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THE GOOD ROAD MOVEMENT AND MONTANA TO 1916

By

Patrick M. Morris

B.A. Montana State College, 1963

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

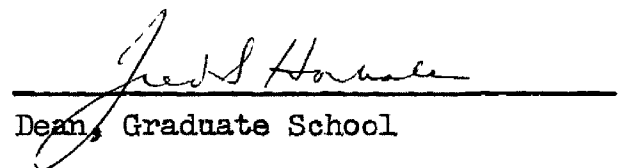
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

1967

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There has been no definitive work delineating the impact of good roads on America, although monographs, articles and technical material have appeared. European roads have been treated more fully. People were only concerned about roads when travel over them became difficult. Then if they were aware that the improvement would cost additional money, they often tended to ignore the roads rather than repair them. This study demonstrates the importance of the change in roads to Montana history. Improved roads and the advent of the automobile began a revolution in Montana and the United States that has not yet ceased.

Society almost completely ignored roads in the United States from the advent of the railroad as an efficient means of transportation until the closing years of the nineteenth century. Then with the introduction of the bicycle, man began to travel for pleasure in the United States. These pioneers rapidly became aware of the pathetic condition of the nation's highways. The disgruntled "wheelmen" began what was known as the "good road movement." From that time to the present, road improvement has made great progress. Initially only a few of the major boulevards in the nation were adequate. At present the nation is covered with a network of superhighways which enable us to travel swiftly and efficiently to any part of the country. Even

the secondary and tertiary roads of the nation, as well as Montana, can be used for high speed travel under nearly all weather conditions.

The appearance of the bicycle, automobile, and Rural Free Delivery all had a tremendous impact on the improvement of the common road. The automobile's destructiveness to the unpaved road demanded a revolution in road building. Better roads contributed also to economic growth. Land values near improved roads appreciated. Areas far from railroads now became economically profitable. Good roads meant that crops could be transported to markets at all times of the year. With improvement in roads and vehicles an infant trucking industry came into being. Prior to 1916 trucking was concerned only with the short haul, not in competing with railroads. The advent of the automobile and truck meant the decline of the use of animal power. Rural Free Delivery meant that with good roads the farmer could have daily mail service. This was a strong incentive for him to keep the roads in good repair.

Faster, more convenient, transportation worked a tremendous change in social life. Faster transportation enriched farm life and possibly affected morals. Each of these changes is a complete study in itself.

How did the movement apply to Montana? What were the actual social and economic effects? Montana became involved after the road movement had accomplished its objectives elsewhere. The state held its first good road convention in 1910. Montana's road movement, although later, was very much like those in other parts of the country. Organizations grew up very quickly and as suddenly died.

Because the topic is largely unexamined, material was difficult to find. The Federal Government from the time the Office of

Public Road Inquiries was established in 1893, kept a comprehensive though scattered history of the national good road movement. Various supporters of the movement, such as Colonel Albert A. Pope of Boston, collected and solicited comments about the good road movement. This material shows important national support for the movement and provides a history of good road building.

The most valuable sources on the subject in Montana were found in the state's newspapers. The press in Montana prior to 1916 was poor. Most of the papers did not write much about roads. They largely chronicled local news and gossip plus varying amounts of national news. Most of them were rabid purveyors of party politics. One exception to portions of this general rule was the Great Falls Tribune. The Tribune was a daily in 1900 and printed eight pages every day of the week except Sunday, when it published sixteen. The Tribune was interested in roads, and road and automobile news was reported on the county, state, and national level. Other state papers were used as source material for this study when they were relevant but heavy reliance on the Tribune was a necessity in the Montana sections.

Most articles and books on roads are of a technical nature and of limited value in a work such as this. The most valuable sources were newspapers, and Montana and United States documents. The Federal Government did undertake a survey on the economic impact of road improvement. The conclusions are generally applicable to Montana. No sociological work on the effect of roads at this time has been done.

This study is of necessity limited. The specific effect of trucks on transportation is thought-provoking but is a thesis in

itself. The entrance of the Federal Government after 1916, indeed intriguing, is also beyond the scope of this thesis. These topics will be examined in a general way on the national level and more specifically in Montana. The assumption is made that what applied to the nation generally applied also to Montana.

Prior to 1914 Montana legislation demonstrated concern for the road problem only by passing skeletal laws within which the counties worked. County activities are the key to an understanding of why roads ultimately required state and then national subsidy and concern. Incidents such as that of the "Wiegands," a county problem, are included in detail to illustrate the complex problems the counties faced, for road history, as any other, involves basic human motivations. This paper delineates the basic issues involved in road building and attempts to avoid a post hoc ergo propter hoc approach an involved body of evidence.

The various areas of the United States went through different phases at different times, but the good road movement followed a fairly definite pattern in all areas. The economic and social results and their implications have been treated as extensively as possible, without reaching for conclusions that expand the movement beyond its proper importance. While roads are of incalculable importance to an advanced civilization, they occupy only a small portion of man's concerns.

CHAPTER II

FROM THE COLONIES TO THE LEAGUE OF AMERICAN WHEELMEN

A road "is a thing you have to go on when you want to get somewhere."¹ In a childishly simply way this defines a road. There are many more complex ways to define a "road," but for any form of land travel this definition will suffice. Only railed roadbeds have to be deleted. The definition covers everything from the original simple trail to the complex superhighway.

The earliest roads in this country barely fit the description. They could be used to travel on but were extremely inconvenient and lacked any decent construction. Many were just areas where the trees were cut leaving stumps low enough that a coach or wagon could get over them. As one man reported, "the roads were such that my people had to leave home Friday night to go to church."²

This condition was not a terribly serious handicap at first as the settlers lived on the coast and coastal shipping met their transportation needs. As the settlers moved further inland they tended to settle on the rivers and used them for transportation. However, once they crossed the Allegheny's they now had to send their goods down the Mississippi River and anything that came west had to be carried

¹U. S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Bulletin #12, Wide Tires, (Washington, 1895), 61.

²U. S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Bulletin #25, Proceedings of the Jefferson Memorial and Interstate Good Roads Convention, (Washington, 1902), 14. Hereafter cited as ORI #25 Bulletin.

over the mountains or painstakingly poled and pulled up the Mississippi. East-West roads were badly needed. In the nineteenth century the country experienced a boom in canal building followed by one in railroad building. The railroad finally was the solution to the need for an East-West transportation system.

There were, of course, roads in the colonies and the infant United States. Extremely early the colonists provided for the building of roads, but not good roads. As early as 1632 in Virginia, laws were passed creating them.³

In the eastern part of the United States the roads followed streams and ridges. These were generally just improved wagon ruts that some trailblazer had thought was the easiest way through the mountains.⁴ In the Western part of the United States roads generally followed section and sometimes even half-section lines. This practice was very wasteful as it took up tremendous portions of the land in road.⁵

Private companies built better highways by private investment and charged tolls to repay the investors. These were usually not successful ventures and after an original heavy promotion then died a lingering death. The first toll road in the United States was the

³Jean Labutut and Wheaton J. Lane, eds., Highways in Our National Life, Wheaton J. Lane, "The Early Highway in America, to the Coming of the Railroad," (Princeton, 1950), 68. Hereafter cited as Labutut.

⁴W. C. Latta, Money Value of Good Roads to Farmers, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Circular #23, (Washington, 1896), 63. Hereafter cited as ORI #23 Circular.

⁵George R. Chatburn, Highways and Highway Transportation (New York, 1923), 127. Hereafter cited as Chatburn.

Lancaster Turnpike, built over the more than sixty miles between Lancaster and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. By 1828 there were 3,110 miles of government chartered turnpike in Pennsylvania alone. Two-thousand three hundred and eight miles of this had been completed at a cost of \$8,431,059.50. But investors in this system had not by 1828 received enough dividends to pay the interest on their loans.⁶

For a period of time during the early railroad years, between 1835 and 1855, plank roads were built. These wooden roads seemed extremely satisfactory to some, but soon met the same fate as the turnpikes: they did not pay enough dividends to interest investors. During this period two thousand miles of plank road was built. Stringers were laid down and planks fastened to them. These were simply wooden roads for wagon travel. Introduced in New York in 1837, they cost between \$1,000 and \$2,400 per mile to build and were at first very successful. In a few isolated places the people of the area supported the building of plank roads over the building of railroads.⁷ These roads were open at all periods of the year and according to one author on transportation:

The farmer was thus enabled to carry his produce to market at times when otherwise he would be unable to use his time to advantage. The values of farm lands contiguous to these roads was enhanced. The farmer was enabled to carry his load to a more distant market than before, or to increase his load, and could sell more cheaply, thus

⁶J. E. Pennypacker, ed., Good Roads Yearbook: 1914 (Baltimore, 1914), 8. Hereafter cited as Good Roads Yearbook.

⁷Caroline E. MacGill et al., History of Transportation in the United States before 1860 (Washington, 1917), 299. Hereafter cited as MacGill.

benefiting the consumer. The stockholder in such cases generally found the road earned two or three times its original cost, above repairs and incumbrances, before it was worn out. Thus all parties were satisfied--the farmer, the community as a whole, and the stockholder of the particular road.⁸

By 1857 the romance with the plank road was dead. Even with the addition of preservatives they wore out. When they did the builders found they were often more expensive to repair than to build originally. By 1857 most of the plank road companies were bankrupt and so they disappeared from the American scene.⁹

The best roads until the good road movement were built by the Federal Government. It was involved in building roads for a number of years and during that time built some good roads but not nearly enough for a growing country. The government was involved in road building from 1806 until 1832 spending during this period \$14,000,000.¹⁰ The Federal Government was instrumental in building the Cumberland Road. Seven hundred miles long and at a cost of \$7,000,000, it was the longest and straightest road built by any government until fairly recent times.¹¹ Although Albert Gallatin, Secretary of Treasury under President Madison, was the original promoter of the road, Henry Clay, perennial presidential aspirant, was its strongest supporter. The work began in 1806 and by 1838 various appropriations had totaled \$6,824,919.33. It was first

⁸MacGill, 305.

⁹Id., 10-13.

¹⁰U. S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Circular #26, Going in Debt for Good Roads, (Washington, 1897), 15. Hereafter cited as ORI #26 Circular.

¹¹ORI #25 Bulletin, 16.

used to carry mail from Cumberland to Wheeling on August 1, 1818.¹²

The Federal Government was concerned about the constitutionality of road building and with the advent of the railroad no longer was involved in road building.

The railroad made its entrance in the 1830's and soon demonstrated that it was the solution to rapid, overland transportation. The mileage of railroads built spread quite rapidly so that by 1867 the nation was linked from coast to coast. The railroad led to an even worse neglect of roads as many people felt this was the solution to the nation's transportation problems. Now that goods could be shipped from one point to another, people tended to ignore the simple fact that it was still next to impossible to get goods to the railhead. But it was possible. Therefore the farmer accepted his bad roads stoically, considering them part of his life just as he accepted isolation, inclement weather, and crop failures.

Then in the late 1870's bicycles came to the United States. In 1877 Colonel Albert C. Pope, Boston industrialist, became the first importer of bicycles into the United States, and subsequently became a leading bicycle manufacturer and one of the staunchest advocates of early good roads. In 1878 he began to manufacture bicycles.¹³ Soon after their importation bicyclists began to ride the bad roads. They complained and the good road movement was born.

¹²Good Roads Yearbook, 8.

¹³Philip P. Mason, "The League of American Wheelmen," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1957), 36. Hereafter cited as Mason.

The bicyclists were at first concerned only with permission to ride on the public streets and highways. The people who rode bicycles for sport found themselves unpopular and subjected to restrictive regulation. They were accused of frightening horses and being impolite to pedestrians.¹⁴ The bicycle was more dangerous than was often thought, and the concern people had about its reckless use was not unwarranted. In Kansas City a thirty-year-old woman was struck and killed by a careless rider.¹⁵ The vehicles were dangerous and many of the riders were careless, thus leading to discriminatory legislation during the early years. To protect themselves the cyclists began to form small local groups.¹⁶ The riders discovered that as small local groups they did not have much effect so on May 31, 1880, the League of American Wheelmen organized at Newport, Rhode Island, with the motto: "Good Company on Good Roads."¹⁷ They organized for two reasons. They had to have an organization to combat hostility to "wheelmen" and to urge rural road improvement.¹⁸

After receiving permission to ride on the streets the cyclists began to try and improve them. The poor condition of the roads made riding dangerous and more work than it should have been. The bicycle rider was more immediately aware of the increased amount of power

¹⁴Mason, 36-7.

¹⁵Great Falls Tribune, March 26, 1902.

¹⁶Mason, 36-7.

¹⁷Ibid., 37; Bassett's Scrapbook, V (May, 1907), 26-7.

¹⁸Albert C. Rose, "The Highway from the Railroad to the Automobile," Labutut, 84-5.

needed to move a vehicle over poor roads than was the farmer. While the farmer just urged his animals to greater effort, the bicycle rider had actually to exert more power on poor roads.¹⁹ Therefore, as the bicycle rider knew at first hand the increased power needed to move over poor but passable roads, he began to agitate for better ones.

The concern of the League for improved roads became organized in 1888 when it established a National Committee for the improvement of highways.²⁰ Colonel Albert Pope was an indefatigable worker for the movement. He propagandized for good roads and tried to influence the federal government to become involved in building them. He prepared several memorials to Congress containing the pleas and support of famous Americans for the improvement of roads.²¹

The League of American Wheelmen was the originator of the good road movement. Formed to repeal discriminatory legislation against them, it soon moved into the realm of agitation for improved roads. The League tried to demonstrate to the farmer that good roads would improve his life and save him money. It published large numbers of pamphlets trying to demonstrate this. In the twelve years from 1889 to 1900 the Wheelmen distributed more than 5,000,000 pamphlets at a cost of \$200,000.²²

¹⁹Lewis M. Haupt, "The Road Movement," Journal of the Franklin Institute, CXXXV (January, 1893), 9.

²⁰Mason, 64.

²¹Chatburn, 133; see the Bibliography under Pope.

²²Mason, 105, 108.

The LAW was instrumental in agitating and achieving the creation of the Office of Public Road Inquiries in the Agriculture Department in 1893. The creation of this office was the most important single event to the road movement prior to 1916. The League worked very closely with the OPRI. The OPRI had a limited budget but had unlimited franking privileges. Therefore the two were symbiotic; the Wheelmen furnished the pamphlets and the OPRI disseminated them.

After several years of growth the LAW began a swift then slow decline. The organization had one good decade: the 1890's. The membership rose from 18,000 in 1891 to a 103,000 peak in 1898. By 1900 it had dropped to 30,000; in 1905 it was below 3,000 and still declining.²³ In the second decade of the twentieth century the organization had largely disappeared. Bicyclists existed in large numbers but the days of touring on bicycles was over.

The League was formed to obtain equal privileges on the roads for bicycle riders and then to improve the roads. With the attainment of equality and a basic good road movement the LAW no longer had a reason for existence. Workers began to use the bicycle for utilitarian reasons and the day of the pleasure rider was ending. The automobile replaced the bicycle as the divertissement of the idle rich.²⁴ Bicycle races gave way to automobile races. The LAW's group outings gave way to auto rallies, such as the Glidden Tour.

²³Mason, 47.

²⁴Ibid., 238.

The Wheelmen may have had a short career but it was a significant one for the road movement. The period of its power saw the advent of three things important to the movement: state aid; Rural Free Delivery; and the improvement of roads in local areas.²⁵ The official magazine of the LAW, which continued through the senescence of the League, carried reports of cycling events that were pathetic in terms of previous glory. But the movement was now largely limited to a few major cities, principally Boston.²⁶ Between 1906 and 1913 the membership steadily dropped from 2,134 to 1,043. The members who remained were the old faithfuls and the few new members were largely their sons. Death was now depleting the organization's numbers. The treasury at the end of the year always had a positive balance, but always less than \$50.00. This organization that had spent \$200,000 on pamphlets in twelve years now handled less than \$2,000 per year.²⁷

The bicycle industry was not affected by the diminishing strength of the LAW. In 1909 the sixteen largest bicycle factories in the country were turning out 250,000 bicycles a year. The two largest factories had never produced less than 40,000 units. Their business was not declining as 1909 was the best year that they had had up to that time.²⁸ In 1910 the Pope Manufacturing Company made nearly \$750,000 profit.

²⁵Mason, 238-40.

²⁶Bassett's Scrapbook, III (October, 1905), 250.

²⁷Ibid., IV (March, 1906), 24; V (June, 1907), 284; VII (October, 1909), 114; VIII (September, 1910), 100; IX (October, 1911), 114; XI (October, 1913), 99.

²⁸Ibid., VII (December, 1909), 153.

Abbot Bassett, editor of Bassett's Scrapbook, mourned the factories' neglect of the bicycles' touring potential. He admitted that they were selling a lot of machines but asked how many more they would sell if they stressed not only the utilitarian aspects but also that of touring.²⁹ Bassett was unable to realize the change that had taken place. Touring was not motorized and bicycling for pleasure was consigned to purgatory. He did not surrender. Bassett's Scrapbook occasionally stressed the superiority of the bicycle over the motorcycle and automobile. In a statement disparaging motorcycles, which demonstrated the dying magazine's bitterness, something about the continuing state of the poor roads: "'I know of one road in Missouri over which ten members of the St. Louis Cycling Club rode 100 miles in one day's actual riding time on bicycles. On one stretch of ten miles on this road we crossed a creek 17 different times, and the depth of the creek varied from ankle deep to waist deep, and the width from ten feet to 100 feet."³⁰

The LAW was supplanted in the twentieth century by other groups in agitating for improved roads. But this organization was the one that made the strong initial push for the building of better roads, and which with the services of such men as Colonel Albert Pope, began the entire good road movement.

