

# U.S. 95 and Idaho's North and South Highway

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## U.S. 95 and Idaho's North and South Highway

When the Joint Board on Interstate Highways released its proposal for a U.S. numbered highway system in October 1925, it identified U.S. 95 as a route located entirely in Idaho:

From the United States-Canada line to Bonners Ferry, Idaho, Sand Point, Coeur d'Alene, Lewiston, Grangerville, Weiser, Payette. [All spellings here and in later logs as in the original]

This routing encompassed Idaho's North and South Highway, which had been completed in 1926.

Because the States owned the roads included in the proposal, the Secretary of Agriculture forwarded the plan to the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO) for action. After numerous changes in routing and numbering, AASHO approved the plan on November 11, 1926, by ballot of the State highway agencies.

U.S. 95 remained a one-State route, as described in the first approved U.S. highway log (1927):

Idaho. Beginning at the United States-Canadian International Boundary at Eastport via Bonners Ferry, Sandpoint, Coeur d'Alene, Muscow, Lewiston, Grangeville, New Meadows to Weiser.

The route was listed as totaling 483 miles.

## Extending the Road

When AASHO's Executive Committee met on June 21, 1937, it considered, but deferred, a proposal to extend U.S. 95 to Nevada, as reflected in the meeting summary:

**U.S. 95 – Idaho, Oregon, Nevada.** The proposal for an extension of U.S. 95, which now terminates at Potlatch (Weiser) Idaho, coinciding with U.S. 30 to Fruitland, Parma, Caldwell, via a State route in Oregon to McDermitt, Nevada, then over a State route in Nevada to Winnemucca, was deferred. Information from Oregon states that this route will not be improved for travel before 1940. After the proper improvement of this proposed route has been completed, the committee will be willing again to consider the proposition.

The extension was approved on June 28, 1939, effective January 1, 1940:

**U.S. 95. Idaho-Oregon-Nevada-California.** U.S. 95 is extended from Weiser, Idaho, as follows:

**Oregon:** Beginning at the Idaho Stateline near Ontario, via Adrian, Jordan Valley to McDermitt.

**Nevada:** Beginning at McDermitt, Winnemucca, Lovelock, to a junction with U.S. 50 east of Fernley, Fallon Schurz, Harthorne, Coaldale, Tonapah, Beatty, Indian Springs, Las Vegas, Alumite, Searchlight, to the California line south of Searchlight.

**California:** Beginning at the California State line south of Searchlight, Nevada, via Needles, Vidol, to a junction with U.S. 60 and U.S. 70 east of Blythe.

On June 3, 1940, the Executive Committee approved State proposals for changes in the routing of U.S. 95 in Idaho and Oregon:

**Idaho-Oregon.** U.S. 95 is extended south from Weiser to read as follows: **Idaho:** Weiser, Payette, Fruitland, Parma, State Route 18 to a point west of Notus, thence south to a junction west of Marsing, thence southwesterly to the Idaho-Oregon line on Idaho Route 20.

**Oregon:** Beginning at the Idaho State line 2 miles north and east of the Malloy Ranch, Jordan Valley, thence southwest to a point on the Owyhee River approximately 2 miles south and east of Rome, thence southerly to the Nevada state line at McDermitt.

The June 1940 routing change was first shown in the 1942 log, which listed U.S. 95 as being 1,557 miles long. The log described U.S. 95 as follows (figures indicate the mileage between towns):

**Idaho:** Beginning at the International Boundary at Eastport 32, Bonners Ferry 34, Sandpoint 45, Coeur d'Alene 70, Potlatch 19, Moscow 38, Lewiston 79, Grangeville 88, New Meadows 84, Weiser 15, Payette 6, Fruitland 16, Parma 10, Wilder 12, two miles of Marsing 49.

**Oregon:** Mallow Ranch 20, Jordan Valley 33, Rome 68.

**Nevada:** McDermitt 74, Winnemucca 72, Lovelock 58 to Junction one mile east of Fernley 27, Fallon 39, Schurz 33, Hawthorne 62, Coaldale 42, Tonopah 93, Beatty 73, Indian Springs 42, Las Vegas 19, Alunite 36, Searlight 57.

