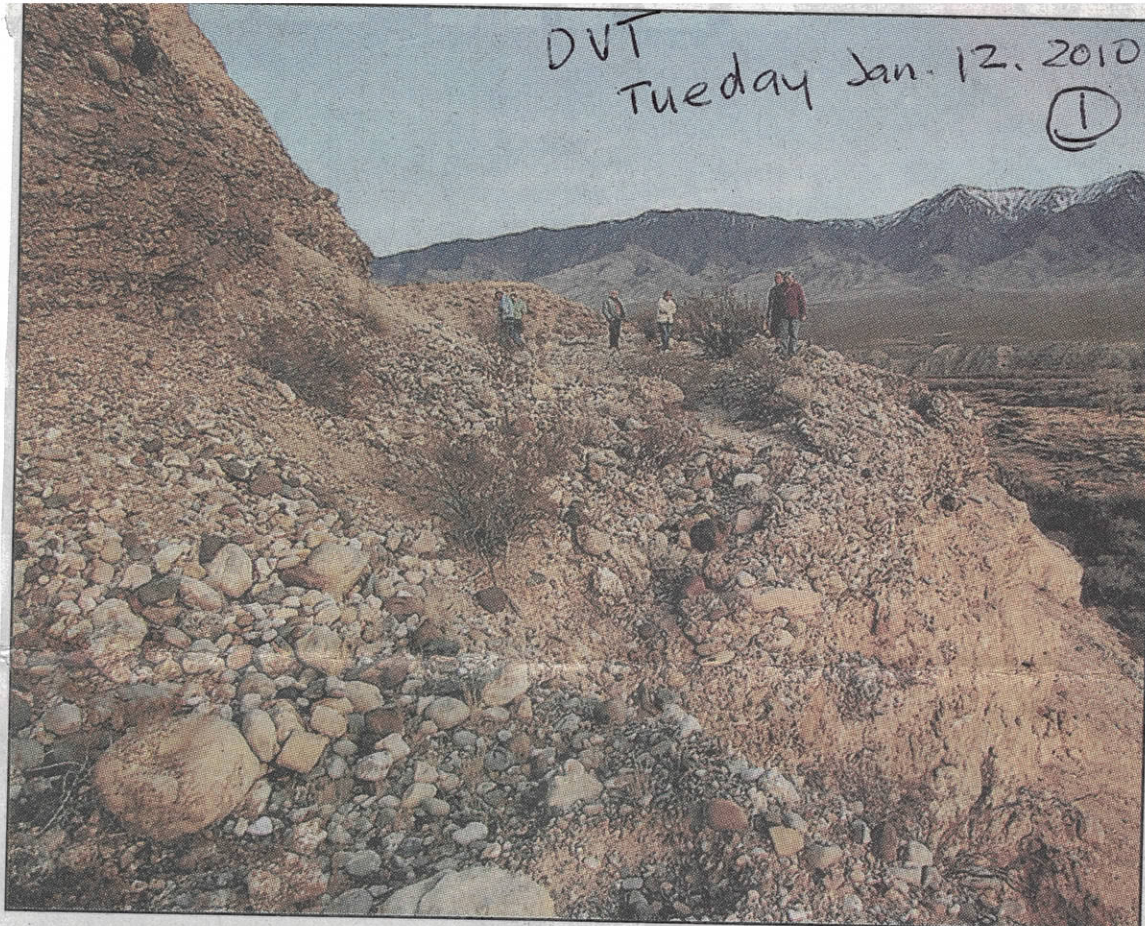


DVT
Tuesday Jan. 12, 2010
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David Bly / Desert Valley Times

History buffs check the sharp curve that was part of the Arrowhead Trails Highway in the 1920s and '30s. Buses and trucks had to stop, back up and zig-zag to make this curve a few miles east of Mesquite.

Arrowhead Trail remnants traced

David Bly

Desert Valley Times

A group of history buffs picked their way carefully along a section of the old Arrowhead Trails Highway Saturday, within sight of Interstate 15 and Old Highway 91, and not far from remnants of the Spanish Trail and the Overland Trail.

High above, an airliner traced a chalk line across the blue desert sky.

"This has always been an important transportation corridor, and it always will be," boomed the voice of historian Leo Lyman.

Lyman led a field trip east of Mesquite to show a remnant of the Arrowhead Trails Highway, the road that opened up southern Nevada to motorized travel, before speaking on the Arrowhead Saturday evening at City Hall. The event was organized by the Mesquite Historical Committee.

Geraldine Zarate, a fourth-generation Virgin Valley resident and

local historian, was one of those who followed Lyman through the creosote brush and cacti. Growing up in Mesquite, she often traveled Highway 91 and would see the old road where it angles up the steep hill, but Saturday was the first time she stood on the sharp curve that was the bane of bus and truck drivers coming to and from Mesquite.

"Often my mother would tell me of how the buses going up that hill would have to stop, back up, go forward and back up again," she said. "They would have to zig-zag to get around that curve. It was hard to get them into that position."

Lyman said not everyone made it.

"I know that some went off into the Virgin River," he said. "I haven't been able to find any record of anyone being killed, but it was a dangerous curve."

The first recorded transportation route through the valley was the Spanish Trail. From about

1829 to 1849, Spanish traders used this route to bring woolen goods in mule pack trains from Sante Fe, New Mexico, to Los Angeles. They would bring back horses and other livestock on the return trip.

After the end of the U.S.-Mexican War, the Southwest became part of the United States, and freighters and pioneers followed traces of the Spanish Trail as they made their way to Las Vegas and Los Angeles. Those two routes diverged in places, as wagons had to take more gradual routes than did the sure-footed mules as they made their way up and down mesas and washes.

After the completion of the transcontinental railway in 1869, wagon traffic on the route declined, but it was still the route that brought the pioneers to the Virgin Valley, and was their only connection to the outside world.

"Talk about isolation," said

• See **ARROWHEAD** on A6

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Some remnants of the old Arrowhead Trails Highway can be seen a few miles east of Mesquite off Old Highway 91.

David Bly / Desert Valley Times

ARROWHEAD

• Continued from A1

Lyman. "The road from St. George to Mesquite was hell. Brigham Young started to come here once, but it was so rough, he told his driver to turn back."

As promoters of the Lincoln Highway sought for ways to connect Salt Lake and San Francisco around 1913, people in southern Nevada began promoting a southern route that would include Las Vegas. Politics and promotion kept churning the issue in California, Nevada and Utah.

Charles Bigelow, a former race car driver known for his prowess in desert races, was engaged to promote the southern route, and eventually became known as the father of the Arrowhead Trails Highway.

In September of 1916, Bigelow was part of a cavalcade of California businessmen, led by Fritz Fisher, that drove their cars from Los Angeles to Las Vegas, often taking difficult mining trails. From Las Vegas, the group set out on poor sandy trails through the desert and canyons.

When they came to an area of lofty sandstone cliffs and pinnacles, Fisher said it looked like a valley of fire, and the name stuck.

They made their way to St. Thomas, and then on to Bunkerville and Mesquite, where they were treated to a feast of melons and fruit.

They left Mesquite, headed through Littlefield and then up through the Beaver Dam Mountains. They arrived in St. George, 18 hours later, having covered only 150 miles.

Advocates of the Arrowhead route continued their efforts, with serious opposition coming from proponents of the Lincoln Highway.

Bigelow traveled the route many times to promote the highway, and eventually settled in St. George. In his later years, he would head out onto the highway with supplies to help anyone broken down or stuck.