²⁹Bassett's Scrapbook, IX (April, 1911), 10.

³⁰Ibid., IX (July, 1911), 75.

II

Montana was not divorced from bicycling in the 1890's. Teams of bicycle riders from various parts of the state traveled considerable distances to enter bicycle races.³¹ The Montana "wheelmen" were not only involved in races but also in the same type of long distance trips that were taking place in the East. For example two Missoula men rode from Missoula to Hamilton and back, a trip of 114 miles, in ten hours.³² It was trips such as these that made people aware of the conditions of the roads and the difficulty of traveling on them.

Montana was the home of a very unique bicycling situation. In 1897, the Secretary of War allowed the 25th U. S. Infantry Bicycle Corps to take a trip from Missoula to St. Louis under the command of Lt. J. A. Moss. He and the twenty-three men in his command were trying to prove that bicycles were faster and cheaper than cavalry under certain conditions. They made the 1900 mile trip in just over forty days. They traveled in snow and over very poor roads and trails. The bicycles spilled and were bent but continued rolling along. Moss had made a previous 800 mile trip through Yellowstone Park that had been very successful. Now he picked St. Louis, as it offered the best challenge as far as difficult terrain was concerned. The group left Missoula in June of 1897, and arrived in St. Louis over a month later averaging 6.3 miles per hour and 55.6 miles a day.³³

³¹Missoula Messenger, September 23, 1896; September 28, 1896.

³²Ibid., October 5, 1896.

³³Newspaper clipping, 1928 Winnet Times, McLeod Collection.

The good road movement would undoubtedly have come without the bicycle but not as soon as it did. The advent of the automobile would have certainly initiated the same type of good road movement but not until at least twenty years later.

CHAPTER III

THE GOOD ROAD MOVEMENT

Our wagon roads throughout the country are generally a disgrace to civilization, and before we undertake to supply Jaeger underwear and sealskin covered Bibles with flexible backs to the African it might be well to put a few dollars into the relief of galled and broken-down horses that have lost their health on our miserable high-ways.¹

The good road movement began with the League of American Wheelmen. The LAW knew at first hand that the roads were bad and bad roads detracted from their pleasure. Thus began the movement to improve the roads. A few isolated road supervisors 'and others' had always demanded good roads, but the League was the first influential nation-wide group to become involved in road agitation. Colonel Pope of the LAW was instrumental in sending memorials to Congress concerning the improvement of roads.

In the 1890's the United States began planning the Columbian Exposition. The plans included road building machinery exhibits, good roads on the grounds, and other exhibits relating to highways. Colonel Pope undertook a personal and abortive crusade to have the exhibits consolidated. Early in 1892, he wrote the Director General of the Exposition and offered \$1,000 for a fund to build "object lesson" roads and consolidate the exhibits from five buildings to one. Pope was principally concerned with publicizing the good road movement. The

¹New York Times, September 11, 1892, 12. From Good Roads.

Director referred the request to Selim H. Peabody, Chief of the Liberal Arts Division. Peabody agreed that the United States needed better roads and evinced interest in Pope's proposal. Nevertheless, he advised Pope that the implementation of the plan was impractical. With this failure, Pope took his pleas to the American people and the government of the United States where he had no greater success.² His efforts culminated, however, in the production of several memorial pamphlets to Congress.

One of these memorials requesting changes in the Columbian Exposition road exhibit had a three page list of prominent signers of the petition and over sixty pages of periodical reaction favorable to the proposal.³ Another of 110 pages contained laudatory statements from nineteen Senators, ten Representatives, and twenty-seven governors or their secretaries. It also included three pages of statements by military men stating their knowledge of the usefulness of roads.⁴ The pamphlet closed with fifty pages of favorable newspaper comment.

The pamphlets demonstrated the dedication of some people, and the apathy of others. The newspaper articles cited in the memorial stressed two main themes: good roads were an economic benefit, and people were becoming aware of the good road movement. It must be

²Albert A. Pope, The Movement for Better Roads (Boston, 1892), 5-10 passim. Hereafter cited as Pope, Better Roads.

³Albert A. Pope, A memorial to Congress on the subject of a Road Department at Washington, D. C. and a Comprehensive exhibit of Roads, their Construction and Maintenance at the World's Columbian Exposition (Boston, 1892).

⁴Albert A. Pope, A memorial to Congress on the subject of a Comprehensive Exhibit of Roads, Their Construction and Maintenance, at the World's Columbian Exposition (Boston, 1892). Hereafter cited as Pope, Memorial I.

remembered that many of these articles were not the result of independent thought or research but the result of the stimulation by groups such as the LAW.

The first sign that the road movement was beginning to be effective was local and state road conventions. These conventions were gatherings of people who were concerned about bad roads and wanted to discover how to improve them. In time these meetings became very large and influential. The first state wide meeting was held in Iowa in 1883.⁵ These meetings publicized the need for improved roads and eventually led to the adoption of state aid laws and national conventions.⁶ Because of the increased agitation the states began to pass state-aid road legislation that aided the local areas in the building of roads. The conventions also were able to publicize road problems and any solutions that they had discovered.

The creation of the Office of Public Road Inquiry was a milestone in the road movement. At first this office, with its limited budget and staff, was little more than a propaganda device. The OPRI advised anyone interested how to build good roads, and demonstrated the techniques through the construction of object lesson roads. The opening of the OPRI also represented the reinvolvement of the federal government in the building of roads for the first time since railroads became important and established the base for continued and increased involvement. The creation of this office demonstrated the trend towards centralization that was taking place.

⁵Mason, 69.

⁶Montana's first state wide good road convention was not held until 1910.

The Office originated in 1893 after continued agitation by the LAW and others interested in the improvement of roads. The Office was created with an original budget of \$10,000 to help coordinate the building of good roads and advise how those roads should be built. The OPRI soon replaced the Wheelmen as the principal agitator in the movement. Its original activities were, of course, limited by its small budget.⁷ General Roy Stone, a civil engineer from New York, was the first head of the office.⁸ In its first year the OPRI, even with its limited budget, managed to publish nine bulletins and the director spoke to many groups.⁹ The money for the department soon increased substantially for by 1896, it was \$37,660. The Department hired "bright" young men and put them to work on the various projects. They set up testing standards and tried out many kinds of road building materials.¹⁰

By 1897 the publishing record of the OPRI was fairly substantial. The OPRI had published twenty bulletins and fifteen circulars. The OPRI had investigated: the cost of bad roads and the benefit of improved ones; the interest of various groups in the good road movement; the methods of working with farmers; the good road movement in all sections of the United States; the most useful native road materials in the various sections of the United States; new methods of road

⁷Mason, 132, 147, 150; U. S. Congress, Senate, "Miscellaneous Document #22," 53rd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1892.

⁸Chatburn, 137-138.

⁹U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1894, (1895), 53.

¹⁰Chatburn, 144.

construction; and building sample roads.¹¹ The Office took a decided shift when Logan Waller Page replaced Horace Dodge as director. Page severed connections with non-governmental road agitation and propaganda ceased. Pamphlets turned to scientific matters.¹²

The Office now desired to purchase their own equipment rather than constantly depend on handouts from machinery companies.¹³ A testing laboratory was working smoothly by 1901 and was very useful to those people who wanted to know how well their local materials would do for the building of roads.¹⁴ An expert was appointed for each of four geographical sections in the United States in 1900 by the OPRI. The appointee for the Mountain States area was James W. Abbot.¹⁵

The OPRI began building object lesson roads in earnest, and by 1900 had them in nine states.¹⁶ By 1905 the OPRI had built ninety-six experimental and object lesson roads with a total distance of thirty-nine miles. These roads had been built in twenty-eight of the nation's states of "shells, gravel, brick, oil, tar, sand-clay, marl, stone, burned clay, slag, and steel track."¹⁷ In 1905 alone they had built

¹¹Roy Stone, "Work of the Department for the Farmer: Office of Road Inquiry," U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1897 (1898), 175-6.

¹²Chatburn, 142.

¹³U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1901, (1902), 100.

¹⁴Id., 61.

¹⁵U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1900 (1901), 53.

¹⁶U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1901 (1902), 100.

¹⁷U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1900, (1901), 53.

twenty-one sections of road in nine states.¹⁸ They were also concerned at this time with the problems created by the automobile. The OPRI reported that "a treatment which will retain the dust on the surface of a macadam or gravel road is of special value at present, owing to the great damage done to such roads by motor car traffic." The OPRI advocated covering the roads with an oil film to prevent this damage.¹⁹

The Office was more important by 1906. Twenty-one people were then demonstrating how to build good roads in various parts of the country. In addition to this the OPRI was actively working with the Post Office Department. In areas where the roads were so bad that RFD service was to be suspended, the OPRI advised the people in the area of the quickest and cheapest way to make the roads functional again.²⁰ By 1907 the Bureau's yearly appropriation was up to \$70,000.²¹

The Federal Government in 1909 spent \$16,916.79 of a total appropriation of \$87,300 building sixty-nine sections of object lesson roads. Experts were still trying to solve the problem of dust created by the automobile.²² The government was experimenting with various

¹⁸U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1905, (1906), 53.

¹⁹Ibid., 108.

²⁰U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1906, (1907), 113, 117.

²¹Logan W. Page, "Object-Lesson Roads," U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1906, (1907), 138.

²²U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1909, (1910), 148.

materials and was having the greatest success with oil. By this time the OPRI had issued 200 publications.²³

There was little change in the general trend in 1910. More object lesson roads were built, lectures were given, and pamphlets were published. The budget of the OPRI was now \$135,000 and over eight percent of the roads in the country were improved.²⁴

The Federal Government by this time recognized the transition taking place in the building of roads. It was occurring on two levels. Localism in road management was giving way to various forms of state supervision and aid and the automobile was creating a demand for new construction techniques. During 1910 the government had built fifty-five object lesson roads.²⁵ To determine the accomplishments of object lesson roads, the government investigated twenty-two object lesson roads that had previously been built. They discovered that the building of these roads had resulted in the building of 730 miles of additional good road.²⁶

Other than the OPRI the numerous good road conventions demonstrated the centralization that was taking place following 1890. In

²³Logan Waller Page, "The National Government as a Factor in Highway Development," Good Roads Magazine, X (November, 1909), 402.

²⁴U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1911, (1912), 144; Chatburn, 143.

²⁵U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1910, (1911), 151.

²⁶Ibid., 152.

Missouri, in August, 1892, a large group gathered to promote the good road movement. This first national convention had three hundred delegates representing boards of trade, boards of road supervisors, county road conventions, eighty-eight counties, and one hundred thirty cities.²⁷ This convention was completely financed by General Roy Stone, New York road official, because three of the strongest supporters of the movement, including Colonel Pope, were as yet suspicious of working on the national level.²⁸ This meeting, as did all road meetings, generated more enthusiasm than specific policy and was important just for this enthusiasm.

The large numbers of people who assembled from all parts of the country to attend these meetings did demonstrate that national interest had been aroused.²⁹ The national convention suggested in the road movement what was happening in government. Road responsibility extended from small areas gradually to state control and finally to federal involvement. The movement to centralization moved along two parallel lines: private road meetings and governmental road supervision.

The support for the good road movement did not come entirely from selfless idealists. Certainly Albert Pope was a dedicated man, interested in improving roads for the benefit of all. But Pope and

²⁷Chatburn, 132, from the Engineering Record of August 27, 1892; U. S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Bulletin #26, Proceedings of the National Good Roads Convention, (Washington, 1903), 10. Hereafter cited as ORI #26 Bulletin.

²⁸ORI #26 Bulletin, 46.

²⁹U. S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Bulletin #10, Proceedings of the National Road Conference, (Washington, 1894), 50.

the LAW were primarily concerned with better roads on which to ride their bicycles. Pope had the additional incentive of selling bicycles. It would be natural for him to assume that if the roads were better bicycles would sell better. This standard passed in the twentieth century to the automobilists and the automobile manufacturers. Drivers were now interested in good roads and the manufacturers wanted to sell more automobiles.

There were other concerns interested in the good road movement such as the railroads. The managers had been convinced that improved roads would mean more business for them. After all, the railroad executive reasoned, if farmers can now only haul goods twenty miles to the railroad because of poor roads, and if they were improved so he could haul forty miles, would not it double my business? The railroads' support was substantial. They contributed trains to travel through an area building object lesson roads and carrying the important personnel necessary to good road conventions.

An extensive good road train traveled through the South in 1902. The Office of Public Road Inquiry worked with this train for five months during the winter of 1901 and 1902 while it toured the South building good roads and holding good road conventions. The train was furnished by the Southern Railway Company, with the National Good Roads Association actively promoting the venture. The train traveled 4,037 miles through six southern states making eighteen stops and building as many object lesson roads.³⁰

³⁰ORI #23 Bulletin, 2.

In September a fair was held in Minneapolis. The Great Northern Railway Company planned to work with the good road people. Following a road exhibit there, a good road train traveled to the west coast. Although this train crossed Montana and Idaho, there were no stops for good road demonstrations between Grand Forks, North Dakota, and Seattle.³¹

Road building machinery manufacturing companies furnished equipment free for awhile. Their interest was obvious. With more good roads being built, there would be more machinery sold. The companies helped with the good road trains until 1905 when they stopped contributing road building equipment and money.³² When the good road movement was solidly enough entrenched, they no longer had to agitate to build up the demand for business.

The movement for better roads was not always singleminded. There was always a split between those who wanted utilitarian farm-to-market roads and those who wanted only good touring roads. Those who advocated simple farm-to-market roads were opposed to those who favored the more grandiose coast-to-coast, city-to-city projects favored by the automobile interests. This dichotomy in the good road movement broke into the open in 1905, at the Portland good road convention, as a lurid power struggle, reaching the ludicrous climax of two men trying to chair the same meeting. Although the split was "amicably" settled, the Great Falls Tribune lamented that it should be evident just when the good road movement was beginning to do a great deal of work.³³

³¹Great Falls Tribune, August 30, 1902.

³²Mason, 185-6.

³³Chatburn, 141; Great Falls Tribune, June 23, 24, 1905.

The split in the good road movement was again evident in 1911 with the controversy over the Shackelford Bill, which proposed building farm-to-market roads. It was opposed by the American Automobile Association as a waste of money on dirt roads, but strongly supported by the farmers. It passed the House by a wide margin but got no further.³⁴

The effect the automobile had on the road movement varied. In the East and Midwest the road movement was well established before the automobile became important. However, in the West the automobile played much the same role that the bicycle and the LAW did in the East. The automobile took people onto bad roads and started them agitating for improved ones. Automobile clubs agitated for better roads and tried to overcome the objections to the new vehicles.

In the entire country the automobile worked a profound revolution in road building. The automobile demanded a road that it could not break up with its swiftly spinning rubber tires. This led to the hard, bound surfaces that we drive on today.

The good road movement achieved several things. One of its first acts of importance was the building of the object lesson roads. The building of these short stretches of good highway throughout the country demonstrated to the public what a good road was and using it demonstrated, forcefully, why they were necessary.

³⁴Wayne E. Fuller, "Good Roads and Rural Free Delivery of Mail," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLII, (June, 1955), 78-81. Fuller declared, "this [farm to market roads] he [the farmer] wanted before the automobile was invented, and he would have wanted it had there never been an automobile in the country."

Secondly, the movement led to centralization. Control of road building moved slowly from the counties to the states. This meant more money could be raised from a broader tax base and there could be a central plan to state road building. To finance this the tax base was changed to include for the first time the urban residents. The first states to pass state aid laws were New Jersey in 1891, Massachusetts in 1893, Connecticut in 1895, and New York in 1898.³⁵ The New Jersey law should have made a bigger impression on the country than it did, for its accomplishments were remarkable. In that state two years after the act, Union County had built forty miles of telford³⁶ road and spent \$400,000 without raising the tax rate. Real estate increased in value, new markets were opened, business improved, and the carriage trade prospered.³⁷ The New Jersey law was an excellent precedent. Many people had been afraid of losing local autonomy but this law was designed to keep the initiative at the local level and to provide aid to those areas that presented a coherent plan for the use of the money.³⁸

New York initiated a state aid program in 1898. This program, as did the one in New Jersey, bowed to local initiative. The first step was for the people of an area to petition the state for aid. New York officials then investigated and decided whether to aid the area, undertaking only one project at a time. The cost of road building was broken down in this manner: fifty percent of the money for the

³⁵Chatburn, 148-50.

³⁶Telford is a type of surface much like macadam.

³⁷Mason, 209.

³⁸Ibid., 231.

project came from the state; the county paid thirty-five percent; and the individuals immediately affected by the road paid the remaining fifteen percent.³⁹ This method of financing accomplished two things good road advocates had been demanding: it helped overcome the objections of the farmers and it spread the burden of road building more evenly over the economy.