**California:** Nevada 17, Needles 55, Vidal 40, to a junction with U.S. 60 and 70 east of Blythe

On June 27, 1960, AASHO's Route Numbering Committee approved an extension of U.S. 95 at the request of Arizona and California:

The proposed routing would begin at the Arizona-California State line U.S. Routes 60-70 in Ehrenberg, thence east over U.S. Route 60-70 to junction with State Route 95 at Quartzsite, thence southerly over State Route 95 via Yuma, Somerton and Gadsden to the International Boundary at San Luis, a total distance of 128 miles.

The extension was reflected in AASHO's 1969 log.

Today, the termini remain unchanged. As of the most recent log, published by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials in 1989, U.S. 95 was listed as being 1,689 miles long.

## Idaho's North and South Highway

From a geographic standpoint, Idaho is unusual, as Ernest F. Ayres explained in an article in *Western Highways Builder* ("A Highway with a Reason," June 19, 1920):

If ever a State or community had occasion to stress the importance of a highway from a social and economic standpoint, Idaho has. Until a comparatively short time ago, this northwestern commonwealth was laterally divided. The northern and southern portions of the State were as widely separated as if an ocean divided them.

The topography of Idaho is very peculiar. In the southern portion of the State is a broad, fertile valley. The northern part, in fact, approximately four-fifths of the State, is composed of rugged hills and mountains. Along the western boundary from the Canadian line to Ada runs virtually a continuous mountain range.

No railroad has ever attempted to penetrate this rugged territory and until recently, no highway has been available to provide communication. As a result persons wishing to travel from any part of the north to the south, or to the capital, located in the southern part of the State, were required to travel through Oregon and Washington.

A more recent summary of Idaho's topography states:

Its northern two-thirds consists of a mountain massif broken only by valleys carved by rivers and streams, and by two prairies: the Big Camas Prairie around Grangeville and the Palouse Country around Moscow . . . Idaho's lowest point is 710 feet (216 meters) near Lewiston, where the Snake River leaves the Idaho border and enters Washington. [*Worldmark Encyclopedia of the States*, Gale Research, Inc., 1995, p. 159]

State law established the Idaho State Highway Commission in 1913 to identify a trunk highway network and administer a State-aid program (with project costs shared on the basis of one-third State funds, two-thirds county funds). As described in *Good Roads* magazine (June 5, 1915), the original trunk line designations included the Idaho-Pacific Highway:

The Idaho-Pacific Highway, commencing at the Idaho-Utah line near the southeastern corner of Idaho and extending northwesterly, then westerly, then again northwesterly through Montpelier, McCammon, Pocatello, American Falls, Burley, Twin Falls, Buhl, Hagerman, Bliss, Mountain Home, Boise, Nampa, Caldwell and New Plymouth to Payette, thence northerly near the western border of the state, through Weiser, Council, Pollock, Grangeville, Nez Perce, Lewiston, and Moscow to the Idaho-Washington line, near Moscow, a total distance of about 800 miles. It is expected to extend this survey later to Sandpoint via Coeur d'Alene, an additional distance of about 150 miles.

From Coeur d'Alene to the Canadian border north of Bonners Ferry, the State Highway Commission named the trunk road the Panhandle Highway.

In 1915, the Idaho-Pacific Highway was divided into two routes, with the southern portion retaining the original name south of Weiser. North of Weiser, the proposed trunk line route became the North and South Highway. (The Panhandle Highway was redesignated part of the North and South Highway in 1919.) The split recognized the topographic difficulties Ayres described.

The August 1916 issue of *Northwestern Motorist* ("Idaho's North-and-South Highway") reported that boosters had formed the North and South Idaho State Highway Association during a meeting in the Elks' temple in Lewiston, Idaho, on July 25, 1916. The meeting included over 80 representatives of Clearwater, Idaho, Lewis, and Nez Perce Counties who had responded to a July 19 invitation. Participants elected Dr. L. J. Perkins, president of the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley Automobile Association, to be president and Mrs. Jessie Adam, secretary of the Lewiston Commercial Club, to be secretary-treasurer of the new association. In addition, participants adopted articles describing the structure of the new organization and its purpose:

The purposes of this association are to promote the building of a highway that shall connect the northern and southern sections of the state; to promote the building of trunk line highways, state and interstate, that will develop the resources of Idaho; and generally to aid the movement for better roads in the state and to assist in producing more adequate highways connecting the several sections and communities of Idaho.

