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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

[X] New Submission [ ] Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Historic and Architectural Resources of the Potash Highway in Nebraska

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Highway Development in Nebraska, c.1890 – 1974

The Potash Highway in Nebraska, 1918 – c.1965

C. Form Prepared by

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Organization Mead & Hunt, Inc. / Heritage Research, Ltd. / Consultant Date 08-2002 / 03-2014

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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register Criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. ([ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature and title of certifying official

05-22-14
Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper

7-13-2014
Date of Action

Table of Contents for Written Narrative

Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Introduction

This Multiple Property Document for Historic and Architectural Resources of the Potash Highway in Nebraska is based on the Historic Highway Survey completed for the Nebraska State Historical Society and the Nebraska Department of Roads in 2001-2002. The following historic contexts were developed as a component of the Historic Highway Survey. See Section H for a discussion of the project and the identification and evaluation methods of the Historic Highway Survey.

Historic Highway Development in Nebraska

Prior to the twentieth century, much of the country, including Nebraska, had largely undeveloped road networks. The Oregon, California, and Mormon Trails and the route of the Pony Express were among the earliest transportation routes through Nebraska. The railroads followed, dominating the nineteenth century as the preferred method of transportation, while a system of vehicular roads for horse carriage, and later automobile, travel developed haphazardly. Rural roads typically followed section lines, which were reserved for right-of-way by the Nebraska Territorial Legislature, or historic routes of overland travel.

By the 1880s, interest groups began pressuring the federal government to reevaluate its role in the development of roads. The popularity of the bicycle and the introduction of the automobile in the 1890s raised public awareness of the need for adequate road networks. In response to the poor condition of the nation's road system, the "Good Roads Movement" emerged. A group of bicyclists organized the League of American Wheelmen, founding the first of many organizations to promote road improvements as part of the Good Roads Movement. With the motto, "lifting our people out of the mud," they lobbied the federal and state governments for better roads.[1] Advocates of the Good Roads Movement pushed for federal, state, and local support and financing for road building and maintenance activities. Rural Free Delivery (RFD) of postal services, begun in 1896, also increased awareness about the nation's substandard roadways and broadened the support for good roads, especially among those served by RFD. Although mail service was technically required in all conditions, poor roads could prohibit delivery and some local applications for RFD were even denied due to insufficient road connections.[2]

The nation's first state highway department was formed in Massachusetts in 1893, and Massachusetts was the only state to devote significant funding to roads between 1894 and 1903.[3] The federal government formally became involved in roads in 1893 with the formation of the Office of Road Inquiry within the United States Department of Agriculture. The engineers within the Office of Road Inquiry quickly allied with the "Good Roads" movement and the department evolved into a central source of technical information regarding roads. The Office of Road Inquiry collected data and released bulletins and circulars addressing road construction and administration issues.[4] After being renamed the Office of Public Road Inquiry in 1899, it also established a materials testing laboratory to identify suitable road materials.[5]

The 1905 Agriculture Appropriations Act terminated the Office of Public Road Inquiry and established the Office of Public Roads, a permanent federal road agency with an annual budget of $50,000.[6] Based on continued laboratory tests, the Office of Public Roads issued typical material specifications and testing procedures, as well as construction guidelines in 1911 and bridge specifications shortly thereafter. Highway standards were also developed by professional trade

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[1] George E. Koster, *A Story of Highway Development in Nebraska* (Lincoln, NE.: Department of Roads, 1997), 7, 11.
[2] Bruce E. Seely, *Building the American Highway System: Engineers as Policy Makers* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1987), 27.
[3] Seely 12-13, 22.
[4] Seely, 9.
[5] Seely, 16-17.
[6] William Kaszynski, *The American Highway* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co, Inc., 2000), 30.

organizations, a few states, and even the Lincoln Highway Association, which developed "Seedling Miles" to demonstrate the use of concrete for pavement.[7]

With the coming of the automobile and through the efforts of citizen groups and local governments, the development of roads took on major focus in the early twentieth century. By 1902 numerous national, state and local groups were involved in road promotion, including the National Good Roads Association, 32 affiliates of the Automobile Club of America, and 18 state and 14 local road associations. Despite the early efforts of these groups, only 154,000 miles of the country's over two million miles of road were improved in 1904.[8] Although prior to the turn of the century the automobile was a luxury only for the wealthy, by 1904, there were over 55,000 vehicles in use across the United States and by 1910 this number had skyrocketed to approximately a half-million.[9] As a result, the early twentieth century saw a proliferation of "named highways" across the United States, which sported descriptive names. In Nebraska, the Lincoln Highway, Meridian Highway, and Omaha-Lincoln-Denver (O-L-D) Highway were marked by 1913. The Blue Pole Highway, Grant Highway, Golden Rod Trail, Sun Flower Trail, Sunshine Highway, and Alfalfa Trail are just a few of the many other named early twentieth-century roads in Nebraska. As the automobile gained popularity and travelers made their way across the state and the country, these routes became well-traveled thoroughfares.

During this period, road development was largely initiated by private interests, composed of local, state, or regional associations, who cooperated in the designation, promotion and improvement of regional and cross-country routes. Citizen organizations, like the Omaha-Lincoln-Denver Transcontinental-Highway Association, the Lincoln Highway Association and the Meridian Road Association, were formed to designate, promote, and improve these long distance highways. These groups also lobbied state, federal, and local governments to cooperatively plan and construct roads. Local commercial clubs, business associations, automobile clubs, and merchants often contributed labor and funds to bring major roads through their towns and improve local roads that linked to their routes. These interest groups were significant in the ultimate development of a national highway system.

Road organizations promoted their routes through published guidebooks, which advertised their highway by offering route directions and identifying tourist services and sites of interest. Two national guidebook series identifying routes throughout the country, including those in Nebraska, were the *Tourist Information Bureau* and the *Automobile Blue Book*. The earliest guidebook published specifically for Nebraska was the *Official Road Book*, released in 1913 by the Nebraska State Automobile Association. In addition to the published road and route guides, gasoline, oil and tire companies often published state maps identifying early named highways. These state maps not only provided information on a variety of highways, but also served as a marketing device. The Standard Oil Company of Nebraska and Goodrich Tire Company are known to have published some of the earliest commercial maps of the state of Nebraska.

In Nebraska, the Good Roads Association was officially formed in 1918, offering a forum in which private citizens and organizations could express opinions and lobby for highway development. The organization's purpose was to encourage the most efficient and economical expenditure of highway monies. It also offered state and local officials accurate information to help guide them in enacting legislation concerning Nebraska's roads.[10]

Early State Road Legislation

Nebraska's first county road law pre-dates statehood, passed by the Territorial Legislature on January 26, 1856. An 1862 map prepared by civil engineer Augustus Harvey indicates the first ten territorial routes in Nebraska. They were: Omaha City to Cedar Island, Plattsmouth to Archer and the Kansas line, Brownville to Nebraska Center, Tekomah to Pawnee, Florence to Fontanelle, Nebraska City to Grand Island, Bellevue to Catherine, De Soto to Pawnee, a suitable point on the

[7] Seely, 29.
[8] Seely, 24 and 9.
[9] Koster, 7.
[10] Nebraska Good Roads Association, *The Nebraska Good Roads Quiz* (n.p., 1940).

Platte River to Dakotah, and Pawnee to Nebraska Center.[11] Although the Territorial Legislature recognized the need to develop a road network connecting settlements throughout the entire territory, their first road law delegated responsibility for road construction to the individual counties. Therefore, each county was responsible for surveying public roads, maintaining them to standards spelled out in the law, and overseeing construction labor within its boundaries. To facilitate road construction and maintenance, the law authorized county commissioners to impose taxes and appropriate labor.[12] Despite the legislation, roads throughout Nebraska remained poorly maintained and largely undeveloped. The majority of traffic on territorial roads was local in character; therefore, interest in road construction and improvement rarely extended beyond township lines.[13] These local roads often remained in poor condition because maintenance meant higher taxes.

After achieving statehood in 1867, Nebraska's state government began to more fully recognize the need for good roads; however, it continued to delegate responsibility for their construction to the counties. State legislation passed in 1879 granted individual counties the authority to build and maintain roads, reserved section lines for public roads and established a standard 66-foot road width. The law also authorized a tax levy to finance maintenance projects. Finally, the new state law actually mandated the creation of roads, which the earlier territorial legislation had failed to do. Even so, road construction was still dependent on local taxation. Men within a community usually opted to pay off their tax levy with road work, while expressing little interest in additional taxation. As a result, while Nebraska had 79,462 miles of road by 1904, most were unimproved and poorly-maintained section line roads that followed the rectangular "grid" of the township-range system of land survey.[14] This eventually created "stair step" routes with numerous 90 degree turns for Nebraska's early "named highways," which often followed local roads in an effort to speed completion and save money.

The first state agency with road-related responsibilities was the State Board of Irrigation. Created on April 24, 1895, it was charged with supervising irrigation practices to manage Nebraska's water resources, while preserving the integrity of affected waterways. Overseeing the construction of State Aid bridges was among the Board's early responsibilities, and it naturally evolved into the state agency that dealt with road issues. With the introduction and popularity of the automobile, the Board sought legislation regarding motor vehicles in 1905. The Nebraska Legislature passed a motor vehicle registration fee of $1.00 and responded to safety issues regarding speed limits, the operation of a vehicle near horses and the use of brakes, signals, and lights.[15]

The need for better roads in Nebraska and the state's involvement in road construction was spurred by a rapid increase in motor vehicle registration. The number of registered vehicles in Nebraska climbed from a mere 1,087 in 1906 to 11,399 in 1910, 211,750 in 1919 and a staggering 419,198 by 1929.[16] As the number of automobiles increased in Nebraska, the state government recognized the growing need for improved roads. In 1911 the Nebraska Legislature changed the name of the Board to the State Board of Irrigation, Highways and Drainage and increased its responsibilities to include road construction and maintenance.[17] The Board was also directed to elect a civil engineer to serve as the "State Engineer." Finally, the legislation raised vehicle registration fees to $2.00, with the increased revenue going to county road funds.[18] The State Aid Bridge Act, which passed the same year, was the first legislative action resulting from this increased interest in roads. The act not only increased the state's authority over local road administrators, but it also resulted in increased local expenditures.[19]

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[11] Wardner G. Scott, "Nebraska Public Highways," *Nebraska History* XXVI, no. 3 (July-Sept. 1945), 164.
[12] Koster, 11-12.
[13] Clinton Warne, "Some Effects of the Introduction of the Automobile on Highways and Land Values in Nebraska," *Nebraska History* 38, no. 1 (1957), 43-44; Koster, 2.
[14] Nebraska Highway Advisory Committee, *Nebraska Highway Needs* (Lincoln, NE.: Nebraska Highway Advisory Committee, 1948); Koster, 13.
[15] Koster; iv, 14-15.
[16] Koster, 14-15, 20-22. Nebraska's population in 1930 was 1,377,963, with 271,994 individuals between the ages of 0 and 14. That means there was approximately one car for every 2.65 Nebraskans over the age of fifteen.
[17] Koster, iv.
[18] Koster 16.
[19] Warne, 44.

Federal Funding for Nebraska's Highway Construction

Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1916
Limited federal and state funds were available for road construction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In 1916 Congress passed the first formal highway policy with a regular appropriation of funding to the states. By this time the number of automobile registrations in the country had reached 2.3 million and the auto industry and motorists were lobbying heavily for programs and funds to improve roads.[20] The Federal-Aid Highway Act, signed by Woodrow Wilson on June 11, 1916, was the first time the federal government was directly involved in financing road building efforts. Approximately $5 million was appropriated the first year with the funding escalating each year until reaching $75 million.[21] Managed by the Secretary of Agriculture, funding was allocated by a formula based on a state's population, land area and road mileage. Under this act the federal government would finance up to 50% of the cost of construction, not to exceed $10,000 per mile.

In order to obtain federal funds, each state's highway commission had to meet standards set by the Office of Public Roads. To participate in the Federal-Aid Program, a state had to:

- maintain a state highway department to administer the Federal-Aid Act
- assume responsibility of all roads on which federal funds were spent (this could be delegated to local governments)
- classify eligible mileage in eligible road systems based on traffic needs and services rendered
- agree to uniform standards of construction and design
- meet inspection requirements before bills were paid
- agree to further diversion of road funds to non-road purposes after 1935
- match federal funds under mutually acceptable standards[22]

The passage of the Federal-Aid Road Act of 1916 discouraged the haphazard construction of roads by counties without state supervision. Individual states now had to support federally-approved highway departments and develop the engineering skills necessary to design Federal-Aid roads. State highway commissions were now responsible for the preparation of plans and specifications, as well as the administration of all road construction and maintenance, while the federal government held the right to inspect all projects.[23] In Nebraska, the Federal-Aid Road Act of 1916 forced the State Board of Irrigation, Highways, and Drainage to take on a greater role in road development. Once Nebraska accepted federal funding, the state became responsible for the construction and maintenance of the Federal-Aid road system.[24]

Wartime shortages hindered actual road construction following the passage of the Federal-Aid Road Act of 1916. The first Federal-Aid road project in Nebraska, the Lincoln and Emerald Road (West "O" Street), began in July of 1918 and was completed the following year. The project was 5.44 miles in length and was estimated to cost over $217,000. Several other Federal-Aid projects in the state were completed by 1920, including: a paved portion of the Lincoln Highway from Dodge Street in Omaha to the Saunders County line, an earthen 12.53-mile stretch of the Meridian Highway between Geneva and Belvidere in Fillmore County, and 25.87-miles of the Seward-York-Aurora (SYA) Highway, an earthen road extending east and west of York, in York County.[25]

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[20] Seely, 24-25.
[21] Seely, 43.
[22] Nebraska Highway Advisory Committee.
[23] Seely, 42-43.
[24] Nebraska Department of Public Works, *Fifteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1923-1924* (Lincoln, NE.: Nebraska Department of Public Works, 1924),14.
[25] Nebraska Department of Public Works, *Thirteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1919-1920* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Public Works, 1920), 579.

Under the Federal-Aid plan, approximately 5,000 miles of highway under 88 route numbers were designated as the state highway system in 1919.[26] Maintenance of the state highway system was assigned to the counties. In addition, the legislature created the State-Aid Road Fund, financed by property taxes and appropriated with the same formula as the Federal-Aid. With the establishment of the state highway system, counties were required to form a system of county roads, under the jurisdiction of the County Board, not exceeding 20% of the total mileage in the county.[27]

World War I brought a slow-down in new road construction and the improvement of existing roads due to a construction deferment and limited labor and supplies. Road construction continued at a slower pace but, by 1918, 16 projects comprising 512 miles had been approved, contracts for 200 miles had been let, 1,600 miles had been surveyed, and plans had been prepared for another 952 miles. After the war, Congress transferred surplus equipment and materials from the War Department to state highway departments. Nebraska received 407 trucks, 74 touring cars, miscellaneous equipment and tons of materials and supplies. The state then sold surplus trucks, equipment and materials to county road departments to use for road construction and maintenance.[28]

In 1919 the Nebraska Legislature restructured state government, replacing the State Board of Irrigation, Highways and Drainage with the Department of Public Works. The Department consisted of the Bureau of Irrigation, Water Power, and Drainage; the Bureau of Roads and Bridges; and the Division of Motor Vehicle Registration, all under the authority of the State Engineer. The Bureau of Roads and Bridges was responsible for the construction of all state and Federal-Aid roads and the building of all State bridges. It was divided into three sub-divisions. The Maps and Plans Division was responsible for preliminary field investigations and surveys required in planning State and Federal-Aid roads. They also completed special designs for equipment, such as derricks, camp buildings, and wagons. The Division of Road Construction was responsible for all facets of construction, maintenance, and testing for State and Federal-Aid road projects. The Division of Road Equipment, Repairs, and Maintenance was responsible for outfitting counties with equipment, and keeping up with the general maintenance and repair of Department vehicles and equipment. The three divisions worked together to create and maintain Nebraska's early road and highway system.[29]

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1921

Federal funding for highway construction was continued by Congress with the passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1921. This act created the "seven percent system," under which each state was eligible for financial aid for the construction of seven percent of its road mileage. Nebraska's certified mileage at the time was 80,272, allowing for 5,619 miles of roads to be funded under the seven percent system. Within two years, each state was required to designate three percent of their primary roads and four percent of their secondary roads as part of the federal-aid highway system and, as a result, these roads were eligible for assistance.[30] Federal funding was to be matched by state funds on a 50-50 basis. Primary roads were designated as an important interstate throughway, and were to be developed into an integrated national road system that would allow easy intercommunication throughout the country. Road designs were required to adhere to the federal government's standards for minimum width, grade, and adequacy of roadbed type for estimated traffic load. States were required to submit their plans to the United States Secretary of Agriculture for approval.[31]

Between 1917 and 1926 Nebraska spent over $27 million on road construction of which just less than half, $12.5 million, was furnished by the federal government.[32] The 1920s were a boom for highway construction and improvements

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[26] *Thirteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1919-1920*, 755. A description of each numbered highway, including the terminus points, is located on pages 755-759.
[27] *Fifteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1923-1924*, 14; Koster, 19.
[28] Koster; 20, 28.
[29] *Thirteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1919-1920*, 535-539.
[30] Seely, 74.
[31] *Fifteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1923-1924*, 14.
[32] "Roads and Road Building in Nebraska," *Nebraska Highways* 1, no. 3 (1927): 6.

nationwide with over $10 billion invested in roads. Most states financed this significant road construction through increased taxation and bonds; however, Nebraska was not allowed to go into debt and unwilling to dramatically increase taxation to pay for improved roads. Until about 1925, road construction and maintenance in Nebraska was financed largely by federal aid and funds from property taxes levied by state, county, and cities. After 1925 road construction and maintenance funding was supplemented by a gasoline tax and vehicle registration fees. Nebraska's fiscally responsible pay-as-you-go policy challenged the Bureau of Roads and Bridges to meet the state's growing highway needs and to keep up with road development in the rest of the country. This policy also forced the Bureau of Roads and Bridges to continually struggle to meet the financial match for federal funding. In an effort to control costs, Nebraska researched road materials and advocated graded dirt roads as a sound and economical option.[33]

The trend toward a centralized system of highway construction and maintenance continued into the 1920s. In 1926 the Nebraska Legislature passed a statute requiring the Department of Public Works to maintain the state highway system, except for state highways within the corporate limits of municipalities with a population over 1,400. Other city and village streets in Nebraska were under the authority of municipal agencies. Financing and maintenance for state highways was provided by setting aside 30 percent of all motor vehicle registration fees, and portions of the gasoline tax, first authorized in 1925, as deemed necessary. Prior to this time, counties were responsible for state highway maintenance. The legislation also required highway construction and maintenance contracts, previously let by the counties, to be awarded by the Department of Public Works. The Legislature also gave the Department of Public Works the power to acquire right-of-way directly.[34]

In 1933 the Legislature changed the name of the Department of Public Works to the Department of Roads and Irrigation. The State Engineer was given the additional duties of Director of Motor Vehicles, Chairman of the State Planning Board, and Director of Highway Safety and Patrol.[35]

Marking the Way

The early highway organizations gave their roads colorful and descriptive names and marked them haphazardly with logos on telephone poles and other makeshift signposts. However, there was an obvious need for a uniform system for marking interstate roads and presenting warning signs. In 1918 Wisconsin became the first state to adopt a state highway numbering system to replace the haphazard system of named trails. The movement for a nationwide system of highway routes and road signs was proposed at an annual meeting of the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO) in 1922. AASHO, formed in 1914 of senior state and federal highway officials, had a role in shaping many aspects of road policy including building, financing, and maintenance.

In an effort to diminish the confusion surrounding named routes and unify the national highway system, the Federal Department of Agriculture adopted the recommendation by AASHO in 1925. When this took effect in 1926, the new numbering system affected 145 roads, or 76,000 miles of road, across the United States. Federal highways were marked by a uniform white shield sign with bold black text. The state's name was included in the top portion of the sign, and the highway number appeared in large bold text on the lower portion. Odd numbers were assigned to north-south highways and even numbers to east-west highways. Route numbers ending in "0" or "1" were reserved for principal cross-country routes.[36] Several interstate routes were selected for marking in Nebraska including the Lincoln Highway (U.S. Route 30), Grant Highway (U.S. Route 20) and the Meridian Highway (U.S. Route 81).[37] Other early numbered regional highways

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[33] Koster, 26.
[34] Nebraska Department of Public Works, *Sixteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1925-26* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Public Works, 1926), 74; Koster 32.
[35] Bureau of Roads and Bridges, Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Second Biennial Report of the Bureau of Roads,* 1938, 16.
[36] Kaszynski, 60.
[37] *Sixteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1925-26*, 65.

included the D-L-D Highway (U.S. Route 38), Washington Highway (U.S. Route 75), Cornhusker Highway (U.S. Route 77) and Platte Valley Highway (U.S. Route 26). At this time, the named routes lost their unique identity to a number.

Nebraska adopted a standard system for its state-designated highways when the national system was implemented. In the spring of 1926, the Nebraska Department of Public Works began placing markers along highways in the state. The state highway marker design adopted by Nebraska was a diamond-shaped sign, 15-inches square, with a covered wagon graphic on the upper half and the route number on the lower half. The sign was black and white, which made it easy to distinguish from the yellow and black danger and warning signs. In addition to route signs, the state also placed signs along the highways that were designed to inform motorists. Signs were located at various points along the highway that gave the distance to the next town and other important places ahead. The names of streams were marked with signs on either side of bridge crossings.[38]

Danger and warning signs, in compliance with the AASHO and the Federal Bureau of Roads, were also placed throughout the state in 1926 to increase safety. These signs came in four shapes and all were of a yellow background with wording or symbols to denote the hazard. The diamond shape was used to mark a hazard within the road, such as loose gravel, new fill, a narrow bridge, or a curve. A square-shaped sign marked hazards outside the road, such as crossroad traffic or school children. The circular shape was used only to mark railroad crossings and the octagon shape was used only for stop signs. Nebraska was in line with the rest of the nation in highway marking. Over 50 percent of the states, including Nebraska, had erected the standard signs by the close of 1926; the remaining states were scheduled to comply by the end of 1927. In order for the standardized highway signs to be effective, they had to be seen by the motoring public. All advertising signs were removed from the right-of-way and an adjacent buffer zone to ensure they would not conflict with the highway markers.[39]

In 1928, the legislature mandated stop signs be placed on 6,200 miles of Nebraska roads. Signs were placed at the entry of side roads into main highways. These signs gave highway traffic the right-of-way and required all approaching vehicles to stop and wait for traffic to clear before proceeding across intersections. Nebraska continued to conform to the national signage standards set by AASHO and all signs purchased in Nebraska after January 1, 1936, met the most recent set of standards recognized by AASHO and the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads.[40]

Paving the Way

Early routes were largely created by linking sections of existing roads, although these roads were often primitive and not improved. In 1914, State Engineer Donald D. Price reported that Nebraska had three major highways: the Meridian Highway, the Lincoln Highway, and the Omaha-Lincoln-Denver Highway. He also reported that these highways were in fairly decent condition, except for in portions of the western part of the state where they were merely deeply rutted trails. At this point in time only one-and-a-half percent of the total number of Nebraska roads had been "improved" (graded).[41]

The 1912-1914 Biennial Report of the State Board of Irritation, Highways and Drainage stressed the economic benefits of earth roads, with excellent building materials located throughout the state. Improved roads of pavement or macadam (stone set in a binder) were viewed as too costly. Basic road maintenance was outlined in the biennial report as follows:

> An earth road should be properly graded wide enough so that two vehicles can pass easily; that the grade should not be crowded too much but should be left rather flat so that the travel can be over any portion of the road; and that after the grading has been done and the grade has been fixed, that it should be

[38] *Sixteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1925-26*, 65; "Highway Markers," *Nebraska Highways* I, no. 6 (Jan/Feb 1928), 10.
[39] *Sixteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1925-26*, 65.
[40] Bureau of Roads and Bridges, Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-First Biennial Report of the Bureau of Roads and Bridges of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1935-36* (Lincoln, NE: Bureau of Roads and Bridges of the Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1936), 103.
[41] Koster, 17; Warne, 45

> surfaced with clay and gravel, either one of which is nearly always readily obtainable in the vicinity. Then if the road is kept properly dragged, it will remain in a more or less permanent state and this work can be done at a very low cost.[42]

Road grading or dragging was imperative to maintain the state's early dirt roads. D. Ward King, a Missouri farmer, invented the "King road drag" method around 1904, to be used in areas that could not afford macadamized roads.[43] The United States Department of Agriculture printed King's road dragging method in 1908, complete with a description of the materials needed to construct a drag and the proper technique in its use. It was recommended drags be constructed of split timbers, since squared timbers would only glide over the surface. The Pierce County (Nebraska) Auto Club promoted the use of King's road dragging method. They pointed out that unless the dragging was conducted immediately after a soaking rain, the benefits would be lost. The drag had to be completed while the road was muddy, so "the soft mud is troweled onto the road bed," and allowed to harden in the sun.[44]

Other materials found naturally in Nebraska were also used in road construction. Deposits of limestone and shale were combined to create cement, the most important material used in some forms of early road construction. Niobrara chalk rock combined with Granerose shale, both of which occur naturally in Nebraska, created high-grade cement, much of which was made near the town of Niobrara. Sand was used to create mortar and concrete for construction projects involving curbs, gutters, sidewalks, water pipes, sewers, culverts, bridges, and pavements. Stretching across Nebraska and well-connected by railroad lines, the Platte Valley provided a large source of quality sand, ideal for road construction. Nebraska's varied soil types were also ideal for construction purposes, particularly when using a sand-clay mix.[45]

At the federal level, the Office of Public Roads and its predecessor the Bureau of Public Roads operated research programs focusing on practical issues of road construction, including the construction and performance of various road materials. Concrete and bituminous materials were studied. The Bureau of Public Roads also partnered with trade groups and professional organizations, such as the Asphalt Institute and the American Society of Civil Engineers, state highway departments and universities on research. The Bureau of Public Roads established a research journal, *Public Roads*, in 1918 to disseminate information to the states.[46]

Research addressing road construction and materials was also the focus of universities. In 1915, the Nebraska Legislature directed the State Highway Engineer to work cooperatively with Nebraska's State University on the testing of road construction materials. A cooperative agreement between the Department of Public Works and the University of Nebraska was reached in 1920 to test materials. Nebraska highway engineers were continuously looking for inexpensive, yet high-quality, paving materials and this directed much of the material testing research. In 1919-1920, 1,208 tests were completed to develop a new hard surface that would be cheaper than concrete pavement.[47]

In 1918 legislation was enacted to fund maintenance of the state highway system. Prior to formal funding, maintenance had been recommended but often did not occur. The legislation allowed for the maintenance to be conducted state-wide and for skilled crews to grade highways and bring them up to state and federal standards. Maintenance crews were

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[42] State Board of Irrigation, Highways and Drainage, *Tenth Biennial Report of the State Board of Irrigation, Highways and Drainage 1912-1914* (Lincoln, NE: State Board of Irrigation, Highways and Drainage, 1914), 221.
[43] John Stilgoe, "Roads, Highways, and Ecosystems," July 2001, <www.nhc.rtp.nc.us:8080/tserve/nattrans/ntuseland/essays/roadsb.htm> (Accessed 6 March 2002).
[44] D. Ward King, *The Use of the Split-log Drag on Earth Roads*, U.S. Department of Agriculture Farmers' Bulletin 321 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1908), 5-8, 9-11; "Road Dragging," *Pierce County Call*, 29 April 1915. Available at the Nebraska State Historical Society, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, NE.
[45] State Board of Irrigation, Highways and Drainage, *Eleventh Biennial Report of the State Board or Irrigation, Highways and Drainage 1915-1916* (Lincoln, NE: State Board of Irrigation, Highways and Drainage, 1916), 325-445.
[46] Seely, 107 and 109-110.
[47] Koster 24-25.

responsible for surface maintenance, repairing ditches, opening culverts, maintaining official road signs, snow removal, and the emergency repair of roads, bridges, and guardrails.[48]

As traffic increased, Nebraska highway engineers advocated the use of gravel for surfacing highways. Even 25 years after other state highways had embraced permanent surfacing such as concrete and bituminous asphalt, Nebraska was still promoting gravel. In Nebraska, gravel was promoted because the state's soil conditions provided for a hard and fine gravel surface, with an ample gravel supply available from Nebraska's numerous waterways. The state's low rainfall also made it an economical choice for highways.[49] A 1928 article in *Nebraska Highways* described the fine quality of the state's gravel for use as a road material:

> Gravel in Nebraska is distinctly different from the class of roads usually referred to as 'gravel roads' or 'sand gravel roads' or 'sand clay roads' in other states. From the standpoint of materials, Nebraska gravel lies between the above classes and has generally been satisfactory. It partakes of the smoothness of the sand clay road and has the wearing and carrying capacity of the best gravel roads of other states. The material is fine enough so that the surface does not ravel and with proper and continuous maintenance, which it must have, can be kept in good condition.[50]

Despite the limited use of hard surfacing, Nebraska still ranked fourteenth nationally in 1929 in the amount of state highway mileage that was graveled or better.[51] While Nebraska highway engineers were advocating gravel roads, the Bureau of Public Roads was continuing to research and test improved paving materials including asphalt, concrete, and the quality of aggregate.[52]

By the close of 1928, Nebraska had 8,012 miles of state and federal highways, including 165 miles of paved roads and 3,761 miles of gravel roads. During the late 1920s hard surfacing of roads began to be advocated. Both concrete and asphalt were used for hard surfacing, while gravel was falling out of favor for major roads. By 1929, the Nebraska Legislature was funding approximately 100 miles of paving annually and at the end of 1930, it was estimated that 368 miles of state highways were paved, with more paving projects scheduled for the coming years. Along with improved surfacing, special attention was also given to creating direct routes, curves with long radii, and long sight distances. The Department of Public Works adopted several standards including distances, widths, and smoothness.[53] To lessen overall expenses, the department planned to relocate or shorten highways when paving was needed. Rather than completing a relocation project, the department would wait until paving or surfacing was needed, then relocate the segment and pave or surface the new section. These route relocations allowed state engineers to create more direct routes and increase safety by eliminating hazardous railroad crossings or sharp curves and were designed to save drivers time and money.