Finally the movement was able to involve the central government. This was the final necessary act to prepare the way for good roads. In 1892 bills were introduced into both the United States Senate and House of Representatives for the building of good roads, establishment of a Highway Commission and consolidation of the exhibits at the Columbian Exposition. They were sent to committee and never emerged.⁴⁰ Ten years later another serious proposal brought to the federal government received much the same fate, even though at this time the good roads movement was behind the bills. In December of 1902, Walter P. Brownlow of Tennessee introduced H. R. 15369 that was to create in the Department of Agriculture the Bureau of Public Roads to provide for national, state and local cooperation on the building of roads. The bill was referred to the Agriculture Committee and was not heard from in the legislative halls of the United States again.⁴¹ Brownlow's bill continued the theme of local option: any

³⁹U. S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Bulletin No. 21, Proceedings of the International Good Roads Congress, (Washington, 1901), 20-21. Hereafter cited as ORI #21 Bulletin.

⁴⁰U. S. Congressional Record, 52nd Cong., 1st Sess., 1892, XXIII, Part 3, 5765, 6380, 6588, 6846, 6849, 7060.

⁴¹U. S. Congressional Record, 57th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1902, XXXVI, Part 1, 5.

state that wanted money had to ask for it. The government, of course, had the right to accept or reject any proposals. The states were to be limited in what they received by the percent of the national population living within the state. The bill also declared that with the new modes of transportation all the people that benefitted from the roads should help pay for them and not just those that lived alongside roads. Brownlow argued that if it were good policy to spend so liberally on the rivers and harbors it would be equally sound to spend liberally on roads, which benefitted so many more people.⁴²

The Federal Government increased its involvement with good roads movement in 1913. A joint committee was appointed from the House and the Senate to look into the matter of federal construction of post roads.⁴³ As a result of this study, \$500,000 was appropriated to be given to the appropriate agency. This action moved the Federal Government from a purely advisory capacity into one in which it was actively involved in the building of roads.⁴⁴ The Office of Public Road Inquiries became the Office of Public Roads and Rural Engineering and actively worked with local farm organizations to accomplish road building and other engineering objectives.⁴⁵ The states were, of course, the prime road builders. Twenty-four had highway commissions or other state agencies for supervising or building roads. In 1912 they had

⁴²Walter P. Brownlow, "National Aid to Road Improvement," Cosmopolitan, XXXIV (January, 1903), 355-8.

⁴³U. S. Statutes at Large, XXXVIII, Part 1, 551.

⁴⁴Mason, 179.

⁴⁵C. W. Thompson, "How the Department of Agriculture Promotes Organization in Rural Life," U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1915, (1916), 272; Chalkurn, 143.

spent forty-three million dollars on road building compared to only two million in 1902.⁴⁶

By 1916 centralization had led to increased demand for federal aid on the roads. The 1913 appropriation had not worked out as well as it should have because of the desire for market routes as well as post roads. The 1913 money had been devoted only to post road work.⁴⁷ Many people were still dubious about interstate roads as they felt only trucks would use them and trains could handle long distance hauling. "It maybe that federal aid in highway work would come, but it need not come as a half-formed and ill advised policy."⁴⁸ On July 11, the President signed the Shackleford-Bankhead Federal Aid Road Act.⁴⁹ The bill appropriated eighty-five million dollars. Ten million of this was to be spent on the nation's forest roads from 1916 to 1921. The yearly amounts ranged from five to twenty-five million dollars.⁵⁰ The Office of Public Roads and Rural Engineering was responsible for the building of the roads. Thirty-two states quickly indicated a willingness to take part with matching funds.⁵¹

⁴⁶U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1913, (1914), 51.

⁴⁷Mason, 249.

⁴⁸"National Aid for Building Roads," Good Roads, Oct. 4, 1913, 144.

⁴⁹George W. Metlen, Report of the Montana Highway Commission: 1913-1914, Montana, Highway Commission, (Helena, n.d.), 12. Hereafter cited as Montana, Highway Commission: 1913-1914.

⁵⁰David F. Houston, "The Government and Good Roads," U. S. Congress, Senate, 64th Cong., 1st Sess., 1916, Doc. #6953, 24.

⁵¹U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1916, (1917), 51.

This brought an era to a close. The bicyclists began the good road movement, the automobiles and the Rural Free Delivery pushed it along. The emergence of the OPRI in 1893 was extremely important to the expanding good road movement. The agitation had begun at the local level. In 1891, a state, New Jersey, had begun to help build roads. The trend toward centralization continued and culminated in the Federal Aid Act of 1916.

CHAPTER IV

LEGISLATION

Legislation in Montana, as in other states, prior to centralization, merely provided a framework within which the county commissioners worked. In some respects the laws were detailed but the functioning of the laws depended entirely on the county commissioners. Prior to 1901, the county commissioners were responsible for the building of roads. They were allowed to tax property at a specified rate and also collect a \$2.00 poll tax from males twenty-one to fifty or sixty. The poll tax could be collected in cash or labor. However, the days the men worked on the roads usually resembled picnics rather than earnestly at work. If the commissioners needed extra money they were allowed to transfer it from the general fund into the road fund. Obviously the gigantic counties were too large for three men, particularly with other duties, to oversee the building and repair of the roads. Therefore the counties were divided into as many road districts as the commissioners thought expedient. A supervisor was to oversee the building of roads in these areas. He was paid either a yearly salary or per diem. Prior to the movement to improve the roads the supervisor hired people to work for him building and repairing the roads. There was in the early years very little contracting. Later legislation provided for contracting if the work to be done were in excess of

the specified amounts. The commissioners generally called for contracts on bridge jobs.

Each legislature had to concern itself with the status of roads. Each one usually made only miniscule changes in the basic law. In 1901, however, the lawmakers deviated considerably in several areas. In each of these areas of change problems arose. First, they changed the entire supervisory framework. The supervisor system was abolished and the county commissioners were to hold elections in each of the road districts and elect three road trustees. These trustees were to be paid \$25.00 per year salary. In addition, in order to "qualify," each trustee had to post a \$1,000.00 bond.¹ Naturally not many men were willing to work under these conditions. Furthermore there was no provision in the law to handle the circumstance of elected men not being willing to serve. The second problem involved the expense of the election although this was usually held at the same time as the school elections. When the road districts were coterminous with school districts, and the commissioners sometimes arranged this, the elections were somewhat easier. Finally the trustees assumed the function of collecting the poll taxes. But the 1901 law limited poll taxes to non-incorporated areas. Hence the trustees could not collect money in any of the incorporated towns. The districts could themselves vote bond issues to raise more money if they needed it within their districts. This the people were generally unwilling to do.

¹Laws, Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Montana, 1901, 118-40.

The story of the "Geiger" law² and the way it worked in Montana demonstrated: the law was interpreted various ways in the different counties reflecting the lack of centralization; the law also inhibited the building of the roads demonstrating that state legislation did have some effect on local road building.

The day after the bill was passed the editor of the Dillon Examiner labeled the bill impractical. According to him if "this new road bill become[s] a law it will be simply another case of jumping from the frying pan into the fire." He objected because the expense of hiring trustees was exorbitant. The \$25.00 per year was not in itself excessive but multiplied by three times the number of road districts made quite a large sum. Secondly, the bill decentralized control by keeping money within the districts where it was raised. This meant, of course, that districts with low populations could not possibly build adequate roads.³ However, the Dillon Examiner was apparently the only voice in the state strongly opposed to the bill upon its introduction and its journey through the legislature was uneventful.⁴ Other counties reacted in various ways to the new bill. State newspapers, even those not usually interested in road news, found space to include a synopsis of the "Geiger" bill. The editor of the Yellowstone Journal of Miles City wrote that "probably no law

²The 1901 road legislation was introduced by Senator Eugene Geiger of Kalispell.

³Dillon Examiner, February 6, 1901.

⁴Senate Journal, 1901, 68-173 passim.

enacted by the late legislative assembly is of as much importance to the people of the state as large as the new road law."⁵ This paper did not highly praise the new law but appeared generally to be in favor of it. The Carbon County Democrat of Red Lodge was ecstatic about the legislation. The paper summarized it in an article sub-headed: "sweeping changes made in the interest of the electors . . . will benefit the Road Districts."⁶ Most of the comments on the bill were of the "wait and see" variety, although some of the newspapers were mildly critical.⁷

The various interpretations of the law demonstrated either lack of understanding or disgust for it. In Lake County the people within a road district made nominations for trustees. The commissioners then made selections from this group.⁸ Lake County then found itself with an amusing situation: On June 7, the Daily Interlake reported, "In road district 19, where L. H. Faust declined and J. H. Geiger failed to qualify as road trustees, the board appointed John Cowell and M. J. Brown as trustees."⁹ The new law completely confused the Hill County Commissioners. The people elected

⁵Yellowstone Journal (Miles City), March 16, 1901.

⁶Carbon County Democrat (Red Lodge), March 13, 1901.

⁷Red Lodge Pickett, March 15, 1901; Daily Interlake (Kalispell), Feb. 15, 1901; Western News (Hamilton), March 20, 1901; Enterprise (Malta), March 27, 1901.

⁸Daily Interlake (Kalispell), April 26, 1901.

⁹Ibid., June 7, 1901. Faust introduced the "Geiger" bill in the House as did Geiger in the Senate.

road supervisors in April¹⁰ and in May the commissioners informed the men elected that there were no longer any such positions.¹¹ The Beaverhead County Commissioners approached the entire situation rather whimsically. They divided the county into nine road districts. Twenty-seven trustees were selected and advised "of their appointment and also that there was no money in the road fund."¹²

The operation of the law was chronicled in the Great Falls Tribune, which had always been skeptical about it. Cascade County Commissioners met and redistricted the county, reduced the number of districts from nineteen to seven, and appointed trustees. The paper stated that "it is not very likely that many of those named will serve." Later they declared "there is not even a chance for a 'rake-off' if a trustee should desire to be dishonest."¹³ The Tribune lauded the few men that indicated a willingness to serve. The editor was certain that the legislature would change the law. The "Geiger" law was bad and according to this paper, "if the roads are in any kind of shape at all it will be in spite of this law and not on account of it."¹⁴ The attorney general's announcement that the commissioners could take care of the roads if trustees could not be found received a banner headline.¹⁵

¹⁰Milk River Eagle (Havre), March 23, 1901.

¹¹Ibid., May 4, 1901.

¹²Dillon Examiner, June 12, 1901.

¹³Great Falls Tribune, June 5, 1901; June 23, 1901.

¹⁴Ibid., June 30, 1901.

¹⁵Ibid., July 19, 1901.

In July the commissioners appointed men to the five districts lacking trustees. Many accepted just to keep the roads in their districts from further deterioration.¹⁶ Late in July, the state attorney general officially informed the commissioners that they were responsible for the roads and had to keep them up whether or not trustees could be found.¹⁷ By September most of the districts were functioning, albeit poorly. In only one district was there no one willing to serve. But the county's problems were far from over.¹⁸ In December, the trustees for District #1 resigned. From many areas in the county complaints were received that no work was being done on the roads.¹⁹ A December editorial in the Great Falls Tribune declared that trying to keep decent roads under the "Geiger" law was very difficult. The editor added: "no subject of equal importance to the community is, as a rule, so carelessly handled by those in authority as that of roads."²⁰ The paper went on to say, "there is probably no county in the state where the new road law has done more harm than in Cascade."²¹ Citizens of Great Falls were concerned that if the road situation became worse, farmers could not come to town except when absolutely necessary and, even worse for local business, they might increase their mail order

¹⁶Great Falls Tribune, July 20, 1901.

¹⁷Western News (Hamilton), July 3, 1901.

¹⁸Great Falls Tribune, Sept. 6, 1901.

¹⁹Ibid., Dec. 3, 1901.

²⁰Ibid., Dec. 8, 1901.

²¹Ibid.

buying.²² Many other counties in the state experienced similar difficulties.²³

Yellowstone County was an interesting contrast to the others. The "Geiger" law received no publicity, favorable or unfavorable, in the Billings Gazette. The county encountered problems getting men to serve as trustees but countered by merely continuing to appoint new ones until all districts were functioning.²⁴ The commissioners kept road supervisors working until they could be replaced by trustees.²⁵ When the commissioners were unable to get anyone to serve within a given district they created the post of "agent" to care for the roads in those districts.²⁶ Apparently, with inventive innovation it was possible to work with the "Geiger" law by providing extra-legal stop-gaps.

Generally, though, everyone in the state was opposed to the current road legislation. A late 1902 governmental commission determined this and informed the legislature and the governor that the state was in favor of repeal. Governor Toole, in addressing the legislative assembly in 1903, declared that he had been misled when he signed this worthless bill. He added, "let us have a simple and effective law suited to our sparsely settled condition, one which will not only

²²Great Falls Tribune, June 23, 1901.

²³Carbon County Democrat (Red Lodge), April 17, 1901; May 8, 1901; Dillon Examiner, June 26, 1901; July 24, 1901.

²⁴Billings Gazette, June 21, 1901.

²⁵Ibid., April 12, 1901.

²⁶Ibid., Sept. 13, 1901.

facilitate the building of roads but the building of good roads." Since the building of the railroads, he maintained, roads had been largely neglected. He concluded with a poem:

We hear no more of clanging hoofs,
and the stagecoach rattling by,
For the steam king rules the traveled world.
And the old Pikes left to die.²⁷

With the 1903 legislature the "Geiger" law passed unmourned from the Montana road scene, replaced by a law very much like the 1899 road law. The "Geiger" law was a well meaning attempt to provide a more sympathetic and orderly method of building and repairing roads in Montana. Three flaws destroyed the law's good points. The provision that the trustees be elected was impractical and the salary of \$25.00 per year was calamitous. The remaining problem was raising money. The method of distributing the counties' road money was unwise and inefficient. Montana certainly needed to take steps toward effective highway building and control. But the "Geiger" law was a step in the wrong direction.

The laws from 1903 to 1913 were just variations on a theme. The major changes concerned legislation affecting the automobile. The 1903 bill passed with little debate.²⁸ This law, H. B. #145 was the

²⁷Montana, Governor (Toole) Message of Governor Jos. K. Toole to the Eighth Legislative Assembly of the State of Montana, Jan 5, 1903, 57. Wheaton J. Lane in The Early Highway in America, to the Coming of the Railroad (Highways in Our National Life, ed., Jean Labutut and Wheaton J. Lane, Princeton, 1950), attributes this poem to Reverend John Pierpont with no citation.

²⁸Senate Journal, 1903; House Journal, 1903.

first bill Governor Toole signed in that session.²⁹ It demonstrated the concern for a change in the road law desired by the state of Montana. The provisions of the law were standard: the responsibility of road upkeep lay with the county commissioners who were empowered to appoint supervisors to do the actual work.³⁰ By this law the supervisor was given tremendous power. If emergency work needed to be done on the roads the supervisor could draft people from their homes to make the necessary repairs.³¹

In article XI of H. B. #145, the legislature provided some primitive auto legislation. It legalized the simple rule of turning to the right when meeting a vehicle, forbade employing drunken drivers, and required heavy loads--threshers, and steam engines--to plank bridges and culverts before crossing. A rather nebulous provision demanded that mechanical units had to stop 100 yards from the place of halting³² when meeting animal-drawn vehicles.³³

From 1905 to 1911 the legislature passed even less of significance in road legislation. There was, generally, an increasing control and regulation of the automobile. Speed limits were raised

²⁹House Journal, 1903, 267.

³⁰Laws, Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Montana, 1903, 74.

³¹Ibid.

³²The law describes the procedure in this manner. What it actually intended is questionable.

³³Laws, Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Montana, 1903, 90-91.

and the vehicles no longer had to stop for animal-drawn vehicles, just proceed slowly.³⁴ In 1911 the legislators attempted a major change which would have created a Highway Commission.³⁵ The bill passed the House uneventfully but died in the Senate.³⁶

The Montana Legislature in 1913 passed a general highway law,³⁷ which among other things created a Highway Commission. The Senate voted unanimously³⁸ for the act and in the House only three men opposed it.³⁹ The bill provided for further regulation of automobiles. They were to be registered, paying a fee of \$2.00, and identification was necessary upon each vehicle.⁴⁰ The law listed safety features required upon each vehicle, such as adequate brakes.⁴¹ All chauffeurs (drivers) had to register with the state and pay a \$2.00 fee.⁴² The legislature divided the highways of the state into three classes-- common, main and state. The counties were to levy road taxes of no

³⁴Laws, Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Montana, 1905, 223-4; Laws, Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Montana, 1907, 323-4; Laws, Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Montana, 1909, 221-5.

³⁵House Journal, 1911, 418.

³⁶Senate Journal, 1911, 635.

³⁷Senate Journal, 1913, 279.

³⁸Ibid., 493.

³⁹House Journal, 1913, 907.

⁴⁰Laws, Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Montana, 1913, 161.

⁴¹Ibid., 164.

⁴²Ibid., 165.

more than five mills and not less than two mills on taxable property. Additional funds were to come from the \$2.00 poll tax collected from all males between the ages of twenty-one and fifty.⁴³ The speed limit on the roads outside of towns was raised to thirty miles per hour although the limit in towns was maintained at eight.⁴⁴ The increased regulation of automobiles stemmed from their increased presence on the state's highways.

The newly created Highway Commission was at first no more than a "big brother" to the county commissioners. Its principal function was to oversee, advise, and coordinate certain economic activities. In 1913 there was virtually no opposition to the creation of this commission.⁴⁵ With this bill providing for the creation of a three man Highway Commission, Montana had taken the first step towards centralizing its road control. Two of the members of the commission, a Professor of Civil Engineering from the college at Bozeman, and the State Engineer, were ex-officio members. The third member was a civil engineer to be selected by state officials and paid a salary of \$3500 per year. The ex-officio members were to receive \$10.00 per diem while in session.⁴⁶ Their expenses were also to be paid while they were away from home on Commission business.⁴⁷

⁴³Laws, Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Montana, 1913, 140.

