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Historically speaking: Snowplows past and present

by Michele Regenold

Before those newfangled horseless carriages became popular, people got around in the snow on foot, on horseback, or in horse-drawn sleighs. Snow didn't need to be plowed off the roads.

Once cars and trucks became more popular, people expected to be able to use them year round—including in the winter. That meant the snow had to be removed from the roads.

Here are a variety of snowplows that have been used over the years in Iowa. (All the photos below are courtesy of the Iowa Department of Transportation.)



This plow has a V-shaped blade that helps push snow off to both sides. It was used in the 1920s.



Blades on the front of this plow chopped up the deep, hard snow and blew it many feet away.



Dragging a plow behind a tractor worked too.



Since the time of this snowplow, the blades have gotten significantly larger.



Usually you see motorgraders like this one on gravel roads, not Interstates.



Snowplows used in the 21st century often use a wing plow, like the one visible above, in addition to the blade on the front of the truck. The two blades together help push the snow off the road and shoulder.

Michele Regenold is the editor of *Go!*.

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