

Routes of Memory in the United States: Symbolism, Design and the Landscape

Itinéraires de mémoire aux États-Unis : paysage, symbolisme et conception

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Victory Memorial Parkway, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Photo: Julie Swanson

*The little trees that line the way, Sad symbols of a nation's pride,
Are etched against the wintry gray—Oh let them live for those who died!*
—W.R. Rose, printed in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* newspaper, 1919

On 15 July 1918, nearly four months before Armistice Day (11 November 1918), the City of Cleveland, Ohio passed an ordinance to change the name of North Park Boulevard to “Liberty Row” in honor of the soldiers lost during World War I. By Memorial Day in May of 1919 the planting of 850 memorial “Liberty Oaks”—white oaks (*Quercus alba*)—each with a bronze plaque embedded in concrete, memorializing a fallen hero, was well underway.¹ As *American Forestry* Editor Percival Sheldon Ridsdale eulogized, “The trees will be, in their very greenness and robust strength, reminders of the youth who gave their vigor to win the war.”² The American Forest Association endorsed the idea and suggested the planting of trees as a suitable memorial for America’s war dead and encouraged cities and towns across the nation to undertake similar plantings in numerous articles in its monthly magazine, *American Forestry*.

The selection of North Park Boulevard was not accidental, it was one of the city’s most capacious and attractive public ways. As the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* noted, “This is a splendid way of honoring our boys. It is particularly fitting that one of our finest boulevards in the city be chosen.”³

¹ ‘Cleveland Heights’ Liberty Row,’ Cleveland Heights Historical Society, <http://www.chhistory.org/Places.php?PlacesContent=LibertyRow>, accessed September 30, 2018.

² “Trees for the Dead,” *American Forestry*, vol. 24, no. 296, Aug. 1918, p. 463.

³ *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. July 7, 1918.

'Our Finest Boulevards'

Cleveland's "Liberty Row" represents an interesting intersection between the desire to memorialize the dead from the Great War and the emerging metropolitan infrastructures of American cities at the start of the twentieth century. Cleveland, in 1918, was the fifth largest city in the United States.⁴ The birthplace of John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company and home to General Electric Corporation's Lighting Division, Cleveland was investing in sophisticated city planning tools to guarantee its stature as a major cosmopolitan center—including the development of one of the first regional park authorities in the nation, the Cleveland Metropolitan Park District established in 1917. North Park Boulevard (Liberty Row) was not an ordinary city street, it was a broad parkway that provided a green link among a chain of larger public parks intended to encircle the city. North Park Boulevard is parallel to Doan Brook located in an approximately 400-foot (122 meter) wide protected park corridor. The planting of memorial oaks within this park context ensured a lasting memorial of dignity and beauty.

In 1921 the City of Minneapolis, Minnesota dedicated the "Victory Memorial Parkway" (also known as "Victory Memorial Drive") as a segment of the city's "Grand Rounds"—a system of 55 miles (88 kilometers) of parkway drives connecting seven major park units. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board was established in 1883, and noted landscape architect H.W.S. Cleveland developed the plan for the park and parkway system. The Park and Recreation Board began acquiring land for the parkway in 1910; its completion shortly after World War I led to the decision to dedicate the new parkway to the servicemen and nurses of Hennepin County, Minnesota. 568 trees, each with a plaque memorializing an individual who died during the Great War, were planted in formal rows along the parkway drive.⁵ As the superintendent of the Minneapolis parks, Swiss-born Theodore Wirth stated, "In formal gardening there is nothing more beautiful than long parallel rows of stately trees...they will in time become giants of strength and beauty. What better or more noble symbol of strength and character of our victorious soldiers could be chosen to serve as a memorial to the fallen heroes and noble defenders of our liberty?" Later, in 1921, General Pershing, Commander of the American Expeditionary Force, visited Victory Memorial Parkway. The general noted, "I can conceive of no more fitting monument to the heroic dead of Hennepin County than this great Victory Memorial Driveway with its living borders of magnificent trees."

