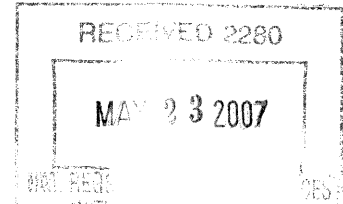


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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable". For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Lincoln Highway – Duncan West

Other names/site number (PT00-280)

2. Location

Street & number North Boulevard in Duncan, rural 145th Street

Not for publication

City or town Village of Duncan and Butler Township

Vicinity

State Nebraska Code NE County Platte County Code 141 Zip code N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Michael J. Ball
Signature of certifying official

May 17, 2007
Date

**Director/CEO, Nebraska State Historical Society
State Historic Preservation Officer**

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

see continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.

see continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): _____

Edson H. Ball 7.3.07

for
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- X Private
Public-local
Public-state
Public-federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- Building(s)
District
Site
X Structure
Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing and 4 rows: Buildings, Sites, Structures, Objects, Total.

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
Historic and Architectural Resources of the
Lincoln Highway in Nebraska

Number of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION/road related (vehicular)

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION/road related (vehicular)

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation N/A

Walls N/A

Roof N/A

Other GRAVEL and DIRT SURFACING

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- X A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B Removed from its original location.
C A birthplace or a grave.
D A cemetery.
E A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F A commemorative property.
G Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance

1913-1928

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

UNKNOWN

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
Previously listed in the National Register
Previously determined eligible by the National Register
Designated a National Historic Landmark
Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location for additional data:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local Government
University
Other
Name of repository:

Lincoln Highway – Duncan West

Name of Property

Platte County, Nebraska

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property: Approximately 7.2 acres

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

Table with 7 columns: Zone, Easting, Northing, Zone, Easting, Northing. Rows 1-4.

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title L. Robert Puschendorf, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
organization Nebraska State Historical Society date January 2007
street & number P.O. Box 82554, 1500 R Street telephone (402) 471-4769
city or town Lincoln state NE zip code 68501

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

Union Pacific Railroad Company
Platte County Board of Supervisors
name/title Village of Duncan
1400 Douglas, Stop 1690 (402) 544-8558
2610 14th Street (402) 563-4904
street & number Village Hall, 906 8th Street Telephone (402) 897-5285
Omaha Nebraska 68179
Columbus Nebraska 68601
city or town Duncan state Nebraska zip code 68634

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, (15 USC 470 et seq.). Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Lincoln Highway – Duncan West

Name of Property

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DESCRIPTION

This section of the former Lincoln Highway begins in the village of Duncan (2,000 population, 359) and continues southwest as a rural road paralleling the railroad through an agricultural setting of the broad Platte River valley. In Duncan, it begins at 8th Street and Main Avenue, the location of a Lincoln Highway marker, and continues southwest on a vacated section of North Boulevard. Continuing west from town, it follows 145th Street for approximately 2.4 miles. It terminates at a grade crossing. The section of road retains excellent integrity. The nominated property includes the roadbed, an avenue of trees, and a Lincoln Highway marker.

In Duncan the route followed North Boulevard, skirting the central business district. The nominated section begins at 8th Street and Main Avenue, the location of a Lincoln Highway marker (Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey PT04-025). The Lincoln Highway marker, *in situ*, was approximately four feet in height, now buried to a height of three feet and once featured a bronze medallion with the relief of Lincoln, now removed. An incised arrow is on the side denoting that the highway once continued straight ahead. The marker featured the red-white-blue stripes and letter "L," the logo of the Lincoln Highway. The road continues southwest to 10th Avenue on a vacated section of North Boulevard, which is flanked to the south by an avenue of two rows of hackberry trees (Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey PT04-027). The avenue of trees defines the now-vacated section of road. Both features are considered contributing to the nominated section of road. Where the road into Duncan on North Boulevard once entered town from the east, the road has been resurfaced with modern asphalt and is not being nominated.

As route continues west from the city at its intersection with 10th Avenue it is a county road, 145th Street, which parallels the railroad on the north (Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey PT00-280). The rural section of road falls between Union Pacific milepost marker 92 on the east to milepost marker 95 on the west. This section of road is approximately 2.4 miles in length and consists partially of gravel surfacing and partially of dirt, graded and flanked by grassed, shallow ditches on a 50-foot railroad right-of-way. It can still be driven, given seasonal conditions. A railroad crossing defines it terminus at the west. It is not been included in this nomination, having been altered since the period of significance by elevating the railroad track bed.

The road west of the section being nominated crosses to the south of the railroad. Today's route of U.S. 30 still follows this south alignment. It has been improved with modern concrete and paved shoulders and has not been included in this nomination.

This section of road retains excellent integrity. The roadway retains characteristic features from the historic period(s) of the highway and conveys integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. This nomination includes the roadbed and its right-of-way. Contributing properties include the avenue of trees and the Lincoln Highway marker, both in Duncan.

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Lincoln Highway – Duncan West

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Section 8 Page 1

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Lincoln Highway was to be a paved, toll free cross-country highway. The Lincoln Highway Association, founded in 1913, and national and community supporters propelled the highway into national significance as the nation's first transcontinental automobile route. As the highway progressed from a road first mapped by the Lincoln Highway Association to a well-traveled cross-country highway, improvements were made. The Lincoln Highway at Duncan west is an exemplary section of road that exhibits the development of the highway from the original route of the Lincoln Highway, mapped in 1913, to the period when routes began to be relocated to eliminate railroad grade crossings and the bypassing of communities.

Background

The broad Platte River valley in Nebraska was a natural corridor of travel. In the mid-nineteenth century it was the route of the Oregon-California Trail, the Mormon Trail, and Pony Express. Following the Platte River through today's Platte County were the Omaha-Fort Kearny military road (1857) and a road authorized by the Nebraska territorial legislature in 1864. Next to come was the transcontinental Union Pacific Railroad as it built through the Platte River valley beginning in 1866. The Lincoln Highway, established in 1913, was another milestone in the evolution of the Platte River valley in Nebraska as a route for the nation's travel; a trail of the twentieth century and the nation's first transcontinental automobile route.

