

Vår Historia

SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

INTERNATIONAL ROAD THROUGH THE VALLEY



PUBLISHED
BI-MONTHLY



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Who would have thought that the very first International Road Committee would congregate in Salina, KS June 1st, 1911 to layout the very first International road going north and south through the USA? This would also become the first International Highway Organization in the world!

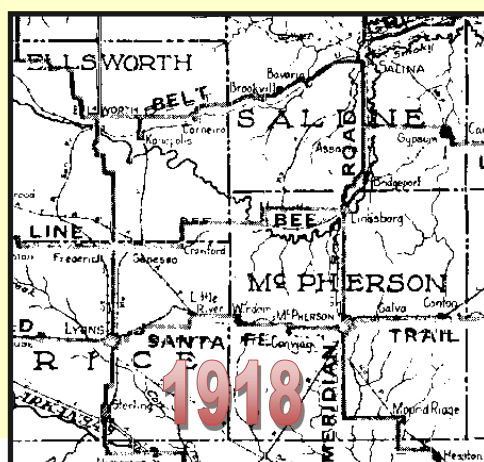
Named after the Sixth Principle Meridian, which Kansas and Nebraska was surveyed in after the 1854 Act, this proposed road would also follow the Chisholm Trail from Newton thru Oklahoma. The initial plan was to link the road from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, but later extended from Winnipeg to Mexico City.

Almost instantly after McPherson County Commissioners OK'd the plan to start building our stretch of the road, delegates from other towns in the county went into action to also push for roads connecting to this "Meridian Road". Some of today's

state highways like 56 and 4 derived from this. In fact, Hwy 4 west of Lindsborg was known as the "Bee Line".

Lindsborg was in the direct path of the Meridian Road, and at the time of construction there was only one bridge crossing the smoky, the Mill Street Bridge. A few years later the First Street Bridge would be built, directly connecting the bridge and road. First St. was Meridian Road, or the first highway through town. It connected to Old Main and Ling Auditorium at Bethany College, making it quite convenient for Messiah Week.

Meridian Road didn't completely follow the current (old) 81 Hwy, one sign still stands just inside the Saline County line, two miles east of Coronado Heights. Fairchild Rd was the original stretch of Meridian Road, which then cut over to Bridgeport. Due to land owner disputes, Meridian was originally built with a lot of 90° turns, many revisions later added curves and angles to help speed up traffic.



Fairchild Rd. Sign

MERIDIAN ROAD (CON'T)

A newspaper reporter from Salina wrote about the 1916 Easter Sunday Messiah in Lindsborg. He quoted "Cars were separated by from 25 to 200 feet all the way between Salina and Lindsborg on Meridian." He asked no less than 50 people just how many autos were in Lindsborg on this day, no one knew for sure. What he did know was that autos were parked from a gun-shot distance to the north to one mile and a half south of the Brunswick, or south of the Smoky. An estimated four square miles of ground, making Lindsborg to look like one big garage.

It wasn't until 1918 that Meridian was becoming "hard-surfaced" in the Lindsborg area, where gravel and concrete was making up much of the highway. At this point Meridian thru Kansas was estimated to be 60% "hard-surfaced", or an "all-weather road". "Good Road" committees were being established in many towns, as the constant upkeep and improvements were not as funded as hoped. McPherson and Saline Counties tried to join forces but McPherson voted against it, so Saline County set their own up. 1918 was also the year Lindsborg bricked Main and some partial side streets. All while being short-staffed due to the war.

In 1920 the National Highway Marker System added pole signs through Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma so travelers could follow the Meridian easier. John Nicholson, President of the Meridian Highway Assoc., spent eight days traveling from his home in Newton, KS. to Winnipeg, 1,000 miles, to inspect the highway. It took him longer than needed as he wanted to visit all towns to “get to know them”.

A key change came in 1924 when the State Highway Commission recommended to the Federal Bureau of Public Highways in Washington DC that the entire Meridian Highway receive both Federal and State funding. Within two years Meridian began the switch to US Hwy 81.

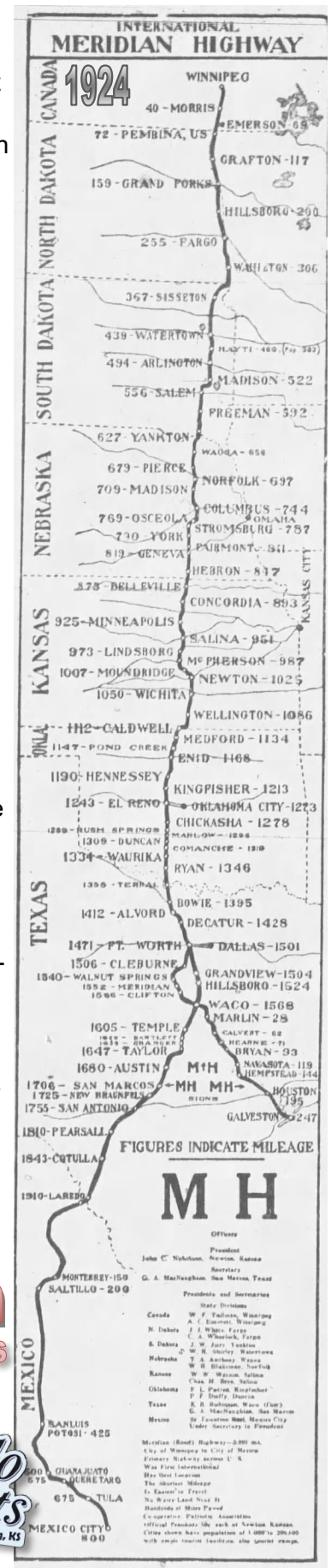
June 1928 Lindsborg Chamber of Commerce petitioned to re-route Meridian through town, instead of driving down College St. (First St.), it would divert west a few blocks past the bridge to Main St. The Chamber also added Lindsborg signs at both the south and north highway entrances. For the next eight years all highway

traffic went down the heart
of Lindsborg.