The Arrowhead Trails Highway wasn't born at any certain moment, but came together as

different sections were completed, and as county commissions and state legislatures came on board. By the mid-1920s, it was in steady use.

Although the Arrowhead Trails Highway was the shortest route between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles, and for years the only major road in and out of Las Vegas, it wasn't paved. It was subject to washouts and blowing sand, and was an arduous journey.

As rough as it was, the Arrowhead helped diminish

Mesquite's isolation.

As the rising waters of Lake Mead erased portions of the Arrowhead, it was replaced by U.S. Highway 91, which was subsequently replaced by Interstate 15.

Lyman, who has written extensively on transportation routes in the Southwest, has a soft spot for the hard trail that leads through the Virgin Valley. He would like to see an information center built at the west end of Mesquite to commemorate the five incarnations of the route, and bring attention

to the still-visible segments of the Spanish Trail, the wagon route, the Arrowhead and Old Highway 91.

"You've got some of the most fabulous artifacts in place along the whole route," he said, referring to these segments.

He also foresees the transportation corridor as becoming increasingly important.

"You watch," he said. "That I-15 is going to be one of the three busiest transportation corridors in America."





The Arrow Head Service Station in Pleasant Grove, ca. 1929. USHS collections.

The Arrowhead Trails Highway: The Beginnings of Utah's Other Route to the Pacific Coast

BY EDWARD LEO LYMAN

IN 1918 HIGHWAY BOOSTER DOUGLAS WHITE stated that the old Mormon trail from Salt Lake City to St. George was destined to become one of the most important links in the transcontinental highway system. At the time, the proposition probably seemed far-fetched, particularly because of the progress being made on the Lincoln Highway,¹ which promoters hoped would become the pre-eminent transcontinental route for the burgeoning automobile tourist industry. But as it turned out, White, one of the early supporters of the Arrowhead Trails Highway along the Mormon route, was prophetic: this rough track running from Los Angeles to Salt Lake City would indeed become a critical transportation corridor.

A native Utahn, Leo Lyman teaches history at Victor Valley College, California, and is completing a book-length study of the wagon road from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles.

¹ Charles Bigelow scrapbook, Dixie College Archives, St. George, Utah. The Lincoln Highway later became Interstate 80.

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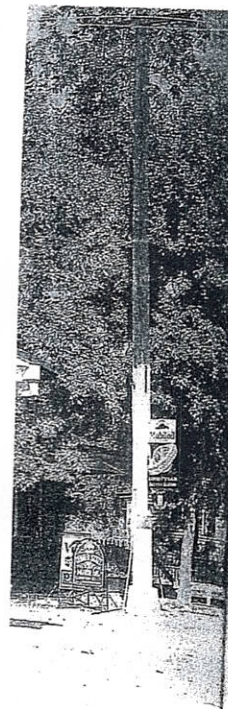
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The idea for the Arrowhead Trails Highway was born in 1914 when businessmen from Las Vegas began to push for a highway through their town. The idea especially took off that year after well-known "desert pilot" Charles H. Bigelow began to investigate a shorter route between Salt Lake City and Los Angeles by going through Las Vegas instead of through Ely and Tonopah, Nevada. Bigelow made three trips into the desert. In Salt Lake City he conferred with Salt Lake Railroad official Fred C. Wann, who pledged the community's support for the highway project. Early the following year, Bigelow met with interested southern California businessmen at his hometown of Redlands to begin organizing efforts in support of the highway. Thus the Arrowhead Trails Association was born.²

It was natural that southern Californians became the highway's primary boosters. None of the western states were in the forefront of initial developments in American automobile travel, but early in the century, southern California began an unprecedented love affair with the automobile, and the region's auto enthusiasts soon became leaders in promoting good roads for tourist travel throughout the West and beyond. The Automobile Club of Southern California was pre-eminent in these efforts. Besides pressuring political entities responsible for highway construction and publicizing roads already completed, club officials also sought links from their region to the rest of the country. One of the most significant of the club's contributions was the promotion of a new highway to Utah at a time when the nation was beginning to appreciate the great scenic wonders of southern Utah's canyonlands.

In order to develop roads within and beyond southern California, the auto club employed men in "scout cars." These men not only reported road conditions on known highways but also ventured into the virtually uncharted mountain and desert regions of the Far West in search of the most practicable routes. They gathered data needed for effective road maps, also produced by club staff members, and engaged a crew of road-sign painters to effectively mark the highways even in areas far beyond the boundaries of California. In the long run, the federal Highway Aid Act of 1916 would bring the national government into the process and assure completion of the vast interstate highway system. But prior to that, many highways were laid out and

² *Redlands Review*, February 1, 26, July 8, 11, 12, 1916; *Washington County News*, March 4, 1920; see also Edward Leo Lyman, "Arrowhead Trails Highway: California's Predecessor to Interstate 15," *Southern California Quarterly*, Fall 1999, for a more detailed treatment of the California portion of this story. The name "arrowhead" came from an arrowhead figure clearly visible on the mountain slope at San Bernardino. It is unclear whether vegetation was intentionally removed to form the arrowhead or whether it is a natural phenomenon.





Charles Bigelow, a former racecar driver and the main road locator of future Interstate 15, sits in the official Salt Lake-Los Angeles Arrowhead Trails automobile. From William G. Moore, comp., *Fun with Fritz*, 1986.

promoted by private business interests.³

After his initial meeting with the auto club, Charles Bigelow sought to more carefully define the proposed route within Utah. Some citizens from Sevier and Sanpete Counties had made preliminary overtures promising to construct a highway from Marysville halfway to Los Angeles.⁴ There is no evidence, however, that this offer was more than a daring effort by central Utah promoters seeking to bring the proposed highway through their area. Besides, Bigelow and his associates soon determined that a highway east of the central Utah mountains was not the shortest or most practicable route to Salt Lake City from Los Angeles. Instead, by the summer of 1916 they were seeking to establish working

relationships with leaders of Utah communities on the west side of the mountains in Washington, Iron, Beaver, Millard, and Juab counties.

The reaction of businessmen in Fillmore was probably typical. Millard County citizens had taken notice of the Redlands meeting, carefully considered correspondence from Arrowhead Trails Association president Mont B. Chubb, and then promptly organized their own branch of the association. They knew that communities east of the mountains, in Sanpete and Sevier counties, were lobbying for the designated route and that Millard and its west-side neighbors could "not sit supinely and wait" for the road selection. Eventually, the Utah Road Commission decided to favor both routes, the one on the east as the primary route to the Grand Canyon and the one on the west as the main roadway to southern California.⁵

³ *Redlands Review*, August 20, 1916, stated that initial support for Bigelow's efforts came from Studebaker Corporation, Goodrich Rubber Company, and the San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake City Railroad even before the auto club gave assistance. Similarly, it was a delegation of Searchlight businessmen that prevailed in securing routing through their town. See *Las Vegas Age*, November 21, 1914, November 12, 1944.

⁴ *Redlands Review*, February 1, 26, July 8, 11, 12, 1916.

⁵ *Millard County Progress*, July 21, 1916; Edward Leo Lyman and Linda King Newell, *History of Millard County* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Historical Society, 1999); *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 18, 27, 28, 1921.