The article's subtitle was: "State After Federal Coin." This was a reference to the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916, which President Woodrow Wilson had approved on July 11, establishing the Federal-aid highway program. The U.S. Office of Public Roads would apportion Federal-aid highway funds among the States to assist in their highway construction and improvement programs on the basis of a Federal-State matching ratio of 50-50. In addition, the legislation authorized \$1 million a year over 10 years for Federal construction "under the supervision of the Secretary of Agriculture, upon request from the proper officers of the State, Territory, or county for the survey, construction, and maintenance of roads and trails within or only partly within national forests when necessary for the use and development of resources upon which communities within and adjacent to the national forests are dependent."

As the *Northwestern Motorist* article made clear, the new association wanted to secure that funding for the North and South Highway:

The general discussion of the purpose of the meeting, the views of the people of the several localities represented and what measures should be taken to insure decisive action and the federal and state aid for the construction of the north and south highway followed at the afternoon session.

A key part of the proposed highway, the Lewiston Hill Highway, was already under construction to replace a wagon road built in the 1870's. Author Betty Derig described the earlier road:

At one time, this hill was an almost insurmountable barrier between Lewiston and points north. Negotiating the 2,000-foot drop between the upper prairie and the valley below was a hazardous undertaking. However, Lewiston took steps to conquer the hill, hoping to draw neighbors from Moscow into town to trade. The city hired John Silcott to build a road wide enough to accommodate "a wagon and eight yoke of cattle."

With horses, scrapers, and plows, Silcott finished his masterpiece in 1874, and it served the area well for the next forty-three years. As for comfort, that is another matter. In *Lewiston Country*, historian Margaret Day Allen records the plight of two Salvation Army officers who took a midnight stage down the plunging profile in 1895: "[T]alk about the alps, and the bottomless pit, that wonderful Lewiston Hill was a fright. Down we went at breakneck speed for 1,200 feet in the middle of the night turning first to the left and then to the right around the edge of that high point until five miles were behind us. The stage driver yelled blood and fire at the ferry man to get him to take us across to Lewiston, sleeping peacefully in the forks of the Clearwater and Snake rivers." [Derig, Betty, *Roadside History of Idaho*, Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1996, p. 280]

Perkins described the nearly 10-mile long new highway in *Northwestern Motorist* ("Idaho's Lewiston Hill Highway to be Dedicated Soon," November 1916) as running from Lewiston to the State line near Uniontown, Washington. At Uniontown, it linked to Washington State highways leading to Spokane, while at Lewiston, motorists could connect with a highway to Walla Walla, Washington, "so the Lewiston hill construction was carried out not only to serve the state program, but to harmonize with the system of its neighbor, Washington." He described the highway:

[This] highway, which, in a climb of nine and nine-tenths miles, gains an elevation of two thousand and nineteen feet, traversing heights from which the Bitter Root range but a few miles from Wallula can be seen; while the vision from the South reaches the Seven Devils Mountain range in Southern Idaho. The grading contract alone on this highway reaches approximately seventy thousand dollars, while drainage and finishing will bring the total cost up to one hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

The narrowest portion of the roadway is sixteen feet, while on curves it reaches twenty feet, and the grade at no point from top to bottom exceeds five per cent. The least radius on the curves is fifty-nine feet. Two miles of guard rail are being installed on the curves and at the edge of big fills. The highway will be lighted at night and to tourist travel at the greatest elevation there will be an electric sign notifying the traveler that he is soon to look down two thousand feet upon Lewiston-the City of the Rivers.

To maintain the maximum grade of 5 percent, the Lewiston Hill Highway employed an "S" switchback design (sometimes called the "Lewiston Spiral") for the 2,000-foot climb/descent. In all, it took 64 turns in 2,000 feet. The Lewiston Hill Highway opened with a ceremony on November 26, 1916-the Sunday preceding the opening day of the Northwest Livestock Show.

Perkins' article also discussed formation of the Idaho North and South State Highway Association and its goals and initial accomplishments:

It is encouraging of highway construction of this type that has been and is receiving the attention of the North and South State Highway Association. The latter has now perfected an organization embracing the Counties of Nez Perce, Lewis, Idaho, Clearwater, Latah, Kootenai, Shoshone, Bonner, Benewah, Adams, Washington, Canyon, and Ada, all working harmoniously in the principal program now outlined-

the construction of a North and South highway to the northern part of the Salmon river canyon from the southern to the northern part of the state and connecting here with the Lewiston hill road to then proceed through the northerly counties. Up to this time remarkable and most gratifying progress is being made in this work, which also includes encouragement of a [sic] construction of a highway from Kooskia, Idaho, through the Forest Reserve to Missoula, Montana. This latter matter is being presented to the Forestry officials who control the Federal appropriation for such purposes made by the recent Congress. This road would continue down the Clearwater and would here connect with the highway coming in from southern Idaho as well as the one going north by Lewiston hill. In many of the counties definite movements are now under way for bond issues or other methods of raising money so that co-operation can be made in a manner to secure portions of the state and Federal funds that will be available for these purposes. A direct illustration of the effective work of the North and South Idaho State Highway association is given in the recent action of the Idaho State Highway association [the Commission] in setting aside for exclusive use on the north and south road the Federal Government's first installment of monies under the Federal road aid act. This step was taken upon direct petition of the highway association.

Mrs. Adam also extolled the Lewiston Hill Highway in *Northwestern Motorist* ("Idaho's Achievement," May 1918):

Lying directly north of Lewiston and obtaining an almost abrupt elevation of nearly two thousand feet is the Lewiston Hill, which had been a barrier against convenient access to the city from the great Palouse plateau region to the north. Lewiston determined that this barrier should be removed and by practically unanimous vote the people authorized the issuance of \$150,000 for cooperation with the state in building a highway on the hill that would meet the highest exaction of the State Highway standard.

Adams said that because of its scenic views, the highway "is classed in many features as being superior to the Great Columbia River Highway" (in Oregon). Moreover, the road was built on "such a uniform grade that the traveler in his journey cannot realize but that he is on a level roadway although during a brief few minutes he has risen nineteen hundred feet to towering eminences with constantly changing color effects in the valley below."

Although E. M. Booth, a Nez Perce County engineer and future state highway engineer, surveyed the route in 1914, Adams gave credit for the project to C. C. Van Arsdol "a noted railroad engineer, builder of the Western section of the Grand Trunk Pacific railway." He made himself available to work on the project "only through the fact that this locality is his home place."

The article summarized the construction schedule:

The road extends from the Eighteenth Street bridge in Lewiston to the Idaho-Washington state line, a distance of ten miles. The survey was made in the spring of 1916, and the grading was commenced in May. The surfacing of the road was commenced in the spring of 1917, and the spreading of the surface material was completed the first of August.

She provided additional details about the design:

The width of the constructed sub-grade of roadway has a minimum of 24 feet in cuts and 20 feet on embankments, with a proportionate widening up to 30 feet on the sharper curves. The surfaced portion of the road bed had a minimum width of 16 feet on tangents, with a proportionate widening to 22 feet on the sharper curves. In the construction of the road bed, there was removed 75,300 cubic yards of earth, 29,300 cubic yards of loose rock and 48,500 cubic yards of solid rock. For drainage, 2,502 lineal feet of corrugated culvert pipe were used, together with 514 cubic yards of concrete in culverts and headwalls.

The road is surfaced to a depth of six inches with crushed rock, one inch and under mixed with clay and with sand mixed with clay. The surface materials employed are 12,139 cubic yards [of] crushed rock,

4,207 cubic yards of clay and 2,146 cubic yards of sand. A total of two miles of guard fence is constructed for protection on steeper slopes and around the sharper curves.

Completion of the Lewiston Hill Highway, she said, was "Idaho's great achievement of 1917 in the now Nationally recognized important work of road construction."

Ayres stated in his 1920 article that:

Such was the economy maintained in building the road that the \$150,000 from the bond issue and the small additional appropriation from the State, paid not only for the originally planned ten miles, but for an additional 9½ miles as well, five miles of which were an extension of the North-and-South Highway toward Spalding, and 4½ miles toward Moscow and Genesee.

(The original estimate was \$50,000. The project cost was double that, \$100,000, with funds left over for the additional work Ayres cited.)

He reported that work was continuing on the North and South Highway. Convict labor had been used to improve three sections of the road in 1916:

- Midvale to Cambridge, Washington County;
- Near the town of Whitebird in Idaho County; and
- The Uniontown Grade, near Lewiston, Nez Perce County.

Surveying in Adams, Nez Perce, and Washington Counties took place in 1917 and 1918, with about 45 miles of road graded and drained. A short section received a crushed rock surface. A series of Federal-aid highway projects ensued:

With the completion of the program already outlined, about 200 miles of this highway will be improved, and travelers will be able to go from Coeur d'Alene to Weiser without having to go through three States, as in the past.