During the 1931-1932 biennium, both paved and oiled roads were being completed across the state. By the close of 1932, it was estimated that 663 miles of pavement had been completed in Nebraska. At the same time, progress was being made on the construction of oil-surfaced roads. Early use of oil surfacing had been relatively experimental and was restricted to small projects, but by 1932 it was a widely accepted component of the highway construction program. Oil-sand surfacing was constructed by the application of asphaltic road oil and a small amount of very fine material to a sand base and thoroughly mixing them with discs or blades to a depth of five inches. When no free oil remained in the mixture it

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[48] *Thirteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1919-1920*, 697-699.
[49] *Fifteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1923-1924*, 31.
[50] "Report of Nebraska Department of Public Works," *Nebraska Highways* I, no. 11 (July 1928), 4.
[51] Koster, 27.
[52] Seely, 101-102.
[53] Nebraska Department of Public Works, *Seventeenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1927-1928* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Public Works, 1928), 13; Nebraska Department of Public Works, *Eighteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1929-1930* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Public Works, 1930), 65.

was spread and ready for traffic. In some cases protection work was required on the shoulders and back slopes to prevent sand from blowing or washing away. 292 miles of oil-surface roads were completed during the 1931-1932 biennium and an additional 248.7 miles of oiled roads were completed during the 1933-1934 biennium.[54]

In cooperation with the University of Nebraska, the Department of Roads and Irrigation continued testing hard surface materials into the 1930s. Testing proved that a bituminous surfacing would be durable for traffic and weather conditions in the state. The initial cost of construction was also lower than that of concrete paving and local materials could be used, further reducing costs. Although Nebraska continued to use gravel for highway surfacing projects, it was beginning to move towards more permanent hard surfacing materials that would require less maintenance. Gravel surfacing projects gradually dwindled in the 1930s and hard surfacing projects became more popular across the state, especially in populated and high traffic areas.

Several large paving projects were awarded in 1935-36 in an attempt to close the remaining five open patches on Nebraska's principal highways.[55] In 1935, U.S. 30 was the first highway to be hard surfaced across the state, including both concrete and bituminous materials. At this time, projects were also completed on U.S. 6 and U.S. 8 resulting in completely paved highways.[56] These projects totaled over $1.5 million, with the state funding approximately one-half and federal matching funds covering the remainder.[57] Asphalt evolved as the material of choice for highways, although most of Nebraska's lesser-used county section line roads remain well-maintained gravel surfaces.

Road Development through the Depression and World War II

Federal relief programs during the 1930s provided jobs and funding that contributed to the construction and improvement of roads throughout the country and the state of Nebraska. An ample workforce, lower wages, and lower costs for building materials allowed Nebraska to save money during this period, even as road construction saw an era of "unprecedented progress." Federal funding increased for highway construction in the 1930s. In 1931, $80 million dollars in emergency Federal-Aid was made available to the states to supplement their required matching funds. In 1931-32, Nebraska received $4.25 million in emergency Federal-Aid. During the hard times of the Depression, this allowed states to continue with highway construction and put unemployed people to work. The following year, a second emergency relief act was passed by Congress with stipulations. States were required to pay a minimum wage rate (30 cents per hour for unskilled labor and 50 cents per hour for skilled labor) and give hiring preferences to local residents and ex-servicemen with dependents. To employ as many people as possible, laborers were hired for only a 30-hour workweek.[58]

As the Depression continued, the Nebraska Legislature offered measures to assist taxpayers and the counties. In 1933, for instance, motor vehicle registration fees were lowered to lessen the tax burden on individuals and the counties received an increased share of the gasoline tax. Both of these measures decreased the state funds available for highway construction. Also in 1933, the Department of Public Works became the Department of Roads and Irrigation.[59] A total of 198 federal Civil Works Administration (CWA) projects were completed under the supervision of the Department of Roads and Irrigation. They included constructing new earth roads, widening cuts and fills, producing and placing gravel surfacing, constructing bridges and drainage structures, widening bridges and culverts, improving railroad crossings, painting bridges and guardrails, removing and relaying brick pavement, slope and ditch protection, landscaping and roadside

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[54] Nebraska Department of Public Works, Bureau of Roads and Bridges, *Nineteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1931-1932* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Public Works, Bureau of Roads and Bridges, 1932), 41-45; Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, Bureau of Roads and Bridges, *Twentieth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Roads and Bridges 1933-1934* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, Bureau of Roads and Bridges, 1934), 49.

[55] The Biennial Report did not specify the five remaining open patches.

[56] *Twenty-First Biennial Report of the Bureau of Roads and Bridges 1935-36*, 77-78.

[57] "Ask Paving Bids on No. 6 Highway; Opened July 23," *The Morning Spotlight,* 2 July 1936, 1.

[58] *Twentieth Biennial Report for 1933-1934*, 189; Koster 41.

[59] Koster, 44; Scott, 166.

planting, constructing and repairing patrol sheds and equipment yards, preparing maps and plans, testing and inspecting materials, and other various tasks.[60] After the suspension of the CWA on March 31, 1934, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) began organizing work divisions. CWA projects that had not been completed prior to March 31, 1934, were transferred to FERA and continued as work relief projects. Over 150 work relief highway projects had been approved under this system by November 1, 1934.[61]

Highway beautification projects began in 1934 when the Federal Bureau of Public Roads required that at least 1% of total funding to each state be used for "the appropriate landscaping of parkways or roadsides." This advocated roads that conformed to their natural setting, including sensitive siting, conserving soil, selective tree cutting, and appropriate plantings. The Department of Roads and Irrigation cooperated with local civic organizations and assisted with several improvement projects by contributing plans, layouts and consultation. In 1934 the Department built its first rest area or roadside park on the south side of U.S. 20 near the Bryan Bridge, southeast of Valentine. This rest area remained in use for only five years, closing in 1939 when the state did not renew the lease.[62]

Weather conditions in the 1930s also had a significant impact on road construction activities in Nebraska. Severe flooding in the Republican River Valley in 1935 and extreme drought in the 1930s forced the Department of Roads and Irrigation to allocate financial resources toward cleaning and repairing damaged highways and bridges. Flooding destroyed approximately 341 miles of highway and 307 bridges.[63] During the 1930s, a severe drought hit Nebraska and the rest of the Great Plains. In the Sandhills region, the dry, sandy soil could not withstand the winds, which triggered dust storms that hindered road construction. The dry conditions also affected materials, forcing workers to use water to compact the grade work and keep the concrete from drying out.[64]

During the 1930s, Nebraska continued to struggle to match federal funding for road construction on a 50-50 basis. Utilizing its "pay-as-you-go" policy, Nebraska was unable to match approximately $2 million of the total federal funds available by the end of the decade, which would have totaled approximately $4 million dollars for road construction.[65]

By 1940, Nebraska had an 11,200-mile highway system, of which only 9,000 miles were maintained. Of the 9,000, 4,784 miles were graveled, 3,804 miles were hard-surfaced, and 412 miles had dirt surfacing.[66] After the United States became involved in World War II, road construction halted, except for along routes designated necessary to the war effort. For national security, the War Department and the Public Roads Administration identified a system of roads known as the Strategic Network of Highways to access military bases and defend manufacturing plants and other strategic sites. In Nebraska three main routes were designated as a top priority for materials and were eligible for federal funds made available in the Defense Highway Act of 1941:

- US-75 from Kansas line to Omaha
- US-30 and US-30A (Fremont to Omaha spur) from the Missouri River / Iowa line to the Wyoming line
- US-81 from the Kansas line to Norfolk, continuing on US-275 from Norfolk to O'Neill, and then on US-281 from O'Neill to the South Dakota line.[67]

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[60] *Twentieth Biennial Report for 1933-1934*, 190-191.
[61] *Twentieth Biennial Report for 1933-1934*, 195.
[62] *Twentieth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Roads and Bridges 1933-1934*, 56; Koster 46-47.
[63] *Twenty-First Biennial Report of the Bureau of Roads and Bridges of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1935-36*, 15, 57; Koster, 48.
[64] Koster, 45-46.
[65] Koster, 49-50.
[66] Koster, 43.
[67] Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1941-1942* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1942), 5.

The Defense Highway Act of 1941 further restricted the activities of state highway departments. Federal funds were limited to the Strategic Network of Highways, construction of roads to military bases and defense manufacturing plants, construction of air bases, and advanced engineering surveys for projects to be initiated after the war. A major war effort project undertaken in Nebraska was the completion of the state's first four-lane divided highway on December 8, 1941. Highway 73/75 from the south city limits of Omaha to Fort Crook (currently Offutt Air Force Base) consisted of a 6-mile stretch of two, 22-foot concrete lanes separated by a 10-foot grass median. The road led to the Glenn L. Martin Bomber Plant at Fort Crook.[68]

During World War II, the Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation shifted its efforts to defense-related activities and assisted Army and Navy engineers with the design and construction of ordnance plants and airfields. The department provided information regarding soil conditions within the defense areas, rented out survey equipment for engineering work, and collected scrap materials. Work was postponed on active highway contracts so that contractors could assist in Army and Navy projects [69]

Restrictions on critical building materials during the war forced the department to change design and construction standards and reduce or eliminate the use of critical materials in new construction. At first metal was the only critical material that the department had to do without, but later restrictions included lumber, asphalt products, cement, and other materials. The AASHO Committee on Standards suggested changes in design and construction standards to reduce or eliminate the use of critical building materials. These suggestions were used to the fullest extent possible in the design of highway construction in Nebraska and non-critical materials were used whenever possible. In the case of concrete structures it became necessary to remove almost all steel reinforcement because metal was restricted to military use. Several projects had to be postponed until materials were made available, while some designs were deemed adequate without the steel reinforcements, but became more expensive due to the additional amounts of concrete needed.[70]

Near the end of World War II, in 1944, the condition of Nebraska's highway system was similar to its pre-war state with a total of 9,119 state highway miles, with only 4,050 miles paved. Overall the condition of the roads was poor due to their general neglect and deterioration during the war. In a post-war report to the roads committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Department of Roads and Irrigation reported that over half the State's 1,200 miles of concrete pavement was over 10 years old and in need of repair and 40% of its bituminous surfacing was inadequate.[71]

Post World War II Road Development in Nebraska

In order to address road deficiencies nationwide, a post-war highway program was implemented by the 1944 Federal-Aid Highway Act. Three categories of funding were established: 1) federal-aid primary roads based on the previously used seven percent system; 2) feeder or secondary roads, including farm-to-market roads, rural free delivery routes and public school bus routes; 3) highways in urban areas with a population over 5,000. Within Nebraska's highway system, roads eligible for funding included 5,630 miles of primary roads, 9,800 miles of feeder or secondary roads, and roads within 18 cities with populations over 5,000. Nebraska was initially scheduled to receive approximately $8.5 million in funding annually; however, funding was reduced and the program was cut back in 1946.[72]

As federal funding was limited and roads remained deteriorated following the war, the State of Nebraska reviewed its road system situation. In July 1947, a 35-member Nebraska Highway Advisory Committee, composed of private citizens, was established to assess the state's present and future highway needs. This committee was the predecessor of the State

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[68] *Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1941-1942*, 5.
[69] *Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1941-1942*, 6-7.
[70] *Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1941-1942*, 6, 109.
[71] Koster, 49, 57.
[72] Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Sixth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1945-1946* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1946), 1, 4.

Highway Commission established in 1953. The committee's assessment identified over 6,500 miles of the state highway system that was defective and estimated the cost of repair to exceed $259 million. They recommended the adoption of a 20-year program of highway improvement, which upon completion would result in an entirely modern and adequate highway transportation system.[73] To finance the improvements, the gasoline tax and motor vehicle registration fees were raised in 1949 to increase funds available for road construction. Together these taxes would produce $5 million in revenue, with $4.5 million earmarked for matching federal-aid highway funds. This legislation was repealed in a November 1950 referendum by voters who were unwilling to pay for—or did not fully understand the need for— highway financing.[74]

In addition to limited funding, the Department of Roads and Irrigation continued to face material shortages after the war. Steel, used as a reinforcement material, continued to be in short supply into the early 1950s, creating an obstacle in the development of an accelerated highway program. The shortage of skilled engineers also affected the department. Trained engineers who left the department for the war effort were failing to return to positions in Nebraska's Department of Roads and Irrigation, often taking more lucrative positions elsewhere.[75] By the 1953-1954 biennium, however, the required materials were no longer in short supply and delayed highway projects were back on schedule.[76]

By 1950, Nebraska's state highway system consisted of 9,578 miles of road, of which 5,062 were graveled, 4,386 were hard-surfaced and 130 miles were dirt. In addition to maintaining the state highway system, by this time the state was also responsible for maintaining streets and highways in communities with populations under 2,500.[77] In the 1950s converting Nebraska's gravel highways, which still included over half of the system, to hard-surfacing was a Department of Roads priority.[78] With funding remaining tight, the need for highway improvements in Nebraska began to be determined through the establishment of a "sufficiency rating." The rating took into consideration surface conditions, economic factors, safety and service. The rating system process was described by John W. Hossack, former State Engineer, as follows:

> Basically, you drove every mile of highway in the state and analyzed it as to its condition, width, and all the various things that would have to do with the condition, life, and service rating of that particular section. Then, every highway got a grade. Kind of like a report card, it got a grade from 0 to 100.[79]

Roadside improvements, begun in the 1930s, continued in the 1950s to reduce soil erosion and improve the aesthetics of the right-of-way. Trees and shrubs were planted in the right-of-way to improve its appearance and screen properties adjoining the roads. Noxious weeds were removed from the right-of-way through the use of chemicals. Brome grass seed was planted on highway shoulders, slopes, and roadsides to prevent wind and water erosion and the growth of weeds.[80]

In 1953 the State Highway Commission was established by the Nebraska Legislature, replacing the Highway Advisory Commission. The State Highway Commission was formed to promote better relations between the public and the Department of Roads and Irrigation and to act as a liaison between citizens, the agency, and the governor. The State Highway Commission also served as an advisor to the State Engineer, establishing broad policies and forming a trunk highway system to be financed with revenue generated from highway user taxes.[81] In 1957 the Nebraska Legislature divided the Department of Roads and Irrigation into three separate agencies: Department of Roads, Department of Motor

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[73] Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1947-1948* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1948), 3; Koster, 63.
[74] Koster, 66.
[75] *Twenty-Seventh Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1947-1948*, 3.
[76] Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Thirtieth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1953-1954* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1954), 3.
[77] Nebraska Highway Advisory Committee, 19.
[78] Koster, 57-59.
[79] Koster, 68. The quote was from George Koster's 1985 interview with John W. Hossack, former State Engineer.
[80] Koster, 69.
[81] Koster, 69-70.

Vehicles, and Department of Water Resources. The Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) included the Bureau of Highways and the Safety Patrol (in 1967 renamed the Nebraska State Patrol).[82]

The earliest plans for a national interstate highway system were included in a 1939 Federal Bureau of Public Roads report that advocated the construction of a special system of direct interregional highways that would meet the requirements of national defense in times of war, as well as the increasing demands of traffic. However, the project was delayed by World War II.[83] Further steps were taken in 1944, when the Federal-Aid Highway Act called upon the states and the Bureau of Public Roads to designate a national system of interstate highways, not to exceed 40,000 miles in total, connecting state capitals, principal metropolitan areas, cities, and industrial centers by direct routes. Finally, the 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act declared the early completion of the interstate highway system, as authorized under the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944, essential to the national interest.

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 had a significant impact on the development of Nebraska's highways and the volume of traffic they were able to serve. The Act increased appropriations to states for primary, secondary, and urban highway construction and made a provision for a 41,000-mile "Interstate Highway System." It also authorized a 13-year construction period for the Interstate, which would be extended as states faced routing and funding difficulties. The entire system was anticipated to cost over $27 billion, with the states responsible for only ten percent of the construction costs and the federal government covering the other 90 percent of costs. The intentions of the Interstate Highway System were described as follows:

> Consisting of routes of highest importance to the Nation, which connect the principal metropolitan areas, cities, and industrial centers, including important routes into, through, and around urban areas, serve the national defense, and connect at suitable border points with routes of continental importance in the Dominion of Canada and the Republic of Mexico.[84]

General road construction and improvements increased in the late 1950s and continued in the 1960s. Over 500 miles of construction was completed on state highways in 1962. Construction projects were generally geared towards modernizing highways that had become inadequate due to increased traffic loads and deterioration. It was a goal of NDOR to replace gravel surfaces with dustless surfaces in all towns and highway routes across the state. These projects, however, were often overshadowed by the development of Interstate 80 (I-80) across the state. During these decades, the planning, design and construction of the interstate became the central focus of NDOR and the State Highway Commission. Along with the governor, these agencies were responsible for selecting the actual route within a general corridor outlined by the federal government. Work in Nebraska began almost immediately after the 1956 federal legislation was passed, and the construction was planned for four phases over an anticipated 15-year time line.

It took 17 years to complete construction of I-80 across Nebraska's landscape. Despite a slow start in 1956 and 1957 and struggles over the location of the route, construction picked up momentum and the majority of the I-80 was completed in the 1960s. On October 19, 1974, the interstate was fully opened with the completion of a five-mile section west of Sidney. The final cost of completing I-80 in Nebraska was $390 million, or about $857,000 per mile.[85] Although behind the schedule outlined in the 1956 Highway Act, Nebraska was the first state to complete its main line Interstate system. Nationally, only 28,000 miles of the 41,000-mile Interstate system outlined in the 1956 Highway Act were completed by

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[82] In 1981 the Nebraska State Patrol became a separate state agency.
[83] James C. Creigh, "Constructing the Interstate Highway in Nebraska: Route and Funding Controversies," *Nebraska History History* 72, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 44.
[84] Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Thirty-First Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1955-1956* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1956), 1.
[85] Curt McConnell, "I-80 Changed Car Travel in Nebraska." *Lincoln Journal Star.* 29 March 1999, 14x. The "Golden Link" was meant to symbolize the "Golden Spike" that symbolically completed the first transcontinental railroad.

the end of the 1960s. Routing controversies and right-of-way acquisition in urban areas delayed the completion of several sections for extended periods in some states.[86]

Conclusion

In less than a century, Nebraska's automobile routes transformed from a random collection of unimproved dirt roads to a modern system of hard surfaced regional and transcontinental highways and Interstate 80 (I-80). Rutted pathways evolved into the early named highways, promoted by local citizen groups, which in turn developed into a system of state highways that have been continuously improved for safety and efficiency. In Nebraska, as in the rest of the country, road development was influenced by both federal funding and road building standards.

The introduction of the interstate in the 1960s ended the heyday of the earlier transcontinental highways, such as the Lincoln Highway and the D-L-D Highway, which presently serve as regional transportation routes. I-80 across Nebraska serves as a national transportation thoroughfare and the state's major roadway. The Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) has worked to improve not only the Interstate but a state Expressway system and all highways within the state. Increased safety and the addition of modern surface materials have been a major focus of these improvements. By the year 2000, the Department had reduced the miles of gravel surfaced highways to only 44 statewide.[87]

NDOR's eight district offices manage approximately 9,950 miles of state roads. These roads represent the evolution of the Nebraska highway system from the early trails of the nineteenth century to the modern Interstate connecting Nebraska with the nation. All of these roads are vital to the state's transportation system.

The Potash Highway in Nebraska

Introduction

The development of the Potash Highway, through the efforts of the Potash Highway Association and later as a designated state highway, was an important initiative for the residents of central and northwest Nebraska. Early efforts to locate and develop the highway, which initially extended from Alliance to Grand Island through the state's Sandhills, began in 1918. Progress was slow, due in part to difficulties associated with building roads in the sandy region. Nevertheless, the goal of the roadway's supporters to tie central and western Nebraska to economic opportunity inspired them in 1923 to transform the route from a state road to one of regional importance. The roadway was extended north from Alliance, through Crawford to the Black Hills of South Dakota. To the south, it ran from Grand Island to Hastings, from where it existed concurrently with the Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway (D-L-D Highway) east to Fairmont, and then extended south with the Meridian Highway to Wichita, Kansas. Shared highways were pursued in the hope that more connections would bring more motorists and greater economic development. The Potash Highway, therefore, extended from Wichita, Kansas, to the Black Hills until 1926 when the original Alliance to Grand Island segment was incorporated into Nebraska Highway 2.

Early Development

Initial efforts to develop roads between Alliance and Grand Island were haphazard and uncoordinated. For instance, road advocates worked in 1916 to designate a highway between Ravenna and Broken Bow. That same year, residents in Alliance were trying to realign and reconstruct a road northwest to Hemingford (which was added to the Potash Highway after 1923). It was to be shorter and safer than its predecessor, with fewer dangerous curves. The new route required only 56 acres at $20.00 each, needed $50.00 per mile for grading and required no bridges due to the relatively flat terrain. With the rapid development of the potash industry during World War I, particular attention was paid to the roads east of Alliance.[88] The passage between Hoffland and Antioch, for example, was reportedly in very poor condition.[89] The resulting

[86] Kaszynski, 192.
[87] Information provided by Len Sand and Cindy Veys, Nebraska Department of Roads, 29 April 2002.
[88] Potash is a component of agricultural fertilizer. Large quantities were shipped from Germany, but the supply was embargoed during WWI. Boosters and industrialists turned to quantities of potash found in the area and built large plants to evaporate the material from lakes. Once the war ended, the industry failed.

construction projects all appear to be isolated instances of roadway development and concern, lacking any thought toward a continuous highway between Alliance and Grand Island.

Perhaps inspired by the flourishing potash industry, local newspapers paid a growing level of attention to the region's roads in 1917. In early May, the *Alliance Times* reported that a new east/west road was being considered to run parallel to the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad (CB&Q Railroad) from Grand Island, through Hemingford to Crawford. Three days later that idea was given more definition when the route was specifically suggested to parallel the railroad from Grand Island through "...Lakeside, Alliance, Hemingford to Crawford." Such visionary schemes notwithstanding, practical considerations had to be met. Those individuals working in the potash industry at the end of 1917 expected the road between Alliance and Antioch to be in passable condition for the winter.[90]

The Potash Highway Association and the Roadway's Construction

The growing demand for a regional road in 1917 was quickly heeded, for the next year dawned with many Nebraskans seriously considering an Alliance to Grand Island highway. The specific suggestion for a road between Alliance and Broken Bow, which was already connected by road to Grand Island, came from a Mr. Fisher, then secretary of the Alliance Commercial Club. The highway was officially born at a meeting held at the end of February 1918 in Mullen, Nebraska, about one-third of the way between Alliance and Grand Island. The approximately 105 delegates in attendance recommended "a state highway from Alliance to Broken Bow to connect with the present highway from that point to Grand Island."[91] Several votes were taken to decide upon a name for the highway, with"Potash Highway," a nod to the region's booming potash industry, eventually winning the day. Further plans called for accepting federal funds for the roadway's development and making it passable by July 1, 1919, as well as creating a permanent roadway by July 1, 1920. Finally, delegates also elected Potash Highway Association Officers, including Frank Kelly of Broken Bow as President.[92]

The new members of the association left Mullen full of enthusiasm. Local meetings of Potash Highway advocates were soon held in counties and towns along the proposed route, including in Hooker, Grant and Thomas Counties. Indeed, Thomas County wanted to complete and mark the roadway within its borders by May 1, 1918. Highway enthusiasts also met at Anselmo in Custer County. They observed that the route should largely mirror that of the CB&Q Railroad between Grand Island and Alliance, with a limited number of railroad crossings. They also sought to complete the road quickly. The community of Merna, also in Custer County, wanted to take advantage of the enthusiasm created at Mullen. In a meeting held there, W.C. Elliott of nearby Mason City reported that "...this new auto route was the second most important thing that had come to Custer County, the first being the railroad."[93] Enthusiasm for the Potash Highway was high. Hoping to accomplish as much as possible, President Kelly "spoke of the necessity of pushing the highway as rapidly as possible... Now was the time to act and do something definite before enthusiasm was allowed to cool."[94]

Interest in the Potash Highway grew quickly in Sheridan County after Secretary Fisher of the Alliance Commercial Club appeared before the County Commissioners to promote the road. According to the *Alliance Times*, Fisher, "supplied the

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[89] "Blaze Auto Line to Grand Island," *Custer County Chief*, 23 November 1916; "Commissioner Recommends New Road To Hemingford," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 30 June 1916; "Antioch Resembles Hive of Bees with Unusual Building Activities," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times,* 18 August 1916.

[90] "State Engineer Visits Alliance," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times,* 1 May 1917; "$20,000 for Roads," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times,* 4 May 1917; "Good Roads Day November Ninth," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 2 November 1917; "Antioch Road to be Given Care," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 13 November 1917.

[91] "Federal Aid for a Proposed New Road," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 22 January 1918; "'Potash Highway' May be Completed by July First," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 26 February 1918. Commercial Clubs were entities developed to promote commerce in and about a community. It appears that many, if not most, communities of any size in western Nebraska claimed a Commercial Club.

[92] "'Potash Highway' May be Completed by July First"; "Potash Highway a Possibility," *Custer County Chief*, 28 February 1928. Additionally, it was noted that, of the 105 delegates in attendance at the convention, forty were from Mullen, 14 were from Hyannis, 11 were from Seneca, ten from Whitman, and so on, down to several communities that were only represented by one.

[93] "Added Interest in 'Potash Highway,'" *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 8 March 1918; "Thedford Strong for Potash Route," *Custer County Chief*, 14 March 1918; "County Meeting Potash Highway," *Custer County Chief*, 28 March 1918; "Merna Meeting of Potash Highway," *Custer County Chief*, 25 April 1918.

[94] "Road Meeting in Broken Bow," *Custer County Chief*, 4 April 1918.

magic word that touched the hearts of the commissioners and now...[their support] is to be poured forth like the wealth of Montezuma." The county appropriated 5,000 silver dollars for the project as a result of Fisher's appearance. Shortly thereafter Sheridan County learned they would receive $60,000 in federal highway aid, $20,000 of which they reportedly would devote to the Potash Highway.[95]

The Potash Highway appeared to be riding a crest of good news, but its good luck was about to change. Despite Sheridan County's pledge of $20,000, there was more support for a different highway in the northern half of the county where Rushville, the county seat, was located. Less than two weeks after the $20,000 had been pledged, the county reversed itself and decided to spend all of the federal money on development of the northern road (the Blue Pole Highway, later U.S. Highway 20). Potash Highway supporters in the southern part of the county were disappointed and pledged to go to the governor to secure an injunction. They wanted "a fair deal" for their roadway. Adding to the general consternation of some roadway supporters was the fact that Grand Island had never made a strong commitment to the Potash Highway. A suitable alternative terminus, some felt, was Kearney, about 42 miles to the west-southwest.[96]

Despite disappointment in Sheridan County and questions about Grand Island's intent to serve as the route's eastern anchor, boosters continued to advocate for the Potash Highway. Individual cities also pledged money for road construction. Alliance made $2,000 available, while Broken Bow offered $1,500, Merna, Anselmo and Mason City each provided $1,000 and the tiny community of Bingham even pledged $350. Surveying and marking activities in 1918 also indicated commitment to the highway. In early May, the *Custer County Chief* provided very specific marking instructions for local sections of the route: "...put on sixteen inches of white (two coats), then two inches of black at the top and two inches of black at the bottom. Stencil the P.H. in the center. Paint the poles not higher than six feet through a town and not higher in the country than five feet."[97] The highway was quickly marked in Thomas County as well, with the stretch between Thedford and Halsey completed by the end of July. Highway supporters were also encouraged by the May arrival in Alliance of three state surveyors tasked with delineating the Potash route to the east. The year concluded with the highway receiving the attention of Congressman Moses P. Kinkaid, who was looking into the prospect of the roadway becoming a mail route.[98] These early successes of the Potash Highway Association were noted by auto clubs in Lincoln and Omaha, Nebraska, who sent letters of congratulation.

Although booster activity along the Potash Highway waned somewhat after the initial enthusiasm of 1918, efforts to develop the roadway remained very much alive through the following year. An indication of the route's anticipated importance was demonstrated when it, along with two other routes, was included in Nebraska's "Permanent Road Plans." The highway association's annual meeting in 1919 was held shortly after the "Road Plans" were released. Many ideas about the road were offered at that gathering. One attendee suggested the route be pushed west to Yellowstone Park. Another reported that the roadway was marked for more than half its distance between Grand Island and Alliance and that the number of gates along the road had been reduced by two-thirds, making long-distance travel much easier. J.C. Moore of Anselmo was also elected president of the association.[99]

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[95] "Five Thousand for New Potash Highway," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 19 March 1918; "$20,000 of Federal Money for Potash Road in Sheridan County," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 2 April 1918.

