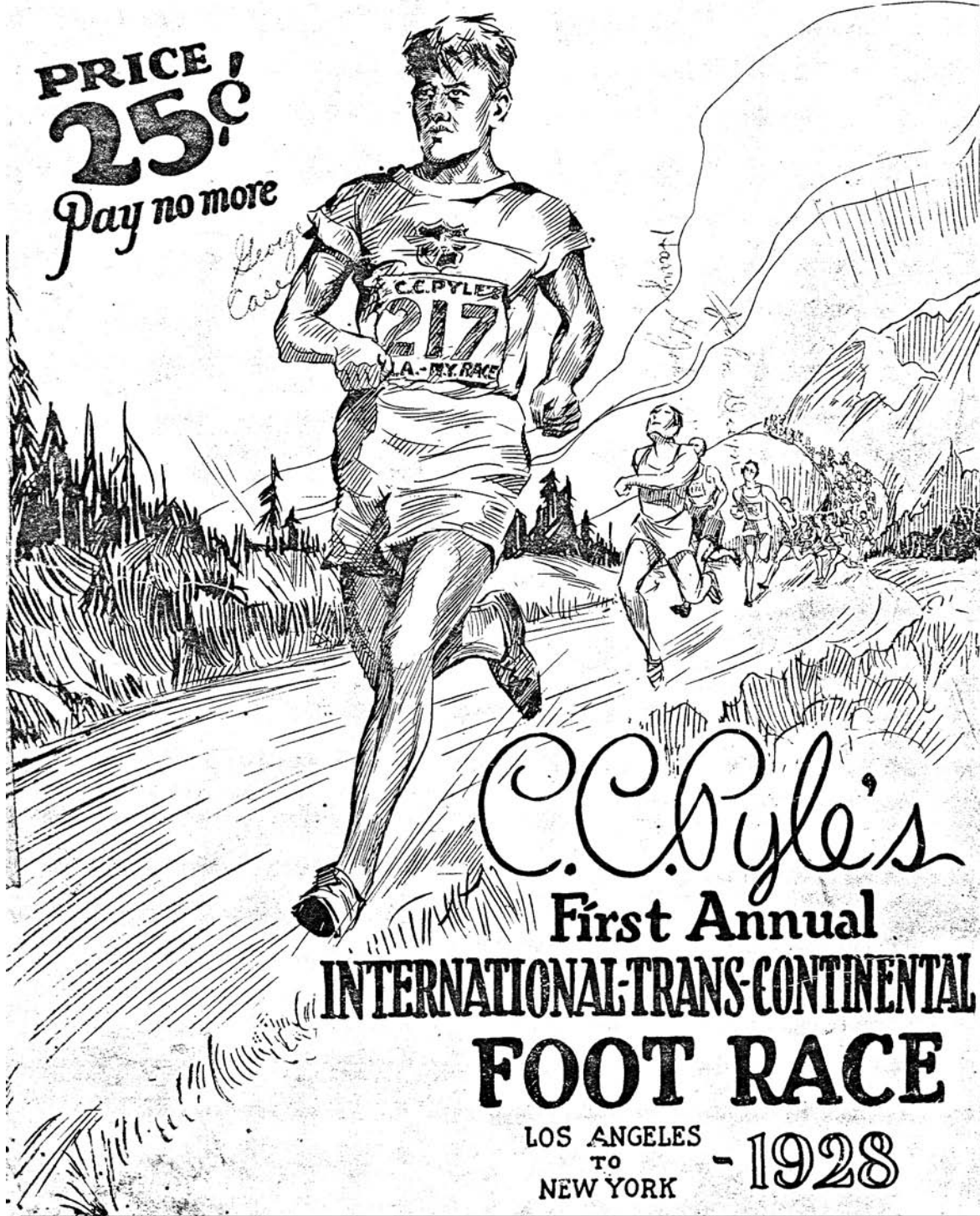


OFFICIAL PROGRAM

Running the Road



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The Bunion Derby of 1928

Route 66 is famous. Some consider it a national treasure. People come from Europe, Scandinavia, Japan, and other points distant to motor on its seventy year old pavement and poke into its byways.

Its fame is no accident nor just a by-product of longevity. Nostalgia is a big factor, a longing by some to recapture a time of more leisurely travel, picturesque windshield views, and the ability to just pull over to the side of the road to look without putting on the hazard warning lights. But the fame and romance of the road is a product of events, media hits, and promotion.

The Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck's novel of Depression farmers traveling the "long concrete path across the country" to find the "Promised Land" in California, delighted readers in 1939. Steinbeck dubbed the route "The Mother Road." John Ford's film ver-

sion in 1940 added visual impact. Bobby Troupe gave the road a tune in 1946 when he wrote "Get Your Kicks on Route 66". Nat King Cole made it a hit and almost 200 performers have recorded their versions since. In the fall of 1960, television viewers began traveling the road in a Corvette convertible with George Maharis and Martin Milner in the series "Route 66." Cultural iconography was firmly fixed for another generation. More recently, the animated film "Cars" (2006) boosted the road for yet another generation.

But these media boosts to the fame of the highway were by no means the first. Cy Avery of Oklahoma, sometimes referred to as the "Father of Route 66," and John Woodruff of Springfield, Missouri, began promoting the road from its beginning in 1926 as "The Main Street of America." Each of the eight states through which the road snaked had a U. S. Highway 66 Association. Avery's National U. S.

runners put their toes to the mark in Los Angeles on March 4, 1928. The \$25,000 first prize was certainly an enticement to runners on the eve of the Depression.

The Laclede County Republican
April 27, 1928

Runners Here Monday

Pyle's Footracers Passed Through Lebanon On Their Way From Conway To Waynesville

As a sort of whistling post between the two stations, Conway and Waynesville, Lebanon on Monday morning entertained about 2,000 visitors who gathered here to see the footracers pass through on their way from Los Angeles to New York. The runners spent Sunday night in Conway and Monday night in Waynesville.

Highway 66 Association promoted the road in traditional advertising forms. In 1928 Lon Scott, the Association's public relations director, dreamed up the idea of a coast-to-coast foot race to promote the as yet not fully paved highway. He reasoned that people would realize that if people could run the road, they certainly could drive it in motorcars.

C. C. Pyle (nick-named "Cash and Carry," a Barnum-esque sports promoter of the Roaring Twenties) was hired to stage the event. He planned to finance the race and fill his pockets by charging an entry fee, selling programs along the route, and endorsements. Thus, the First Annual International Trans-Continental Foot Race, hailed by Pyle as "the most stupendous athletic accomplishment in all history," was launched. Reporters promptly dubbed it the "Bunion Derby."

Although the exact number varies with the source, about 200

As per announcement, contestants began arriving in Lebanon a little after 9 o'clock. Among the first arrivals at this point was Sam Richman of New York, who, in January, along with three brothers, had an unpleasant experience in this County. The Richman brothers then were on their way to Los Angeles to enter the race. The two leading runners, Andrew Payne, of Claremore, Oklahoma, and Peter Gavuzzi, of Southampton, England, passed through soon after 9 o'clock. The last of the pedestrians went through Lebanon at 12:45. The contestants left Conway at 7 o'clock Monday morning and had to be in Waynesville by 12 o'clock Monday night to remain in the race.

Several of the runners stopped in town for refreshments in the way of ice cream, sandwiches and other edibles, and Sam Richman took time to buy a pair of new shoes while he was here. Sam visited a few minutes with Sheriff Allen and a few other acquaintances he picked up during his stay here in January. He expects to be in the line of winners when the racers arrive in New York. Some of the racers trotted all the way through town, while others plodded ahead in a flat footed walk. One of the men stopped on a convenient lawn, not far off Commercial street, and took an after-lunch nap. He said he had his nap every day after noon, whatever happened.

At all points in the County, along the highway, Conway, Phillipsburg, Brush Creek, at the filling stations, crowds gathered to see the racers as they passed along. The Lebanon Chamber of Commerce arranged a detour at this point and the runners left Highway 66 at the sign on the Springfield road, came through Commercial street, and passed out of town by the way of Mill Creek road, to the sign across the road at 66.

C. C. Pyle, Red Grange, the famous star, and other guests, travel in a special Fageol cruising coach. [Fageol was the first company to build a bus from the ground up.] The coach, with Mr. Pyle and Red Grange, arrived about 10 o'clock, remaining but a short time. The traveling broadcasting station came in before the runners and remained here several hours.

While Ginsto Umek, of Trieste, Italy, No. 79 in the official list led the way into Conway, two Negroes, Phillip Granville, of Hamilton, Ontario, and Ed Gardner, of Seattle, led into Waynesville. Umek again was in the lead into Rolla.

In the official list of entrants in the race, 249 names were entered. Of these, 150 left Los Angeles in the race. At

Springfield, three of the runners were dropped and this reduces the number in the race to seventy-three. This number of racers passed through Lebanon. The shortest time made by any runner between Conway and Waynesville, 51.9 miles, was 7:42.06. Payne, who holds the lead over all the runners, made it from Conway to Waynesville in 9:23:12.

