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Signs and Entrances For Attracting Tourists

Michigan State University Extension

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Robert W. McIntosh, Conservation Institute; Arthur T. Wilcox, Forestry

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# SIGNS and ENTRANCES

*For Attracting Tourists*



## ENTRANCES

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By

ARTHUR T. WILCOX, *Department of Forestry*  
ROBERT W. McINTOSH, *Conservation Institute*

**MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE**

*Agricultural Experiment Station • Cooperative Extension Service*

EAST LANSING

# Why Better Signs and Entrances?



Better signs and entrances pay!

Actually, your sign represents you at the roadside.

First impressions mean sales in the tourist and resort business. The entrance to your property is usually the first thing to meet the eye of your prospective customer. If he is pleased, he will drive in and make inquiries. If he is unimpressed, someone else who does a better job of presenting his wares gets the sale.

This bulletin will show some of the ways to make the entrance of your business attractive . . . figuratively to make it reach out and pick customers right off the highway!

You may not be able, personally, to accomplish all of the improvements suggested here. Because entrances are such an important part of grounds development, it is often wise to consult one's architect or landscape architect. Use this circular to help present your ideas to him. Use it in talking to your sign maker. A well-designed entrance will be a lasting asset to your business. It will pay off because it will attract more customers.

Good signs and entrances are extremely important. They are the front door of your establishment. Make the most of them!

## Entrances

An important function of an entrance is to open up a view to your buildings and act as a kind of picture frame to display your business to prospective guests. A good entrance provides an easy, effortless way to get into your area from the highway. Its value may be directly proportional to the ease by which the motorist can see where he is going, and drive in without difficulty. Properly designed entrances may be likened to mental magnets, pulling the motorist off the highway and into your driveway.

Think of your entrance as a funnel which gathers tourists from both directions and leads them easily and effortlessly to your office. To draw the customer from the highway to the cash register, the entrance road should be well defined and gently curving, taking advantage of the space which you have and the natural beauty of your grounds. Provide adequate, convenient parking off the right-of-way. Plant trees and shrubs in a pattern which opens the view to your property and gives the prospective guest an opportunity to see it and make up his mind. Well placed trees and shrubs create a setting for structures like a picture frame sets off a picture to its best advantage.

Make the entrance reveal the character of your establishment. A picket fence goes with clean white cottages, but a rustic fence goes with a log cabin resort.

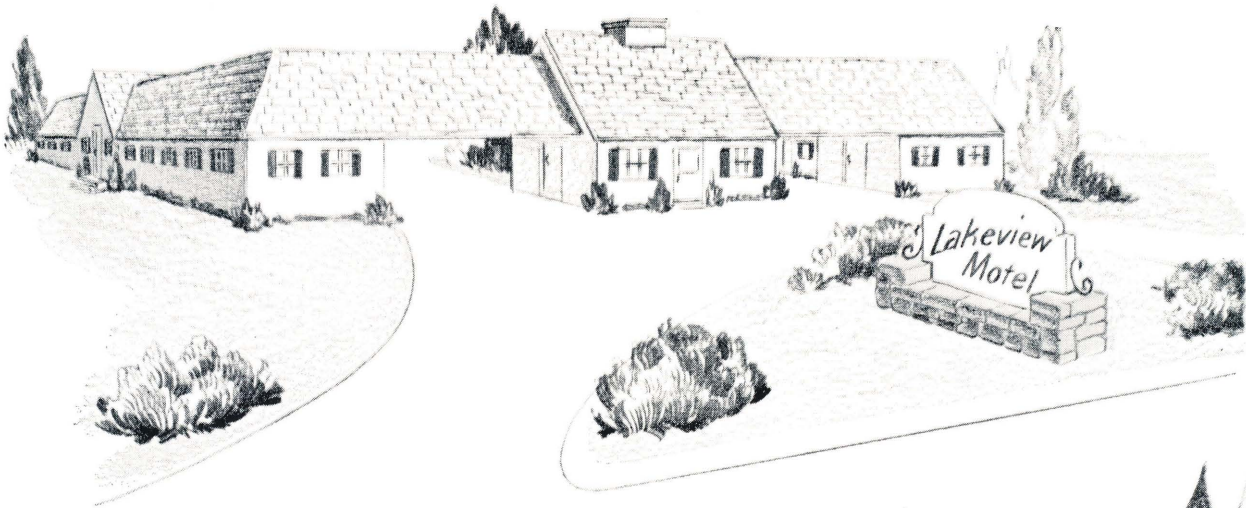
Wherever possible, take advantage of the double or U-shaped entrance. Many a sale may be made if the motorist misses the first entrance but is able to turn into the second with safety.