By 1922, motorists could travel from Boise to Grangeville in about 18 hours driving time, according to A. S. McDougall's article, "A Little Journey Along Idaho's 'Golden Road,'" in *Western Highways Builder* (July 1922). He stated that only those who had traveled through the area in earlier times "know the almost insuperable difficulties which faced the engineers who first began the task of putting an automobile road through the rugged, almost impassable canyons of the Little Salmon River." He recalled those earlier years:

Veteran residents of central Idaho are best able to appreciate the work that has already been done, because they know the difficulties encountered by earlier road builders. The first State aid, (offered in 1894, according to the records), took the form of a \$25,000 appropriation, which was supplemented by county funds and made effective by the muscle and perspiration of farmers and cattle men along the road. But that original highway did not scale the heights of perfection.

"Yes, sir," said one old-timer, speaking from the depths of a comfortable wicker chair in the hotel at Riggins, "The first time I went over that road I *led* my saddle horse. It looked safer to me that way."

McDougall indicated that conditions would soon be better:

By the spring of 1925, according to officials of the Idaho State Department of Public Works, even the humble Lizzie [Ford's Model T] will be able to travel from Weiser to Grangeville in high gear. And there is even a possibility, if sufficient funds become available, that the entire highway will be completed in time to permit football enthusiasts from southern Idaho to motor direct to Moscow for one or more games of the coast conference season of 1924.



The roadway was still a work in progress:

At the present time there are parts of the road which were not intended to be traveled in milady's electric, nor even by a driver who is not on intimate terms with his car. There are many stretches of completed highway where the motorist may buzz along comfortably at 40 or 45 miles an hour, but there are also three or four sharp grades that not even a jack-rabbit could negotiate "in high" without stumbling.

Among the 180 miles of roadway that span the gap between Weiser and Grangeville there are only a few more than 40 miles which merit the label "not so good." To be sure, these 40 unimproved miles include many a rough and rugged road [sic], but the careful pilot will experience no serious difficulties, provided he is accustomed to shifting gears on short notice, and provided, also, that he is not averse to twisting around grades that tower several hundred feet above a tortuous rock-studded river.

The State officially opened the North and South Highway in July 1925, although the section between Coeur d'Alene and Potlatch had not been completed.

Completed at a cost of over \$6 million in 1926, the North and South Highway was recognized as a scenic attraction. A brief article in the December 1926 issue of *Good Roads* began, "The two states of North and South Idaho are now united." After describing the road ("will not compare favorably with the Lincoln Highway, for there are many stretches where the roadway has not been worked to any great extent"), the article concluded:

Few highways can mean more to the State; few others can so successfully join the main cities of a great member of the Union.

Frank W. Guilbert described "this transcending highway" in the March 1926 issue of AAA's magazine, *American Motorist* ("Idaho's New North and South Highway"):

Scenically and historically interesting and enthralling, almost every mile of its winding way, the North and South Highway will compete for tourist attention for all time . . . . The engineers have made it possible for any good car to make all of the wonderful winding grades on high. The curves are well marked and guarded with miles of substantial safety rail. It seems almost unbelievable that Idaho could have accomplished all this, for she is a State of rather small valuation for tax levying purposes. But her clear-visioned men have, during a period of about ten years, accomplished all this and more . . . .

Given the highway's "grandeur and its beauties," Guilbert had only one complaint, namely the road's name:

These men conceived the idea of a good highway for quick motor travel to connect the north and south portions of their State, and for lack of [a] more euphonious name it was called the North and South Highway.

This view was shared by O. A. Fitzgerald, writing in *Western Highways Builder* for February 1927:

It is unfortunate that steps were not taken years ago to assure Idaho's newest highway, the North-and-South, a name worthy of the historical significance of the route, and the splendor and the natural beauty that lies along its way. The present name, "North-and-South," is likely to stick but it falls miserably short of appealing to the traveler. It is much like telling someone to take the "third road to the right"-merely a route to a given point.

He acknowledged that because it was the first in-State transportation route linking the two halves of the State, "the highway was welcomed as an influence cementing the two regions." He added:

Its name traces to that source and to the much shouted slogan of unity-"No North-No South-Just Idaho." This is all commonplace to the Idaho citizen but the lover of romantic names wonders why such a splendid opportunity was passed by.

