



Photos provided by Richard Finn (left) and Jeff Kaskey

Heritage Guild Celebrated 100 Years of History at Duarte Garage

The Livermore Heritage Guild recently celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Duarte Garage in Livermore, located on what was once known the Lincoln Highway.

Around 75 people were in attendance including Mayor John Marchand, Jeffrey Kaskey Livermore Heritage Guild President, and Joel Windmiller President of the Lincoln Highway Association. Representatives of the “Star” and “Durant” owners motor club were also present and brought cars from the 1920, which had been sold at the Duarte Garage at one time.

Kaskey and Windmiller provided some historical perspective on the Duarte Garage and the Lincoln Highway. Some of the information provided during the event comes from an article on the Lincoln Highway by Richard Weingroff. Their remarks included the following information:

Frank H. Duarte established the Duarte Garage located at Portola Avenue and North L Street in 1915. The garage, along with the cottage where the Duarte family lived, was adjacent to what was then the Lincoln Highway, the first transcontinental highway.

Before highways were numbered, prior to 1926, they all had common names. The Abraham Lincoln Memorial Highway was the grandest of them all. The Lincoln

Highway was the first transcontinental highway, running between Times Square, New York and Lincoln Park in San Francisco, often referred to as “The First Road Across America” or “The Main Street of America.”

Having agreed on New York City and San Francisco as the termini, the Lincoln Highway founders wanted the shortest, best, and most direct route possible between the two points. The highly publicized trip to San Francisco took 34 days

- mud pits in Iowa
- sand drifts in Nevada and Utah
- radiators boiling over
- flooded roads
- cracked axles
- enthusiastic greetings in every town that thought it had a chance of being on the new highway

After a triumphal auto parade down Market Street in San Francisco, before thousands of cheering residents, the Trailblazers returned to Indianapolis-by train.

During the early years, a trip from the Atlantic to the Pacific on the Lincoln Highway was, according to the LHA's 1916 Official Road Guide, "something of a sporting proposition." The LHA estimated the trip would take 20 to 30 days, but that assumed the motorist could average a driving time of 18 miles an hour. The motorist could expect the trip to cost no more than \$5 a day per person. That included everything (food, gas, oil), "even allowing for five or six meals in hotels." Car repairs caused by breakage or wear would, of course, increase the cost.

The LHA also sponsored short concrete "Seedling Mile" object lesson roads in many locations (the first, built in the fall of 1914, was just west of Malta, Illinois). They agreed on such features as:

- a 110-foot right-of-way
- a 40-foot wide concrete pavement 10 inches thick (maximum loads of 8,000 pounds per wheel were the basis for the pavement design)
- minimum radius for curves of 1,000 feet, with guardrail at all embankments
- curves super-elevated (i.e., banked) for a speed of 35 miles per hour
- no grade crossings or advertising signs
- a footpath for pedestrians

The original 1913 alignment:

- crossed the Sierra Nevada over Donner Summit on the north and Echo Summit to the South
- Alignment met in Downtown Sacramento near Capitol Park
- Headed south passing thru small towns of Elk Grove, Galt, Woodbridge, Lodi, Stockton
- Before heading east thru Banta, Tracy, Mountain House, Altamont
- Over Altamont Pass descending into Livermore Valley

The Lincoln Highway entered Livermore along First Street crossing the railroad tracks, then turned right on Junction Avenue. Lincoln Highway passed to the north of the Duarte Garage where Portola Park is today. Ailing autos would pull into the Duarte Garage, an important stop for motorists traveling along the route. The mechanic on duty would be asked to repair flat tires, overheated radiators, broken transmissions, damaged fenders and bumpers. The garage was open for business seven days a week. No one could come from Oakland without having car trouble according to Frank Duarte, the owner of the garage. In the summertime, with the small tires of that era, they would have blowouts and drivers would have to get new tires. The garage later became the distributor for Durant and Star Automobiles.

Frank Duarte purchased the triangular lot at the end of North L Street and fronting on the Dublin Road State Highway on which he planned to build a garage. He learned the machinist trade in the east. At that time, roads were mostly still dirt. After he opened his garage, it would be almost a decade before Henry Kaiser would begin quarrying gravel in the area. Rubber tires were beginning to be reliable and engine technology was being refined

An excerpt from the Daily Log of the First Transcontinental Motor Convoy dated Sept. 15, 1919, offered such observations as,

- Departed Stockton 6:15 a.m.
- Drove over best section of entire Lincoln Highway
- Two Rickers and Packard broke fan belts
- Unexcelled roads, made 76 miles in 9.75 hours
- Arrived Oakland 4 p.m.

The City of Livermore took the land by eminent domain in the 1970s intending to demolish the garage and build a park. However, Anita Gandolfo, daughter of Paul Aguilino Caratti, rallied historian Janet Newton of the Livermore Heritage Guild who drafted many residents. They convinced the city council to let the Guild take on the restoration and operation of the site.

The Guild raised over \$30,000 to restore the garage. Today, the Duarte Garage and Lincoln Highway Museum provides an educational resource and asset for Livermore and the surrounding communities.

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