[96] "Keen Interest in 'Potash Highway,'" *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 15 March 1918; "More Delay for the Potash Highway," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 12 April 1918; "Road Meeting in Broken Bow." No evidence was found to suggest that Potash supporters actually secured an injunction.

[97] "Potash Highway to be Finished in June," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 2 April 1918; "Road Meeting in Broken Bow"; "Mark Potash Highway," *Custer County Chief*, 9 May 1918.

[98] "Another Victory on Potash Highway," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 30 July 1918; "To Survey New Potash Highway," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 7 May 1918; "Kinkaid Aids in Potash Highway," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 22 October 1918. No evidence was found to suggest any type of a resolution regarding transport of mail along the route.

[99] "Three Highways Are Approved in the State Permanent Road Plans," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 7 February 1919; "Alliance Men Instill 'Pep' in Road Plan," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 28 February 1919. It is unknown whether the gates referred to were associated with railroad crossings, or the control of livestock.

Despite the apparent success of the 1919 annual meeting, a renewed effort emerged to remind citizens along the proposed route of the highway's importance. The *Custer County Chief* reported on the 15th of May that "the Potash Highway is an automobile route running from Grand Island to Alliance, through the famous farming, stock raising and potash district of Nebraska, parallel to the main line of the Burlington Railroad."[100] Boosters at Anselmo made the same report four days later. Soon thereafter a meeting was held at Anselmo to discuss the value of maintaining interest in the highway. The governor attended the meeting, at which reports were made about how farmers benefit from good roads.[101]

The close of World War I caused a rapid decline in the potash industry, leading to many lay-offs in Box Butte County during the spring of 1919. With labor thus available, plans for the Potash Highway progressed. H. H. Lotter, a senior engineer with the Department of Public Works, explained that the road was to be a "...dirt grade with a top of alkali lake mud five inches deep–this to be surfaced with limestone rock...which is abundant in all the hills of this section."[102] Sporadic work along the roadway continued into 1920 when the Alliance to Antioch segment was expected to be graveled. Excavating, grading and bridge construction was also planned between Broken Bow and the east Custer County line, all of which was underway by June of 1920.[103]

The 1920 annual meeting of the Potash Highway Association was planned by the Alliance Chamber of Commerce and held on October 14th, with both Broken Bow and Grand Island sending delegations. Extending the highway from Alliance to Hot Springs, South Dakota, and then on to Yellowstone National Park was discussed and unanimously supported by the delegates. Indeed, association members increasingly focused on promoting the highway as a tourist route to Yellowstone National Park. Also discussed was construction of the roadway through the Sandhills region between Alliance and Broken Bow. It may have been a matter of bravado, but in order to inspire the completion of the road, John Turner, the association's president for the year, reported that "there are no sand hills or other obstacles too great to overcome on the Potash Highway."[104] The *Custer County Chief* was even more dramatic, first telling boosters, "your great obstacle is the sand hills which lie between...[Alliance] and Broken Bow," and then directing them to,"get together and figure out a plan for the thing you want to do–do it in spite of Hell."[105]

Following the 1920 annual meeting, the fortunes of the highway began to improve. In 1921 a Community Club was organized in Bingham, about 40 miles east of Alliance, for the specific purpose of finishing and promoting the highway. The community was very much in the middle of an incomplete section along the route in western Grant and Sheridan counties. Approximately 150 Potash Highway boosters attended the meeting, one of which, a rancher, donated land for the right-of-way. It was also noted that 31 miles of roadway were complete in Grant County, 22 of which were considered to be in excellent condition. By 1922, Walter Newberg, who had recently driven the entire route, could report to the *Custer County Chief* that the segment between Grand Island and Anselmo was in "excellent shape," but the Sandhills west of Anselmo still offered "...some difficulty, chiefly from lack of proper marking of the highway, rather than from impassable places." Newberg concluded his report optimistically, observing, "...the Potash Highway when completed will be one of the most traveled and popular highways in the west...."[106] The apparent success of Newberg's trip notwithstanding, the *Custer County Chief* subsequently reported that entire roadway should be "passable by the end of 1923."[107]

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[100] "Potash Highway Meet," *Custer County Chief*, 15 May 1919.
[101] "Highway Meeting at Anselmo Soon," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 20 May 1919; "The Potash Highway Holds Big Meeting," *Custer County Chief*, 5 June 1919.
[102] "Potash Road Work to Start Before July 1," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 1 April 1919.
[103] "Contractor Here to Finish Roads," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 6 April 1920; "Contract Let for Roadwork," *Custer County Chief*, 26 February 1920; "Road Work Progressing," *Custer County Chief*, 27 May 1920.
[104] "Getting Ready for Good Roads Meeting," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 28 September 1920; "Good Roads Meeting Here Next Thursday," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 12 October 1920; "Potash Highway Convention Here is Big Success," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 15 October 1920.
[105] "Potash Highway Annual Meeting," *Custer County Chief*, 21 October 1920.
[106] "Interest Now Keen in Potash Highway," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 26 July 1921; "Potash Highway is Reported in Good Condition," *Custer County Chief*, 11 May 1922.
[107] "Potash to be Passable by End of 1923," *Custer County Chief*, 7 June 1923.

The annual meeting of the Potash Highway Association in 1923 was a seminal event in the roadway's history. First, the road between Grand Island and Anselmo, as well as that around Alliance, was reportedly in good condition, although segments in the Sandhills still needed work. Additionally, the availability of $1,142,837 in state and federal monies for road construction in Nebraska over the next two years assuaged many fears about persistent funding problems. Perhaps most exciting, however, was the association's decision to officially expand the highway into a multi-state route that extended from the Black Hills of South Dakota to Wichita, Kansas.[108] While the Black Hills were a tourist destination, and thus a logical northern terminus, the decision to extend the Potash Highway to Wichita is a bit more perplexing. It is probable the Nebraska group wanted to generate as much business as possible with a minimal investment. Thus it made sense to extend the highway south from Grand Island to Hastings, then east along the D-L-D Highway to Fairmont, and then south on the Meridian Highway through another state (Kansas) and to another major city (Wichita). Whatever the reasoning behind its southern extension, the Potash Highway would exist in its Black Hills to Wichita form until the original Grand Island to Alliance segment was configured into Nebraska Highway 2 in 1926.

From the Potash Highway to Nebraska Highway 2

Nebraska Highway 2 was designated as part of state's evolving trunk highway system in 1926, incorporating the former Potash Highway from Grand Island to the South Dakota state line.[109] The new highway then traveled south to Red Cloud (now U.S. Highway 281). In 1933, however, Nebraska Highway 2 was rerouted along U.S. Highway 34 (formerly the Seward-York-Aurora Highway) to Lincoln, before turning southeast to its terminus in Nebraska City. Today, the highway is non-contiguous, with the Grand Island to Lincoln section decommissioned as Nebraska Highway 2.

Early alignments of the Potash Highway displayed an array of construction methods and surface materials. The development of oil-sand surfacing in the late 1920s and 1930s, however, would soon dominate construction along its successor, Nebraska Highway 2. This method employed a machine that picked up approximately five inches of surface sand, mixed it with oil, and then laid it back onto the roadway. It provided a surface that was durable, yet economical to construct and maintain. A seven-mile stretch of the highway between Mullen and Whitman received one of the first experimental applications of this road material. The Department of Public Works eventually determined oil-sand surfacing to be a viable road construction method, declaring in its 1932 report that it would "insure [sic] lower maintenance costs."[110] The evolving oil-sand method was ideal for Nebraska Highway 2, which extended through a region where sand was plentiful and other road materials were scarce. It created a modern traveling surface for the highway, which, by 1940, was largely paved from Hemingford south with the exception of the segments between Mullen and Dunning, and Cairo and Grand Island.[111] A gravel segment between Dunning and Halsey was finally paved during the 1949-50 biennium, but one stretch of gravel still remained north of Crawford.[112]

As better paving methods came into use, changes were also being made to the former Potash route. Road segments were realigned and railroad crossings were eliminated. During the Great Depression, the Works Progress Administration

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[108] "P.H. Meeting Draws Crowd," *Custer County Chief*, 19 July 1923. It should be noted that the additions to the Potash Highway were made only three years prior to the implementation of the federal highway numbering system. They were likely made to broaden the highway's appeal and thus to increase traffic along the core section of the roadway between Alliance and Grand Island.

[109] Nebraska Highway 2 presently runs from Nebraska City through Lincoln to Ardmore, SD located in the Buffalo Gap National Grassland.

[110] *Conoco 1931 Official Road Map: Nebraska* (Chicago: H.M. Gousha Company, 1931), map; Nebraska Department of Public Works, *Eighteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1929-30* (Lincoln, NE.: Nebraska Department of Public Works, 1930), 57; Nebraska Department of Public Works, Bureau of Roads and Bridges, *Nineteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works Bureau of Roads and Bridges 1931-1932* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Public Works Bureau of Roads and Bridges, 1932), 33-34.

[111] Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Third Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1939-1940* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1940).

[112] Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Fifth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation1943-1944* (Lincoln, NE: Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1944), 172; Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Eighth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1949-1950* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1950), 151; Nebraska Department of Roads, *Biennial Report 1971-72* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Roads, 1972), 39.

(WPA) provided funds so that the state could relocate a stretch of Highway 2 through Sherman, Custer and Blaine Counties. As a result, the roadbed was moved to the south side of the CB&Q Railroad tracks, eliminating five railroad crossings.[113] In 1941-42, a section of Nebraska Highway 2 through Hooker and Thomas Counties "was reshaped and a new drainage structure was installed…."[114] Road relocations also bypassed many of the single-span pony truss bridges along the old alignment of the Potash Highway, such as those still extant southeast of Broken Bow. During World War II, the construction of the Cornhusker Ordnance Plant west of Grand Island forced the relocation of Nebraska Highway 2 to a route direct from Grand Island to Cairo, 13 miles to the northwest.

Travel and Tourism along the Potash Highway

As construction of the Potash Highway sputtered along in the August of 1921, the *Alliance Herald* remained hopeful about its prospects as a tourist route, reporting:

> It is beginning to look as though Alliance will someday have at least one decent road that will connect us with a trans-continental highway and furnish a thoroughfare that will attract and not repel the tourist traffic. This tourist business is one of the most profitable sources of income for cities along the route to vacation spots, and Alliance has the opportunity to become a stopping place…If a road connecting this city to the Lincoln Highway is ever constructed this city will come into its own.[115]

While the Potash Highway and its successor, Nebraska Highway 2, would never become celebrated tourist routes during their period of historic significance, they still offered motorists a unique journey through Nebraska's Sandhills. A region of sand dunes stabilized by mixed-grass prairie, the Sandhills of north-central Nebraska quickly developed into a rich cattle ranching area after the Sioux ceded their hunting rights in the 1870s. In essence, it was the unique natural and cultural landscapes of the Sandhills that were the real tourist draw, rather than purposely-developed attractions. Furthermore, communities along the route did stand to benefit from adventurous tourists who chose Nebraska's "road less traveled" through the development of roadside businesses that catered to travelers.

The Potash Highway Experience

Early travelers along the Potash Highway through Nebraska's Sandhills were in for an adventure. The highway was in various states of completion for much of the 1920s and the distance between towns could be intimidating for travelers from more populated regions. Although possibly sensationalized to push the road's completion, the condition of the early Potash Highway is illustrated by a 1921 article in the *Alliance Herald.* Describing the "worst" stretch of the highway between Lakeside and Bingham, the article stated, "one who knows the country well can…find a road which can in case of necessity be traveled, but the eastern tourist soon finds himself almost hopelessly lost in a maze of soft sand."[116] The patchwork of fencing necessary to keep Sandhills cattle on their own range also created a barrier for, "the tourist, who seriously objects to lowering and fastening gates."[117] This problem prompted the firm of Hoffland, Conners and Rodgers of Antioch, a World War I potash boomtown, to develop an automatic spring-operated cattle gate that opened when driven over by an automobile. The number of such gates installed along the Potash Highway is unknown—the low-profile cattle guard was a less complicated option—but their development provides a fascinating example of entrepreneurship along the route aimed at promoting, and profiting from, tourism.

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[113] George E. Koster, *A Story of Highway Development in Nebraska* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Roads, 1986, revised 1997), 36. District 7 consisted of Blaine, Dawson, Grant, Hooker, Keith, Lincoln, Logan, McPherson and Thomas Counties.
[114] Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Fourth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1941-1942* (Lincoln, NE: Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1942), 210.
[115] "Road Prospects," *Alliance Herald*, 12 August 1921, 2.
[116] "Potash Highway Must be Completed," *Alliance Herald*, 28 June 1921, 2.
[117] "New Automatic Gate Promises to Relieve Tourist's Troubles." *Alliance Herald*, 6 June 1922, 1.

Tourists braving the original segment of the Potash Highway in the 1920s likely found welcoming communities along its route. Railroad-era hotels, including the Hotel DeFair in Hyannis (GT02-002, NRHP listed), the Commercial Hotel in Mullen (HO02-039) and the Cowpoke Hotel in Thedford (TM05-009), were probably happy to accommodate a new type of traveler and free tourist camps in Alliance and Broken Bow gave weary motorists a safe place to camp for the night. As early as 1920, the roadway's association called for camps in towns along the route "...with adequate conveniences for travelers."[118] In 1921, the city of Alliance moved a house from Antioch to their campsite, which provided lavatories, hot and cold water, and a home for the camp's caretaker and his wife. Just two years later, the city of Broken Bow purchased a $1,400 parcel of land at L Street and 13th Avenue for the development of a campsite. "This camp will no doubt be greatly improved during the coming year," claimed the local paper, "and its close-in location and good shade will, when improvements are completed, make it one of the most attractive tourist camps in this part of the state."[119] As the condition of the road improved, so did lodging and eating options. In 1928, for instance, tourists could stay at the brand new Arrow Hotel in Broken Bow and could stop in Alliance for hot coffee and conversation at the Orange Tea Room or a quick meal at Rex's Hamburger Shop.[120] Auto-related businesses also quickly proliferated along the route, so that by 1930 even tiny Potash Highway communities such as Whitman, Ashby, Bingham and Lakeside could offer a garage.[121]

Tourists heading south from Grand Island along the newly expanded Potash route during the mid-1920s found well-developed services in communities that had been served by major transcontinental highways for over a decade. In Hastings, where the route turned east along the D-L-D Highway, tourists could stay at the popular Prospect Park Tourist Camp (AD04-694) or the Hotel Clarke (AD04-022, NRHP listed). The latter advertised in a c. 1920 Lincoln Automobile Club guidebook to the D-L-D Highway as, "Nebraska's most popular hotel, tourists welcome." Hastings and Fairmont even had "D-L-D" garages."[122] When the route turned south along the Meridian Highway, early motor tourists were treated to a variety of camping choices with tourist camps found in Fairmont, Geneva, Bruning, Chester and Hebron. Other services were also readily available. For instance, by 1931 the community of Hebron offered tourists four cafés, three service stations, two motor companies and a tire shop.[123]

Although the Potash Highway officially disbanded in 1926 with the creation of Nebraska Highway 2, motorists traveling diagonally across the central United States likely continued to use all or segments of its route.[124] The Works Progress Administration's Federal Writers' Project (WPA) captured the original Potash Highway and its post-1923 northern extension to the Black Hills as a tourist route in their 1939 publication, *Nebraska: A Guide to the Cornhusker State*.The guide's "Tour 10b" documents the 373.6-mile route of Nebraska Highway 2 from Grand Island to the South Dakota state line.[125] The tour began in Grand Island (pop. 18,041), where the route intersected with the Lincoln Highway (U.S. Highway 30) and U.S. Highway 281. The guide alerted tourists to the city's five hotels and eight tourist camps, where they might consider staying before setting out for the Sandhills.[126] Once on their journey, motorists could stop at Ravenna's (pop. 1,559) Woodland Park, "a wooded area of much natural beauty," before reaching the route's junction with Nebraska Highway 45. Here tourists had a choice: they could continue along Nebraska Highway 2 toward Broken Bow or take a side trip to Jenner's Zoological and Amusement Park in Loup City (pop. 1,446).While it was a 30-mile round trip, this

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[118] "Potash Highway Convention Here is Big Success," 15 October 1920; "Potash Highway Annual Meeting" 21 October 1920.
[119] "Alliance Will Have Auto Tourist Park," *Alliance Semi-Weekly Times*, 29 April 1921; "Tourist Camping Ground Now An Assured Fact," *Custer County Chief*, 1 February 1923; "Tourist Park Takes on New Improvements," *Custer County Chief*, 2 August 1923.
[120] Alliance-Box Butte County Centennial Committee, *City of Alliance and Box Butte County, Nebraska* (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corp., 1988), 103.
[121] U.S. Census Service.1930 Federal Census. Presence of a garage is indicated in the "occupation" and "industry" fields.
[122] Lincoln Automobile Club, *Guide Map of the Lincoln Automobile Club* (N.p., c.1920s). Available at the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, NE.
[123] Mead & Hunt, Inc., L. Robert Puschendorf (Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office), "Historic and Architectural Resources of the Meridian Highway in Nebraska," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Document, 2006.
[124] According to the WPA, the section of Nebraska Highway 2 "west of Mullen" was still referred to as the Potash Highway during the 1930s. WPA Guide, 368.
[125] Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration, *Nebraska: A Guide to the Cornhusker State* (New York: Viking Press, 1939), 365-370, in passim. All quotes and information in the reminder of this sub-section (The Potash Highway Experience) are taken from "Tour 10, Section b." unless otherwise specified. All population data is from 1930 and take from either the WPA guide or the 1930 Federal census.
[126] *WPA Guide*, 162.

tourist attraction would have been hard to resist. For 25 cents (10 cents for children) tourists could visit the zoo, playground and picnic grounds, and with another 10 cents (5 cents for children) enter the "Mummy Cave" where some 10,000 East Indian and African artifacts, including 17 mummy cases, were on display. Either way, the next stop for travelers was probably Broken Bow (pop. 2,713), where they found a full spectrum of accommodations and services.

According to the guide, Victoria Springs State Park near Merna was the next significant tourist stop along the route (now Victoria Springs State Recreation Area, CU00-149). The "curative" mineral waters and natural beauty of area made the springs a destination for travelers beginning in the late 19th century, especially after one area settler, Charles R. Mathews, built lodging accommodations above his nearby general store. Victoria Springs became Nebraska's third state park in 1925, and by 1939 it offered picnicking facilities, a playground, rental cabins, swimming and boating on the large lake, and soaking in the spring waters. Next tourists headed for Dunning, where the Potash route turns westerly to follow the scenic Middle Loup River for approximately fifty miles. Immediately west of Dunning, tourists encountered the edge of Nebraska National Forest. An island of dark green in the middle of the treeless Sandhills, this preserve was begun as an experiment in 1902 under the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, and by 1936 encompassed 90,000 acres, almost a quarter of which were plated with trees. The manmade forest offered free picnicking facilities, scenic drives and a look at the Bessey Nursery (TM00-110), where seedlings were grown for use across the state, but federal restrictions were tight. For example, all cars were required to, "be equipped with mufflers," and all "cutouts," were to, "be kept closed on hay roads." Smoking in the forest was, understandably, forbidden. Flanking the forest are the small Thomas County towns of Halsey (pop.130) and Thedford (pop. 270).

After leaving the Middle Loup River, tourists entered the interior Sandhills where they found, in the words of the WPA guide, an "Old West" or "pioneer" culture surviving across the vast cattle ranges and on the streets of towns like Mullen (pop. 524), Hyannis (pop.384) and Ellsworth (pop. 36). In addition to the towns, signs of civilization along the highway included windmills, Hereford cattle, oversized homemade mailboxes, cattle guards on the side roads and an occasional sprawling ranch.[127] Finally there were the people, which, through colorful descriptions like those found in the WPA guide, became a tourist attraction as well. During the 1930s, the WPA found that many still wore long fur coats, drove wagons and burned cow chips for fuel, while ranchers and cowboys in ten gallon hats, riding boots, spurs and chaps walked the streets of Mullen and Hyannis. While descriptions of the Sandhills often leaned heavily on myth, the WPA guide did at least point out that cowboys in Hyannis, "were not the two-gun, liquor-drinking type described in fiction." At the eastern edge of the Sandhills, auto tourists could view ruins from the fleeting World War I-era potash industry that gave the highway its original name at Antioch (SH00-002, NR listed). A booming town of 2,500 during World War I, by the 1930s Antioch was home to just under 150 people and had the look of a "war torn village," where only, "a few dilapidated houses and the ruins of five large potash factories, with rusting retorts, boilers, and steel skeletons scattered about them, remain as a reminder of former prosperity."

After traversing the isolated Sandhills, northwest-bound travelers along Nebraska Highway 2 probably felt a dash of relief upon reaching Alliance (pop. 6,669), where they found a range of services and accommodations. For instance, they could stay in one of fifteen cabins at Kastner's Tourist Camp or a in room at the Drake Hotel, fuel-up at one of several gas stations and choose from a variety of garages for any necessary repairs.[128] They might also tour the Sod House Museum at the Alliance City Park, visit the grave of famed Sandhills homesteader Jules Sandoz, or take an 18-mile excursion along a dirt road to Point of Rocks, a stop on the Sidney-Deadwood Trail, all of which were potential tourist attractions highlighted by the WPA. The Sandhills give way to flat tableland just east of Alliance, allowing for the cultivation of potatoes, wheat and other crops between there and the Niobrara River. Near the northern edge of this agricultural area tourists found the town of Hemingford (pop. 1,025), with its numerous potato warehouses, and then crossed the Niobrara River, which the WPA noted for its fishing potential. Just north of the river, they crossed the southern edge of the Pine Ridge via a gentle grade through the steep Bryan Canyon. The scenic White River Valley lies on the northwest side of the

[127] *WPA Guide*, 3 and 361-362.
[128] Sanborn Map Company, "Alliance, Box Butte County, Nebraska," 1930, Sheet 13.

Pine Ridge, and here tourists could visit a number of sites associated with 19th century military and Native American history, including the still-operational Fort Robinson (now the Fort Robinson and Red Cloud Agency NHL) near Crawford (pop. 1,703). Immediately north of Crawford, the highway crosses the White River and then enters the Cottonwood Creek drainage and associated badlands. As described by the WPA, Toadstool Park, with its "field of gigantic stone mushrooms," would have made an interesting stopping point for tourists before they entered the vast grasslands between the Pine Ridge and South Dakota's Black Hills (now Toadstool Geologic Park and the Ogallala National Grasslands).

Potash Highway Communities

The impact of the Potash Highway on Nebraska communities is difficult to measure, but it is equally difficult to ignore. The highway assuredly effected each community's physical development as auto-related businesses (often followed by other businesses) moved toward each successive highway alignment. It also provided economic opportunities, particularly in those industries that specifically catered to highway travelers. Heavier traffic along state routes like Nebraska 2 also increased the potential customer base for those businesses that could serve both local and traveling populations, including drive-ins, garages and filling stations. Moreover, highway-related businesses and road construction created jobs for both "skilled labor" (such as engineers and auto mechanics) and "non-skilled labor" (including food servers, filling station attendants and laborers). Finally, the Potash Highway also provided industrial and agricultural producers with another connection to outside markets, while at the same time giving local citizens a quicker route in or out of town.

Of course, the impact of the Potash Highway varied between communities. It created larger retail markets for communities like Alliance, Grand Island and Broken Bow, while eventually drawing business away from smaller towns. Moreover, communities along the original Potash route and its 1923 extension to the Black Hills were much more likely to be impacted than those along the 1923 southeastern extension, which were already served by other major highways.

Community Planning and Development

Because of its relative size and regular coverage by Sanborn fire insurance maps, the city of Alliance (2010 pop. 8,491), offers an excellent case study for examining the impact of the Potash Highway on the physical development of communities along its route. Furthermore, its commercial district, which contains a handful of auto-related properties, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2007. Alliance's main street (Box Butte Avenue) was platted perpendicular to the main line of the Burlington & Missouri River Railroad (later the CB&Q Railroad), which was completed through Box Butte County in 1888. By 1910, the commercial district extended five blocks along Box Butte Avenue from the Burlington Passenger Depot on 1st Street to 5th Street. Between 1st and 4th Streets the district was three blocks wide, but narrowed to just one block at its northern end. Three hotels were located immediately across from the railroad depot, while the Drake Hotel (BX01-229, non-extant) and another hotel were built at the north end of the commercial district between 4th and 5th Streets. At that time, the commercial district was home to just two auto-related buildings: a garage immediately across from the Drake Hotel at 422 Box Butte Avenue and a garage at the southwest corner of 3rd Street and Laramie Avenue.[129]

A decade later, the Sanborn Map Company depicted the trend of auto-related businesses clustering in automobile rows along 3rd Street, which was selected as the Potash Highway's route through Alliance. For instance, two garages set up shop on the north side of W. 3rd Street's 200 Block and a new automobile dealership (BX01-225) was under construction just across Cheyenne Avenue. Another group of auto-related businesses clustered along the highway immediately east of Box Butte Avenue, including an automobile dealership at 301 Box Butte Avenue, a garage at 114 E. 3rd Street and a tire repair shop next store at 118 E. 3rd Street. While most new auto-related business located along the highway in automobile rows on either side of Box Butte Avenue, others chose to locate in the traditional business district. These included a new automobile dealership and garage at 116 Box Butte Avenue and the architecturally significant Lowery and Henry Building (BX01-232), an automobile showroom at the northwest corner of Box Butte Avenue and 5th Street.[130]

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[129] Sanborn Map Company, "Alliance, Box Butte County, Nebraska," 1910 Map. Sheets 6 and 9.
[130] Sanborn Map Company, "Alliance, Box Butte County, Nebraska," 1920 Map, Sheets 7, 10 and 11.

While no filling stations were depicted on Sanborn maps of Alliance in 1920, there were at least seven by 1930. At this point, filling stations were fairly equally distributed between the highway and the fringes of the commercial district. Four were found along 3rd Street at the southern corners of its intersection with Cheyenne Avenue, the northwest corner of its intersection with Niobrara Avenue and at 614 W. 3rd Street. The other stations were found at the northeast corner of Box Butte Avenue and E. 6th Street, the northeast corner of Laramie Avenue and W. 4th Street and the northeast corner of Laramie Avenue and W. 2nd Street. The latter was housed in the corner of a long, one-story building that also offered auto washing and greasing, auto repair services and auto sales. It anchored a new automobile row between the highway (3rd Street) and 2nd Street that also included an auto dealership, an auto junkyard, an auto wrecking business, an auto repair shop, an auto painting shop and the older (pre-1910) garage at the southwest corner of Laramie and 3rd Street.