⁴⁴Ibid., 159.

⁴⁵Senate Journal 1913, 494; House Journal, 1913, 911-2. See reasons for breakdown of farm resistance in Chapter VIII.)

⁴⁶Laws, Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Montana, 1913, 318.

⁴⁷Ibid., 320.

Six months after this act the county commissioners were to furnish the Highway Commission with a map of all the roads in their counties, indicating those of primary importance.⁴⁸ The commissioners were to use this information to draw up a state road map prior to 1914, indicating all roads they believed important enough to receive state aid. Any road improved under this act was to be known as a "state" road.⁴⁹ The county commissioners were to make all of the original surveys and plans, but the State Highway Commission could alter these if they contained flaws.⁵⁰ When increased federal funds became available after 1916, the new Highway Commission soon developed into the organization responsible for the building and maintenance of the state roads.

In 1915 there were no consequential changes in the road legislation. However, in that year the Governor officially proclaimed good roads day for the first time.⁵¹ Highway legislation in Montana from statehood to 1916 is the story of a slow move toward state centralization. The earliest attempt to vastly improve the state's roads was the abortive "Geiger" law of 1901. After that tragedy the lawmakers returned to caution. Except for legislation for the increasing numbers of automobiles they avoided any innovation. Finally in 1913, almost twenty years after the New Jersey law, Montana passed a law establishing a highway commission.

⁴⁸Laws, Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Montana, 1913, 320.

⁴⁹Ibid., 321.

⁵⁰Ibid., 323.

⁵¹Laws, Resolutions and Memorials of the State of Montana, 1915, 19-20.

CHAPTER V

ROADS AT THE GRASS ROOTS

In Montana, as elsewhere, the influx of settlers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries meant a demand for roads. Before any effective civil authority existed, the settler followed old game trails and other ill-defined paths from place to place. In the absence of these he would strike out over the prairie, thus in time creating his own road.

The need for roads encompassed two things. First, people who were not served by roads demanded a way to get from their farms to trading areas. Secondly, once the roads existed there was a continued cry for improvement, partly to permit the settlers to reach the towns throughout as much of the year as possible. This second demand was practically mute, however, until the advent of the good road movement which increased the individual's awareness of the advantages and desirability of good roads.

With the start of effective civil authority, some form of "legalizing" roads came into existence. The early laws provided a framework for the recognition of the roads that had been informally established by use and for the creation of new roads. Under these laws roads that had been in existence for a specified number of years, usually five, were designated roads by common law. The only problem, and one the courts had to decide, was how well traveled a path had to be to make it a "road." For

new roads in an area the populace petitioned the commissioners. The commissioners then appointed people to investigate the area, interview the residents and report on the feasibility of the road. These investigators were called "viewers." Although the Montana legislature, which was often ineffectual, provided a framework within which the county commissioners were supposed to work, they often interpreted the road laws to please themselves.

Lack of adequate funds and talent made the building of good roads impossible. The farmers would most certainly have welcomed good roads but they were not willing to pay for them. This was particularly true at the beginning of the good road movement as they were unconvinced that good roads would bring them benefits equal to the additional outlay. The farmer believed that the movement would benefit the urbanites and the former would have to pay the bill, therefore they resisted. The lack of trained road building engineers further inhibited road building. The roads were built and repaired with little or no knowledge of sound construction principles. Thus much of the money that was spent was wasted. Until the population was educated to the need for improved over-land transportation and specific highway engineers were trained, good roads could not be built in large numbers.

The county commissioners had to accept lack of funds and talent. However, they were faced with everyday problems that overwhelmed them and made the construction and maintenance of roads practically impossible. The road situation was endurable only as long as the expectations of the people concerning roads was low. But when the citizenry began to demand better roads, roads that could be used all year long, they eventually

demanded that control be moved to more effective agencies--the states and the federal government.

Basically the commissioners faced two impediments to the maintenance and construction of as good roads as possible with the available money. The first problem was natural and the second was the result of the cupidity and stupidity of man. The natural problem concerned the weather. In the winter snow often blocked Montana roads. There was very little that the commissioners could do about this problem until the snow melted. When the thaw came and after rains the roads became virtual impassable bogs. The commissioners could do nothing except wait for the water to seep in, drain away, or evaporate. These problems of nature were largely accepted and the commissioners just replaced bridges that washed away and did as much as possible with their limited funds to smooth the terribly rutted roads.

After one hard rain one Cascade County Commissioner reported that in the district he checked, there were fifty small wooden culverts and bridges destroyed. Another said that he could not report on the condition of the roads that he was to check because many of them were still under water and could not be seen. The third commissioner reported that roads in his area were not too bad but that eighteen bridges, built the year before, had been washed out.¹ At other times following rains observers noted that "the mud [was] two feet deep for long stretches."² This problem was not limited to the prairie counties.

¹Great Falls Tribune, June 23, 1908.

²Ibid., July 6, 1902.

C. H. McLeod, prominent western Montana merchant, wrote to a friend that he intended to take a trip as soon as the roads were in a condition to make it possible. The tenor of his letter implied that he was not irritated at this situation but calmly accepted it as an immutable part of life.³ The Dillon Examiner once reported that "mud was so deep in the Gallatin Valley last week that a mail carrier was unable either to ride or drive and he carried the mail afoot."⁴ The condition in which nature and the lack of scientific building and repair left the roads was extremely dangerous. When wagons slipped off the rutted roads they often overturned, dumping their loads and even injuring the driver and passengers.⁵ Lack of adequate stream crossings sometimes led to death in the swirling waters.⁶ More common and irritating but less dangerous was merely reaching an impassable place and being bogged down. So very often a farmer would be "stuck" between his ranch and town and have to return home without his load and return to get it when the roads had dried. The irritation this caused was considerable.

Yet to the average farmer all the above were facts of life to be accepted. If he were careful he could stay on the rough, rutted roads. If he only traveled when it was fairly dry he probably wouldn't get stuck. More irritating problems concerned the actions of men that

³C. H. McLeod to George H. Beckwith, March 9, 1904, McLeod Collection.

⁴Dillon Examiner, April 17, 1901.

⁵Great Falls Tribune, Aug. 26, 1904; Feb. 17, 1907; July 13, 1907.

⁶Ibid., June 24, 1907.

hindered the transportation of others. These problems even included the plowing of roads.⁷

The basic problem was the conflict of interest between the settler who wanted his land fenced and inviolate and the man who had to travel through that land to get to town. An increased population intensified this problem. Between 1900 and 1910 the number of farms in Montana almost doubled.⁸ This conflict was intense and caused the commissioners and other county officials more grief than all the other problems. The commissioners also had to deal from time to time with problems other than the fencing of roads.

One obstruction problem concerned water. Yellowstone County had to order the Big Ditch Company to stop diverting water onto the roads.⁹ F. I. Long, one of the leading sheepmen of the United States, wrote several letters to the Choteau County Surveyor, John Culbertson, complaining of an irrigation ditch a neighbor dug across a road he used. Long maintained that the road in question had been used for twenty-five years. He added that "two cars have been damaged there and wagons broken while trying to cross these ditches with loads."¹⁰ The surveyor after several complaints asked Long to try to prepare a petition to get a new road in the area. Long accepted the petitions but asked Culbertson to

⁷Great Falls Tribune, May 10, 1911.

⁸U. S. Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910, Agriculture, VI, 943.

⁹Billings Gazette, Dec. 17, 1901.

¹⁰Long Brothers Mss. F. I. Long to John Culbertson, #215, Sept. 2, 1913.

try to get the road opened as the ditch was just a sham his neighbor was merely trying to show that he had improved the land.¹¹

The largest problem, of course, concerned the fencing of roads. The commissioners were continually besieged with complaints about fenced roads, a problem due largely to the increased farm population.¹² F. I. Long complained about roads being fenced as well as ditched. "Recently the old road which has been in use for the past 25 years has been fenced up, making it necessary to cross the ditches at another point even worse than the one mentioned in my letter to you." In this letter he stated that he would be unable to get his huge loads of wool to Great Falls over this road and inquired if Choteau County could possibly connect him to a road in Cascade County.¹³

A unique situation occurred when the Gibson Land Company closed and fenced a road that ran through their property. They even moved a bridge completely off the land. The county, after investigation, determined that the Land Company was within its rights.¹⁴ The Gibson Company subsequently leased the land to a man who allowed the county to use the old road until they were able to build a new one.¹⁵

¹¹Long Mss. #266, Sept. 17, 1913, Long to Culbertson; #450, June 29, 1914, Long to Culbertson.

¹²Great Falls Tribune, July 14, 1904; Jan. 3, 1905; Sept. 11, 1906; March 15, 1907; June 15, 1907; Jan. 18, 1908; July 15, 1908; Nov. 22, 1909; June 16, 1912; Ronan Pioneer, May 5, 1911; May 12, 1911; Judith Gap Journal, June 2, 1912.

¹³Long Mss. #477, Long to Culbertson, June 25, 1914.

¹⁴Paris Gibson founded Great Falls.

¹⁵Great Falls Tribune, May 20, 1904; May 25, 1904; June 7, 1904; June 15, 1904.

The fencing problem was not restricted to the new western plains states. In areas as old as Vermont the problem still existed. The governor of Vermont reported on a trip he made to see some "good roads" in a certain area of his state:

Well, I went up there, and we went out on the natural roads he was going to show, and come to a gully that had been washed out; the road was impassable; turning around went another way and found that road fenced up; we could not get through there; then we turned and went back, drove across the line into the neighboring town, where they had such terrible roads, and there we found the only pleasure we had on that occasion.¹⁶

Typical of the harassment the commissioners were subjected to was the problem the Cascade County Commissioners had trying to keep the Cascade and Mission Road to the Muddy Valley Road open. Late in 1901, the County Commissioners of Cascade County stated that the road through the Wiegand property, west of Great Falls, was a legal road and should be open.¹⁷ This might have been the end of this problem. It was not. At one of their first meetings in 1902, the commissioners declared that the Wiegand road was a public highway and again ordered that it be opened to traffic.¹⁸

This fencing problem was not limited to the roads. For the purposes of this paper the relationship to roads is all that is to be considered. The reader, however, should be aware that fencing in the west was a classic problem between many interests. As far as fencing was

¹⁶ ORI, #10 Bulletin, 4.

¹⁷ Great Falls Tribune, Nov. 22, 1901.

¹⁸ Ibid., Jan. 23, 1902.

concerned, fencing roads was a minor problem; as far as roads were concerned, fencing was a major problem.

In January, 1902, Frank Nevill,¹⁹ a rancher who lived near Cascade, started a trip to Great Falls. On his way to Great Falls his path was barred by a fence at the Wiegand property. He took the fence down and proceeded on his way. On his return he again found the road blocked by a fence. Henry Wiegand and a hired hand arrived on the scene with guns as Nevill was preparing, for the second time that day, to take down the fence. The men exchanged eight shots.²⁰ Henry Wiegand then went to Great Falls and accused Nevill of property damage and assault. Nevill retorted that he was only defending his rights.²¹

County officials, quite concerned about the road, planned to send the county surveyor, O. C. Mortson, and a deputy sheriff, to open the road permanently.²² Mortson, irritated by the continual demand made on his time by the various road fencing controversies, wrote a letter to the editor of the Great Falls Tribune. He warned seventeen "chronic" offenders that public rights would be protected and that road changes unauthorized by the county commissioners would not be tolerated.²³

¹⁹To avoid confusion, the blood relationship of the characters was as follows: Wilhelmina Wiegand was the mother of Ernest, Henry, and William. Mrs. Wiegand's daughter was married to Frank Nevill. E. J. "Cayuse" Brown leased the Wiegand land during the controversy.

²⁰A wounded Wiegand horse was the only casualty.

²¹Great Falls Tribune, Jan. 31, 1902.

²²Ibid., Feb. 1, 1902.

²³Ibid., Feb. 3, 1902.

Henry Wiegand then called on surveyor Mortson to declare that his property would stay fenced. Mortson heatedly informed Wiegand about road laws. He added that the road was to be opened, as soon as he had the chance to get to it.²⁴

County officials, already weary of the dispute, planned to open the road. Mortson, with the sheriff, and one other man, went to take down the fence and open the road. Mortson was to make certain that the road was properly placed. The men were to arrest anyone who resisted their efforts. The commission also declared that any new obstruction would be met with immediate arrests.²⁵

County officials arrested Henry Wiegand on February 11, on charges of road obstruction and assault for the January shooting. He pled not guilty and posted \$300 bond on the assault charge and \$200 on the obstruction charge.²⁶ Then a Great Falls constable arrested Henry's brother, William A. Wiegand, for road obstruction. William was a Great Falls music dealer and had originally settled the land. Highly incensed, William Wiegand first refused to post bond. His trial was set for the same time as Henry Wiegand's.²⁷

In March the courts handed down some of the legal decisions affecting the Wiegands. Wilhelmina Wiegand, Henry and William's mother, asked for but was denied an injunction to keep J. J. Vance, a local

²⁴Great Falls Tribune, Feb. 4, 1902.

²⁵Ibid., Feb. 6, 1902.

²⁶Ibid., Feb. 12, 1902.

²⁷Ibid., Feb. 26, 1902.

farmer, from using the road through the Wiegand ranch. Vance would have to take a wide detour if he were unable to use this road.²⁸ The county scheduled Henry Wiegand's assault case for the next term of court.²⁹

For a time the road was open and there were no problems. Then in late May, E. J. "Cayuse" Brown, who was leasing the Wiegand ranch, closed the road. The county advised him to take the fence down and warned him that they would remove it if he did not. They further warned that for each twenty-four hours the fence remained up, he would be charged with a separate offence of obstruction.³⁰ William Wiegand, part owner of the land, was not ready to surrender. On May 27, 1902, the Great Falls Tribune printed a letter from him stating that the road was going to be closed. He wrote that very few people ever used it and added that the Wiegands intended to sue anyone who damaged their fences.³¹

In the fall of 1902, there was more legal action. Early in August, the city attorney, A. C. Gormly, brought action against William A. Wiegand, Henry Wiegand, and E. J. Brown. Gormly demanded the abatement of the nuisance of fences on the Cascade and Mission Road to the Muddy Valley Road.³² In October the second court decision was delivered. Mrs. Wiegand lost a suit brought against J. J. Vance for trespassing and had to pay \$75.50 in

²⁸Great Falls Tribune, March 20, 1902.

²⁹Ibid., May 26, 1902.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., May 27, 1902.

³²Ibid., Aug. 2, 1902.

court costs. The Tribune was certain that this finally meant the opening of the road.³³

By December, William Wiegand wanted the county either to try his brother for assault or dismiss the case. The county did neither. In order to force the issue he withdrew Henry's bond. Henry, to avoid jail, obtained new sureties.³⁴

Early in 1903 the obstruction case reached the courts. In Montana vs. William A. Wiegand, Henry Wiegand and E. J. Brown, the state contended that the road had been in use for more than five years and therefore was a public highway. The Wiegands objected. They stated that the land had been settled by William Wiegand April 14, 1900, under the provisions of the Desert Land Act. They maintained that there was no road, only a shifting private trail.³⁵ The presiding judge ruled that the Wiegands were correct. The court decreed "that no public highway exists or has ever existed at the place where the defenants [sic] are alleged to have obstructed a public highway." The court awarded the defendants a \$70.70 judgment against Cascade County for the destruction of their fence.³⁶ The county attorney requested and received dismissal of the assault case against Henry Wiegand.³⁷

- ³³Great Falls Tribune, Oct. 2, 1902.

³⁴Ibid., Dec. 14, 1902.

³⁵Cascade County (Montana), Records of the 8th District Court (Great Falls), State of Montana vs. William A. Wiegand and E. J. Brown, Jan. 31, 1903, Civil Action #4004, Microfilm Box #54.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Great Falls Tribune, Jan. 3, 1903. The record of the assault action against Henry Wiegand may be found: Cascade County, Records of the 8th District Court (Great Falls), State of Montana vs. Henry Wiegand, (1902), Assault in the 1st Degree, #255.

These court actions would seemingly have ended the problem on this road, but a few months later the fence was again cut and the courts were again petitioned for redress.³⁸ The Great Falls Tribune stated that the farmers who could not use the road would have to make an eight mile detour.³⁹

At this point the Wiegand controversy passed from the news. Officially there was no road across Wiegand property. Except for the Cascade County officials who had been involved and a few farmers who still wanted the Cascade and Mission Road to the Muddy Valley Road open, the affair was forgotten.

The maintenance problem was greater than the ones attendant on opening a new road but these were also exasperating. First of all when people petitioned for a road in an area they sometimes could not agree on where they wanted to construct it.⁴⁰ Once this problem was surmounted there was the difficult of getting the necessary land for the roads.⁴¹ If the people involved did not agree to the price then the commissioners had to resort to the courts; this meant time and expense and they still might lose and not get the land.⁴² These problems did not often occur because generally the people were interested in having new roads built. These obstructions were most common when the persons who had the desired land had another route to town themselves and rather than consider their

³⁸Great Falls Tribune, March 4, 1903.

³⁹Ibid., April 2, 1903. It is important to note that an eight-mile detour then would be about a seventy-five mile detour today.

