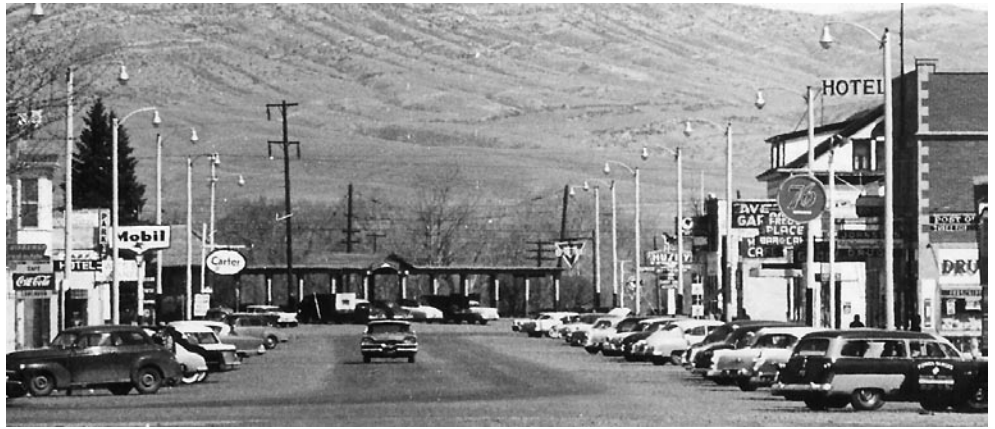


Service Stations along Old Yellowstone Trail

In 1912, businessmen in South Dakota envisioned a nation-spanning road that would bring tourists through their towns. The (Old) Yellowstone Trail was the first road to have markers, road maps, and helpful “Trailsmen” along the way. By 1920, the road extended to the Pacific Coast, coming through the Gallatin Valley and down the Main Streets of Bozeman, Belgrade, Manhattan, Logan, Three Forks and Willow Creek. At one time, Carpenter Road was part of the Yellowstone Trail. The Trailsmen, in addition to advising tourists of road conditions, encouraged communities to improve the roads that were, in some cases, nothing more than dirt trails.

In the early 30s, Highway 2 came through Three Forks, but veered off to the west, bypassing Willow Creek. Roy Joseph Wade was one of the members of the City Council when the decision was made to bring the highway down Main Street and round off the corner of Block 16 at Date Street. The highway then carved through the grid of blocks at an angle, disrupting the planned north / south & east / west streets along the way. The new, well-traveled and well-maintained highway brought travelers and tourists through the heart of Three Forks, causing a plethora of gas stations to spring up along the route. US Highway 10 brought even more cars and tourists through the small towns it wended through.

76, Carter, Conoco, Exxon, Husky, Lightening, Mobile, Phillips 66, Shell, Sinclair, Standard, Texaco, Union, were just a few of the providers of that precious commodity that let Americans go places faster. It is surprising how many gasoline stations in Three Forks have given drivers the freedom of the open road.



Five gas stations are scattered down the road; Mobile and Carter on the west side of Main and 76, Husky, and Conoco on the east side.

Photo courtesy of Headwaters Heritage Museum

Service station locations in Three Forks over the years include; McLees’ property just outside of town, the north parking lot of the Sacajawea Hotel, 2 S. Main (Sinclair), 5 S. Main (Thriftway), 23 S. Main (Christian Center), 104 S. Main (D&D Auto), 124 S. Main (June’s/Lands West), 201 S. Main (TF Physical Therapy), 220 S. Main (TF Motor Supply), Jenkin’s Garage, Longhorn (West End) Cafe, and one on south Front Street.

Some of the owners and operators of these stations include; Jim Kolokotronis, Lee Temp, H.L. Clack, Makoffs, Betty Davis, Fred, Bob, & Phyllis Norman, Chet Schendel, George McPhail, Aquistepace & Robinson, Rod Frick, “Grandma” Tinsley, the Jenkins family, Ted Schlepp, Ray & Louise Arnold, Art Cooper, Larry Wilcox, Ed Avery, Hughie Byrd, Clarence & Liz Elgen, Bill Cramer, and I’m sure there are more!

With its controlled accesses, I-90 replaced US 10 and bypassed most towns, making most of them dream up ideas to lure the now fast moving tourist off the interstate. Whatever its designation, Old Yellowstone Trail, Montana 2, Montana 205 or US 10, it is still our main street and at the heart of our City.

The Masonic Temple

Having lived in Three Forks for over thirty years, I’ve only just recently stepped inside the Masonic Lodge at the junction of Main and old highway 2. For many years I was unaware that it was the home of the Three Forks Lodge No. 73, which was chartered back in 1910. The boarded up windows gave me the impression that the building was abandoned, not noting the occasional activities that the Masons have at the lodge.

The Mason’s Lodge originally housed the First National Bank which opened its doors on February 4, 1909. The First National hit hard times during the hard hitting drought of 1917 - 1924, and was taken over by Labor National Bank in 1922-1923.

The earthquake of 1925, centered near Lombard, crumbled the decorative stonework around the eaves of the building, marring the bank’s image. Labor National Bank did not survive the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and the Masons negotiated with the receivership to purchase the building. Their first meeting in their new lodge was held March 15, 1933. Previous to moving into their new lodge, the Masons used the second floor of the



The First National Bank after the 1925 earthquake.

Photo courtesy of Headwaters Heritage Museum

original school (now Bertagnolli Park), and then, later on, the second floor of the Wells Building (now the Plaza Bar).