Other American cities, also in the process of implementing comprehensive park plans, viewed the memorial trees as an honorable and logical component of their mission to establish new parks and parkways. In 1921, for example, Portland, Maine planted 400 European linden (*Tilia europaea*), or common lime, trees along Baxter Boulevard—a proposed "arborway" recommended in the city's park plan prepared by the Olmsted Brothers in 1905.⁶ In Massachusetts, the first metropolitan park system was established in 1893 to provide comprehensive planning for twelve cities and twenty-five towns in an approximate 15-mile (24 kilometer) radius from central Boston. To facilitate access to the new 7,000 acres (2,800 hectares) of parklands, 40 miles (64 kilometers) of parkways were planned. In 1923, one of the parkways, the former Charles River Road in Cambridge, was renamed Memorial Drive in honor of those lost during World War I.

In America new investments in public park infrastructure, particularly in response to the automobile, were occurring during the same time as memorial avenues were being planned. "The automobile," observed the *New York Times*, "has revolutionized our ideas of parks and city or regional planning."⁷ Between 1910 and 1915, the number of passenger automobiles in the United States increased 409% to 2,332,000.⁸

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau.

⁵ Andy Sturdevant, "Victory Memorial Drive, with its remarkable sightlines, is a well-named parkway," April 3, 2013, <https://www.minnpost.com/stroll/2013/04/victory-memorial-drive-its-remarkable-sightlines-well-named-parkway/>, accessed September 30, 2018.

⁶ "A Short History of Trees in Portland, <https://www.portlandmaine.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1888/A-Short-History-of-Trees-in-Portland?bidId=>, accessed September 30, 2018.

⁷ W.B. Van Ingen, "A Tale of Two Parks," *New York Times*, July 6, 1924.

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1999*, Section 1439, "Transportation Indicators for Motor Vehicles and Airlines: 1900-1998."

Civilization's Highways

In 1904 the United States had 2,151,570 miles (3,462,617 kilometers) of rural roads, only 7.14%, or 153,664 miles (247,298 kilometers), were paved.⁹ In 1910 the United States had approximately 240,000 miles (386,000 kilometers) of railway tracks and a large canal network in the East. Outside of urban areas, the nation's public highways were in deplorable condition and long-distance travel frequently impeded by impassable conditions.

The invention of the pneumatic tire in 1885, and the popularity of the bicycle laid the groundwork for today's modern automobile network through the Good Roads Movement. The League of American Wheelmen, a bicycle organization, began advocating in the 1890s for a national network of hard-surfaced roads suitable for the bicycle. Farmers, with poor access to towns and without home mail delivery, saw Good Roads and the newly inaugurated Rural Free Delivery program of the U.S. Post Office as intertwined, and joined the movement after 1896. Significantly, recreation and leisure users were actively demanding these improvements as well. The introduction of the bicycle, and later the automobile, occurring almost simultaneously with a new awareness for conservation and the first National Parks, was spurring Americans to take to the road and explore the countryside and wilderness.¹⁰

Responding to the growing national movement for Good Roads the U.S. Congress passed an appropriation of \$10,000 to conduct a public roads inquiry. To implement the authorization, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture established the Office of Roads Inquiry (ORI) in 1893 "to make inquiries in regard to the system of road management throughout the United States, to make investigations in regard to the best methods of road making and to enable [the Secretary] to assist the Agricultural College and experiment stations in disseminating information on this subject." The office responded to its charge by publishing road building technology bulletins and preparing state and national maps of good roads. In 1905 the ORI received Congressional funding to become a permanent agency and was renamed the Office of Public Roads. In 1916 President Woodrow Wilson signed the first bill to establish a federally aided highway program. In order to receive this new federal funding, each state was required to establish a highway department. With the involvement of the federal government in highway construction, the United States embarked on a massive program of public highway construction just as World War I was beginning.