In addition to the filling stations, other auto-related businesses also appeared along the highway during the 1920s, adding to the automobile rows already in place. East of Box Butte Avenue, for instance, the garage at 114 E. 3rd Street expanded to encompass the next lot (and the tire repair shop located there), while an auto repair shop, a filling station and auto paint shop were built on the remaining lots west of Niobrara Avenue. The real growth, however, occurred along W. 3rd Street, where the former automobile row was transitioning into a commercial strip between Laramie and Toluca Avenues. New auto-related businesses opening here during the 1920s included a tire and battery shop behind the filling station at 303 W. 3rd Street, a machine shop (311 W. 3rd) an auto dealership (BX01-238, 313 W. 3rd), an auto paint shop (323 W. 3rd), an auto repair shop (406 W. 3rd) and Kastner's Tourist Camp at 614-622 W. 3rd Street. In 1930, Kastner's Tourist Camp featured fifteen individual cabins, two carports/garages, a residence/office and shop with an associated filling station. Between the auto-related businesses lining the highway during the 1920s were other commercial enterprises, including shops at 202, 206, 210 (farm implements), 213 (feed store), 217 and 224 W. 3rd Street.[131]

The 3rd Street commercial strip continued to develop during the 1930s and 1940s, so that by 1948 businesses dotted the highway amidst pockets of older residential development for fourteen blocks between Howard and Yellowstone Avenues. A new filling station (BX01-235) was built at the northwest corner of E. 3rd Street and Yellowstone Avenue, but most commercial growth continued the earlier trend of shifting west. New auto-related businesses in place by 1948 along W. 3rd Street included: three filling stations (927, 724 and 425 W. 3rd), the Zesto Drive-in (715 W. 3rd), two auto repair shops (703 and 420 W. 3rd) an auto dealership (511 W. 3rd), a restaurant (220 W. 3rd) and a tire shop (215-217 W. 3rd). Indicating the increasing importance of Nebraska Highway 2 as a shipping route, motor freight stations also began to appear along the highway in Alliance. Some were constructed between 1930 and 1948, such the stations at 719 and 723 W. 3rd Street, while others were former commercial enterprises, including what had been a feed store at 213 W. 3rd Street. In the meantime, auto-related development declined in the commercial district. For instance, one of Alliance's first garages (at 201 W. 3rd Street) had become a store with hall space on the second floor by 1948, while the auto wrecking business and auto dealership along the west side of Laramie Avenue between 2nd and 3rd Streets became a furniture repair store and a "shop," respectively. Predictably, the migration of auto-related businesses (and other businesses) to the commercial strip continued through the end of the highway's period of significance in c. 1965 and continues into the present. Postwar examples of auto-related properties along the 3rd Street commercial strip include a service station at the northeast corner of Yellowstone Avenue (BX01-236), the Sunset Motel (BX01-233) east of Pine Avenue and McCarroll's Motel (BX01-234) between Flack and Boyd Avenues.[132]

Alliance, of course, was not the only community to have its development effected by the Potash Highway, and later Nebraska Highway 2. In Grand Island a commercial strip developed along S. Locust Street, which after 1923 became the first segment of the Potash Highway's southern extension to Hastings and beyond. The Hotel Yancey (HL06-014, NRHP listed) at the intersection of S. Locust (the Potash Highway) and W. 2nd Street (the Lincoln Highway) anchored this commercial strip, which by 1924 already included (from south to north) the Eagles Tourist Camp (507 S. Locust), a filling

[131] Sanborn Map Company, "Alliance, Box Butte County, Nebraska," 1930 Map, Sheets 2, 3, 10, 11 and 13.
[132] Sanborn Map Company, "Alliance, Box Butte County, Nebraska," 1930 Map (1948 update), Sheets 2, 3 and 10 – 13.

station (404 S. Locust), an auto-repair shop (220 S. Locust) and a garage (219 S. Locust).[133] Just six years, the Eagles Tourist Camp was gone, but the commercial strip had grown to include at least six filling stations at 708, 516, 303, 250, 200 and 124 S. Locust Street, as well as an auto repair shop at 317 S. Locust and a tire shop at 110 S. Locust.[134] Commercial strips also developed at the east and west end of E Street (the Potash Highway) in Broken Bow, although, in contrast to their counterparts in Alliance and Grand Island, these are divided from the commercial district by patches of residential development.[135]

The development of small towns was also impacted by the Potash Highway, which is particularly evident when examining the impact of realignments during the 1930s and 1940s. The Custer County communities of Merna and Mason City are both good examples of the impact of shifting alignments. In Mason City, the highway originally entered the commercial district from the east via Crawford Street and the town erected a concrete bridge (CU11-015) and road markers (CU11-016) to welcome motorists. A small automobile row consisting of a garage (CU11-013), gas station (CU11-014) and service station (CU11-034) also developed at the intersection of Crawford and Prentiss Streets, just one block over from Main Street. However, when Nebraska Highway 2 was re-routed to skirt the eastern edge of town in 1937, auto-related development shifted to the new alignment. This is represented by the c. 1937 domestic style service station built along the current alignment.[136] The Potash Highway originally ran through the southern edge of Merna along what is now "Old Highway 2." At least one former gas station (CU12-009), and possibly another, provide evidence of the original route, while more recent auto-related development has shifted to the current (c. 1940) alignment. Similar patterns of development are still evident in numerous other small towns along the route. For example, Ben Bowen built a small gable-roofed filling station along the original Potash Highway alignment through Dunning in 1930. When the route was realigned just seven years later, Bowen saw an opportunity to expand and built the much larger Bowen Oil Company Service Station and Café (BL02-014) at the new alignment's intersection with Main Street.[137]

The Potash Highway and the Local Economy

The various businesses supported by the Potash Highway did more than shape the cultural landscape; they also provided jobs. In the interior Sandhills communities of Hyannis, Thedford and Mullen, for instance, the 1930 Federal Census reveals a fairly diversified highway-related economy with jobs in lodging, food service, automobile service, oil distribution, trucking and state government all represented (See Table 1, below). What is more, almost half (46.5%) were in managerial positions with 34 of the 73 individuals employed in highway-related industries reporting job titles of proprietor, manager, assistant manager or self-employed truck driver. Travel along the Potash Highway, whether it was long distance tourism or more localized, created opportunities for individuals like George Stopple, Sylvia Kirk, Clarence Rodgers, Loy James and Otto Pearson to own and operate their own businesses. Stopple, a 34-year-old divorcee, and Kirk, a 34-year-old married woman, both owned and operated restaurants in Hyannis. Rodgers, the proprietor of a service station in Thedford, had achieved sufficient financial stability by 1930 to own a house for himself and his family. In Mullen, James and Pearson were also able to own homes with income they earned as a garage proprietor and an independent truck driver, respectively. A good wage was especially important for these highway-related workers as James, 46, and his wife had four children and a nephew to support, while Pearson, 45, and his wife had six children.

Garage mechanic was by far the most common auto-related occupation along the Sandhills portion of the Potash Highway, with 18 mechanics reportedly working in Hyannis, Thedford and Mullen in 1930. Demographically, mechanics in these communities were a relatively uniform group. All were white men ranging in age from 19 to 41 and most (78%) were married. Of the three single men, 19-year-old Edgar Hester lived with his married brother (also a mechanic) in Thedford,

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[133] Sanborn Map Company, "Grand Island, Hall County, Nebraska," 1924 Map, Sheets 3 and 27. The Eagles Tourist Camp is not depicted on the Sanborn Map (although the Eagles Building is depicted and labeled), but is noted in the 1924-1925 Grand Island City Directory, 332.
[134] Sanborn Map Company, "Grand Island, Hall County, Nebraska," 1930 Map, Sheets 3 and 34.
[135] Sanborn Map Company, "Broken Bow, Custer County, Nebraska," 1943 Map, Sheets 2, 5 and 6.
[136] *Mason City, 1886-1976*, (Callaway, NE: Loup City Queen, 1976) 9 and 13.
[137] Thedford Women's Vicinity Club, *Pictorial History of the Sandhills* (Thedford, NE: The Club, 1983), B26.

while Cain Olsen, 38, and Curtis Arnold, 20, were lodgers at a hotel in Mullen. Finally there was Otterbier Rice, a 33-year-old widower who lived with his two young children in a rented home. Unfortunately, he was Mullen's only unemployed mechanic at the time of the 1930 census. Another common trait among mechanics in Hyannis and Mullen was that all were listed as either renters or lodgers. This suggests that while being a mechanic was a decent living, it failed to offer—at least at this particular time and place—the kind of financial security necessary to purchase a home. In Thedford, a smaller town where housing may have been less expensive, the situation was reversed with two of three mechanics owning their own homes in 1930. Mechanics were not the only employees working in garages along the Potash Highway. Garages in Hyannis and Mullen also employed three bookkeepers in 1930. Interestingly, in Mullen both bookkeepers were single women in their mid-20s. In contrast, Hyannis's sole garage bookkeeper, 26-year-old Merle Frye, lived with his 22-year-old wife, Bertha, at the Hotel DeFair (GT02-002, NRHP listed), where she worked as a waitress.

Until motels were constructed in these communities after World War II, most Potash Highway travelers choosing to spend the night in Thedford, Mullen or Hyannis likely stayed in a hotel or rooming house. In addition to offering lodging, these establishments also provided a measure of economic opportunity for potentially disadvantaged segments of Sandhills society. Hyannis's two lodging houses are a case in point. In 1930, the town's sole rooming house was managed by 65-year-old widow, Anna Hosman, who rented the property for $40.00 a month. Houseman's 83-year-old widowed mother, Mary Carroll, and her divorced son, Alfonso, also lived with her at the rooming house. It is hard to imagine another line of work that could have provided Hosman with both income and housing for her family. Fortunately, Alfonso, 35, also found work in the lodging industry as a cook at the nearby Hotel DeFair. In 1930, this hotel was rented and managed by the husband-and-wife-team of Jack and Lulu Scoval. In addition to Bertha Frye and Alfonso Hosman (see above), the Scovals also employed 21-year-old Jessie Gaines as a waitress.The availability of such a job, which also provided affordable (possibly free) onsite housing, was especially fortunate for Gaines, who was divorced and had a 2-year-old daughter to support. Food establishments and fillings stations, both of which were frequented by Potash Highway travelers, also provided jobs for a specific demographic in these communities. In Mullen, for instance, three married women in their 40s found work in restaurants as either a cook or waitress to supplement their family's income. The job of filling station attendant, on the other hand, was filled exclusively by single young men (ages 18-21) in Thedford and Mullen.

Automobile salesmen and dealership owners were conspicuously missing in these communities, at least according to the 1930 census. Automobiles, however, were surely sold from garages and other auto-related businesses along the Potash Highway's route through the interior Sandhills. For example, Harry Mathews, longtime owner of Mullen's Chevrolet dealership, reported to census takers in 1930 that he was the proprietor of a garage (HO02-057, non-extant), and not an auto dealer or salesman. By 1940, Mathews had expanded his business to include the dealership, a garage and a service station (HO02-053), but he had also just financed the construction of a small oil refinery in Mullen. As such, Mathews reported his occupation as, "oil refinery owner," in the 1940 census, while his son, Arthur, reported "garage operator" as his occupation and "retail Chevrolet cars" for his industry.[138] On the other hand, Harry Mathews was listed as an "auto dealer" in the 1940 edition of *Who's Who in Nebraska*. In summation, the federal census should only be viewed as starting point for assessing the economic impact of the Potash Highway; further research will yield a more complete story.

[138] U.S. Census Bureau, "1940 Federal Census, Mullen Village (Enumeration District 46-2), Hooker County, Nebraska," Sheets 1A and 9A; Hooker County Historical Society.*Hooker County, Nebraska: the First 100 Years, 1889-1989*, (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corp., 1989),36-37; *Who's Who in Nebraska* (Lincoln, NE: State Journal Printing Co., c. 1940), 579. The small service station (HO02-053) was eventually purchased by a Ray Sexton and moved to his "back lot" in Mullen, where it served as a self-service station. This is where it was documented during the 2000-2010 Nebraska Historic Highway Survey. Its current status is unknown.

Table 1. Highway-related Jobs in the Interior Sandhills, 1930[139]

Town	Hyannis	Thedford	Mullen	Total
Population, 1930	**384**	**270**	**524**	**1,178**
Lodging, Manager / Assist. Manager / Proprietor	4	3	2	9
Lodging, Cook	1	-	-	1
Lodging, Waitress	2	-	-	2
Lodging, Maid / Servant	-	1	1	2
Food Service, Manager / Proprietor	2	1	1	4
Food Service, Cook	-	-	2	2
Food Service, Waitress	-	-	1	1
Garage, Proprietor / Manager	1	2	5	8
Garage, Bookkeeper	1	-	2	3
Garage, Mechanic / Helper	4	3	11	18
Service Station, Proprietor / Manager	-	2	-	2
Service Station, Attendant / Helper	-	1	2	3
Oil Company, Manager	1	-	-	1
Oil Company, Agent	-	-	1	1
Oil Company, Truck Driver	1	-	1	2
Truck Driver, Self-employed	-	1	8	9
Salesman (traveling), Automobile Parts	-	-	1	1
State of Nebraska,Highway Overseer	-	-	1	1
State of Nebraska,Road Maintenance	1	-	-	1
State of Nebraska,Highway Patrol	-	1	1	2
Total Highway-Related Jobs	**18**	**15**	**40**	**73**

The Potash Highway also created jobs more directly through road maintenance projects and safety programs, especially after the road became part of the state highway system in 1926. Even before that, however, the State of Nebraska was investing in road construction along the Potash route. For example, the Nebraska Department of Public Works reported that engineer Forest Hall made $165.00 in November 1920 for his work on construction of a 14.82-mile earth and sand clay road between Alliance and Antioch (Project 21). During the same month and on the same project, instumentman A. E. Anderson and rodman Charles Caldwell made $110.00 and $80.00, respectively.[140] Ten years later, at least four state highway workers lived along the Potash route (officially Nebraska Highway 2 after 1926) in the interior Sandhills communities of Hyannis, Mullen and Thedford, including one "overseer," one road maintenance worker and two highway patrolman (See Table 1, above). The various incarnations of Nebraska's highway department continued to create jobs between 1930 and the 1960s, some of which were along the former Potash route. In 1939, 44 men joined the newly-created Safety Patrol and in 1954, 51 new "scale officers" manned 12 weighing stations across Nebraska. Two years later, "Twenty-one field headquarters were assigned as permanent headquarters for field engineers and their helpers to enable these field men and their families to establish permanent homes in a city with adequate school facilities."[141]

From Producer to Market

In the fall of 1910, the *Omaha Bee* argued, "Nebraska is in Need of Highways for Rural Districts," in a half-page article, citing higher lands values and lower agricultural transportation costs in both the eastern United States and Europe where

[139] U.S. Census Bureau, "1930 Federal Census, Nebraska Hyannis Village (Enumeration District 38-2), Grant County, Nebraska."; "1930 Federal Census, Thedford Village (Enumeration District, 86-7), Thomas County, Nebraska."; "1930 Federal Census, Mullen Village (Enumeration District 46-2), Hooker County, Nebraska." Data compiled form "Field 28: Occupation" and Field 29: Industry."

[140] Nebraska Department of Public Works, "Monthly Report," January 1921, 9-10.

[141] A. T. Lobdell, *Nebraska Department of Roads: A History* (Lincoln, NE, 1965), 26, 36 and 38; Twenty-ninth Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation, V. 1 Bureau of Highways Motor Vehicle Division Law Enforcement and Public Safety, (Lincoln, NE, 1951-1952) 134.

better roads were already in place.[142] In addition to its other functions, the Potash Highway would also become part of the "farm-to-market" network of highways envisioned by the *Omaha Bee*. The trucking business grew quickly in Nebraska during the 1920s and even continued to expand during the Great Depression, when passenger vehicle use fell by 16% in 1936 alone.[143] At least some of these trucks were transporting crops, livestock and other goods along the Potash route and by the early 1940s the Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation described Nebraska Highway 2 as a, "typical farm-to-market highway in the central dry land farming and stock raising section of Nebraska."[144] In the Sandhills region, Mullen developed as a trucking center with at least nine "truck drivers" living there in 1930. Ten years later that number had grown to 20, with six truckers working in "general trucking," and four each working for transfer lines and in road construction. Of the six remaining truckers, three transported oil and gasoline products, one hauled gravel, one worked for an implement company and one was employed by the State Highway Department.[145] Likewise, trucking was also an important industry in larger communities along the Potash route like Alliance, Grand Island and Broken Bow.

While most trucks on the Potash Highway and its successor, Nebraska Highway 2, were hauling locally-produced livestock and agricultural products to larger markets or bringing consumer products to the isolated Sandhills, there were notable exceptions. During World War I, potash was mined from local Sandhills lakes and transported to reduction plants in Antioch and Lakeside. Sandhills ranchers also had a local market for their cattle after the Mullen Sales Pavilion opened in 1920. Twenty years later, Harry Mathews built his oil refinery along Nebraska Highway 2 in Mullen. This plant required the shipment of crude oil by truck or train into Mullen for refining, as well as the distribution of its petroleum products, which in 1940 included gasoline, hot tractor fuel, kerosene, No.1 Fuel Oil and No. 2 Fuel Oil.[146] Transport of petroleum products put trucks on other stretches of the Potash route as well. During the early 1950s, for example, truck drivers for Roy and Elva Dickey's Socony-Vacuum Oil (later Mobil Oil) agency in Hemingford drove to Alliance two to three times a day to pick up their products, most of which were later delivered by truck to area farmers.[147]

The Potash Highway also offered new opportunities for consumers, who—after purchasing a car—could now more easily reach bigger markets. This had a mixed, and sometimes detrimental, impact on local economies. The small Sheridan County community of Bingham provides one example of the Potash Highway's potential downside. "It seems that when the highway was built through here it was the start of the decline of small towns," begins one Bingham resident in a 1976 county history, adding, "It was possible to get to Alliance in a short time and people did not patronized the local stores enough to keep them going. They say we are progressing; however, at times I wonder."[148] Ironically, the one Bingham business still in operation during the 1970s, at least according to the author, was a filling station that carried basic groceries and served meals (probably SH00-148). Despite later misgivings about the impact of the Potash Highway and Nebraska Highway 2 on small town life, there was no denying its significance to the region. Its status as the sole "good" highway through the Sandhills for a number of years was memorialized in the following poem by Hooker County resident Mabell Cox:

Roads, Roads, Roads (abridged)

In the early days the roads they had
Were really not that great.
You'd better start early
Or you might be quite late….

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[142] "Nebraska in Need of Highways for Rural Districts; Road Figures," *The Omaha Sunday Bee*, 4 September 1910, 4.
[143] Twenty-fourth Biannual Report Department of Roads & Irrigation to the Governor of Nebraska, 1941-1942.Volume 1. Passenger vehicle statistics for 1936, Trucking grew by 5% that year.
[144] Ibid., 41.
[145] U.S. Census Bureau, "1940 Federal Census, Mullen Village (Enumeration District 46-2), Hooker County, Nebraska."
[146] *Hooker County, Nebraska: The First Hundred Years*, 37.
[147] Edna Clark and the Hemingford Centennial Book Committee, *Hemingford, Nebraska, 1886-1986* (Hemingford, NE, 1986), 74.
[148] Sheridan County Historical Society, *"Recollections" of Sheridan County, Nebraska* (S.l.: Iron Man Publications, 1976), 12.

But the automobile soon came along
And they didn't like the trails.
Something must be done – Call the State,
That's a trick that never fails.

So the State built roads going East and West
They called it Highway Two,
But if you wanted to go North or South
That was just too bad for you…

Safer and faster too –
But we still have our trails that are not so good
When you leave old Highway Two.[149]

Conclusion

The Potash Highway, which originally ran from Grand Island to Alliance in Nebraska, served recreational and economic interests from its inception in 1918. The highway initially connected central and northwestern Nebraska to the more populous south and east regions of the state. Additions to the Potash Highway in 1923 extended it south from Grand Island to Hastings and then along the Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway and Meridian Highway to Wichita, Kansas, as well as north from Alliance to the Black Hills of South Dakota. In its extended form, the Potash Highway served as a tourist route to the Black Hills and, less commonly, to Yellowstone National Park. In 1926, the original portion of the highway and the Nebraska segment of its northern extension were integrated into Nebraska Highway 2. Today, Nebraska Highway 2 is a modern, two-lane roadway that facilitates timely travel between Grand Island, Alliance and points north, as well as allowing travelers to observe and appreciate the Nebraska Sandhills, a National Natural Landmark. In order to further encourage tourism, the State of Nebraska designated the original segment of the Potash Highway as the Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway in 1999.

[149] *Hooker County, Nebraska: The First Hundred Years*, 24.

F. Associated Property Types

In order to qualify for listing under this Multiple Property Document (MPD), resources must have a documented association with the Potash Highway through one of the four National Register of Historic Places "Criteria for Evaluation:" an event, a person, design/construction and information potential. The evaluation of potentially eligible properties under this MPD will be limited to intact examples of identified related property types meeting one or more of the National Register criteria. Potash Highway resources must retain sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association to convey their historical significance.[150]

Application of the National Register Criteria
Related property types are evaluated for eligibility under the four National Register criteria. These are:

Criterion A – Event
A property is eligible for the National Register for significant associations with a single event, a pattern of events or activities, or historic trends in the development of the Potash Highway. Related property types will qualify for the National Register under Criterion A for historical association(s) with transportation, commerce, travel patterns and development along the Potash Highway during its period of historical significance. These may include the promotion or development of the highway, pioneering or advancement of road construction, or representation of highway-related travel or commerce. Under Criterion A, potential National Register areas of significance might include: commerce, community planning and development, engineering, entertainment and recreation, and transportation.

Criterion B – Person
A property is eligible for the National Register if it possesses a strong association with a person or group significant to the history and development of the Potash Highway during its period of historical significance. Under Criterion B the specific contributions of an individual or group must be identified and documented and the associated property must best illustrate the person's significant achievements. These may include a property that best represents an individual's importance in the promotion or development of the highway, contributions to the advancement of engineering or road construction, the advancement or innovation of a type of roadside business or highway-related commerce, or a government official whose contributions to the development of the highway can be specifically articulated. In some cases, a person's residence or place of business could qualify if no associated highway-related property is identified. Under Criterion B, potential National Register areas of significance might include: commerce, community planning and development, engineering, entertainment and recreation, politics and government, and transportation.

Criterion C – Design/Construction
A property is eligible for the National Register if it exemplifies an identified property type, style and/or method of construction and is significantly associated with the history and development of the Potash Highway during its period of historical significance. Under Criterion C resources must embody a distinctive characteristic of a type, period or method of construction, represent the work of a master, possess high artistic value, and/or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction (i.e. historic district). They may exemplify a design, construction method, architectural style, engineering or construction type, innovations or an evolution in road building, or a type of associated roadside commercial building. Under Criterion C, "type, form and function" or distinctive architecture or engineering most often represents significance along with a relationship to the highway. Potential National Register areas of significance might include: architecture, engineering, and landscape architecture.

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[150] In Section F, "Potash Highway" and "Potash route" generally refer to all incarnations of the route through Nebraska, including the original Potash Highway from Grand Island to Alliance (1918-1923), the expanded Black Hills to Wichita, Kansas route Potash route (1923-1926) and Nebraska Highway 2 from Grand Island to the Nebraska-South Dakota state line (1926-present). In some cases when a specific year or era is under discussion, the more time-specific name is used.

Criterion D – Information Potential
Criterion D is usually applied to archeology, and, in the case of historic highways, "historic archeology." Eligible properties must have yielded, or have the potential to yield, information and/or address research questions. In rare cases, an early alignment of the Potash route will qualify for listing under Criterion D if it can yield information about road engineering and construction methods prior to the development of specifications. In these cases, the historical documentation will be inadequate. Eligible highway alignments must remain sufficiently intact to potentially yield information and any archeological investigations must employ appropriate study techniques. Non-extant historic buildings or structures would not qualify under this criterion, since documentation is commonly available and/or other examples of the property type remain extant. Under Criterion D, potential National Register areas of significance might include: archeology (historic, non-aboriginal), engineering and transportation.

Criterion Considerations
In some cases, National Register "Criterion Considerations" should be applied to the eligibility of properties associated with the D-L-D Highway. Two Criterion Considerations are most likely to apply:

Criteria Consideration B: Moved Properties
Moved properties may be eligible for the National Register for their association with the Potash Highway if they retain an orientation, setting and general environment similar to their original location. They should also maintain a spatial connection and physical association with the highway.

Criteria Consideration G: Properties Less Than 50 Years Old
Resources that are less than 50 years old must be assessed under Criterion Consideration G. These properties must be associated with the continued development of the route as Nebraska Highway 2 and should be rare, exceptionally distinctive or important, or a single example of a property type.

Periods of Significance
Eligible resources will represent the development of the Potash Highway from its origins in 1918 through 1965, when the National Register's 50-year cutoff for historical significance is approached. Properties must have an association with the highway during its period of historical significance. Resources predating 1918 can still be eligible if they became associated with the Potash Highway during its period of significance. In some cases, Criterion Consideration G may be applicable for exceptionally significant properties that are less than 50 years old.

Integrity
Properties must retain acceptable levels of historic integrity to qualify for the National Register. The aspects of integrity are: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. A property or group of properties that meet one or more of the National Register criteria and retain sufficient integrity should be considered potentially eligible for the National Register if dating from the period of significance.

Several resource types were once prevalent on Nebraska's highways but are disappearing from the highway landscape. In the case of rare property types, the relative scarcity and availability of comparable properties should be used to inform the degree that alterations affect a property's historic integrity. Fewer alterations are acceptable on highway resources that are ubiquitous, as numerous examples in better physical condition can better represent the property type. To be eligible for the National Register these should retain a higher degree of physical integrity than rarer property types.

Alterations completed within the period of significance generally will not diminish the historic integrity of a property. Property types associated with road construction and travel on the Potash Highway changed or evolved due to many factors, including roadway improvements and marketing techniques. In these cases, alterations may not diminish integrity and may have themselves achieved significance. On the other hand, significant alterations occurring beyond the period of

significance will diminish the overall integrity of a resource, disqualifying it from National Register listing. Significant alterations include major structural changes, such as additions or partial demolitions, and modifications to the façade. Many highway resources are vacant or no longer serve their original function; however, this does not usually affect their historic significance or integrity.

Levels of Significance
Resources associated with the Potash Highway can be evaluated at the local, statewide or national levels of significance. The original Potash Highway was only a statewide route between Grand Island and Alliance; however, after 1923 the route was extended north to the Black Hills of South Dakota and southeast to Wichita, Kansas. However, no comprehensive surveys have been accomplished through these states and no definitive national context is available, making evaluations at the national level of significance difficult. The scope of this document, therefore, is limited to evaluations at the statewide and local levels of significance.

Statewide significance can be applied under Criteria A, B, C and/or D. Statewide significance should be applied to those property types, such as roadways, that represent the history of the Potash Highway, but are also considered major components of the Nebraska highway system as a whole. Resources that represent rare property types or can demonstrate statewide impact or associations should also be assessed for statewide significance. Under Criterion C, properties may also be considered for statewide significance if they are among the best examples of a property type, architectural style, engineering technique or method of construction in Nebraska. In general, a property significant at the statewide level will possess historical associations and/or contemporary importance extending beyond a local area.

Local significance can be applied to Criteria A, B, C and/or D. Local significance may be applied to related property types frequently found on or near alignments of the Potash Highway. It will apply to resources that served local and regional trade but bear a documented association to the highway. Resources of local significance include those that are ubiquitous and found in many, if not all, locales.

Related Property Types
Property types are buildings, structures, objects, sites, or districts. For the purpose of this document, historic highway resources are identified as properties associated with transportation, commerce, architecture or engineering. Historic highway resources encompass a wide range of property types. A discussion of the prominent property types and examples related to the Potash Highway/Nebraska Highway 2 includes:

- Gas Stations: Curbside Pumps, Filling Stations and Service Stations
- Automobile Agencies, Garages and Dealerships
- The Automobile Row and Commercial Strip
- Commercial Districts
- Truck Transport and Associated Sites
- Tourist Sites
- Markers, Signing and Monuments
- Campgrounds, Tourist Parks and Comfort Stations
- Wayside Areas and Parks
- Boarding Houses, Hotels, Cabin Camps, and Motels
- Roadhouses and Rural Crossroads Stores
- Restaurants, Food Stands, Diners and Drive-ins
- Man-made Landscape Features
- Natural Landscape Features and Viewsheds
- Bridges and Culverts
- Roadways

Gas Stations: Curbside Pumps, Filling Stations and Service Stations

Description
The gas station was developed in the early twentieth century to provide petroleum and other products exclusive to the automobile. They grew rapidly in number with the phenomenal acceptance of the automobile and the associated flood of motorists that took to the road. The gas station became a marketing outlet of both large corporations and hundreds of small independent companies and operators. This property type can be divided by function into two categories: the "filling station" and the "service station." Its form can be further described by these design-based subtypes: the "curbside pump;" "shed," "house," "house with canopy," "house with bays" and "oblong box." [151]

The early "drive up" source of gasoline was the "curbside pump" placed in front of businesses, such as automobile agencies, garages, dealerships, liveries, implement shops, hardware and general merchandise stores. With a pump and underground storage tank, this was a convenient and effective method for filling an automobile with gasoline. However, the proliferation of these curbside filling stations soon came to the attention of city officials, especially when located in the larger, more concentrated commercial districts. Their underground storage tank and pump often required the operation to be placed in the public right-of-way. Concerns about fire hazards, odor, noise, and pedestrian and traffic conflicts were voiced. Fire and zoning ordinances enacted in larger cities during the 1910s and 1920s eliminated curbside operations. Curbside pumps, however, remained a fixture in small villages and at rural crossroads stores.

The first off-street, drive-in "filling station" is so-named because it offered only a limited line of products and services, mostly a fill of gasoline. Among the first were utilitarian "sheds," which began to appear in the 1910s. Some types were prefabricated; others were built as common sheds by local operators, who based their design on utilitarian buildings used by grain, lumber and coal dealers, or petroleum operations at oil yards or bulk stations. When oil companies began constructing these sheds in neighborhoods and downtowns where aesthetics were important, their appearance quickly became objectionable. These utilitarian structures were sometimes eliminated in the highly concentrated commercial districts by local zoning ordinances.

Operators sought a better appearance for their stations. These often took the form of a "house" and "house with canopy." As the name suggests, the house type filling station took on the appearance or details of a domestic house. The house with canopy was similar to the house type, but had a canopy that extended over the pumps to shelter customers and employees in inclement weather. The typical house type consisted of an office, perhaps a storage or workroom, and single restroom. Products and services were limited and included free air, water for batteries and radiators, lubricating oils, tire repair and a small line of automotive parts. Outdoor grease pits and hoists provided lubrication services.

Many filling stations were built by small independent retailers in a manner preferred by the operator, using designs worked out with local contractors or observations of industry trends. The house and the house with canopy types were erected largely in the 1920s. The large oil companies chose a standardized design. One of the finest examples was an architect-designed station built statewide by the Standard Oil Company of Nebraska during the 1920s. Another example was the standardized stations built by the Continental Oil Company in Nebraska. Standardized designs allowed the public to easily identify the oil company and its products. The filling station sometimes took on other architectural themes as a marketing tool because the public was attracted by the "homelike" appearance, such as quaint cottages. These include the cottage types built by the Phillips Petroleum Company in Nebraska. Spanish Revival was another style commonly employed for filling stations. Sometimes attention-grabbing exotic themes were used in an attempt to pull motorists from the road.