George M. Rehayn, the "singing Dutchman," a big German, No. 208 in the list, entertained the onlookers with German ditties as he passed through town.

The entertainment derived from the passing through of this aggregation of men, representing nationalities covering the world, was well worth what it cost the Chamber of Commerce, and the opportunity to study faces and characteristics of these men from every part of the globe was rare. The 2,000 or more people who formed a double line up and down Commercial street very greatly enjoyed the show.

The Lebanon Rustic (April 26, 1928) filled in the details of the side story about the four Richman brothers. It was alluded to in the *Republican* article with the attention given to Sam Richman, who stopped to buy shoes in town and visit with Sheriff Allen. The brothers were from New York. Two brothers ran, one brother was the trainer, and the other drove the following car.

Before leaving New York, the Richmans were able to scrape together just enough money to cover the entry fees for the two running brothers, bare expenses, and \$25 to purchase a Ford sedan to drive west. "They started west with this car and plenty of determination as their capital." Enroute from New York to Los Angeles in February, they drove through Lebanon and four miles west of town hit and killed a mule. The sheriff hauled the two into court with the intent of making them pay for the mule. "After threatening to attach their car, the matter was finally compromised by their paying \$8.00 in cash and giving a note for the balance in payment for killing the mule."

There is no account of the runners' entrance into Waynesville and activity around the square. There are no issues of our usual source for news of Waynesville and Pulaski County, the *Pulaski County Democrat*, for that period. *The Crocker News* printed a short announcement a few days before the runners were expected to arrive in Waynesville.

The Crocker News
April 19, 1928

The transcontinental foot racers, who are running from coast to coast, will probably arrive in Waynesville about noon Sunday and stop for the night. A broadcasting outfit, first aid crew and



The First Trans-Continental Foot Race stopped in Waynesville April 23, 1928. Booths hawking souvenir programs and mementos lined the square. Visible is the bus carrying reporters and the traveling broadcast station. Not visible is Pyle's \$25,000 flagship traveling coach, the double-decker "America." Courtesy of Skip Curtis.

others are included in the caravan accompanying the racers on their long hike eastward. Waynesville invites the presence of all and a large crowd will no doubt be there.

The Crocker News did not publish a followup story of the stopover in Waynesville. *The Dixon Pilot* didn't mention the event at all.

At their stop in Rolla, an account of the festivities and status of the runners was reported in the *Rolla Herald* (April 26, 1928.) The standings of the runners

had not changed at Mile 1969.3. Payne was in the lead, Gavuzzi in second place, and John Salo of Passaic, New Jersey, was third. *The Herald* observed, "The runners are accompanied by their manager and trainers. They are a husky, robust looking aggregation made up from all parts of the United States. They are accompanied by a regular carnival company [featuring] various advertising stunts. Tents are pitched on the Masonic lot opposite the post office, where shows are conducted and all sorts of stands such as you see at carnivals were opened for

business."

On May 26th, 55 runners finished the race, crossing the line at Madison Square Garden at Mile 3,422.3. Peter Gavuzzi of England, who ran second much of the way, dropped out in Ohio because of an abscessed tooth. John Salo finished second.

After 573 hours, Andrew Payne, the Oklahoma Cherokee, finished first. Payne was a dark horse in the race with no real track record in marathons. His family borrowed \$125 so Andy could enter the race. He collected the \$25,000 prize money and paid off his parents' farm.

The Bunion Derby was great for Route 66. The foot race was expansive, unique, and lined with novel characters. It was much like the road itself. Runners and road garnered publicity in the national press and on radio. However, C. C. Pyle didn't carry away suitcases full of cash. He spent lavishly and many towns along the way didn't contribute to become a stop on the route. However, he was convinced it was a good idea.

Pyle launched a Second Annual Trans-Continental Foot Race in 1929 from New York to Los Angeles. This second run was even less financially successful. John Salo and Peter Gavuzzi came in first and second, respectively, and neither collected prize money. Nonetheless, Route 66 was a success for the next four decades.



Entering Waynesville from the east on Route 66, not long after the pavement was completed. Eight thousand people attended festivities in Rolla in March of 1931 to celebrate the completion of concrete across the state. The final section paved on Missouri Route 66 was a 72 mile stretch between Rolla and Lebanon. Courtesy of Jan and Terry Primas.