In 1920, *American Forestry* magazine suggested that the massive investment in building new public highways presented an opportunity to memorialize the war dead. An article entitled "Civilization's Highways" asked if the modern concrete highways "blistering in the sun" might be reconsidered as tree-shaded "Roads of Remembrance" honoring the dead of World War I.¹¹ The article not only linked the construction of America's modern public highways with memorial avenues, but it also referenced European precedents—both directly and indirectly. After a detailed state-by-state listing of funds approved to build modern highways, the article introduced Jean-Frédéric Oberlin of Alsace and his work to construct roads and bridges to improve access and opportunity within Ban de la Roche in the eighteenth century. The article's notes on how public roads improved life, community and industry in the Alsace region was a direct reference to the larger goals of the Good Roads Movement in the United States. Indeed, the article directly linked the philanthropy of Coleman DuPont to construct a public highway in the state of Delaware planted with memorial trees to M. Oberlin's public service. In an indirect reference to European highway design, the article noted that Samuel C. Lancaster, the engineer for the Columbia River Highway in Oregon was brought to Delaware to provide advice on beautifying public highways.

The Columbia River Highway, constructed between 1913 and 1922, showcased the scenery of the sublime Columbia River. Good Roads advocate Sam Hill developed the 74-mile (119 kilometer) highway based on the nineteenth-century Axenstrasse carriage drive around Lake Lucerne in Switzerland. The two-lane road through the Columbia River Gorge used elegant concrete bridges, rustic tunnels, and advanced engineering concepts to negotiate the towering basalt cliffs, ravines, and spectacular waterfalls of the area, while maintaining a

⁹ "Public Road Mileage, Revenues, and Expenditures in the United States in 1904," Washington, D.C.: Office of Public Roads Bulletin, no. 32.

¹⁰ Yellowstone, the first National Park was designated in 1872; Yosemite National Park was designated in 1890. The Niagara Falls Reservation and Adirondack Forest Preserve were established by New York State in 1885. In 1891 the Forest Reserve Act was established—allowing the president to designate protected public reservations on federal lands. The Sierra Club was founded in 1892.

¹¹ "Civilization's Highways," *American Forestry*, vol. 26, no. 317, May 1920, p. 291.

maximum grade of five percent. While the article noted an American familiarity with European roads and their tree allées, it concluded with a distinctly American view of the twentieth century by Lancaster: “We must not forget that we are living in a new age; the new types of conveyance—the high-powered automobile and auto truck—have changed old methods of highway transportation....”¹²

A Transcontinental ‘Road of Remembrance’

Beyond the urban planning context, America was fully embracing the automobile during this period. In 1913, Good Roads advocate, industrialist and visionary, Carl G. Fisher, established the Lincoln Highway, the nation’s first transcontinental automobile highway. The planned all-weather, paved road from New York City to San Francisco captured the public’s imagination. Regarding Fisher’s highway, the *New York Times* proclaimed, “This is the biggest project ever undertaken in the automobile world.”¹³ The 3,389-mile (5,454 kilometer) highway would cross twelve states from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean.

After the war, the Women’s Clubs of the United States viewed the nation’s first transcontinental highway as an ideal roadway for an Atlantic to Pacific memorial tree planting to remember the war dead. As a result, trees were planted in many communities along the Lincoln Highway.

Women’s organizations in the U.S. were strong advocates for the Good Roads Movement. Beyond the basic benefits of modern paved roads, women saw new rural highways as important infrastructure to improve nutrition, by bringing fresh produce and dairy products to city centers, and enable rural children more reliable access to education—muddy and rutted public highways severely limited these essential public goods. The “Road of Remembrance” enabled women to expand their advocacy for modern public roads to a powerful voice for planting trees as a memorial project. Importantly, the planting of trees, unlike more traditional stone monuments, offered women an opportunity to serve as community leaders independent of male authority.¹⁴

In York County, Pennsylvania the Women’s Club of York planted approximately 1,500 memorial trees along the 25-mile (40 kilometer) segment of the Lincoln Highway traversing their county. The trees were dedicated on Memorial Day in May 1922 and the York County segment of the great transcontinental highway declared a “Road of Remembrance.” During the ceremony a letter from the First Lady of the United States, Florence Kling Harding, solemnized the occasion with these words, “May long life attend the trees you have placed in the care of the Lincoln Highway Memorial....” In addition to the trees, simple stone monuments with plaques identified the memorial allée at the eastern and western borders of the county.¹⁵ The plaques stated:

LEST WE FORGET
This Highway for Twenty Five Miles Eastward [or Westward]
Across York County Was Planted with Trees
BY THE PEOPLE OF YORK COUNTY
And Dedicated by Them to Be Forever A
ROAD OF REMEMBRANCE
In Honor Of
THEIR SONS AND DAUGHTERS
Who Served in The World War
1917-1918

The Blue Star Memorial Highway

Begun in 1945 by the National Council of State Garden Clubs (now National Garden Clubs, Inc.), the Blue Star Memorial Highway was established at the end of World War II to honor America’s armed services. The project began in 1944 when the New Jersey State Council of Garden Clubs planted a 5.5-mile (8.8 kilometer) section of U.S. Route 22 between North Plainfield and Mountainside, New Jersey with approximately 8,000 dogwood trees (*Cornus florida*). On 22 January 1945, the state legislature of New Jersey designated the route the “Blue Star Drive.” The selection of U.S. Route 22 in New Jersey reflected a new and modern view toward public

¹² “Civilization’s Highways,” *American Forestry*, vol. 26, no. 317, May 1920, p. 293.

¹³ “More Pledges for National Highway, Plan to Raise \$10,000,000 to Construct Ocean-to-Ocean Road Finds Many Supporters,” *New York Times*, October 27, 1912.

¹⁴ J. Morgan, “Arboreal Eloquence: Trees and Commemoration” (Ph.D. University of Canterbury, 2008) p. 160.

¹⁵ “Memorial Day—The Nation’s Tree Day,” *American Forestry*, vol. 28, no. 343, July 1922, pp.419-420.

highways in the United States. Rather than a historic or scenic highway (which many of the later Blue Star Memorial Highways would dedicate), this segment of highway was constructed before the war in 1932 with dual concrete lanes, 20-feet (6 meters) in width, a safety shoulder and a central green median.

Before World War II modern concrete roads were one of the most tangible representations of the modern age in the United States—their use as memorial highways suggests the high-value the public accorded these new roads.

In a 1946 article, in *Contractors and Engineers Monthly* magazine, discussing the Blue Star Memorial Highway section on U.S. Route 22, it was noted that a six-lane 140-mile (225 kilometer) parkway, with a right-of-way of 300 feet (91 meters) and a central median of no less than 20 feet (6 meters) was being planned from the George Washington Bridge (New York City) south to Cape May, New Jersey. While the discussion of the new parkway did not specifically note the dogwood plantings or the Blue Star Memorial Highway, it was a part of the article detailing the dogwood plantings along U.S. Route 22. The association of the new parkway with the Blue Star Memorial Highway project may suggest the new landscaped parkway was viewed as an appropriate and dignified roadway for to honor America's veterans. With the existing memorial parkways in Cleveland, Minneapolis and Boston, and the use of newly constructed roads to memorialize the war dead, it is likely the planned parkway would have been viewed as a dignified and appropriate corridor for memorial trees. The planned parkway is today's Garden State Parkway.¹⁶

Unlike many memorial routes, the Blue Star Memorial Highway is not a continuous highway with defined starting and ending points, it is comprised of over 100 highway segments in thirty states. Each highway segment is marked by a plaque depicting a blue star—the blue star service flag was displayed in the windows of homes which had family members fighting during World War II.

Rather than constructing memorials, the National Council of State Garden Clubs envisioned the project as a program of beautification for America's highways through the planting of native trees and shrubs, and the creation of roadside rest and picnic areas, bird sanctuaries and the screening or removal of commercial and industrial areas viewed as visual blight. New Jersey State Highway Commissioner, Spencer Miller, Jr., noted, "We are helping to redeem our times and to build a civilization which is fit for free men, for we shall be helping to build America the beautiful."¹⁷