It is necessary to consult your local highway officials before constructing an entrance. The highway department will also be glad to assist you in the design of the entrance.

For further information, call on your county agricultural agent, or write to Conservation Institute, Michigan State College, East Lansing, Michigan.

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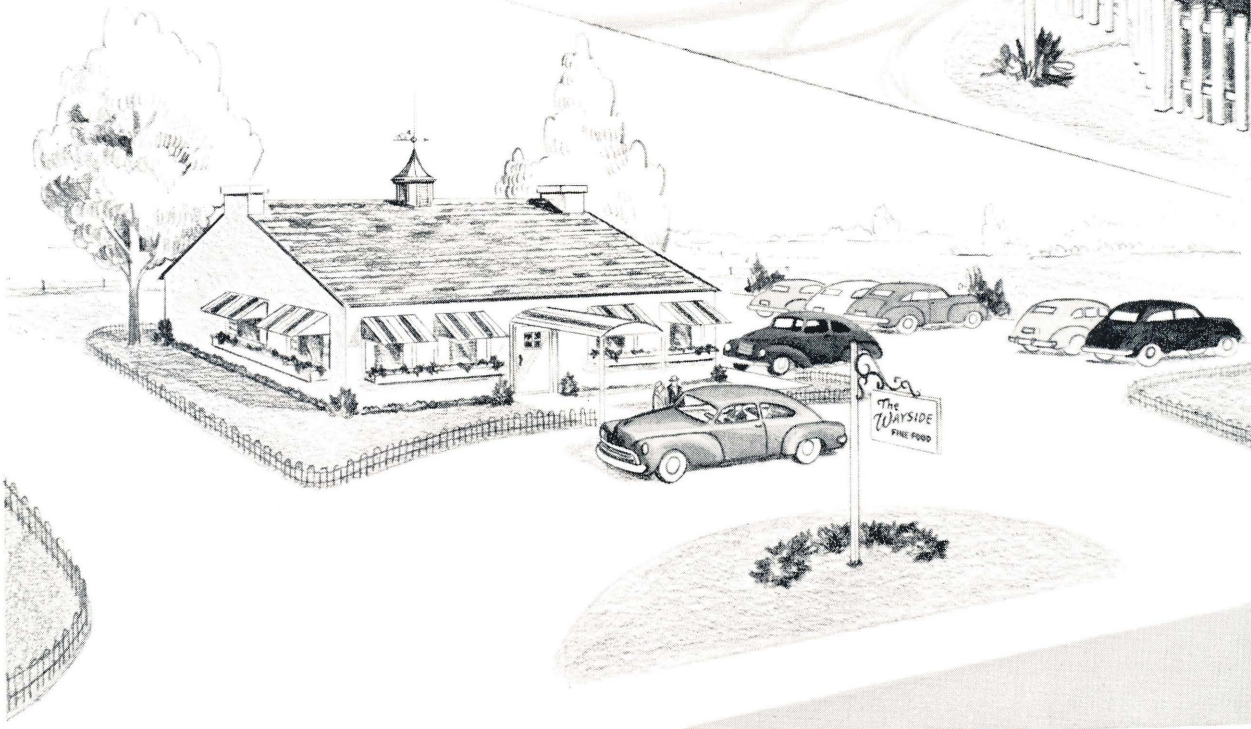
# Types of Entrances



● Show your property to advantage. A good view with easy turn-in draws customers.

● Make your entrance wide enough to invite the traveler. Use fences and plantings to help direct the driver.

● Good parking combined with easy, inviting entrance drive encourages good business.



