



NEWS RELEASE

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Glasco's Red Line Team, Champions of Kansas

Glasco, KS - Early automobile travelers encountered a string of red-striped telephone poles between Kansas City and Denver in the 1910s. The telephone poles marked the Red Line Division of the Midland Trail, an early transcontinental route. The painters? Members of Glasco's Red Line basketball team. In 1915, the team embarked upon a journey across Kansas, playing basketball games and marking the Red Line Division of the Midland Trail. Glasco's Red Line basketball team's story complements the many great American transportation stories featured as part of the Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition *Journey Stories* on display August 14 – September 27, 2009 at the Glasco Corner Store, 129 E Main Street in Glasco.

Glasco formed the Red Line basketball team in an effort to bolster support for the highway route that passed through the town. 26 games were scheduled along the Midland Trail from Kansas City to Denver between January 6, 1915 and February 13, 1915. The team played basketball at night and painted red stripes on telephone poles during the day. The money raised at the games covered travel and paint expenses.

By all accounts, the trip was a success. Not only did the team paint the telephone poles along the majority of the route, they also dominated on the basketball court. According to a February 11, 1915 article in *The Glasco Sun*, "They have won every game since leaving by good scores and according to the dispatches from Glasco to Denver will soon be a crimson streak." The Red Line team returned to Glasco undefeated.

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By 1916, the Red Line Division of the Midland Trail merged with the Midland Trail. Glasco's basketball team continued to play basketball and served as a reminder of the Red Line Division. The Midland Trail continued to evolve as named roads gave way to numbers, and this two-lane highway shared designation with U.S. 40, and eventually became U.S. Highway 24. Glasco residents follow a long tradition of supporting the highway. They are collaborating with the Solomon Valley – Highway 24 – Heritage Alliance to preserve and share its history in a National U.S. 24 Museum in Glasco.

“Building Highway 24's story has been a step-by-step process, revealing the imagination and commitment of local men who saw into the future and dedicated their lives and resources to that vision,” said Joan Nothern of the Glasco Community Foundation. “From L. F. Davidson, boosting the Red Line Highway by creating a basketball team to literally put the road and the towns on the map, to Ray Sawhill, who served 35 years as secretary of the successive Highway Associations that promoted the highway, Glasco played a pivotal role in this two-lane highway's history.”

Nothern added, “Our challenge now is to explore, preserve, and share this history by hosting the national *Journey Stories* exhibition, and then by opening the U.S. 24 Museum in Glasco. Our vision is to restore and reuse buildings dating from the Red Line days and are now part of Glasco's Historic Downtown District, listed on the National Register of Historic Downtown Districts.”

To learn more about similar stories of early highways and community development, make the trip to the Glasco Corner Store, operated by the Glasco Community Foundation, in Glasco for the *Journey Stories* exhibition. Journey stories – tales of how we got here - are as American as apple pie. Why did our ancestors come to America? Why did our families choose Kansas as home? The exhibition explores four centuries of American history through images, audio clips, music, maps, and artifacts. Visitors will listen to stories of travelers and trace their route on an interactive map; read harrowing accounts of escaped slaves on the road to freedom; and use an 1859 guidebook to prepare for a westward trip on an overland trail.

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The local companion exhibit to *Journey Stories*, entitled *Journey Down Our Road! One Route! One Road! Endless Stories! The History of U.S. 24 Through Kansas* produced by the Glasco Community Foundation, explores the nearly 100-year history of Highway 24, from a dirt road to a paved highway, and stories of the highway's impact on Glasco and other communities along the route. The local exhibit also features the story of the Red Line basketball team.

The Glasco Community Foundation is one of six Kansas community cultural organizations to host *Journey Stories*. Other Kansas hosts include the McPherson County Old Mill Museum in Lindsborg, Geary County Historical Society and Museums in Junction City, the Parsons Public Library, the Prairie Museum of Art and History in Colby, and the Atchison County Historical Society.

The *Journey Stories* exhibition is part of Museum on Main Street, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution, the Kansas Humanities Council, and the Federation of State Humanities Councils. Support for Museum on Main Street has been provided by the United States Congress.

The Kansas Humanities Council sponsors the Kansas tour of *Journey Stories*. A non-profit organization, the Kansas Humanities Council conducts and supports community-based programs, serves as a financial resource through an active grant-making program, and encourages Kansans to participate in their communities.

For more information about *Journey Stories* and related exhibits and events in Glasco contact the Glasco Community Foundation at 785/568-0120 or www.glascokansas.org, or the Kansas Humanities Council at 785/357-0359 or www.kansashumanities.org.

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