⁴⁰Great Falls Tribune, Oct. 16, 1908.

⁴¹Ibid., Oct. 11, 1907.

⁴²Ibid., Sept. 10, 1908.

less fortunate neighbors they thought only of the inconvenience to themselves of having a road pass through their property.

Lack of money, lack of knowledge, bad weather conditions and selfish, ignorant men made the building and maintaining of good roads impossible. This was accepted for many years. Then the bicyclists arrived and began the move for better roads. Slowly more and more people joined in until the consensus was that the situation was no longer tolerable. Then people began to look for solutions: raise more money; educate road-building engineers; build roads that weather could not easily harm; buy equipment to keep them repaired and open; and override those people who were trying to hold back progress. The counties would not, and could not do these things because of lack of power and often lack of finances. This meant a step towards centralization when the public began to look to the state governments for help. This move towards centralization culminated in the involvement of the Federal Government and a nationwide program for the improvement of roads. The problem in the West was particularly acute as the western state governments were often weaker and more ineffectual than their eastern sisters in raising money for the building of roads. This led to increased demand for federal aid.

CHAPTER VI

THE GOOD ROAD MOVEMENT IN MONTANA

The status of Montana roads and the change that took place in the first years of the twentieth century were recorded by United States Government surveys during the period. In 1904 the OPRI initiated a study into road conditions in the various states of the United States. At this time Montana had 22,419 miles of public road, 65 miles of which were improved with gravel surfaces. These gravel roads were located in four counties: Madison had twenty-five miles, Lewis and Clark, twenty; Ravalli, ten; and Sweetgrass, ten. Montana had one mile of road for each ten inhabitants. Funds collected for road purposes amounted to \$18.02 per mile or \$1.66 per inhabitant.¹ See Table 1 for comparison with selected states. In 1904 Montana spent almost twice as much per mile on her roads as did the neighboring states to the east and south.

In 1909 the Federal Government surveyed the roads throughout the country again. Montana had 900 more miles of road and 30 more gravelled miles than in 1904.² See Table 2. By the end of 1914 609.25 of Montana's 39,204 miles of road were surfaced. Most of this distance, 514.25 miles, was gravel. This improved road mileage was considerably

¹U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Circular #54, Public Roads of Montana: Mileage and Expenditures in 1904, (1906).

²J. E. Pennybacker and Maurice O. Eldridge, Mileage and Cost of Public Roads in the United States in 1909, Bulletin No. 41, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, (1912).

increased from 1909 when only 95 of 23,319 miles were surfaced. Montana spent a total of nearly three million dollars on roads and bridges in 1914.³ But most of the roads were still completely unimproved. Besides the 609.25 miles of surfaced road only 6,528.05 miles of earth roads were graded and drained. Flathead, Lewis and Clark, and Missoula Counties had the largest amounts of improved roads within their boundaries.⁴

TABLE 1

MILEAGE AND ROAD EXPENDITURES, SELECTED STATES, 1904^a

State	Mileage	Improved Mileage	Mileage per Inhabitant	Money Spent	Money Spent per Mile	Money Spent per Inhabitant
Montana	22,419	65	10	404,097.81	18.02	1.66
North Dakota	59,332	212	5	550,340.72	9.28	1.72
South Dakota	59,295	151	7	383,283.07	6.40	.95
Wyoming	10,447	—	8	95,931.73	9.45	1.04

^aORI #32 Bulletin.

TABLE 2

ROAD MILEAGE, SELECTED STATES, 1909^a

State	Mileage	Improved Mileage	Per Cent of Improvement
Montana	23,319	95	0.41
North Dakota	61,593	140	0.23
South Dakota	56,354	268	0.5
Wyoming	10,569	—	—

^aORI #41 Bulletin.

³U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bulletin No. 389, Public Roads Mileage and Revenues in the Central, Mountain and Pacific States, 1914, (1917), 32-

⁴Ibid., xviii.

These slow improvements came about partially because of the good road movement, although Montana did not become involved in the movement until late. Then the state became peripherally involved and finally after the movement had achieved its aims elsewhere was briefly important in Montana. Governor Joseph K. Toole sent three representatives to the Pan American Exposition in 1901. According to the Interlake of Kalispell, one of the men "knows a road when he sees one."⁵ The paper added that although the current law did not permit the building of good roads, the county and the state could certainly use the ability to build good roads.⁶ In 1903, one Montanan, W. O. Hutchinson of Helena, was present at the first National Good Roads Meeting in St. Louis. A member of the resolutions committee,⁷ he declared:

We come from Montana to bring greetings to this National Good Roads Convention. We came here on our own time and at our own expense to be assisted and, perchance, to assist in the solution of this great national question.

We have put upon our statute book in the last sixty days a statute that shows we are now on the road to progress in the matter of good roads. In our State we have the water, the wood, the stone, and many other things necessary to the building of good roads. I want to tell you that Montana is with you heart and soul, with energy, money, and everything we have.⁸

There were no highway meetings in Montana in the nineteenth century and few in the early years of the twentieth. Montana was not completely disassociated from the movement, however. At the largest of the road meetings, there was usually a representative from Montana.

⁵Daily Interlake (Kalispell), Oct. 18, 1901.

⁶Ibid. The derogatory remark concerned the "Geiger" law.

⁷ORI #26 Bulletin, 14.

⁸Ibid., 71.

Montana was also involved with the Federal Government. Although beginning late (1902), Montana did become involved with Rural Free Delivery. When it finally came, RFD wrought a tremendous change in the way of life for the farmers of Montana. It was very instrumental in convincing the farmer that good roads were necessary. On March 1, 1901, there were 3,391 RFD routes in operation in the United States and applications for 4,517 more. But at this time Montana had no RFD routes and had applied for only five.⁹ See Table #3 for a comparison with surrounding states.

TABLE 3

RURAL FREE DELIVERY^a

State	RFD Routes in Operation		RFD Routes Applied For	
	3/1/01	5/1/02	3/1/01	5/1/02
Idaho	8	12	9	16
Montana	-	1	5	13
North Dakota	5	19	6	15
South Dakota	21	52	39	79
Wyoming	4	5	3	-

^aU.S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1900, (1901), 752; U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1901, (1902), 691.

There were only three other states that had no RFD routes: Mississippi, Nevada, and Oklahoma.¹⁰ By May 1, 1902, Montana had 1 RFD route out of a

⁹U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1900, (1901), 752.

¹⁰Ibid.

national total of 8,458 and had applied for 13 more.¹¹ But by August of 1901, a local appreciation of RFD appeared in the Great Falls Tribune when it editorially declared that "Rural Free Delivery was making better roads and enhancing the value of farm property."¹² The paper was concerned with the new RFD service. This editorial briefly described the history of RFD in the postal department and made the common allegations offered by good road-RFD advocates. RFD was supposed to end farm isolation and bring many benefits to farmers. It was supposed to help bring roads with all the benefits that accompanied them. Billings was scheduled to get Montana's RFD route #1. The city was quite excited about this post office on wheels and the Billings Gazette described the various services that the Post Office Department through RFD would render to the farmer: stamps, postal cards, newspapers, and wrappings.¹³ By 1910 many in Montana were aware of the connection between the rural routes and improved roads. Even though postal officials were not concerned with good roads, per se, their actions on RFD service helped to improve the roads. The Great Falls Tribune mentioned that RFD routes brought good roads, although the postal officials' primary interest was in improved mail service.¹⁴ Farmers now had an excellent reason to build good roads--daily delivery of mail and all the benefits that this brought.

¹¹ U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1901, (1902), 691. See Table #3.

¹² Great Falls Tribune, Aug. 25, 1901.

¹³ Billings Gazette, Nov. 12, 1901.

¹⁴ Great Falls Tribune, April 6, 1910.

Some Montanans looked to the Federal Government in other ways to improve the roads. For example, F. H. Ray, assistant state examiner in 1901, began to correspond with the Department of Agriculture in Washington, trying to obtain estimates for the cost of establishing a road building department at the Bozeman College. He was supported in his idea by M. O. Eldridge, then assistant director at the Office of Road Inquiry. Ray, in his letter to the Department of Agriculture, stated that "the greatest single obstacle to better roads is lack of properly qualified men to construct and repair them." He also remarked that a great deal of money was being spent on roads, but was wasted because of inadequate supervision.¹⁵

Because of this type of agitation a road building department was opened at Bozeman. From 1907 to 1910 the Federal Government was involved with Montana's roads in various ways. In 1907, Montana received \$5,760.90 from the United States Treasury for the forest reserves in Montana. This money was distributed to the Montana counties; one-half was to be spent on schools; the balance could be spent on the roads.¹⁶

Finally in 1916 the Federal Government became directly involved in the building of roads. This led to quite drastic changes in the work of the highway commission and other Montana agencies that were concerned with road building.

¹⁵ U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, Record Group 30, General Correspondence, File #258, "Montana Roads: 1901-1912," letter F. H. Ray to M. O. Eldridge. Hereafter cited as RG 30.

¹⁶ U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the Department of Agriculture: 1907, (1908), 603.

In the twentieth century Montana groups began to hold meetings to try and promote better roads in their areas. Some of these groups were formed only for the purpose of good roads and others were based on automobile interests with good roads being only one of the items that concerned them. As early as 1902, Cascade County had a Good Road Association actively trying to promote the building of better roads. Three representatives from this group called on the Cascade County Commissioners to ask for more efficient supervision of road work. The commission appeared interested but no concrete action was taken.¹⁷ By 1911, state auto clubs were beginning to help promote the building of good roads. The Flathead Auto Club of Kalispell planned to raise \$2500 for the Flathead County Commissioners to develop the road from Kalispell to Glacier National Park. The Superintendent of the Park had declared that automobiles were welcome to use all the Park's roads.¹⁸ The club raised less than it planned, but nevertheless presented \$1500 to the county commissioners to build the road. After its completion only the road from Kalispell to Missoula had to be finished to open up the entire Northwest with its very beautiful scenery to the touring autoist.¹⁹

Local good road meetings continued throughout the period. The merchant was continually concerned, especially after the advent of RFD, that without good roads to the towns the farmers might become addicted

¹⁷Great Falls Tribune, Oct. 21, 1902.

¹⁸Ibid., April 18, 1911.

¹⁹Ibid., May 16, 1911.

to the "Montgomery Ward" habit. The Meagher County Democrat felt that good roads "are" of intense interest to every man who owns a foot of property in the county, as the conditions of the roads have a great bearing on the prosperity of every town and farming community in the county. The better the roads the more often the farmer will come to town with his produce." The newspaper was trying to drum up interest for a good road meeting at Two Dot, by deploring the lack of road work being done in the county and urged everyone in favor of better roads to attend the meeting.²⁰ The editor reminded the farmers that not only local businessmen had a stake in seeing that good roads were built.²¹ The meeting at Two Dot was attended by about sixty people and a permanent organization was set up and plans made for periodic meetings. Mr. Metlen, secretary of the fledgling State Highway Commission, advised the delegates how other counties were meeting the challenge of good road building. In this fashion the Meagher County Good Roads Association was formed.²² Throughout the county these meetings continued at various places for a short time.²³

On occasion groups would gather for the purpose of agitating for a specific road project. The most important of these projects was the proposed Park-to-Park road from Yellowstone to Glacier Park. This proposal caused a great deal of interest along the proposed route. In

²⁰Meagher County Democrat (White Sulphur Springs), July 9, 1915.

²¹Ibid., July 9, 1915; July 16, 1915.

²²Ibid., July 23, 1915.

²³Ibid., July 30, 1915; Aug. 3, 1915; Aug. 20, 1915; Aug. 27, 1915.

1912 various groups of promoters in the state began planning this extensive project. Although this plan did not reach fruition until after the federal government became involved in road building, it at least demonstrated the magnificence of early road building ideas. This was the type of project most favored by the automobilist and tourist promoters and most objected to by the farmers. The road was to extend from Gardiner to Midvale, via Livingston, White Sulphur Springs, Great Falls, and Choteau. It was to be 320 miles long, passing through four counties: Park, Meagher, Cascade, and Teton.²⁴ Promoters stated that would be excellent for bringing tourists to Montana and for publicizing the state. It was to be useful for farmers, although designed primarily for tourist use. The Great Northern Railway Company was to build a road from Midvale into Glacier Park and it was expected that the Federal Government was going to build roads within the Park.²⁵

Some thought that the road would be an expensive undertaking but examination proved otherwise. Three men from Great Falls, two county commissioners and one businessman, went on a path finding tour over the route. When they reached White Sulphur Springs they stated that the only area that needed improvement between Great Falls and White Sulphur Springs was four miles north of the summit of King's Hill in Cascade County and the three miles on the south side of the hill in Meagher County. The principle disadvantage to the road was

²⁴Great Falls Tribune, April 4, 1911.

²⁵Ibid., Jan. 28, 1912.

that it was open to travel only during certain times of the year. The objective of the project was to get a good all-weather route.²⁶

In 1910 Montana finally held its first state-wide good road meeting. This was thirty-seven years after the first state-wide good road meeting held in Iowa. The meeting stirred up a tremendous amount of interest. It was well attended and had the support of many interests. The state-wide good road meetings were never so important after this time. One reason for this was that the road movement, on a highly organized level, was just beginning in Montana when it was ending in the rest of the country.

On March 3, 1910, Governor Edwin Norris called for a Good Roads meeting in Billings from June 16 to 18. He called an executive committee meeting to plan the convention on March 16.²⁷ On March 5, the Great Falls Tribune editorialized on the coming meeting: "There isn't the slightest doubt in the world that Montana needs better roads" and the good roads convention should help the states get these better roads. The automobile was becoming more popular in Montana and this led to the consideration of more "hard" road building. The editorial mentioned the things that had been used in other states to help with the roads, such as state aid and convict labor and added that these would have to be considered.²⁸

In the middle of March, 1910, H. M. Frayton, the secretary of the Billings Chamber of Commerce, wrote to James Wilson, Secretary of

²⁶Meagher Republican (White Sulphur Springs), Sept. 30, 1912.

²⁷Great Falls Tribune, March 4, 1910.

²⁸Ibid., March 5, 1910.

arrived in Billings on April 20, 1910 and was ready to begin work there very shortly.³⁵ After inspection he decided that graveling was the best way to make good roads on Yellowstone County's adobe.³⁶ Late in April, the Governor appointed the county representatives that were to attend the Good Roads meeting in Billings.³⁷ One of the features of the convention was to be an automobile parade. The promoters felt that they could arrange to have 250 vehicles in the parade, 100 of them from the Billings area.³⁸

Voshell was plagued by other requests on his time. In May, his office delivered an application from Missoula County, pushed by Representative Joseph Dixon, for aid in building an object lesson road. The national office hoped he could take time off from his work at Billings to go to Missoula and see what could be done.³⁹ Voshell advised the government that he could not go to Missoula until he had finished the Billings project because he was already doing a three-man job in Billings: engineering, supervising construction, and writing a speech.⁴⁰

Yellowstone County finally decided that they could spend \$5,000 on the project. By late May the road bed just outside Billings was selected for its accessibility and heavy use. The cost was apparently

³⁵Voshell to Pierce, April 20, 1910, RG 30.

³⁶Great Falls Tribune, April 24, 1910.

³⁷Ibid., April 23, 1910.

³⁸Ibid., May 1, 1910.

³⁹Director to Voshell, May 2, 1910, RG 30.

⁴⁰Voshell to Pierce, May 7, 1910, RG 30.

going to be closer to \$4,000 than to \$5,000 and the construction materials at hand were very good. Voshell's only complaint was that the sand content of the gravel was a bit more than it should have been. Also, construction was slowed because the earth to be removed was packed very hard.⁴¹

The railroads of the state were apparently not opposed to the meeting as the Great Northern, Northern Pacific, and Burlington declared that they would sell tickets to people who wanted to go to the convention at a discount--round trip ticket for one-half of a one-way fare.⁴² The automobilists of the state planned to take advantage of the convention. They decided to hold their annual convention in Billings at the same time.⁴³ The convention organizers planned an automobile race for those of a sporting inclination.⁴⁴

On June 16, the convention opened. Every community in Montana was represented; there were over 500 delegates in attendance. The sessions were addressed by influential people from most parts of the Western and Midwestern United States. During the recesses the delegates were given auto rides throughout the area.⁴⁵ The highlights of the second day of the meeting were the address of Governor Edwin Norris of Montana and a trip to the "Model Road." Eminent speakers enlightened

⁴¹Great Falls Tribune, May 28, 1930.

⁴²Ibid., June 2, 1910.

⁴³Ibid., June 3, 1910.

⁴⁴Ibid., May 23, 1910.

⁴⁵Ibid., June 17, 1910; Billings Gazette, June 16, 1910.

and entertained the delegates through the second day. One of the most famous of the speakers was D. Ward King, the inventor and promoter of the split log drag.⁴⁶ The convention ended as planned on the 18th. Missoula was chosen as the site for the next year's convention.⁴⁷

Several resolutions came out of this convention: the State of Montana was asked to create a highway commission and offer engineering courses at the state universities in road building; the state was asked to give the counties the power to bond themselves for road improvement; convict labor was approved; all political parties were asked to include planks for good roads in their next platforms. The automobile race was won by an eighteen horsepower Buick.⁴⁸

With this meeting the improved road fever began in earnest in Montana. Concern for better highways was evident. Later in 1910 there was to be a highway meeting in Ogden, Utah. Great Falls, alone, proposed to send ten delegates.⁴⁹ Local meetings for better roads began to occur.⁵⁰

Early in 1911, planning began for the second annual good roads convention to meet in Missoula. The principal concern of this convention was to be the proposed state highway commission.⁵¹ When the delegates were appointed the Tribune stated:

⁴⁶The split log drag was an inexpensive wooden device used to smooth out the ruts in earth roads.