In a promotional booklet issued by the Lincoln Highway Association for its 1913 meeting in Detroit, the road in Nebraska was described:

At Omaha the state of Nebraska is entered, following the historical Overland Trail up the broad and prosperous Platte river valley. The entire distance across the length of this state is, approximately, 450 miles. The route is natural and easy. It affords opportunities for constructing a picturesque roadway such as cannot be equaled in any state in the union.¹

Routes of the Lincoln Highway make their earliest appearance in a Nebraska guidebook dated 1913.² The earliest routes followed existing roads. Where these routes jogged along section lines, the road consisted in a "stairstep" of left and right turns. The most direct routes, however, were those roads paralleling the Union Pacific Railroad's mainline, which followed in a cross-country path through the Platte River valley. When the railroad first built its railroad line across the state, the federal government granted up to a 400-foot right-of-way as a subsidy. However, because the railroad did not require this much right-of-way, they leased portions of it to counties to use as public roads. In a large number of places, these existing county roads were incorporated into the route of the Lincoln Highway, resulting in numerous crossings of railroad grades. The 1915 "Official Road Guide of the Lincoln Highway" stated that in Nebraska "(f)requent crossings of the Union Pacific Railroad are encountered, and tourists are cautioned to use extreme care, although normally the trains can be seen for long distances before the approach."³

By 1919, about 160 miles of the highway in Nebraska were located on Union Pacific right-of-way, representing about one-third of the entire route.⁴ As travel increased on the Lincoln Highway, cars crossing the tracks resulted in accidents. Realignment to the route were proposed to avoid railroad crossings. They also shortened the route, making it more direct. Early improvements to the Lincoln Highway, however, were hampered where roads were located on railroad right-of-way. The expenditure of Nebraska's federal-aid on any portion of the Lincoln Highway that followed on the outer 50 feet of the railroad's right-of-way was prohibited. As a result, many miles of the Lincoln Highway in Nebraska were not eligible for federal assistance appropriated by the 1916 Federal-Aid Road Act. It was not until 1919 that the federal government agreed that federal-aid could be used on these portions of the Lincoln Highway. After the agreement was reached, subsequent lease arrangements were entered into by counties, allowing improvements to these sections or the realignment of the route paralleling the Union Pacific

¹As quoted in the Columbus Telegram, October 3, 1913, page 7.

²Nebraska State Automobile Association, Official Road Book. Fremont, Nebraska: Road Book Department of the Nebraska State Automobile Association, 1913, page 61.

³The Complete Official Road Guide of the Lincoln Highway. Detroit, Michigan: The Lincoln Highway Association, 1915, page 100.

⁴"To Iron Out Road Wrinkles," Columbus Telegram, May 16, 1919, section 1, page 1.

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Lincoln Highway – Duncan West

Name of Property

Platte County, Nebraska

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mainline. Nearly half of the miles of the highway would eventually be located on Union Pacific right-of-way.⁵ The official history of the Lincoln Highway Association states that the agreement in Nebraska brought about the longest realignment of the Lincoln Highway in the United States.⁶

Field Secretary Gael S. Hoag aggressively took up the matter of grade crossings on behalf of the Lincoln Highway Association.⁷ In 1922, Hoag proposed that the highway between Fremont and Columbus pass on the north side of the railroad, from Columbus and Grand Island be taken to the south side of the Union Pacific, on the north side from Grand Island to North Platte, and the south side from North Platte to the Nebraska-Wyoming state line. The association's program for Nebraska would be to eliminate practically all crossings except for those located at Omaha, Elkhorn, Fremont, Columbus, Grand Island and North Platte.

(Hoag) explained that the association is getting the road in shape to be taken over by the federal government at a future date, and that when the federal government does take it over it will insist upon viaducts and tunnels at every railroad crossing - which will mean that the number of crossings must be reduced to the absolute minimum.⁸

The changes would not only reduce the number of grade crossings, but by locating the route as close as possible to the Union Pacific tracks would "eliminate every foot of extra mileage."⁹ Federal officials indicated the desire to eliminate railroad crossings: The federal highway department is holding fast to its attitude announced a year ago concerning railway crossings. In view of the increasing traffic and the consequent danger of railroad crossings, elimination of grade crossings is necessary. According to the present plans, the number of crossings over the Union Pacific will be reduced from 15 to 3 between Omaha and Grand Island.¹⁰

At the 1924 convention of the Nebraska Lincoln Highway Association, C.A. Weir, chairman of the Union Pacific's "Safety First" committee, reported that from state border to border there had been 30 grade crossing accidents between Omaha and Bushnell during the past year. Ten deaths had occurred and 19 people injured. He said:

Railroad crossing maintenance works a hardship on automobilists as well as the railroad company... Doubtless a Moses will rise to lead us to a solution. We are only to glad to cooperate with you on all safety work at railroad grade crossings. To preach safety does no good. You must practice it. That is what the Union Pacific is trying to do... The Union Pacific will be only too glad to cooperate with the Nebraska Lincoln Highway association in any way they desire to aid in eliminating grade crossings.¹¹

In August of 1925, Field Secretary Hoag of the Lincoln Highway Association, State Consul George Wolz of the Nebraska Lincoln Highway Association, and State Engineer Roy Cochran of the Nebraska Department of Public Works traveled the Lincoln Highway and, among other things, observed which railroad crossings should be eliminated. Hoag said:

The elimination of railway grade crossings and the paving of the Lincoln Highway that it might retain its position as the most traveled transcontinental automobile road in the country are the two chief objectives of the Lincoln Highway commission in the next few years.¹²

The officials agreed to eliminate all crossings between Columbus and Grand Island in the next three years.¹³

⁵ Nebraska Historic Highway Survey, Nebraska State Historical Society and Nebraska Department of Roads, report dated August 2002, page 52.

