

## Second of two parts

BY DUANE CARLING

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FARMINGTON — Many of today's generation may not recall former President Dwight D. Eisenhower's role in the creation of today's modern interstate highway system. But even those who do may not be aware that Eisenhower's involvement has its roots in a movement that started slightly more than a decade into the 20th century.

A coast-to-coast paved highway was first envisioned by Carl G. Fisher of Indianapolis in 1912. He had built the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and held the first Indy 500 there in 1911. The famous racetrack is still referred to as The Brickyard because it was first paved with three million bricks weighing 10 pounds each.

Fisher also owned the Prest-O-Lite company, maker of carbide lights for automobiles. Together with Frank Seiberling, president of Goodyear, and Henry Joy, president of Packard Motor Car Company, they formed the Lincoln Highway Association (LHA) and promoted "The Good Roads Movement."

Subscribers to the movement realized that the automobile could only reach its full potential and the businesses associated with them could thrive only if good roads were built to provide fast and easy movement of people and goods across the nation. The name "Lincoln" was chosen to promote patriotic fervor for a road to unite the country.

The plan was to build "seedling miles" in or near every major city to demonstrate the benefits of a paved road — and hopefully motivate or shame local authorities into paving more road, eventually resulting in a paved road from coast to coast.

Concrete would be provided at the expense of the LHA if the localities would provide the labor. Because a two-mile stretch of concrete was already available between Kaysville and Farmington, Utah Gov. William Spry persuaded the Lincoln Highway Association to move the route through Weber Canyon, instead of through Parley's Canyon near Salt Lake City.

For two years, what vehicles there were whizzed through Davis County. But because the Weber Canyon route was 36 miles longer than the alternative, the association moved the highway to Parley's Canyon in 1915.

Some early motorists still favored the original line since the grades were flatter, which saved time as well as brake wear. The first route doesn't appear on any early maps because none were made available to the public until just after the Parley's route had been adopted.

In fact, the origin of the first Lincoln Highway pavement in Davis County might have been lost forever had it not been for crews accidentally discovering it while doing roadwork this fall. As it turned out, there were still a few people like 90-year-old Burnham J. Leonard around to identify the concrete because they remember watching it being built.

The Lincoln Highway in its early days was mostly just an idea at first, a collection of cow paths and country lanes that if linked together could take an imaginative traveler from Times Square in New York to Lincoln Park in San Francisco. In Davis County and in many parts of the route, motorists found their way across farm roads and cattle trails

by way of red, white and blue stripes painted on anything — fences, poles, houses and barns — that could serve as markers.

Guide books advised allowing 20 to 30 days to traverse the 3,384-mile route, depending on the weather, at an average speed of 18 miles per hour. In 1916, one very tough lady named Amanda Prouse did it in 14 days, driving an Oldsmobile with no top or sides, covering as many as 350 dirt road miles per day.

In July 1919, the first military convoy to cross the United States set out from Washington, D.C., for San Francisco via the Lincoln Memorial Highway. Among the 280 men and 72 vehicles was a young tank officer named Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The purpose of the trip was to demonstrate the practicality of speedy movement of men and war materiel from coast to coast

via truck convoy. The trip took two months, required the building or rebuilding of 65 bridges and improving miles of road that were previously suitable only for horses of light weight vehicles.

When "Ike" became president in 1953, one of his top priorities was beginning the construction of the country's present interstate highway system, originally known as the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. Today, the Lincoln Highway route is mostly followed by Interstate 80.

