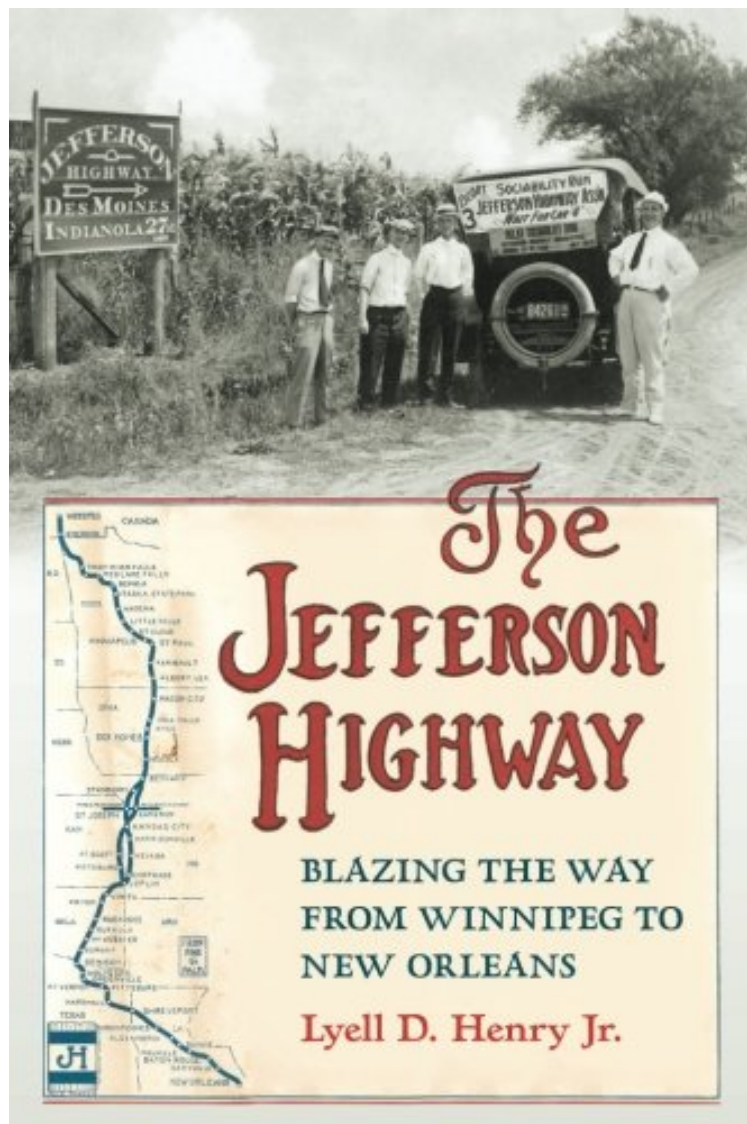


(Free pdf) The Jefferson Highway: Blazing the Way from Winnipeg to New Orleans (Iowa and the Midwest Experience)

The Jefferson Highway: Blazing the Way from Winnipeg to New Orleans (Iowa and the Midwest Experience)

Lyell D. Jr. Henry

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Lyell D. Jr. Henry : The Jefferson Highway: Blazing the Way from Winnipeg to New Orleans (Iowa and the Midwest Experience) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Jefferson Highway: Blazing the Way from Winnipeg to New Orleans (Iowa and the Midwest Experience):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great info for history buffs and travelers alikeBy CustomerGreat