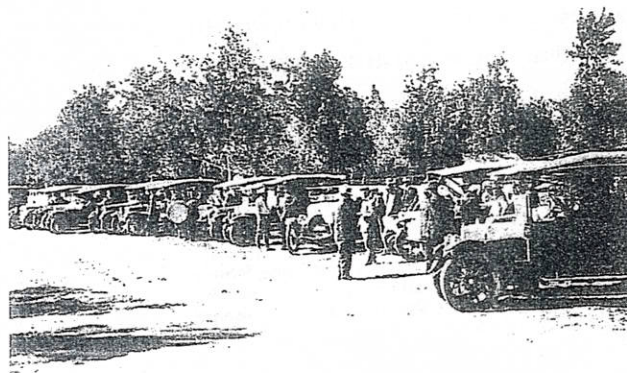
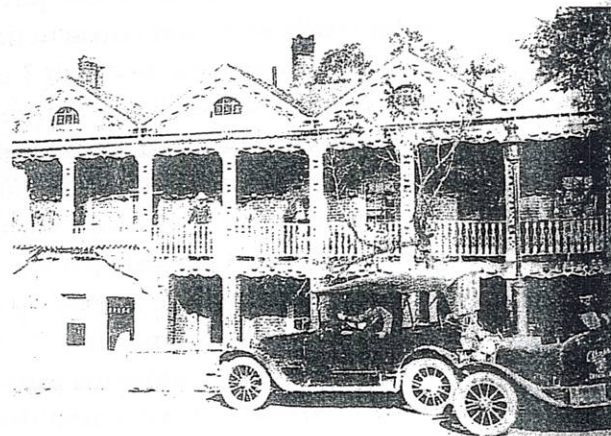
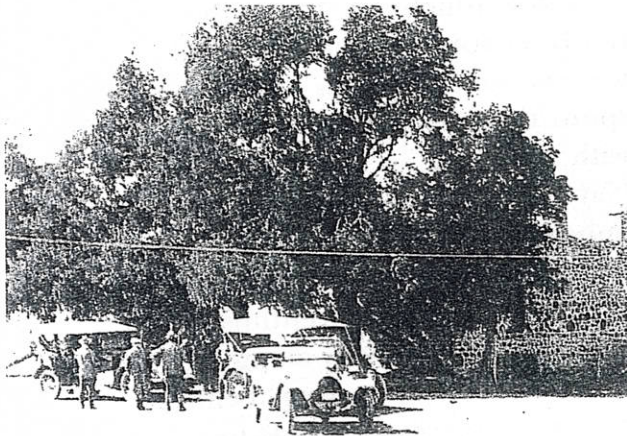
Not long after the formation of the first chapters of the Arrowhead Trails Association, Fritz Fisher, president of the Redlands Chamber of Commerce, suggested that a group of Californians drive automobiles over the proposed route to prove and publicize its feasibility. The group would also seek to organize more chapters and lobby for improvement of the highway. On September 25, 1916, three cars loaded with Californians embarked up Cajon Pass; they met Charles Bigelow, *Los Angeles Times* reporter F. V. Owens, and railroad traffic agent Douglas White en route. Another added to the party along the way was Nevada state senator Levi Syphus whose parents had traveled over the route as Mormon converts withdrawing from the San Bernardino colony.

After a difficult trip across the sometimes roadless Mojave Desert, where the group camped the first night out, the party finally reached Las Vegas. There, the men attended a meeting of the Arrowhead Trails Association.⁶ Continuing on, they wound through desert hills and canyons, including one that they named the Valley of Fire—the name stuck—and came to the small Mormon town of St. Thomas at the lower edge of the Moapa Valley, which has long since been inundated by Lake Mead.

The group then climbed over a divide and through a canyon sufficiently narrow and rocky to cause later observers to marvel that it was ever a main highway. At Bunkerville the group held a road promotion meeting and was treated to a melon and fruit feast across the Virgin River at Mesquite. After a difficult night drive over the Beaver Dam Mountains (long thereafter known as Utah Hill) in the southwestern corner of Utah, the party arrived at St. George early in the morning, exhausted after eighteen hours spent traveling only 150 miles.

The roads in Utah were generally better, and the promotional meetings held at St. George, Cedar City, and Beaver—a town that also staged a dance in honor of the occasion—were equally successful. Southern Utah citizens were excited about the prospect of a good highway link to the outside world. The Millard County branch of the Arrowhead Association dispatched nine carloads of boosters to greet the California association members, who had just visited Cove Fort, and to escort them into Fillmore. There they were treated to a ban-

⁶ William G. Moore, comp., *Fun with Fritz: Adventures in Early Redlands, Big Bear and Hollywood with John H. "Fritz" Fisher* (Redlands, Calif.: Moore Historical Foundation, 1986), 45–51.



Along the Arrowhead Trails Highway, counterclockwise from top: Charles Bigelow's Oldsmobile stuck in mud on main highway; California road promotion party visiting Cove Fort; Nephi townspeople welcoming California touring cars; hotel in Fillmore with questionable toilet facilities; Will Burke of Redlands, California, and Douglas White, railroad industrial director, admiring view north of St. George. Photos from John Fisher photo collection published in William G. Moore, comp., Fun with Fritz: Adventures in Early Redlands, Big Bear and Hollywood with John H. "Fritz" Fisher (Redlands, CA: Moore Historical Foundation, 1986). Related photo negatives can be found at Smiley Library, Redlands, California.

quet provided by the high school domestic science department at the town's new school building.

That evening the Utah state engineer made some remarks to the group. The featured speaker was Douglas White, industrial director of the San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake City Railroad, who stressed the hundreds of thousands of dollars that the road was expected to generate for southern Utah, southern Nevada, and southern California. He also observed that this new road would be shorter by at least eighty miles than the old route across central and eastern Nevada and that it was the only all-season roadway from California to the Intermountain West. Naturally, the consensus of the gathering was "to boost for the Arrowhead Trail."⁷

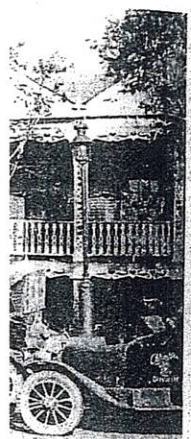
The California party made its way northward through Utah, holding promotional meetings at Holden, Nephi, Payson, and Spanish Fork, where the group was offered a public luncheon. When they reached Provo, the group was particularly appreciative of a "real hotel"; at three previous lodging places the toilet facilities had been less than ideal.⁸ Most of the party spent the evening in Provo discussing roads and road construction with a group of about thirty men. The party finally reached Salt Lake City where they stayed at Hotel Utah as guests of Governor Simon Bamberger and the local chambers of commerce. They had traveled eight hundred miles from Redlands, mostly over unimproved roads, but their letters home were enthusiastic. They noted the "glorious scenery" and that "everybody along the line enthusiastic. Chapters [of the Arrowhead Association were] being organized over the line at every point. At some places the whole town turn[ed] out to welcome [us]."⁹

Later that fall, California association members were perhaps over-optimistic when they informed their Utah counterparts that they estimated ten thousand automobile tourists would travel the new route during 1917. Naturally, it was anticipated that most of these would spend money in towns along the way. Several communities, including

⁷ *The Arrowhead: A Monthly Magazine of Western Travel and Development*, September 1911, is a special issue of White's magazine promoting Millard County, Utah; copy in Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

⁸ At St. George, Fisher noted that the only toilet in their place of lodging was on a raised platform in the center of a sixteen-foot-square room with seven entry doors along the walls. He recalled, "You nervously wondered which one of the seven you had neglected to lock." At Fillmore it was an opposite arrangement, with the toilet installed at the end of a downstairs hallway, cut off by a curtain hung from a pole. There, Fritz stated, "When you heard someone approaching, you judiciously coughed." At Beaver, it was the overflow of a toilet in a room above theirs that caused some of the California group to discard damaged items soaked during the night. See Moore, *Fun with Fritz*, 54-55.