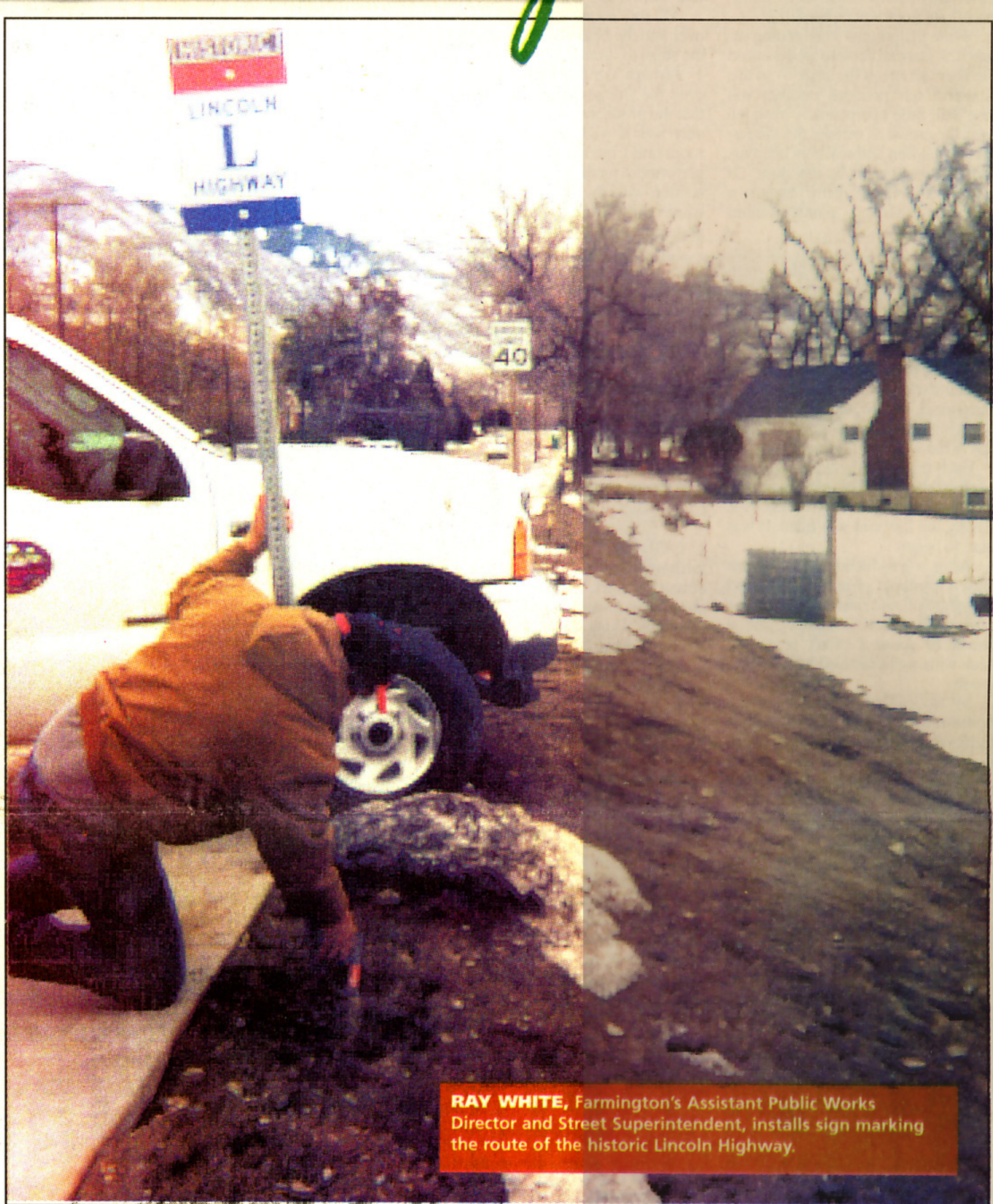
The Interstate system changed the face of the United States, and the face of travel. Instead of blasting straight across the landscape at 70 or more miles per hour, motorists first had to travel down country roads often built by the people who lived by them, stay in hotels run by people who perhaps lived

there, too, and eat in restaurants owned by those who grew, cooked and served the food.

Modern highway technology, plus corporate franchising systems have dramatically changed all that. But with all of today's technology, it seems that engineers still can't seem to make a highway that lasts for more than a few years before it starts to break up and need patching.

A creamy white chunk of concrete cut out of the original road near Farmington may find its way to the Lincoln Highway Association headquarters in Franklin Grove, Ill. It's a nice piece of history and still in perfect shape.

One has to wonder where all the prison laborers are who knew how to make that old concrete — or whether their secret was buried along with the road so many years ago.



**RAY WHITE**, Farmington's Assistant Public Works Director and Street Superintendent, installs sign marking the route of the historic Lincoln Highway.