info for history buffs and travelers alike. Thanks, Lyell, and all those who worked on this project with you, for all your hard work. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Henry has given us a book that is both interesting and fun to read. By Deke Solomon Having read Mr. Henry's book through from cover to cover, I cannot decide if *The Jefferson Highway: Blazing the Way from Winnipeg to New Orleans* is a history posing as travelogue or a travelogue posing as history. But I do know that Lyell D. Henry has given us a book that is both interesting and fun to read, and that's doubly so if the reader is like this writer an aging Iowa farm boy still resident in the Hawkeye State. To meet an American citizen today who cannot drive a car, does not own a car, and has never ridden in a car is a noteworthy encounter, a noteworthy encounter to share with family and friends. A hundred and twenty years ago, however, the reverse was also true. Few Americans were personally acquainted with anybody who owned an automobile. For such folks to see someone driving a car was a noteworthy sight and a tale to share with one's family and friends. Today, paved roads are everywhere we look. A hundred and twenty years ago, however, there were no roads of any kind anywhere. People got around by following dirt paths. If enough people trod the same path over a period of years, that path became a trail. When the weather was good, folks found it easy enough to walk a few miles to town. When the weather was foul, travel was a nightmare and folks stayed home. Only desperate people walk five miles through eight inches of mud or snow. Even to ride a horse in such weather, one wants thick, heavy clothing, a large, waterproof poncho and good, tall boots. Experienced riders took food and camping gear with them because, like automobiles, horses were known to break down occasionally. Of course there were trains, but one had to ride to town to catch a train because the rails didn't run past every home in the land. The gist of it is that before we had good roads, few people traveled who didn't absolutely have to. Mr. Henry tells the story of how a few wealthy, enterprising individuals saw the possibilities, the implications of the automobile. In Iowa, boosters gathered themselves behind a wealthy magazine publisher in Des Moines, Mr. Edwin T. Meredith by name. Calling themselves the good roads movement, boosters nationally set themselves to raise money to build hard-surfaced roads by which folks in automobiles could drive around freely and spend money in rural America. Meredith and friends were inspired by the building of The Lincoln Highway, which was the first paved road to link America's east and west coasts. The Lincoln Highway (today U.S. Hwy. 30) crossed the Hawkeye State much as it does today from Clinton to Council Bluffs. Only a few miles north of Des Moines, The Lincoln Highway ran directly through the tiny village of Colo, Ia. Meredith's idea was build a north-south route from Canada to New Orleans that would intersect The Lincoln Highway at Colo and bring some of that east-west traffic south, to Des Moines. He called his proposed road The Jefferson Highway, and it would make Iowa the only state in the Union in which two transnational routes intersected. To accomplish the task, the good roads movement in Iowa took a more grandiose name: The Jefferson Highway Association (JHA) set to work with a will. First task was to establish sister organizations in the states through which the Jefferson Highway would pass. So JHA soon had offices in Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana. All of those offices set to work to promote the planned highway and to raise funds to pay for the road. The task turned out to be easier than it sounds today because boosters in all of those states clamored to bring The Jefferson Highway through their communities and farmers everywhere needed good roads over which to move their crops to market. The effort to build The Jefferson Highway began in 1915 and ended with the completion of the road in 1927. The entire effort was paid for with private money because, when the work began, neither the United States government nor any of the states had a highway department or a transportation department. Governments of 1915 did not build roads and bridges. Roads were built with private money and private money, having paid for the roads, named the roads and bridges as private money saw fit. The Jefferson Highway, however, was finished at a time when governments having realized the worth of the good roads movement were planning and building roads with a will. A national network of roads was rationally planned and the routes were systematically numbered. The upshot was that The Jefferson Highway was no sooner completed than governments disallowed the road's name. North of Des Moines The Jefferson Highway became U.S. Hwy. 65. South of Des Moines, The Jefferson Highway became U.S. Hwy 69 and The Lincoln Highway became U.S. Hwy. 30. After a year or two or three, names such as The Jefferson Highway or The Lincoln Highway, were nevermore seen on road maps or road signs. Tales of the routes construction were soon forgotten by the motoring public. Over the years, U.S. 65 and U.S. 69 have been straightened any number of times. Many towns through which The Jefferson Highway originally passed are no longer on the route. Many bridges no longer stand where they were first placed. Some of the more rugged terrain features have been graded down, or through, or bypassed. Many folks who live along the old road today never heard of The Jefferson Highway and are unaware that it once meandered through their town. Mr. Henry's tale of The Jefferson Highway doesn't end there, though. Henry took the time and trouble and the expense of touring the original route of The Jefferson Highway. He actually drove to all the cities and towns and (where possible) to the bridges that were bypassed over the years. Mr. Henry's book gives detailed driving directions for readers who might wish to do the same. Having read *The Jefferson Highway: Blazing the Way from Winnipeg to New Orleans*, this writer plans to drive the old road soon. I know not what course others may take, but any excuse for a road trip will never be wasted by me. Solomon sez, Four Stars. *The Jefferson Highway: Blazing the Way from Winnipeg to New Orleans* Lyell D. Henry Paperback: 220 pp. 2016 by University of Iowa Press Series: Iowa and the Midwest Experience ISBN 978-1-60938-421-01 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Road Trip: An