By 1929 the final stretch of Kansas highway was being hard-surfaced in Cloud County, but at the same time a new highway was being built north of Newton. The Marquette-Newton road was redesigned to take a full five miles off, and was completed September 1930.

Another redesign came between Lindsborg and Bridgeport in 1933. This new road was concrete so slow moving, even with 100+ workers. Only two miles were completed by winter and had to be finished the next spring and summer. This new road prompted a redesign thru Lindsborg, and in 1936 the overpass north and US 81 bridge south were constructed, ending highway traffic down Main.

This was the main highway until the 1960s when the interstate was constructed, which took the entire decade to complete. "Old" 81 is still used by many on a daily basis.



Available at: Lindsborg Old Mill & Swedish Heritage Museum—120 E. Mill St.

Robert Ahlstedt
1942-2021

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Cathy and the kids for the loss of Vice President Rob Ahlstedt, he is no longer in pain. Not only was Rob VP of the SVHA, but his legacy lends to Bethany College Hall of Fame, Teacher, singer in Messiah for 60 years, carpenter, and 45 years providing fireworks for many families' Independence Day, just to name a few.

SVHA raises a cup of coffee in your honor Robert.



Upcoming SVHA Programs

Nov. 9th, 2021

Discovering the Magic of the Harp

John A. Miller, Lindsborg



Jan. 11th, 2022

Notorious Saline County

John Burchill, KWU Salina



March 8th, 2022

The 1706 Excursion of the Spanish into Kansas

Mike Wallen, Lindsborg

**All programs
start at:
7:30 pm**

Location:
Messiah Lutheran Church—Fellowship Hall
402 N. 1st Street
Lindsborg, KS.

Please cut along the dotted line

Smoky Valley Historical Association
P.O. Box 255
Lindsborg, KS. 67456

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other \$ _____

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Memberships are renewed in the first quarter of each year

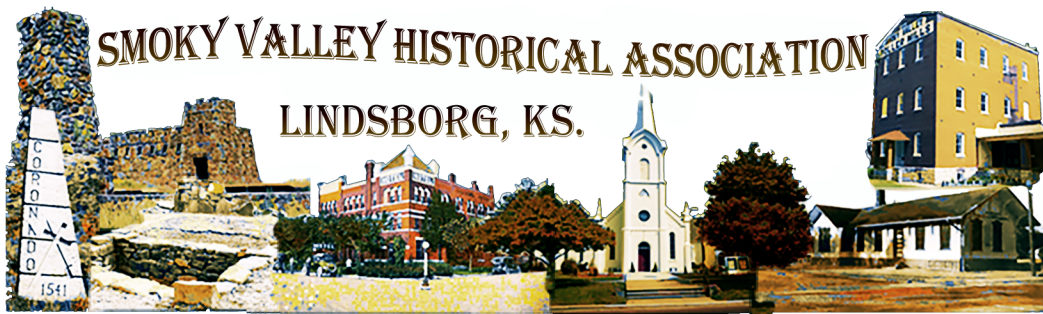


Smoky Valley Historical Association is a non-profit organization and is registered under 501(c)3

All Membership Donations, Bequests, Trusts, and Legacy Donations are tax deductible.

Please mail to P.O. Box listed above.

Thank You!



SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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We currently have one Board position open



Meetings

We have bi-monthly meetings from September thru May and held on the 2nd Tuesday of the month. There are five meetings per academic year (Sept.-May). Program starts at 7:30 p.m. with topics of local historical interest. Location is listed on schedule page 3.

Come join us!



Funding

Membership contributions are the SVHA's major source of on-going funding. A free-will donation in any amount will secure your membership in the Association for the year. Memberships are renewed in the first quarter of each year.

Grants, such as those awarded by the Kansas Humanities Council, are also available from time-to-time to further the mission of the SVHA.

Smoky Valley Historical Mission

The purpose of this association shall be to collect, arrange and preserve historical data, books, pamphlets and manuscripts pertaining to the early history and settlement of our community in general and the City of Lindsborg in particular; to preserve and beautify places of historical interest in our city, its vicinity, and properties entrusted to the association; and to promote the study of history of our settlement and its cultural growth by lectures and other available means.

Contact info:

email us at:

info@lindsborghistory.org

or mail to:

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 LINDSBORG, KS 67456

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SMOKY VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
 LINDSBORG, KANSAS 67456

Check our Facebook page for the most up-to-date information concerning the Smoky Valley Historical Association.



Thank you for your contributions, and supporting the historical preservation of Lindsborg and the Smoky Valley of Central Kansas.

Our pioneers left their legacy long after they were gone, so can you. Managing estates, bequests, and gifts through retirement plans can help keep our preservation ongoing and long-lasting.