The road was "destined be a great and popular highway," he said, adding that thousands had traveled it "and not one has failed to be impressed by the magnificence of the route." He would prefer a more romantic name, "but if the name means anything psychological in bringing about a better unity in Idaho it should be accepted."

By then, Idaho's North and South Highway was U.S. 95.

In October 1925, Blaine Stubblefield described a trip along the North and South Highway in *Western Highways Builder* ("Near End on Idaho Arterial Road"):

The new road begins at Port Hill in northern Idaho at the Canadian border, runs south through Coeur d'Alene city, around Coeur d'Alene lake, and south to the mill town of Potlatch. This section is as yet largely unfinished, but the Inland Empire Highway parallels it in Washington, 89 miles from Potlatch to Spokane.

South from Potlatch, the finished road winds among fields and forests to Moscow, the seat of the State University, and then over the Palouse hills 29 miles to the Snake River brakes and the summit of the Lewiston spiral, a ten-mile switchback descent of engineering [known] for its grandeur. The 2000 feet that is much admired as a feat of grade was built by C. C. Van Arsdol. From this height, one looks down on Lewiston, at the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater rivers, where Lewis and Clark passed in their canoes on October 10, 1805.

Thirteen miles above Lewiston, at the road side, stands a monument that marks the spot where the Reverend Henry H. Spalding established his mission for the Nez Perce Indians in 1837. From this valley, the ascent to the high level of Camas Prairie is known as the Winchester grade. It is similar to the Lewiston spiral and its elevation is about the same.

Crossing Camas Prairie through Grangeville and continuing south between the walls of thick fir and pine, the summit of the divide between the Clearwater and Salmon rivers is reached. A third spiral descends from this divide 3000 feet to the village of White Bird and the Salmon River, where Chiefs Joseph and White Bird defeated General Howard's soldiers (1877) . . . .

It is here that the highway enters the Salmon River country, and one can gaze for an hour on this stupendous panorama and truly feel the meaning of the name "Idaho"- "Eee-dah-ho," in the language of the Nez Percés [meaning "Behold the sun coming down the mountain"]

From White Bird, the road traces the left bank of Salmon River, "The River of No Return," in Indian lore, 32 miles to Riggins at the mouth of Little Salmon. Then a gradual climb of 37 miles along the Little Salmon reaches New Meadows, set in a high meadow surrounded by forests.

The last lap is 65 miles of timber, sagebrush prairie, and the valley of the Weiser River. At Weiser, the North-and-South Highway connects with the Old Oregon Trail, which joins the Columbia River Highway at Umatilla and the Lincoln Highway at Salt Lake City.

In 1937, the Federal Writers Project released the American Guide Series volume on Idaho (*Idaho, a Guide in Word and Picture*, The Caxton Printers, Ltd.). As with all the volumes in the series, the Idaho guide narrated tours along the State's major roads, including U.S. 95. The tour of U.S. 95 began:

This, the only N-S highway in western Idaho, and only recently completed, is one of the most picturesque scenic routes in the West. Following rivers, skirting National Forests, or climbing mountains

in spectacular switchbacks, it unfolds in one panoramic vista after another, and offers side trips which penetrate excellent hunting and fishing areas or lead to mountainous depths and heights of unusual grandeur.

The tour pointed out that the road was not paralleled by a railroad "but the buses of various motor coach lines serve sections of the route."

A few points of interest from the tour will be quoted here (all capitalizations as in original).

At Sandpoint, the tour stated:

Of unusual interest is the SANDPOINT BRIDGE upon U S 95 at the southern extremity of the city. Though not spectacular in comparison with the great bridges of the world, it nevertheless spans the lake for a distance of two miles.

Between Granite and Plummer, the tour described the roadside:

U S 95 skirts the lovely city park [in Granite] and crosses a bridge on its way southward from the city . . . . After passing a huge mill, U S 95 swings around the lake and climbs over a fine piece of highway architecture, with farms below looking like gardens. For many miles now the country has been logged and burnt over, with most of it restored to beauty by fields or young growth.

Of the Lewiston Hill Highway, the tour said:

At some distance south of Genesee, U S 95 swings westward into Washington to connect with U S 195, and returns to the summit of the famous LEWISTON HILL (2,750 alt.). The descent is two thousand feet in the next ten miles.

Lewiston Hill, unlike the White Bird or Gilbert, is relatively barren, and the road lies below like the segments of an enormous boa, with each loop hugging a denuded brown mount. In the foreground below is the Clearwater River with its bridges, with Lewiston on its far bank.