⁹ Moore, *Fun with Fritz*, 57.



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Fillmore, geared up for the tourist trade increase with impressive promptness. Within a short time, at least three business establishments, including a garage and a motor hotel, would be named Arrowhead in that town alone. For the next half-century as much as a third of Fillmore's income would be generated from tourists.¹⁰

The Automobile Club of Southern California maintained a low profile during the early promotion of the new highway. Perhaps this was to prevent suspicions that the highway effort would benefit southern California most of all. Too, perhaps the club thought it wise—in order to avoid prematurely angering the communities along the old central Nevada route—to withhold official backing until government agencies had sanctioned the project. In fact, in 1917 the club was still engaged in a sign-placing project along that old route. Finally, in June 1918 the club magazine, *Touring Topics*, noted that its "pioneer car" crews had traveled over the Arrowhead Trail taking map and sign notes and that the organization would soon devote its attention to a sign-making project for the new route. These steps did much to assure the future acceptance of the infant highway.¹¹

The key road locator, Charles H. Bigelow, was introduced to the public in a *Las Vegas Age* sketch describing him as an automobile enthusiast. He had enjoyed a notable career as an early West Coast racecar driver and had participated in several of the Los Angeles-to-Phoenix desert races; in 1911 he had won a major road race in the San Francisco Bay area. Soon thereafter, he established a reputation as one of the best desert road locators in the American Southwest; he had helped locate the National Old Trails Highway—later Route 66—and rival ocean-to-ocean routes: from Los Angeles to Phoenix and beyond and from San Diego to Imperial, then to Yuma, and on to Texas.¹² Bigelow was also an effective publicist, offering news columns to local newspapers and taking reporters and photographers from the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Los Angeles Examiner* with him on some of his exploration excursions. On other occasions he was accompanied by movie cameramen working for the Hearst news syndicate.¹³

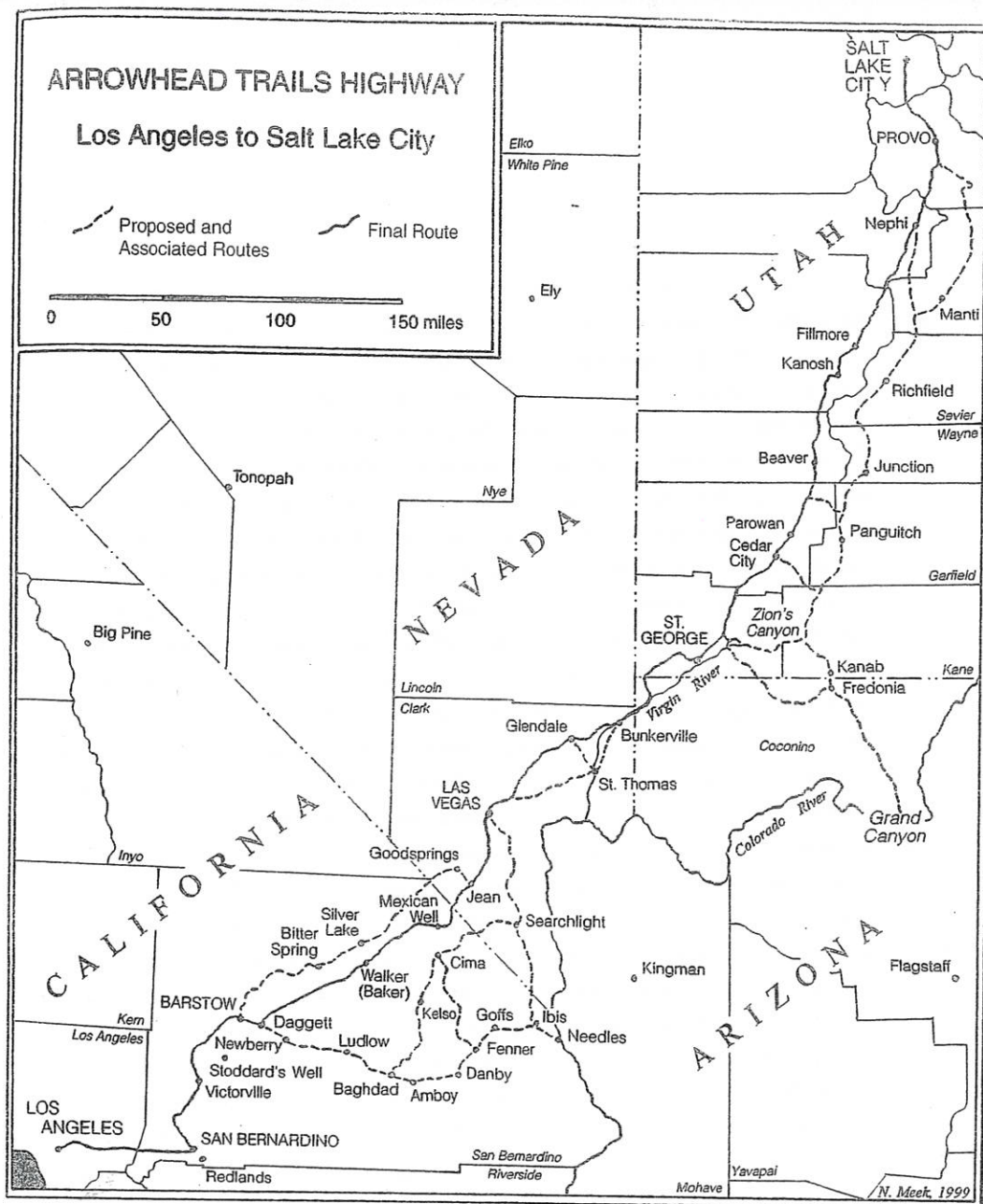
Although on several occasions the promoters stated that the proposed Arrowhead Trail followed "the route traveled by the old

¹⁰ *Millard County Progress*, September 29, October 6, November 10, 1916; Lyman and Newell, *Millard County*, 246–47.

¹¹ *Touring Topics*, December 1917, 9; May 1918, 15; June 1918, 15.

¹² Charles Bigelow scrapbook, including clippings from *Los Angeles Times*, November 1, 1908, *Oakland Tribune*, February 22, 1911, and *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 23, 1911, Dixie College Archives; also *Las Vegas Age*, May 13, 1916, which asserts that Bigelow had also blazed the other routes.

¹³ *Las Vegas Age*, February 5, 12, April 1, May 13, 1916.



Map prepared by Norman Meek, California State University, San Bernardino.

