

The Lincoln Highway Markers in Davis

Remarks at the September 1, 2003 Proclamation of Lincoln Highway Day in Davis, CA

John Lofland, President, Davis Historical Society.

The history of roads in America divides into a named road period before the 1920s, a transition period in the 1920s, and a numbered road period since the 1920s.

This change came about importantly because the Federal government began to fund road construction in major ways and required that they be numbered rather than named.

Therefore, named roads, such as the Lincoln Highway, began to fade away. The Lincoln Highway Association dissolved itself effective the last day of 1927. At that time, the Association also decided to spend its remaining funds on more than 3,000 seven feet long concrete posts with a medallion of Abraham Lincoln on them. It asked the Boy Scouts of America to set these posts at one-mile intervals along the Lincoln Highway route from New York City to San Francisco. This was to be done on September 1, 1928.

The *Woodland Daily Democrat* of August 31, 1928 writes of this event:

The Boy Scouts of America, including the Davis and Dixon troops, will erect the markers simultaneously and, at a signal from President Coolidge, they will be unveiled and dedicated to the immortal Lincoln. . . . The markers weigh two hundred and seventy-five pounds each. They are as strong and plain in design as the man to whom they are dedicated, and bear his image in bronze. . . . The Davis troop will erect the markers from Sacramento to Davis and the Dixon troop will mark the highway from Davis to Dixon.

The *Dixon Tribune* of August 24th tells us: “Dixon has been assigned thirteen cement posts . . . between Davis and Dixon.”

And, the *Davis Enterprise* for August 31 reports:

Nine of the new markers for the Lincoln Highway will be set by the Davis boys to be unveiled on Saturday morning, September 1. Three of the patrols are each taking two markers and the fourth patrol taking the other three. . . . Davis is responsible for those from the Sacramento river to the west side of the city.

Two of these at least 22 local markers have survived and are on public view in Davis today. One of them is in front of us here at the southeast corner of B and Fifth streets. The other is about two miles west of here on Russell, just beyond Route 113, and on the left side of Russell as one heads west.

The public presence of these two markers is a continuing reminder of the named road past that we have long since left behind. Along with the striking image of the Lincoln Highway, we have also lost such colorful names as the Pacific Highway, the Dixie Highway, and the Victory Highway.

#