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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.

New Submission Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Historic and Architectural Resources of U.S. Highway 20 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

U.S. Highway 20 in Nebraska, c. 1920 – 1965

C. Form Prepared by

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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.)

Michael J. Smith
Signature and title of certifying official

05-22-2014
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.

James J. [Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

7.14.2014
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.

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for application to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Introduction

This Multiple Property Document for Historic and Architectural Resources of U.S. Highway 20 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

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.

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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).

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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

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.

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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 standards²²

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

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.

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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

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.

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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

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.

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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 Irrigation, 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

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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

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 of 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.

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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

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.

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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

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.

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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

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.

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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

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.

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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

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.

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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

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* 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.

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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.

U.S. Highway 20 in Nebraska

Introduction

U.S. Highway 20, along with the earlier Blue Pole and Grant Highways, was an important route for the people of northern Nebraska because it connected them to shipping, processing and commercial centers. After it was designated in 1925 as part of the federal highway system, the road came into national prominence, attracting commercial and tourist traffic. Extending west from Boston, Massachusetts, U.S. Highway 20 traversed New York State, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, where passed through the city of Chicago, before continuing west through Iowa, Nebraska and Wyoming. It was a convenient route to tourist destinations, including the Black Hills of South Dakota and Yellowstone National Park, where it terminated. Then, in 1941, U.S. Highway 20 was extended west from the park through a small portion of southwest Montana, to Idaho and Oregon, where it terminated at Newport on the Pacific Ocean. Upon its completion, U.S. Highway 20 tied northern Nebraska into a national transportation route. The Highway 20 Association was then established to promote the route across the country.

The Blue Pole and Grant Highways

The federal highway system, established in 1925, built upon earlier "named" highways already crisscrossing the nation. Odd numbers were assigned to north-south routes and even numbers to east-west routes. Numbers ending in "0" and "1" were reserved for principle cross-country routes. Three of these newly-created interstate routes crossed Nebraska: U.S. Highway 30 (the former Lincoln Highway), U.S. Highway 81 (the former Meridian Highway) and U.S. Highway 20, which incorporated sections of the former Blue Pole and Grant Highways.

The Blue Pole Highway was a Nebraska state route that ultimately extended from Omaha and passed through Fremont, Norfolk, Clearwater, O'Neill, Ainsworth, Wood Lake, Valentine, Merriman and Hay Springs prior to terminating at Chadron. It was named for the blue stripe painted on telephone poles to mark its route. The Grant Highway was a national route that entered the state at South Sioux City, after which it passed through Laurel, Plainview and Orchard before joining the

⁸⁶ Kaszynski, 192.

⁸⁷ Information provided by Len Sand and Cindy Veys, Nebraska Department of Roads, 29 April 2002.

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Blue Pole Highway at O'Neill. It then ran concurrently with the Blue Pole Highway to Chadron, except for an approximately 75 mile deviation where the Grant Highway crossed the Niobrara River at Carns and extended through Springview and Sparks, which were north of the Blue Pole's route through Wood Lake. The Grant Highway then ran from Chadron, through Crawford and Harrison, and into Wyoming.⁸⁸

The Blue Pole Highway was conceived as early as 1912 when it was mentioned in an article in the *Norfolk Press*. The highway clearly stretched from Norfolk to Chadron by 1921, and extended southeast from Norfolk to Omaha by about 1925. Efforts to promote travel on the road began as early as the spring of 1922 when the Blue Pole Highway Association was established. A year later, in the *Valentine Democrat*, roadway boosters reported that the Blue Pole had achieved a prominent level of popularity. The facility was by then a state aid road in Cherry County and was almost graded from Wood Lake to the county line. A plea was also made by roadway boosters that the road be completed from the county line to Johnstown the next year.⁸⁹

Although the Blue Pole route's Ainsworth-Wood Lake-Valentine alignment is depicted on a 1921 map, the highway's course through this part of the state was apparently never formalized. At its 1925 meeting in Chadron, the Blue Pole Highway Association called for a decision on the Wood Lake alignment, "which has not been heretofore designated a route," and the matter was still under consideration a year later in Valentine.⁹⁰ Delegates attending the Valentine meeting in 1926 argued that the governor should do what was needed to officially designate the Wood Lake alignment as part of the Blue Pole Highway and that it should be part of the federal aid system. The 75 men attending the meeting went on to argue that the Blue Pole route, "will be one of the most important if not the most important highways in Nebraska when it is completed, because it connects Western Nebraska directly with Omaha, our metropolis."⁹¹

In contrast to the Blue Pole Highway, an older state road, the Grant Highway was a national route that extended to New York in the east and then slowly moved west. The Grant Highway Improvement Association's letterhead identified the road as extending though Nebraska from Chicago to the west coast, and described the association as, "devoted to the development and advertisement of the most direct and otherwise most practicable route of motor transportation."⁹² The highway had reached Sioux City, Iowa by 1921, but remained unmarked in Nebraska. In May 1922, however, Malcolm MacKinnon, Secretary of Grant Highway Improvement Association, indicated in a letter to Arthur Bowring, a prominent rancher and road booster in Merrimam, Nebraska, that after recently visiting several towns along the route, he expected, "to have the marking complete in Nebraska and Wyoming in a few weeks." Of course, the Grant Highway (at least in Nebraska) would be short-lived, supplanted by U.S. Highway 20 just four years after it was finally marked.

The adoption of the federal highway system in 1925 was a definitive step in the nation's road development, but the transition from named highways to numbered routes was more gradual in popular culture. In a November 1925 *Chadron Journal* article detailing the designation of U.S. Highway 20, supporters of the Blue Pole Highway argued that their suddenly obsolete route was, "a vital link in an important national highway," that was worthy of preservation.⁹³ On the same day, the *Valentine Democrat* enthusiastically reported that, "one of the most important transcontinental highways approved was designated as Route No. 20," but the paper was still referring to the Grant Highway as late as 1927.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ *Commercial Atlas of America* (Chicago, IL: Rand McNally & Company, n.d.), 280. Despite the fact that there is no date on the atlas, it is assumed to be c. 1925.

⁸⁹ "The Automobile As An Educator," *Norfolk Press*, 19 September 1912; *Auto Trails Map: District No. 11* (Chicago, IL: Rand McNally & Company, 1921), n.p.; *Commercial Atlas of America*, 280; President of the Blue Pole Highway Association to George E. Johnson, State Engineer, 16 September 1922, Arthur Bowring Papers, Arthur Bowring Sandhills Ranch State Historical Park, Merriman, NE; "Road Boosters Meet," *Valentine Democrat*, 16 November 1923.

⁹⁰ *Auto Trails Map*, n.p.; "B.P.H. Meets Here in 1926," *Valentine Democrat*, 30 October 1925.

⁹¹ "B.P.H. Meeting A Huge Success," *Valentine Democrat*, 19 November 1926; "Chadron Men at Blue Pole Highway Meet At Valentine," *Chadron Journal*, 19 November 1926.

⁹² *Auto Trails Map*, n.p.; Malcolm MacKinnon to Arthur Bowring, 28 May 1922, Arthur Bowring Papers. It was not unusual in the west to ignore portions of a road that extended east of Chicago.

⁹³ "Blue Pole Road is Vital Line in National System," *Chadron Journal*, 27 November 1925.

⁹⁴ "Highway System is Designated in State of Nebraska," *Valentine Democrat*, 27 November 1925.

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Regardless of which name it went by, the highway traversing northern Nebraska quickly gained national prominence, particularly as a potential tourist route. In addition to Yellowstone National Park, U.S. Highway 20 also promised access to the Black Hills in South Dakota and New York's Finger Lakes region.⁹⁵ It was now up to the Nebraska Department of Public Works to build a roadway to meet both federal standards and public expectations.

Early U.S. Highway 20 in Nebraska

During its early period, U.S. Highway 20 was championed by Arthur Browning, the prominent Merriman, Nebraska rancher who had already devoted much time and energy to developing the Grant and Blue Pole Highways. From 1927 to 1933, Browning was in an especially good position to secure funding for the new federal highway as a state representative and, after 1930, as a state senator. For instance, he toured parts of U.S. Highway 20 in 1928 with Division Engineer W.H. Bauman, investigating the condition of the road and noting needed repairs between Valentine and Gordon. Browning's interest in northern Nebraska's roads continued as his political prominence grew. "Senator Browning is one of the best informed men in the country on roads," extolled one 1931 *Chadron Journal* article, while reporting that, according to Browning, U.S. Highway 20 would soon receive funding for repairs and improvements.⁹⁶

Early construction on U.S. Highway 20 was much like that completed along many Nebraska highways. In 1924, clay was reportedly added to the native soils for road use in the Valentine vicinity in order to prevent turning the earthen roadway into powder. Similarly, a sand-clay mixture was laid on the road from Eli to the west county line, a distance of approximately 35 miles. In 1925 a sand-clay mixture was used for the roadway in the Sandhills region between Valentine and Crookston, as well as between Merriman and Gordon.⁹⁷ As work progressed in 1926, two inches of gravel were laid over the route between Merriman and Gordon, as well as between Eli and Cody—a distance of just under 50 miles. A year later work on U.S. Highway 20 was progressing between the Sandhills towns of Cody and Nenzel. Hills were cut down and low areas filled. Work on the Nenzel to Kilgore segment was scheduled next, while the contract for the Kilgore to Crookston segment was to be let on August 26th of that year.⁹⁸

Work expanded in 1928 when some of the objectives established for 1927 were finally completed. The *Valentine Democrat* declared on April 26, 1928 that, "we are getting good roads fast."⁹⁹ Less than two months later graveling started where it had stopped at the end of the 1927 construction season—immediately west of Eli. One problem with road construction in the Sandhills was the scarcity of gravel. It had to be delivered to the region by rail, generally from Oral, South Dakota, or Bridgeport, Nebraska, the latter of which was over 150 miles away. Still, graveling was perceived as a significant road improvement. When such work was expanded to include the 18-mile segment from O'Neill to Atkinson, the *Valentine Democrat* enthusiastically reported that there would soon be a, "graveled surface most of the way from Omaha to Chadron."¹⁰⁰

Despite hope that the Crookston to Kilgore work would be contracted for in 1927, this segment was finally included in the improvement program for 1929. It was delayed due to questions about the type of construction to be used. In a letter to state representative Browning, State Engineer Cochran said that the road might be surfaced with a sand and oil mixture. "By this means," Cochran explained to Browning, "oil is worked deep down into the sand and forms a good surface, one that has been satisfactorily used in experimental sections of road."¹⁰¹ The Crookston to Kilgore segment of U.S. Highway

⁹⁵ "The Grant Highway," *Valentine Democrat*, 29 April 1927.

⁹⁶ "B.P.H. Meets Here in 1926"; "Division Engineer and Browning Inspect Roads," *Valentine Democrat*, 9 February 1928; "Browning Well Received by Chamber of Commerce," *Cherry County News*, 16 October 1930; "Browning Says No. 20 to Get Attention Soon," *Chadron Journal*, 18 December 1931.

⁹⁷ "Eighty Road Projects in the 1924 Program," *Valentine Democrat*, 4 January 1924; "B.P.H. Meets Here in 1926."

⁹⁸ "Road Contracts to be Awarded," *Valentine Democrat*, 5 March 1926; "Work on Highway 20 Progressing Rapidly," *Valentine Democrat*, 12 August 1927.

⁹⁹ "Roads Improving Wonderfully Each Year," *Valentine Democrat*, 26 April 1928.

¹⁰⁰ "Road West Nearing Completion, Soon Graveled," *Valentine Democrat*, 14 June 1928; "Graveling Progressing Fine on Highway '20'," *Valentine Democrat*, 21 June 1928.

¹⁰¹ "Crookston Kilgore Contract to be Let In June," *Valentine Democrat*, 9 May 1929.