Mormons when they trekked across the desert with their oxen and unyielding [sic] carts and found a way through the mountains to [the San Bernardino] valley," the Arrowhead Trail in fact followed that road only on each end.¹⁴ In his explorations, locator Bigelow doubtless skirted Death Valley as the pioneers did and maybe then crossed Mountain Springs and passed the town of Blue Diamond to reach Las Vegas, but he was too good at his job to select that route for automo-

¹⁴ *Redlands Review*, July 12, 1916.

biles, mainly because of its two steep mountain passes and several long stretches of soft sand. The locator initially preferred a route nearly parallel to the Salt Lake Railroad from Amboy to Kelso, Cima, and Manville, California, and then to Jean and Las Vegas, Nevada. But at the same time, Clark County, Nevada, officials preferred a route through Barstow and Silver Lake, California, then on to Jean. Both were superior to the route that had been in use for some eight years, which ran between Goffs and Needles, California, then north through Searchlight, Nevada. After Las Vegas, the old Mormon road would be followed more closely.¹⁵

One family took that route apparently even before the National Old Trails section was improved with oil in 1916. About 1914, the Lafayette Morrison family moved from San Diego to settle in the new farming community of Woodrow, Utah, camping along the way. The first day, they traveled from Riverside to Barstow. A son, Ralph, later recalled "the trip up Cajon Pass was rather rugged but passible [sic] and we did OK getting to Barstow." They broke a driveshaft on the Franklin car, but fortunately a mechanic at Searchlight recalled a similar automobile burned and abandoned some miles out of town, retrieved the necessary part, made the repairs, and sent the family on toward Las Vegas. There they camped at a ranch that had a well, a spring, a pond of water, and a friendly proprietor who allowed camping. On the next day's journey, Ralph remembered "one bad sandy strip of road" on which they encountered five or six cars coming from the other direction—a surprising number for that early stage, although most were probably Nevada people. The Morrisons assisted an oncoming automobile that got stuck in the sand, and the entire group worked together to get all the vehicles safely on their way.

The family ordered meals at a hotel in Mesquite, and Ralph long remembered the greasy eggs that he could not eat, although he appreciated the bread, butter, and milk served. After waiting for more auto parts after a second breakdown at Littlefield, Arizona, the family arrived in St. George, where they ordered another dinner at a little restaurant. The steaks appeared to the cautious mother to be "pretty old and smelled kinda spoiled," and Ralph was again disappointed.

For the then-young man, one of the most memorable segments of the trip was the so-called Black Ridge between St. George and Cedar City, "over a terrible road." He also recalled difficulty with the

¹⁵ Lyman, "Arrowhead Trails Highway."

road through the low pass just south of Beaver. As an older man, Ralph concluded, "Actually, while it was quite a trip and would be unthinkable to tackle it nowadays under those conditions, we were treated very well on the trip. People that we met in the little towns were very accommodating and if we needed help they helped us."¹⁶

During the spring of 1917, as the nation was adjusting to involvement in World War I, some opponents of the Arrowhead Highway—probably backers of the Lincoln Highway—informed the U. S. War Department that the infant Los Angeles-to-Salt Lake City road was simply an unproved paper project that should not be included in the national highway system then being worked out by the military. Arrowhead Trails advocates heard the allegation and immediately organized a timed one-car road race to demonstrate how fast the new route could be traveled. Naturally, Bigelow was one of the drivers; he was joined by Capt. O. R. Bird and Sgts. H. A. Baker and Roy Hamilton. Although the well-publicized trip was staged during a period of considerable rain and mud, it took but thirty-six and a quarter hours, including time out for meals and some remarkably quick tire changes by the sergeants. This was the fastest time ever recorded between the two cities, achieved despite a blinding storm that slowed the car for 150 miles. The drivers asserted that in normal weather and road conditions the trip could be made easily in about twenty-four hours. Convinced of the practicality of the Arrowhead route, the War Department changed its route priorities, although it designated the shorter Cima cutoff blazed by Bigelow rather than the common and marked route through Searchlight.¹⁷

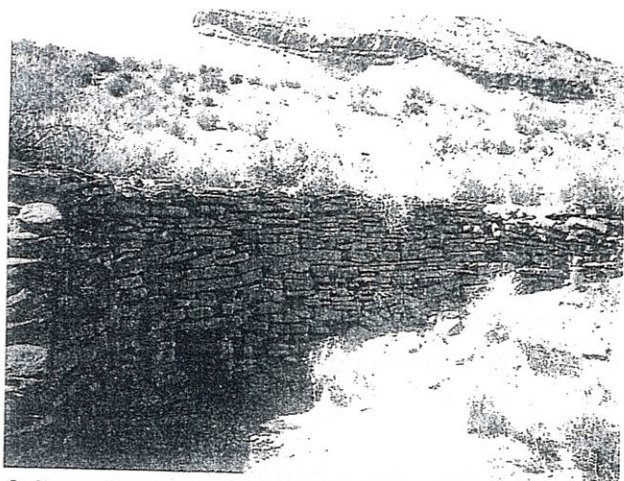
Even though Arrowhead promoters did not encourage pleasure touring while the United States was involved in World War I, traffic increased over the route, as it did on the National Old Trails and Lincoln highways. In April 1917, 123 automobiles bound either for Los Angeles or Salt Lake City were helped across the bridgeless Virgin River; 200 passed the Indian farm at Santa Clara during the first three weeks of July. The following year, 218 cars were assisted at the Virgin during April and 196 during the first eighteen days of May. It was estimated that up to 2,500 cars would use the roadway that year.¹⁸

Residents along the highway clearly perceived the benefits to their communities of the increased traffic, and many participated in

¹⁶ Ralph S. Morrison "Recollections," undated typescript in Great Basin Museum, Delta, Utah.

¹⁷ *Millard County Progress*, June 11, 1917; *Las Vegas Age*, June 16, 1917.

¹⁸ *Las Vegas Age*, March 16, May 12, August 11, 1917, March 16, July 1, 1918.



Still-standing "rip-rap" fill bridge across a wash on Utah Hill, probably constructed by Utah State Prison labor and used early in the existence of the Arrowhead Highway. Photo taken early 1990s by Clifford L. Walker.

Utah Historical Quarterly

volunteer work days to repair chuckholes and rake loose rocks out of the roadway. In mid-March 1918 some thirty-eight horse teams, with scrapers, ditchers, and other equipment, along with more than fifty other laborers from St. George, Santa Clara, and the Shivwits Indian Reservation, greatly improved one of the first stretches of the road within Utah.

The previous winter, a crew of state prison convicts had worked, probably less willingly, in the Utah Hill vicinity; possibly the rip-rap rock-fill bridge still visible there on the now-abandoned road was built by these convicts. Citizens of Santa Clara and Kanarra also donated a tremendous amount of labor to improving the highway in 1920.¹⁹

The communities took additional steps. The *Salt Lake Tribune* noted that several towns along the Arrowhead route mounted beautification efforts to enhance community appearance as the expected traffic increases began to materialize.²⁰ A column in the *Beaver Press* queried whether most local citizens realized how many tourists from Arizona, California, Nevada, and beyond passed through town. The paper noted that the community needed "better accommodations for these people" so that they would stay in town longer and "spend some of their money [there] instead of going to larger cities." Townspeople soon made substantial improvements in tourist housing and eating establishments, and Beaver thereafter remained more than able to garner its share of tourist dollars. Neighboring towns strove to do the same.²¹

Despite the enthusiasm of the southern Utah counties and municipalities, state officials appeared more than a little slow in extending cooperation to the Arrowhead project. Finally, in September 1918, Governor Bamberger, state engineer George F. McGonagle, and deputy state engineer Ray Galbraith met with representatives of various counties through which the Arrowhead Trail ran and belatedly offered promises that Utah would do her part to

¹⁹ *Las Vegas Age*, February 12, March 16, July 6, 1918; *Washington County News*, January 8, 1920, March 22, April 5, 1923; Ezra Knowlton, *History of Highway Development in Utah* (Salt Lake City: Utah State Road Commission, 1967), 198.

²⁰ Quoted in *Washington County News*, January 8, 1920.

