CALAIS—Motorists traveling between Robbinston and this town may have noticed a series of weather-beaten, granite stones situated alongside the road. They may not have realized it, but they were looking at the only matched set of milestones in New England. These historic chunks of Red Beach granite—12 in all—marking the miles along Route 1 to Calais—were erected in the 19th century by James Shepard Pike, “U. S. minister to the Netherlands under President Abraham Lincoln.

Five of these stones recently faced a crisis. Construction work straightening a section of road along Route One between Calais and Red Beach has been slated for this spring. It was discovered that in order to cut up some curves, stones two through six would either have to be plowed under or relocated.

The story has a happy ending. State Representative Elbridge B. Davis of Calais arranged with the State Highway Commission to have these five stones relocated. Actually it will mean moving them only a few feet, but the historic chain of granite will not be broken.

An equally famed watering trough at the foot of Carson Road will not be affected by the proposed construction. This trough was installed by Pike’s brother, Frederick Augustus Pike, in 1879.

It was a love or horses and the thrill of racing them that prompted James Pike to set up the now famous milestones.

Pike, who owned homes in Calais and Robbinston, came up with a novel idea on how to time his favorite steeds. He knew how many revolutions the wheel of his carriage would have to take to cover the 5,280 feet in a mile. By tying a rag to the wheel, he had an assistant call off the number of revolutions until a mile had been reached. In that way, Pike was able to measure off, mile by mile, the distance between his homes. At each mile point, he had one of the granite stones installed.

Once the stretch of road had been properly measured, Pike was able to race his horses along the road and find out in just what time they could cover a mile’s distance. The unique stones have since weathered storm and time until progress threatened to catch up with them. Now five of them will rest in a different spot but will still stand as testimony to a man’s ingenuity.

Plans call for the stones to be given a “face-lifting” and to be made more prominent for passing motorists to see.