## Signs

Your sign is a substitute for a doorman. Its first job is to tell the tourist what he will find. It persuades sales. It must make friends with the motorist and influence him to give you his business.

The sign gives your prospective guest his first impression of your business establishment. Very often his decision to stop or continue on his way will depend upon this impression. The sign should be visible for at least 1,000 feet. This is necessary to give the driver time to slow down, read, understand what the sign says, and finally turn in to your location. In short, your sales must be made in the tick of seconds.

A good sign stimulates the mind and tells the motorist that he has found a good place to stop. It indicates to him that your place is clean, comfortable, and entirely acceptable. In addition, when he leaves, it is the last thing he sees to remind him that this is a place to remember and to recommend to his friends.

A sign must be direct and clear in meaning as well as highly legible. Use as few words as possible and still sell your business. People cannot and will not read a long wordy sign. Your sign should be "different" so it will stand out, be noticed and admired. Ideas count. A striking display of original thought in color, shape or name will attract attention from the thousands of ordinary signs. Make the sign attractive, neat, and businesslike. People admire beautiful things. They come to enjoy a beautiful country, and your sign, in harmony with the landscape, will create thoughts of an attractive and comfortable establishment. A neat, well-kept sign conveys an air of hospitality and pleasant invitation to good times.

Reflect the character of your business in your sign. A rustic sign goes with rustic construction. A carefully painted colonial-type sign with a neat, newly painted appearance goes well with neat well kept cottages. A bright plastic and metal sign brings forth thoughts of innerspring mattresses, chrome bath fixtures, and comfort in the modern manner.

Try a sign with a distinctive shape or trade mark. Remember, a picture will attract more business than a mere statement, "modern cabins."

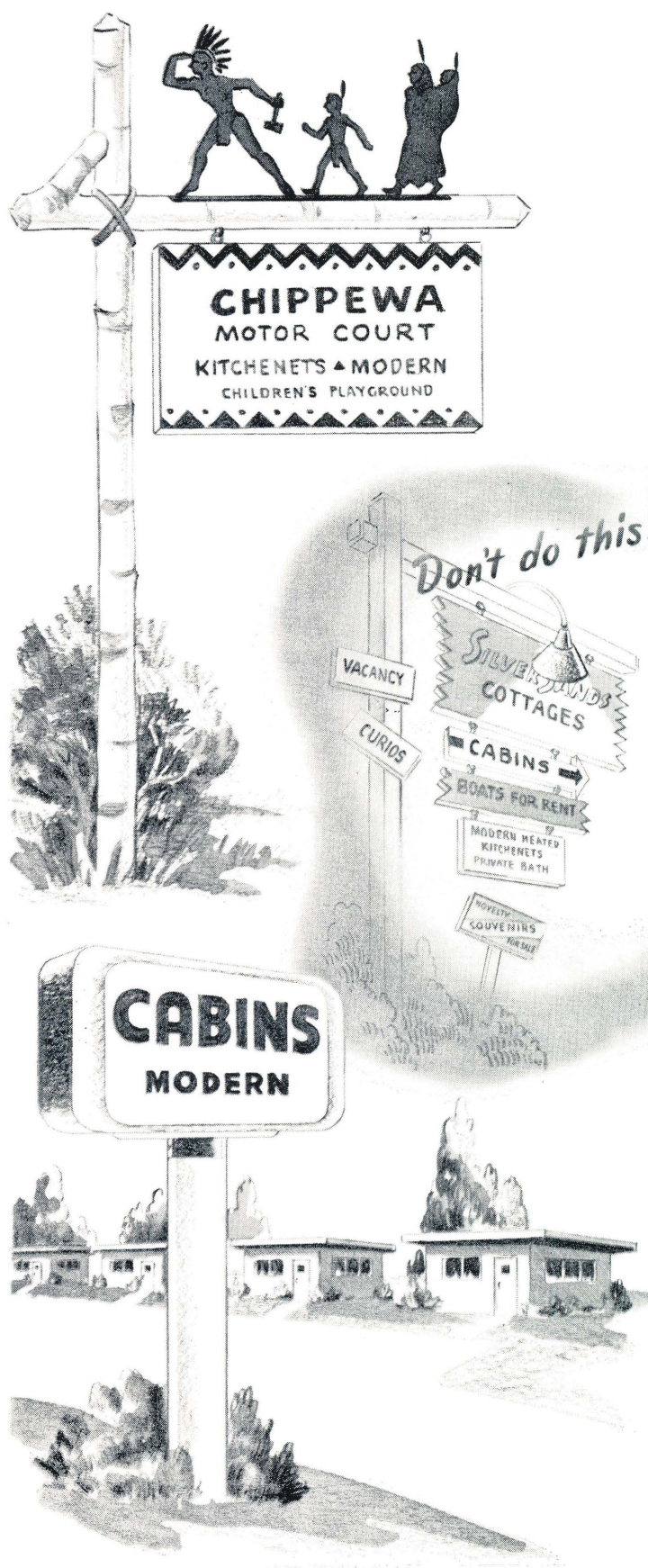
Carry the color of your buildings to the sign and have them bright and well blended. Use distinctive lettering. Use few words, easily read, which carry your thought in a convincing manner.