Journey Through Hallowed Ground

The Journey Through Hallowed Ground is a National Heritage Area that was designated by the U.S. Congress in 2008 for its important role in America's history. From prehistoric times to the present, it has also been an important transportation corridor. Importantly, the 180-mile (290 kilometer) long corridor has the largest concentration of sites from the American Civil War (1861-1865), including Gettysburg, Pennsylvania where President Lincoln delivered his important Gettysburg Address and Antietam, Maryland, the single bloodiest day of the four-year conflict that led to 620,000 deaths. Running north-south through the heritage area is the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Scenic Byway. To honor the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, 620,000 trees are being planted in memory of each life lost during the nation's deadliest war. The 180-mile (290 kilometer) corridor will become a "landscaped allée" that will be the largest such pathway of trees on the globe. The inspiration for the allée, according to the director of the Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership, was the memorial allées planted in Australia after World War I.¹⁸

The end of World War I was only fifty-three years after the end of the U.S. Civil War. America occupied many of those intervening years erecting somber and dignified monuments of stone and bronze—some of which were still new in 1918—to the nation's war dead. With the loss of life from the Civil War still fresh in many memories, and the scars of the war still visible on America's landscape and culture, the idea of a living memorial of trees may have been particularly embraced as a suitable and appropriate acknowledgement to remember World War I, as many hoped, as the "war to end all wars." The United States was not ready to erect new monuments of stone and bronze next to those so recently dedicated to lives lost in another war.

¹⁶ Today, New Jersey has three highway segments dedicated as the Blue Star Memorial Highway (including the original segment of U.S. Route 22. The planned parkway, today's Garden State Parkway, is not designated as part of the Blue Star Memorial Highway system.

¹⁷ *Contractors and Engineers Monthly*, September 1946.

¹⁸ "620,000 trees being planted to honor Civil War Dead," *USA Today*, December 21, 2013.

Memorial trees offered the hope and promise of the future, and when considering how to honor America's sons and daughters lost on the soil of Europe, *American Forestry* opined, "They themselves would doubtless prefer such monuments to marble columns."¹⁹

Annotated Listing of Memorial Trees from *American Forestry* magazine, 1918-1921

Prepared by Bryce Patterson, Landscape Architecture Student, Pennsylvania State University

***American Forestry*, vol. 24, 1918**

"Memorial Trees," *American Forestry*, vol. 24, no. 300, Dec. 1918, pp.756

Editorial of nation-wide tree planting in memoriam for fallen WWI soldiers

"Memorial Trees for Sailors and Soldiers," *American Forestry*, vol. 24, no. 300, Dec. 1918, pp. 728-729

Brief mention of Lincoln Highway Association endorsing tree planting along the highway. First mention of this idea in *American Forestry* magazine (?)

"Trees for the Dead," *American Forestry*, vol. 24, no. 296, Aug. 1918, pp. 463

Article mentioned in initial email—Cleveland's "Victory Oaks" lining a boulevard, possibly to be named "Liberty Row."

***American Forestry*, vol. 25, 1919**

"The Great Tree Maker," *American Forestry*, vol. 25, no. 306, June 1919, pp.1158

Mentions dedication of an avenue of Liberty Oaks in Cleveland on Memorial Day, 1919

"National Honor Roll, Memorial Trees," *American Forestry*, vol. 25, no. 311, Nov. 1919, pp. 1494

***American Forestry*, vol. 26, 1920**

"American Legion Plans Memorial Tree Planting," *American Forestry*, vol. 26, no. 315, Mar. 1920, pp. 156-159 pp. 158-159, see mention of a Mrs. John B. Hamme planning to plant memorial trees along twelve miles east and west of the Lincoln Highway, York, PA.

"Civilization's Highways: Shall We Have Them as Streaks of Concrete Blistering in the Sun or Shall We Make Them 'Roads of Remembrance?'" *American Forestry*, vol. 26, no. 317, May 1920, pp. 291-294

pp. 294, see mention of a Mrs. John B. Hamme, President of the Women's Club, planning to plant memorial trees along the Lincoln Highway, York, PA. See also her statement on the subject directly following her introduction.

"Living Memorials," *American Forestry*, vol. 26, no. 318, June 1920, pp. 347-352

pp. 350, see general mention of communities planting memorial trees along the Lincoln Highway, mostly led by the General Federation of Women's Clubs of America

"Memorial Trees for Trenton," *American Forestry*, vol. 26, no. 319, July 1920, pp. 443

Very similar to "Planting of Memorial Trees" article in May 1920 issue

"Memorial Trees—Our Heroes' Hall of Fame," *American Forestry*, vol. 26, no. 314, Feb. 1920, pp. 111-114

pp. 114, see mention of York, PA Women's Club + Chamber of Commerce beginning planting program along the Lincoln Highway.