Enthralling Account of a Great American Highway By JH American road histories are not a genre of nonfiction in the same way that institutional histories or political histories are genre too few have been written but the growing number of such tales suggests that may soon have to change. Lyell Henry's new book *The Jefferson Highway: Blazing the Way from Winnipeg to New Orleans* adds to the weight of the argument that American road histories are indeed a genre and as such ought to be measured against what has been written to date the established standard, such as it is. And what is that standard? Well, Drake Hokanson's book *The Lincoln Highway: Main Street Across America*, Michael Walliss *Route 66: The Mother Road*, Max Skidmore's *Moose Crossing: Portland to Portland on the Theodore Roosevelt International Highway*, and the histories of the Dixie Highway and the Yellowstone Trail are just a few notable books that come to mind and provide the outlines of a standard. Measured against it, Lyell Henry's history of the Jefferson Highway is certainly a fine book, a solid part of the tradition, deeply researched and superbly written. One is inclined to wonder why we have not had a history of the Jefferson Highway until now, the 100th anniversary year of the Jefferson Highway's origin. Lyell Henry suggests it might have something to do with the disappearance of the early Jefferson Highway Association records, the most important cache of primary research materials for a writer of this particular road history. Daunted as he was by the absence of such records in the early going, Lyell Henry, nonetheless found sufficient primary records letters, newspaper accounts, and early copies of the Jefferson Highway Declaration to embark on his journey. And a fine journey it is, in seven chapters between the prologues historical context and the epilogues summary comments. The first four chapters of *The Jefferson Highway* go into the details of conceiving, promoting, building, and marking a highway from Winnipeg to New Orleans the north-south counterpart to the east-west Lincoln Highway while the next three chapters, 5, 6, and 7, are substantially different from the early ones: Here the author puts history aside and focuses on the Jefferson Highway in present day Iowa, specifically what he finds remaining of the highway and the buildings alongside it that served the motorists who used it. The author notes that Iowa is the state designated for a closer look" in his account of the Jefferson Highway," and then he takes some pains to justify his statement. In Lyell Henry's history of the building of the Jefferson Highway, Iowa is a specimen highway state, representative of all eight states, but also one with some claim to exceptionalism. It was the Iowa magazine publisher E.T. Meredith, after all, who conceived of a great north-south American highway shortly after the building of the Lincoln Highway began to gain traction in 1913. Such was Meredith's pivotal role in moving the idea forward, he was elected the first president of the Jefferson Highway Association at its organizational meeting in 1915. As Lyell Henry explains in his prologue, the case for centering an initial investigation of the Jefferson Highway on Iowa is, in fact, very strong. As it happened, Iowans played outsized parts in the successful quest for the Jefferson. The impetus and initial proposal for creating a highway coursing through the Mississippi Valley originated in Iowa, Iowans had already taken the lead in producing an auto trail the Interstate Trail between Kansas City and St. Paul that became a large part of the new highway, and the state supplied some of the top organizers and subsequent leaders of the JHA. Even Iowa's location on the highway symbolized the centrality of Iowa in the campaign for the Jefferson Highway: it was the state in which the Jefferson and Lincoln Highways crossed, a matter initially conveying a special cachet to the state as site of the Crossroads of the Nation and to which the Iowa State Highway Commission certainly attached great significance in its planning. What followed the germination of the idea for a nation-spanning north-south highway, in Lyell Henry's telling, was a ferment of road-drawing activity to establish the route of the highway, an experience replete with all the contentiousness one would expect as participating state boosters argued their case, eager for the economic advantages of a major highway within their borders. In sum, from its beginning to its final days, Lyell Henry writes, the Jefferson Highway remained a fluid product of accommodation and inclusion, an amalgam of proliferated and sometimes uncertain or even mysterious routings. It was a highway shaped at least as much by contending pressures from local boosters as by a unifying division or central direction. General readers with an interest in American history not just highway scholars or road enthusiasts who come along for the ride will find much to admire in *The Jefferson Highway*. They will find Lyell Henry's book an enthralling tale of an American grand dream carried through to its conclusion, one traced from its beginnings in ideas, grassroots proposals and organizational movements and growing to include state and federal roles, all amid the bedeviling resistance of personalities and politics such as the resistance, 14 years would pass before the end-to-end hard-surfaced highway was completed in 1930. Such readers will find the author himself a first-rate guide and excellent company, well-informed, insightful, and entertaining, a storyteller who appreciates the ironies of history as he shows how a great American highway came to be.

Today American motorists can count on being able to drive to virtually any town or city in the continental United States on a hard surface. That was far from being true in the early twentieth century, when the automobile was new and railroads still dominated long-distance travel. Then, the roads confronting would-be motorists were not merely bad, they were abysmal, generally accounted to be the worst of those of all the industrialized nations. The plight of the rapidly rising numbers of early motorists soon spawned a good roads movement that included many efforts to build and pave long-distance, colorfully named auto trails across the length and breadth of the nation. Full of a can-do optimism, these early partisans of motoring sought to link together existing roads and then make them fit for automobile driving blazing, marking, grading, draining, bridging, and paving them. The most famous of these named

highways was the Lincoln Highway between New York City and San Francisco. By early 1916, a proposed counterpart coursing north and south from Winnipeg to New Orleans had also been laid out. Called the Jefferson Highway, it eventually followed several routes through Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana. The Jefferson Highway, the first book on this pioneering road, covers its origin, history, and significance, as well as its eventual fading from most memories following the replacement of names by numbers on long-distance highways after 1926. Saluting one of the most important of the early named highways on the occasion of its 100th anniversary, historian Lyell D. Henry Jr. contributes to the growing literature on the earliest days of road-building and long-distance motoring in the United States. For readers who might also want to drive the original route of the Jefferson Highway, three chapters trace that route through Iowa, pointing out many vintage features of the roadside along the way. The perfect book for a summer road trip!

Travelers wise enough to shun the monotonous, crowded turnpikes and interstates must read this well-researched book. They will discover that the Jefferson Highway the first transcontinental international highway traversing North America from north to south is alive and well, especially in Iowa, where a century ago the brainchild of a Des Moines publisher became a reality. Michael Wallis, author, *Route 66: The Mother Road*