⁶ Carol Ahlgren and David Anthone, "The Lincoln Highway in Nebraska: The Pioneer Trail of the Automotive Age," Nebraska History Volume 73, No. 4 (Winter 1992), page 177.

⁷ Hokanson, Drake, The Lincoln Highway: Main Street Across America. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999, page 97.

⁸ "Only One Crossing in Platte County," Columbus Telegram, September 8, 1922, page 2.

⁹ "Only One Crossing in Platte County," Columbus Telegram, September 8, 1922, page 2.

¹⁰ "New Lincoln Highway in Colfax Next Year," Columbus Telegram, December 23, 1923, page 8. Reporting an article printed in the Schuyler Sun.

¹¹ "Pleads for Fewer Grade Crossings," Columbus Telegram, March 7, 1924, page 5.

¹² "Elimination of Rail Crossings is Object of Highway Officials," Columbus Telegram, August 14, 1925, page 5.

¹³ "Elimination of Rail Crossings is Object of Highway Officials," Columbus Telegram, August 14, 1925, page 5.

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Lincoln Highway – Duncan West

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It was reported that the Lincoln Highway would be paved or graveled from Omaha to North Platte by the end of 1925. Only a section between Central City and the Platte County line and one west of Duncan in Platte County were not.¹⁴

The Lincoln Highway at Duncan West

After a 1913 meeting of the Lincoln Highway Association in Detroit, Platte County boosters immediately began work to mark the route of the Lincoln Highway through the Platte County, led by Henry Ragatz of Columbus, county consul for the Nebraska Lincoln Highway Association.¹⁵ Just two months later, county supervisors appointed a committee to go over the road and make recommendations as to putting it into "first class condition."¹⁶ Among the several observations made was the straightening of the road to provide for the most direct route.

In only three places the Lincoln Highway paralleled the Union Pacific in Platte County. These were all located beginning at Duncan and west on railroad right-of way. For the most part, these roads were already designated as rural postal routes under Rural Free Delivery (RFD).¹⁷

Just east of Duncan the road crossed to the north side of the railroad. An automobile guidebook described the crossing into Duncan. "Keep left with poles along RR, crossing tracks..."¹⁸

Duncan traces its roots as a town located on the Union Pacific. Its main thoroughfares, however, were platted directly east-west, not paralleling the railroad with the exception of North Boulevard, which paralleled the north side of the Union Pacific Railroad and skirted the central commercial district. The road through Duncan followed North Boulevard, and continued southwest as it exited the city limits at the west. The road west from Duncan paralleled the railroad on the north and was used as a postal road, which accommodated Rural Free Delivery (RFD) mail service to the rural area and allowed mail service to pass through town.

About 2.4 miles southwest of town it crossed the tracks and continued on the south side of the railroad. Continuing on it crossed to the north of the railroad at Gardiner Station. (See National Register of Historic Places nomination, Lincoln Highway at Gardiner Station, January 2007). The road jogged west on a largely undeveloped wagon road to the Merrick County line where it returned to the south side. In total, the route from Duncan to the county line consisted of about seven miles of road and included four railroad grade crossings.

When the Platte County supervisors appointed their committee, the route west of Duncan was discussed. "Chief among the preliminary steps that will probably be asked of the county later on is the straightening of the road west of Duncan to the county line."¹⁹

Henry Ragatz visited Duncan to appoint a consul to represent Duncan.²⁰ The local consul would look after the road in the immediate area and generate support for the highway.

When delineated in 1913, the road through Duncan was immediately the subject of "keen interest" of the citizens:

(I)t will run through one of Duncan's principal streets. Duncan residents, one and all, are awake to the fact that the construction of such a permanent highway would open great possibilities for the town and they are all willing to put their shoulders to the wheel and push when their services are needed.²¹

¹⁴ "Lincoln Way Soon Paved or Graveled Omaha-North Platte," Columbus Telegram, April 30, 1925, page 8.

¹⁵ "Lincoln Highway Unchanged," Columbus Telegram, October 3, 1913, page 7.

¹⁶ "Take Interest in Highway," Columbus Telegram, December 5, 1913, page 14.

¹⁷ For the designated postal and wagon roads see Platte County plat map for parts of Oconee, Loup and Butler Township. Des Moines, Iowa: The Anderson Publishing Company, Map and Atlas Publishers, c. 1916. Collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society.

¹⁸ The Automobile Blue Book. Chicago: The Automobile Blue Book Publishing Company, 1916, Volume 5, page 451.

¹⁹ "Take Interest in Highway," Columbus Telegram, December 5, 1913, page 14.

²⁰ Columbus Telegram, November 7, 1913, page 4.

²¹ Columbus Telegram, October 10, 1913, page 8.

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Lincoln Highway – Duncan West

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Lincoln Highway certificates were being sold at a fast pace:

Considerable interest is being shown in the proposed highway, and the stock certificates are going fast. You can secure one for only \$5 at the Duncan State bank, and then know you have done something to help along the first big transcontinental highway.²²

The women of Duncan also rallied to the cause:

The young ladies of Duncan are active and enthusiastic boosters for the Lincoln Highway association and the young ladies of other towns might well pattern after their example. Last Saturday evening the young ladies served a coffee to raise money with which to swell the Highway fund... They are to be commended for their loyalty to the cause. Every such effort on the part of the friends of the movement brings just that much closer to the dawning of the day when paving of the Lincoln Highway shall be transformed from a dream into a reality.²³

In 1914, a press bulletin of the Lincoln Highway Association praised the work of Duncan:

Duncan, Nebr. is the center of great Lincoln Highway enthusiasm and for its size has probably accomplished more than any other town on the route.

Duncan is only a small town with a population of about 225, a few miles west of Columbus, Nebr. Up to date, twenty Lincoln Highway contributors' certificates have been issued in this community. Thirty-seven pairs of pennants and sixty-two Lincoln Highway buttons have been sold, while another consignment on one hundred buttons has just been sent forward to the local consul, W.H.Thomas, who is responsible for much of this enthusiasm.

