

County road dubbed 'Historic Route 6'

By Barb Rochholz
of the Advocate News

Nostalgia has become trendy. With hit TV shows like "American Pickers" and classic car clubs popping up in many communities, it was only a matter of time before the idea of bringing Highway 6 back to its historical glory became a reality.

With that goal in mind, Dave Darby, executive director of the Iowa U.S. Route 6 Tourist Association, led a meeting June 14 at the Wilton Community Center with more than 50 people from Wilton, Durant and Walcott in attendance, including the mayors of all three communities.

Darby is passionate about bringing travelers off the interstate to see, feel and taste what small towns have to offer and has been working on the project for five years. As director of the non-profit organization, Darby has worked to encourage state and local governments to place historical signage, preserve historical buildings, bridges and alignments along Route 6 and to encourage cooperation of communities along the highway. This includes holding festivals, concerts and car shows to boost tourism and traffic along Highway 6.

"I'm here to sell you something — you!" he said. "When people visit our state, what they enjoy the most in Iowa are the people. When you go to a 'mom and pop' establishment, you come away with a friendly new experience. On the other hand, when you go to a chain restaurant, the experience is soon forgotten. Remember what you had to eat or the waitress the last time you ate at Applebee's?" he said.

Quoting the late journalist Charles Kuralt, Darby said, "If the United States interests you, stay off the interstate."

It's been more than 32 years, but Historic Iowa U.S. 6 Route signage will be officially installed along a 30-mile corridor between Wilton and Davenport thanks to Darby and the mayors of Walcott, Durant and Wilton. Each of the towns has received a new sign to post along the route.

Mayor Ira Bowman of Wilton said that another sign has been purchased so one can be installed at each end of the city limits.



Darby promotes Highway 6 tourism—Dave Darby, executive director of the Iowa U.S. Route 6 Tourist Association, spoke to dozens of people at a meeting June 14, in the Wilton Community Center. Darby is assisting communities like Wilton, Durant and Walcott, along old Highway 6, to find ways to promote tourism and bring the spotlight back to the historic coast-to-coast highway. Iowa U.S. Route 6 Tourist Association is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the economic development and cultural presentation of inner cities, small towns and rural communities along the Grand Old Highway. For more information go to www.route6tour.com or email Darby at iowa@route6tour.com. Photo by Kim Sloan

Dawn Smith, mayor of Durant, also said that the city council voted to pay for an additional sign along with the Durant Chamber of Commerce.

Darby also encouraged the mayors to visit with each other, come up with promotional ideas and to think beyond the main highway. For example, Dahl Ford of the Quad Cities will host a classic car cruise Sept. 7-9, which will go through Wilton and Durant, according to Darby.

History

The old Route 6 goes back to stagecoach



Historic Iowa U.S. 6 Route—New signs, great idea! Dave Darby (center) of the Iowa U.S. Route 6 Tourist Association met with three city mayors and one ambassador during a June 14 meeting held in Wilton. Mayors of Wilton, Durant and Walcott each received a new sign that will be posted near their towns to help promote tourism along the Grand Old Highway. Pictured are Ira Bowman of Wilton, Dawn Smith of Durant, Thelma Nopoulos, Ambassador for the City of Wilton, and Jim Couper, mayor of Walcott. As proprietors of the Wilton Candy Kitchen, Thelma Nopoulos and her husband George were among the original members of the Iowa U.S. Route 6 Tourist Association. Advocate News photo by Kim Sloan

days and was known as the River to River road auto trail in 1910. That's when 10,000 volunteers, mostly farmers, across the state created the route in one hour, according to Darby.

U.S. Route 6, began in Provincetown, Mass., stretching all the way to Long Beach, Calif. In the early 1960s, Highway 6 in Iowa forever changed with the completion of Interstate 80, affecting 15 communities in Iowa which were completely bypassed.

In 1980, the federal government moved a section of Highway 6 from Davenport (near I-280) to the west end of Wilton to the interstate, turning the former Highway 6 over to the state, which tagged it IA 927. By 2003, it was renamed County Road F58.

"This is a rather ignominious fate for such a storied highway," Darby said.

Film Project

Inspired by Darby's commitment and enthusiasm, filmmakers Kelly and Tammy Rundle, a husband and wife team from Moline, also spoke about the documentary they are completing which will be available on DVD and broadcast on PBS, especially in the Midwest.

River to River: Iowa's Forgotten Highway 6 will be a guide to viewers through soda shops, filling stations, general stores, drive-ins and roadside attractions of yesterday, according to Kelly. "Our goal is to tell a great story about Highway 6 in the state of Iowa," he said. "We want it (the film) to inspire people to get in their car and see some of the places we're featuring."