²¹ *Beaver Press*, July 11, 1919.

improve the highway. They promised \$15,000 in federal funds to construct a better bridge across the Santa Clara River and to build the highway across the nearby Shivwits Indian reservation. It appeared that even more money would be forthcoming. In early 1920 Arrowhead Highway pioneer Charles Bigelow not only predicted heavy traffic on the route but also stated that two million dollars raised by state bonds would soon be available for work on the Arrowhead Trail.²²

The activities of the Arrowhead boosters had slackened during the war, but in the fall of 1918 they reorganized as the Arrowhead Development Association with Joseph H. Manderfield, the Union Pacific traffic manager who was tremendously popular in southern Utah, as president. Each state chose a vice president. Local promoter Joseph S. Snow, from the prominent St. George family, was Utah vice president, and E. W. Griffith, an original promoter of the road, was his Nevada counterpart. California later chose F. A. Wann, formerly of Utah and also a Union Pacific employee, for its vice president. Reportedly, association president Manderfield devoted much time to promoting the association and highway with the goal of getting its share of the 1919 travel traffic.²³

By then, Congress had, through a series of new highway laws, improved the prospects for relatively poor, sparsely populated states like Utah and Nevada. In July 1916 legislation provided for federal cooperation with states in construction of rural roads. The U. S. Department of Agriculture was given responsibility for distributing the funds on the basis of population, area, and mileage of roads. Initially, states were expected to match the federal funds. However, in 1919 Congress liberalized this requirement and increased the amount of federal money that could be spent per mile of highway. In 1921 Congress again reduced the proportion of matching funds expected from the states, to about twenty-six percent. This measure saved Utah from an almost impossible funding dilemma.

At a meeting of the state road commission on October 8, 1919, Charles Bigelow, who was now living in St. George, was appointed special district engineer over road work in Washington and Iron counties. Several months later, Bigelow and fellow St. George highway enthusiast Joseph Snow journeyed to southern California to procure road-building equipment. While there, they also arranged for what was

²² *Las Vegas Age*, September 14, 1918, February 14, 1920.

²³ *Ibid.*, September 14, December 28, 1918, January 25, 1919.

called "the heaviest advertising campaign yet of Utah and its scenic attractions" ever mounted. In order to garner a large share of the tourist traffic so rapidly proliferating in the California southland, they prepared pamphlets that included photographs, strip maps, information on tourist accommodations, and verbal descriptions of Utah. While no mention was made in the Utah newspapers of the Automobile Club of Southern California, it was known that the branch offices of that organization were given large numbers of these pamphlets to be circulated among motorists inquiring about tours in that region. At the same time, promoters like W. W. Wylie of Pasadena, who owned campgrounds at Zion and on the north rim of the Grand Canyon, were lavishing unrestrained praise on the canyons and other wonders to be seen in southern Utah.²⁴

With hopes of receiving federal funds after the war, the Utah Road Commission planned projects related to the Arrowhead Trails that would have exceeded anyone's previous expectations. Highway improvements were projected for segments of the roadway between St. George and Buckhorn (a spring between Parowan and Beaver), from Kanosh to Holden, and from Scipio to Levan; this would create a total of more than 150 miles of good gravel-surfaced roads. All was in readiness to complete these segments, but then state officials realized that, even at a reduced percentage, it was not at all certain that they could meet the matching funds obligations.²⁵ The central problem southern Utah faced was that the majority of the population, including state lawmakers, had never paid much attention to the portion of the state beyond the Wasatch Front, particularly in budget expenditures.

Additionally, there were people in the northern portion of the state, including W. D. Rishel, manager of the Utah State Automobile Association, who seemingly engaged in conscious efforts to belittle the importance of the Arrowhead route.²⁶ In the 1919 edition of the "Official Touring Guide" of the Utah State Automobile Association, there was no mention of the Arrowhead Trail Highway; in fact, only a dozen pages out of 180 even dealt with roads south of Nephi. A late November issue of the *Salt Lake Herald* featured an article discussing

²⁴ *Washington County News*, October 16, December 18, 1919, February 5, 1920.

²⁵ *Official Touring Guide*, Utah State Automobile Association, 1919, 157-69.

²⁶ *Salt Lake Tribune*, September 30, 1915, indicates how opposed the head of the Utah auto club was to the early efforts to promote the Arrowhead Highway. This is in exact opposition to his daughter's later assertions in Virginia Rishel, *Wheels to Adventure: Bill Rishel's Western Routes* (Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers, 1983), 119-20, which argues that Rishel was the one who first recognized that the route was viable and that he had difficulty interesting southern Utah citizens. This assertion is patently false.

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the highways bringing traffic into the state. According to the article, the five highways funneling motorists into the northern Utah population and commercial centers brought just over 20,000 automobiles into the state during the first ten months of 1919, while the Arrowhead Trail carried only 1,244 non-local cars. However, Jody Leavitt, who was employed at Mesquite to pull automobiles across the Virgin River, had figures indicating that he assisted 4,952 non-local cars that year, not counting those who got through on their own during low-water periods. This was a figure at least equal to the best of the northern Utah entrances into the state, even in the infancy of the Arrowhead. Yet newspaper readers in northern Utah had no way to know that fact.²⁷

Equally serious was the condition of some southern Utah roads and the probability that they would remain poor through lack of proper legislative initiative. The San Pedro, Los Angeles and Salt Lake City Railroad, soon fully incorporated into the Union Pacific system, passed within thirty-five miles of Cedar City, and most mail for a large portion of southwestern Utah was unloaded at Lund station. But the road from there to Cedar was a virtual quagmire impassable for motorized vehicles during the winter season. In early 1920, it could take more than a month for parcel post material to reach Cedar City from Lund, a fact that the *Iron County Record* termed "a disgrace to the state." Having virtually no contact with northern Utah during the harsh winter, some 30,000 people depended on prompt improvement of the road. The irrepressible Charles Bigelow traveled from St. George to Las Vegas to determine if the founder of an early freight-line, Joseph Milne, could get a truck over the Arrowhead route to deliver much-needed gasoline, medicine, and other supplies. All understood that with proper highway improvement southern Utah communities would seldom be similarly stranded in the future.²⁸

But the situation first had to get worse. In mid-March 1920 Bigelow received notice from his superior, State Road Engineer Ira Browning, that all new state construction work in Iron and Washington County must cease. This was because the two million dollars in state highway bonds could not then be sold at par, and state law prohibited selling them for the highest offer, which was \$91 on each \$100 of face value. This meant that, even though the dedication of Zion National Park was approaching that year, most state officials

²⁷ *Salt Lake Herald*, November 26, 1919; *Washington County News*, December 18, 1919.