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20 was finished in December, although the completion of all graveling was to wait until the spring of 1930. The conclusion of this work eliminated the final segment of sand on U.S. Highway 20 in Nebraska. The construction of two concrete bridges would also wait until spring, the waterways in question being spanned by temporary structures.¹⁰²

Wood Lake Road and Bryan Bridge

U.S. Highway 20 was originally aligned along the route of the Grant Highway west of Springview to Valentine, via Sparks. But it was soon apparent to state highway experts that the Wood Lake option, the one that followed the Blue Pole Highway, was more appropriate. It was, after all, about ten miles shorter. This was a major realignment, indeed, the largest one on U.S. Highway 20 in the state of Nebraska. Work was scheduled to occur in 1930.¹⁰³

The proposed realignment of U.S. Highway 20 generated some debate and was not pursued until 1932. In the interim, some people along the route studied and commented on the proposal. One particularly detailed observation came from M.P. Jordan, who lived in Arabia, which is on the south side of the Niobrara River between Valentine and Wood Lake. His idea was to shorten the road by 3.5 miles and required a high bridge over the Niobrara River. He proposed to follow the state's route from Wood Lake to Arabia, then extend the alignment to the northwest and meet the railroad about two miles east of Thatcher, after which the route would follow the railroad to Valentine. Jordan mapped his proposal, discussed the soils in the area and then presented the plan to state officials. He received a favorable reaction from C.C. Burdis, an associate engineer for the state. Regardless of what happened with Jordan's plan, however, the *Cherry County News* reported that, "one thing is certain, this section needs a highway east through Wood Lake and this route should stand on its own feet to provide the traveling public with the most direct route between the points in question."¹⁰⁴

The alignment ultimately selected largely mirrored Jordan's proposal. It ran concurrently with the railroad from Wood Lake to Arabia, from where it extended to the northwest, about one mile west of Jordan's proposed route. It then met the railroad immediately west of Thatcher and continued on to Valentine, deviating from the railroad alignment for the final two miles to Valentine. The deviation facilitated the Niobrara River crossing, which is a high bridge about three-quarters of a mile west of the railroad. Construction of the bridge at this crossing was perhaps the most impressive portion of the work along the new Wood Lake route. The Bryan Bridge (CE00-028), named for former Nebraska governor Charles W. Bryan, is an arched, cantilever structure. It was designed by Josef Sorkin, a Russian immigrant who arrived in the United States in 1923 and who graduated in 1929 from the College of Engineering at the University of Nebraska. The structure carries a 24-foot roadway, is 289 feet long and cost \$55,564.00.¹⁰⁵ The Wood Lake route between Ainsworth and Valentine subsequently opened to traffic on November 18, 1932.¹⁰⁶

Later Efforts to Complete U.S. Highway 20 in Nebraska

The realignment of U.S. Highway 20 through Wood Lake and the construction of the Bryan Bridge were significant steps in developing the highway's final alignment through Nebraska. Yet work along the road continued, although much less money was available due to the Depression and the resulting strain on roadway funding sources. This point was made in a 1933 meeting with State Engineer Roy Cochran, and a subsequent meeting with the governor, when Arthur Bowring

¹⁰² "New Road Open For Traffic," *Valentine Democrat*, 12 December 1929; Nebraska Department of Public Works, *Eighteenth Biennial Report of the Department of Public Works 1929-1930* (Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Department of Public Works, 1930), 64.

¹⁰³ "Federal Highway No. 20 to be Contracted," *Valentine Democrat*, 14 November 1929. The route via Sparks was approximately 59 miles, while that passing through Wood Lake was only 49 miles.

¹⁰⁴ "Propose New Route for Valentine-Wood Lake Road," *Cherry County News*, 15 January 1931; "M.P. Jordan Writes Concerning Highway," *Cherry County News*, 15 January 1931.

¹⁰⁵ "The Bryan Bridge," Nebraska State Historical Marker, Nebraska State Historical Society and the Nebraska Department of Roads, Lincoln, NE. The Bryan Bridge was selected by the American Institute of Steel Construction for its annual Award of Merit for the Most Beautiful Steel Bridge of 1932 (Class C). It was also listed on the National Register in 1988 and designated in 1995 as a State Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.

¹⁰⁶ "Official Opening of New Highway on November 18," *Chadron Journal*, 25 November 1932.

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and others learned that there was simply less money available for roads. Oiling the gravel already on the roadway was about the only activity for which money was available, and even some of that work was yet to be contracted.¹⁰⁷

Nevertheless, some work did continue. By 1937-1938, U.S. Highway 20 was completely paved from South Sioux City to Stuart and only 83 miles of unpaved road remained between Stuart and the Wyoming state line. Work continued and by 1940, only eight miles of unpaved road near Harrison were found along the Nebraska segment of the highway. The state's biennial report of 1939-1940 observed that, "when the bituminous and concrete pavements which were placed under contract during 1940 are all completed the status of pavement on the State Highway System will be as follows: Highway No. 20 will be paved across the entire State from Sioux City to the Wyoming State line."¹⁰⁸ Even as it neared completion, however, some Nebraskans were still hoping to influence its route. The Stream-Line Highway Association, for instance, called for straightening U.S. Highway 20 between Jackson and O'Neill to create the "longest straight highway in the United States," further claiming it would happen, "eventually...why not now?" Their letterhead depicted a map of the highway running arrow-strait for 93 miles through Creighton and bypassing the towns of Laurel, Osmond, Plainview and Orchard.¹⁰⁹ Obviously the movement was never pursued—the highway continues to jog south at Laurel—but it was an intriguing proposal.

Finally, in June 1941, only six months before the United States entered the Second World War, the remaining eight miles of U.S. Highway 20 near Harrison were paved. As of June 28, 1941 the *Chadron Journal* happily reported that U.S. Highway 20 was an, "all weather hard surfaced route" from Boston, Massachusetts, to Yellowstone Park. Extending 2,385 miles, and due to its later period of construction, the road was, "laid out and engineered for fast transcontinental travel, sharp curves being eliminated and towns by-passed where possible." The newspaper also observed that U.S. Highway 20 had been extended only the year before from Yellowstone Park to Albany, Oregon. Occasional roadway segments between those two entities still needed to be paved, but U.S. Highway 20, which was subsequently extended to Newport, Oregon, would be, "the shortest and most direct all weather route from coast to coast across the United States for tourists and commercial travel."¹¹⁰ The National Highway 20 Association, which included representatives from Chicago, Illinois, to Albany, Oregon, offered congratulations to those who worked on the roadway and called for a three-day celebration in Wyoming or Idaho.¹¹¹

The National Highway 20 Association

The first effort to establish a promotional organization for Highway 20 appears not to have occurred until 1933 when the Kiwanis Club of Gordon, Nebraska, called for one. Representatives of Nebraska towns from O'Neill to Harrison were invited to a meeting, as were delegates from Wyoming.¹¹² Despite such meetings, U.S. Highway 20 boosters remained unorganized until 1939 when the National Highway 20 Association was formally established. The group's first convention was in April 1940, a year that coincided with the highway's extension to Albany, Oregon, and then to Newport, Oregon, on the Pacific Ocean. The meeting was held in Lusk, Wyoming, and Nebraska's representatives included several people from Dawes County: Secretary Hill of the Chadron Chamber of Commerce, Dick Dempster, chairman of the local road committee and Ward Diehl, a Dawes County commissioner.¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ "Highway Twenty Meeting Held At Lincoln Monday," *Chadron Journal*, 30 June 1933.

¹⁰⁸ Bureau of Roads and Bridges, Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Second Biennial Report of the Bureau of Roads* (Lincoln, NE: Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1938), iii; Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twenty-Third Biennial Report of the Department of Roads and Irrigation 1939-1940*, (Lincoln, NE: Department of Roads and Irrigation, 1940), 75-76.

¹⁰⁹ Bogner, Otto (Stream-Line Highway Association), Letter to Congressman Carl Steffen, 7 February 1939. General Highway Files of Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office.

¹¹⁰ "Harrison Gap U.S. Hiway [sic] 20 Is Completed," *Chadron Journal*, 4 July 1941.

¹¹¹ "Harrison Gap U.S. Hiway [sic] 20 Is Completed."

¹¹² "Gordon Kiwanis to Sponsor a Highway Association," *Chadron Journal*, 9 June 1933.

¹¹³ Daryl Norris, "Federal Highway 20: The Last Transcontinental," *The Great Lakes Geographer* 2, no. 1 (1995): 87-89; "Attend Highway 20 Road Meet at Lusk," *Chadron Journal*, 5 April 1940.

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Roy Chamberlain, an oilman and hotel owner in Wyoming, established the association and Bert Bell became its secretary. The association developed grand plans. Six offices were to be opened between Wyoming and Boston. Additionally, the association printed 500,000 maps that identified the highway and the various roads that could contribute to its traffic. Also concocted was a five-year development plan, as was an idea to promote the highway as the "covered wagon trail." Radio advertisements were pursued, and a Highway 20 caravan converged on Sioux City, Iowa in October 1940. About 20 to 50 people stayed overnight in Chadron on Saturday, October 26th, on their way to Sioux City. Several Chadron residents also traveled on Sunday and Monday to Sioux City where the caravan joined a procession through the community that included an estimated 225 cars, 800 people and 350 musicians.¹¹⁴

Soon after the celebration in Sioux City, the United States became embroiled in World War II. Roy Chamberlain lost interest in the group as he became more involved in Wyoming politics. The association's headquarters also moved around, first to Sioux City, and then to Chadron. The organization did recover somewhat after the war. A new brochure was printed, likely sometime in the 1950s. But by the mid-1960s, despite having sponsored a car that promoted the highway and supplied information, the organization claimed representatives in only 43 cities in four states. Due to its flagging activities, the association disbanded.¹¹⁵

Tourism and Outdoor Recreation along U.S. Highway 20

From its start as the Blue Pole and Grant Highways, U.S. Highway 20 has offered access to some of the Nation's best outdoor recreation. Yellowstone National Park and the Black Hills are probably the most famous destinations along the western section of the transcontinental route, but tourists traveling through Nebraska would have found endless opportunities to stop and explore. Communities along U.S. Highway 20 benefited greatly from the all the visitors, who supported a variety of highway-related businesses.

Early Tourism in Northern Nebraska

Sportsman flocked to the lakes of Cherry County for hunting and fishing opportunities, especially after the arrival of the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad (later Chicago and NorthWestern Railroad). Many early tourists traveling through northern Nebraska were sportsmen from Omaha and Lincoln who formed their own hunting clubs, such as the Hackberry Club and the Dewey Lake Club. These clubs often purchase and leased lands for hunting and fishing—the Dewey Lake Club had exclusive rights to 17,220 acres in southern Cherry County by 1920—where they built retreats with cabins and lodges. In addition, local families also set up resorts, so that soon, "every lake...large enough and deep enough to have fish or attract waterfowl had at least one club or resort."¹¹⁶ This tourist traffic was a boon to early automobile-related businesses, including Wood Lake's Heath's Garage and the L.E. Brown Auto Livery, which offered, "Special Attention to Hunting and Fishing Parties," in 1911. Sportsmen braving the Blue Pole Highway often used Wood Lake as their access point to the lake county, but with improvements to U.S. Highway 20 in the 1930s, Valentine, located 25 miles to the northwest, became the center for tourism in north central Nebraska. The county-seat of Cherry County, Valentine was larger and also benefited from the intersection of U.S. Highway 20 and the north-south U.S. Highway 83. Northern Nebraska, however, was not just a playground for sportsmen. Resorts like Hidden Paradise, which opened as the Long Pine Amusement Park in 1910, quickly became a vacation destination for many Nebraskans and some out-of-staters.¹¹⁷ Hidden Paradise's early visitors arrived in Long Pine by train, but would soon have the option of driving the Blue Pole Highway / U.S. Highway 20.

The WPA Guide

The WPA Federal Writers' Project captured U.S. Highway 20 as a tourist route in 1939 with their "Tour No. 7," in *Nebraska: A Guide to the Cornhusker State*. Starting at the eastern end of Nebraska, travelers along U.S. Highway 20

¹¹⁴ Norris, 87-89; "Highway 20 Caravan Will Stop in Chadron," *Chadron Journal*, 25 October 1940.

¹¹⁵ *US 20: From Coast to Coast U.S. 20 Points the Way to Save a Day* (Chadron, Nebr.: Highway 20 Association), n.p.; Norris, 87-89.

¹¹⁶ Jon Farrar, "Wood Lake: The Sportsman's Gateway," *Nebraskaland*, November 2011.

¹¹⁷ Rebecca A. Buller, "Intersections of Place, Time and Entertainment," *Nebraska History*, Summer 2011.

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crossed the Missouri River over a toll bridge (20 cents per vehicle, 5 cents each additional passenger) before entering South Sioux City. From here, tourists passed through, "typical Nebraska prairie: undulating fields, numerous trees, farms, occasional large towns."¹¹⁸ In this section of the trip, tourists might stop at Dikeman Park, located 2.5 miles north of Royal, for fishing and an overnight cabin, or, for a better view of the landscape, visit the "Antelope County Marker" near Orchard, an eight foot square granite shaft and cross placed on the county's highest point. West of O'Neill, tourists entered hay country, "which extends as far as Valentine in an almost unbroken prairie, dotted in the fall with large haystacks." Many tourists would likely stop at Pine Creek, a tributary of the Niobrara River with a deep and scenic canyon nestled in the midst of the hay meadows. Served by the town of Long Pine, this tourist area offered two heavily-developed resorts: Hidden Paradise (BW00-061) with a swimming plunge, cabins, good fishing and a dance pavilion, and Long Pine Tourist Park (The Pines, BW04-079), where tourist could rent cabins for \$1.00, \$1.50 or \$2.00 and boats for 50 cents per hour. Swimming and fishing were free.

Moving west, tourists went on to Valentine, described in the WPA guide as "a typical western cow town, with cowpunchers, sportsman and weather-beaten stores." From Valentine, located at the northern reaches of Nebraska's famous Sandhills, tourists could access an array of outdoor recreational activities. To the east, the 70,000 acre Cherry County Migratory Water-fowl Sanctuary (now the Valentine National Wildlife Refuge) offered endless fishing opportunities. Created in 1935, this was the former territory of early 20th century hunting clubs and many of the lakes continued to offer accommodations, including Trout Lake (with rooms, meals and a filling station), Pelican Lake (with 12 modern cabins, a small grocery store, fishing and hunting supplies and rental boats), and Dewey Lake (with a filling station). To the west, tourists could view bison, elk, antelope and deer, as well as a variety of bird life within the 16,681-acre National Niobrara Game Reserve. They would also find a museum at the site of Fort Niobrara, where they might, "be greeted by tame deer, which nuzzle the visitor's hand in search of food," and scenic spots with idyllic names like Shady Nook and Sears Falls. Of course, tourists did not need to venture so far from Valentine to find recreational opportunities. They could picnic and camp at the Valentine City Park and swim, fish and boat at nearby Lake Minnechaduzza. On their way west from Valentine, tourists could take a drive and picnic in the Niobrara Branch of the Nebraska National Forest (smoking prohibited). They might also stop in Cody, which, according to the colorful language of the Federal Writers' Project, was like, "a movie set for a western thriller," with, "white and grey frame stores lined up on a single side of its graveled main street."