During the 1930s, the filling station began to evolve into the "service station." During the Depression, gas sales sagged.

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[151] Property type description for gas stations is based on John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle, *The Gas Station in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 131-152.

Oil companies began to offer a much-expanded line of more profitable products and services, such as tires, batteries and accessories (in the trade, TBA) and automotive repairs. Existing filling stations sometimes adapted this new marketing technique. Canopies were removed to accommodate larger cars and trucks and either attached or detached service bays equipped for lubrication, car washing and automotive repairs were added. Probably the first to transition to the service station type were those of the Standard Oil Company of Nebraska. Some new stations kept the traditional appearance of cottages or other styles but were built with attached service bays, creating the "house with bays." Examples of those built in Nebraska are the Sinclair Oil Company stations. They took on the Spanish Revival details of stucco exteriors and tile mansard roofs, but maintained the canopy.

Most service stations, however, accommodated their growing services with a new and very different type of gas station building: the "oblong box." The Texas Company (Texaco) developed perhaps the earliest and most prototypical example of this modern, stylistic type in 1934. Oblong boxes were most popular in the 1950s through the 1960s. In contrast to the house types, the oblong box was designed to be both functional and to attract the motorist with their modern design. Most often these stations were built in a prominent location along the highway with a streamlined, functional, rectangular form and a flat roof. Typically of brick or concrete block construction, they were sometimes finished in glazed brick or porcelain-enameled panels. The oblong box was often painted with the oil company's trademark colors and included prominent signage. The interior of the oblong box included an office, storage space, a display area, a workshop and service bays. Exterior doors providing access to separate men's and women's restrooms were typically located on one side of the oblong box service station, usually behind the office. The Standard Oil Company of Indiana and Texaco built a number of these service station types in Nebraska in the 1950s and 1960s, using a uniform design, signage and product line. Multiple service stations were once found along the commercial strip of larger towns.

Beginning in the 1970s, the exterior simplicity of the oblong box fell out of favor. Elements such as cedar shakes, brick facing, and gable roofs with cupolas were added to existing stations, such as those of the Standard Oil Company/Amoco. By the 1990s a new station type was introduced, the "convenience store," fronted by a large canopy sheltering the pumps. Sometimes alterations were made to the oblong box to serve as a convenience store operation. Today, the oblong box as a type has been largely replaced with the convenience store and its monumental, freestanding canopy.

Significance
Gas stations located on or within close proximity to historic alignments of the Potash route may qualify for listing on the National Register under Criterion A for their association with the highway and the marketing of products and services to the traveling public. Under Criterion B, a gas station may best represent an individual's importance in the promotion or development of the highway, or a business person who advanced highway-related commerce or was associated with the innovation of a marketing technique. A gas station may also qualify for the National Register under Criterion C as a representative example of a design-based subtype (ex. house with bays, oblong box) and/or an identified architectural style related to trends in the marketing of petroleum products. Properties eligible under Criterion C will embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction. Moved properties must retain an orientation, setting and general environs similar to their original location and should maintain a spatial association with the highway. Early examples of gas stations are increasingly rare along the Potash route and should be assessed accordingly.

The curbside station is identified only by the pump itself, an object typically not considered individually eligible for listing in the National Register. Furthermore, curbside pumps associated with hardware stores, general merchandise stores or lumberyards would not be eligible for assessment under this MPD, since the primary function of such properties was not highway-related. Examples of early highway-related businesses that may have provided gasoline fills are liveries, automobile agencies, garages and automobile dealerships (see "Automobile Agencies, Garages and Dealerships," below). In these cases, extant curbside pumps could be considered contributing resources, but would still not be individually eligible. Common "sheds" were short-lived examples of petroleum marketing and were soon supplanted by the more substantial and attractive "house" or "house with canopy," gas stations. Most curbside operations and shed type

filling stations are no longer extant, and none were identified along the Potash Highway during the 2001-2002 Nebraska Historic Highway Survey.

Filling stations and service stations will most likely be eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C. Filling stations should be evaluated under Criterion A as early examples of the marketing of petroleum products and other offerings to the highway traveler. Under Criterion C, they may represent a designed-based subtype, such as the “house” and “house with canopy,” and/or an architectural style. The period of significance largely dates to the1920s. Although some may display alterations and the removal of their gas pumps, filling stations that retain characteristic features from the highway’s period of significance may be eligible for listing. Many early filling stations evolved into service stations. The canopy was often removed to accommodate larger cars and trucks and attached or detached service bays were added to expand the business’s offerings. Such changes generally do not diminish the property’s integrity, but instead represent its historically significant evolution from a filling station to the service station in type, form and function. Due to the rarity of well-preserved examples of filling stations along Nebraska’s highways, they warrant evaluation at the statewide level.

Early filling stations along the Potash route are extremely vulnerable. Two early stations have been lost completely since the 2001-2002 Nebraska Historic Highway Survey: a hipped-roofed station with a canopy in Hazard (SM02-015) and a stucco-covered Mission Revival station in Mullen (HO02-053). In Seneca, a stucco hipped-roofed station (TM04-004) has been significantly altered with the replacement of its original roof, the reconfiguration of its windows and a rear extension, all of which significantly compromise its historic integrity. Even so, a handful of good examples are still extant along the highway. Perhaps the most simplistic example of the “house” type can be found in Whitman, where there is a small hipped-roofed stucco station (GT03-004) with a door and three four-over-one wood windows on its façade. In Mason City, there is a small brick filling station with a hipped-roofed canopy (CU11-014). Its roof has recently been rebuilt and a frame addition on its rear elevation has been removed, however, the station still retains excellent integrity of materials and design, including its original four-over-four wood windows. An early filling station in Seneca (TM04-019) includes two buildings: a gable-roofed building with a stepped false-front parapet and wood garage door that likely served as a livery stable/garage and a hipped-roofed stucco station with a canopy that has been infilled.

Further examples of early filling stations can be found along the Potash Highway’s southern extension, which beginning in 1923 followed the earlier routes of the D-L-D Highway and Meridian Highway to Wichita, Kansas. In Hastings, located along the D-L-D route, there are two noteworthy early filling stations. The first is a small brick Tudor-style (“house” type) station (AD04-053) with a steeply-pitched side gable roof and cross gable entrance. The station has a corner orientation with detached service bays found at the back of the property. The second Hastings filling station is a striking example of the Art Deco-style (AD04-426). The stucco station features a heavy curvilinear embellishment and parapet with contrasting vertical and horizontal elements, a centered entrance flanked by large plate glass windows and exterior restrooms. Warner’s Filling Station (FM05-060), which was listed in the National Register in 2006, is located in Geneva, along the concurrent Meridian and Potash routes. This stucco-covered “house” type station has a gable roof and canopy with exposed rafter tails and knee braces, mimicking the appearance of a small Craftsman style bungalow.

The service station, which appeared inside commercial districts and along the commercial strip of larger towns in the 1930s, can accrue significance under Criterion A for offering an expanded line of products and services, in addition to the continued marketing of petroleum products, to the highway traveler. Criterion C can be met when a service station represents a design-based subtype, such as the “house with bays” or “oblong box,” and/or an architectural style. While there are still numerous service stations dating from the period of historical significance along the Potash route, they are increasingly vulnerable. At least four service stations have been lost since the 2001-2002 Nebraska Historic Highway Survey and the highway’s best examples of the “house with bays” type, a Neoclassical-style station in Broken Bow (CU05-072), and the “oblong box” type, a Sinclair station in Ansley (CU02-052), have been altered significantly. Even so, service stations must retain a relatively high degree of integrity. Service stations will be considered eligible for the National Register if they retain sufficient physical integrity to identify their original function, even if they are vacant or have a new

use. Very few service stations retain gasoline pumps and their absence does not impact a property's ability to convey its associational significance. Non-historic alterations such as enclosed and downsized windows and service bay openings or additions/alterations to the building are rarely acceptable, as these changes diminish the historic integrity of the property. Due to their commonality, most service stations will be eligible at the local level. Service stations that are less than 50 years old, but possess exceptional significance, should be evaluated under National Register Criterion Consideration G. To be eligible under this criterion consideration, the property must retain excellent historic integrity and appear much as it did when originally constructed.

Examples of the "house with bays" type service station are found in Alliance and along the Meridian / Potash route in Belvedere. The Tudor-style Alliance station (BX01-235) has cross-gable roofs and service bays attached to its rear elevation. Belvedere's historic station (TY02-026) is an excellent bungalow style example of the type with a cross-gable plan, a canopy and one service bay. Other early service stations with canopies can be found in Mullen (HO02-056) and Sutton (CY12-163). The former is a stucco-coved station with a hipped roof that extends out to create a canopy and a brick service bay attached to its side elevation. Further additions are found at the back of the station. Its roof and canopy have been restored since the 2001-2002 survey. The stucco-covered station in Sutton, also on the historic D-L-D route, has a larger and more stylized canopy with a pedimented parapet. Red terra-cotta tiles covering the parapet and a small pent roof on the exposed north (side) elevation link the station to the Mission Revival style. Non-historic metal additions extend off the south elevation. An interesting variation on the service station form stands in Merna. This rectilinear brick service station (CU12-) has a corner drive-through supported by a single brick post and a garage door on its rear elevation. An abandoned early service station in Dunning (BL02-014) also includes a café. This flat-roofed, stucco-covered station has a projecting bay with a pedestrian entrance flanked by widows near the center of its façade with the café to one side and a service bay with a wood panel and glass overhead garage door to the other side. A band of six-over-six double hung windows provides generous lighting for the office and café sections.

Historic service stations dating from the 1940s and later, usually representing variations of the "oblong box" type, can also be found along the Potash Highway. Stations in Hemingford (BX04-057), Halsey (TM01-019), Thedford (TM05-024) and Fairmont (FM04-023) all have two service bays and an office on their façade, but still display the wide range of materials and fenestration patterns used for this simplified type. The brick station in Hemingford has a pedestrian door entering the office beside its service bays and two square windows lighting the corner of the office. Halsey's concrete block station has a glass office door flanked by plate glass windows with a third window around the corner. In Thedford, the oblong box station is covered in stucco and has a door, window, window, door, window configuration in the office section. This station also steps down in height from its façade and has a third service bay at the back of the building. In Fairmont, where the Potash Highway ran concurrent with the D-L-D Highway after 1923, the oblong box station is clad in porcelain enamel paneling and has a completely glass corner office. Immediately to the west is a more complex service station (FM04-022) with three distinct segments: a flat-roofed plate glass office protected by overhanging eaves, a taller segment with two serve bays and a projecting "Quonset" type service bay. Further variations on the "oblong box" can be found in Alliance, where there is a concrete block station (BX01-236) with two projecting service bays and a glass office with a short corner elevation, and in Berea (BX02-004). The Berea service station is constructed with structural clay tile and has a wood panel pedestrian door flanked by large multi-light industrial steel windows. The service bay is accessed through a batten garage door on the south (side) elevation and brick "quoins" embellish all doors and windows.

Beginning in the 1970s elements such as cedar shakes, brick facing, and gabled roofs with cupolas were commonly added to service stations. These alterations do not meet Criterion Consideration G, because they fall outside the period of significance established by this MPD. By the 1990s the convenience store became the fashion. No examples of these stations were recorded along the Potash route due to their recent date.

Single or multiple gas stations may also anchor automobile rows and are often found in significant numbers along commercial strips (see "Automobile Rows and Commercial Strips," below). For instance, three service stations line the 3rd

Street commercial strip in Alliance between Yellowstone and Missouri Avenues. Intersections of the Potash Highway with other significant national, state and local routes also often attracted more than one gas station.

Automobile Agencies, Garages and Dealerships

Description
The proliferation of automobile agencies, garages and dealerships corresponded with the phenomenal acceptance of the automobile in Nebraska. Highway travelers found these establishments to be convenient for repair service, products and even the purchase of automobiles themselves.

The earliest sales of automobiles were through agencies, which became the marketing operation of choice for the many early automobile manufacturing companies. Few automobiles were offered for sale on-site, but rather the agent took orders for new automobiles, which were then shipped by railroad car. Garages responded to the growing need for automotive repair and other services. Sometimes called “automobile liveries” they represent the evolution from “horse and buggy” to the automobile. Many early agencies operated from liveries or implement dealers, which sometimes evolved into full-fledged garages. One character-defining feature of buildings designed as automobile agencies or garages are their prominently-placed vehicle doorways. These buildings can be of frame, brick or concrete block construction and often feature a stepped parapet with a taller garage bay and industrial-style steel windows. Many agencies and garages also provided curbside gasoline pumps. Garages were found in almost every community, large or small.

As automobile sales soared in the 1920s the first automobile “dealerships” began to appear across Nebraska. Dealerships offered a large stock of new automobiles and an expanded line of parts and services, such as automobile repairs. Dealerships featured display areas to showcase new automobiles, offered a large stock of parts housed in a separate room, and multiple indoor bays for automobile repairs and storage. Like agencies and garages, many early dealerships also offered gasoline from curbside pumps. Early dealerships resembled commercial buildings of the period and were usually constructed of brick. Dealerships in larger cities were built to be large, fashionable and elegant and could include multiple stories. Elevators large enough to carry automobiles served multi-story dealerships, which often held a large inventory. Dealers in smaller communities built scaled-down versions. The Ford Motor Company established a significant number of dealerships during this period, selecting larger towns and county seats for their location.

Automobile sales declined during the Great Depression and World War II and few, if any, new dealerships were built. But with the development of America’s “automobile culture” following World War II, new dealerships once again appeared. These new dealerships often adopted the most modern appearance possible, often displaying the rounded corners and oval windows of the Streamline Moderne style. Porcelain-enameled metal panels, pigmented structural glass and glazed brick facades often complimented these designs. Pylon signs and large signage prominently displayed the name of the dealership and/or the manufacturer of the automobiles it offered. Large window-wall showrooms displaying the newest models faced the curbside to attract the most attention. Dealerships also included a parts department that specialized in parts and accessories for the automobile makes and models they sold. Multiple service bays for automobile repairs were also incorporated into the design. Used cars were typically sold from outdoor lots, sometimes covered with a canopy. Dealerships of this period were increasingly located along newer highway alignments and the commercial strip.[152]

Beginning in the 1970s auto dealers began their move to larger lots far from the commercial strips. The main building was removed from the curb-line and rows of autos were placed between the roadside and the building.

[152] Description of Automobile Agencies, Garages and Dealerships based largely on Chester Leibs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 76-93.

Significance
Automobile agencies, garages and dealerships were exclusive to the sale and/or servicing of automobiles. To be eligible for the National Register, these resources should retain overall massing, materials, siting, and design dating from their period of significance. This property type will most likely be eligible under National Register Criteria A and C. Properties located on or within close proximity to historic alignments of the Potash route may qualify under Criterion A for association with the highway and the marketing of products and services to the traveling public. Under Criterion B, they may best represent an individual's importance in the promotion or development of the highway, or a prominent business person who advanced highway-related commerce or was associated with the innovation of a marketing technique. Automobile agencies, garages and dealerships may also qualify for the National Register under Criterion C as representative examples of a type, form, function or style. Properties eligible under Criterion C will embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction. Moved properties must retain an orientation, setting and general environs similar to their original location and should maintain a spatial association with the highway. Automobile agencies, garages and dealerships were built in large numbers along the highway and will typically possess only local significance. Eligible properties may predate the 1918 establishment of the Potash Highway but will be built before the 50-year cutoff date. Single or multiple agencies may be found in automobile rows (see "Automobile Rows and Commercial Strips").

Garages dating from the period of significance are well represented along the Potash route. Examples of brick garages are found in Fairmont, Harvard, Grafton (all also on the D-L-D Highway), Chester (also on the Meridian Highway) and Ansley. The gabled-roofed garage in Grafton (FM06-005) sports a stepped parapet and a central drive. Fairmont's brick garage (FM04-024) also has a gable roof and a central drive, but its street façade has a flat parapet with minimal corbelling and an office with a pedestrian door flanked by plate glass windows on one side. Located in the commercial district between other buildings, Harvard's brick garage (CY07-042) has a flat roof with no parapet and includes a single service bay to one side and an office entrance flanked by windows on the other. The brick garage in Chester (TY06-054) has a single garage door and a corner office on its façade. The fading "tires, tubes, repairs" sign painted on its side elevation identifies its historic function. Ansley's brick garage (CU02-) features a curvilinear parapet with decorative brickwork in a zigzag pattern. Brick pilasters capped by corbelling divide the garage into four bays with the east bay holding a wood panel garage door.

Two garages in Custer County (CU04-028 and CU11-013) are constructed with rusticated concrete block. Like the brick garage in Grafton, each has a gable roof hidden by a stepped parapet and a central drive. A stucco-covered frame garage in Ashby (GT01-014) features a peaked "false front" parapet and a unique garage door that slides open on an exterior track structure. In Mullen, a stucco-covered brick garage (HO02-021) provides a deviation from this property type's typical form with a cube rather than an elongated rectilinear shape. Structural clay tile was used in the construction of garages in Hemingford, Mullen and Ravenna. The Hemingford garage (BX04-054) has a brick façade with a corbelled cornice, while the rest of the building is clay tile. Glazed tile was used for the garage in Mullen (HO02-048), which also features a barrel vault roof and includes a detached office building. Ravenna's clay tile garage (BF11-057) is the highway's most elaborately designed. With its curved corners, horizontal banding on the parapet and glass block panels, the garage exhibits characteristics of the Streamline Moderne style. It also has large plate glass windows on its façade and, like many of the other garages along the Potash Highway, industrial-style, multiple light steel windows on its side elevation.

Very few buildings designed specifically as automobile dealerships were documented along the Potash Highway. Two noteworthy examples, however, can be found in Alliance. Designed by Denver architect, H.W.J. Edbrook, and completed in 1920, the Lowery & Henry Building (BX01-232) is one of Nebraska's best preserved automobile dealerships.[153] The building, which is a contributing resource within the National Register-listed Alliance Commercial Historic District, has a brick-clad first story and an unadorned stucco-covered second story dominated by windows. The corner showroom and entrances on the Box Butte Avenue (west) elevation are protected by a large craftsman style awning supported by knee braces. Stained glass transoms are found above all plate glass windows and pedestrian entrances located under the

[153] Heritage Research Limited. "Alliance Commercial Historic District," National Register Nomination, 2006.

awning. Identifying signage includes two stained glass transoms reading “garage” and a glazed terra cotta panel inscribed with “Lowery and Henry.” The A.H. Jones Company Chrysler and Plymouth Dealership (BX01-255), built in 1920 along Alliance’s emerging 3rd Street automobile row, is a less elaborate example of this property type. This one-story brick building features a series of plate glass windows with glass block transoms along its corner showroom and service bays along its secondary Cheyenne Avenue elevation. The Hughes Motor Company Building at the southwest corner of S. C and 9th Streets in Broken Bow (CU05-) has a similar design.

Later examples of automobile dealerships are found in Geneva (also along the D-L-D Highway) and Hebron (also along the Meridian Highway). The one-story brick dealership in Geneva (FM05-129) has a stepped parapet and large plate glass display windows. A brick pylon sign was added to one end of the façade, probably in the 1960s, along with four service bays at the rear of the property. With its rounded corner and horizontal banding, the one-story brick automobile dealership in Hebron (TY10-108) reflects the popularity of the Streamline Moderne style for auto-related buildings during the 1940s and 1950s. The building also features large plate glass display windows on its corner façade and multiple garage entrances and industrial-style steel windows on its street elevations.

The Automobile Row and Commercial Strip

Description
The automobile row and commercial strip were established solely in response to the automobile. They are districts where automotive and transportation-related businesses were concentrated. They represent “new” forms of commercial districts. The first type of automotive commercial district, known as the “automobile row,” appeared in the late 1910s and 1920s when groups of automobile-related businesses located in or near established commercial districts. The automobile row included gas stations, automobile agencies and dealerships, auto supply stores and repair garages. The automobile row not only served a large local and regional trade, but also provided products and services for the traveler.

The “commercial strip,” better known simply as “the strip,” first developed in the post-World War II period when the automobile became engrained in American culture. Automobile-related businesses associated with “the strip” included motels, restaurants, private or franchised drive-ins, gas stations and automobile dealerships. Commercial strips developed remote from commercial districts as highways began to bypass the congested traffic of “downtown.” Commercial strips evolve rapidly due to changing marketing trends. Buildings and businesses continue to be replaced or remodeled at a rapid rate. They are now dominated by businesses that date from the 1970s to the present.

Significance
The automobile row is characterized as a concentration of automobile-related business buildings and would be evaluated as a district. These automotive districts provided products and services primarily for local and regional markets, as well as motorists on the Potash Highway. Criterion A would apply to the automobile row’s association with travel on the Potash Highway. Under Criterion B, automobile rows will rarely represent an individual businessperson, since this property type usually includes multiple businesses associated with a group of individuals. Criterion C would be met when properties within an automobile row exhibit distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or when the district as a whole provides a representative example of automobile row development. The period of significance is typically the late 1910s and 1920s. In general, automobile rows will be eligible at the local level. However, the rarity of well-preserved examples might warrant evaluation at the statewide level.

Full-fledged automobiles rows such as those found along other highways that traveled through Nebraska’s largest cities did not develop along the Potash Highway. This is likely because fewer auto-related businesses set up shop in the smaller towns along its route. Automobile rows did develop in Grand Island and Hastings, but these communities were also served by the Lincoln Highway/U.S. Highway 30 and the D-L-D Highway/U.S. Highway 6, respectively. Of course, lesser concentrations of auto-related businesses did still develop adjacent to commercial districts in smaller communities. By

1930, two concentrations of automobile businesses had developed in Alliance. Garages, auto dealerships and two junk yards were concentrated on Laramie Avenue between 2nd and 3rd Streets, while Alliance's 3rd Street commercial strip began with a grouping of service stations, auto dealerships and specialty service and parts shops between Big Horn and Cheyenne Avenues (including BX01-225 and BX01-328). In Broken Bow, there is a small automobile row centered on the intersection of 9th and C Streets, just off the town's open community square. It includes the Hughes Motor Co. Building, along with a farm implement dealership/garage and a motor freight station, among other buildings.[154] A small automobile row is also still extant in Geneva, where the Potash Highway followed the route of the Meridian Highway after 1923. Located on the west side of 8th Street between F and G Streets, it is anchored by Warner's Filling Station (FM05-060, NRHP listed) on its north end and includes approximately six other auto-related buildings.

Other concentrations were documented during the 2001-2002 Nebraska Historic Highway Survey, such as a grouping of a garage (CU11-013) service station (CU11-034) and a filling station (CU11-014) at the intersection of Prentiss and Crawford Streets in Mason City. There is also a later (c. 1937) service station immediately to the north at the intersection of Prentiss and Nebraska Highway 2 and a small concrete bridge (CU11-015) and highway marker (CU11-016) to the east along Crawford Street.

The commercial strip developed in the post-World War II years through the 1960s and served the "automobile culture" of the period. Commercial strips may be eligible under Criterion A for an association with the Potash Highway's successor, Nebraska Highway 2. Under Criterion B, commercial strips will rarely represent an individual businessperson, since their many businesses would usually be associated with a group of individuals. Criterion C would be met when properties within "the strip" exhibit distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or when the district as a whole provides a representative example of commercial strip development. A commercial strip district will display distinctive architectural styles representing period marketing trends.

A well-developed commercial strip was in place along Alliance's 3rd Street by the end of World War II. In 1948, it extended at least 10 blocks between Black Hills Avenue to the west and Yellowstone Avenue to the east and included: six service stations, seven garages and specialty service/parts shops, five auto dealerships, three freight stations, Kastner's Tourist Camp (now the Rainbow Motel, BX01-240) and a "dairy" (Zesto Drive-in, BX01-239).[155] Alliance's commercial strip would continue to evolve, with more auto-related establishments, as well as other types of businesses, locating along the highway instead of in the older commercial district. By the 1960s, for instance, three service stations lined the north side of 3rd Street between Yellowstone and Missouri Avenues: a pre-World War II "house with bays" type station (BX01-235) and two postwar variations of the "oblong box" type station (BX010-236 and an un-surveyed station).

Modest commercial strips appeared in smaller communities along the Potash route. In Thedford, a small commercial strip including the Arrowhead Lodge (TM00-045), Arrow Café (TM00-044) and a service station / café (TM00-046, non-extant) were built near the intersection of Nebraska Highway 2 and U.S. Highway 83. Two service stations (HO02-056 and HO02-060), a former cabin camp (now the Sandhills Motel, HO02-055) and Big Red's Café (HO02-061) line the highway on the west end of Mullen. In Fairmont, where the D-L-D Highway and Potash Highway intersected with the Meridian Highway, there are two service stations and a garage (FM04-022, FM04-023 and FM04-024) along D Street between 6th and 7th Streets. Where the highway merged with heavier-traveled highways in larger towns, commercial strips are more pronounced. Commercial strips did develop in Grand Island and Hastings, but these communities were also served by the Lincoln Highway/U.S. Highway 30 and the D-L-D Highway/U.S. Highway 6.

Historic properties along commercial strips are rarely found in any concentration making the creation of district a difficult. Properties that retain sufficient integrity, however, may be individually eligible under Criterion A for their association with the development of the commercial strip. The commercial strip remains evolutionary and changing to this day.

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[154] Sanborn Map Company, "Broken Bow, Custer County, Nebraska," 1943, Sheets 2-3.
[155] Sanborn Map Company, "Alliance, Box Butte County, Nebraska," 1943, Sheets 2, 3, 13, 15, 16.

Commercial Districts

Description
Early highways were routed through towns and "main street" commercial districts, both to promote local support for the new highway and for motorists to take advantage of the offerings found in these districts. Automobile-related businesses located in these commercial districts served local and regional patrons but also provided services for the traveler. Commercial districts accommodated the frequent stops and services needed by the early motorist, such as food, supplies, lodging and repair services. Individual and multiple automobile-related resources are found in towns along the Potash route. Most numerous in commercial districts were gas stations, automobile agencies, garages and automobile dealerships. Brick pavement was often built in towns to improve their commercial areas in the 1910s and 1920s.

Eight commercial districts along the Potash route mark the intersection of major regional or national roads. Two of these intersections are located in southeastern Nebraska where the Potash Highway followed the Meridian Highway/U.S. Highway 81 beginning in 1923. These are in Hebron, were the concurrent routes intersect with the Golden Rod Highway/U.S. Highway 136 and in Fairmont, where they intersect with the D-L-D Highway/U.S. Highway 6. From Fairmont, the Potash Highway followed the D-L-D Highway to Hastings, where it intersects with U.S. 281. At this point, the Potash Highway turned north along U.S. 281 to Grand Island, where it intersects with the Lincoln Highway/U.S. Highway 30. Grand Island marks the southeastern terminus of the original route of the Potash Highway which intersects with U.S. Highway 183 at Ansley, the Great Plains Highway/U.S. Highway 83 at Thedford and U.S. Highway 385 at Alliance. In 1923, the Potash Highway was also extended north from Alliance to the Black Hills in South Dakota, intersecting with U.S. Highway 20 at Crawford.

In the 1930s, highway development included the bypassing of smaller communities once linked by the highway. Along the Potash Highway, this was especially true where it ran concurrent with federal highways, including the D-L-D Highway/U.S. Highway 6 between Hastings and Fairmont and the Meridian Highway/U.S. Highway 81 between Fairmont and the Kansas boarder. The small town of Harvard, for instance, was bypassed by the D-L-D Highway and Bruning and Belvidere were bypassed by the Meridian Highway. The central business districts of some communities were also eventually bypassed, including in Hastings, Fairmont and Hebron.

As a state highway with limited traffic, communities along the northwestern stretch of the Potash Highway were less likely to be bypassed during realignments.The most significant realignment came during World War II when the highway was rerouted between Grand Island and Ravenna to make way for the Cornhusker Ordinance Plant. This realignment actually added the small town of Cairo to the route. The Potash Highway has also been rerouted through Grand Island on multiple occasions. The original route came up Locust Street from the south and turned west on 2nd Street to follow the Lincoln Highway through the commercial district until splitting off to head northwest after crossing the Union Pacific Railroad tracks. After the World War II realignment,the highway turned north after traveling through the commercial district. A still later alignment moved both U.S. Highway 281 and Nebraska Highway 2 to the western edge of Grand Island, completely bypassing the central business district. Another noteworthy realignment occurred in Hemingford. Here the Potash Highway originally entered town from the south via Box Butte Avenue, which was widened to create a boulevard for three blocks south of the commercial district. Today, however, Nebraska Highway 2 enters Hemingford from the east along Niobrara Avenue. Later alignments of Nebraska Highway 2 also bypassed commercial districts in Mason City, Merna, Dunning and Seneca, among others.

