



ROUTE 36 - NEWSLETTER #2

March 2018

FROM: Allan Ferguson
TO: Friends of Route 36 – *Please forward to all who may be interested*



A "Perfect 36"—What's the story behind this curvaceous image promoting Route 36? (It's a "teaser" to get you to read to the end of this newsletter.)

This is the second of an occasional newsletter (call it a "blog") to keep you posted on the progress of my journey along US Highway 36—a much-neglected historic and scenic by-way through Heartland America.

US36 in a nutshell: From Uhrichsville OH to Norton KS, present-day Route 36 closely reflects the *middle third* of what was once the transatlantic Pikes Peak Ocean to Ocean Highway stretching from New York City to San Francisco (later Los Angeles). Now more than 100 years old, the "named highways" have not fallen entirely into the dustbin of history. Route 36 gives us opportunity to rediscover our national past while enjoying a journey down a (mostly) bucolic,

two-lane highway. Westward from Norton KS, present-day Route 36 passes through Denver, Boulder, and Estes Park where it ends at a junction with US34 (continuing over Trail Ridge Road in Rocky Mountain National Park). The highway is replete with American history and American heroes and heroines—from Cy Young, "Mad" Anthony Wayne, and Annie Oakley in Ohio to Abraham Lincoln, Mark Twain, General John J. Pershing, Walt Disney—and many more—as we move westward.

April in Ohio and Indiana: I'll be hitting the road for Ohio and Indiana in April. Some of the towns and cities I'll be visiting: OHIO: Uhrichsville - Coshocton - Mt. Vernon - Delaware - Marysville - Urbana - Piqua - Greenville. INDIANA: Lynn - Pendleton - Indianapolis - Danville - Rockville. If you know anyone in those towns I should see, please contact me at aferguson@ecentral.com.

Richard Weingroff - Highway Historian. This winter I've done a lot of reading and writing on U.S. highway history. That study has given me special appreciation for the life-long work of Richard Weingroff, the "unofficial historian" of the Federal Highway Administration.

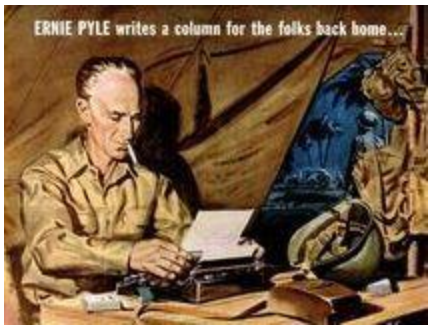
Mr. Weingroff has written voluminously on a variety of highway topics, from biographical sketches to arcane policy deliberations. Anyone interested in getting "into the weeds" of highway history will enjoy reading his articles available at www.fhwa.dot.gov/highway/history. Here are just a few of the Weingroff titles:

- "The Federal Highway Administration at 100"
- "A Maximum of Good Results: Martin Dodge and the Good Roads Trains"
- "From Names to Numbers: The Origins of the U.S. Numbered Highway System"
- "The National Old Trails Road: The Quest for a National Road"
- "The Lincoln Highway"
- "The Pikes Peak Ocean to Ocean Highway: The Appian Way of America"

Mr. Weingroff probably would be the first to admit his articles do not always make for the most scintillating reading. But his technique of quoting extensively from primary sources—e.g., association minutes, letters, and the Congressional Record—lend authority and accuracy to his work. His articles have become the Gold Standard for researchers. Highway historians of every description—from academicians to popularizers (like me)—owe a huge debt of gratitude for the spadework done by Richard Weingroff.

A pictorial journey down the highway—

Ernie Pyle and Dana, Indiana. Ernie Pyle was not only a great journalist, he was, plain and simple, a great writer. Most folks think Dana is in the proverbial "Middle of Nowhere"—but not really. Near the state line between Indiana and Illinois,



Dana can be reached by millions of Midwesterners with just a little effort. Dana's memorial to its hometown hero is a "must-see" attraction along Route 36.

Housed in Quonset huts donated by the military, hand-crafted exhibits in a dark setting create a moving experience. If you can keep a dry eye while listening to a recitation of Ernie's "Death of Captain Waskow" you are a more stoic person than I. And if you've admired the work of the "Greatest Generation" of journalists—Edward R. Murrow, Eric Severeid, Andy Rooney, Walter Cronkite, Charles Kuralt—you'll want to know more about their "Captain." That was Ernie Pyle.



Speaking of **Walter Cronkite**, he was born in *St. Joseph MO* on Route 36 and you can visit an exhibit memorializing the "most trusted man in America" in the Leah Spratt Building on the Missouri State University campus (on Mitchell Ave. one mile E of US169).



Meet C. F. Adams, mayor of *Chillicothe MO* and father of the Pikes Peak Ocean to Ocean Highway. C.F. Adams was one heck of a busy guy. He made a small fortune as a grocer and early auto dealer in Chillicothe. He served as mayor of Chillicothe 1907-09 and then became president of not one—not two—but *three* highway associations dedicated to building good roads in Missouri and the western states. We can be forever grateful for his energetic leadership of the PPOO between 1914 and 1924. Thanks to **Pam Clingerman** at the Grand River Museum in Chillicothe MO for digging this photo up for me.

My guidebook will *not* be cataloging the ever-changing restaurant and lodging scene—tracked most effectively on the internet. But I can't resist mentioning some

great watering holes I've found along the way. If you are ever within striking distance of any one of them, you'll enjoy a satisfying stop.



• **Incredibly Delicious** - *Springfield IL*. The name says it all. This may well be the finest bakery/patisserie this side of Paris, France. Housed in a Victorian-Italianate mansion, it's at 925 S. 7th St., a few blocks south of town center.



• **Boji Stone** - *Chillicothe MO*. Books, music, coffee, good food, artwork—pretty much all the ingredients of a great life. On the main drag across from the county courthouse in the center of town.

• **A.J.'s** - *Macon MO*. People come from miles around to A.J's for good, honest food well prepared in a convivial space. It's on US63 a few blocks south of US36.



• **Boudreaux's** - *St. Joseph MO*. *C'est un bon* Cajun restaurant at 5th & Jules, one block west of the office site of the Pikes Peak Ocean to Ocean and Jefferson Highway Associations (now demolished).



Now for "Miss 'Perfect 36'" - In 2000 the Missouri US36/I-72 association celebrated completion of that state's four-lane iteration of Route 36 from border to border. At the time, **Jack Briggs** of *Cameron MO*, longtime secretary/treasurer of the association, wrote a nice piece in his family's *Macon Chronicle-Herald* commemorating the occasion. His summary of Route 36 history included details of the locally-famous *Miss Perfect 36 beauty contest* used during the 1950s

to promote the highway. Mr. Brigg's own personal memories were specific to 1954 when, as a 14-year-old with raging hormones, his family's home was the site of the contest. As Mr. Briggs recalled, "The fact that those college girls changed clothes in my room left me a Highway 36 fan forever!".

So, on that note of dubious distinction, I'll say "until later" when I'll have impressions and notes from Ohio and Indiana.

ALLAN FERGUSON
The Story of Route 36
1743 South Marion St.
Denver CO 80210
ph: 303-722-3441
aferguson@ecentral.com