²⁸ *Iron County Record*, quoted in *Washington County News*, February 12, 1920.

could see no way to assist the people in the southern end of the state to prepare for that event. However, another state road engineer, George McGonagle, suggested that the various counties interested in completion of the highway could take up some of the bonds until the market improved.²⁹

In the meantime, Arrowhead promoters perceived still another attempt to thwart their efforts. The Salt Lake City press noted a meeting at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco held to plan fundraising through subscription and state expenditures to complete the interstate Lincoln Highway from Wendover, Utah, through the Sierra Nevada to the Pacific Coast. According to the *San Francisco Examiner*, a fund of just under a half million dollars was being raised "for the purpose of diverting travel from southern California to northern California." Some southern Utah newspapermen noted that officials of the San Francisco-based California State Automobile Association were active in this effort and alleged that some leaders of the Utah State Automobile Association, particularly director Rishel, were fully cooperative with such efforts. They raised a pertinent question: "Why is it that certain Salt Lake people work so hard for Reno and against the southern portion of the state?"³⁰

In mid-June 1920 the *Washington County News* noted that in the recent Sunday editions of the Salt Lake City papers articles on the roads of southern Utah ignored the term "Arrowhead Trails Highway," preferring such verbiage as "road to St. George" and "Zion's Canyon highway" instead. The *News* also discussed a *Salt Lake Tribune* column by Wesley King proposing that the name "Arrowhead Trails Highway" be replaced with "Zion Park Highway." The *News* alleged that King's proposal—and the apparent acceptance of it by the papers—was part of an effort by agents of the northern California tourist industry "seeking to counter the interests of southern California."³¹

One advantage of the southern route that opponents could hardly deny was the superior scenery adjacent to the Arrowhead route. This continued to be one of the most consistent messages of Charles Bigelow, who stressed the fantastic natural tourist attractions the new roadway would open to the public. Zion Canyon and the

²⁹ *Washington County News*, March 25, 1920.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, April 29, 1920.

³¹ *Ibid.*, June 17, 1920. Similarly, the next year the *Salt Lake Tribune*, on June 18, 19, 1921, published a full-page article and map showing Salt Lake City as the "Hub of Park Tourist Traffic," with what was labeled as the Zion Park Highway running through Cedar City all the way to Barstow, California. Although some maps even in the 1940s still used the term Arrowhead Trails Highway, the name Highway 91 was being utilized by the 1930s.

north rim of the Grand Canyon were simply the foremost of these, with Bryce Canyon and Cedar Breaks also notable. It is likely that the Union Pacific Railroad had the promotion of these excellent tourist attractions in mind, at least partially, when it lent so much support to early advocacy of the Arrowhead Trails Highway. Certainly, better access roads were essential to proper promotion of what could be called national scenic treasures.

Despite the fact that the highway system was hardly adequate, in mid-September 1920 Zion was dedicated as a national park during rather elaborate proceedings chaired by Stephen T. Mather, director of the national parks system. Mormon apostle Richard R. Lyman, a former member of the Utah Highway Commission, represented LDS church president Heber J. Grant, and numerous political and business leaders were among the speakers, many of whom pled for better access roads to the parks. One of those, C. E. McStay of the Automobile Club of Southern California, candidly stated the fundamental fact that the typical tourist spent an average of twenty dollars per day if facilities warranted. The lack of such facilities was still a foremost challenge for southern Utah citizens.³²

One of the most crucial segments of the Arrowhead Trails Highway in Utah was the abrupt grade down the Black Ridge near the rim of the Great Basin to the lower elevations of the state's Dixie. In earlier pioneer days, wagons had to be lowered down this spot with ropes. County and state plans to improve this section had been rejected by engineers of the United States Road Commission, but in 1922 federal officials examined the site and submitted a plan that was accepted. At the end of the year the Utah Highway Commission approved a cooperative arrangement for improving the section and appropriated \$47,787 from Washington County's portion of the road bond funds to cover the local portion of the cost. Early the next year, Senator Reed Smoot of Utah was able to obtain a \$133,000 appropriation for construction of highways and bridges within Zion National Park.³³ Yet there was still much road construction to be accomplished in the area.

In the spring of 1923 the Provo Chamber of Commerce hosted a meeting that was well-attended by representatives of southern Utah counties. At the meeting a Scenic Highway Association was organized to promote the Arrowhead Trails route and neighboring potential

³² Ibid., September 16, 30, 1920.

³³ Ibid., December 7, 1922, March 8, 1923.

In November 1921, at a well-attended regular meeting of the Utah Society of Engineers hosted by the Salt Lake City Commercial Club, R. J. Finch, chief regional engineer of the U. S. Bureau of Public Roads, urged the need for a Utah tax on gasoline, which was helping to solve the highway funding challenges in other states. Auto association director W. D. Rishel seconded the timely proposal. This recommendation undoubtedly stemmed not only from the crisis of the Utah Highway Commission having cut half its staff, particularly its engineers, in the previous year but also out of frustration with the consistent parsimony of the state legislature on such matters. Two years later the same subject was recommended to members of a new legislature by Governor Charles R. Mabey. This time, the lawmakers complied with a tax of two and a half cents per gallon, one of the most important steps yet made for highway building in Utah.³⁶ Still, although the state gasoline tax and federal assistance for highway construction were already in place by 1924, their ultimate success was not yet assured. And the bond funds that had earlier appeared so abundant had not fulfilled the needs in southern Utah.

Thus several other, seemingly drastic, methods of highway financing were attempted. The first of these stemmed from an effort by the Scenic Highways Association to further improve the old road from Iron County into Washington County in order to make Zion and Grand Canyons more easily accessible. In the absence of sufficient state funds in hand, the Association decided to encourage citizens in the various counties along the Arrowhead Trail to underwrite the borrowing of \$35,000 from banks situated between St. George and Salt Lake City. Each \$1,000 note was to be endorsed by fifteen individuals who guaranteed its payment should the state not eventually appropriate the funds to repay this indebtedness. Salt Lake City and Utah County businessmen were prompt in providing their \$10,000 portions, dramatically signifying that not all in that part of the state opposed developments along the Arrowhead Highway. Fillmore raised its county quota of \$2,500 in just twenty minutes. In Washington County, the only one in southern Utah to be assessed a full \$5,000, \$2,000 each was cosigned by citizens in St. George and Hurricane, with the remaining amount underwritten in the communities closer to Zion Park. This endeavor was referred to by a *Washington County News* writer as "a loan to the state road commission." The Utah legislature, perhaps with

³⁶ *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 17, 1921; Knowlton, *History of Highway Development*, 232.

a degree of embarrassment over a situation forced upon them by earlier negligence toward southern Utah, finally redeemed the obligation during their 1926-27 session. This generous and perhaps unique private initiative undertaken by civic-minded Utahns is a revealing commentary on the attitudes that persisted among many in the more densely populated portions of northern Utah. Certainly such a contingency was never required to provide for highway or other needs in that part of the state, which had clearly been better served by previous legislatures.³⁷

An even more unusual highway fundraising venture was Governor Mabey's pilgrimage to southern California to appeal for \$100,000 from the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and the Auto Club of Southern California. Doubtless, as Utah highways historian Ezra C. Knowlton has suggested, the governor was encouraged by the offer of \$50,000 from San Francisco Bay-area supporters of the so-called Utah-Nevada-California Highway Association, then promoting the east-west Lincoln Highway. Half of this amount had already been delivered prior to Mabey's journey to the California southland late in 1923. As he confided to Stephen T. Mather, who was still director of the National Parks Service and equally interested in southern Utah highway development, Mabey requested the funds "to help us finance the southwestern highways of Utah." He asserted to the federal official that if the money was forthcoming, of which he was confident, the state would not only be able to complete the Arrowhead Trails Highway, but it would also probably receive sufficient similar assistance to finance the highways to the region's national parks. As Knowlton has stated, "It is doubtful if any other governor in the nation ever went to such extremes in attempts to attain outside financial aid for state highways."³⁸ The negligence by the Utah legislature that made this solicitation seem desirable was certainly related to the rivalry between the competing interstate highways, the Lincoln and Arrowhead. Most lawmakers clearly sympathized with the former.