Tourists crossed the Pine Ridge, with its pine-covered hills and sandstone buttes, to the west of Chadron. Described in the WPA guide as "a typical western college town...with many good houses," Chadron sits at the edge of the scenic and historic White River valley. Here, tourists could visits several sites significant to nineteenth century relations between Native Americans and the federal government. Chief among these was the still-operating Fort Robinson near Crawford, where Lakota Sioux leader Crazy Horse was killed in 1877 and a band of Cheyenne under Dull Knife escaped captivity in early 1879, in addition to its associations with a myriad of other significant events and people. While included on another WPA tour between Chadron and Sidney, Nebraska, travelers along U.S. Highway 20 could also visit Chadron State Park, located nine miles south of Chadron. Established in 1921 as Nebraska's first state park, visitors could rent cabins and explore the natural landscape by horseback (horses were rented by the hour) or swim in the park's pool for 10 cents.

Tourists encountered scenic drives on either side of Crawford. The original alignment of U.S. Highway 20 followed Smiley Canyon through the pine-covered broken country east of Fort Robinson. For the more adventurous, however, there was the "Rim of the World Drive." Not marked on any map, the 32-mile "rough and sandy" road climbed to the highest point of the Pine Ridge before descending into farming and grazing lands. The WPA authors advised potential users to inquire about the road at local filling stations, and proceed only with a guide. A final tourist destination along early U.S. Highway 20 in Nebraska was the Agate Springs Fossil Quarries and Cook Museum of Natural History, located twenty-three miles south of Harrison (now Agate Fossil Beds National Monument). From Harrison, travelers heading west drove another nine miles before entering Wyoming.

¹¹⁸ WPA Federal Writers' Project, *Nebraska: A Guide to the Cornhusker State* (American Guide Series), New York: The Viking Press, 1939. Information taken from Tour No. 7, 306-325. Chadron State Park was included on tour No. 6 (Chadron-Sidney), 304.

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Where to Stop and Stay

Communities along U.S. Highway 20 offered a full spectrum of lodging accommodations to motorists touring the surrounding countryside. Tourist camps were one of the first types of amenities developed specifically for automobile tourists. By April 1927, Valentine was said to have, "tourist campsites of remarkable beauty and comfort."¹¹⁹ The combination of available campsites and an improving roadway prompted the *Valentine Democrat* to project a, "radical increase in tourist traffic...next season."¹²⁰ Indeed, by September 1928 a local count indicated that 619 cars had registered at the tourist park, while 2,250 guests had registered in the city's hotels. The visitors spent \$15,000 at local gas stations, garages, hotels, eating places and other establishments.¹²¹ As this data suggests, local hotels, which were initially established to serve railroad traffic, competed with campgrounds for the patronage of automobile travelers. Examples of hotels that likely catered to early motorists include the three-story Blaine Hotel in Chadron (DW03-012) and the Hotel Pfister in Rushville (SH08-007), a two-story, brick building. Travelers could also venture into the countryside and rent one of the many hunting, fishing or "resort" cabins build alongside the route's numerous lakes and waterways.

Cabin courts also began to open in communities along U.S. Highway 20, although initially most were located off the highway. In Valentine, for instance, Harry Schosser built his cabin camp north of 6th Street, "near a prairie dog town," in 1931 and Hamilton Hooper first rented cabins atop Park Hill, before moving them to his filling station along the highway in the 1930s.¹²² By World War II, Chadron had at least three cabin courts located south of the highway, which followed 3rd Street. Beyerly's Cabins at the northwest corner of East 5th and Cedar Streets included a house, nine rental cabins and even a small souvenir shop to entice tourists.¹²³ Cabin courts were also often combined with service stations along U.S. Highway 20. In addition to Hooper's business in Valentine, Paul Barnes built a filling station with cabins alongside a former dairy barn in the late 1920s in Harrison. The complex eventually became the Gateway Service Station and Café, advertised as "a popular stopping place for truckers and travelers alike."¹²⁴ In 1941, Ira Irby built a combined "Super Service Station and Delux Auto Court," along U.S. Highway 20 in Rushville (SH08-039). The Steamline Moderne service station at the front corner of the property sold Texaco products and the auto court featured "individual carports, air conditioning, shower baths and Simmons beds."¹²⁵

Many cabin courts evolved into motels after World War II. In Laurel, J. Knudsen built cabins near the junction of U.S. Highway 20 and Nebraska Highway 15 in 1941. The property was later purchased by George Hodgson, a former traveling salesman who was, "always looking for a 'Shady' spot to stop overnight." Hodgson quickly remodeled the cabins and dubbed his property the Shady Rest Motel.¹²⁶ Other examples of this phenomenon include a former cabin court at 435 Chapman Street in Chadron that became Ryan's Motel by 1960 and Ira Irby's Deluxe Auto Court in Rushville, which was remodeled to create a more motel-like appearance by enclosing the carports.

New motels also proliferated along U.S. Highway 20 following World War II. This era was the apex of America's "car culture," which flourished along all of Nebraska's highways until Interstate 80 began to siphon off much of the state's east-west traffic during the 1970s. The Grand Motel (DW03-128), Western Motel (DW03-129), Roundup Motel, Log Cabin Motel (DW03-131) and Dex's Motel (DW03-132) were all built along U.S. Highway 20 in Chadron before 1960, and four new motels opened in Valentine between 1946 and 1970: the Wooden Shoe Motor Court (CE14-147), Valentine Motor Court (CE14-175), Dunes Motel (CE14-179) and Raine Motel (CE14-172).¹²⁷ These motels, which were typically designed

¹¹⁹ "The Grant Highway."

¹²⁰ "Work on Highway 20 Progressing Rapidly."

¹²¹ "Tourist Park Attracts Many Transient Guests," *Valentine Democrat*, 6 September 1928.

¹²² Cherry County Historical Society, *A Sandhills Century*, (Valentine, NE: Cherry County Historical Society, 1985-1986), 258.

¹²³ Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, "Chadron, Neb., 1948," Sheets 1 and 7. Chadron City Directory, 1960, 24.

¹²⁴ Sioux County History Book Committee, *Sioux County History: First 100 Years, 1886-1986* (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corporation, 1986), 189-190.

¹²⁵ Newspaper advertisement, c. 1941. Provided by the property owner of the Nebraskaland Motel (SH08-039) during 2001 Nebraska Historic Highway Survey.

¹²⁶ Laurel Centennial Book Committee, *We Celebrate 100 Years, 1883-1993, Laurel, Nebraska* (Marceline, MO: Walsworth Pub. Co., 1992), 49.

¹²⁷ Chadron City Directory, 1960, 24; *A Sandhills Century*, 259.

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in a relatively generic Modern style, often turned to evocative names in an effort to entice travelers. Westerner, Roundup, Log Cabin and Dunes, which references the Sandhills, all evoke the American West, while Wooden Shoe Court suggests Old World domesticity. The Log Cabin Motel and Valentine Motor Court (now the Valentine Motel) took their roadside promotion a step farther, employing architectural gimmickry to attract attention. The Valentine Motel features a massive three-post sign with an iconic heart and banner signboard and an abundance of white “lace” wrought iron, which contrasts with the building’s red brick cladding. The brick veneer also sports “weeping” motor joints, adding to the motel’s romantic character. In Chadron, the associative architecture is even more literal at the Log Cabin Motel, which includes an authentic log cabin office building.

Another post-World War II motel along U.S. Highway 20 also attracts attention with its name and architecture: the Sage Motel and Village Barn Café in Harrison (SX04-014). Built in 1959, the name of this complex contains an eccentric array of regional connotations—the American West (sage), the Midwest (barn) and Europe (“Swiss” village)—while also featuring a significant example of Modern-era roadside architecture: an A-frame restaurant. With its severe geometry, the A-frame is both eye-catching and thoroughly modern, while also conjuring the Swiss Chalet, an iconic symbol of cozy relaxation between outdoor adventures. Its little wonder the A-frame form was selected by a number of mid-twentieth century chains, including Whataburger, International House of Pancakes (IHOP) and Village Inn Pizza Parlor, as well as independent restaurants like the Village Barn Café in Harrison.

Beginning in the 1930s, tourists along U.S. Highway 20 could also take a break from driving at a handful of roadside parks. The Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation developed the state’s first publically-funded roadside park near the newly-completed Bryan Bridge southeast of Valentine, noting in its 1933-1934 Annual Report that:

The area has been fenced and provided with benches, trails, a foot-bridge, and a well. Some cedar trees and many native shrubs have been planted in it, making the park a pleasant place for highway travelers to stop for an outdoor meal or for a fine view of the Niobrara River.¹²⁸

The park (CE00-250) remains today and provides an appropriate place from which to observe the Bryan Bridge, although the fence and foot-bridge are gone and the benches and picnic tables are modern. Another roadside park (RO00-078) along U.S. Highway 20 was developed privately. In 1938, Vic and Maude Thompson financed and built a two-acre roadside rest area called Spring Valley Park near their home in Newport. This early wayside park may have been the first created in the state using non-public funds. The Thompsons built the park after witnessing a fatal car accident near Bassett, which occurred due to the driver’s fatigue.¹²⁹ The park became a convenient stop for travelers, who used the shelter, picnic tables and outhouses to relax after being on the road.

U.S. Highway 20 Communities

The impact of U.S. Highway 20 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 tourists, traveling businessmen and/or truck drivers. Heavier traffic along national routes like U.S. Highway 20 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, U.S. Highway 20 provided industrial and agricultural producers with another connection to outside markets, while also giving local citizens a quicker route in or

¹²⁸ Bureau of Roads and Bridges, Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation, *Twentieth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Roads and Bridges 1933-1934* (Lincoln, NE.: Department of Roads and Irrigation, Bureau of Roads and Bridges, 1934), 41.

¹²⁹ Candy Moulton, *Roadside History of Nebraska* (Missoula, Mont.: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1997), 287; Betty Stevens, “Couple Saw Need For First Rest Stop,” *Lincoln Star*, 25 April 1988.

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out of town. Of course, the impact of U.S. Highway 20 also varied between communities. For example, the highway provided easier access to larger retail centers like Chadron, Valentine, O'Neill and South Sioux City, eventually drawing business away from smaller towns.

Community Planning and Development

Because of its relative size and regular coverage in city directories and fire insurance maps, Chadron, with a 2010 population of 5,851, provides an excellent example of the impact U.S. Highway 20 had on the physical development of communities along its route. Its downtown commercial district is also well documented in the National Register of Historic Places. With a long period of significance spanning from 1888 to 1956, the Chadron Commercial Historic District represents the evolution of transportation and commerce from the railroad era through the automobile age.

Like in countless other railroad towns, Chadron's Main Street was platted perpendicular to the tracks, in this case a main branch of the Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley Railroad (later the Chicago and NorthWestern Railroad), which arrived in 1885. One quarter-century later, Chadron's commercial district remained centered on Main Street, running south from the tracks to 3rd Street. Its widest point was along 2nd Street, where commercial development stretched three city blocks between the alley behind Chadron Street to the west and the alley behind Bordeaux Street to the east. There were five hotels, including the Hotel Blaine (DW03-012), between the tracks and 2nd Street, along with five boarding houses and three livery stables in the larger commercial district.¹³⁰ By 1918, the commercial district had grown another 1.5 blocks along 2nd Street, now stretching between Moorhead Street to the west and the alley behind King Street to the east. Only four of the businesses in Chadron's growing commercial district were auto-related: two garages at the northwest corner of King and W. 2nd Streets and 225-233 W. 2nd Street and two auto repairs shops at 235 W. 2nd Street and 158 Bordeaux Street.¹³¹

Ten years later, in 1928, the automobile and U.S. Highway 20, which followed 3rd Street, had clearly arrived in Chadron. An automobile row began to develop on the 200 and 300 blocks of W. 2nd Street, with four auto sales/service shops at 255-231, 246, 305 and 312 and an auto repair shop at 210. Smaller concentrations of auto-related businesses could also be found on the 200 block of E. 2nd Street, which included a vulcanizing shop at 224 (DW03-134), and the 200 block of Bordeaux Street, where there was a pair of auto sales/service shops at 220 and 226. Filling stations anchored the commercial district, with pairs of stations at the intersections of Main Street with 1st Street and 3rd Street / U.S. Highway 20. A fifth filling station was located at the northeast corner of Bordeaux and 3rd Streets. These three 3rd Street filling stations were the first outposts along what would become the U.S. Highway 20 commercial strip in Chadron.¹³²

Other auto-related businesses would eventually follow the filling stations to the commercial strip, but not until the 1950s. In 1948, for instance, the commercial district remained firmly planted between U.S. Highway 20 and the railroad tracks. Only service stations, "tourist cabins" and one transfer station had moved outside of the traditional commercial district. Four service stations now lined the highway at the 303 E. 3rd Street, the southwest corner of 3rd and Bordeaux Streets (DW03-130) and at the southern corners of the 3rd Street and Main Street intersection. Service stations were also built off the highway during this period, with new stations at the southwest corner of Bordeaux and E. 2nd Streets (DW03-013), the southeast corner of Main and 4th Streets and the southeast corner of Main and 6th Streets. The transfer station (DW03-135), a house attached to a large gable-roofed garage, was built at the southwest corner of the highway and Bordeaux Street. Cabin courts developed to the south of the highway between 4th and 5th Streets. By 1948, there were three cabin courts in Chadron at 431 Cedar Street, 435 Chaplin Street and 424 Maple Street.¹³³

¹³⁰ Sanborn Map Company, "Chadron, Dawes County, Nebraska, November 1909," Sheets 1-4.