⁴⁷Billings Gazette, June 19, 1910.

⁴⁸Great Falls Tribune, June 19, 1910.

⁴⁹Ibid., Sept. 2, 1910.

⁵⁰Ibid., October 7, 1910.

⁵¹Ibid., May 21, 1911.

In these days when automobiles are so abundant and when so much money has been invested in those vehicles, it is especially necessary that, if they are to be practicable, that [sic] roads from years [sic] to year shall be made easier to travel.⁵²

On June 27, a much smaller group than the previous year met at Missoula. Instead of 500 delegates, there were a few more than 200. But the good road movement had begun. One of the speakers claimed that more good roads had been built in Montana in the past twelve months than in the previous five years.⁵³ Plans were made for regular conventions and in a much less spectacular way these conventions continued for several years. This convention called for the creation of a Montana Highway Commission, the development of road building courses at the state institutions of higher learning, and a cross state road plus several north-south routes, including one to connect the parks.⁵⁴ The roads had to wait but the creation of a highway commission was in the near future.

The beginnings of centralization reached Montana in 1913 with the creation of the Montana Highway Commission. This Commission was created in 1913 to guide the state in the building of roads. In 1913, the state had no money available for the building of roads as the legislature had not appropriated any. However, the Highway Commission managed to use \$2,484 of its operating money for road building.⁵⁵ From

⁵²Great Falls Tribune, May 26, 1911.

⁵³Ibid., June 28, 1911.

⁵⁴Ibid., June 29, 1911.

⁵⁵Good Roads Yearbook, 289.

the various counties in the state about two million dollars were available for road building. An additional sixty to eighty thousand dollars were to be provided by the Forest Service for roads on forest lands.

The Montana Highway Commission was created by the 1913 legislature. The appointed member and secretary was George R. Metlen. The first two ex-officio members were A. W. Mahon, state engineer, and R. D. Kneale, Professor of Civil Engineering at Bozeman. Kneale resigned August 1, 1914.⁵⁶ One of the first things that this group did was to try and discover how comparable commissions functioned in neighboring states.

- Montana's counties were to submit to the new Highway Commission maps of roads within the counties. All did so by the scheduled time except Dawson, Missoula, and Ravalli. The commission was short of money because the Attorney General advised the commission that the licensing provisions which were to finance it was unconstitutional. The commission then had to operate on motor vehicle registration fees. The group spent \$2,466 to purchase eight teams of horses for use by the road building convicts. One of the very valuable functions of the commission was to check and evaluate money spent by the various counties. They discovered that the counties were paying from $4\frac{1}{2}$ to 10¢ per pound for culvert steel. This knowledge was made available to all of the counties so that they could take advantage of the cheaper purchase prices. The commission also endeavored to set up model bookkeeping methods to aid the counties in the expenditure of their monies.⁵⁷ The commission

⁵⁶ Montana Highway Commission: 1913-14, 3.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 3.

investigated the taxing practices of the counties and ascertained that the lowest mill levies for the road and bridge funds were three mills in Jefferson and Silver Bow and the high was Choteau with eight mills. Several counties had levies of seven mills.⁵⁸

The commission worked in harmony with the prison board, building forty-three miles of road with convict help. The bulk of this mileage was in Flathead County. Between October, 1913, and August of the following year there were two crews of seventy-five convicts continuously at work in Flathead County. The commission considered the work with convicts "experimental." The men were furnished to the counties free except that the counties had to pay for their maintenance, less the estimated 50¢ per day it cost to keep prisoners at Deer Lodge.⁵⁹

Early in 1914, the Montana Highway Commission published its first pamphlet; in April the second one came out. They both had to do with the upkeep of the common road.⁶⁰ The commission wanted a number of items from the next legislature: a new road law that was not so vague; a moderate vehicle licensing fee to yield about \$150,000; permission to buy teams and equipment; \$30,000 to purchase equipment for the convicts to use; and a law requiring railroads to give special rates for the transportation of prisoners.⁶¹

⁵⁸Montana Highway Commission: 1913-14; 10.

⁵⁹Ibid., 11.

⁶⁰Ibid., 12.

⁶¹Ibid., 12, 13.

The most important considerations surrounding the question of good roads were the ones concerning money. These revolved around many issues, such as who was going to get available money, how could roads be built with so little money, and who was going to furnish the money? The counties of Montana split over the first question. People who lived in districts far from the county seats often demanded better roads. They felt that most of the money and consideration was going to areas closer to the county seat. The road issue was thus one issue that led to county division.

Montana began with a few very large counties, especially in the eastern part of the state. These split again and again until fifty-six counties were formed. The state had twenty-five more counties by 1916 than it did in 1889.⁶² There were many reasons for the divisions. Probably the most compelling was the difficulty of administering such a large land mass with a small local organization, as those areas distant from the original population center and/or the county seat were often neglected. Also, a vast transient population demanded services for the brief time they were in the counties. Particularly ignored was the adequate building of roads. Although there were petty reasons and sometimes negative reasons from splitting the counties many of the inhabitants had legitimate complaints.

Meagher County, originally one such monolith, eventually lost sections from almost all of its borders. The Judith Gap Journal, in 1911, complained that Meagher County could not raise enough money

⁶² Ellis Waldron, Montana Politics Since 1864: An Atlas of Elections (Missoula, 1958), 56, 160.

under present circumstances. The newspaper also stated that it cost more to build roads in the western end of the county than it did around Judith Gap. The basic problem was that the influence concentrated around the county seat and there the bulk of the money remained. The only solution that the Journal saw was to form a new county.⁶³ When the county divisionists met in November of 1911, one of the problems presented was that of roads. This problem was far from the only concern of the people present, but it was one of the most important.⁶⁴ It was still present a year later. The editor of the Judith Gap Journal felt that the farmers were not convinced that they could get fair treatment in Meagher County and were upset enough to throw in with the "grafters of Harlowton."⁶⁵ This unrest was caused because the county commissioners were not doing enough work on the roads in the eastern end of the county.⁶⁶ The Journal continued its diatribe later that year. The paper emphasized the differences between the two sides of the county. The east side was an agricultural area while the west end was concerned principally with livestock and mining. The paper complained that the eastern side of the county was only given \$100 for each road district while, according to the Journal, \$3,000 was spent in the west end of the county on a worthless road to a sheep camp. The

⁶³Judith Gap Journal, Nov. 24, 1911.

⁶⁴Fergus County Democrat (Lewistown), Nov. 28, 1911.

⁶⁵This perjorative statement concerns conflict between the two largest towns in the eastern end of the county for the proposed new county seat.

⁶⁶Judith Gap Journal, July 12, 1912.

editorial entitled "Nothing is common with Us," reminded that it takes six years to elect county commissioners, and then closed by asking if the populace could wait that long for good roads.⁶⁷

The amount of money spent on the roads in the various parts of Meagher County became a cause celebre. The Meagher County Republican of White Sulphur Springs published an editorial showing that the Judith Gap District received as much or more road money than the White Sulphur Springs District. The Journal then went into great detail explaining how the money was spent, why it was necessary and how the comparison was unfair.⁶⁸ Late in 1912 the Journal asked the farmers of the area how long they were going to allow the White Sulphur Springs group to wear out the farmers' horses and their patience. The editor asked the farmers if they wouldn't rather have their money spent on roads in the eastern part of the county.⁶⁹ The roads themselves were not the only problem; the distance from the county seat was another difficulty. In this time of slow travel it was a day's journey from the north-east section of the county to White Sulphur Springs. This meant that it took a minimum of three days from home to take care of a few hours business in the county seat.⁷⁰

The division of counties came about for a great many reasons. Some reasons, such as neglect of roads were legitimate and worthwhile

⁶⁷ Judith Gap Journal, Sept. 16, 1912.

⁶⁸ Ibid., Sept. 27, 1912.

⁶⁹ Ibid., Nov. 15, 1912.

⁷⁰ Ibid., Nov. 22, 1912.

while others were petty and because of this and the population decrease the splitting of counties often brought more problems than it solved.

The next consideration was how to build roads with so little money available. One possible solution was to use convict labor. Convict laborers were used extensively for a few years in Montana but were finally abandoned. Convicts as a form of semi-slave labor had been used on public works since ancient times. In the United States this practice was more common in the South and the West which had never been so well supplied with prisons, and work camps were one answer for the detention of prisoners. Also, the weather conditions in those areas were more conducive to extended periods of outside work.⁷¹

There were two different points of view concerning convict labor. One was that "instead of wasting your resources in watching the lawless element in our cities, or in keeping it in idleness in your jails, offer it on public works, on national highways, the alternative of labor or the lash."⁷² The other point of view was more humane. It declared that "of all the advantages that are urged in favor of road work as an occupation, that which carries the greatest force is that such work undoubtedly is more healthful than any form of employment which may be provided in a prison shop."⁷³ The Federal Government made an exhaustive study of the convict road building problem during 1914 and 1915. It examined all of the ways convicts were worked

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J. E. Pennybacker, Convict Labor for Road Work, Bulletin No. 414, U.S. Department of Agriculture, (1916), 6-10. Hereafter cited as Agriculture Bulletin #414.

⁷²ORI #21 Bulletin, 86.

⁷³Agriculture, Bulletin #414, 11.

and the produce sold openly or used by state institutions. The researchers examined the efficiency of convicts under various conditions and found that sometimes it was cheaper to use free labor. They established that convict labor was most useful where the men were engaged on very heavy projects rather than on lighter work such as repairs. Convicts could also be used to advantage on jobs such as quarrying where large numbers of men could be kept under supervision with little opportunity for escape.⁷⁴ Colorado used many convicts on state roads and was very pleased with them. Officials of that state felt that it cost them about 32¢ per day to maintain the convict and used them only for very heavy work such as blasting cuts through mountain passes.⁷⁵

By 1910 in Montana convicts were being used in various projects throughout the state. Forty convicts, at work near Deer Lodge, were brought to Helena to build a macadam boulevard from downtown Helena to the State Fairgrounds. The county furnished all of the equipment.⁷⁶ In 1910, the State Board of Prison Commissioners wrote an open letter to the various labor groups within the state, advising them of the work being done within the state by convicts. There were at that time fifty men building a highway north of Deer Lodge towards Helena and Garrison. There had been forty men building a ditch near Warm Springs, but they had been transferred to the fairgrounds job near Helena. It was impossible not to have some of the men working because there was

⁷⁴ Agriculture, Bulletin #414.

⁷⁵ "Convict Labor on Colorado Roads," Better Roads and Streets, May, 1913, 31.

⁷⁶ Great Falls Tribune, July 17, 1910.

room in the prison for 474 inmates and the system was then responsible for the care of 639. Defenders of convict labor contended that work was good for the prisoners because idleness was very hard on them. The prisoners were not used on anything but roads, therefore they were not competing with free labor. The convict-laborers were not punished. If they did not work or if they misbehaved, they were returned to prison, as there were many others who wanted to be outside. The work was done only if the material was furnished and if the county would otherwise be unable to have the work done.⁷⁷ The stipulation was designed to answer the objections of labor which had at first been opposed to this form of competition, but had been won over and had no further objections.⁷⁸ There seems to have been some opposition to the use of convict labor in Montana although it did not make the news. A Tribune editor implied as much when he argued that Montana would not, without using convict labor, be able to build good roads and added that "the wonder is that any sane citizen of the state, looking at the question from any viewpoint, would oppose the plan."⁷⁹

The cost of using convicts in Montana was higher than in most of the other states. Alabama, which used about 300 convicts on its roads, spent only 40-65¢ a day on them. Colorado spent 80¢ per day.⁸⁰

⁷⁷Great Falls Tribune, July 31, 1910.

⁷⁸Ibid., June 1, 1911.

⁷⁹Ibid., June 26, 1910.

⁸⁰See page 78 above. The difference in cost is between pure maintenance and total expense including all materials needed to keep them working.

while Montana's cost was around \$1.00 per day.⁸¹ After the 1913 legislature, the provisions for working convicts in Montana were that anyone in the county jails could be used for road work by the county commissioners and that the commissioners could requisition convicts to do the work on the state roads.⁸² Idaho was much the same except that the prisoners that worked on that state's roads were given \$5.00 per month allowance.⁸³ In North Dakota, those prisoners who worked well were given an allowance of 10-25¢ per day, were restricted to ten hours per day work, and were allowed extra "good time."⁸⁴ In South Dakota, only prisoners between the ages of eighteen and fifty could be worked on the roads. They were to be given a reasonable compensation for each day's work and allowed to work off fines at the rate of \$2.00 per day.⁸⁵ In Wyoming the law was not specific but convicts were to be allowed to work on road construction and repair under the auspices of the State Commission on Prison Labor.⁸⁶

By 1916, the Montana Highway Commission had decided that the usefulness of prison labor was limited. In 1915 and 1916, the prisoners built fifty miles of road in Powell County and six additional miles near Garrison. The commissioners decided that 125 miles was the maximum

⁸¹Good Roads Yearbook, 456.

⁸²Agriculture, Bulletin #4114, 205.

⁸³Ibid., 199.

⁸⁴Ibid., 208.

⁸⁵Ibid., 212.

⁸⁶Ibid., 218.

practical limit from Deer Lodge to use prisoners. They were convinced, of what in 1914 was just a suspicion, that the convicts would profitably be used only for fairly heavy work. At the end of 1916, convicts were at work building a difficult stretch of road between Divide and Wisdom in Beaverhead County.⁸⁷

The final problem involved determining how and from what groups the money was to be raised. In the beginning the farmer paid generally for all the roads except for what money came from the poll tax. With the advent of the automobile came automobile licensing and fuel taxes that spread the burden of paying for the roads somewhat more evenly. With the advent of state aid the burden was largely lifted from the farmers and spread more equitably over the balance of society.

Originally road money came from the people who lived alongside the roads--principally the farmer. When it came to building good but expensive roads, the farmer balked. He refused to pay the large amounts of money necessary to build good roads particularly when he doubted the value of them. The farmers of Montana, as in most other states, paid most of the road tax. They paid a certain millage of their property taxes for road building and a poll tax was collected that could be either paid in cash or worked out. Generally "working out" did not produce very good results. Very soon proposals originated to raise road building money from the users of roads. The principal ways of collecting from users was by licensing of vehicles and, with the advent of gasoline powered equipment, by taxing fuel.

⁸⁷George W. Metlen, Report of the Montana Highway Commission 1915-16, Montana, Highway Commission, (Helena, n.d.), 34.

Montana was aware of the taxing problem early in her history. When the "Geiger" law exempted incorporated towns from road districts, it was apparent that the townspeople would not be taxed to pay for the roads.⁸⁸ There was a continuing dispute about the poll tax. Although most writers felt that it was essentially waste, others felt that with proper supervision this type of tax would be satisfactory.⁸⁹ The legislature changed the poll tax age group from time to time. The workings of the poll tax laws were generally quite liberal. For instance, if the person in question had another residence, he was not to be taxed.⁹⁰ The Great Falls Tribune, in 1907, began to agitate for a new road law, declaring that a tremendous amount of money was being wasted. The paper wondered if the people of the state realized "that one-sixth of the taxes collected in the state go[es] into roads and bridges--poor roads and poor bridges." The paper added that the farmers of the state were presently agitating for better roads and therefore, the legislature should pass a better road law.⁹¹

The Meagher Republican, in 1912, was still concerned about who should pay for the roads. The editor reprinted an article asking how it could be determined who benefitted from the roads, and in what proportions. At this time, it was concerned about proposals for state aid. The author of the article was curious about how the state would raise

⁸⁸ Great Falls Tribune, Aug. 15, 1901.

⁸⁹ Enterprise (Malta), April 3, 1901.

⁹⁰ Great Falls Tribune, May 11, 1907.

⁹¹ Ibid., Jan. 15, 1907.

money to build roads. Perhaps, the editor ventured, vehicle licensing would be an adequate way.⁹²

The paper continued its questions later in the year. The editorial, "About Good Roads," reflected the farmer's nonacceptance of the automobile at this time and his feeling that the autoist should pay some of the cost of improved roads inasmuch as he complained so much about them. The editorial suggested that perhaps a stiff automobile license would be the answer.⁹³ The funding problem was never completely solved but finally all levels of society were paying for the roads through auto and driver licensing, fuel taxes, county levies, and bonding.

Montana's counties by 1914, had resorted to bonding to help improve their roads. On January 1, 1915, there was a bonded indebtedness of \$2,224,050.72 for roads in nineteen Montana counties. This practice was of recent origin. There was only \$33,000 worth of road bonds retired in 1914, and this in one county, Fergus.⁹⁴

The good road movement in Montana at the beginning of the twentieth century was miniscule. From then until 1961 the involvement increased and better roads were built in the state. Montana followed the same pattern towards centralization as other states. The movement

⁹²Meagher Republican (White Sulphur Springs), Sept. 6, 1912. Reprint from the Belgrade Journal or the Great Falls Tribune.

⁹³Ibid., Dec. 6, 1912. Reprint from the Bozeman Chronicle.

