

Way We Were

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The Lincoln Highway: 100 Year Road Tour 2013

On June 27th you may see a large caravan of antique cars cruising east through Summit County. This car tour is part of the 100 year celebration of the Lincoln Highway. The Lincoln Highway was the first transcontinental road in the US. The Highway was the idea of Carl Fisher who wanted to extend an improved road from New York City to San Francisco. Before 1913 there was only a haphazard collection of mostly dirt roads stretching from coast to coast. Mr. Fisher who was known for building the Indianapolis Motor Speedway persuaded Frank Seiberling of Goodyear Tire and Henry Joy of the Packard Car Company into supporting his vision. He established the Lincoln Highway Association (LHA) on July 1, 1913. The plan was to have the straightest line possible through the country.

As the road continued west toward Utah, the original plan was to have the route go through Coalville and then to SLC, but Governor Spry persuaded them to go to Ogden instead. So the first version of the route turned northwest at Echo and went to Henefer, passed through Ogden, and then south to SLC. A year and a half later, the LHA changed the route to go through Coalville, Wanship, and Parleys Canyon. This shorter revision brought the road west through Summit County passing right between the two houses on the Bitner Ranch at Kimball's Junction. It then continued west through Parley's Canyon on the road we now know as I-80. (When the freeway was widened in 1975 it was curved out and around the Bitner Ranch Rock house which is on the National Historic Site registry)

The Lincoln Highway Association will be briefly visiting Utah in June as it celebrates the 100 year anniversary. They have organized a driving tour that will follow the route from San Francisco to the halfway point in Kearney, Nebraska. Another tour will drive from New York City to Kearney where they will gather for a two day celebration. The Lincoln Highway changed public roads as they had been known and literally put Park City on the map! For more information visit: www.lincolnhighwayassoc.org.



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Credit: Park City Historical Society & Museum

Caption: Army convoy from Washington D.C. to San Francisco on the packed-dirt Lincoln Highway, around 1919.