¹³¹ Sanborn Map Company, "Chadron, Dawes County, Nebraska, October 1918," Sheets 3-4.

¹³² Sanborn Map Company, "Chadron, Dawes County, Nebraska, November 1928," Sheets 2-4 and 9.

¹³³ Sanborn Map Company, "Chadron, Dawes County, Nebraska, 1928-1948," Sheets 2-4, 7, 9-11 and 13.

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The 1950s saw fairly extensive commercial development along U.S. Highway 20 (3rd Street) between Maple and Beech Streets (a length of 15 city blocks). This early commercial strip was dominated by service stations, motels and restaurants. By 1960, nine service stations lined the highway, including Bob's Standard Service at 301 Main, Bordeaux Texaco (DW03-130) at 3rd and Bordeaux, Conoco Service at 3rd and Chadron, Dau Oil Co. at 232 E. 3rd Street, Guy's 66 Service at 3rd and King and Haskell's Mobil Service at 3rd and Maple. Only three service stations were in operation off the highway by this time. The Chuck Wagon Café, Colacino Supper Club, Frontier Drive Inn, Helen's Steak House, Saults Luncheonette and the Sioux Skillet, all located along the commercial strip by 1960, provided highway travelers and Chadron residents with a wide range of eating options. Rounding out the early commercial strip were five new motels: Grand Motel (DW03-128), Westerner Motel (DW03-129), Log Cabin Motel (DW03-131), Dex's Motel (DW03-132) and Roundup Motel.¹³⁴ At this point, few other businesses were located along U.S. Highway 20 and auto dealerships and garages remained firmly planted in the commercial district, especially along W. 2nd Street. Commercial development, however, has continued along the highway through the present, with commercial pockets also emerging at the eastern and western edges of town. The commercial strip in Chadron is now home to a typical array of auto dealerships, fast food chains, small "strip malls," convenience stores, motels, banks, various local businesses and Walmart.

Commercial strips also developed along U.S. Highway 20 in Valentine and South Sioux City. In Valentine, the highway enters the eastern edge of town from the south and then follows C Street, which runs approximately three blocks south of the Chicago and NorthWestern Railroad tracks and the commercial district. Valentine's commercial strip began much as the Chadron commercial strip did, with a small group of filling stations built along the highway in the late 1920s and early 1930s. A Studebaker-Buick Dealership (probably CE14-155), Ford Dealership, the Wooden Shoe Auto Court (CE14-174) and the Highway Market followed in the 1940s, and the next two decades saw a flood of development along the highway. Auto-related businesses established in Valentine's commercial strip during the 1950s and 1960s included the Valentine Motor Court (CE14-175), Pierce Raubach's Dodge Garage, Thomas Auto Parts, Monroe Motors, the Dunes Motel (CE14-179) and the Raine Motel (CE14-172).¹³⁵ In South Sioux City, Highway 20 was routed along Dakota Avenue, the town's original north-south main street. Already a strip-like commercial district before the designation of U.S. Highway 20 in 1926, the highway's route cemented South Sioux City's status as a "long town."¹³⁶ Development continued along the highway until South Sioux City's commercial strip stretched nearly 25 blocks from the Missouri River to 29th Street, where the highway finally turned east. In about 1980, U.S. Highway 20 and U.S. Highway 77 were rerouted to bypass South Sioux City to the east and new commercial development has followed the highways.

U.S. Highway 20 had a significant impact on the physical development of smaller towns along its route as well. In Harrison and Hay Springs clusters of auto-related businesses developed separate from the traditional commercial district due to the route of the highway. In Hay Springs, U.S. Highway 20 runs south of the Chicago and NorthWestern Railroad tracks, while the commercial district developed north of tracks. As a result auto-related businesses, including a service station (SH06-025), a service station / café (SH06-026) and the Hay Springs Motel (SH06-027), were built near the intersection of the highway and S. Main Street. In Harrison, U.S. Highway 20 was routed along 5th Street, which runs a few blocks north of the Main Street commercial district found between 1st and 2nd Streets. Just like in Hay Springs, auto-related businesses clustered around the highway's intersection with Main Street (SX04-013), but also stretched along the highway to the east (including SX04-014, SX04-015 and SX00-035). The rerouting of U.S. Highway 20 also impacted communities, as can be seen in Newport. The highway was originally routed along the small town's east-west main street, where three filling stations and a garage were established. In 1938, however, the highway was rerouted approximately one-half mile south of town and development followed the highway.¹³⁷ Filling stations were built along the new alignment where it intersects with Cedar Street and Nebraska Highway 137. Finally, in towns completely bypassed by major realignments, including

¹³⁴ Chadron City Directory, 1960. Pages 17-18 and 24-27.

¹³⁵ *A Sandhills Century*, 258-259.

¹³⁶ WPA Guide, 306.

¹³⁷ Rock County Centennial Book Committee, *Rock County Centennial History, 1888-1988* (Marceline, MO: Walsworth Pub. Co., 1987), 37 and 50-51.

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Springview in 1932 and Whitney in 1954, the loss of a major federal highway likely had a detrimental effect on the development and/or survival of auto-related commerce.

U.S. Highway 20 and the Local Economy

The various businesses supported by U.S. Highway 20 did more than shape the cultural landscape; they also provided jobs. A look at three U.S. Highway 20 communities in the 1930 Federal Census, for instance, reveals a relatively diversified auto-related and travel industry (See Table 1 below). Highway-related work employed fifteen individuals in the small towns of Belden (Cedar County) and Royal (Antelope County), which both had populations of between 200 and 250 at the time. In Royal, where five individuals held highway-related jobs, all but one ran their own business, including a service station, a hotel and two garages. The fifth worker was employed as an attendant at the service station. Almost 50 miles to the east along U.S. Highway 20 in Belden, Christian Kools, a Danish immigrant, ran a garage that employed Elmer Christopherson, another Danish immigrant, as a mechanic, 29-year-old Marvin Rice as a laborer and Imogene Rosettier, a 33-year-old single woman who lived with her father, as a bookkeeper. Belden was also home to a filling station salesman, an oil salesman, three highway graders and a highway laborer in 1930.

The town of Harrison (1930 pop. 480), located at the western end of U.S. Highway 20 in Nebraska, was home to thirty-seven highway-related workers in 1930. Harrison's only hotel at that time offers a glimpse into the demographics of this group. The hotel, valued at \$7,000, was owned by Alex Lowery, a 78-year-old widower, and managed by his divorced daughter, Della Fleming (age 49), who lived there with her 16-year-old daughter. One of the hotel's lodgers, Frank Lacy (age 32), ran a garage and another, Peter Hamilton (age 30), was a truck driver. Both men were single. 19-year old Alice Martin also lived at the hotel, working there as a servant. Other highway-related workers of demographic note were filling station proprietor Ferdinand Federle, who emigrated from Austria in 1903 and spoke German as his first language, and Ray Johns, a 41-year-old truck driver from Oklahoma, who was of Cherokee heritage. Of course, many of Harrison's highway-related jobs were also filled by more "typical" segments of Nebraska's population, including 45-year old garage proprietor, Edwin Meier, who lived with his wife and three children in their own house.

The economic significance of U.S. Highway 20 is also well documented in local histories. For example, the highway is described as one of the Plainview's, "most important assets," in that town's centennial history, because, "as the highway improved, more tourists and trucks used this coast-to-coast highway...[and] filling stations and cafes were built along the route." A few of the Plainview businesses that benefited from U.S. Highway 20 were Mary's Café and Duinen Service Station, Stienkraus Oil Company, Saathoff Chevrolet Company, the Home Oil Company, Johnny's Cafe, and the William Timmerman Garage. Opened in 1938 by Mary Duinen, Mary's Café and Duinen Service Station was particularly dependent on highway traffic, which was steady enough for the business to stay open 24 hours a day for several years. Saathoff Chevrolet Company, established in 1928, became a major employer in Plainview, with twenty-two employees by World War II. One of those employees was business manager, Bernice Millnitz, who was hired in 1931, "to deter the foul language used by some of the men," but ended up staying on for 47 years.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Plainview Centennial History Book Committee, *Plainview Centennial History Book, 1886-1986* (Norfolk, NE: Norfolk Printing Co., 1986), 29, 39-40, 42-43 and 110.

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Table 1. Highway-Related Jobs in Select U.S. Highway 20 Communities, 1930¹³⁹

	Royal	Belden	Harrison	Total
1930 Population	217	248	480	945
Garage, Proprietor	2	-	5	7
Garage, Mechanic	-	1	3	4
Garage, Bookkeeper	-	1	-	1
Garage, Laborer	-	1	-	1
Food, Proprietor	1	-	1	2
Lodging, Proprietor / Manager	-	-	3	3
Lodging, Cook	-	-	3	3
Lodging, Waitress	-	-	1	1
Lodging, Servant	-	-	1	1
Filling Station, Proprietor	1	-	2	3
Filling Station, Attendant / Salesman	1	1	2	3
Oil Company, Agent / Salesman	-	1	1	2
Auto Salesman	-	-	1	1
Truck Driver	-	-	8	8
Highway Patrol	-	-	5	5
Road Construction, Grading	-	3	1	4
Road Construction, Laborer	-	1	-	1
Total	5	10	36	51

Of course, U.S. Highway 20 also created jobs more directly through road construction and maintenance projects. Even before it became a federal highway in 1926, work along the route was providing good paying jobs. For example, in 1920 Asa E. Redmond, a student at the University of Nebraska just two year earlier, made \$150.00 per month as an engineer during a grading project between Long Pine and Ainsworth. Fred Parkhurst and M.C. Cash pulled monthly wages of \$80.00 and \$90.00, respectively, as rodmen on the same project. Highway projects also provided opportunities for Nebraska contractors. On the same project, the Western Bridge and Construction Co. of Omaha had an October grading estimate of \$3,147.63.¹⁴⁰ Ten years later in Belden, highway work employed four individuals: three graders and a laborer. These men were not part of a work gang moving through town, but were well-established community members. Graders Marion May and Frederick Riedler owned their own homes, and laborer James Landreth lived with his widowed father (See Table 1 above).

The construction and maintenance of U.S. Highway 20 also created much-needed work during the Great Depression as evidenced by a 1935 story in the *Laurel Advocate* outlining a New Deal-era highway project. "County men on relief are being given preference for the different jobs, the contractors filling in when they cannot find suitable men" the article explained, continuing, "This project will mean much to the community during the coming summer and we are hoping every idle man in the country will soon be at work on his own."¹⁴¹ Local residents also stood to benefit from highway construction by providing materials and equipment. In Rock County, the Strelow family was able to supplement their farm income by providing clay and several horse teams during the initial construction of U.S. Highway 20 between Bassett and Newport.¹⁴² More broadly, the various incarnations of Nebraska's Highway Department also created jobs, some of which

¹³⁹ United States Census Bureau. 1930 Federal Census, "District 26, Royal Village, Antelope County, Nebraska;" "District 27, Belden Village, Cedar County, Nebraska;" 1930 United States Census. "District 3, Harrison Village, Sioux County, Nebraska."

¹⁴⁰ Nebraska Department of Public Works. "Monthly Report," January 1921, 11; February 1921, 37. Project 125 was a 7.76 mile earth and sand clay road grading project.

¹⁴¹ Terry Turner, "Highway 20," *Living Here*, Fall 2008, 9.

¹⁴² *Those Who Came Before Us: A History of Rock County* (Bassett, NE: s.n., 1976), 66-67.

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were along U.S. Highway 20. 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, “(t)wenty-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.”¹⁴³

More symbolic evidence of U.S. Highway 20’s significance is found in the 1960 Chadron City Directory and *Tales of Brown County, Nebraska*, published in 1997. The Brown County history features a map of Ainsworth’s Main Street businesses flanked by two representative emblems: the horned head of a “Sandhill Beef” and the shield of “Nebraska U.S. 20 – Coast-to-Coast.”¹⁴⁴ In the 1960 Chadron City Directory, a map of Nebraska calls out Chadron’s location and provides a list of its charms, including: “60 Miles from the picturesque Black Hills...Heart of the beautiful Pine Ridge Country...Home of Fine Herefords...Site of the delightful Chadron State Park...Home of Nebraska State Teachers College...C&NW Division Point,” and, finally, “The Friendliest Spot of Highway 20.”¹⁴⁵ Such symbolic references indicate just how closely U.S. Highway 20 is linked to the economies, and even the identities, of communities along its route.