The tour writers were impressed by Culdesac Hill south of Spalding:

The CULDESAC HILL (sometimes confused with the Winchester) is one of the most impressive pictures in the State. Like the Lewiston, Gilbert, and White Bird Hills, it offers a remarkable panorama, but it cannot be fully appreciated until the summit is reached and vision turns back and downward. Down this mountain, farms are picturesquely landscaped for miles, lying steeply on either side of the highway from elbow to elbow.

The authors also were impressed by White Bird Hill:

The WHITE BIRD HILL (5,430 alt.) is almost as famous as the Lewiston Hill, but its northern approach is unimpressive, save for the luxuriance in summertime of the wild flowers. This ascent to the summit . . . is only five miles by easy grade. On the summit the flora is chiefly white fir with a little Douglas fir and pine. The vista from here is breath-taking. Far southward, and flanking out east and west, are canyons blue with mist, backbones reaching high in purple obscurity, and the nebulous zeniths of the Seven Devils Peaks. The descent from this hill drops over a series of elbows twenty-eight hundred feet in the next twelve miles, with the view closing in, as the road falls down, and releasing first the vast canyons southward and the forested backbones; dropping next to the immense low foreground of brown and green foothills; and finally closing the shutter to the narrow canyon and the village of White Bird. Unlike the Lewiston Hill, this mountainside in summertime is a continuous garden of wild flowers, and especially at the higher levels.

Over the years, Idaho has improved U.S. 95 from its original design and alignment. For example, the March 1975 issue of the Division of Highways' *Highway Information* newsletter reported on "Another North – South Milestone," the improvement of U.S. 95 in Washington and Adams Counties. The project would "realign almost 17 miles of outmoded, dangerous highway." The article summarized the origins of this stretch of highway:

The original highway was started with a bond issue of Adams County residents in 1916. It is one of the only two counties in Idaho that had a bond issue to begin a State highway. From Cambridge to Council, U.S. Highway 95 – with the exception of about 300 yards located in the Alpine area – is exactly on the same route, the same gradient and the same curvature as it was back in 1917-1919 when first built . . . .

Roadway construction and bridges over the numerous streams were completed from Cambridge to the Washington-Adams County line by 1918. Not until 1924, however, was the road opened all the way to Council. Paving was done between 1930 and 1933 on the entire stretch.

The article described the planned project:

The rural section between Cambridge and Council is being constructed to modern, two-lane, 34-foot wide standards with paved shoulders. The old highway had a narrow 24 to 28-foot width. On long stretches of ascending grades, an auxiliary lane will be provided for slow-moving vehicles . . . .  
Maximum grade is 5.38 percent.

The September-October 1981 issue described "The New Sandpoint Bridge":

A 23-year dream came true September 23, 1981, when the new \$11,442,000 Sandpoint Bridge was officially dedicated under the sponsorship of the Sandpoint Chamber of Commerce . . . . The new bridge is supported by 1,519 piles. Total length of the piling is 164,150 feet, of which 100,190 feet are steel and 63,957 are wood. Six sections of prestressed rib deck beams make up each span of the 42-foot wide bridge.

The article pointed out that this was the fourth bridge in the location:

The new concrete structure presents a dramatic contrast to the first bridge of 1908. Called the "Wooden Wagon Bridge," it was the longest structure of its kind in the world. It was only 200 feet short of two miles in length and it cost \$50,000.

The second bridge was constructed in 1933 and was also a wooden pile structure, only 41 feet shorter than the first bridge and was located slightly downstream. A hand-operated lift-span was provided for the work barges on the lake in those years.

By the time the second Sandpoint Bridge needed replacement the day of long wooden pile bridge construction had passed and the third structure was constructed completely of steel and concrete in 1956.

To provide additional bridge width and a separation for pedestrian and bicycle users as well as accommodate the increased bridge loading requirements of modern-day traffic, it was necessary to "retire" the third structure.

After completing the new bridge, the State retained the "old long bridge" for use by pedestrians, bicyclists, joggers, and fishers.

According to information from <http://www.sandpoint.com>, construction of the first bridge began on May 26, 1908, with the bridge ready for use on March 11, 1910. "Near the center was a steel lift which allowed the steam boat traffic to

pass underneath." The second bridge was dedicated on March 3, 1934. "Unlike the first bridge, whose planks were placed long-ways, the second bridge was quieter and safer." The third bridge was completed in June of 1956.