Locate your sign where it will show off the entrance to the best advantage and still be easily seen. The motorist should see your sign for some distance before he can read it.

The vacation business depends upon the attractions of woods, waters, climate, scenery, wildlife, history, and ease and comfort of travel. Your highway department is doing all it can to protect these attractions. For this reason, you should keep your sign outside of the road right-of-way. Consult with your highway or street officials before erecting the sign and before you use reflector signs or unusual lighting effects.

## Color

The color of your sign is very important in attracting business. Color, wisely used, creates an appeal which the motorist cannot ignore. It is often the





first thing about a sign to catch the eye. It may be used to attract attention to certain important parts of the sign which emphasize main attractions.

Color has emotional appeal. People prefer certain colors to others. Clean, bright colors convey a feeling of comfort and cleanliness. The yellow-oranges, reds and browns are associated with a feeling of warmth and are called warm colors. The blue-greens and black and white are cool colors and convey that feeling to the reader. Light tones imply spaciousness and airiness. Intense colors strike the eye and make the reader take notice. Contrasting colors are more forceful than those which look somewhat alike.

Too many colors in a sign may irritate rather than attract. Use only two or three colors, with a principal one to give your sign a feeling of unity. Use silhouettes and broad one-color objects, and use heavy shadows to make objects visible at a distance.

Legibility and visibility are important. Yellow, orange and yellow-green colors followed by red, red-orange plus red-violet are very penetrating to the eye and can be identified at the greatest distance.

Dark letters on a light background are more legible than light letters on a dark background. Black on white, red on white, green on white, and red on yellow are all very legible combinations.

There are any number of good color combinations for sign use. Perhaps the best method of determining your sign colors is to observe good-looking signs, posters, packages, and other advertising material and choose a combination which best fits your needs.

## Lettering the Sign

First of all—*be legible*. Your sign must be easy to read and have good visibility. Letters should never be so unusual as to tax the eye or leave doubt in the mind. Fancy letters may be used to lend atmosphere only when they do not detract from the first purpose of the sign.

Letters may be made in many easily read styles. They may be light or heavy and have many different sizes and shapes to emphasize special points. Together the lettering should deliver its message as naturally as the human voice. Remember, it is really taking your place at the roadside.

Lettering, like color, will influence the emotions and help to convey your message without spoken words. Light-faced Roman-style lettering has a soft tone and conveys a feeling of refinement, cleanliness, and courtesy. **HEAVY BLOCK LETTERS** denote solid strength, straightforwardness, and honesty. Modified Old English letters bring thoughts of comfortable chairs by a lighted fireplace. Thin lines denote delicacy, refinement, and femininity. Broad lines suggest boldness and the rugged out-of-doors.

The spaces between words are like pauses in a speech. Also, these spaces are important in framing the message and making it stand out. One of the best ways to attract attention is to use blank spaces cleverly. One word on a blank page will attract more attention than a panel solid with writing. Proper use of lines and spaces will carry the reader's eye like an arrow to the main points of your message.

Use only a few styles of lettering. Let shape, color and size make the leading words leap to the eye. The secondary words must be invitingly readable.