Every room in the local school house has a Lincoln Highway pennant and the teachers have been giving lectures on the origin of the idea and the purposes and meaning of the Lincoln Highway association, the economic advantages of good roads, etc.

H.B.Waldron, consul for the state of Nebraska, says that this town is only a sample of the kind of enthusiasm shown all over the state.²⁴

The 1915 "Complete Official Road Guide of the Lincoln Highway" described the route at Duncan as well-marked. "Route marked through town and county; signs at town limits."²⁵

With the precedent-setting Federal-Aid Road Act of 1916, assistance became available for road construction, matched by state funding. That year, Platte County officials haggled with the Union Pacific Railroad regarding the road from Duncan west being on railroad right-of-way. The railroad insisted that the county either lease the ground on its right-of-way for twenty years at \$10 a year or move the road.²⁶ The county opted for a lease of a 50-foot right-of-way, rather than bear the expense of relocating the road.

Platte County applied for federal aid in 1917 and selected two projects. The Lincoln Highway through the entire county east to west was one.²⁷ However, federal aid was not available for those sections located on railroad right-of-way west of Duncan.

In 1919, George F. Wolz, state consul for the Nebraska Lincoln Highway Association, called for a meeting in Kearney to discuss the fact that federal aid was not available for roads that were located on railroad right-of-way. "Platte County is interested in the matter because it has about six miles of the Lincoln highway on Union Pacific land west of Duncan," reported the newspaper.²⁸

²² Columbus Telegram, November 7, 1913, page 4.

²³ "Duncan Doings," Columbus Telegram, May 8, 1914, page 4.

²⁴ "Good Boost for Duncan," Columbus Telegram, June 26, 1914, page 8.

²⁵ The Complete Official Road Guide of the Lincoln Highway. Detroit, Michigan: The Lincoln Highway Association, 1915, page 103.

²⁶ Columbus Telegram, December 15, 1916, page 1.

²⁷ "Name Roads for Federal Aid," Columbus Telegram, August 24, 1917, page 1.

²⁸ "To Iron Out Road Wrinkles," Columbus Telegram, May 16, 1919, section 1, page 1.

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Later that year, federal aid was approved for use on those roads located on railroad right-of-way in which counties had negotiated leases with the railroad. Platte county officials had already acted in advance and selected two supervisors to take up a lease with railroad officials for 50 years at a nominal yearly rental fee.²⁹ On a visit to Columbus, Henry C. Ostermann, field secretary of the Lincoln Highway Association, declared that "Platte County was the only county in Nebraska that had acted promptly and gotten its lease signed up."³⁰

Ostermann was presented with the county's preference to run the Lincoln Highway on the north side of the railroad west of Duncan to the Merrick County line. The route would eliminate two railroad crossings by building a new road grade opposite an existing road on the south.³¹

The year 1920 was to be a "banner year in road improvement" in Platte County. Surplus Army trucks had been procured from the state to be equipped with dump boxes and an order for two new tractors was proposed by the county supervisors to operate maintainers and road drags. Plans of the state highway engineer and county board of supervisors had been made. These plans included the grading and surfacing of the Lincoln Highway west to the Merrick County line.³² The following spring a twenty-ton Holt tractor "of the caterpillar type" and two twelve-foot graders were shipped to Duncan to work on the road.³³

In 1921, Gael S. Hoag, now field secretary for the Lincoln Highway Association, and State Consul George Wolz of the Nebraska Lincoln Highway Association authorized changes in the route beginning southwest of Columbus, eliminating the "stairstep" route of section and half-section line roads. This reduced a mile and a half in distance. The changes would continue the route of the Lincoln Highway from its junction with the Meridian Highway, traveling directly west and connect to the north road at Duncan.³⁴

Hoag visited Columbus in 1922 and explained that the program for the Lincoln Highway Association insisted on the elimination of grade crossings. He requested the elimination of all grade crossings in Platte County, except that in Columbus.³⁵ A route south of the railroad from Duncan to the Merrick county line was now under consideration.

At the 1924 convention of the Nebraska Lincoln Highway Association in Columbus, C.A. Weir, chairman of the Union Pacific's "Safety First" committee stated that "(t)here are four crossings that should and can be eliminated in Platte County. We cannot eliminate them. That is up to you. But we will help."³⁶ In conjunction with the convention, a conference was held with Platte County representatives and Union Pacific officials. The officials indicted the railroad's cooperation to work that summer to place the road to the south. One proposal would place the entire road from Duncan west to the Merrick County line on the south side. County officials were ready to take up the matter. Union Pacific officials had already prepared blueprints for the move to the south side. The chief engineer with the railroad indicated that he would "meet them half way." The railroad would contribute the necessary right-of-way under a long-term lease. However, officials declined to say if \$2,000 would be contributed to eliminate each grade crossing.³⁷

The Platte county board was at work just days later, meeting in conference. They discussed the elimination of the grade crossings from Duncan west to the Merrick County line. County officials, a Union Pacific engineer, Platte County Consul A.R. Miller of the Nebraska Lincoln Highway Association, and representatives of the Columbus Chamber of Commerce participated in the meeting. They took a trip over the road to observe its condition. Several Duncan representatives also accompanied the group. This would result in the move of the highway to pass to the south side of Duncan, eliminating its direct route through

²⁹ "May Lease Land for Lincoln Way," Columbus Telegram, July 25, 1919, section 1, page 1.

³⁰ "O.K.'s Change in the Lincoln Highway," Columbus Telegram, October 24, 1919, page 1.

³¹ "O.K.'s Change in the Lincoln Highway," Columbus Telegram, October 24, 1919, page 1.

³² "Big Program of Road Work Ahead," Columbus Telegram, February 27, 1920, section 1, page 1.

³³ "Buys Road-Making Outfit from State," Columbus Telegram, March 25, 1921, section 1, page 1.