⁹⁴U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bulletin No. 389, Public Road Mileage and Revenues in the Central, Mountain and Pacific States, 1914. (1917), lxxxi. For a breakdown of the money spent in each county and its source see Ibid., 1/507.

in Montana was much later than the movements in the Eastern States and hence the automobile was more important than in some of the other states. Otherwise the movement was much the same.

CHAPTER VII

MONTANA AND THE AUTOMOBILE

The farmer, in Montana as elsewhere, did not welcome the automobile when it first appeared. He considered it a non-practical plaything for the idle rich. After the farmers began to use the automobile they changed their minds. One such man reported, "I'm a farmer, and have looked upon automobiles as a curse and an abomination, but I never was in one before--Don't forget that."¹ Much the same sentiment was expressed by the man who said, "N-no. Oh, no, I haven't gone back on horses at all. . . . I'm going to get another horse before long, and when I do get it, it will be an automobile."²

Another problem in the west was the cost and the general availability of the units. The Great Falls Tribune in 1903 indicated that the West was generally unaware of the impact the automobile was making in the heavily settled areas and the heavily populated cities of the country. The paper felt that the only thing holding the automobile back in the west was the cost. According to the editor, a good automobile cost around \$750, or about three times the cost of a horse and carriage. Therefore those who did not really need the extra speed

¹ Great Falls Tribune, March 10, 1903 from the New York American.

² Ibid.

could not be expected to buy the automobile. The editor felt that in the future when the price came down perhaps everyone would possess an automobile. That time had not yet come.³

Montana's Senator William A. Clark in 1901 described the automobile that he had ordered. It was a very fast automobile that reportedly would travel between fifty and one hundred miles an hour. He commented about fast traveling in Europe and added, "of course the roads of the United States will permit of no such flying as that, but the roads will be built."⁴

People in many areas in Montana were not familiar with the "horseless carriage" in the first few years of this century. In April of 1903 a man in Havre planned to open a livery barn and stock it with one or two automobiles. These were "the first horseless carriages seen in [that] part of Northern Montana."⁵ The inhabitants of other areas in Montana were no more enlightened. In September, 1903, a man touring from Elmira, Michigan to Spokane passed through Miles City. His was the second automobile to be seen there. Crossing Montana had been difficult. His biggest problems were climbing steep hills and getting stuck in sand draws. In order to cross the Powder River he had to use a railroad bridge.⁶

³Great Falls Tribune, April 8, 1903.

⁴Ibid., July 8, 1901.

⁵Ibid., April 27, 1903.

⁶Ibid., Sept. 20, 1903.

In the first decade of this century Montana automobilists enjoyed adventurous journeys as did their national counterparts. Road conditions were crude. On a trip of forty miles out of Great Falls in 1904, one group had to overcome several obstacles: a hill of forty per cent grade and wet and dry irrigation ditches.⁷ The use of automobiles, by anyone, for almost any purpose was an item worthy of note in the Great Falls Tribune.⁸ The bad roads troubled most of these drivers who reported on road conditions. These people all advocated the improvement of roads.

Automobilists were also interested in getting permission to use the national parks. As late as 1909 automobile bodies and engines had to be separated and pulled through the parks.⁹ Some very famous people advocated the use of automobiles within the parks. Buffalo Bill Cody, speaking in Billings, declared that automobiles should be allowed to use Yellowstone Park. He declared that when the restrictions were passed they were aimed not at the automobile, which was unknown, but the steam railways. He added that the roads in the park were excellent and would be very good for automobile traffic.¹⁰

One of the first ways the automobile contributed to the road movement was to get people out on the roads so they could see how bad they were. Many organizations and individuals made long treks in the

⁷Great Falls Tribune, Aug. 9, 1904.

⁸Ibid., Aug. 9, 1904; Jan. 12, 1905; May 7, 1906; July 23, 1907; May 5, 1908; Aug. 13, 1909; Aug. 18, 1909; Aug. 9, 1910; Sept. 1, 1910.

⁹Ibid., Feb. 8, 1909.

¹⁰Judith Gap Journal, April 12, 1912.

early years of automobiling. Several of these had Montana as an objective or part of the route. The hazards and difficulty of traveling in these early days were considerable. For example, late in 1901 a man made a trip from Chicago to Great Falls by automobile. He made the trip in one week, which was very remarkable time. The traveler had no knowledge of the roads so he followed the railroad tracks. According to him his auto could travel faster than a train and he claimed to have averaged better than a mile a minute on dirt roads.¹¹ This journey took nine sets of tires. The automobile was a sixty horsepower machine that used a naphtha fuel. The railroad time schedule for the trip was 54 hours. This journey took 168 hours including "all stops for repairs, meals, sleep, rest, etc." He did not travel at night.¹² Other trips such as this were reported in the Great Falls Tribune from time to time.¹³

By 1910 the automobile had existed long enough so that they were beginning to wear out. An editorial in the Great Falls Tribune explained why. The editor advised the people to take care of their automobiles and keep them away from children and then they would last for more than a few years.¹⁴ The conditions the automobiles operated under were harsh and it was not surprising that they should experience wear. There were not garages in the early years and the owners, for

¹¹For other than short distances this was possible but certainly improbable.

¹²Great Falls Tribune, Nov. 3, 1901.

¹³Ibid., July 25, 1909; July 26, 1909; Aug. 12, 1909.

¹⁴Ibid., Sept. 26, 1910.

all practical purposes, had to handle all repairs and service work. The condition of the roads shortened the life of the vehicles. The local "sports" also thought that automobiles were just expensive toys. One group had a wonderful time chasing a coyote over the prairie, finally running over the exhausted animal after a fifteen mile chase.¹⁵ Another party near Billings successfully hunted deer from one man's large touring car.¹⁶

The press often reported, in very humorous vein, events that took place concerning automobiles. These reports concerned breakdowns and were just reflections of humour about people suffering from using their automobiles. These stories concerned autos with broken parts, replacing water in the lighting system with beer, and a hearse pulling a broken down automobile back to town.¹⁷

A few people were quick to see the possibilities for the automobile in the business world. W. E. French, Choteau County Commissioner, was planning on opening a stage line between Harlem and Landusky early in 1902. He wrote to two automobile manufacturing companies to see if they could furnish him with an automobile that would hold up in "Montana roads, mud, and climate." If he could not find suitable automobiles he planned to use four horse concord coaches.¹⁸ The press

¹⁵Great Falls Tribune, April 10, 1909.

¹⁶Ibid., Nov. 2, 1906.

¹⁷Ibid., Jan. 20, 1908; July 5, 1910; July 29, 1910.

¹⁸Ibid., Jan. 10, 1902.

wrote no more about this venture but subsequent advertisements for a horse drawn stage line in this area demonstrated that the automobile did not work as hoped.¹⁹

In 1904, W. C. Doherty, A Great Falls businessman, planned an automobile stage line between Great Falls and Lewistown. B. D. Whitten, Cascade County surveyor, took a trip over the route. He announced that there were no grades too steep to get up, and that the roads only needed to be repaired in a few places.²⁰ Doherty planned to open the line as soon as he received an automobile. He felt that the journey should be made in less than eight hours.²¹ He had ordered Locomobiles to use on the route to carry passengers while horse drawn stages would cover the route to carry baggage. The schedule was planned to connect with trains and although the service would be better the charge was to be the same as it had been for the stagecoach. Doherty planned to buy the two Locomobiles if they served well and could run nine months out of the year. The Great Falls Tribune gave Mr. Doherty encouragement as being the first man to provide good stage service between Great Falls and Lewistown. The editor declared that Doherty's service was much better than that provided by the "jawbone" railroad.²²

¹⁹There is no evidence on many of these ventures whether or not the businessman carried through his intent or not. For the purposes of this paper, the intent is sufficient.

²⁰Great Falls Tribune, April 2, 1904.

²¹Today this is about a 110 mile trip.

²²Great Falls Tribune, April 8, 1904. "Jawbone" was a pejorative for the Montana Railroad.

Other people desired auto lines at various times. One group wanted an automobile line to replace the stage line from Choteau to Collins. These routes were at this time merely adjuncts to the railway system. No one advocated the use of them for long distance journeys.²³ This demand for the Choteau-Collins line was met quite rapidly. One month after the first news note in the Tribune the automobile for the line arrived. It was a six passenger machine and the promoters planned to make two round trips per day, six days a week.²⁴

Montana businessmen also planned to use the automobile for delivery of goods. The Krogstad Company of Kalispell felt that the \$800 they spent each month for transportation was excessive and that they should be able to reduce these costs. The company planned to put automobiles to use delivering in Montana early in the spring of 1907.²⁵

Manufacturers very quickly made functional mechanically powered fire engines. Extensive studies in the East had demonstrated its superiority in speed and versatility over horse drawn vehicles. The successful use of fire engines and the publicity that came to them led to a quicker acceptance of the automobile by those that at first resisted it. Early in 1910 Great Falls purchased the first such unit in the state. The city signed the contract for the engine in March.²⁶ This

²³Great Falls Tribune, Jan. 23, 1905.

²⁴Ibid., Feb. 17, 1905.

²⁵Ibid., Nov. 18, 1906.

²⁶Ibid., March 23, 1910.

custom made 79.3 horsepower units cost \$6,365. The city had been assured that fire insurance rates would be lowered when it went into service.²⁷

Billings also purchased a fire engine. They ordered an even more expensive one than Great Falls had. This 120 horsepower machine cost \$8500.²⁸ The engine arrived in Great Falls on December 16, and its first trial was December 18. The Fire Department was well pleased with it. The vehicle could reach all portions of the city quickly, and was not slowed by the hills in the city.²⁹ In January the unit was put to a severe test. It traveled over three miles in six minutes in twenty-degree-below-zero weather. The only casualty was the driver who was frostbitten.³⁰ The fire engine was for some time the object of pilgrimages. The mayor and others from Sheridan, Wyoming, viewed it and thought that they might order a similar unit.³¹ A group of visitors from Bozeman came to Great Falls to observe the engine. They were well pleased with the ensuing demonstration and planned a similar purchase.³² Missoula purchased a fire engine after viewing the one in Great Falls and visitors from Lethbridge, Alberta, came to Great Falls to observe the machine in action.³³

²⁷ Great Falls Tribune, April 10, 1910.

²⁸ Ibid., April 29, 1910.

²⁹ Ibid., Dec. 18, 1910.

³⁰ Ibid., Jan. 14, 1911.

³¹ Ibid., Feb. 15, 1911.

³² Ibid., Feb. 16, 1911; Feb. 18, 1911.

³³ Ibid., Feb. 18, 1911.

The long distance multi-auto trip of various groups did not altogether bypass Montana. In 1911, the Minnesota State Automobile Association planned its third annual trip. They were going to travel from St. Paul, Minnesota to Helena, Montana. The "pathfinder" for the trip was going to leave on May 5. "The laying out of a route for a trip of such extent would be a difficult task, and would take nearly two weeks and the state association was anxious to have the work done as soon as possible." The Great Northern Railway, courtesy of Louis W. Hill, president, was going to furnish a train to travel with the group to provide them with meals and accommodations.³⁴ The people of Montana were very excited about this trip and it was in the news until its completion in July. The trek was as much a stimulus to road building as hoped for by Hill: "'Hope Montana counties will interest themselves in road improvements and bridge repairs, which is all that will be asked of them. This will be a great advertisement for Montana.'"³⁵ Montanans did take a great deal of interest in the trip. Merchants in Great Falls volunteered garage space for the automobiles while they were in that city.³⁶ The route that was laid out demonstrated that the distances between towns at that time were much longer than today. For example, from Great Falls to Helena, which today is 93 miles, was in 1911, 150 miles.³⁷ Although on April 10, the Tribune had declared

³⁴Great Falls Tribune, March 25, 1911.

³⁵Ibid., March 29, 1911. Transcript of a telegram from Louis W. Hill to Thomas A. Barlow, Helena.

³⁶Ibid., April 10, 1911.

³⁷Ibid., April 18, 1911.

that the route was over 1300 miles of good road, when the pathfinding car reached Great Falls on May 22 the report was somewhat different. The car left St. Paul on May 10. They had encountered bad roads and weather from the beginning. They had contended with heavy gumbo and alkali. Until May 21, they had not traveled over ten miles of good road. The "pathfinders" were optimistic and thought that the route could be improved with very little difficulty.³⁸ After the pathfinding group reached Helena, they visited Yellowstone Park for several days. Then they and their car returned by train.³⁹

Citizens of the state contributed money to help get the road in order for the touring group. On occasion they even asked the touring group which one of several different routes they would prefer.⁴⁰ The Cascade County Commissioners also got into the fund-raising act. They agreed to match any amount up to \$1,000 raised by private funds for the improvement of the route. The Tribune even printed the list of those people who had subscribed with the amounts given.⁴¹ To encourage the improvement of roads on the route through Montana, Louis W. Hill announced that a \$1,000 trophy would be given to the county that had the best roads for the touring group.⁴² By early July considerable work had been done on the roads in the Great Falls area, and

³⁸ Great Falls Tribune, May 22, 1911.

³⁹ Ibid., May 23, 1911; May 24, 1911.

⁴⁰ Ibid., June 12, 1911.

⁴¹ Ibid., June 22, 1911.

⁴² Ibid., June 24, 1911.

the editor of the Tribune said that even if Cascade County did not win the trophy the touring group would have good roads to drive on while in the county.⁴³ Finally on July 20, the group left St. Paul for Helena.⁴⁴

Five days later the tour reached Montana. The journey had been very eventful. They had minor accidents, killed some livestock, refused to allow railroad detectives to ride with them when there was a threat of attack by bandits, and generally had a very exciting time.⁴⁵ When they reached Poplar, Montana, on July 25, a band and every automobile from Glasgow, Montana met them.⁴⁶ When they reached Glasgow they were pleasantly surprised to find a mock roadside tavern set up to cater to their thirsts. They announced that the roads on either side of Hinsdale were the best that they had encountered. Then it rained. This cloudburst completely altered their plans. The proposed route was impassable and the trailblazers had a very difficult time finding a way around.⁴⁷

Large numbers of autoists from Great Falls planned to meet the group at the county line and drive into Great Falls with them. The town planned a band concert to entertain them when they reached the city.⁴⁸ The group arrived in Great Falls, led by Hill, in a very

⁴³Great Falls Tribune, July 9, 1911.

⁴⁴Ibid., July 20, 1911.

⁴⁵Ibid., July 21, 1911; July 22, 1911; July 23, 1911; July 25, 1911.

⁴⁶Ibid., July 26, 1911.

⁴⁷Ibid., July 27, 1911.

⁴⁸Ibid.

disheveled condition because of the difficulty of the detour. Helena now planned a big welcome for them at the end of their journey.⁴⁹ The group concluded the trip in Helena. The only difficulty they had between Great Falls and Helena was one car that completely overturned on Sullivan Hill; no one was seriously injured.⁵⁰

The winner of the tour was an 18-year-old, driving a Marmon. Lewis and Clark County received the good road award and the party split up. Part of the group went to Yellowstone Park and part of them to Glacier Park. John Ringling, of circus fame, went to White Sulphur Springs.⁵¹

Thus ended a great automobile tour into Montana. From many aspects it was purely frivolous. But the effect these touring groups had on good roads was incalculable. The group traveled long distances publicizing those areas with good roads and those with bad. Such tours greatly stimulated the building of good roads.

The number of automobiles in Montana was minimal up to 1910. When the automobilists increased in numbers, they organized in order to get better roads. In 1907 at least eighteen men in Great Falls wished to form an automobile club. A great many of them were physicians.⁵² Nothing developed from this meeting and a year and one-half later a group of fifty men met to discuss organization in Cascade County.⁵³

⁴⁹Great Falls Tribune, July 28, 1911.

⁵⁰Ibid., July 29, 1911.

⁵¹Ibid., July 30, 1911.

⁵²Ibid., July 19, 1907.

⁵³Ibid., Dec. 17, 1908.

This group organized permanently and planned to have at least forty members by the first of the year.⁵⁴ They completed their organization on January 5, 1909 with the election of officers. The group also decided to appoint a committee on good roads.⁵⁵ In addition to improving roads the group encouraged drivers to be more careful.⁵⁶

Late in 1908 the automobile drivers formed a state organization to promote good roads in Helena. The headquarters of the group was Butte. They immediately began a campaign to get 400 members in the state. The group stated that their primary concern was good roads and that they were interested in good roads that would be useful to Montana as well as to tourists.⁵⁷

With the increase in automobiles the Great Falls Tribune became concerned, in 1905, that automobile owners were not being properly taxed. In a story datelined Helena, entitled "Dog and Automobile discovered in Teton Co." the paper facetiously stated that one dog valued at \$100 and an automobile valued at \$700 represented all the dogs and automobiles in Montana.⁵⁸ Seven months later the editor stated that he knew of many automobiles in the state and that most of them were owned by well-to-do men that could well afford to pay their taxes. He added that it was unfortunate that the wealthy man was always trying to avoid

⁵⁴Great Falls Tribune, Dec. 18, 1908.

⁵⁵Ibid., Jan. 6, 1909.

⁵⁶Ibid., May 6, 1909; Aug. 25, 1909; Aug. 28, 1909; March 20, 1910; May 22, 1910.

⁵⁷Ibid., Nov. 24, 1908.