The most important points of the message should be at eye level which is lightly above the horizontal center of the sign.

Don't clutter up your sign with too many details. Use one or two dominant ideas. Probably 10 words are the most that a motorist should be expected to read. He will be more impressed with half that number if they are cleverly arranged and presented. The best signs are simple with no unnecessary details. Essential information such as office location is usually best placed on a smaller sign located where it can be easily seen.

Letter sizes depend upon the distance they are to be seen, together with their shape and color. Generally speaking, an 8-inch letter height will be readable from about 300 feet, although a larger letter is preferable.

The design or layout of your lettering is most important. Bad composition or wrong arrangement the parts of the sign layout can spoil the effect of the sign. The lettering and all other parts of your sign must have a proper balance of color, shape of letter, and size of part to look good. Most people can sense at a glance whether a sign is balanced or not, although they cannot tell why. They are unconsciously affected by poor balance and dislike it. A test of competition and balance is to decide whether the sign looks as if it would stay level if balanced on its center and if no part could possibly be put in any other place.

## Lighting

Floodlighting at night shows off your sign as it might appear in the daylight. In addition, floodlights can be used to illuminate adjacent trees and buildings to make your area visible from a great distance. Careful use of lighting for this purpose adds to the appeal of your property.

If you plan to light your sign with overhead electric brackets, be sure that they are set far enough above the sign to keep from interfering with vision. Be careful that the lights do not shine in the eyes of highway drivers. Individual reflectors should be close enough together to spread light evenly over the sign board. If possible, always use hard-glass projector lamps. These lamps are sealed against rain and snow and are easy to clean. Choose a lamp which will fit into the design of your sign rather than one that looks as if it had been attached as an afterthought.

Lamps placed on the ground in reflectors are often better than high ones. They are out of sight in the daytime, easy to reach, and they do not cast disagreeable shadows on the sign itself in the daytime.

Recently the increased use of translucent plastics has made it possible to use hidden lamps which glow through the sign itself. Neon lights are efficient when designed so as not to detract from the appearance of the sign in the day time. With both plastic and neon signs, the possibility of breakage and vandalism should be considered.

Flashing signs and reflector signs using reflector cloth, buttons, and other materials which depend upon the lights of a car to make them visible are rigidly controlled by state law for highway safety reasons. Such signs may not be used within 200 feet

of the highway and should be used with great care. No sign which imitates any highway warning sign may be used to advertise your property.

## Points in Preparing a Sign

It is very important to know your friendly highway officials. Their advice will help save you money and prevent conflicts with highway safety laws.

Professional sign makers are trained in the technique of making attractive signs. Unless you feel confident of your ability, consult a good craftsman and let him use your ideas to construct the finished product.

Some things to consider in developing a sign for your business are:

1. **The necessary information.** Don't print too much. Be direct and brief. Give the motorist a chance to read your message.
2. **The important message.** It is usually what you have to sell and not your name. Your client is primarily interested in himself, and it is through his emotions which affect him as a person that you can capture his interest. "Motor court," "Resort," "Cabins," "Restaurant," "Bait," "Trading Post," may be the first words to catch the driver's eye.
3. **The style or character of your business.** Modern cottages suggest modern signs. Log cabins suggest rustic signs. The design of your sign may be used to give the motorist of a feeling of what he is to expect. The colors of your building can often be used in your sign as a sort of trade-mark for your business.
4. **A distinctive style of lettering or design.** When such is used in the sign, postcards, letterheads, folders and other advertising media, a lasting impression is made upon your client.
5. **Local attractions.** Build up your local attractions to the utmost. Can your sign tell of special attractions to lure the guest?
6. **Extra services.** These are money makers. One resort operator advertises snacks at any time. Others have special entertainment programs, playgrounds for the children, and similar features. In some areas, modern facilities are the most important. In others, free boats may make extra sales. Use these to increase the appeal of your sign.