The Rundles do their magic under the name Fourth Wall Films. To date, they have received awards for historical documentaries including *Lost Nation: The Ioway*, *Country School: One Room, One Nation* and *Villisca: Living with a Mystery*. They are currently putting the finish-

ing touches on a film about Iowa born actress Jean Seberg and are also working on a sequel to *Lost Nation: The Ioway*.

The couple met Darby nearly a year ago at a showing of their film about country schools and he suggested an idea about doing a film on Highway 6. "I think we caught his bug," Tammy said of Darby's enthusiasm.

The Rundles have been awarded a grant and have received contributions from corporations, businesses and individuals for their film work. "We are still looking for funding along with stories and historical photographs. We shot a lot of material last year and hope to have the movie completed by 2013, with luck," Kelly said.

Contributions may be made directly to Fourth Wall Films by check or credit card through the contribution link on Highway-6Movie.com. Tax-deductible contributions can also be made through their fiscal sponsor, U.S. Route 6 Tourist Association, Iowa Division.

About Dave Darby

The urge to travel began early for Darby. Growing up along Kimberly Road in Davenport, he says he would always listen to the trucks, motorcycles and hot rods that drove by his house and wondered where they were going.

As a child, he and his family took many trips on Highway 6 through small towns like Atalissa and drove past landmarks like Hatfield's Corner before stopping to camp or fish.

He is currently finalizing a book entitled, "From River to River, a Historical and Photographic Guide to the Original Highway 6."

"With planning and hard work, this could be just the beginning for a new Highway 6. To the people of Wilton, Durant and Walcott, you are no longer on a nameless county road, you are on the Historic Route 6," Darby said.



Volunteers with green thumbs—Duffy DeFrance of Wilton and Sherry Bogan of Muscatine have volunteered to keep the planters at Wilton's city office complex thriving this summer season. Between the lack of rainfall and abundance of varmints (of both two-legged and four-legged varieties, according to Duffy), the women keep busy watering and filling holes where the posies have been removed or re-arranged. Thanks to Duffy and Sherry, the flower beds will be enjoyed by everyone who strolls through beautiful downtown Wilton. Photo by Barb Rochholz

West Liberty man dies in one-car accident

A West Liberty man died Saturday evening following a one-car accident on Cedar County Road X54 north of 320th Street near Moscow.

Scott Samuel Mullin, 42, died from his injuries when the 1996 Chevrolet Tahoe SUV he was driving ran off the road, swerved and hit a machine shed owned by Harry Kaufmann and a utility pole owned by REC. The driver had to be extricated by mechanical means from the vehicle.

According to crash information provided by the Iowa State Patrol Department of Public Safety, the driver was under the influence of alcohol at the time of the accident which was approximately 10:30 p.m.

Funeral arrangements are under the direction of the Henderson-Barker Funeral Home in West Liberty. A complete obituary appears on page 6 of the *Wilton-Durant Advocate News*.

Wilton-Durant

Advocate News

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Official Newspaper
for Cities of
Durant, Wilton and Stockton
School Districts of
Wilton and Durant
and County of
Muscatine

The mission of the Wilton-Durant Advocate News is to provide information to its readers in an accurate, dependable and professional manner which reflects the uniqueness and similarities of the communities it serves.

Published by North Scott Press, Inc.
Eldridge, Iowa (563) 285-8111
William F. and Linda Z. Tubbs: Publishers
Derek Sawvell: Managing Editor
Barbara Rochholz: Reporter
Paulette Theobald: Circulation Manager
Advertising Assistant and Reporter
Theresa Blackledge: Advertising Manager
Connie Brown: Contributing Reporter
Phil Roberts: Contributing Reporter

Consulting & Technical support by North Scott Press:
Charles S. Campbell, Editor; Jeff Martens, Advertising Manager; Erin Engelbrecht, Layout and Design;
Jackie Duwa Composition;
Sindie Harman, Circulation.

Published every Thursday. Editorial and business offices at 410 Cedar Street Wilton, Iowa, telephone 563-732-2029, with an outlet at Westfair Drug, 621 5th Street, Durant.
Periodical postage paid at the Post Office in Wilton, Iowa. Exceptional dispatch at the Post Office in Durant and Stockton, Iowa (Wilton-Durant Advocate News USPS 685-760). Postmaster: Send address changes to Wilton-Durant Advocate News, P. O. Box 40, Wilton, IA 52778.
Subscription rates: \$31 per year in Muscatine, Cedar and Scott Counties, \$33 in Iowa and Illinois, \$35 elsewhere in the continental USA and for members of the armed forces. All subscriptions expire with last issue of the month printed on the mailing label. Deadline for material/change of addresses is 3 p.m. Monday.