Significance
Commercial business districts most often merit recognition for periods of significance predating the automobile, and are best associated with railroad transportation, commerce and architecture dating from late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, most commercial districts maintained local significance after their inclusion along the Potash Highway. At this time, highway-related commerce became an integral facet of their development with the establishment of

businesses and services catering to the traveler. The highway brought trade into commercial districts and facilitated further commercial development. Highway-related businesses would contribute to a larger historic commercial district and can be evaluated under Criterion A for their association with period(s) of growth and commerce. They may also accrue significance for an association with community club/chamber of commerce or local government efforts to bring the highway through town as they endeavored to promote their community's commercial growth. Criterion B would rarely be applicable, since the multiple businesses in a commercial district usually represent a large group of individuals associated with the development of a community's local and regional trade, in addition to its highway-related commerce. Under Criterion C, contributing properties within a commercial district must display a type, form or function or a distinctive architectural style representing property types related to historic period(s) of the Potash Highway. Properties will embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction. In general, commercial districts will be eligible at the local level. An automobile row may also be part of a larger commercial district or eligible in and of itself (see "Automobile Row and Commercial Strip," above). The concentration of automotive-related business buildings might warrant evaluation at the statewide level.

The period of significance will include dates up until the time a number of the smaller communities were bypassed beginning in the 1930s (see above). The further development of some types of automotive-related businesses declined with the removal of the highway. Where regional or cross-country highways intersect with the Potash route, commercial development was often more pronounced.

Brick or concrete paving was commonly used to improve local commercial districts, but it often predates the highway. However, brick and concrete streets may be eligible under Criterion A as contributing to a larger historic district if documented as having been built to accommodate the route of the Potash Highway. Built by local governments, these would accrue significance under Criterion A as an early example of community development, long before comprehensive transportation planning became a practice. Significance under Criterion B could be achieved for a local promoter or government official who worked for street improvements. Although common construction techniques found in communities across the state were typically used for brick streets, Criterion C could be applied for structures that represent a type, period or method of road construction used in commercial districts. Brick pavement adds to the historic feeling of commercial districts in Alliance, Broken Bow, Fairmont (FM04-027), Geneva, and Hebron (TY10-107).

The Alliance Commercial Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2007 with a period of significance beginning in 1883 and ending in 1957. Extending along Box Butte Avenue between 2nd and 6th Streets and Laramie Avenue between 3rd and 4th Streets, the historic district includes a handful of automobile-related properties. Chief among these is the impressive Lowery and Henry Building (BX01-232) at the northwest corner of Box Butte Avenue and 5th Street, which was designed as an automobile dealership. Automobiles were also sold and serviced from buildings not necessarily designed to accommodate them, especially along the route of the Potash Highway, which followed 3rd Street through Alliance. For example, an automobile dealership was located in the first floor of the I.O.O.F Hall (BX01-224) at 117 W. 3rd Street during the 1930s and 1940s. Most auto-related properties, however, were historically located outside of the historic district, especially along Laramie Avenue between 2nd and 3rd Streets and the highway itself (3rd Street).The historic district is also home to buildings that held lodging accommodations on their upper stories, including a building at 318 Box Butte (BX01-215) and the Reddish Building (BX01-208) at 208 Box Butte, which may have been used by early motorists. Alliance's premier hotel, the Drake Hotel (BX01-229) was located within the district, but was demolished prior to listing, while several other hotels were located outside the district along 1st Street, immediately adjacent to the CB&Q Railroad Depot (non-extant).

Campgrounds, Tourist Parks and Comfort Stations

Description
As early motorists began to exercise the freedom of long-distance travel, they began to desire facilities for short rests and overnight stops. The earliest motorists brought their own gear and made makeshift camps along the roadside at convenient and attractive locations. This solution worked until the popularity of automobile tourism swelled after World War I, when the flood of travelers camping on the roadside, schoolhouse grounds or private property upset local residents. Leaving unsightly messes, these travelers were sometimes called "tin can" tourists.

Community leaders, however, saw the potential for campgrounds to encourage the motorist to stop in town and do business. In an effort to entice travelers, many communities began to establish simple campgrounds, offering a shaded grove, fire pits, picnic tables and outhouses. In the 1920s, some larger communities built municipal tourist parks with the support of local governments and commercial clubs. Highway associations aggressively advertised the availability of these parks along the route. Conveniences such as a community building or shelter house, fireplaces, concrete slabs that were called "car washing floors," toilets, running water and showers, picnic areas, recreation areas, public telephones and/or electrical hookups were provided. Fees were often required to keep out undesirables and police patrols were sometimes assigned to the facility. Many local entrepreneurs also seized the opportunity, building private tourist parks. These often consisted of cooking facilities, showers and restrooms, electrical hookups, a shelter house or community room and/or a concession stand. The largest communities sometimes offered "comfort stations;" individual buildings that incorporated a community room, showers and restrooms.[156]

Significance
Campgrounds and tourist parks are potentially eligible for the National Register under this MPD because they were developed exclusively to serve travelers along the Potash Highway. They are usually classified as districts or sites. Eligible campgrounds and tourist parks should retain features that convey their use by the traveler. For example, kitchen facilities, shelter houses, washrooms or shower facilities must be present for a tourist camp to be eligible. Moved resources must retain an orientation, setting and general environs similar to their original site in order to contribute to a campground or tourist park. Under Criterion A, campgrounds and tourists parks accrue significance as one of the earliest accommodations developed specifically for the motorist. Under Criterion B, these property types may represent an individual's importance in the promotion or development of a specific campground or tourist park to enhance community trade and commerce. As a type, Criterion C may be met by an individual or a group of buildings or structures displaying a form or function representative of these early transportation facilities. Campgrounds and tourist parks may also be eligible for their overall design. Properties will embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction. The period of significance dates from the 1920s through the 1930s.

Tourist parks or campgrounds developed along the Potash Highway in Alliance, Broken Bow and Grand Island. The campground in Alliance, opened in 1921, was associated with the City Park (BX01-067, now Central Park). Established two years later, Broken Bow's campground was located at 13th and L Streets on the northern outskirts of town. During the 1920s, the International Order of Eagles opened a tourist campground near their lodge at 507 South Locust Street in Grand Island, which was along the highway's southern approach into the city's commercial district. By the late 1930s, the WPA's *Guide to the Cornhusker State* indicated that Grand Island had eight tourist camps, although by this time many of those were probably "cabin camps." According to that same guidebook, camping was also available in more natural settings, such as at the Frye Lake Recreation Grounds (now a state wildlife management area) near Hyannis. After the Potash Highway was extended to Wichita, Kansas in 1923, tourist could also utilize the Prospect Park Tourist Camp in Hastings (AD04-694) and several campgrounds along the Meridian Highway between Fremont and Chester.

[156] Leibs, 169-172.

A comfort station is eligible as an individual building if it retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic use. No comfort stations have been identified along the Potash route.

Wayside Areas and Parks

Description
Public wayside areas and parks offered amenities to the traveler. Often, they were part of a public park, improved by a community to meet the needs of motorists. They provided stopping places and recreation for highway travelers and included picnic areas and campgrounds. In some cases, provisions were made for public wayside areas along with the construction of Nebraska highways. The first public wayside area in Nebraska was developed in 1933-34 by the state's Department of Roads and Irrigation near the Bryan Bridge on U.S. Highway 20 and consisted of tree and shrub plantings, benches, trails, a footbridge and a water well.

The WPA, a Depression-era "New Deal" program, built parks that offered amenities to the local public as well as the traveler. These parks were built as designed landscapes consisting of shade trees, roads, stone entrances and sometimes a lagoon. Amenities for the traveler included shelter houses, fireplaces, picnic tables, restrooms, campgrounds and recreational offerings.

Significance
Parks and wayside areas provided attractive locations for the traveler. They would accrue significance under Criterion A for their association with the Potash Highway, providing amenities to the highway traveler. Criterion B would be applicable to a park or wayside area if it could be documented as the property that best represents an individual's work in promoting the highway's development. Under Criterion C these parks would be significant as designed landscapes that included provisions for the traveler and may also be significant as the work of an important landscape architect or engineer. They will embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction. Parks and wayside areas could accrue statewide significance as the most substantial and distinctive example of this highway-related property type.

One park and one wayside area have been identified for their association with the Potash Highway: the City Park in Alliance (BX01-067) and a wayside area near Crawford (DW00-191, now Cochran State Wayside Area). Located at Niobrara and 10th Streets, the park in Alliance likely offered auto camping sites in the 1930s and 1940s. It is distinguished by stonework gates and buildings, all of which were built in 1939 by the National Youth Administration. Similarly, a roadside park was developed c. 1935-36 near Crawford. It is notable for several landscape features of stonework, including the base for a sign and a secluded picnic area accessed by a foot bridge.

Parks were also often noted in tourist guides as points of interest for motorists, including Memorial Park, Pioneer Park and Burnett Park in Grand Island, Woodland Park in Ravenna and Toadstool Park north of Crawford. The latter, which is now part the Ogallala National Grasslands, sits at the edge of the Adelia Badlands and features a unique landscape of geological formations, as well as a rich fossil record. Several private "resort" parks were also located in the Grand Island vicinity. Shimmer's Lake (now Hall County Park) was located approximately four miles southeast of the city center and offered swimming and boating on the lake, as well as a dance hall. Two miles south of Grand Island was Lion's Grove Picnic Resort, an amusement park that by 1930 included a dance hall, a filling station and a row of tourist cabins. The State of Nebraska also developed state parks and recreation areas along the Potash route during the 1920s and 1930s. Chief among these were Victoria Springs State Recreation Area (CU00-149) near Merna, established in 1925, and Stolley State Park south of Grand Island (HL00-026), established in 1927. The latter consists of the homestead of William Stolley, one of Grand Island's founders, and has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places since 1976. Finally, there was Nebraska National Forest and the Bessey Nursery (TM00-001) east of Thedford, where Potash Highway travelers could picnic and enjoy the scenery. While these public and private parks were not directly related to the Potash Highway, early motorists likely used them extensively as they traveled through central and northwest Nebraska.

Boarding Houses, Hotels, Cabin Camps and Motels

Description
Pioneering automobile tourists looked for boarding houses where they could rent a room after a day's drive. These establishments were located in or near the downtown commercial district and were built to accommodate railroad travelers, such as the traveling salesman. Boarding houses provided rooms, bathing and meals. Boarding houses sometimes only offered extended stays with weekly or monthly rates for renters and traveling salesmen.

Like boarding houses, hotels were located in or near the downtown commercial district to accommodate railroad travelers, and often predate automobiles and highway development. They were not ideal for motorists, who were unwilling to unpack their travel gear, did not want to leave their automobiles unattended, and did not want to enter the hotel lobby after a day of dusty travel. Another option was the "commercial" hotel, built in larger cities in the 1910s and 1920s to serve local and regional patrons with amenities such as ballrooms and meeting rooms. Some of the larger commercial hotels also began to advertise as "motor hotels," in an effort to welcome highway travelers to stay overnight.

By the 1930s private "mom and pop" businesspeople began to provide travelers with convenient, comfortable and completely private accommodations in the form of one- and two-room cabins arranged in rows, right angles or courts. These were often called "cabin camps" and many were built along highways at the edge of town. The motorist could drive up to their private cabin and unload their gear. Sometimes a shelter was connected to the cabins to provide protection for the automobile. The cabins were most often vernacular in form with frame construction and gable roofs. A house for the owners, common showers, restrooms and shelter houses were often part of the complex, which may also have included a store, lunch counter, concession stand and/or gas station. The grounds were often park-like in setting with picnic areas and well-cared for grounds. They sometimes also provided a campground for the traveler. Exterior imagery and layout sometimes became aspects in attracting guests. Some owners utilized domestic architecture to give a "homelike" appearance. Others used exotic or fanciful themes or attractions designed purely to attract attention, such as teepees. Some cabin camps later adopted the newer form of the motel by connecting the cabins or enclosing the adjoining automobile shelters.

During the post-World-War II period, individual cabins slipped from fashion and the "motel" took over as the favorable form of lodging for highway travelers. The word "motel" is a contraction of motor and hotel and became the generic label for this type of highway-oriented accommodation. They consisted of single buildings with a string of rooms and ample parking so that motorists could drive up to their room. Motels generally date to the 1950s and 1960s, although several examples may predate this period. They were family operations with a combined office and living quarters for the owners, and sometimes a restaurant and/or gas station. They used prominent neon signs to attract the traveler. Some emulate styles such as the Spanish Revival. Motels were most often found along the commercial strips and the newer highway alignments (see "Automobile Rows and Commercial Strips," above). The opening of Interstate 80 in the late 1960s affected the viability of motels in Nebraska. National chain motels dominated the state's lodging industry in the decades following the 1970s, aggressively competing with independently owned motels and causing many to close.[157]

Significance
Boarding houses, hotels, cabin camps and motels represent the evolution of marketing trends in the lodging industry along the highway. Boarding houses and hotels need not be along the route of the highway, since most were located in or near commercial districts for the convenience of the railroad traveler. In order for a boarding house or hotel to qualify for listing under Criterion A, an association with automobile travel along the Potash route must be established. Criterion C will not be applicable for this property type, since its form and function are unrelated to the motorist. Boarding houses and

[157] Leibs, 174-179 and 184-191; John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle & Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel In America* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 18.

hotels will date from before the late 1800s to the early 20th century. To date, no boarding houses associated with the highway have been documented. Railroad-era hotels that may have also served early motorists include the Hotel DeFair in Hyannis (GT02-002, NRHP listed) and the Cowpoke Hotel in Thedford (TM05-009).

The commercial hotel offered lodging for the traveler and could accrue significance primarily under Criterion A. Under Criterion B, these property types may include an individual's importance in the promotion or development of the highway or the advancement of highway-related commerce in general or the development of commercial hotels as motorist accommodations in particular. Criterion C is not applicable to commercial hotels, since their form and function are unrelated to the motorist. Examples of commercial hotels that likely catered to early highway travelers were the Clarke Hotel in Hastings (AD04-022, NRHP listed), the Hotel Yancey in Grand Island (HL06-014, NRHP listed), the Arrow Hotel in Broken Bow (CU05-054, NRHP listed), and the Drake Hotel in Alliance (BX01-229, non-extant).

Cabin camps will qualify for listing on the National Register under Criterion A for providing lodging along the highway. Their location and operation were almost exclusively to serve the motoring public. Under Criterion B, this property type may represent an individual's importance in the advancement or innovation of this type of roadside business in particular or highway-related commerce in general. Cabin camps may also qualify for the National Register under Criterion C as examples of their type, form and function or as representative examples of a distinctive architectural style associated with this important type of highway-related lodging. Properties will embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction.

Once a prolific property type along Nebraska's highways, cabin camps are an increasingly rare resource and should be evaluated as such. Due to their rarity, integrity levels for cabin camps will be less stringent, but they must retain some examples of cabins and/or representative building(s) associated with the cabin camp. Alterations to individual buildings or to a complex may be acceptable as some cabin camps adopted the newer form of the motel by connecting the cabins. These should be evaluated for their significance in representing the evolution of the cabin camp to the motel type. Cabin camps are often found in extremely deteriorated condition, but may still meet National Register guidelines if sufficient integrity is present. Cabin camps should be assessed for statewide significance, due the scarcity of well-preserved examples of this property type.

Cabin camps (or courts) were a common sight in communities along the Potash Highway beginning in the 1930s; however, most are now gone or have been converted into motels. Broken Bow, for instance, had two camps at either end of South E Street (the route of the highway) in 1943. On the east end of town at 1st and E Street sat seven cabins arranged in a "L" around a house with a filling station located on the corner of the property. The Wooden Castle Motel at 15th and E Streets in Broken Bow (CU05-) began as cabin camp with a row of paired cabins separated by garages. Two cabin camps were also operating in Alliance during the 1930s. The Danceland complex at 10th and Flack included a dance pavilion, a filling station, auto repair shop and a group of detached cabins. Kastner's Tourist Camp at the northwest corner of the highway (3rd Street) and Platte Avenue consisted of a row of thirteen attached cabins at the back of the property flanked by a house with another cabin and a shop/filling station. It has been extensively altered and now functions as the Rainbow Motel (BX01-240). A continuous canopy was attached to the façade of the cabins to protect automobiles. Due to its status as a transportation hub, Grand Island was also home to a number of cabin camps. Along 2nd Street, which served as the route of the Lincoln Highway and (west of Locust Street) the Potash Highway, camps were located at Cherry Street and Grant Street (Conoco Motel, HL06-709). Both properties included multiple attached cabins with carports or garages and a filling station.

This property type fared somewhat better in smaller communities, where they were not faced with stiff completion from more modern lodging establishments. The best extant cabin camp along the highway is the Sandhills Motel in Mullen (HO02-005). This property includes six individual gable-roofed, frame cabins, a longer building with attached rooms and an office. While the office and longer unit have been covered in vinyl siding and door hoods have been added to the

cabins, the complex still clearly reflects its historic (and current) function as a cabin camp. Just south of Dunning stands the remnant of a cabin camp that once consisted of a house, a four unit building and a two unit building. Today only the two unit building remains (BL00-046). The flat-roofed, stucco-covered building has a room, garage, garage, room configuration and features peaked window hoods. Historic cabins dating from the 1930s, which were likely used by tourists along the Potash Highway, can also be found at Victoria Springs State Recreation Area (CU00-149).

Motels will qualify for listing on the National Register under Criterion A for providing lodging along the Potash route. Under Criterion B, this property type may represent an individual's importance in the advancement or innovation of this type of roadside business in particular or highway-related commerce in general. Motels may qualify under Criterion C as examples of their type, form and function or as representative examples of a distinctive architectural style associated with this prominent type. Properties will embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction.

Motels are still relatively common along the historic Potash Highway route; however, they too are becoming increasingly vulnerable due to completion from modern chains and a lack of demand in smaller towns. Even so, they still must retain a relatively high degree of integrity (higher than cabin camps) to qualify for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Motels complexes of the 1950s and 1960s should retain their main buildings and display few alterations. Motels facilities may be vacant or may have a secondary use, but they remain eligible for the National Register if they retain sufficient physical integirty to identify their original use. Due to their commonality, local significance would be applied. Facilities that are less than 50 years old need to meet National Register Criterion Consideration G and display excellent integrity

Motels along the northwestern segment of the Potash route display a variety of configurations, roof shapes and cladding materials, but few retain much historic integrity. The L-shaped, hipped-roofed Sunset Motel in Alliance (BX01-233) is clad in faux stone and its windows and doors have been replaced. A massive two-story addition is located on its east elevation. McCarroll's Motel (BX01-023), also in Alliance, consists of three gable-roofed buildings clad in horizontal wood siding that are arranged around and interior courtyard. In Crawford, the Town Line Motel (DW01-196) includes a flat-roofed, two-story motel unit and a detached, two-story stucco office/residence. Originally, the first story of the motel contained carports, but those have been converted into guest rooms. The office/residence, which was moved to the property, is the only motel building along this portion of the highway that employs architectural style to attract attention. It features a flat-roofed, enclosed porch with curved window openings and exposed rafter tails (or vigas), a vernacular interpretation of the Pueblo Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival styles. Perhaps the best example of a mid-century motel along the northern stretch of the Potash Highway is the U-shaped Arrowhead Lodge in Thedford (TM00-045). It has a gable roof and a brick-clad lower section, with the office/residence located in the western "ell." A gable-roofed building to the west of the motel contains additional rooms. The associated Arrow Café (TM00-044) is located to the southeast of the motel.

Several excellent examples of post-World War II motels are located along the southeastern segment of the route, where it followed the D-L-D and Meridian Highways to its southern terminus in Wichita, Kansas. The L-shaped Belair Motel in Fairmont (FM04-025) is clad in permastone on its lower section and replacement horizontal siding on its upper section. An office/residence is located on the end that extends toward the road. The property also includes a vintage two-post sign that features an abstract-shaped signboard with an arrow making up its lower boarder. "Belair," "Motel" and the vacancy indicators are outlined with neon tubing, while the arrow is accented with bulb lighting. Geneva's Goldenrod Motel (FM05-127, now Geneva Motel), is a U-shaped, brick-clad building with a hipped roof and a central projecting office. The brick-clad Wafarer Motel in Hebron (TY10-111) also has a U-shaped plan and a projecting office, but it is covered by a gable roof and has a pool in its central courtyard. A vintage sign with a triangular signpost and individual sign boards for "Wafarer" and "Motel" marks the property. Several hotels dating from the 1950s and 1960s are also located in Hastings, including the X-L Motel (AD04-688).

Roadhouses and Rural Crossroads Stores

Description
The name "roadhouse" often conveys a disreputable meaning. Located in rural areas, the roadhouse offered liquor and food and began to appear in the 1920s and 1930s. Rural crossroads stores, which often predated highway development, provided goods and services primarily to local farmers, but also offered groceries and supplies to the traveling motorist. Some included curbside pumps for gasoline sales and were usually located on the earliest alignments. Roadhouses and rural crossroads stores were built to accommodate local trade and both were constructed as modest vernacular buildings.

Significance
Roadhouses and rural crossroads stores may be significant under Criterion A if an association with travel along the Potash Highway can be documented. Criterion C would not be applied to these property types, since their form and function primarily served purposes other than the motorist. The period of significance for rural crossroads stores will sometimes predate the Potash Highway. The roadhouse will date to the 1920s and 1930s.

No examples of rural crossroads stores or roadhouses have been identified although several were probably located along the Potash route at one time.

Restaurants, Food Stands, Diners and Drive-ins

Description
Eating establishments were a necessity for the long-distance traveler and dinging options evolved alongside shifting marketing trends. The earliest motorists often carried their own supplies of food, served and prepared at campgrounds and tourist parks. Early motorists could also turn to restaurants, cafés and lunchrooms in commercial districts through which early highways passed.

During the 1920s and 1930s an assortment of entrepreneurs began serving travelers along highways. The food stand, often operated in conjunction with a private tourist campground or cabin camp, provided a spot for highway travelers to pause and buy a meal. Local roadside stands were small and modest buildings where food, supplies and refreshments were served. Open-air markets or roadside stands were also set up to sell locally grown produce. Diners were small, locally-owned operations usually found in commercial districts. They consisted of small, and often prefabricated, models sold by national manufacturers. Diners date to the 1930s and served local patrons as well as truckers and travelers.

Restaurants were located on the newer alignments of highways during the post-World War II years through the 1960s. The drive-in was an important milestone in the evolution of the earlier restaurant and diner. Restaurants and drive-ins served local and regional patrons, as well as highway travelers and were primarily located on the commercial strips of larger cities (See Automobile Rows and Commercial Strips, above). The drive-in often consisted of a building with ample parking for cars. Drive-ins featured curb-service dining, with an attendant, commonly called a "car hop," bringing food to customers in their parked cars. Large, distinctive signs and canopies that protected cars and car hops from the elements were other common features. Many also included a curbside menu and call-in station for placing orders. Drive-ins were operated both as family businesses or small regional chains. Chain operations followed distinctive and standardized designs and signage.

The most recent step in the evolution of the drive-in was the introduction of the modern fast-food restaurant in the 1950s, which reached Nebraska in the 1960s and 1970s. These nationally or regionally franchised fast-food companies emerged rapidly in the following decades. Modern fast-food restaurants typically follow the standard floor plan, exterior design and signage required of franchised chains, highly marketed by their name recognition. These standard designs allowed for

easy recognition in any location across regions of the country. Most have located on the "commercial strip," replacing the family businesses and smaller chains.[158]

Significance
Early restaurants located within business districts of the 1910s and 1920s will rarely qualify for listing on the National Register individually, but could contribute to a National Register district under Criterion A (see "Commercial Districts" above). Criterion C would not apply since they were located in typical commercial buildings of the period and do not represent a particular type, form or function related to the highway or the traveler.

Diners date to the 1930s and served local or regional patrons, as well as truckers and travelers. They were found in commercial districts. They may be eligible under Criterion A by association with travel on the Potash Highway. Criterion C would be met when diners represent their type, form and function or a distinctive architectural style associated with this type of roadside property. Properties will embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction. Diners must retain their original form, although some had later additions. The diner is a rare property type in Nebraska and should be evaluated accordingly. Only one diner was recorded along the Potash route during the 2001-2002 Nebraska Historic Highway Survey: the Valentine Diner and Gas Station in Hastings (AD04-425). While the cottage style gas station still stands, the long metal diner building has since been removed from the property.

Restaurants and drive-ins were established in the post-World War II era and served local and regional patrons, as well as travelers. They are mostly found along the commercial strip. Restaurants and drive-ins may qualify under Criterion A for their association with and location along U.S. Highway 20, from where they served local and regional patrons, as well as the highway traveler. Both types may also qualify for the National Register under Criterion C as distinctive examples of a type, form and function or as representative examples of an architectural style associated with this type of roadside business. Properties will embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction. Well-preserved restaurants and drive-ins may be individually eligible or may contribute to a commercial strip historic district. They must retain characteristic features from their period of significance in order to meet National Register criteria. In the case of drive-ins, the removal of original canopies, a most distinctive feature of some drive-ins, would make them ineligible. The properties should also display few alterations outside the period of significance. Drive-ins may be vacant or have a secondary use, but remain eligible for the National Register if they retain sufficient physical integrity to identify their original use. Properties less than fifty years old would require application of Criterion Consideration G.

Restaurants and drive-ins dating from the Potash Highway's period of significance are relatively rare. The finest example is the Zesto Drive-in in Alliance (BX01-239), which dates from the mid-1940s. Zesto drive-ins were originally retail outlets for the Taylor Freezer Company's Zest-O-Mat frozen custard machine, but by 1955 the South and Midwest's many franchises were abandoned by the parent company. Alliance's Zesto retains excellent historic integrity. Its glass block façade includes two walk-up widows flanking a large central window. Long windows also light the upper section of the front service area on the side elevations. The small, rectangular building has a flat, overhanging roof that features a vintage curvilinear sign with "Zesto" underlined in ice and an ice cream cone. Neon tubing lights the sign and the façade at night. Other examples of small drive-ins are the Dairy Sweet in Crawford (DW00-195) and the Hubkap Drive-in in Hebron (TY10-112). The former is a gable-roofed building with a walk-up counter and an attached outdoor seating area protected by a flat roof. Plastic strip signage featuring a boy with an ice cream cone and the drive-in's name and products is located in the façade's gable end and under the eave of the south elevation. Hebron's small, hipped-roofed drive-in has two walk-up windows protected by an overhanging eave. Paul's Liquor & Drive-in in Mullen (H002-) is the only known example of a drive-in with a canopy along the Potash route.

[158] Leibs, 197-213.

A handful of cafés are also located along the Potash route. Perhaps the best example is Big Reds Café in Mullen (HO02-061). This relatively large concrete block building sits under a gable roof with a single gabled cross-dormer. A taller rear extension has a curved overhanging eave that protects the café's rear entrance. Ribbon windows located under the overhanging eave light the dining area along the side (highway) elevation. Andy's Café in Lakeside (SH07-008) is a stucco-covered building with a cross-hipped roof. Long windows light the western end of the façade near the entrance. The Arrow Café in Thedford (TM00-044) has a low hipped roof with a cross gable drive-up window and ribbon windows that light both sides of the dining area. It is associated with the adjacent Arrowhead Lodge (TM00-045).

Franchised fast food outlets appeared nationally as early as the 1950s, but only entered Nebraska markets in the 1960s, 1970s and into the present. No examples of fast food outlets are recorded in surveys of the Potash route, since all postdate its period of historic significance.

Markers, Signing and Monuments

Description
A black rectangle with a white band reading "PH" was painted on telephone poles, trees and other makeshift signboards to mark the early route of the Potash Highway. The large number of named roads, along with an increased use of motor vehicles; however, caused great confusion among motorists. To improve this situation, the Federal Department of Agriculture announced a plan for a numbered system of highways in the fall of 1925. The department designated 145 roads, or 76,000 miles, across the United States as part of a national, uniform system of marking highway routes. In 1926, the northern section of the Potash Highway became Nebraska Highway 2. The southern portion, which followed the D-L-D and Meridian Highways, became U.S. Highway 6 and U.S. Highway 81, respectively. The small north-south stretch between Grand Island and Hastings was originally numbered Nebraska Highway 2 all the way to Red Cloud, but became part of U.S. Highway 281 by 1933. At this time Nebraska Highway 2 was extended east from Grand Island to Lincoln and Nebraska City (along the old S-Y-A Highway). In order to reflect the change from named to numbered highways, older markers were replaced with standardized signage for federal or state routes. Federal highways were marked with signs featuring a shield, while state routes in Nebraska depicted the iconic covered wagon.

Most commercial signs along highways are specifically intended for motorists. Moreover, most signs are intended for visitors, as local citizens typically know the location of businesses and services in their community. "Signs address basic commercial needs: identifying the name and type of business, marking the location, and attracting customers," writes Lisa Maher in here seminal study of motel signs along Route 66, "but signs also fulfill a more important need: making the unknown familiar."[159] Along the Potash Highway, commercial signs pointed travelers to goods and services including gas, food, lodging and automobile supplies. Neon lighting, developed in the 1920s, and individual bulbs illuminated signs at night, enticing travelers to stop. Like the buildings they serve, highway-related signs also reflect the architectural styles of the day, with Art Deco and Art Moderne popular in the 1920s through the 1940s and abstract Modernism taking hold after World War II. By the 1960s plastic had often replaced metal as the material of choice for sign makers.[160] Signs also provide a canvas for iconography and naming devises that reflect regional character and/or marketing techniques.

Like parks, local monuments and memorials along highway routes often served as convenient, and even educational, stopping places for travelers. Commemorative properties were often listed as points of interest in guidebooks, including the WPA Federal Writers Projects' American Guide Series, which was produced between 1935 and 1943.