Governor Cecil D. Andrus gave U.S. 95, despite the improvements, its nickname: the "goat trail." (Governor Andrus served from 1971 to 1977, when he became Secretary of the Interior under President Jimmy Carter. After leaving office in 1981, Andrus returned to Idaho where he served again as governor from 1987 to 1995.) An article by Joan Abrams in the *Lewiston Morning Tribune* on January 17, 1988, explained why the nickname was apt. The State of Idaho Transportation Department classified about 210 miles of the road as substandard. Conditions were hurting economic opportunity. "A goat trail isn't exactly the path of economic prosperity, unless you're in the business of making cheese." She explained:

There are 19 stretches along the highway where sharp curves and narrow pavement prohibit the use of 85-foot tandem trucks . . . . Besides narrow curves, problems on U.S. 95 include poor sight distance, lack of passing opportunities, surfaces susceptible to potholes, roadside obstructions, lack of shoulders and poor drainage, said James H. Clayton, district engineer for the Transportation Department at Lewiston.

The road also hindered tourism:

Tourism in northern Idaho also is hurt by U.S. 95's reputation. A recent poll of southern Idaho members of the American Automobile Association revealed a common complaint is the highway is "inadequate."

"It was the only road that really came up in the survey," said Timothy M. Mitchell, director of public relations for AAA at Boise. "There's really a strong feeling about it."

Sandpoint Chamber of Commerce Director Jonathan Coe has said Canadian tourists coming into Idaho on 95 at Eastport find "it's like going from a freeway onto a dirt road. [Joan] Pasco [director of the Lewiston Chamber of Commerce] said Canadian tourists often choose to enter the U.S. through Washington or Montana instead of Idaho because of the highway.

The good news:

Because it's the major north-south connection in the state, the road receives about 40 percent of all primary highway funds spent and many improvements have been made since Andrus first called the road a goat trail, said Kermit Keibert, state Transportation director.

Because of efforts by Andrus and former Gov. John Evans, U.S. 95 today "is a much improved goat trail," Keibert said.

District Engineer Clayton told Abrams that a two-lane highway with passing lanes and good sight distance "would last a lot of years."

Improvements notwithstanding, Betty Derig said of the White Bird Hill section:

Near the top of White Bird Hill, follow the signs to the sixteen-mile White Bird Battlefield Auto Tour. The undisturbed terrain remains a place of grassy knolls and rocky ravines, much as it was in 1877 [at the time of the Nez Perce War]. Equally striking is the road itself, part of old US 95. For decades this twisting miracle of engineering made a harrowing connection between north and south Idaho. The view is spectacular and gives the traveler a fair overview of the Nez Perce ancestral lands. [p. 259]

William Least Heat Moon traveled the Lewiston Hill Highway on his tour around the country prior to writing his 1999 book *Blue Highways: A Journey into America*:

Old U.S. 95 up barren Lewiston Hill, two thousand feet of grinding steepness, is such a fearsome thing travelers often carry an extra pair of undershorts when forced to drive it. Even the engineers of the new route approached the "hill" most reluctantly, tacking evasively as if ascent and descent weren't their goal. But once on the summit, the rider sees the highway turn to mere dribbles trying to gain the great basin again. [Least Heat Moon, William, *Blue Highways: A Journey into America*, Fawcett Crest Book, June 1984, p. 255]

The November 1993 issue of *Men's Journal* included a feature article on "The Call of the Road: America's 20 Best Drives." One of the twenty was the 110-mile northern stretch of U.S. 195:

The section of U.S. 95 that traverses the northern sliver of Idaho, separating Montana and Washington, is one of the truly great stretches of northwest two-lane. Running out of Coeur d'Alene up to Eastport at the Canadian border, you'd never know this was one of the chief thoroughfares in the state, because it looks-and drives-like a scenic highway of the first order. About halfway up the 110-mile run, you cross Lake Pend Oreille on a 2-mile bridge. There is startlingly clear glacier water here, cold, deep and full of trophy-sized trout.

Once across the bridge, you immediately hit the little logging town of Sandpoint . . . [You] can press on up to Bonners Ferry and on to the Canadian border. If you can, make the drive in the fall, when the aspens and tamaracks are in that dazzling gold phase and the occasional maple stands out in brilliant red.

The State is gradually upgrading U.S. 95 to four lanes throughout its length.

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