"National Honor Roll, Memorial Trees," *American Forestry*, vol. 26, no. 313, Jan. 1920, p. 56

"National Honor Roll, Memorial Trees," *American Forestry*, vol. 26, no. 314, Feb. 1920, p. 114

"National Honor Roll, Memorial Trees," *American Forestry*, vol. 26, no. 315, Mar. 1920, p. 177

"National Honor Roll, Memorial Trees," *American Forestry*, vol. 26, no. 316, Apr. 1920, p. 227

"National Honor Roll, Memorial Trees," *American Forestry*, vol. 26, no. 317, May 1920, p. 304

"National Honor Roll, Memorial Trees," *American Forestry*, vol. 26, no. 318, June 1920, p. 336

"National Honor Roll, Memorial Trees," *American Forestry*, vol. 26, no. 319, July 1920, p. 440

"National Honor Roll, Memorial Trees," *American Forestry*, vol. 26, no. 320, Aug. 1920, p. 500

"National Honor Roll, Memorial Trees," *American Forestry*, vol. 26, no. 321, Sep. 1920, p. 562

"National Honor Roll, Memorial Trees," *American Forestry*, vol. 26, no. 323, Nov. 1920, p. 686

The National Honor roll is a listing of individual trees (and the individuals or organizations that planted them) organized by town and state.

¹⁹ "Trees for the Dead," *American Forestry*, vol. 24, no. 296, Aug. 1918, p. 463.

“Planting of Memorial Trees,” *American Forestry*, vol. 26, no. 317, May 1920, pp. 319

See mention of memorial tree plantings along the Lincoln Highway near Trenton, NJ (are the plantings in Trenton & Mercer County, or are the plantings in memoriam for the soldiers of Trenton & Mercer County)

***American Forestry*, vol. 27, 1921**

“First Road of Remembrance Dedicated,” *American Forestry*, vol. 27, no. 326, Feb. 1921, p. 134

Article talks about memorial roads/highways throughout the country

“Honor Roll Masons of Pennsylvania,” *American Forestry*, vol. 27, no. 336, Dec. 1921, p. 783

“National Honor Roll, Memorial Trees,” *American Forestry*, vol. 27, no. 326, Feb. 1921, p. 110

“National Honor Roll, Memorial Trees,” *American Forestry*, vol. 27, no. 329, May 1921, p. 326

“National Honor Roll, Memorial Trees,” *American Forestry*, vol. 27, no. 330, June 1921, p. 408

“National Honor Roll, Memorial Trees,” *American Forestry*, vol. 27, no. 334, Oct. 1921, p. 665-666

“President Approves Memorial Tree Planting,” *American Forestry*, vol. 27, no. 330, June 1921, p. 389



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Dan Marriott dirige le bureau d'études Paul Daniel Marriott + Associates, à Washington, DC, qu'il a fondé en 2004 et qui est spécialisé dans la conservation des routes historiques et des routes pittoresques, les études de corridor, les stratégies de programmation régionale, les études de transport, d'entrées de ville ou de territoire, et les études d'aménagement de voiries. Auparavant, Dan a dirigé le programme du patrimoine rural et des routes historiques au National Trust for Historic Preservation à Washington, DC. Il est l'auteur de *Saving Historic Roads: Design and Policy Guidelines* (Wiley, 1998) et de *Milestones to Mile-Markers* (Federal Highway Administration, 2004). En 2009, il a été lauréat d'une prestigieuse bourse de conservation du patrimoine de la Fondation Fitch. Il est actuellement professeur invité à l'Université d'État de Pennsylvanie, chargé de cours en architecture du paysage.

Dan a une licence en architecture du paysage de cette même université, une maîtrise en aménagement du territoire de l'université Cornell, et un doctorat de l'université d'Edimbourg.