Significance
Highway markers that are potentially eligible for the National Register were established as a directional device for the traveling public and/or as a way to promote the route. To qualify for listing, the markers must date to the period of

[159] Lisa Maher, *American Signs: Form and Meaning on Route 66* (New York, The Monacelli Press, 2002), 25.
[160] Michael J. Auer, "Preservation Brief 25: The Preservation of Historic Signs," TPS, 1991.

significance and retain good integrity including location, design, setting, materials, and association. Markers should generally be in their original location; however, a moved marker may be eligible if it meets National Register Criterion Consideration B. For example, a marker moved slightly to allow a street widening project can be eligible if it maintains a connection and physical association with the Potash Highway. Reproduction markers are not eligible for the National Register. Extant highway markers dating from the period of significance are unlikely to be found along Nebraska Highway 2. Markers for the Potash Highway became largely obsolete with the designation of Nebraska Highway 2 and most signs installed by government agencies have likely been replaced.

Only one marker has been recorded along the Potash Highway: a small concrete pylon along Crawford Street in Mason City (CU11-016). The marker was probably installed by the town in about 1920 to direct traffic, but it is currently not known if it ever held the highway's "PH" symbol.

Most advertising signs along rural sections of the highway have been removed in response to highway beautification efforts of the 1960s and today's strict application of state and federal regulations. Those that remain are on modern alignments of the highway and are contemporary in nature. Signs that date from the period of significance are more common along urban alignments, which run through downtown commercial districts and commercial strips.

Early signage was often incorporated into the design of a building or painted onto a secondary façade. The Lowery and Henry Building (BX01-232), an automobile dealership in Alliance, has incorporated signage, while the Chester Electrical Co. (TY06-054) continues to sport a fading painted list of its products and services. Signs later became separate objects that were either somehow attached to their associated buildings or were freestanding structures. With its neon lighting and subtle Art deco or Art Moderne elements, the sign for the Sutton Motel (CY12-162) was an excellent example of an early freestanding sign (c.1920-1940) along the D-L-D / Potash Route; however, it has been modified since the 2001-2002 Nebraska Historic Highway Survey. Originally the sign included a horizontal signboard with "Sutton" and "Motel" and a vertical "Vacancy" signboard, which curved up and around so that "No" reads horizontally. A neon sign with horizontal banding was also attached to motel's residence/office. Now only the vacancy signboard and office sign remain; the main signboard has been replaced by a modern plastic model.

After World War II, signs became increasingly complicated with the incorporation of different abstract geometric shapes, which evoked the Modern aesthetic of day. Arrows, explicitly pointing tourists to their establishment, also became common sign elements. Good free-standing examples include the Belair Motel sign in Fairmont (FM04-025) and the Wayfarer Motel sign in Hebron (TY10-111). The Zesto sign in Alliance (BX01-239) and the Foote Truck Stop sign in Chester (TY00-259), both of which sit atop their associated building are also wonderful examples from this era. The Zesto sign has an elongated balloon shape with an ice cream cone jutting from its thicker end. "Zesto" is underscored by the bottom line of the "Z" which is dripping with ice. The Foote Truck Stop sign has a wedge shape with an arrow incorporated into the border and "Café" and "Foote Truck Stop" outlined in neon tubing. A tall "FOOD" sign at a roadside café in Fairmont (FM04-026) illustrates a growing desire to be seen from greater distances, in this case a new alignment of the Meridian Highway / U.S. Highway 81. It is also noteworthy for its design, which includes a hollow signboard with the individual letters, "F, O" and "O, D," flanking a stylized martini glass.

Plastic signs eventually gained popularity in the 1960s and 1970s. The strip signage at the Dairy Sweet in Crawford (DW00-195) and the free-standing sign at Big Reds Café in Mullen (HO02-061) are both good examples of this shift in materials. The former incorporates fairly elaborate iconography (a boy with and ice cream cone and a hamburger) while the latter, which consists of two plastic sign boards on a metal post, reflects an opposite trend toward simplification. It simply reads "Big Reds" and "Café Open." Interestingly, the highway elevation of Big Reds Café also serves as a signboard with "C," "A," "F," and "E" painted between its window strips. This harkens back to an earlier period of painted signage, but here the scale and text treatment suggest more of a vernacular play on the postmodern maxim, "the building as sign," rather than an attempt at historicism.

Signs, which are classified as objects by the National Register of Historic Places, are not typically considered individually eligible for listing. They should, however, be considered significant contributing resources to the properties they serve, as well as within any commercial districts, automobile rows or commercial strips listed in National Register as historic districts. Signs of exceptional significance may be considered for individual eligibility under Criterion A for their association with highway-related marketing and commerce and/or under Criterion C as outstanding examples of a type or style of highway-related signage, or for their artistic merit. Signs that are integral to a building should be evaluated as part of the building as a whole.

Commemorative monuments and markers are not typically eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. They may, however, achieve significance under Criterion A in the area of recreation and culture if proven to be an important tourist site and rest area for travelers along the Potash route. Commemorative properties would need to meet the requirements established by National Register Criterion Consideration E. No such monuments or memorials are currently identified along the Potash route.

Truck Transport and Associated Sites

Description
The Potash Highway developed as a highway of commerce. As improvements were made to the highway, it became an important east-west route for truck transport. Trucks would eventually overtake the railroad as the nation's primary method of transporting most types of freight.

The Army first attempted to show the feasibility of truck transport in 1919 with a truck convoy over the Lincoln Highway (U.S. Highway 30). With improvements such as graveled surfaces, truck transport became more feasible and transporters delivered a variety of products, both retail and wholesale, beginning in the 1920s. Crops and livestock were also transported over the highway to local and regional markets in significant numbers during the 1920s, although agricultural production, and in turn agricultural trucking, saw a steep decline during the Great Depression.

Truck stops arrived along highways in the 1950s and 1960s to serve long-distance truck drivers, as well as local and regional patrons. They combined a restaurant and large service bays for trucks. Gasoline was sold to the retail customer and diesel fuel for trucks. Most truck stops were located on the edge of communities. Since its completion in 1974, Interstate 80 now carries much of Nebraska's truck traffic.

Significance
Properties associated with the development of the Potash Highway as a truck route could accrue significance under National Register Criterion A. With improvements to the highway, trucking companies and independent drivers moved livestock and a variety of other retail and wholesale products along its route. In some cases, Criterion B could be applicable for properties associated with important transporters. Under Criterion C, properties will embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction. Truck stops of the 1950s and 1960s may be eligible under National Register Criterion A for association with commercial transport along the Potash Highway. Under Criterion B, truck stops may represent an individual's importance in the advancement of highway-related commerce in general or the innovation of this type of roadside business in particular. Several were established by prominent businessmen, who may be significant under Criterion B. Under Criterion C, truck stops could be eligible for National Register listing as outstanding examples of their type, form and function.

Some of the best examples of truck-associated properties along the Potash Highway are found where it followed the Meridian Highway/U.S. Highway 81, an important north-south route for the transportation of petroleum, livestock and wholesale goods.[161] These include the Hill Oil Terminal (TY00-257) and Foote Truck Service and Café (TY00-259), both

[161] Meridian Highway MPD.

near Chester, and the H. Ells Oil Company truck stop in Hebron (TY11-). Hugh B. Hill established the "Hill Oil Terminal" near Chester to serve gasoline jobbers and retailers, but also sold product directly to the customer. It consisted of storage tanks and a bulk station and also included a combined service station/café. The Hill Oil Terminal could be described as an early type of "truck stop." The Foote Truck Stop in Chester is a later example. This one-story concrete block building features a ribbon of windows lighting its dining area, a flat roof that extends over the café and office sections and two taller service bays on one end. A vintage sign is also attached to the roof of the building. Truck-associated properties also likely developed in Hastings, where the Potash Highway followed the earlier D-L-D Highway/U.S. Highway 6 and in Grand Island, where it intersected with the Lincoln Highway/U.S. Highway 30. In Hastings, for instance, several motor freight stations and warehouses clustered around the intersection of the railroads and South Street.[162]

The original section of the Potash Highway between Grand Island and Alliance also served as a trucking route for the movement of petroleum products, livestock and other goods, although its traffic flow was relatively light when compared to Nebraska's federal highways. By the 1930s and 1940s, several properties had developed to serve the trucking industry. Extant buildings used as freight stations during the 1940s are located in Alliance at 719 and 723 W. 3rd Street and in Broken Bow at 226 S. 9th Street.[163] The Bowen Oil Company Service Station and Café in Dunning (BL02-014) was constructed in 1937 at the intersection of a new highway alignment and Main Street and likely served as a convenient stopping point for truckers, tourists and locals. A later example of a service station/café once stood near the intersection of Nebraska Highway 2 and U.S. Highway 83 in Thedford (TM00-046, non-extant). It included an oversized service bay on one side and a lower café section on the other, and served as a, "one-stop station where truckers, travelers, or locals [could] rest, eat, and 'filler up."[164]

Tourist Sites

Description
Tourism was always envisioned as a significant function of the Potash Highway. It continued to serve as a tourist route through the post-World War II era, as evidenced by the proliferation of motels along its route. From the 1930s through the 1960s, entrepreneurs along the highway developed tourist stops, such as souvenir shops, museums, and sightseeing destinations to profit from tourists traveling the highway. Some featured fanciful and exotic themes to attract the traveler. Most tourist sites disappeared when tourist travel was diverted to Interstate 80 beginning in the 1960s.

Significance
Tourist sites were specifically established to attract travelers on the Potash Highway and may qualify for listing on the National Register under Criterion A for their association with roadside commerce and highway-related recreation. Under Criterion B, tourist sites may accrue significance through association with an individual who was important to the development of highway-related tourism and commerce. Tourist sites may also qualify for the National Register under Criterion C in the area of architecture as distinctive examples of a type, form or function, or as representative examples of a distinctive architectural style.

Eligible tourist sites will most likely date from the 1930s through the 50-year cut-off date for National Register listing. Tourist sites that are less than 50 years old will need to meet National Register Criterion Consideration G. Tourist sites associated with the Potash route should retain characteristic features from their period(s) of significance, retaining an appearance that expresses their original form and function. The earliest examples of these property types should be evaluated in a statewide context, as very few remain along Nebraska's historic highways. Some modifications to early examples may be acceptable, if these changes do not significantly impact the historic appearance of the tourist site. More

[162] Sanborn Map Company. "Hastings, Adams County, Nebraska," 1930 (corrected, 1948), Sheets 9 and 10.
[163] Sanborn Map Company. "Alliance, Box Butte County, Nebraska," 1930 (corrected, 1948), Sheet 13; Sanborn Map Company. "Broken Bow, Custer County, Nebraska," 1943, Sheet 3.
[164] *Pictorial History of the Sandhills*, 78.

recent examples of this property type should retain a high degree of historic integrity to be considered potentially eligible for the National Register. Tourist sites may be vacant or have a secondary use, but will remain eligible for the National Register if they retain sufficient physical integrity to convey their association with automobile tourism.

As a diagonal route that traveled through some of Nebraska's most isolated county, the original segment of the Potash Highway never developed into a major tourist route and tourist sites were limited. Private and public parks along or adjacent to the route probably offered the best recreational opportunities for travelers and tourists (see Parks and Wayside Areas above). In essence, the unique ecology of the Sandhills and the rural cultures that developed in their midst were the biggest tourist draws during the highway's early period. The 1939 WPA Guide to Nebraska, for instance, alerts potential tourists to sites such as the North and Cody Ranch, located 30 miles south of Mullen, a sod house museum in the Alliance City Park and the grave of Jules Sandoz, the Sandhills homesteader whose life was famously chronicled by his daughter, Mari Sandoz, in *Old Jules* (1935). The only real tourist site included along the WPA's Tour No. 10b (Nebraska Highway 2 from Grand Island to the South Dakota border) is Jenner's Zoological and Amusement Park (SM04-001) in Loup City. Located 15 miles off the highway in Loup City, the park was opened in about 1900 by Henry Jenner and operated for approximately four decades.[165] Today a few remnants of the former attraction remain in Jenner's Park including the entrance gate and at least one animal cage. While better associated with railroad tourism, the Potash Highway would have provided the easiest access for motorists beginning in the 1920s. Of course, at any given time, tourists might also happen upon an oddity like the miniature golf course set up on the 300 block of Niobrara Avenue in Hemingford during the early 1930s.[166]

As Euro-Americans began to reflect upon their history in Nebraska, more museums began to open along Nebraska Highway 2 in the 1950s and 1960s. The Custer County Museum, for instance, was established on the second floor of the Broken Bow State Bank in 1960 and the Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer (HL00-027), with its dramatic New Formalist building by famed architect Edward Durell Stone and collection of 19th century buildings, was established a year later. Perhaps the best example of a tourist site along the route dates from well outside the highway's period of significance. Carhenge (BX00-038), which features a replica of England's famous Stonehenge created with automobiles and other "car sculptures," was begun on a farm near Alliance in 1987. One year later, Kenneth "Dobby" Lee opened Dobby's Frontier Village in Alliance, which includes a collection of reconstructed and moved 19th century buildings.[167]

Tourist sites were likely more common where the Potash Highway followed the D-L-D and Meridian Highways to Wichita, Kansas or traveled north into the Black Hills after its expansion in 1923. No specific examples, however, were uncovered during the Nebraska Historic Highway Survey or the preparation of this MPD.

Man-made Landscape Features

Description
Man-made landscape features often characterize the roadside. These include features that defined the road, giving it a manufactured feeling or association.

Early roadways sometimes passed through a grove of planted trees, creating an avenue of tree canopies. Another important man-made landscape feature found along some Nebraska highways are trees and shrubs planted by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the 1930s to manufacture a scenic driving experience. These were often

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[165] *Compendium of History, Reminiscence and Biography of Nebraska*, (Chicago: Alden Publishing Co., 1912), 136.
[166] Sanborn Map Company. "Hemingford, Box Butte County, Nebraska," 1931, Sheet 3.
[167] Custer County Historical Society."A Brief History of the Custer County Museum," Website. Accessed online at http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~necuster/cchshist.html; Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer. "About Stuhr Museum," Website Accessed online at http://www.stuhrmuseum.org/about-stuhr-museum/; Dobby's Frontier Town."About," Website.Accessed online at http://www.dobbysfrontiertown.com/About.html.City of Alliance, "Carhenge History," Website. Accessed online at http://carhenge.com/history/. 27 February 2014.

planted in popular varieties of the time, including locust trees, conifers and juniper shrubs. Man-made landscape features also include shelterbelts, built to control wind erosion, which are often found along section lines. Most shelterbelts were planted under New Deal programs, including the "Prairie States Forestry Project" and the CCC. They were planted in rows, featuring cottonwood, Siberian elm, Russian olive, cedar and other conifers.

Significance
"Avenues" of trees would be eligible for listing in the National Register when planted specifically to provide a scenic experience along the Potash route. Criteria A would apply for an association with early highway beautification efforts. In some cases, Criterion C in the area of landscape architecture may also be applicable, should the avenue represent an important style or method of design. Existing avenues of trees incorporated into the Potash route would contribute to the setting and feeling of a stretch of highway, but would not be considered individually eligible because they were not planted specifically to enhance the driving experience. A CCC beautification project would qualify for the National Register, either individually or as part of a section of historic roadway, as an example of a specific type of improvement directly associated with the highway. Criteria A and/or C would most likely apply, representing a movement to beautify the highway and a style or method of landscape architecture, respectively. Shelterbelts along section lines, which were often used as original highway alignments, would add to the driving experience and could contribute to an eligible section of roadway. However, shelterbelts were planted for purposes unrelated to the highway's development and cannot be evaluated individually under this MPD.

No man-made landscape features meeting the registration requirements established by this MPD have been identified along the Potash route, although examples may be discovered during future research and survey efforts.

Natural Landscape Features and Viewsheds

Description
Natural features such as hills, streambeds and rivers characterize the landscapes through which the highway passes. Natural features and local conditions often dictated early highway routes and methods of construction. "Viewsheds" contribute to the road's setting, feeling and association. They are broad visual landscapes with multiple components (terrain, field patterns, buildings, vistas, etc.) that create the highway's urban, suburban and agricultural settings.

Alignments of the Potash route pass through a variety of natural landscape features and viewsheds in Nebraska. Traveling northwest to southeast, the highway first passes through the vast, relatively flat Ogallala National Grasslands, which are broken periodically by badlands and streams, before entering the scenic White River Valley near Crawford. South of Crawford, the highway crosses the southern edge of the timber-lined Pine Ridge and descends into the Niobrara River drainage, crossing the river near Marsland. From here, the route traverses a stretch of relatively broken country before reaching the flat agricultural region between Hemingford and Alliance, where wheat and potatoes are the dominate crop. East of Alliance, the highway parallels the railroad though the rolling, treeless Nebraska Sandhills, which are characterized by numerous small lakes, hay meadows, windmills and cattle ranges. The highway then follows the scenic Middle Loup River between Mullen and Dunning, with the Halsey Division of the manmade Nebraska National Forest coming into to view just east of Thedford. At Dunning, the highway turns south, leaving the river and entering an area of smaller sandhills, with agricultural areas stretching diagonally along creek drainages. Between Broken Bow and Ravenna, the highway follows Mud Creek, which creates a small, but rich, agricultural valley. At Ravenna, the highway crosses the South Loup River, and continues through its drainage until reaching Grand Island and the Platte River Valley.

At Grand Island, the route of the Potash Highway and Nebraska Highway 2 part ways, with the former continuing south along U.S. Highway 281/34 to Hastings, Fairmont and Hebron and the latter continuing east to Lincoln and then Nebraska City. In general, the landscape south of the Platte River and east of Hastings is characterized by relatively flat to rolling plains covered in agricultural fields, with corn being the predominant crop. The route crosses the Platte River

approximately seven miles south of Grand Island and then heads due south for Hastings, which marks the western extent of the Big Blue River drainage. From Hastings, the Potash route followed the D-L-D Highway/U.S. Highway 6 east to Fairmont, where it turned south to follow the Meridian Highway/U.S. Highway 81 to Wichita, Kansas. Major stream crossings include: School Creek (a tributary of the West Fork of the Big Blue River) near Sutton, Turkey Creek (a tributary of the Big Blue River) near Geneva, Big Sandy Creek (a tributary of the Little Blue River) near Belvedere and the Little Blue River near Hebron.

Significance
Natural landscape features provide context to the setting, feeling and association of an historic road segment. Under Criterion A, these features give insight into how the routing of the early highway was determined. They may also demonstrate construction methods applied to roads and structures built in response to local conditions under Criterion C. Viewsheds will also contribute to the setting, feeling and association of the historic road. Natural features and viewsheds can be difficult to delineate within the boundaries of a National Register nomination, and will rarely be individually eligible under this MPD. The diverse scenic features found along the Potash route, however, remain important to understanding the historic driving experience and are an essential component in narrative descriptions of the roadway.

Bridges and Culverts

Description
Early highway alignments in Nebraska often incorporated existing bridges at streambed and river crossings. These bridges were built in response to local conditions, but their location often dictated the alignment of early highways. Existing bridges were of various types preferred by counties, bridge contractors or the state engineer.

State legislation in 1911 created the State-aid Bridge Fund to assist counties in the construction of bridges. By 1912 standard plans were developed by the state engineer for use by counties. State-aid truss bridges were required to sustain a minimum twenty-ton load. The following year all counties using state aid were required to use these standard plans, which included some 250 bridge configurations with fourteen-, sixteen-, or eighteen-foot wide roadways. Steel girder bridges were thirty to forty feet in length with fourteen- or sixteen-foot roadways. Bridges built from 1912 through the 1920s mostly followed standard bridge plans. Truss bridges had either wood or concrete decks. Concrete structures were also gaining popularity at that time, and types included in a 1912 report from Nebraska's state engineer were small arch culverts, box culverts, slab bridges, girder bridges and concrete arch bridges.

The first Federal-Aid Road Act of 1916 included funds for road improvement and by 1919 standard bridge plans for twenty-ton capacity bridges were widened to twenty feet. Transverse joist girder bridges were added to the state's standard plans in the late 1910s and cantilevered stringer/girder bridges date from the late 1920s. However, the through truss and pony truss were still the design choice for lesser waterways. Pile design for substructures underwent a change in the 1930s with open steel pile bents replacing wood pilings. Superstructures of the 1930s included cantilevered spans and stringer bridges. Rigid frame bridge forms were built beginning in the 1930s. Deprivations of materiel caused by World War II meant that little, if any, new bridge construction occurring on Nebraska highways. However, when road construction accelerated in the 1950s into the 1960s, new bridges followed, including modern concrete girder bridges.

Significance
Bridges constructed or incorporated during the highway's period of significance may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as a contributing resource within an historic road section. Bridges significant for their association with the Potash Highway or its successor, Nebraska Highway 2, would be eligible under Criterion A. For example, a bridge located at a significant crossing of the Potash Highway or a bridge that represents an early example of a bridge type related to the highway may be eligible under Criterion A. Bridges that best represent an individual's importance in the promotion of bridge improvements in general or the construction of a particular bridge may be eligible

under Criterion B. Individual bridges that possess a unique engineering design, are the work of a significant engineer, or demonstrate a transition or innovation in bridge design may be eligible under Criterion C in the area of engineering. Culverts are small-scale resources that are not individually eligible for the National Register; however, original culverts may be contributing features within an historic section of the road.

Several historic bridge types are located on the Potash route. Most are small in scale and are largely single-span pony truss structures or modern concrete girder bridges, although there are significant lager examples. Metal truss bridges were generally constructed in Nebraska between the 1870s and the mid-1930s. Some truss bridges may predate the highway as structures that were constructed on a local road incorporated into the route of the Potash Highway. Timber beam bridges, most popular between 1860 and 1900 and constructed less frequently into the mid-twentieth century during emergencies or periods of economic difficulty, may also be found on the route.

Small bridges dating from the period of significance along historic alignments of the Potash Highway have been identified in Hall, Sherman, Custer and Thomas Counties. Most of these bridges fall into two categories: steel Pratt pony truss bridges and bridges with metal lattice railings. Examples of the former included a bridge near Ansley (CU00-084) and two in the Berwyn vicinity (CU00-086, CU04-011), all three of which have an approximately sixteen-foot wide deck. Pratt pony truss bridges near Hazard (SM00-081) and Seneca (TM00-047) are approximately two to four feet wider, with the latter still retaining a wood deck. Bridges with metal lattice railings are found in Custer County near Berwyn (CU00-087) and Broken Bow (CU00-090) and in Hall County near Grand Island (HL00-201). Only one concrete bridge has been identified along the Potash route: the small concrete bridge along Crawford Street in Mason City (CU11-015). A concrete sidewalk bridge and a nearby concrete highway marker (CU11-016) are also associated with this bridge.

Both modern and historic culverts are located on alignments of the Potash route. Older culverts, dating from the 1910s to 1920s, are concrete pipe and box culverts with obelisk-shaped concrete markers rising on each side to mark the road. Many early culverts have been altered over the years with their markers damaged or broken off, while others are fully intact. Examples with intact markers include concrete culverts near Berwyn (CU11-088) and Cairo (HL00-203).

Roadways

Description
Many segments of the Potash Highway dating from its period of significance can still be driven, giving today's motorist a sense of early automobile travel along its route. Other sections of the highway consist of long-abandoned roadways and trails, bypassed as new alignments were built.

The Potash Highway consisted of newly constructed road segments built along the railroad line between Grand Island and Alliance, as well as portions of earlier existing roads. The original highway often followed section line roads through the relatively flat agricultural lands found along the Potash route, but such roads did not exist in the more rugged Sandhills. In this region, the early highway largely paralleled the CB&Q Railroad. The original Potash Highway was primarily earthen surfaced, however, over time it was subject to improvements including grading, gravel, oiling and later hard surfacing with concrete or asphalt. Many segments of the original 1918 Potash route, as well as later alignments, were abandoned or incorporated into county or local roads. These abandoned or incorporated segments exhibit a variety of surfacing types, ranging from earth to asphalt. Concrete overlays (or spillways), built to prevent washouts along dirt or gravel roads when a bridge or culvert was not feasible, may also be found along historic alignments of the Potash Highway.

This leaves a wide variety of roadways that are associated with the Potash route, including three main categories: (1) completely abandoned roadways, (2) roadways incorporated into local and county road systems and (3) the current route of Nebraska Highway 2. Completely abandoned roadways almost always exist in rural areas. Their condition ranges from fair to nearly indistinguishable and includes materials ranging from dirt two-track to pavement. Abandoned alignments

incorporated into local and county road systems are typically in better condition, but due to regular maintenance may have integrity issues. These former alignments are typical gravel in rural areas and paved in urban areas. Current alignments of Nebraska Highway 2 typically date from the 1930s and are always paved. They included rural and urban segments. Due to maintenance and the replacement of original paving materials, current alignments will have integrity issues.

Significance
The roadway is the most exemplary property type associated with historic highways. They are linear resources, and will most often be historic road segments found between modern improvements or realignments. In order to be eligible for National Register listing, roadways must retain sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and/or association from the highway's historical period to convey their associational significance and/or embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction. In addition to the road surface, historic roadways may include bridges, culverts, spillways, tree alleys and other contributing resources. Under this MPD, roadways will typically represent the Potash Highway as whole and should be evaluated at the statewide level of significance.

The first period of significance begins with the earliest meetings of Potash Highway supporters in 1918 and ends in 1926, when the northern segment of the route became part of Nebraska Highway 2. During this period, roadway development evolved from a handful of haphazard efforts to the creation of a drivable, continuous highway between Alliance and Grand Island. The second period of significance dates from 1926 and extends through the 1930s. This period saw the improvement of dirt roads with gravel surfacing and the elimination of "stair step" routes that followed section line roads. During this period, highway development included the bypassing of some smaller communities that were once linked by the highway. This period represents the most significant advancement of road construction up until that time.

World War II brought a hiatus of road construction and few improvements occurred. A second period of significance dates from after World War II through the 1950s and 1960s. Roads were further realigned and reflect the current route of Nebraska Highway 2. Sections developed after the 1950s and the 1960s have since been improved by modern and standard construction, new bridges, removal and replacement of pavement and the addition of paved shoulders. These road segments do not meet Criterion Consideration G.

Roadways often represent more than one period of significance as the highway continued to evolve. In cases where the road was realigned and vacated, the period of significance will end when existing roads were bypassed and no longer designated as the route of the Potash Highway, or its successor, Nebraska Highway 2.

A roadway may be eligible under Criterion A for association with a single event or a pattern of events or activities, such as the pioneering or advancement of road construction, transportation and travel patterns, development of the highway, or the evolution of highway-related travel or commerce. Early "stairstep" segments where the highway jogged along section lines would be candidates for evaluation, as would segments where the highway followed the railroad right-of-way. Urban routes could also be eligible under Criterion A in the areas of commerce and/or community planning and development. Alterations to roadways, such as hard surfacing, paving, widening, removal of right angle corners with radius curves, and realignment may contribute to the significance of the road if they were completed during an historic period(s). Locations where the Potash route crossed regional or national roads may also be significant under Criterion A.

A roadway that best represents an individual's contributions to highway innovation and development in general or to the construction of a particular road segment may be eligible under Criterion B. This might include a local booster instrumental in getting the highway to pass through his/her town, or a politician who was active in the development of road-related legislation. It is important to note, however, that most highways were built by government agencies, an activity better represented by Criterion A.

Roadways may merit consideration under Criterion C when they exhibit characteristics of a distinctive type or method of road construction or engineering. They may be eligible as examples of early road construction methods; a type of experimental road-building; or the advancement, evolution or transition of improvements to the roadway. Some types of road construction are common and conformed to standard specifications, such as those that are graded and gravel-surfaced. Excellent examples of common road construction methods dating from the period(s) of significance may be eligible under Criterion C. Roadways representing the work of a significant engineer or road builder may also be eligible under Criterion C.

An early roadway may qualify for listing under Criterion D if it has the potential to yield information in the absence of archival or historical references. Archeological investigations, for instance, may yield information on road construction and engineering methods that predate the development of standardized specifications. Such cases would require the development of an appropriate research design. Completely abandoned segments of the original 1918 alignment, which were vacated in favor of better routes, offer the greatest potential for study. These segments were not maintained or improved and may remain sufficiently intact to yield important information regarding the construction of early roads.

Excellent examples of abandoned Potash Highway alignments exist in Hooker County (HO00-025) and Grant County (GT00-034). The remains of the original earthen/gravel road and the paved c. 1940 alignment that replaced it (located north and south of the railroad tracks, respectively), can be seen from the current highway to the west of Mullen. In Grant County, the paved c. 1940 alignment between the railroad tracks and the current highway is visible east of Ashby. This method of roadway arrangement suggests the low price of land in the Sandhills. It was frequently easier and less expensive to acquire additional right-of-way for entirely new alignments, than it was to remove the old roads and build new facilities along the same alignment.

Former alignments of the highway that have been incorporated into county road systems include stretches between Hemingford and Berea in Box Butte County (BX00-080) and between Berwyn and Broken Bow in Custer County (CU00-091). Both are located in areas characterized by agricultural fields, where early highways did follow section lines. This contrasts with road building in the Sandhills, where alignments closely followed the route of the CB&Q Railroad and/or the contours of the natural landscape. The original Hemingford to Berea alignment followed the paved Box Butte Avenue, which was widened to a boulevard for three blocks through the southern half of Hemingford before turning to gravel at Crook Street and becoming County Route 70. It continued to follow this road south until turning east to Berea. The final 1.5 mile east/west stretch of the original Broken Bow to Berwyn alignment is exceptional because it includes a bridge with metal lattice railings (CU00-087), a concrete culvert with intact markers (CU00-088) and a steel Pratt pony truss bridge (CU00-089) in quick succession.