³⁴ "Changes Made in Lincoln Highway," Columbus Telegram, July 29, 1921, section 1, page 1.

³⁵ "Only One Crossing in Platte County," Columbus Telegram, September 8, 1922, page 2.

³⁶ "Pleads for Fewer Grade Crossings," Columbus Telegram, March 7, 1924, page 5.

³⁷ "U.P. Will Cooperate With County Making Lincoln Way Change," Columbus Telegram, March 7, 1924, page 2.

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Lincoln Highway – Duncan West

Name of Property

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town. However, the Duncan representatives voiced no complaint, as the road west was "conceded to be one of the worst sections of the road in Nebraska."³⁸ The road west of Duncan was described:

About seven miles of highway are involved in the proposition, two miles now lying on the south side of the tracks and nearly five miles to be transferred to the south side from the north. Not the question of whether it should be done, but rather that of how it is to be accomplished is uppermost at the conference this afternoon.³⁹

County representatives would meet with State Engineer Roy Cochran of the Nebraska Department of Public Works asking for federal-state aid for the move.⁴⁰ The county board contemplated the south route west of Duncan as one of six projects for that summer. However, agreement between the state and Union Pacific was expected to delay the project.⁴¹

After the second of two trips to Grand Island the summer of 1924, A.R. Miller stated that Columbus was losing two-thirds of the tourist travel due to the "frightful" condition of the road west of Duncan. To avoid the condition of the highway, he found that travelers were detouring to the Detroit-Lincoln-Denver (DLD) and the Seward-York-Aurora (SYA) highways farther south. He urged county supervisors to go to work to put the road in shape.⁴²

When a delegation from Platte County met with State Engineer Cochran in March of 1925, they were given assurance that the road would be diverted to the south side if the state legislature made appropriations to meet federal-aid funding.⁴³ Preliminary surveys were made and prospects were that the highway could be contracted for construction in August.⁴⁴ State Engineer Cochran met with Union Pacific officials in October to settle the matter of obtaining the right-of-way. The county had asked the railroad to grant a lease for 100 feet of right-of-way. The railroad objected.⁴⁵ Cochran was willing to take a lease on a 66-foot right-of-way on the south side. After another meeting in December, agreement was reached whereby the Union Pacific would lease the right-of-way to the county for a nominal fee. The three-mile stretch north of the railroad would be kept open "to make it possible for residents of the territory... especially school children, to drive into Duncan without crossing the tracks."⁴⁶

With the leases in hand, contracts were awarded in July of 1926 to build from Duncan west to the Merrick County line.⁴⁷ The leases with the Union Pacific negotiated the year before, however, were still not found to be in order.⁴⁸ The route change would take the road to the south side at Duncan. According to the railroad's blueprints, however, the route at Duncan did not follow that desired by the town. It would pass through a lumberyard and a house. The desired route was described:

It is proposed that the course of the highway shall turn south off the Union Pacific right-of-way at a point about a quarter of a mile east of the present crossing east of Duncan, and then follow a now-existing road westward into Duncan to the intersection with the road that leads to Platte bridge, at which point it would then jog slightly to the north, then go southwestward again along the Union Pacific right-of-way.⁴⁹

State Engineer Cochran and Union Pacific officials reached a tentative agreement on two leases. One involved the route south of the tracks. The renewal of another lease allowed the north road to be used as a local road. A final agreement would be delayed, however, until a top railroad official approved the change. The route through Duncan on railroad right-of-way would be taken up at a later date.⁵⁰

³⁸ "Consider Eliminating Railroad Crossings," Columbus Telegram, March 12, 1924, page 2.

³⁹ "Consider Eliminating Railroad Crossings," Columbus Telegram, March 12, 1924, page 2.

⁴⁰ "To Seek Federal Aid Lincoln Way Project," Columbus Telegram, March 13, 1924, page 4.

⁴¹ "County Dads Project Drainage, Bridge and Road Improvements," Columbus Telegram, June 9, 1924, page 6.

⁴² "Declares Columbus Losing Two-Thirds of Tourist Traffic," Columbus Telegram, July 10, 1924, page 3.

⁴³ "Prospect Bright for Lincoln Way Change This Year," Columbus Telegram, March 7, 1925, page 3.

⁴⁴ "May Let Lincoln Way Project Near Duncan This Year," Columbus Telegram, July 13, 1925, page 3.

⁴⁵ "Cochran Asks Action on Lincoln Way West," Columbus Telegram, October 20, 1925, page 4.

⁴⁶ "Union Pacific and County Arrange for Lincoln Way Lease," Columbus Telegram, December 10, 1925, page 5.

⁴⁷ "Duncan Project Let to Sokol Brothers," Columbus Telegram, July 2, 1926, page 3.

⁴⁸ "Right-of-Way Mixup Delays Lincoln Way Project Near Duncan," Columbus Telegram, July 24, 1926, page 3.

⁴⁹ "Tentative Agreement on Route of Highway," Columbus Telegram, July 29, 1926, page 6.

⁵⁰ "Tentative Agreement on Route of Highway," Columbus Telegram, July 29, 1926, page 6.

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In the spring of 1927 work by the contractors started.⁵¹ Due to projected difficulties with the railroad, however, the route west of Duncan had been resurveyed by the state to take a path following the railroad right-of-way but at every second section of land placed the road in a series of "snake-like" curves, requiring the road to be diverted to private property. Landowners, led by one farmer, petitioned the county to remove this route from their property. Platte County Consul A.R. Miller also objected to the new route:

The route staked out for the new grade is so much more crooked than I had been led to believe it would be that I am convinced it would be a serious mistake to construct it as now contemplated...Fourteen curves are too many in seven miles of road where they could be avoided, even if most of them are gradual curves.⁵²

The county had already put the question of the right-of-way to State Engineer Cochran.⁵³