It was the most obvious manifestation of northern hostility toward southern Utah highway and tourism development that ultimately prevented Mabey's fundraising efforts from reaching fruition. The governor had agreed to allow each of the rival California automobile clubs to place its road signs on the Utah highways they had pledged

³⁷ *Utah Highways*, 1:9 (April 1924); *Washington County News*, April 3, 1924; Knowlton, *History of Highway Development*, 236.

³⁸ *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 22, 1924; Governor Mabey to Stephen T. Mather, December 14, 1923, quoted in Knowlton, *History of Highway Development*, 236-38.

to help construct. This led to a series of "spirited" state highway commission meetings at which Utah Automobile Association members protested against outsiders placing signs with their colors and logos within the state. These extensive signing programs admittedly had the aim of guiding travelers toward California. But Utah had itself failed to provide signs, and opposition to the effort appears to be the epitome of pettiness.

Eventually, after the Utah Highway Commission asserted an unusual degree of independence, and with the mediation of Elias Woodruff of the Scenic Highway Association and Randall L. Jones, a Cedar City agent of the Union Pacific Railroad, a compromise was reached. Both Utah Automobile Association and California organization signs would be placed on the same posts, with the Utah sign on top. In the case of the southern Utah highway, this duplication was necessary because the Utah Automobile Association persisted in refusing to mention the name "Arrowhead" even though it was favored by virtually all the citizens of southern Utah, southern Nevada, and southern California. Thus, the rival organizations each had maps and directional booklets utilizing their preferred highway names, necessitating both road signs to prevent added confusion.³⁹

The real significance of this controversy was that the northern Utah antagonism doubtless alienated the southern California businessmen who had recently pledged to spend \$100,000 on Utah highways. In mid-January 1924 Utah road commissioner and future governor Henry H. Blood and chief state highway engineer Howard C. Means rushed to the California southland to confer with representatives of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and the Auto Club of Southern California to "correct erroneous impressions" that had arisen regarding the Utah highway project. While the Utah delegates found a good lasting cordiality toward Governor Mabey, there was clearly less willingness to commit financial assistance. When they returned, all that the Utahns could report was that the question of money contributions, clearly rescinded for the moment, would again be raised at the proper time within the Los Angeles organizations. Apparently, that time never came, and the funds Mabey had once virtually secured were not forthcoming.⁴⁰

Despite such setbacks, within another year the scenic highways of southern Utah had improved sufficiently that the official state publi-

³⁹ *Washington County News*, January 24, 1924.

⁴⁰ *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 22, 1924.

for further delay, particularly when the Automobile Club of Southern California had raised ten thousand dollars to assist in the highway shortening project. Slow as this project was to come to completion, California paved its segment of the Arrowhead Highway some years earlier than the other participating states.⁴³

In the spring of 1926, H. C. Wilson, a staff photographer for the *Salt Lake Tribune*, drove an automobile from Salt Lake City to Los Angeles in twenty-five hours, including stops. A month later, Ab Jenkins, Utah's most famous land speed record-seeker, drove a Studebaker an average of 48 miles per hour to make the trip in sixteen hours and seventeen minutes, with no stops except for gasoline. These times certainly added to the popularity of the new highway.⁴⁴

In 1920, Charles H. Bigelow had been proclaimed the "Father of the Arrowhead Trail" at a Cedar City convention of the Arrowhead Trails Association. In later life, Mesquite garage operator Howard Pulsipher recalled another view of this tireless promoter and road racer. He remembered Bigelow as a "poor old man with only one leg who did more to establish that highway than all the officials." This hardly fits the contemporary view of Bigelow, who was not only one of the officials himself but was at one time robust and obviously influential in circles of power. However, he did injure his leg in an automobile accident near LaVerkin in 1920; perhaps the injury led to complications. And it is doubtful whether his employment as a highway engineer continued beyond that point amidst the financial chaos then surrounding Utah highway construction. Later in the decade, which is the time Pulsipher appears to remember, since his own business was not established until 1924, the fortunes of the highway promoter could have declined sufficiently to make him fit the description.

"This poor old man," Pulsipher recalled, "at his own expense and all alone would leave Salt Lake in his old Ford or Chevrolet with cans of gasoline, canteens, tire patching, fan belts, oil, springs and everything to bounce over the rocks and through sand and mud holes" to assist motorists in need on the road. He also persistently contacted individuals and groups along the way he thought might help improve the road by building a bridge, hauling clay to a sandy stretch, clearing rocks from a crucial segment, or grading a steep hill. It was said that he was always trying to get town boards and county commissions to assist as he worked his way toward Los Angeles and then returned.

⁴³ Lyman, "Arrowhead Trails Highway," *Southern California Quarterly*, Summer 1999.

⁴⁴ *Las Vegas Age*, March 6, April 17, 1926.

Pulsipher stated that this work continued for three or four years, and the road was "greatly improved" prior to its being designated Highway 91. Apparently, then, the irrepressible locator and leading promoter of the road stayed with what must have become an obsession long after he faded from the official limelight and from the newspaper coverage he had been so adept at garnering for his earlier efforts.⁴⁵ Although Pulsipher's memoir implies that Bigelow lived in Salt Lake City, evidence suggests that Bigelow resided in St. George most of the remainder of his life and was ultimately buried there. Still, the recollection of Pulsipher, who also assisted needy motorists on the always-demanding Arrowhead route, is further indication that Bigelow should not be forgotten by the myriads of travelers who use his highway—whatever its current name.

In the ensuing years there would still be instances when northern Utah interests would be less than fair toward the southern Utah region in the realm of interstate highway priorities. This was particularly true during the delays in completing Highway 6-50 from Price to Ely after World War II.⁴⁶ It was similarly apparent during efforts to have Interstate 70 pass westward from Salina through Scipio to juncture with Highway 6-50 in the Delta area and continue to San Francisco along the same latitude as the remainder of that interstate route.⁴⁷ On the other hand, the traffic funneled from I-70 further enhanced utilization of I-15 and thereby helped fulfill—beyond his fondest dreams—Douglas White's prediction that it would be one of the most important links in the entire interstate system. Today the route blazed by Arrowhead Trails locators and promoters, now also utilized by a natural gas pipeline and electric power transmission lines as well as by the railroad and airlines, is truly one of the busiest transportation corridors in the nation.

⁴⁵ Howard Pulsipher, "Autobiography," typescript, Utah State Historical Society; *Washington County News*, January 15, May 20, 1920.

⁴⁶ At one point in 1948 citizens of Nevada became so frustrated with Utah's delays in completing its segment of the highway that they offered Utah a quarter-million-dollar loan, interest free, to speed the process of construction. The Utah state attorney general weakly determined that, since he could find no statute authorizing such an action, he advised against the proposal. A Fallon, Nevada, newspaperman alleged at the time that the political interests of northern Utah cared little for a highway that would enable travelers to cross the state without visiting or spending money at Salt Lake City. See Lyman and Newell, *Millard County*, chapter ten; also *Millard County Chronicle*, September 20, November 1, 1945, November 27, 1947, July 14, 1949, January 5, 1950, October 18, 1951.

⁴⁷ In 1966 some central Utah and Nevada businessmen attempted to persuade Utah state and federal highway officials of the logic of continuing the east-west transcontinental roadway to connect with Highway 6-50. They had no success at all, partly because the communities which would benefit from the diverted traffic, both southward toward Las Vegas and Los Angeles and north toward Salt Lake City, benefited from the highway terminating where planned. See *Millard County Chronicle*, February 23, 1967, December 10, 1970, April 15, September 30, 1971, February 17, 1977.

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