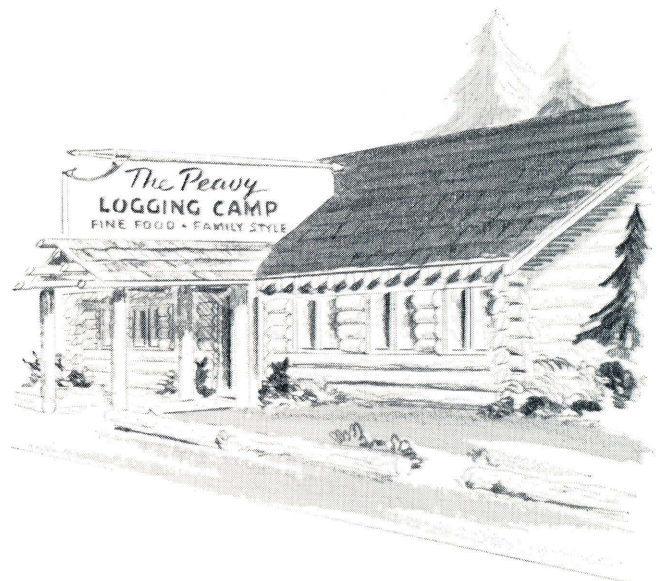
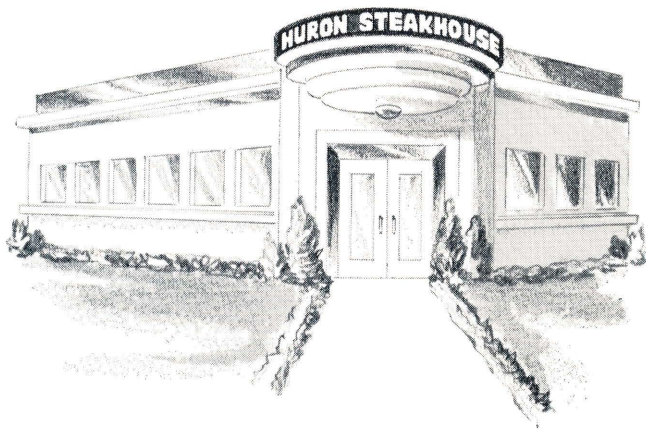
## Construction and Maintenance

Your sign represents a substantial investment, both in terms of first cost and in yearly painting and maintenance.

It pays to use good, sound materials, efficient for their use, durable, easy to maintain, and long lived. For wooden sign, the kinds of wood selected in most instances really don't make much difference. If given the benefit of rot-resisting treatments, most woods do the job very satisfactorily. A metal sign should be treated with rust preventative before painting. Signs should be made so that water will not collect in the joints and lead to rotting or rusting. Rustic work is especially difficult to keep in sound condition. Most woods in contact with the ground should be treated with wood preservatives. Your county







agricultural agent will tell you how to treat different woods to give them a long life.

Wooden posts set in concrete will rot rapidly if moisture can soak into them. If posts are used with concrete or masonry bases, they should be thoroughly treated with preservatives or attached with metal brackets to make replacement easy.

Good paints are expensive but they last longer and retain their color. Use screws and bolts instead of nails. They facilitate replacing broken parts. They also provide joints that are sturdier so the sign will be less likely to lean and droop.

The accompanying illustrations will suggest a number of ideas for sign construction. Your location will sometimes determine the material you may use appropriately. Your design may suggest metal cut-outs or waterproof plywood letters screwed to a wooden sign board. You may paint your words or have the letters carved into the wood so that the re-paint job can be done more easily.

Keep your sign in tip-top condition all the time. The freshness and attractiveness of the sign is part of your plan to entice the motorist to your business. Dirty signs, leaning posts, shabby paint jobs, and poor repairs will drive away business.

Seasonal signs may be stored in the winter; others should be cleaned and painted often. Rustic signs

may be sanded before refinishing to keep their natural light color.

Where first impressions count most, don't take a chance with sloppy workmanship and neglected repairs.

### In Closing

Remember that signs and entrances are advertising devices. They more than pay their way if properly made and coordinated with the other parts of your advertising program.

Don't forget the value of printed advertisements, postal cards, and souvenirs. Memberships in motor court organizations, tourist associations, automobile associations, and chambers of commerce are other valuable aids to building up patronage.

In addition, friendly relations with other tourist service operators, traffic patrolmen, gas station and store employees, all help to bring customers to your door.