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 eastern states and Europe where better roads were already in place.¹⁴⁶ In addition to its other functions, U.S. Highway 20 would also contribute heavily to the “farm-to-market” network of highways envisioned by the *Omaha Bee*. By 1930, U.S. Highway 20 was already a well-established trucking route, with “trucker driver” becoming a common profession at either end of the highway in Nebraska. As previously mentioned, there were seven truck drivers living in Harrison (pop. 480) during the 1930 federal census, and South Sioux City’s 1st Ward (pop. 1,832, city 3,927) was home to twenty-seven truck drivers.¹⁴⁷ The heavy truck traffic, most of which carried cattle and hay to markets in Sioux City and Omaha, wore heavily on the early graveled alignment of U.S. Highway 20, leading to the development of a more durable oil-sand surface on the roadbed in Holt County during the 1930s.¹⁴⁸ The growing number of trucks along U.S. Highway 20 was reflected in statewide statistics, with truck traffic climbing steadily through the Great Depression, even as passenger vehicle use fell by 16% in 1936 alone.¹⁴⁹ By 1942, the Departments of Roads and Irrigation described U.S. Highway 20 as a “farm-to-market and tourist route across northern Nebraska,” with traffic peaks of over 1,800 vehicles near South Sioux City and 950 vehicles near Chadron in August of 1940 and 1941, respectively.¹⁵⁰ Completed through Nebraska in 1974, Interstate 80 diverted some truck traffic away from U.S. Highway 20, but the route continues to be a vital transportation link for northern Nebraska’s farmers and ranchers.

U.S. Highway 20 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 business, a phenomenon that is well summarized in Chadron’s centennial history:

The automobile...also caused a shake-up in our economy, improving Chadron’s and hurting other towns. People could travel farther and quicker. In horse days, if there wasn’t a town eight or ten miles away, you were pretty isolated. By the early 1920’s, nearly everyone had a car, which meant new types of parts to

¹⁴³ 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.

¹⁴⁴ Brown County Historical Society, *Tales of Brown County: History of Brown County and its Families* (Ainsworth, NE: Brown County Historic Society, 1997), inset.

¹⁴⁵ Chadron City Directory, 1960, 15.

¹⁴⁶ “Nebraska in Need of Highways for Rural Districts; Road Figures,” *The Omaha Sunday Bee*, 4 September 1910, 4.

¹⁴⁷ United State Census Bureau, 1930 Federal Census. “Harrison” and “District 13, South Sioux City, Ward 1, Dakota County, Nebraska.”

¹⁴⁸ Nellie Snyder Yost, (Holt County Historical Society). *Before Today: The History of Holt County* (O’Neill, NE: Miles Pub. Co., 1976), 26.

¹⁴⁹ Adams Co. History, 897; Twenty-fourth Biannual Report Department of Roads & Irrigation to the Governor of Nebraska, 1941-1942. Volume 1, 39-40. Passenger vehicle statistics for 1936, trucking grew by 5% that year. Peak traffic at South Sioux City (Location A-7) occurred in 1940 and at Chadron (Location A-8) in 1941.

¹⁵⁰ Twenty-fourth Biannual Report Department of Roads & Irrigation to the Governor of Nebraska, 1941-1942. Volume 1.

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be sold, men to fix autos, gas stations and the demise of our little outlying communities like Wayside, Antelope and Bordeaux.¹⁵¹

This pattern was most likely repeated all along the route as small town and rural families eventually drove to regional centers like Chadron, Valentine, O'Neill, Plainview, Laurel and Sioux City for shopping trips, rather than patronizing their nearest retail shops. Tourists also began to bypass smaller towns, as better roads and automobiles allowed them to drive faster and further. On a larger scale, completion of Interstate 80 to the south also contributed to a downturn in local economies along U.S. Highway 20, at least for auto-related businesses. "After the Interstate highways were built," explains Plainview's centennial history, "much of the tourist and coast-to-coast trade was diverted," leading to the closure or decline in patronage of service stations, cafés, motels and other travel-orientated businesses.¹⁵²

Conclusion

U.S. Highway 20 was completed in 1941 and characterized as "the last transcontinental."¹⁵³ Although the highway was finished immediately before the United States entered World War II, and saw only nominal use during the war, U.S. Highway 20 thrived in the post-war years. Indeed, the Nebraska portion of the roadway did much to accommodate the national traveler of the 1940s and 1950s, both in terms of destinations offered along the route, as well as in the services provided by its adjacent businesses. However, by the late 1950s travel along the highway began to decline and the original Highway 20 Association disbanded in the 1960s. Despite the decrease in usage, the highway still remains and can perhaps thrive once again. The 1999 designation of U.S. Highway 20 from Valentine to the Wyoming state line as the "Bridges to Buttes Byway," was a first step in revitalizing the highway as a tourist route. Two years later, a renewed Nebraska Highway 20 Association produced, "Nebraska's 2001 Highway to Adventure," a publication describing towns and resources along the route. The publication acknowledges the road's historic significance, while also recognizing that the Nebraska portion of U.S. Highway 20 can still play a vital transportation role today and in the future.

¹⁵¹ Chadron Centennial Committee, *Chadron Centennial History, 1885-1985* (Chadron, NE: Chadron Centennial Committee, 1996), 96.

¹⁵² *Plainview Centennial History Book*, 110.

¹⁵³ Norris, 91.

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F. Associated Property Types

In order to qualify for listing under this Multiple Property Document (MPD), resources must have a documented association with U.S. Highway 20 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 one identified related property types meeting one or more of the National Register criteria. U.S. Highway 20 resources must retain sufficient integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association to convey their historical significance.

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 U.S. Highway 20. Related property types will qualify for the National Register under Criterion A for historical association(s) with transportation, commerce, travel patterns and development along U.S. Highway 20 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 U.S. Highway 20 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 U.S. Highway 20 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.

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

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alignment of U.S. Highway 20 will qualify for listing under Criterion D if it can yield information about early road engineering and construction methods when historical documentation is 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 U.S. Highway 20 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 U.S. Highway 20 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 U.S. Highway 20 from its official federal designation in 1926 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 1926, including those originally associated with the Blue Pole and Grant Highways, can still be eligible if they became associated with U.S. Highway 20 during its period of significance.¹⁵⁴ 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 U.S. Highway 20 changed or evolved due to many factors, including roadway improvements and marketing techniques. In these cases, alterations may not diminish integrity and

¹⁵⁴ Resources associated exclusively with the Blue Pole or Grant Highway may well be eligible for the National Register, but would not be eligible under the specifications of this MPD. Resources predating 1926 that became associated with U.S. Highway 20 may be eligible under this MPD, however, full historical contexts would need to be developed for any areas and/or periods of significance that proceed federal designation.

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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 U.S. Highway 20 can be evaluated at the local, statewide or national levels of significance. U.S. Highway 20 is a transcontinental route that passes through 11 other states. 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 U.S. Highway 20, 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 U.S. Highway 20. 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 U.S. Highway 20 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

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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."¹⁵⁵

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.

¹⁵⁵ 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.

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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 U.S. Highway 20 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 U.S. Highway 20 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 liveryies, 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

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filling stations are no longer extant, and none were identified along U.S. Highway 20 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 design-based subtype, such as the "house" and "house with canopy," and/or an architectural style. The period of significance largely dates to the 1920s. 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.

Excellent examples of early filling stations can be found in Orchard, Ainsworth, Rushville and Bassett. The filling station in Orchard (AP06-019) is a house type station designed in the Tudor Revival style with a steeply pitched gable roof with flared eaves and a cross-gable entrance bay. Its entrance is orientated toward the corner of 2nd Street (U.S. Highway 20) and Wisdom Street and a detached concrete block service bay runs along Wisdom Street. In Ainsworth, a small side gable filling station covered in stucco (BW08-013) features historic gas pumps and lighting on its service island. This is the closest to a shed type filling station identified along the route; however, it still falls within the domestic type category with its gable roof. Perhaps the most elaborate early filling station found along U.S. Highway 20, is the small Mission Revival style station in Bassett (RO01-039). With its curvilinear entrance parapet and corner pilasters, brick detailing and tile-covered pent roofs, the small stucco-covered building is an excellent example of the style applied to the gas station form. Like the station in Orchard, it has detached service bays. The filling station in Rushville (SH08-013) is the only early example along U.S. Highway 20 to include a canopy, which is created through an extension of its hipped roof. One unusual example of an early filling station is found in Cody (CE03-008). This two-story building is orientated toward the street corner and has a porte-cochère with living space above and behind the filling station.

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 U.S. Highway 20 route, they are increasingly vulnerable. At least five historic service stations have been lost since the 2001-2002 Nebraska Historic Highway Survey, while others have been altered so significantly they are no longer potentially eligible for listing in the National Register. Even so, they 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.

Excellent examples of historic service stations abound along U.S. Highway 20. Early examples can be found in Ainsworth, Cody, Randolph, Atkinson and Stuart. The brick station in Ainsworth (BW01-175) is a wonderful example of the house with bay type designed in the Tudor Revival style. Its office is situated under the eave, with the single service bay located

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in a projecting cross gable. The service stations in Randolph (CD12-079), Atkinson (HT02-091) and Stuart (HT19-029) all have a similar design that features a hipped-roofed office and canopy orientated toward a street intersection and flat-roofed service bays offset to one side. The service station in Stuart is clad in brick, while the stations in Atkinson and Randolph are covered with stucco. Cody's early service station (HT03-037) consists of a long hipped-roofed office with a Mission Revival style curvilinear parapet at the centered entrance and similarly adorned service bay to the side. An early concrete block service station in Rushville (SH08-042) has an atypical design for the period that foreshadows the oblong box. This long building has a single service bay, pedestrian entrance and windows on its shorter façade, which faces the highway. The oblong box (see below) would flip this orientation, which was more typical of garages found in commercial districts, and put its longer elevation with its multiple service bays along the street.

Streamline Moderne service stations dating from the 1930s and 1940s can also be found along U.S. Highway 20, although arguably the finest example—a combination station and café in Laurel (CD08-049)—has been lost since the 2001-2002 Nebraska Historic Highway Survey. Remaining service stations dating from this era in Jackson, Hay Springs and Rushville, however, are all worthy examples of the style as applied to roadside architecture. In Jackson, the streamlined, stucco-covered service station (DK04-014) features a projecting office bay with an original round art deco clock above the door, two service bays with wood panel overhead garage doors and banding near the roofline. The Moderne style stations in Hay Springs (SH06-026) and Rushville (SH08-037) also likely included cafés. The Hay Springs station is a large, two-story, stucco-covered building with a curved corner entrance flanked by glass block paneling facing the intersection of U.S. Highway 20 and Main Street. Two service bays are situated along the highway elevation and there is a small flat-roofed, brick-clad addition with a centered entrance flanked by plate glass, all capped by a glass block transom, along Main Street. In Rushville, the Moderne service station and café is a one-story building with a tall parapet featuring curved steps that descend toward the café's curved corner entrance. A relatively tall service bay, which may have accommodated trucks, is located at the back of the property. A second Moderne style service station can also be found in Rushville, but it is associated with the Nebraskaland Motel (SH08-039, see below).

Examples of the oblong box type service station are also found along U.S. Highway 20. Two of the best oblong box type stations are found in Ainsworth (BW01-185) and O'Neill (HT13-146), both of which are also notable for their porcelain-enameled paneling. The stations are extremely similar in their design and site, and were possibly built by the same company. Both are set near the back corner of their lots, and feature a glass corner office with bathrooms at the back, two service bays and Moderne type banding near the roofline. The porcelain enamel station in Ainsworth has a small corner entrance elevation and two bathrooms, while the O'Neill station, which has better overall integrity, has its office entrance situated near the service bays and a single bathroom. Other oblong box type service stations include a brick station with two service bays in Randolph (CD12-078) and a concrete block station with two service bays in Merriman (CE10-037). A service station in Harrison (SX04-018) offers a variation on the oblong box with a slightly projecting office bay and a single service bay with a diagonal orientation at the other end. Finally, there is the former Wagon's Ho service station (SX00-035) located on the western edge of Harrison. This station consists of a large Quonset type building with a service bay in its west end and a smaller, stucco-covered Quonset office building to the west with a simple flat parapet. The interesting form indicates the station's other function as a tourist site (see below), as does the frame addition to the west of the service Quonset.

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 U.S. Highway 20 due to their recent date.

Intersections of U.S. Highway 20 with other significant national, state or local routes often attracted more than one gas station. For example there are two service stations (CE10-036 and CE10-037) in Merriman near the highway's

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intersection with Nebraska Highway 61. 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).

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.¹⁵⁶

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.

¹⁵⁶ 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.

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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 U.S. Highway 20 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 1926 designation of U.S. Highway 20 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" below).