Cochran agreed to the route being straightened, despite anticipation of litigation with the railroad.⁵⁴ Cochran felt that he had exhausted the option of leasing railroad right-of-way. Condemnation would be the state's recourse. Power to do so was granted under a 1925 act of the Nebraska legislature that addressed elimination of grade crossings by taking the matter to the State Railway Commission.⁵⁵ The railroad's reply was simple: "(I)t is not willing to sell the portion of right-of-way..."⁵⁶ "All up in the air," Cochran said as to the status of negotiations with the railroad.⁵⁷ Cochran took up the issue with the State Railway Commission. The appeal commenced in October of 1927.⁵⁸ In November, however, the railroad agreed to give the state a lease for 50 years at \$5 a year. The 100-foot right-of-way on railroad property would allow 66 feet for the highway, barrow pits to get dirt necessary for construction, and the removal of nearly all of the curves. Most importantly, the lease "opens the way for construction to proceed in the spring without the delay that might be occasioned by litigation if the state undertook to condemn the land."⁵⁹

However, further issues were again brought up by the railroad. In February of 1928, the Union Pacific requested a supplement to its agreement. One clause read:

(The county will) assume all taxes and assessments levied upon the leased premises during the continuance of the lease...

Another read:

It is agreed between the parties hereto that the use of the land hereby leased by the lessor to the lessee shall be the highway on the south side of the tracks of the lessor...and that the lessor shall not be required to make further contributions toward the establishment, construction or maintenance of said highway except as is required under the laws of general taxation on its property for all purposes.⁶⁰

The county signed the agreement. However, by late June the company had still not signed, delaying negotiations for some of the necessary rights-of-way still needed from private property owners.⁶¹ The lease was finally signed by the railroad in July.⁶² Cochran's efforts had taken over a year to resolve.

Cochran agreed to expedite the project, even if it required a special bid letting.⁶³ A new contract was let in August 1928 for the balance of work on the highway between Duncan west to the Merrick County line. The remaining work consisted of 4.5 miles of road.⁶⁴ As required by the contract, the road was to be completed before December 1.⁶⁵

⁵¹ "Want Different Connecting Link Between Highways," Columbus Telegram, March 16, 1927, page 5.

⁵² "Straighten Grade Much as Practical A.R. Miller Urges," Columbus Telegram, May 21, 1927, page 3.

⁵³ "Put Lincoln Way Question Up to State Engineer," Columbus Telegram, April 19, 1927, page 5.

⁵⁴ "Changes to be Made in Lincoln Highway Project Near Duncan," Columbus Telegram, May 28, 1927, page 4.

⁵⁵ "Will Condemn U.P. Land for Road if Company Won't Sell," Columbus Telegram, June 2, 1927, page 1.

⁵⁶ "Cochran May Take Road Question to Rail Commission," Columbus Telegram, July 26, 1927, page 8.

⁵⁷ "U.P. Refuses Sale of Land for Road West of Duncan," Columbus Telegram, July 23, 1927, page 3.

⁵⁸ "Lincoln Highway Question Before the Commission," Columbus Telegram, October 11, 1927, page 6.

⁵⁹ "Union Pacific to Lease State 100 Foot Right-of-Way," Columbus Telegram, November 23, 1927, page 8.

⁶⁰ "U.P. Submits Supplement to Highway Lease," Columbus Telegram, March 1, 1928, page 6.

⁶¹ "Conference Brings Results in Duncan Project," Columbus Telegram, June 26, 1928, page 6. "To Negotiate for Lease Rights Soon," Columbus Telegram, June 27,

1928, page 4.

⁶² "Union Pacific Signs Lease on Lincoln Highway," Columbus Telegram, July 7, 1928, page 3.

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Grading of the new route neared completion that November. A section of the road was opened for traffic that month.⁶⁶

That same fall in one of the last efforts of the Lincoln Highway Association, concrete markers were erected across the country. Gael Hoag of the Lincoln Highway Association traveled the entire highway making notes where each of some 3,000 markers would go.⁶⁷ The markers were installed by the Boy Scouts, all in one ceremonial day, September 1, 1928. After a grand celebration in Columbus the evening before, the Boy Scouts erected the markers between Schuyler and Central City, including Duncan.⁶⁸

With the completion of Interstate 80 in Nebraska in 1974, the old Lincoln Highway has been bypassed but still serves as one of Nebraska's major highways. Today, the Nebraska Department of Roads has been buying the same leases that established rights-of-way along the old Lincoln Highway, now U.S. 30. Those in Platte County will be converted to a permanent easement in 2007.⁶⁹

Although the highway's heyday may have ended with the opening of the Interstate, the significance of this highway in Nebraska is evident by the extant cultural resources found along its route.

Significance of Historic Roadways on the Lincoln Highway

Rural roadways are property types defined in the National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Historic and Architectural Resources of the Lincoln Highway in Nebraska," January 2007.⁷⁰ They are linear resources and the most exemplary property types of the historic highway. They are found as segments of road, most often where modern improvements or realignments have impacted their contiguity. They may also include bridges, culverts, and other contributing property types. Roadways should be considered as major components representative of the highway system as a whole and evaluated at the statewide level of significance.

A roadway may also be urban in nature. To build local support for the highway and take advantage of the best roads that led into town, communities and their commercial districts were included in the first routes whenever possible. Through towns, the road followed city streets, sometimes resulting in a maze of left and right turns. Towns rallied to be included in the route of the Lincoln Highway and highway-related businesses served the needs of motorists, such as food, lodging, and automobile repairs.

The early route of the Lincoln Highway followed existing roads and trails, which dictated where the official route was designated. The earliest roads served local farm-to-market transportation, often described as "wagon roads," and the more improved "postal roads," which accommodated Rural Free Delivery (RFD) mail service to rural areas. The early road often followed the existing section-line roads of a uniform 66-foot of right-of-way.

However, much of the original route of the Lincoln Highway in the state was located on railroad right-of-way, a more direct route since it traversed cross-country through the Platte River valley. These roads varied according to the amount of right-of-way leased from the railroad, mostly limited to the outer 50 feet of the railroad right-of-way.