Perhaps the most significant examples of abandoned urban routes include the highway's original and c. 1940 alignments through Grand Island. The highway originally entered Grand Island from the south with U.S. Highway 281 via Locust Street, and then turned east along 2nd Street, which was also the route of the Lincoln Highway/U.S. Highway 30. The highways spit at the western edge of town after crossing the Union Pacific tracks, with the Lincoln Highway continuing along the Platte River to Wood River and the Potash Highway heading due east for approximate 18 miles before turning north to meet the current route and Burlington Railroad tracks near Cairo. The east/west portion of this route is now called Old Potash Highway. The construction of the Cornhusker Ordinance Plant east of Grand Island during World War II required a realignment of the original route. At this time Nebraska Highway 2 was rerouted along Eddy Street with U.S. Highway 281 before turning north on Broadwell Street. The two highways split after passing Veterans Park, with U.S. Highway 281 continuing north to St. Paul and Nebraska Highway 2 turning west to Cairo along what is now Old Nebraska Highway 2. A modern realignment now diverts Nebraska Highway 2 and U.S. Highway 281 through the western edge of town. With the exception of 2nd Street, few historic highway-related resources were documented along these abandoned alignments through Grand Island, however; future study may provide a more complete understanding of their character.

Urban routes were also abandoned in smaller towns during realignments of the Potash Highway, particularly during the 1930s and 1940s. Arguably, the most exemplary bypassed small town route is Crawford Street in Mason City. The original Potash Highway entered town from the east via Crawford Street, where a concrete bridge (CU11-015) and concrete route marker (CU11-016) are still extant along with a group of auto-related buildings at its intersection with Prentiss Street (CU11-013, CU11-014, CU11-034). When the highway was realigned to the east edge of town in 1937, highway-related development shifted.[168] Another example of an abandoned small town alignment can be found in Merna, where the original highway approached from the south along the CB&Q Railroad tracks and then turned west at the southern edge of town. A domestic style service station (CU12-009), which has been converted into a house, still stands along this original route. The highway now runs along the eastern edge of Merna.

Current urban alignments of Nebraska Highway 2 are discussed elsewhere (see Automobiles Rows and Commercials Strips). Rural stretches of Nebraska Highway 2 are largely defined by their natural surroundings, and, therefore, depend heavily on the historic integrity of the roadway itself to warrant recognition under this MPD. However, it is worth noting that Nebraska Highway 2 between Grand Island and Alliance, the original segment of the Potash Highway, was designated as the Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway by the State of Nebraska in 1999, and the Sandhills themselves have been recognized by the National Park Service as a National Natural Landmark since 1987.[169]

[168] *Mason City, 1896-1976*, 9.

[169] Twyla Witt, (Nebraska Byway Tourism Byway Consultant). "Frequently Asked Questions About Nebraska Scenic Byways." n.p.; National Park Service."National Natural Landmark Program," Website accessed online at http://www.nature.nps.gov/nnl/. 27 February 2014.

Eligibility Recommendations
Five properties and one district associated with the Potash Highway/Nebraska Highway 2 have already been listed in the National Register:

- Arrow Hotel, 509 S. 9th Avenue, Broken Bow, Custer County (CU05-054)
- Hotel DeFair, Nebraska Highway 2 & Main Street, Hyannis, Grant County (GT02-002)
- City of Alliance Central Park Fountain, 10th Street & Niobrara Avenue, Alliance, Box Butte County (BX01-067)
- Hotel Yancey (Yancey Motor Hotel), 123 N. Locust Street, Grand Island, Hall County (HL06-014)
- Clarke Hotel, 233 North Hastings Avenue, Hastings, Adams County (AD04-022)
- Warner's Filling Station, 8th and G Streets, Geneva, Fillmore County (FM05-060)
- Alliance Commercial Historic District, Alliance, Box Butte County (BX01-)

As a result of the 2001-2002 Historic Highway Survey, as well as the preparation and revision of this document, 86 individual properties and 10 districts associated were identified as potentially eligible for the National Register for an association with the Potash Highway/Nebraska Highway 2. These resources are listed in the table below. Inclusion in a potentially eligible district should not preclude the individual eligibility of a resource. Properties within a potential historic district that may be individually eligible are detonated with an (*) following their NeHRSI number in the table. In addition, a handful of potentially eligible properties not included in the Historic Highway Survey were identified during subsequent research and survey work. These resources are indicated by an incomplete NeHRSI number that lacks a unique three digit identifier (ex. SY03-).

Because the Potash Highway followed other historic routes once it was extended between the Black Hills of South Dakota and Wichita, Kansas, many of these resources should be assessed for potentially significant associations with multiple adjacent highways during any future preservation work. In Nebraska, MPDs have also developed for the Meridian Highway, D-L-D Highway, Lincoln Highway and U.S. Highway 20. The following provides the number of resources associated with each highway(s):

Meridian and Potash Highways (Fairmont to Kansas State Line): 18 individual properties / 1 district

Meridian, D-L-D and Potash Highways (Fairmont): 7 individual properties / 1 district

D-L-D and Potash Highways (Fairmont to Hastings): 10 individual properties / 2 districts

Potash Highway and U.S. Highway 281 (Hastings to Grand Island): 2 individual properties / 0 districts

Lincoln and Potash Highways (Grand Island): 5 individual properties / 1 district

Potash Highway (Grand Island to Crawford): 43 individual properties / 7 districts

Potash Highway and U.S. Highway 20 (Crawford): 1 individual property / 0 districts

Additional site-specific research may be necessary to further evaluate the potential significance of these resources. Eligibility recommendations need to be reevaluated prior to the preparation of a National Register nomination in order to determine if a property has retained the historic features and integrity that made it a potential candidate for the National Register. In some cases, site-specific research will be necessary to demonstrate an association with the Potash Highway. The Historic Highway Survey assessed the potential eligibility of resources along five historic highways, primarily under Criterion A and Criterion C. Further research and evaluation may identify additional resources or historic districts related to the Potash Highway that qualify for the National Register under one or more criteria. The following list should not be considered comprehensive. The list of potentially eligible properties is organized by county following the Potash Highway from east to west.

Potentially Eligible Resources of the Potash Highway

Resource Name	Location	National Register Criteria	NeHRSI No.
Thayer County			
Belvedere Filling Station	NEC C St. & 4th St., Belvedere	Criterion A (Meridian and Potash Highways),C	TY02-025
Segment of Road	1 mile south of Bruning to Belvidere	Criterion A (Meridian and Potash Highways), B, C	TY00-
Bruning Auto Service	Main Street, Bruning	Criterion A (Meridian and Potash Highways), C	TY03-
Concrete Segment	NW corner of Thompson & Nebraska 8, Chester vicinity (at TY00-257)	Criterion A (Meridian and Potash Highways), C	
Hill Oil Terminal & Café	NW corner Thompson & Nebraska 8, Chester vicinity	Criterion A (Meridian and Potash Highways), B, C	TY00-257
Foote Café Truck Stop	E side of Meridian Road, Chester	Criterion A(Meridian and Potash Highways), B, C	TY00-259
Garage (Chester Electric Co.)	E side Thayer between Heron & Howard, Chester	Criterion A (Meridian and Potash Highways), C	TY06-054
Burnett Auto Dealership	NW corner 2nd Street & Lincoln Ave., Hebron	Criterion A (Meridian and Potash Highways), C	TY10-108
Garage	N side Lincoln between 1st & 2nd St., Hebron	Criterion A (Meridian and Potash Highways), C	TY10-109
Ford Auto Dealership	N side Lincoln between 3rd & 4th St., Hebron	Criterion A (Meridian and Potash Highways), C	TY10-110
Wayfarer Motel	NE corner Lincoln * 13th St., Hebron	Criterion A (Meridian and Potash Highways), C	TY10-111
Drive-in	W side Lincoln between Nelson & 13th, Hebron	Criterion A (Meridian and Potash Highways), C	TY10-112
H. Ells Oil. Co Truck Stop	W side Old U.S. 81, Hebron	Criterion A (Meridian and Potash Highways), B, C	TY10-
Culvert and Road Segment	South of Chester at Kansas-Nebraska State Line	Criterion A (Meridian and Potash Highways), C	TY00-
Fillmore County			
2 Service Stations & Garage (District)	S side D Street between 6th & 7th, Fairmont	Criterion A (Meridian, D-L-D and Potash Highways), C	FM04-022*, 023*, 024*
Belair Motel	S side D Street between 1st & 2nd, Fairmont	Criterion A (Meridian, D-L-D and Potash Highways), C	FM04-025
"FOOD" Sign	S side D Street, west of 1st Ave., Fairmont	Criterion A (Meridian, D-L-D and Potash Highways), C	FM04-026
Brick Street	Fairmont	Criterion A (Meridian, D-L-D and Potash Highways), C	FM04-027
Goldenrod Motel	NW corner 13th & D St., Geneva	Criterion A (Meridian and Potash Highways), C	FM05-127
Service Station	W side 13th between E & F St., Geneva	Criterion A (Meridian and Potash Highways), C	FM05-128
Auto Dealership	SW corner 13th & G St., Geneva	Criterion A (Meridian and Potash Highways), C	FM05-129
Automobile Row	W side of 8th Street between F & G St., Geneva	Criterion A (Meridian and Potash Highways), C	FM05-060; FM05-multiple
Garage	NW corner Omaha & Jefferson St., Graton	Criterion A, C (D-L-D and Potash Highways), C	FM06-005
Clay County			
Garage	W side Clay, between Oak & Walnut, Harvard	Criterion A (D-L-D and Potash Highways), C	CY07-042
Filling Station	SE corner French & Forest Streets, Sutton	Criterion A (D-L-D and Potash Highways), C	CY12-163
Adams County			
Gas Station	SW corner N. Elm Ave & E. 2nd St., Hastings	Criterion A (D-L-D and Potash Highways), C	AD04-053
McClelland-Dunn Motor Co.	NE corner E. 1st St. & Denver Ave, Hastings	Criterion A (D-L-D and Potash Highways), C	AD04-080
Automobile Row	1020 -1030 W. 2nd St., Hastings	Criterion A (D-L-D and Potash Highways), C	AD04-107* AD04-108
Automobile Row	N. Lexington, between W. 1st & 2nd, Hastings	Criterion A (D-L-D and Potash Highways), C	AD04-multiple
Service Station	1354 W. 2nd St., Hastings	Criterion A (D-L-D and Potash Highways), C	AD04-175
Gas Station	S side U.S. 6, near S. Ash Ave., Hastings	Criterion A (D-L-D and Potash Highways), C	AD04-425
Filling Station	739 Burlington Ave., Hastings	Criterion A (D-L-D and Potash Highways), C	AD04-426
Gas Station	N side U.S. 6, near S. Elm Ave, Hastings	Criterion A (D-L-D and Potash Highways), C	AD04-693
Prospect Park	Woodland, between W. 3rd & 4th St., Hastings	Criterion A (D-L-D and Potash Highways), C	AD04-694
Drive-In	SE corner Elm and South, Hastings	Criterion A (D-L-D and Potash Highways), C	AD04-740

Resource Name	Location	National Register Criteria	NeHRSI No.
Hall County			
Garage/Service Station	NE corner 2nd & Pine, Doniphan	Criterion A (Potash Highway and US 281), C	HL05-
Gas Station	SE corner S. Locust & Stolley Park Road, Grand Island	Criterion A (Potash Highway and US 281), C	HL06-756
2 Auto Dealerships, Garage (District)	N side, intersection of 2nd & Elm St., Grand Island	Criterion A (Lincoln and Potash Highways), C	HL06-020; HL06-multiple
Garage / Service Station	NE corner 2nd & Kimball Streets, Grand Island	Criterion A (Lincoln and Potash Highways), C	HL06-696
Courtesy Court	SW corner 2nd & Garfield St., Grand Island	Criterion A (Lincoln and Potash Highways), C	HL06-706
Service Station	NW corner 2nd & Oak St., Grand Island	Criterion A (Lincoln and Potash Highways), C	HL06-714
Service Station	SW corner 2nd & Kimball St., Grand Island	Criterion A (Lincoln and Potash Highways), C	HL06-715
Buffalo County			
Garage	SE corner Alba & Genoa, Ravenna	Criterion A, C	BF11-157
Service Station	SE corner of Utica & Grand, Ravenna	Criterion A, C	BF11-
Sherman County			
Service Station	SE corner Main & Buford, Litchfield	Criterion A, C	SM03-
Custer County			
Potash Highway, 2 Bridges, Culvert	Approximately 3.5 miles west of Berwyn to Broken Bow	Criterion A, C	CU00-091; CU00-087 – 089
Garage / Service Station	W side Scott between Smith & Said, Anselmo	Criterion A, C	CU01-028
Garage	NE corner Main & Fargo St., Ansley	Criterion A, C	CU02-
Automobile Row: Hughes Motor Co., Freight Station, etc.	W side intersection of 9th & C; N side C between 9th & 10th St, E side 9th between B & C	Criterion A, C	CU05-multiple
Service Station	NE corner S. E & 10th St. Broken Bow	Criterion A, C	CU05-072
Garage, Gas Station, Service Station, Bridge, Marker (District)	Intersection of Crawford & Prentiss Streets, Mason City	Criterion A, C	CU11-013*, 014*, 015*, 016*, 034; CU11-
Blaine County			
Motel Segment	Dunning vicinity	Criterion A, C	BL00-043
Service Station / Café	Intersection of Jewett & Highway 2, Dunning	Criterion A, C	BL02-014
Thomas County			
Potash Highway and Bridge	Begins approximately 7 miles west of Thedford	Criterion A, C	TM00-048 TM00-047
Motel, Service Station, Former Hotel	S side Jewett between Main & Forest, SW corner Jewett & Main Halsey	Criterion A, C	TM01-014, 017, 019*
Service Station and Gas Station	SW corner Railroad & Albany St., Seneca	Criterion A, C	TM04-019
Cowpoke Hotel	By Walnut & Railroad St., Thedford	Criterion A	TM05-009
Service Station	NEC Court & Cedar St., Thedford	Criterion A, C	TM05-024
Arrowhead Lodge & Arrow Café	NE of intersection between Nebraska Highway 2 & U.S. 83, Thedford vicinity	Criterion A, C	TM00-044 – 045
Hooker County			
Multiple Potash Highway Alignments	Begins approximately 9 miles west of Mullen	Criterion A,C	HO00-025
Commercial Hotel	NE corner 1st & Lincoln Streets, Mullen	Criterion A	HO02-039
Sandhills Motel	SW corner Nebraska 2 & Laird, Mullen	Criterion A, C	HO02-055
2 Service Stations (District)	NW & SW corners Nebraska 2 & Blaine, Mullen	Criterion A, C	HO02-056* HO02-060
Big Reds Café	NE corner Nebraska 2 & Laird, Mullen	Criterion A, C	HO02-061
Paul's Liquor & Drive-in	SE corner Nebraska 2 & Lincoln, Mullen	Criterion A, C	HO02-

Resource Name	Location	National Register Criteria	NeHRSI No.
Grant County			
Potash Highway	Begins approximately 4 miles west of Hyannis	Criterion A, C	GT00-034
Garage	W side Main St. between Railroad & Hill, Ashby	Criterion A, C	GT01-014
Service Station	N side Harrison between Main & Dellinger, Hyannis	Criterion A, C	GT02-021
Gas Station	SW corner of Mason & Nebraska 2, Whitman	Criterion A, C	GT03-004
Sheridan County			
Service Station / Café	Bingham vicinity	Criterion A, C	SH00-148
Service Station	Lakeside vicinity	Criterion A, C	SH00-149
Andy's Café	N side S. Railroad between Gifford & Nebraska 250, Lakeside	Criterion A, C	SH07-008
Box Butte County			
Potash Highway	S. on Box Butte Ave in Hemingford to Berea	Criterion A, C	BX00-080
Alliance Park	Niobrara & 10th St., Alliance	Criterion A	BX01-067
Lowry & Henry Service Garage	NW corner Box Butte Ave. & 5th St., Alliance	Criterion A, C (NRHP listed as contributing property to Alliance Commercial Historic District)	BX01-232
3 Service Stations (District)	S side 3rd Street between Yellowstone & Missouri Ave., Alliance	Criterion A, C	BX01-235* BX01-236 BX01-
Zesto Drive-In	3rd St. near Platte Ave., Alliance	Criterion A, C	BX01-239
Service Station	NW corner A & Depot St., Berea	Criterion A, C	BX02-004
Garage	NW corner Niobrara & Shoshone, Hemingford	Criterion A, C	BX04-054
Service Station	S side Niobrara between Laramie & Cheyenne St., Hemingford	Criterion A, C	BX04-057
Dawes County			
Roadside Park	Crawford vicinity	Criterion A	DW00-191
Garage	NE corner Niobrara & Belmont, Marsland	Criterion A, C	DW10-
Dairy Sweet	NW corner Nebraska 2 & U.S. 20, Crawford	Criterion A (Potash Highway and U.S. 20), C	DW00-195

Notes: This should not be considered as a comprehensive list of all properties that may be associated with the Potash Highway/ Nebraska Highway 2. Others may be identified based on further intensive research and documentation. Properties listed above may not necessarily fulfill National Register requirements in a final evaluation, but may be compared to others that are proposed for nomination.

In general, resources are to be considered under the property types identified in this list under "Resource Name." Proposed historic districts typically represent extant segments of automobile rows, commercial strips or significant intersections. Inclusion in a potential historic district should not preclude the potential individual eligibility of a resource.

"NeHRSI No." is the survey number assigned to each resource in the Nebraska Historic Resource Survey & Inventory, maintained by the Nebraska State Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office. The first two letters indicate the county and the following two digits indicating a specific community ("00" is used for rural properties). The three digits following the dash (-) are unique identifiers. Larger communities (including Lincoln and Omaha) use modified numbering systems. An asterisk (*) following the NeHRSI number indicates properties that are the most likely to be individually eligible within a potential historic district. NeHRSI numbers missing their last three identifying digits (HK03-) indicate properties that were not included in the 2001-2002 Nebraska Historic Highway Survey, but have since been identified as potentially eligible for an association with the Potash Highway/Nebraska Highway 2.

"Location" is a brief verbal description of the property's location. The NeHRSI delineates locations by mapping systems on local plat maps, USGS quadrangles, and county highway maps. Routes of the highway have also been mapped as linear resources, with a site number given for the road in each county. All locations are also added to a GIS system maintained by the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office.

"National Register Criterion" identifies the criterion though to be most relevant for each property. Additional research conducted for a specific property should consider these criteria but further research may identify that not all criteria listed may be applicable. Conversely, additional research conducted for a specific property may identify one or more applicable criteria that have not been included in this list.

G. Geographical Data

Resources evaluated under this Multiple Property Document will be located in the geographical area that encompasses the historic alignment of the Potash Highway and the current alignment of Nebraska Highway 2 in Nebraska. Resources will generally be located within ¼ mile of a historic or the current route alignment.

The Potash Highway travels through the following Nebraska counties from east to west: Thayer, Fillmore, Clay, Adams, Hall, Buffalo, Sherman, Custer, Blaine, Thomas, Hooker, Grant, Sheridan, Box Butte and Dawes.

The Potash Highway travels through the following communities from east to west: Chester, Hebron, Belvidere, Bruning, Strang, Geneva, Grafton, Sutton, Harvard, Hastings, Doniphan, Grand Island, Ravenna, Sweetwater, Hazard, Litchfield, Mason City, Ansley, Berwyn, Broken Bow, Merna, Anselmo, Dunning, Halsey, Thedford, Seneca, Mullen, Whitman, Hyannis, Ashby, Bingham, Ellsworth, Lakeside, Antioch, Alliance, Berea, Hemingford, Crawford.

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Survey Methodology

This Multiple Property Document (MPD) for Historic and Architectural Resources of the Potash Highway in Nebraska is based upon a survey completed for the Nebraska State Historical Society and the Nebraska Department of Roads in 2001 and 2002. See *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey, Historic Highways in Nebraska* (August 2002) for complete survey methodology and results.

Two past studies also informed this MPD. In 1991, a statewide historic bridge inventory and historic context was completed to identify and evaluate the eligibility of pre-1947 bridges in Nebraska, resulting in the creation of an MPD titled "Historic Bridges in Nebraska, 1870-1942." This MPD, along with the *Nebraska Historic Bridge Inventory Management Plan,* informed eligibility decisions regarding bridges along the five highways surveyed during the 2001-2002 Historic Highway Survey Project. Potash Highway resources were also identified during Nebraska Historic Resource Survey & Inventory (NeHRSI) countywide, reconnaissance-level surveys completed for all of the counties on the highway.

The Nebraska Historic Highway Survey developed a statewide historic context addressing highway development in Nebraska and individual historic contexts for the following highways: Lincoln Highway, Meridian Highway, Omaha-Lincoln-Denver/Detroit-Lincoln-Denver Highway, Potash Highway, and U.S. Highway 20. These were selected as being among the most important regional or cross-country highways in Nebraska. Lack of funding limited the scope of work to these highways, although others achieved prominence for their routes in and through Nebraska.

The statewide context, *Historic Highway Development in Nebraska,* covers the beginnings of organized road development in the late nineteenth century and continues through 1974 and the completion of Interstate 80 in Nebraska. The highway-specific context, *Potash Highway in Nebraska*, begins in 1918 with the formation of the Potash Highway Association and extends through c. 1965, which currently marks the end of the highway's period of significance. This context discusses the establishment of the highway and route selection, promotion and tourism, realignments and the highway's impact on communities along its route. The historic context also provides a timeline of development and significant events related to the Potash Highway. Surveyed properties were evaluated under both historic contexts for their potential National Register significance. The historic contexts are included in Section E of this document. Section F discusses property types and their potential National Register significance.

A wide array of resources was consulted during the creation of the historic highway contexts. Archival research was conducted at the Nebraska State Historical Society and the Nebraska Department of Roads. Resources found at the Nebraska Department of Roads included biennial reports, historic highway maps, and project database logs identifying road improvements and realignments. Other important source materials included: the WPA Federal Writers Project's *Nebraska: A Guide to the Cornhusker State*, city directories, Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, various promotional state travel maps, newspaper research and county and local histories.

Properties were selected for survey and documentation base on their identified or understood association with the highway based on their physical appearance. The reconnaissance-level field survey identified historic road features and road-related properties largely from visual inspection. Fortunately, many of property types related to the highway are readily identifiable, such as bridges, gas stations, cabin camps, and motels. Survey methodology was based on *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Identification and Evaluation* and the Nebraska State Historical Society/State Historic Preservation Office's *Historic Building Survey Manual*. Extensive consultation was also conducted with Nebraska State Historical Society and Nebraska Department of Roads staff.

Only one identified historic alignment of the Potash Highway was surveyed in rural areas, because it was expected that highway-related resources would be concentrated in urban areas. However, the roadways of former alignments were documented in some instances. Multiple historic alignments were surveyed within communities in an effort to identify road-related resources. In both rural and urban areas, the reconnaissance survey focused on road-related resources that had an association with the highway, automobiles, and/or tourism. Surveyed properties were generally constructed before 1960 and were located within a ¼ mile of the right-of-way. Identified property types included gas stations, motels and hotels, restaurants, auto garages and dealerships, neon signs, bridges, distinctive culverts, and road segments.

Surveyed properties retained a minimal degree of integrity and convey a sense of function as a road-related resource. Alterations to a property completed prior to 1960 were evaluated as having the potential to contribute to the property's history. If the association of the property was not clearly identifiable, but the property had the potential to serve travelers along the route, the property was documented. Partial complexes or representative buildings were surveyed although demolition and alterations may have diminished their historic integrity.

Previously identified road-related properties recorded in the Nebraska Historic Resources Survey & Inventory (NeHRSI) were reevaluated as part of the Nebraska Historic Highway Survey. This county-by-county survey program began in 1974 and now includes the documentation of over 76,000 properties that reflect the rich architectural and historic heritage of Nebraska. Previously surveyed properties that displayed a severe loss of integrity through major physical changes were not resurveyed. They can, however, provide for a comparative analysis with extant properties.

Surveyed properties were documented with black-and-white photographs and the recordation of locational information in the NeHRSI database. Surveyed properties were mapped on county road maps, town plat maps or USGS quadrangle maps, as appropriate. Surveyed properties are now entered in a Geographic Information System (GIS) maintained by the Nebraska State Historical Society. A total of 918 resources were documented as part of the Historic Highway Survey, including 130 resources related to the Potash Highway. See *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey, Historic Highways in Nebraska* for complete survey methodology and results.

Limitations and Biases of the Survey

This survey was limited in scope and scale to focus on the agencies' objectives within the project budget and schedule. The application of reconnaissance-level survey methodology was necessitated.

The field survey of each highway was limited in the number of alignments driven and resources readily identifiable, as described above. Because early alignments were chosen to capture the history and evolution of the early twentieth century roadways, eligibility assessments focused only on selected routes. In rural areas, the original alignment was primarily chosen for field survey. Other alignments may identify additional properties. Minor realignments were frequent and can only be identified through additional research.

In urban areas, multiple alignments, often including the original alignment and a later (c. 1930s) downtown bypass alignment, were surveyed. Post-1940 alignments in both urban and rural areas can continue to tell the story and evolution of road development and may hold significance in their own right.

As a reconnaissance level survey, research focused on the overall history of the road and property types. Research on individual properties was limited. Field survey efforts focused on the visual identification of resources with a potential connection to the road, such as automobile travel or tourism. For the most part, resources were considered under National Register Criterion A for their association to the highway and Criterion C for their design. Further research on individual properties may identify potential significance under Criterion B for persons associated with highway development and promotion and Criterion D for research potential. In some cases, Criterion Considerations B for moved properties and G for properties less than 50-years old may be applicable.

One inherent challenge of reconnaissance level surveys is identifying a property's historical association(s) with limited information. Without completing site-specific research it is unknown what role, if any, a property may have contributed to the history of the Potash Highway. For instance, determining whether an auto-related business was established as a direct result of the highway or to serve local and regional patrons is particularly problematic, although it seems likely gas stations, auto dealerships and garages would have benefitted from highway traffic regardless of their origin. In such cases, only site-specific research can establish a resource's history and reveal its level of association and significance. As such, this MPD should be viewed as a stepping-off point. Surveyed properties can be better understood and additional resources may be identified with further historical research. More specified information, addressed only in a cursory manner in this MPD, will also be uncovered as historic properties are evaluated for National Register eligibility.

Further exploration of the driving "experience" along historic highways may also lead to the identification of landscape features and viewsheds with potential National Register eligibility under this MPD. These might include alleys of trees, important landmarks or entire urban, suburban or rural landscapes. However, in terms of the highway's historic character, these properties are often ephemeral. They are also extremely difficult to characterize and quantify, and, as a result, were not surveyed as part of this project.

The initial survey of highway-related properties was completed in 2001-2002 and limitations do exist in the greater amount of knowledge acquired since that time. Post-World War II properties, for example, may have been unintentionally overlooked. An attempt was made to identify properties dating to about 1960; however, evaluation methods for "mid-century modern" resources may now be keener. Finally, it is important to note the transitory quality of place and time. Many highway-related properties have been lost or altered since the survey was completed, while others will reach the National Register's 50-year benchmark for potential historic significance in the next few years.

In an effort to be as accurate as possible, a desktop assessment of each resource included in the 2001-2002 Historic Highway Survey (excluding bridges, roadways and some sites) was performed during the 2013-2014 revision of this document. Utilizing Google Maps and other online resources, this assessment was limited to: (1) determining if each resource was still extant; (2) looking for significant alterations that might impact the integrity of each resource (if street view was available in Google Maps); and (3) finding potential historic districts and/or clusters of highway-related resources. According to this assessment, approximately 13 properties associated with the Potash Highway have been lost since the 2001-2002 Historic Highway Survey and several others have been extensively altered. On the other hand, this process also uncovered a handful of previously unidentified highway-related resources and a few successful preservation efforts. Finally, the desktop assessment revealed ten potential highway-related districts ranging in size from two to six adjacent properties. These districts typically represent automobile rows, commercial strips and/or important intersections.

Value of the Survey

Products of the Nebraska Historic Highway Survey are of use to NSHS and NDOR in project planning activities and public information efforts. NDOR participated in the project to facilitate project planning and development by proactively identifying and evaluating historic resources. As a result of the project, NSHS was able to update the state's historic resources inventory and gain a better understanding of the state's historic highways and related resources. Both agencies also have roles in highway project planning and compliance under state and federal cultural resource regulations. The statewide context of highway development and the reconnaissance survey results will assist the NSHS, NDOR, and the Federal Highway Administration in determining what road-related properties may be eligible for the National Register.

Both agencies also have the desire to raise public awareness about the history of highway development in the Nebraska and the significance of road-related resources. The project's products, including the survey report and the publication manuscript, serve as educational materials for the general public that advance knowledge and appreciation of Nebraska's historic highways and the resources that define their character.

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