Automobile dealerships and garages dating from the period of significance are well represented along U.S. Highway 20. Representative examples of garages can be found in Crookston, Valentine, Chadron and Rushville, as well as along the highway's pre-1930s northern alignment in Springview. CE04-019, a stucco-covered garage in Crookston, has a gable roof with a "false front" style stepped parapet that features decorative paneling. It has a centered garage entrance flanked by pedestrian entrances with side widows and transoms. In Valentine, CE11-003 has a rainbow arch roof hidden by a stepped "false front" parapet. Garages in Chadron (DW03-1934) and Rushville (SH08-036) have similar stepped parapets hiding a gable-roofed building and Quonset type building, respectively. In Springview, two early garages are now connected with brick infill. One of them (KP09-048), which also functioned as an auto dealership, is a concrete block garage with a stepped parapet over its central drive, while its companion (KP09-049) has a similar design but is clad in brick. Perhaps the most interesting garage associated with U.S. Highway 20 is found in an elaborately-designed brick commercial block along Cody's main street (Nebraska Street). This building (CE03-029) was constructed in about 1919 to house the Bank of Cody on one side and a commercial garage on the other. The bank has a tall entrance framed by cast stone Doric columns and a heavy entablature, while the garage entrance is flanked by brick pilasters and capped by a cast stone panel engraved with "GARAGE."

Buildings designed specifically as automobile dealerships along U.S. Highway 20 are typically larger and more elaborate than the garages described above. A two-story automobile dealership in Atkinson (HT02-081) is an excellent example. It features a porte-cochère at the intersection of Williams and State Streets and is clad in glazed terra cotta sheathing with terra cotta ornamentation on the stepped portions of its parapet. There is a large plate glass display window on its State Street façade and a service bay at the back of its secondary Williams Street façade. A pair of similar stucco-covered auto dealerships can be found in O'Neill. One (HT13-144) has a flat roof with a stepped parapet, large display windows flanking its central showroom entrance and a service bay at the back of the building, while the other (HT13-145) also has a flat roof with a stepped parapet. Its central bay, however, is filled with multi-light wood doors, which may also provide vehicular access, with the showroom entrance offset to the side with a display window. A second large display window wraps around the other corner of the building. Multiple service bays are located at the rear of the building and there is a detached service bay immediately to the west along Douglas Street (U.S. Highway 20). In Rushville, a brick auto dealership (SH08-038) features a taller flat-roofed showroom section with large plate glass display widows and an entrance under a lightly corbelled cornice. A gable-roofed service section is attached to the back of the showroom.

Examples of later automobile dealerships are found in Valentine (CE14-155) and Ainsworth (BW01-118). The dealership in Valentine likely dates from the late 1940s. It is a long brick building with a cream and black glazed tile façade that features multiple entrances (both pedestrian and vehicular) and windows. Dating from the 1950s, the Modern style

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dealership in Ainsworth has a curtain wall showroom at one corner, a flat overhanging roof that creates a canopy over the showroom entrance and a built in vertical sign that visually breaks the building's horizontal plane.

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 U.S. Highway 20. Criterion A would apply to the automobile row's association with travel on U.S. Highway 20. 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 U.S. Highway 20. This is likely because fewer auto-related businesses set up shop in smaller towns, and because of the relatively late date of the highway's designation and completion. That said, concentrations of auto-related businesses did develop adjacent to commercial districts in communities along U.S. Highway 20. A 1928 fire insurance map, for instance, depicts multiple automobile dealerships and garages on either side of Chadron's Main Street commercial district along 2nd Street, while three filling stations signaled the beginning of a commercial strip along 3rd Street / U.S. Highway 20. In Crawford, the 1937 fire insurance map shows a tire shop and an auto dealership flanked by corner filling stations on the west side of 2nd Street's 300 Block, immediately south of the commercial district. Other concentrations are indicated by extant buildings recorded during the 2001-2002 Nebraska Historic Highway Survey, such as an auto dealership (HT02-091) and service station (HT02-091) on the eastern edge of Atkinson's commercial district at the intersection of Williams and State Streets.

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 U.S. Highway 20. 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

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example of commercial strip development. A commercial strip district will display distinctive architectural styles representing period marketing trends.

A commercial strip developed along U.S. Highway 20 in Chadron. Starting with gas stations in the 1920s, new auto-related businesses began to locate along 3rd Street / U.S. Highway 20. By 1960, there were nine service stations along the highway, six restaurants and five motels (See "Community Planning and Development" in Section E). Valentine also had a fairly developed commercial strip. In addition to many service stations, two auto dealerships opened along the highway in the late 1940s and the Valentine Motel (CE14-175), two more dealerships, an auto parts store, the Dunes Motel (CE14-179) and the Raine Motel (CE14-172) followed in the 1950s and 1960s. Commercial strips also appeared in smaller communities. In Rushville, for instance, a number of auto-related businesses opened along the highway including at least two service stations, a service station and café, an automobile dealership, two motels and a motel with a service station. All of these are still extant, except for one of the motels (SH08-040). Small commercial strips are also found in Hay Springs and Harrison. The former includes a service station (SH06-025), service station / café (SH06-026) and the Hay Springs Motel (SH06-027) clustered at the intersection of U.S. Highway 20 and Main Street. In Harrison, there is a nice group of three service stations along the north side of the highway between Main and Anne Streets (including SX04-013, SX04-014).

Historic properties along commercial strips are rarely found in any concentration making the creation of a district 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.

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 U.S. Highway 20. Most numerous in commercial districts were gas stations, garages and automobile dealerships. Brick pavement was often built in towns to improve their commercial areas in the 1910s and 1920s.

Six commercial districts on U.S. Highway 20 mark the intersection of major regional or national roads: Crawford (Nebraska 2 / Potash Highway), Chadron (U.S. 385), Valentine (U.S. 83), Bassett (U.S. 183), O'Neill (U.S. 281) and South Sioux City (U.S. 75/77 / George Washington National Highway).

In the 1930s, highway development included the bypassing of smaller communities once linked by the highway. A major realignment in 1932 moved U.S. Highway 20 south of the Niobrara River between Ainsworth and Valentine, bypassing the Keya Paha County communities of Springview, Norden and Sparks. Other early realignments that bypassed communities include: east of Laurel, where the highway bypassing Dixon and Allen to the north; between Cody and Merriman, bypassing Eli to south; between Orchard and O'Neill, bypassing Page to the south; and at Newport, where the highway was rerouted south of town. A later major realignment (c. 1954) between Chadron and Crawford in Dawes County, bypassed Whitney to the south. In the late 1970s, U.S. Highways 20 and 77 were rerouted along I-129 in South Sioux City, bypassing the commercial district. The original alignment, which followed Dakota Avenue (South Sioux City's Main Street) to W. 29th before turning southeast, was designated "City U.S. 20" at that time.

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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 U.S. Highway 20. 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 U.S. Highway 20. 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 U.S. Highway 20, 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 U.S. Highway 20. 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.

The Chadron Commercial Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2007. With a period of significance from 1888-1956, it features several automobile-related buildings. These are concentrated on the 200 and 300 blocks of W. 2nd Street, indicating the development of an automobile row immediately west of the traditional commercial district. Chief among these are two automobile sales and service shops at 225-231 W. 2nd Street (DW03-124) and 306 W. 2nd Street (DW03-753). Built approximately seven years apart in c. 1915 and c. 1923, respectively, these buildings reflect the evolution of auto-related buildings from a traditional commercial vernacular design to a more specified form. The earlier building (DW03-124) has two stories, with the first story containing garage and pedestrian entrances and several display windows, and the second story consisting of evenly-spaced windows under a decorative brick panel and corbelled brick cornice. With its stepped parapet and central drive flanked by large plate glass windows, the one-story, c. 1923 building, on the other hand, reflects the development of a specific and recognizable form taken on by automobile-related buildings (especially garages) as they proliferated in and adjacent to commercial districts. Other buildings within the district that once held automobile-related businesses, but were not necessarily designed for that function, are located at 301 W. 2nd Street (DW03-034), 218 W. 2nd (DW03-120) and 217 W. 2nd (DW03-125). Also of note are the Hotel Chadron (DW03-023) and the Blaine Hotel (DW03-012), which are located at the northern end of the historic district near the

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Chicago & NorthWestern Railroad Depot. While these hotels were originally built in the early 1890s to serve rail travelers, they were most certainly used by motorists as well.¹⁵⁷

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.¹⁵⁸

Significance

Campgrounds and tourist parks are potentially eligible for the National Register under this MPD because they were developed exclusively to serve travelers along U.S. Highway 20. 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. A tourist park was developed at the City Park in Valentine (See "Where to Stop and Stay" in Section E).

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 U.S. Highway 20.

¹⁵⁷ Heritage Research, Ltd., "Chadron Commercial Historic District, National Register of Historic Places Nomination," 2007.

¹⁵⁸ Leibs, 169-172.

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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 U.S. Highway 20, providing amenities to the highway traveler. City parks were often noted in tourist guides. For instance the Valentine City Park, Crawford City Park (DW04-279) and the Izaak Walton League Park near Johnstown were all included in the 1939 WPA Guide to Nebraska. 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.

Four wayside areas have been identified along U.S. Highway 20. In Orchard a small park / rest area (AP06-047) was developed on the western edge of town near the intersection of the highway with the Chicago & NorthWestern Railroad tracks. It features mature trees, a curved drive off the highway, RV hookups, a picnic shelter and a playground. The Crawford City Park (DW04-279) was donated to the city by Fort Robinson in 1906 and further developed by the WPA in 1936. Located along the White River, the park is heavily wooded with curvilinear drives and a stone entrance gate built by the WPA that honors Nebraska Congressman Moses P. Kinkaid. Rest areas were also developed along the highway at the Bryan Bridge near Valentine (CE00-250) and at Newport (RO00-078). The rest stop near Valentine dates from 1933-1934 and was one of the first to be developed by the Nebraska Department of Roads. As such it may possess statewide significance. The Spring Valley Park near Newport was developed privately in 1938 as a rest stop for travelers in response to an early traffic accident. (See "Where to Stop and Stay" in Section E for further discussion).

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

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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.¹⁵⁹

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 U.S. Highway 20 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 hotels will date from before the late 1800s to the early 20th century. To date, no boarding houses associated with the D-L-D highway have been documented.

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 hotels that likely catered to highway travelers were the Blaine Hotel in Chadron (DW03-012), Hotel Pfister in Rushville (SH08-007), Golden Hotel in O’Neill (HT13-003, listed NRHP) and the Miller Hotel in Long Pine (BW04-001, listed NRHP). The Streamline Moderne Bassett Lodge and Range Café (RO01-041, listed

¹⁵⁹ 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.

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NRHP) was constructed in 1949-1951 for cattle buyers patronizing the popular Bassett Livestock Auction, but it also served other highway travelers and tourists.

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.

There are very few cabin camps still standing along U.S. Highway 20. There is one cabin camp in Plainview (PC06-033) with six cabins arranged in a court with houses at one street corner and at the rear of the property. A historic two-post neon sign with "CABINS" on the main signboard and a separate vacancy signboard is located along the highway. Due its status as a vacation destination, Long Pine is also home to two "resorts" that include multiple cabins. The Pines (BW04-079) includes approximately ten cabins in a wooded area immediately northwest of Long Pine, while Hidden Paradise (BW00-061) consists of numerous cabins built along Long Pine Creek to the southwest of town.

Motels will qualify for listing on the National Register under Criterion A for providing lodging along U.S. Highway 20. 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 were relatively common along the historic U.S. Highway 20 route; however, they too are becoming increasingly vulnerable due to completion from modern chains and a lack of demand in smaller towns. At least four motels along the highway have been lost since the 2001-2002 Nebraska Historic Highway Survey, while others were altered to appear more modern. Perhaps the most significant losses include the demolition of the Corey/Ballard Motel in Valentine (CE14-062) and the Wheel Inn in Atkinson (HT02-092) and significant alterations to the Remington Arms Motel in Ainsworth (BW01-186), which have rendered it ineligible for listing in the National Register. Even so, motels must still 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. Motel facilities may be vacant or may have a secondary use, but they remain eligible for the National Register if they retain sufficient physical integrity 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.

Excellent examples of early motor courts and motels dating from the 1920s through the 1930s along U.S. Highway 20 include the Skinner Motor Court in Ainsworth (BW01-081) and a motel in Valentine (CE14-059). Skinner Motor Court features a U-shaped plan with connected rooms under a gable roof. A cross-gable office building and an early ceramic

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block service station are located in the center of the court. The early motel in Valentine has four connected cottages with gable roofs and canopies, a house / office and an additional detached cabin behind the main building. Originally built in 1941, the Nebraskaland Motel in Rushville (SH08-039) has been significantly altered but still exhibits a distinctive character. The original portion of the L-shaped motel has a low hipped-roofed office on one end, with guest rooms located under a taller, flat-roofed section. There is a newer gable-roofed section with four additional rooms on the east end. A canopy supported by wrought iron posts with an attached lantern protects the room entrances. The Nebraskaland Motel also retains its original Streamline Modern service station, a stucco building with curved corners. The ceramic block Remington Arms Motel in Ainsworth (BW01-0186) also continues to feature curved corners and glass block in its design, despite being recently altered almost beyond recognition with a new roof and canopy, the infill and/or replacement of several windows and doors and the removal of its sign.

