 61 - Lincoln Highway

Automobiles were the playthings of the rich until 1909, when Henry Ford produced the Model T- the first car



that the average working family could afford. The number of cars manufactured and owned began to take off, but unfortunately there were few good places to drive them! For over half a century, long-distance travel in the United States had been accomplished by rail, and few roads suitable for the new horseless carriages existed. If the early cars did not break down on their own, it was very likely they would get stuck in mud on the dirt roads outside of cities and towns.

A grass-roots effort began, backed by car companies and related industries, to pull the country out of the mud. The Good Roads Movement championed named auto trails on the best available roads and advocated for government involvement in building hard surfaces on the public highways of the country. The first named auto trail to be marked from coast-to-coast was the Lincoln Highway. Only the <u>Yellowstone Trail</u>, the <u>Lincoln Highway</u>, and the <u>National Old Trails Road</u> were transcontinental in length and notability, out of the 250 named Auto Trails of the era.

As you probably know, there were two Lincoln Highways through Northern Indiana. The original one (1913-1928) was north of Starke County and went through Noble, Elkhart, St. Joseph, and La Porte Counties into Valparaiso. Later, the route was straightened to a more direct route through Kosciusko, Marshall and Starke Counties. This was because U.S. 30 was established in 1926, which led to the changing of the Lincoln Highway to a more direct southern route in 1928.

In 1928, The Boy Scouts placed concrete Lincoln Highway markers at 5 different intersections in Starke County

as well as across the nation. The following is from the Boy Scouts Council meetings: DP means direct or straight ahead post. RP means Right Turn.

DP main crossing Grovertown (Ind. 23) No. 630

RP 300 yds, E of Highway Gravel Loading Plant No. 631

DP main crossing (600 N) Hamlet No. 632

DP crossing roads (550 E) about ½ mile W of Hamlet No. 633

DP at Junction with Road No. 29 (U.S. 35) No. 634

I can find only one of these markers which is still displayed, although it has been moved from its original location. It is north of the main intersection in Hamlet –

Old 30 and CR 600E. There is also a modern metal marker on a tall post on the northeast corner of the Starke County Co-op's grain elevator lot in Hamlet.

The Indiana Lincoln Highway Association is developing a corridor management plan. If you know of any other markers or information about the Lincoln Highway, give me a call -574-772-4311.

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http://www.starkehistory.com http://www.scpl.lib.in.us/historical/