⁶³ "Gives Assurance He Will Expedite Duncan Project," Columbus Telegram, July 21, 1928, page 3.

⁶⁴ "To Open Bids for Lincoln Highway Project Aug. 23," Columbus Telegram, August 1, 1928, page 2.

⁶⁵ "Contract Let for Grading Lincoln Way Near Duncan," Columbus Telegram, August 23, 1928, page 3.

⁶⁶ "Finishing Lincoln Highway Grading," Columbus Telegram, November 14, 1928, page 5.

⁶⁷ Hokanson, Drake, The Lincoln Highway: Main Street Across America. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999, page 110.

⁶⁸ "Complete Plans for Program on Friday Evening," Columbus Telegram, August 30, 1928, page 5. "Lincoln Way Marker," Columbus Telegram, September 5, 1928, page 2.

⁶⁹ Correspondence, Ellis Tompkins, Rail and Transportation Engineer, Nebraska Department of Roads to L.Robert Puschendorf, Nebraska State Historical Society, December 28, 2006.

⁷⁰ National Register of Historic Places Property Documentation Form, "Historic and Architectural Resources of the Lincoln Highway in Nebraska." Christina Slattery, Erin Pogany, and Emily Schill, Mead and Hunt, Inc., and L.Robert Puschendorf, Nebraska State Historical Society (January 2007). See property type for "Rural Roadways."

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The first period of significance relative to roadways on the Lincoln Highway is defined as 1913, when the routes of the Lincoln Highway were first delineated on existing roads, through 1916, with the passage of the precedent setting Federal-Aid Road Act. At the time most of the highway consisted of dirt roads and trails. The early efforts of road improvements were those of local governments, "good roads" advocates, and boosters affiliated with the Lincoln Highway Association.

A second period of significance begins in 1916 with the Federal-Aid Road Act, continues with the Federal-Aid Highway Act in 1921, and ends in the 1930s. This represents a period when road construction was now led by state and federal governments and was the most significant advancement of road construction up until that time. Within this period of significance is the trend to improve dirt roads with gravel surfacing, the elimination of "stairstep" routes that followed section line roads, shortening of the route, and improvements along or relocated to the Union Pacific right-of-way under an agreement reached with federal officials in 1919. Beginning in the late 1920s, highway development included the bypassing of communities. In larger cities, the routes through commercial business districts were posed to be eliminated.

A rural roadway may be eligible under Criterion A as an example of a single event, a pattern of events or activities, pioneering or advancement of road construction, transportation, travel patterns, development of the highway, or representative of highway-related commerce. Alterations to roadways, such as paving, widening, removal of right angle corners with radius curves, and realignments may contribute to the significance of roadways if they were completed during an historic period or periods. Early "stairsteps" where the Lincoln Highway jogged along the section line system in Nebraska would be candidates for evaluation, as would sections where the highway followed the railroad right-of-way.

In urban areas, the routes to and through towns may also be significant under Criterion A. The earliest routes that were delineated through town and subsequent realignments can also convey significance as examples of a single event, a pattern of events or activities, transportation, travel patterns, development of the highway, or representative of highway-related commerce.

Roadways must retain enough characteristic features from the historic period(s) of the highway and must convey their significance and integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and/or association. As in cases where the road was realigned, the period of significance will end when these roadways were bypassed and no longer used as the route of the Lincoln Highway.

Significance of the Lincoln Highway at Duncan West

The road through Duncan and continuing west was incorporated into the route of the Lincoln Highway in 1913, one of three sections of road in Platte County that followed the Union Pacific right-of-way. Its period of significance begins in 1913 through 1928 with the rerouting of the road to the south side of the tracks.

The Lincoln Highway from Duncan west is significant under Criterion A of the National Register of Historic Places for its association with a pattern of events and activities, transportation, travel patterns, and historical trends in road development and improvements that eventually resulted in the bypassing of Duncan and the rural road west. It represents the period when the roadway was first incorporated into the Lincoln Highway, the zeal of townfolk to have the route pass through Duncan, the movement to eliminate grade crossings, over a decade of difficult negotiations with the railroad, the resulting improvements to make the road safer and more direct, and its eventual bypassing through Duncan and west of town.

The Lincoln Highway from Duncan west accrues statewide significance for this highway development. It is exemplary of this evolution in the development of the highway system as a whole.

This section of road retains excellent integrity. The roadway retains characteristic features from the historic period(s) of the highway and conveys integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. This nomination includes the route through Duncan, which continues southwest 2.4 miles on its original 50 foot railroad right-of-way on the north side of the tracks. Contributing properties include an avenue of trees and a Lincoln Highway marker *in situ*, both in Duncan.