Motels dating from the post-World War II era are much more numerous. A handful of these motels reflect the eye-catching character of roadside architecture, while several other are relatively generic in their materials and design. The Log Cabin Motel in Chadron (DW03-131) has an actual gable-roofed log cabin at one end, with rooms located in a long L-shaped building with a flat roof at the other end. A canopy supported by decorative concrete block screens protects the room entrances. Slender mansard roofs clad in cedar shingles have been added to the roof and canopy. In Harrison, the Sage Motel and Village Barn Café (SX04-015) also attract potential customers with their unique design. While the motel is a fairly generic L-shaped, gable-roofed building with faux stone on its lower section, it does feature king-post supports under its canopy that evoke a certain "western" feel. It is the distinctive detached A-frame café building that sets the complex apart. The Valentine Motel (CE14-175) utilizes an iconic historic sign and unique design elements to draw attention. The triple post sign features a heart shaped signboard with a banner reading "VALENTINE" across its middle above "MOTEL" in individual metal blocks. Various service signs (vacancy, internet, RV Park) and a large arrow are located below. The flat-roofed, rectangular motel building is clad in brick with "weeping" mortar joints and features a canopy with decorative "lace" wrought iron posts.

More generic examples of post-World War II motels include the Orchard Motel (AP06-048), the Hilltop Motel in Crawford (DW00-194), the Grand Westerner Motel and Western Motel in Chadron (DW03-128 and DW03-129) and the Raine Motel in Valentine (CE14-172). These motels typically feature different materials on their lower and upper sections. For instance, the Raine Motel has board and batten siding above brick veneer and the Westerner Motel has board and batten above horizontal board siding. They also exhibit a range of interchangeable footprints and roof shapes. The L-shaped Orchard Motel, rectangular Hilltop Motel and U-shaped Westerner Motel all have gable roofs, while the L-shaped Grand Western Motel and Z-shaped Raine Motel have hipped roofs. Finally there are a few oddities along U.S. Highway 20 including a garage with motel rooms connected to its rear elevation in Valentine (CE14-101) and a mobile home motel in Merriman (CE10-038).

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 U.S. Highway 20 can be documented. Criterion C would not be applied to these property types, since their form and function

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primarily served purposes other than the motorist. The period of significance for rural crossroads stores will sometimes predate U.S. Highway 20. 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 U.S. Highway 20 at one time.

Restaurants, Food Stands, Diners and Drive-ins

Description

Eating establishments were a necessity for the long-distance traveler and dining 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.¹⁶⁰

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 typically found in commercial districts. They may be eligible under Criterion A by association with travel on U.S. Highway 20. Criterion C

¹⁶⁰ Leibs, 197-213.

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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. No diners are currently recorded along U.S. Highway 20.

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 U.S. Highway 20's period of significance are relatively rare. The Triple Dipper Dinner in Ainsworth (BW01-185) and a drive-in in Valentine (CE14-171) are the only surveyed restaurants that include a canopy for in-car dining. Supported by metal "V" posts, the canopy on the Triple Dipper Dinner also extends across the entire façade to protect two walk-up order windows. A ribbon of square windows lights the dining area. The Valentine drive-in has a similar design, except it has a much smaller dining area and only one walk-up order window.

The remaining drive-ins along U.S. Highway 20 are relatively small buildings with walk-up order windows that offer outside seating. These include the Dairy Barn in Laurel (CD08-068) and Staab's Drive-in and the Dairy Sweet in Crawford (DW00-192 and DW00-0195). The Dairy Barn sports a shed roof that extends over the walk-up order counter. A metal canopy has been added for further protection. Staab's Drive-in is a simple rectangular building with a flat overhanging roof with wide eaves covered in cedar shingles. It features a double window order counter flanked by large plate glass windows. A detached gable-roofed seating shelter is located off to the side of the building. The Dairy Sweet has its walk-up order windows on one side of its gable end and an attached seating area with a flat-roofed canopy on the other end. Historic plastic strip signage adorns the building's street elevations with a boy eating an ice cream cone flanked by "DAIRY" and "SWEET" in the gable end façade and "SHAKES SUNDAES SANDWICHES" and a hamburger under the eave. Each letter of "DAIRY" and "SWEET" is capped by ice.

Freestanding restaurants constructed before the 1970s along U.S. Highway 20 are extremely rare. Only two were documented during the 2000-2001 Nebraska Historic Highway Survey: the Karousel Restaurant and Main Event Lounge in South Sioux City and a modern-style restaurant in Chadron (DW03-126). The Karousel Restaurant, a wonderful example of Exaggerated Modernism with a round dining area capped by a zigzag roof, is no longer extant. In Chadron, the modern-style restaurant (now the China House) features a flat overhanging roof with a brick-veneer recessed section on its façade that contains an entrance near the corner and a window wall that slants up and out. The wide eave of the roof was covered with chrome sheathing at the time of the Nebraska Historic Highway Survey, but it has since been covered by a corrugated metal box. Other eating establishments dating from U.S. Highway 20's period of historical significance are cafés associated with service stations and motels, which are discussed elsewhere.

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 U.S. Highway 20, since all postdate its period of historic significance.

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Markers, Signing and Monuments

Description

The Grant and Blue Pole Highways, which preceded U.S. Highway 20 across northern Nebraska, each had their own marking systems. A plain, rectangular blue field painted on telephone poles, trees and other makeshift signboards indicated the route of the Blue Pole Highway, while the Grant Highway was marked with a yellow rectangle sporting a black center band. 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 Bureau of Roads 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. At this time sections of the Grant and Blue Pole Highways became U.S. Highway 20. Older markers were then replaced with standardized signage for U.S. highways, a shield containing the route number and the name of the state.

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 her seminal study of motel signs along Route 66, "but signs also fulfill a more important need: making the unknown familiar."¹⁶¹ Along U.S. Highway 20, 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 replaced metal and neon as the materials of choice for sign makers.¹⁶² Signs also provide a canvas for iconography and naming devices 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 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 U.S. Highway 20. Reproduction markers are not eligible for the National Register. Extant highway markers dating from the period of significance are unlikely to be found along U.S. Highway 20. Markers for the Grant and Blue Pole Highways became largely obsolete with the designation of U.S. Highway 20 and most signs installed by government agencies have likely been replaced.

Most advertising signs along rural sections of U.S. Highway 20 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 found along 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.

¹⁶¹ Lisa Maher, *American Signs: Form and Meaning on Route 66* (New York, The Monacelli Press, 2002), 25.

¹⁶² Michael J. Auer, "Preservation Brief 25: The Preservation of Historic Signs," TPS, 1991.

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With their simple design, neon lighting and subtle Art deco or Art Moderne elements, the "CABINS" sign for the cabin court in Plainview (PC06-033), the signage at the Bassett Lodge and Range Café (RO01-041, listed NRHP) and the "RESTAURANT" sign attached to the ridgeline of the A-frame Village Barn Café in Harrison (SX04-015) are good examples of early signs (c.1920-1940) along U.S. Highway 20. The latter is probably not original to the building, but taken from an earlier business. Another significant early example along the route is a free-standing c. 1950 oval-shaped Standard Oil sign at an abandoned service station in Newport (RO03-035). The sign sits atop a heavy metal post with bracketing and continues to depict the trademark "torch-and-shield" form, although its torch is missing. After WWII, signs became increasingly complicated with the incorporation of different abstract geometric shapes, which evoked the Modern aesthetic of the day. Arrows, explicitly pointing tourists to their establishment, also became common sign elements. The best example from this era is the Valentine Motel sign (CE14-175). The sign for the Raine Motel (CE14-172), also in Valentine, provides a good example of the shift to plastic signboards and more generic designs in the 1960s and 1970s. Other more recent signs attract attention with their iconography, which along U.S. Highway 20 tends to evoke the American West. For instance, the Grand Western Motel in Chadron (DW03-128) features an upper signboard with "MOTEL GRAND" with a cowboy and a lower signboard with "WESTERNER" outlined in barbed wire.

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 U.S. Highway 20. Commemorative properties would need to meet the requirements established by National Register Criterion Consideration E. No such monuments or memorials are currently identified along U.S. Highway 20.

Truck Transport and Associated Sites

Description

U.S. Highway 20 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.

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Significance

Properties associated with the development of U.S. Highway 20 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 U.S. Highway 20. 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.

A two-story service station / dealership in Chadron (CW03-127) is the only documented property that may possess an association with truck transportation along U.S. Highway 20. The stucco-covered building has a Modern style design with a glass front office (or showroom) area on the first story of the façade and ribbon windows on the second story. Two oversized service bays, which would accommodate larger trucks, are located at the back of the building.

Tourist Sites

Description

Tourism was always a significant function of U.S. Highway 20. 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 U.S. Highway 20 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 U.S. Highway 20 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 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.

Few documented historic tourist sites exist along U.S. Highway 20 in Nebraska. One potential example is the former Wagon's Ho Service Station near Harrison (SX00-035). This service station has a unique Quonset type shape and sold antiques, gifts and souvenirs, but is now closed with its signage removed. Hidden Paradise (BW00-061) and The Pines (BW04-079) near Long Pine might also be considered tourist sites. Originally called the Long Pine Amusement Park,

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Hidden Paradise featured cabins, a plunge and a dance pavilion and was described as a "commercial park and tourist resort" in 1939 by the WPA Guide to Nebraska. That same guidebook also references the Long Pine Tourist Park (probably The Pines), where tourist could swim, fish, rent boats by the hour and stay overnight in cabins. Other tourist sights mentioned in the WPA Guide include: the Ainsworth Museum, "with a few old relics," a fossil park north of Ainsworth, the Fort Niobrara Museum and Tulloss Grove, a wooded area with cabins and a golf course, located on Beaver Scenic Road east of Chadron. Established 1949, the Museum of the Fur Trade near Chadron is a significant later example of a tourist site along U.S. Highway 20. It includes the Bordeaux Trading Post (DW00-002), which was reconstructed in 1956 and listed in the National Register in 1972.

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 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 U.S. Highway 20. 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 route of U.S. Highway 20 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 U.S. Highway 20, 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.

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U.S. Highway 20 travels through a variety of natural landscapes and viewsheds in Nebraska. At the eastern end of Nebraska, the highway crosses the Missouri River and then enters rolling prairie farmland between the Missouri and Elkhorn Rivers. Near O'Neill, the highway crosses the Elkhorn River, and then follows its course through the rest of Holt County and into Rock County. Here the landscape shifts to a flat plain broken by occasional sand hills, as the highway enters Nebraska's great hay-growing country between O'Neill and Bassett. Long Pine Creek, a southern tributary of the Niobrara River, creates a narrow tree-covered strip at Long Pine, with farmlands dotting the region between it and Ainsworth. West of Ainsworth, U.S. Highway 20 traverses the northern edge of Nebraska's famous Sandhills region, before reaching the Niobrara River at Valentine. West of Valentine, the highway reaches another agricultural region between Gordon and the eastern edge of the Pine Ridge, an escarpment between the Niobrara River and the White River. This high tableland is a region of forested buttes, ridges and canyons, perhaps the most scenic area traversed by Highway 20. The highway then enters the White River Valley at Chadron and continued to follow this scenic river through Fort Robinson State Park. From here, the landscape remains fairly broken with pine-covered hills and buttes until reaching the high plains that characterize Wyoming near Harrison.

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 U.S. Highway 20, 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.

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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 U.S. Highway 20 would be eligible under Criterion A. For example, a bridge located at a significant crossing on U.S. Highway 20 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 bridge types are located on historic alignments of U.S. Highway 20. Most are small in scale and are largely single-span pony truss structures or modern concrete girder bridges, although there are significant larger 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 constructed on a local road that was incorporated into U.S. Highway 20. 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.

Two historic bridges on U.S. Highway 20 near Valentine in Cherry County are already listed in the National Register of Historic Places: the Bryan Bridge (CE00-028) and the Berry State Aid Bridge (CE00-225). The former is an impressive pin-connected steel cantilever arch bridge built in 1932, while the latter dates from 1921 and is a relatively long example of the riveted steel Pratt through truss type. Other representative bridges along U.S. Highway 20 included the c. 1920 pin-connected Pratt through truss Meadville State Aid Bridge in Brown County (BW00-067), a c. 1930 steel girder bridge near Merriman with metal lattice rails (CE00-247), a c. 1930 concrete deck bridge with metal rails near Stuart in Holt County (HT00-277) and a c. 1930 one-panel concrete bridge near Newport (RO00-081) in Rock County.

Both modern and historic culverts are located on alignments of U.S. Highway 20. 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 for historic culverts with intact markers can be found in Brown County near Meadville (BW00-076), on an old alignment through Rock County near Newport (RO00-074 and RO00-075) and on Smiley Canyon Road east of Crawford (SX00-039).

Roadways

Description

Many segments of U.S. Highway 20 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.

Sections of the Blue Pole and Grant Highways, two early named roads spanning northern Nebraska, were incorporated into the route of U.S. Highway 20. These predecessor highways were earthen or gravel surfaced and often received limited maintenance. As they became a component of U.S. Highway 20, the roads were subject to improvements including grading, further graveling, oiling, and later, hard surfacing with concrete or asphalt. Some sections of the original 1926 route of U.S. Highway 20 were subsequently abandoned or incorporated into state and local roads and continue to exhibit various types of road surface. 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 U.S. Highway 20.

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This leaves a wide variety of roadways that are associated with U.S. Highway 20, including three main categories: (1) completely abandoned roadways, (2) roadways incorporated into local and county road systems and (3) the current route of U.S. Highway 20. 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 typically gravel in rural areas and paved in urban areas. Current alignments of U.S. Highway 20 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 U.S. Highway 20 as whole and should be evaluated at the statewide level of significance.

