



Passport Directions
 Take this passport and visit Wisconsin communities along the historic Yellowstone Trail and experience Americana! Get your passport stamped at each participating location listed on the back of the map. After visiting 12 participating locations, return your stamped passport to the address on the back and receive a free gift while supplies last. Enjoy the Yellowstone Trail!

Yellowstone Trail History

Explore an auto route steeped in Wisconsin history that had no number - just a famous name, The Yellowstone Trail. The Yellowstone Trail was a transcontinental road, created by joining country roads into a long, connected chain from "Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound". The Yellowstone Trail existed in a time when rural roads were mainly dirt, when outdoor plumbing was coming indoors, when telephones had cranks, and when the automobile was replacing the train as the major means of transportation. Roads were so bad in most of the nation that private citizen grass-roots groups formed to "get out of the mud," which was the national cry. Automobile sales were burgeoning and owners soon discovered that there were no connected roads out of town on which to drive the new black beauty.

The Yellowstone Trail Association (YTA) was one of many groups pushing for long-distance roads, but it was the first group to create a transcontinental route through the upper tier of states. In 1912 a small band of men in South Dakota envisioned a road from Plymouth Rock, Massachusetts, to Puget Sound, Washington. They called it the Yellowstone Trail to honor the national park. The YTA did not build roads with pick and shovel. It's 8000 members persuaded county governments to build a single road that connected to a single road from adjoining counties, resulting in a long distance road, piece by piece. They promoted cross-country tourist traffic, marked the route with signs, and provided maps, thus raising interest in using the automobile for other than local travel. The idea was supported by communities along the approximately 3700 mile route and soon people were fighting to get their towns on the trail and by 1919 the entire route was firmly established coast to coast.

Travel all of Wisconsin's 409 miles from Hudson to Kenosha and see, taste and experience the states Yellowstone Trail from 1915-1930.



First Traveler-Michael Dowling

Almost 100 years ago, Michael J. Dowling, led three families on a "first time by automobile" adventure run and blazed the way for building one of the first highways across America.

At Age 14, Michael Dowling was frozen and nearly died in the great Minnesota blizzard of 1880. Doctors amputated his feet, one hand and all fingers from the other hand. Young Michael refused to live on welfare and worked to become a successful teacher, editor, banker, politician and nationally known public speaker. His courage and achievements were a wonder and inspiration to people everywhere. But, nothing he attempted seems more unimaginable, today, than the historic trip he led, marking the route of the Yellowstone Trail, America's first coast-to-coast automobile highway across the northern states. The long drive to Yellowstone in a 1913 Oakland, quickly became an exhausting endurance test of cars, drivers and passengers. Car engines often over-heated and radiators needed water. There were no paved highways, most of the driving was on grassy horse and wagon trails. There were rivers to cross and no bridges or signs to follow. The great purpose of the trip was to show that the dream of family travel by automobile had become reality and to make headlines for the proposed new Yellowstone Trail and the growing movement for America to build "A Good Road from Plymouth Rock to Puget Sound."

Barry Prichard, Author of "We Blazed the Trail"



Michael Dowling and center car photo printed with permission of Author/Copyright Owner Barry Prichard.