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

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Verbal Boundary Description

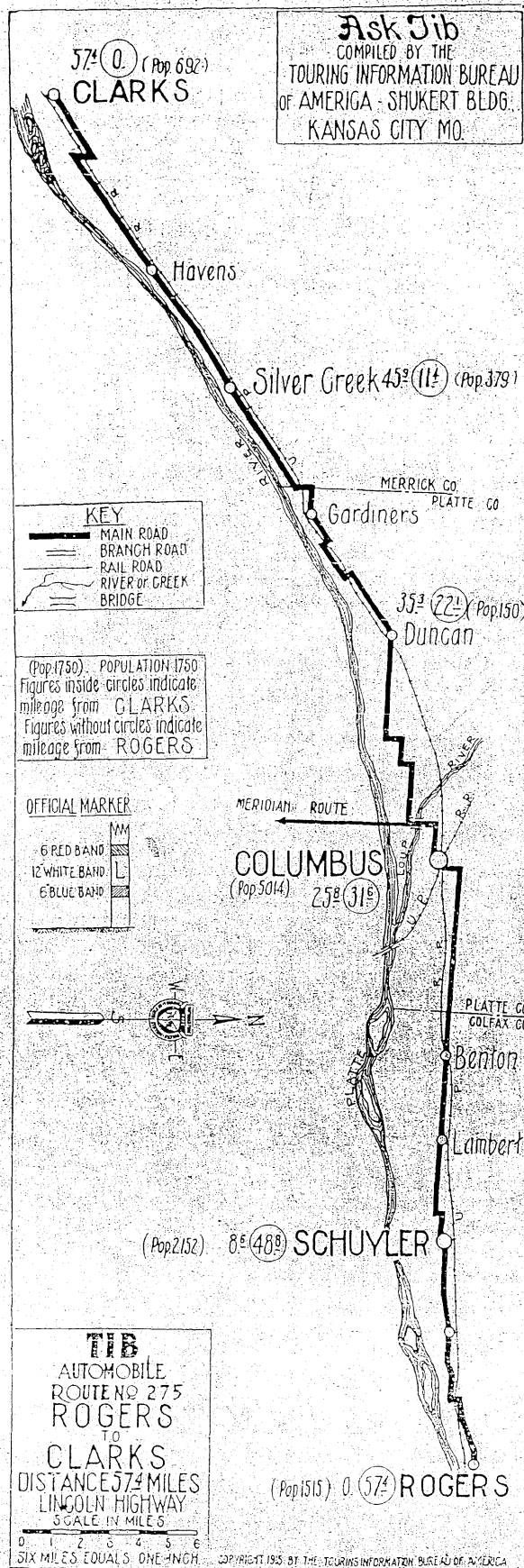
The nominated property is approximately 2.4 miles in length. The right-of-way is 50 feet. See attached map.

Boundary Justification

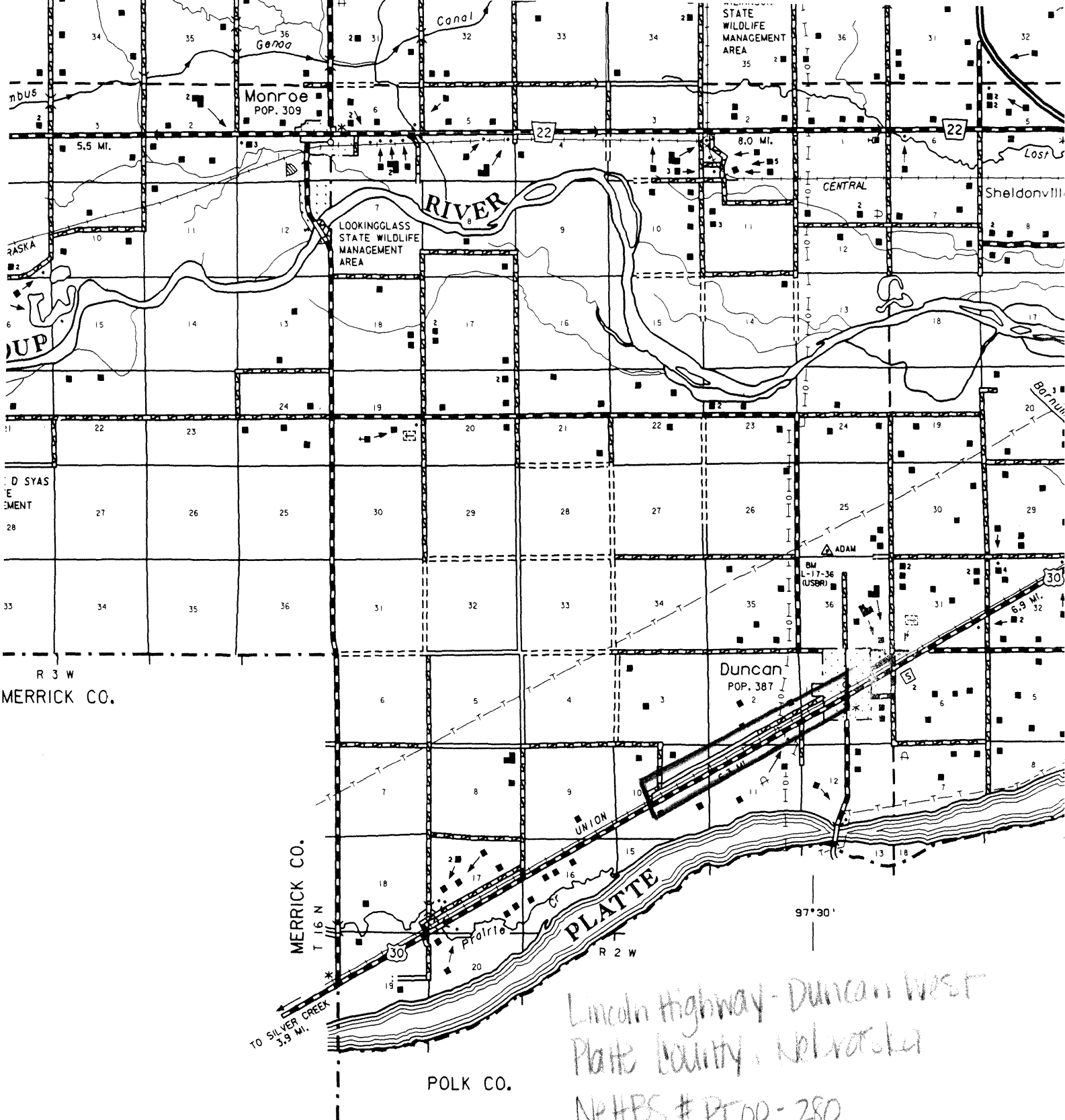
Passing through town its length is about two city blocks. The rural section of road is approximately 2.4 miles in length and is 50 feet in width, defined by a lease granted by the Union Pacific Railroad for its right-of-way.

ROGERS, NEB., TO CLARKS, NEB., 57.4 MILES.

Lincoln Highway. See Marker Front of State Section.



DESCRIPTION: Good dirt road through absolutely level country. In dry weather good time can be made. Slippery in wet weather; use care. Connection made with Meridian Road at Columbus



Lincoln Highway - Duncan West
 Platte County, Nebraska
 NEHBS # P100-280