The first period of significance for U.S. Highway 20 begins with its designation as a federal route in 1926 and ends at the close of the 1930s. This period was characterized by the trend to improve dirt roads with gravel surfacing and the elimination of "stair step" routes following section line roads. During this period, highway development also included the bypassing of some smaller communities 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 during this period and largely reflect the current route of U.S. Highway 20. Sections developed after the 1950s and 1960s have since been improved by modern standardized construction, new bridges, the 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 U.S. Highway 20 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 U.S. Highway 20.

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 U.S. Highway 20 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.

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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 1926 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 paved alignments of U.S. Highway 20 exist in Brown County near Johnstown (BW00-075), in Dawes County near Whitney (DW00-197) and in Sheridan County west of Hay Springs (SH00-150). West of Newport, an abandoned alignment (RO00-037) now serves as a two-track dirt road. These stretches are quickly deteriorating, but still provide an excellent representation of the early road. Former alignments incorporated into county or local road systems include a series of paved and dirt segments in Holt County (HT00-287), a wide dirt road in Keya Paha County near Springview (KP00-086) and the paved Smiley Canyon Scenic Route in Fort Robinson State Park west of Crawford (SX00-034). Bypassed urban routes included the highway's original route through Page, Newport and Whitney and City U.S. 20 (Dakota Avenue) through South Sioux City.

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Eligibility Recommendations

Six properties that can be associated with Highway 20 have already been listed in the National Register:

- Golden Hotel, 406 E. Douglas Street in O'Neill, Holt County (HT13-003)
- Chadron Commercial Historic District, Dawes County (DW03-)
- Miller Hotel, 197 W. 3rd Street in Long Pine, Brown County (BW04-001)
- Bryan Bridge, Valentine vicinity, Cherry County (CE00-028)
- Berry State Aid Bridge, Valentine vicinity, Cherry County (CE00-225)
- Bassett Lodge and Range Café, 205 Clark Street in Basset, Rock County (RO01-041)

As a result of the 2001-2002 Historic Highway Survey, as well as the preparation and revision of this MPD, 69 individual properties and 8 small districts were identified as potentially eligible for listing in the National Register for an association with U.S. Highway 20.

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 U.S. Highway 20. 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 U.S. Highway 20 that qualify for the National Register under one or more of the criteria. The following list should not be considered comprehensive. The list of potentially eligible properties is organized by county following U.S. Highway 20 from east to west:

**Potentially Eligible Properties
U.S. Highway 20**

Resource Name	Location	NRHP Criterion	NeHSR No.
Dakota County			
Service Station	SW corner Pigeon & U.S. 20, Jackson	Criterion A, C	DK04-014
Sweet Tooth Drive-in	NW corner Pigeon & U.S. 20, Jackson	Criterion A, C	DK04-
Motel (Budget Host Inn)	1 st Ave. between 12 th & 13 th Streets, South Sioux City	Criterion A, C	DK05-
Cedar County			
Big Red Motel and Dairy Barn Drive-In	SW corner U.S. 20 & 2 nd Street, Laurel	Criterion A, C	CD08-067 CD08-068
Pierce County			
Service Station	NE corner U.S. 20 & 541 st Street, Breslau vicinity	Criterion A, C	PC00-188
Garage	N. side 4 th Street between State & Logan, Osmond	Criterion A, C	PC00-017
Cabin Court	SW corner of 6 th Street & U.S. 20, Plainview	Criterion A, C	PC06-033
Auto Showroom / Garage	NE corner U.S. 20 & Elm Street, Plainview	Criterion A, C	PC06-085
Service Station / Garage	NE corner Locust & West Streets, Plainview	Criterion A, C	PC06-087
Antelope County			
Service Station	NE corner of Windom & 2 nd Streets, Orchard	Criterion A, C	AP06-019
Holt County			
Auto Dealership and Service Garage	SE corner of William & State Streets, Atkinson	Criterion A, C	HT02-081
Service Station	NE corner of William & State Streets, Atkinson	Criterion A, C	HT02-091
Auto Dealership	NE corner Douglas & Harrison, O'Neill	Criterion A, C	HT02-143
Auto Dealership	SW corner Douglas & Jefferson, O'Neill	Criterion A, C	HT14-144
Auto Dealership / Garage	NW corner of U.S. 20 & 3 rd Streets, O'Neill	Criterion A, C	HT13-145
Service Station	SE corner of Douglas & 5 th Streets, O'Neill	Criterion A, C	HT13-146
Service Station	SE corner Main & 5 th Streets, Page	Criterion A, C	HT15-039
Service Station	S. side Market between 4 th and 5 th	Criterion A, C	HT15-040

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Resource Name	Location	NRHP Criterion	NeHSR No.
Holt County, continued			
Service Station	NW corner of Main & 3 rd Streets, Stuart	Criterion A, C	HT19-028
Garage	W side Main between 2 nd & 3 rd , Stuart	Criterion A, C	HT19-041
Auto Dealership / Service Station	NW corner of Main Street & U.S. Highway 20, Stuart	Criterion A, C	HT19-042
Rock County			
U.S. Highway 20	Abandoned alignment, Newport Vicinity	Criterion A, C	RO00-073
Spring Valley Park	Newport vicinity	Criterion A, C	RO00-078
Service Station	NE corner of Clark & Legnard Streets, Bassett	Criterion A, C	RO01-039
Service Station	2 nd Street, south of Lay Street, Newport	Criterion A, C	RO03-035
Brown County			
Meadville Bridge	Meadville vicinity	Criterion A, C	BW00-067
Skinner Auto Court	W side Main between Dawes & Front Streets, Ainsworth	Criterion A, C	BW01-081
Auto Dealership	358 N. Main Street, Ainsworth	Criterion A, C	BW01-118
Auto Dealership	NW corner 2 nd & Walnut, Ainsworth	Criterion A, C	BW01-166
Gas Station	By Oak & 4 th Streets, Ainsworth	Criterion A, C	BW01-174
Service Station	Northwest corner of Walnut & 4 th Streets, Ainsworth	Criterion A, C	BW01-175
Service Station	SW corner Ash & 4 th Streets, Ainsworth	Criterion A, C	BW01-184
Service Station	NE corner US 20 & Main Street, Johnstown	Criterion A, C	BW02-013
The Pines	Kyner Road, Northwest of Long Pine	Criterion A, C	BW04-079
Hidden Paradise	Hidden Paradise Road, Southwest of Long Pine	Criterion A, C	BW00-061
Keya Paha County			
W.E. Ripley & Co. Chevrolet and Garage	S side of W. Turbine between 11 th & Linden Streets, Springview	Criterion A, C	KP04-048* KP04-049
Café & Service Station	SE corner 11 th & Turbine Streets, Springview	Criterion A, C	KP04-061 KP04-062
Cherry County			
Roadside Park	Valentine vicinity	Criterion A, C	CE00-250
Stott's Standard Oil	NW corner Nebraska & Cherry, Cody	Criterion A, C	CE03-008
Bank and Service Garage	N side Nebraska between Cherry & Walnut Streets, Cody	Criterion A, C	CE03-029
Service Station	By Cherry Street & U.S. 20, Cody	Criterion A, C	CE03-037
Sandhills Automotive Center	NW corner Nebraska & Walnut Streets, Cody	Criterion A, C	CE03-041
Garage	W. Side Main Street between 1 st & 2 nd Streets, Crookston	Criterion A, C	CE04-019
Gas Station	NE corner Main & Second Streets, Crookston	Criterion A, C	CE04-022
Kilgore Service	NW corner U.S. 20 & Main Street, Kilgore	Criterion A, C	CE09-018
Motel	E side NE 61 between Chestnut & North Street, Merriman	Criterion A, C	CE10-035
Two Service Stations	NE & NW Corner Main & U.S. 20, Merriman	Criterion A, C	CE10-036 CE10-037
Mobile Home Motel	S side U.S. 20, east of Main, Merriman	Criterion A, C	CE10-038
Motel	NW corner N. Macomb & 2 nd Streets, Valentine	Criterion A, C	CE14-059
Auto Dealership	SE corner of N. Cherry & W. 2 nd Streets, Valentine	Criterion A, C	CE14-155
Raine Motel	NE corner U.S. 20 & Western, Valentine	Criterion A, C	CE14-172
Valentine Motel	U.S. 20, east of Hall Street, Valentine	Criterion A, C	CE14-175
Dawes County			
U.S. Highway 20	Abandoned paved alignment near Whitney	Criterion A, C	DW00-197
Grand Westerner Motel	1050 W. U.S. 20, Chadron	Criterion A, C	DW03-128
Westerner Motel	300 Oak Street, Chadron	Criterion A, C	DW03-129
Service Station	NE corner 3 rd & Bordeaux Streets	Criterion A, C	DW03-130
Log Cabin Motel	NW corner 3 rd & Spruce Streets, Chadron	Criterion A, C	DW03-131
Bunk House Motel	S side U.S. 20 between Beech & Ridgeway, Chadron	Criterion A, C	DW03-
Stabbs Drive Inn & Service Station	N side U.S. 20 between 2 nd Street & Hospital Drive, Crawford	Criterion A, C	DW00-192 DW00-193
Hilltop Hotel	N. side U.S. 20 between 3 rd & 4 th Street, Crawford	Criterion A, C	DW00-194
Dairy Sweet	Reed Street between 7 th Street & U.S. 20, Crawford	Criterion A (U.S. 20 and Potash Highway), C	DW00-195
Crawford City Park	West end of Main Street, Crawford	Criterion A, C	DW04-279

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Resource Name	Location	NRHP Criterion	NeHRSI No.
Sioux County			
Wagon's Ho! Service Station	U.S. 20, Harrison vicinity (east of town)	Criterion A, C	SX00-035
Service Stations	N side of U.S. 20 between Main & Ann Streets, Harrison	Criterion A, C	SX04-013, 014*
Sage Motel & Village Barn Café	N side of U.S. 20, east of Ann Street, Harrison	Criterion A, C	SX04-015
Sheridan County			
Service Station	NW corner Main & 3 rd Streets, Gordon	Criterion A, C	SH05-
Covered Wagon Drive-In	E. side Main Street between 3 rd & 4 th , Gordon	Criterion A, C	SH05-
District: (Service Station, Service Station/Café, Motel, Garage)	S side intersection of U.S. 20 & Main Street, Hay Springs	Criterion A, C	SH06-025, 026*, 027 SH06-
Auto Dealership	E side Main Street between 2 nd & 3 rd , Hay Springs	Criterion A, C	SH06-
Gas Station	Main Street, north of the railroad line, Rushville	Criterion A, C	SH08-013
Garage and Café	By U.S. 20 & Conrad Street, Rushville	Criterion A, C	SH08-036 SH08-037*
Auto Dealership	S side U.S. 20 between Main & Emmett, Rushville	Criterion A, C	SH08-038
Nebraskaland Motel & Service Station	NW corner U.S. 20 & Heston Street, Rushville	Criterion A, C	SH08-039
Service Station	N side U.S. 20, east of Mosler, Rushville	Criterion A, C	SH08-042

Notes:

This should not be considered as a comprehensive list of all properties that may be associated with U.S. Highway 20. Others may yet to 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 U.S. Highway 20.

"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 thought 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.

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G. Geographical Data

Resources evaluated under this Multiple Property Document will be located in the geographical area that encompasses the historic alignment of U.S. Highway 20 in Nebraska. Resources will generally be located within ¼ mile of an historic or current route alignment.

U.S. Highway 20 travels through the following Nebraska counties from east to west: Dakota, Dixon, Cedar, Pierce, Antelope, Holt, Rock, Brown, Cherry, Sheridan, Dawes, and Sioux. An early alignment of the highway also passed through Keya Paha County.

U.S. Highway 20 travels through the following communities from east to west: South Sioux City, Jackson, Laurel, Belden, Randolph, Osmond, Plainview, Royal, Orchard, Page, O'Neill, Atkinson, Stuart, Newport, Bassett, Long Pine, Ainsworth, Johnstown, Wood Lake, Valentine, Crookston, Kilgore, Nenzel, Cody, Eli, Merriman, Gordon, Clinton, Rushville, Hay Springs, Chadron, Whitney, Crawford, and Harrison. An early alignment of the highway also passed through Springview, Sparks, Norden and Meadville.

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H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Survey Methodology

This Multiple Property Document (MPD) for Historic and Architectural Resources of U.S. Highway 20 in Nebraska is based upon a survey completed for the Nebraska State Historical Society (NSHS) and the Nebraska Department of Roads (NDOR) 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. U.S. Highway 20 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, *U.S. Highway 20 in Nebraska*, begins in 1926 with the implementation of the federal highway designation system and extends through c. 1965, which currently marks the end of the highway's period of significance. This context discusses predecessor named highways, the designation of the highway, 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 U.S. Highway 20. 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 NSHS and the NDOR. Resources found at the NDOR 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 based 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 the property types of 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 U.S. Highway 20 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. A primary c. 1939 historic alignment of U.S. Highway 20 was surveyed, as was an earlier

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secondary alignment, which ran east from Valentine through Keya Paha County and south through Meadville to Ainsworth. In communities, multiple historic alignments were surveyed 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 155 resources related to U.S. Highway 20. 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.

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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 U.S. Highway 20. 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 in the 2001-2002 Historic Highway Survey (excluding bridges, roadway 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 the assessment, approximately 19 properties associated with U.S. Highway 20 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. Finally, the desktop assessment revealed nine small, highway-related historic 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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