⁵⁸Ibid., Jan. 29, 1905.

paying his taxes and forcing the tax burden onto the poor man.⁵⁹ The Cascade County Assessor was not, of course, pleased with this slander on his character, so he contacted the Tribune and advised them of the situation. The paper printed his explanation that automobiles were all assessed; they were placed in the "catch-all" category of "personal property."⁶⁰ The editor then dropped this issue until 1909. At that time the Tribune carried the list of counties that listed automobiles on the tax roles. Lewis and Clark led the list with \$31,000 worth. Fergus, Deer Lodge, Flathead, and Yellowstone all listed automobiles but none of the other counties did.⁶¹ Once again the Cascade Assessor defended himself. He declared that there were fifty-seven automobiles in Cascade County, fifty-two of them in Great Falls. They did not appear on the tax roles as automobiles because they were assessed as machinery.⁶² Very soon, of course, the state would require licensing and registration and the "crusaders" would not have to be concerned about the rich not paying their fair share of taxes, at least as far as the automobile was concerned.

The automobile, also, brought death and destruction with it when it became a means of transportation. However, those that use this as one more reason to look nostalgically back to accident-free days before the automobile are misled. Runaway horses were often the

⁵⁹Great Falls Tribune, July 31, 1905.

⁶⁰Ibid., Aug. 1, 1905.

⁶¹Ibid., Aug. 10, 1909.

⁶²Ibid., Aug. 11, 1909.

cause of death, and children and workers were fairly often killed by being run over by slow but heavy wagons. Even the bicycle was occasionally the cause of death, and very often the cause of injuries, particularly before the advent of the "safety" bicycle.

In any case the automobile soon became notorious for the destruction it caused. In an editorial in 1903 the Great Falls Tribune declared that manufacturers should realize that accidents are not good publicity. The editor claimed that the automobile was going to endure but it would become important more quickly if the companies were more concerned with utility than with speed. According to the editor, speed, was mostly to blame for accidents. The emphasis of automobile manufacturers on racing was largely at fault.⁶³ The reckless use of the automobile meant slower acceptance by the general public. This in turn slowed road development.

The causes of automobile accidents varied. One of the most common was some form of conflict between automobile and animal. Horses were the principal animals involved. Some of these accidents were not contact but were merely the result of an automobile frightening a horse so badly that the beast ran away or spilled its passengers.⁶⁴ Surprisingly enough in some of the accidents automobiles were innocent parties. They were parked when run into by runaway horses.⁶⁵ Many

⁶³Great Falls Tribune, Sept. 14, 1903.

⁶⁴Ibid., June 10, 1904; July 18, 1904; Oct. 7, 1910.

⁶⁵Ibid., April 26, 1910; Aug. 22, 1909.

of the accidents involved a moving collision between the horses and the automobile.⁶⁶ The accidents were most serious when the occupants were thrown out of their buggies and wagons. Other animals were sometimes involved in accidents with automobiles. In Helena when an automobile struck a dog, the car went out of control and the legs of both occupants were broken.⁶⁷ Near Kalispell a man was badly injured when thrown out of an automobile after it struck a cow.⁶⁸

There were also accidents concerning collisions with pedestrians and trains. In Dillon the sheriff ran over a judge and injured him very badly.⁶⁹ This type of accident was fairly common as the early automobiles were often hard to control and night visibility was severely limited.⁷⁰ Automobiles, trains and street cars were occasionally involved in collisions.⁷¹

Other problems with the early automobile stemmed principally from mechanical failure. These early vehicles were often not well built. Under certain circumstances malfunctions led to injury or death. To illustrate, a party of people escaped serious injury on a hill near Butte when all but two of them jumped from an automobile when the brakes failed.⁷² Another time, the wife a Choteau County Commissioner

⁶⁶Great Falls Tribune, Sept. 10, 1909.

⁶⁷Ibid., May 24, 1910.

⁶⁸Ibid., June 4, 1910.

⁶⁹Ibid., July 6, 1909.

⁷⁰Ibid., Sept. 25, 1910; April 15, 1910; April 20, 1910; April 22, 1910; April 24, 1910; June 9, 1910; Aug. 13, 1910; Oct. 26, 1910.

⁷¹Ibid., Feb. 3, 1910; June 30, 1910.

⁷²Ibid., Aug. 5, 1908.

was killed when the automobile in which she was riding overturned when the steering gear broke.⁷³ Sometimes wheels broke off the automobiles.⁷⁴ On other occasions malfunctions in the fuel system caused the vehicles to catch fire.⁷⁵ Even starting the units could be dangerous. A Havre man broke his arm while trying to crank his car.⁷⁶ Almost any part of the car could fail and cause an accident. A party of people were badly hurt at Judith Gap when a shock absorber broke and the vehicle overturned.⁷⁷

Many of these accidents resulted in the automobiles turning over and throwing the occupants and possibly pinning them beneath the heavy machines. This was more serious during the early years because the vehicles had no tops.

The condition of the roads and/or careless driving often resulted in overturned vehicles even without mechanical failure. One of the most tragic deaths of the period was that of Mrs. James Tanner. "Corporal" James Tanner was the Commander-in-Chief of the GAR. Stopping in Helena while touring the Western states, Tanner and his wife toured the city with Governor and Mrs. Joseph K. Toole. During the trip the chauffeur tried to pass a horse-drawn ice wagon. The wheels of the automobile struck a soft shoulder and the auto overturned. Mrs.

⁷³Great Falls Tribune, Sept. 15, 1909.

⁷⁴Ibid., June 16, 1909.

⁷⁵Ibid., Jan. 16, 1911.

⁷⁶Ibid., June 14, 1911.

⁷⁷Meagher County Democrat (Harlowton), Aug. 20, 1915.

Tanner suffered a broken arm and died of shock. The initial article by the Tribune defended the chauffeur stating that he was a careful driver and driving slowly at the time.⁷⁸ However, he was held accountable at the inquest for these reasons: he used poor judgment, he was careless, he was driving too fast, and he passed with too small a margin.⁷⁹ The overturning of automobiles was not always serious but it was common. These accidents often occurred on hills and on contact with soft shoulders.⁸⁰

Automobile drivers were often very careless about obeying the law. The careless autoists' casual disregard of others irritated many people, particularly farmers. The automobile gave men power, and power was difficult for many people to handle without a feeling of superiority. The editor of the Great Falls Tribune wrote an editorial on the subject, quoting Harpers as declaring that every right minded man wanted to kill an automobilist. The editor stated that the automobile had the same rights on the roads as anyone else--but no more. Drivers of automobiles who disregarded the rights of pedestrians and others were threatened with loss of some of their rights if they were not more careful.⁸¹ In a later editorial the paper commented on a new invention from Great Britain, an automobile horn that could be installed on vehicles to blow above a certain speed. The editor of the Tribune

⁷⁸ Great Falls Tribune, June 30, 1906.

⁷⁹ Ibid., July 3, 1906.

⁸⁰ Ibid., June 13, 1907; March 14, 1908; May 31, 1910; June 1, 1910; Aug. 2, 1910; Nov. 22, 1912.

⁸¹ Ibid., March 19, 1909.

felt that such a device in Great Falls would result in a great deal of noise as so many people exceeded the speed limit.⁸² The editor recommended that money be raised to catch "hit-and-run" drivers.⁸³

The Tribune complained that although the speed limit in Great Falls was eight miles per hour most drivers habitually drove between twenty and thirty miles per hour. In 1908 the Mayor ordered the arrest of all offenders.⁸⁴ The Tribune even used cartoons in its war against speeders. One showed a policeman with wings apprehending a motorist who was speeding over the common "peepul."⁸⁵ A later cartoon showed an autoist going to his automobile in company with "Booze" and "Speed." The plain citizen was forced to hide from this deadly combination.⁸⁶ The editor of the paper requested that the populace help the law enforcement officials by turning in speeders. The paper maintained that the number of autos in the city was small enough so that they could be easily identified.⁸⁷

One auto driver protested the indiscriminate arrest of drivers who exceeded the eight mile per hour speed limit. He maintained, in a letter to the editor of the Tribune, that speeding was relative to the situation. Drivers should not be arrested unless they were endangering someone. Notwithstanding this kind of appeal most people were

⁸²Great Falls Tribune, June 6, 1909.

⁸³Ibid., March 25, 1908.

⁸⁴Ibid., March 24, 1908.

⁸⁵Ibid., March 29, 1908.

⁸⁶Ibid., March 19, 1909.

⁸⁷Ibid., March 29, 1908.

opposed to the high speed automobile drivers and the city of Great Falls continued to arrest them.⁸⁸ The police also arrested people for speeding in the city on horses.⁸⁹

The Tribune wrote an angry editorial in July of 1911. The editor stated that night after night speeders drunkenly and careless raced through the city streets at speeds in excess of thirty miles per hour. They recommended that the eight mile per hour speed limit be changed to something more reasonable and that a motorcycle policeman should be hired by the city to enforce the new limit. The city should issue a license for all those that wished to drive within the city and those with repeated violations would lose their licenses.⁹⁰

The Butte City government began a campaign to eliminate speeders as early as 1907.⁹¹ The speeder and careless driver possibly was as much a threat in the country as he was in town. An irate farmer's letter to the Tribune reflected the feelings of many farmers. He claimed that the auto drivers considered forty miles per hour a correct speed. The man was particularly upset because he had met an auto driver and the meeting caused his horse to panic and upset his wagon. He claimed that it was not "worth your life" to try and get produce to market. The farmer listed a considerable number of similar incidents

⁸⁸Great Falls Tribune, May 2, 1909; May 23, 1909; May 30, 1909; July 18, 1909; April 30, 1910; May 7, 1910; May 8, 1910; May 14, 1910; May 16, 1910; July 9, 1910; Aug. 3, 1910; Aug. 4, 1910; Aug. 5, 1910; Sept. 8, 1910.

⁸⁹Ibid., March 24, 1911.

⁹⁰Ibid., July 13, 1911.

⁹¹Ibid., July 20, 1907.

that had happened to people near the area where he lived. He closed with the threat that if automobile drivers were not more careful the farmers would begin to arm themselves.⁹²

Speeding and carelessness were not the only crimes committed with the use of automobiles. Various types of criminals found that the automobile met their need for a rapid exit from the scene of the crime. Montana's criminals were not yet so bold in the use of automobiles. However, young men found the automobile, on occasion, an irresistible magnet and stole vehicles for a quick "joyride."⁹³ Other automobilists, according to the local ranchers, deliberately tried to kill dogs. The drivers were even accused of keeping score in this grisly sport. This type of behavior also brought the threat of armed retaliation from the rancher.⁹⁴

The automobile was not the only mechanically powered unit in the early years. Other types of units were also in use. In 1907 W. G. Conrad moved into the area north of Great Falls to create the community named after him and used tractors to farm.⁹⁵ At first he brought four tractors and used them primarily to cultivate sugar beets. The units could plow five acres an hour. They were able to do quite a bit more heavy work in a day than horses.⁹⁶ In 1909 a Glasgow farmer used a steam plow to clear and break virgin land.⁹⁷ Later in 1911, a

⁹²Great Falls Tribune, April 25, 1908.

⁹³Ibid., May 28, 1909; Aug. 15, 1910; Aug. 26, 1910.

⁹⁴Ibid., July 17, 1910.

⁹⁵These massive iron units are still displayed in the town of Conrad.

⁹⁶Great Falls Tribune, June 23, 1907.

⁹⁷Ibid., Oct. 8, 1909.

man who was filming a "See America First" movie series used four tractors to plow up new land on Box Elder Creek, north of Great Falls.⁹⁸ From 1900 to 1910 three different tractor companies advertised in the Great Falls Tribune. The earliest, Hart Parr, began advertising in 1908.⁹⁹

The use of motorcycles also began at an early date. Motorcycling probably developed out of "paced" bicycle races. These bicycle races were usually on indoor tracks, and were "paced" by a motor driven unit. Rather quickly the motorcycle became popular in Montana. One of the Great Falls enthusiasts became a racer and traveled as far away as Salt Lake City to test his skill as a racer.¹⁰⁰ As early as 1911 the Great Falls motorcyclists were getting together to try and form a motorcycling club.¹⁰¹

Automobile growth in the United States was phenomenal. At first the number of units doubled practically every year. In the beginning not much of the road revenue came from automobiles, but by 1915 automobiles furnished seven per cent of the national total for the road and bridge funds. In 1916 the United States averaged one car for every forty-four people. Iowa had the most cars per capita with one automobile for every sixteen people and Alabama had the least with one for every two-hundred persons. In 1915 Montana had 14,020

⁹⁸Great Falls Tribune, July 18, 1911.

⁹⁹Ibid., Feb. 19, 1908. (See Appendix II.)

¹⁰⁰Ibid., Aug. 18, 1910.

¹⁰¹Ibid., April 29, 1911.

automobiles, 520 trucks and other commercial vehicles and 850 motorcycles. Owners paid to the state a gross return of \$2.27 per motor car.¹⁰² In 1916 Montana had one automobile for every eighteen people and every six-tenths mile of road.¹⁰³

By the time the Federal Government became involved in road building the automobile was solidly entrenched in Montana as it was in the rest of the country. Its social and economic effects became more pronounced later but many of them had appeared at this time.¹⁰⁴ People had begun to tour the country. Many were native tourists who had not been able to travel before. A new industry was firmly established. Some began to notice the new psychology of "the power of the wheel." The automobile was one of the most important factors leading to the development of better roads and the only reason we have the solid road beds that we drive on today.¹⁰⁵ RFD interested the farmer in passable good roads, but the automobile demanded excellent roads. It caused a radical change in road construction because of its destructiveness to "soft surfaces." The automobile was one of the factors that vastly changed American life.

¹⁰² U.S. Department of Agriculture, Circular #59, Automobile Registrations, Licenses and Revenues in the United States, 1915, (1916), 1.

¹⁰³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Circular #73, Automobile Registrations, Licenses and Revenues in the United States, 1916, (1917), 1.

¹⁰⁴ See Chapter VIII.

¹⁰⁵ Ballard Campbell, "The Good Roads Movement in Wisconsin, 1890-1911," Wisconsin Magazine of History, XLIX (Summer, 1966) asserts that the automobile was not important in the good road movement in Wisconsin. It was in Montana. The difference is probably because of the later date of the movement in Montana.

TABLE IV

A COMPARISON OF MONTANA AUTOMOBILES WITH
SURROUNDING STATES, 1913-1916^a

State	Registration				Total Gross Revenue			
	1913	1914	1915	1916	1913	1914	1915	1916
Idaho	2113	3346	7071	12,999	35,160	58,580	121,259	213,758
Montana	5916	10,200	14,540	25,105	12,000	27,000	33,120	52,768
North Dakota	15,187	17,347	24,908	40,446	41,961	55,964	79,245	125,283
South Dakota	14,457	20,929	28,724	44,271	89,170	125,000	180,000	140,746
Wyoming	1584	2428	3976	7125	7920	12,140	19,880	32,625

^aU.S. Department of Agriculture, Circular #59, Automobile Registrations, Licenses and Revenues in the United States, 1915, (1916), 7; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Circular #73, Automobile Registrations, Licenses and Revenues in the United States, 1916, (1917), 1.

CHAPTER VIII

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

I

'We were not a wealthy nation when we began improving our highways . . . but the roads themselves helped us create a new wealth, in business and industry and land values . . . so it was not our wealth that made our highways possible. Rather, it was our highways that made our wealth possible.'¹

The movement for better country roads which has received such impetus from the bicycle organizations is still felt, and is gaining force from the rapid introduction of horseless vehicles. To this demand, which comes in a large measure from the urban population, is to be added that of the farmer, who is wakening to the fact that good roads greatly increase the profits from his farm produce, and thus materially better his condition; and to the farmer, indeed, we must look for any real improvement in our country roads.²

According to one government official, "the difference between good and bad roads is often the equivalent to the difference between profit and loss."³

Though this statement was particularly true for the farmer, good roads were of definite monetary value to the farmers as they would

¹Robert F. Baker, Highways and Economic and Social Changes, U.S. Department of Commerce (Washington, 1964), 1.

²Logan Waller Page, "The Selection of Materials for Macadam Roads," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1900, (1901), 349.

³Maurice O. Eldridge, "Good Roads for Farmers," Archer Butler Hulbert, Historic Highways of America, Vol. XV: The Future of Road Making in America (Cleveland, 1905), 81. Hereafter cited as Hulbert.

make it easier and cheaper to get produce to market, allow the farmer to take advantage of market fluctuations, allow produce to be carried to market during leisure times, "reduce the wear and tear on horses, harness, and vehicles," and raise the value of property in land.⁴

But road conditions were so bad before improvement that it was cheaper to carry a given amount of grain from New York to Liverpool than from the farm to the railhead.⁵ The cost of hauling over poor and muddy roads was much higher than the equivalent haul over a solid road. Better roads would mean savings from many sources. One-tenth of the twenty million draft animals in the country could be disposed of if the roads were such that hauling could be done throughout the year. These animals were worth \$170,000,000 and this amount plus the \$100,000,000 per year that it took to feed them could be saved.⁶ According to Senator William A. Peffer of Kansas the money saved from cutting down the animal labor force would more than pay for putting the roads into good shape.⁷

The cost of hauling produce over the poor roads in the United States was approximately twenty-five cents per ton mile. This was

⁴ORI Circular #23

⁵Charles H. Davis, What the Automobile has done for Good Roads Everywhere (Washington, 1913), 10. Hereafter referred to as Davis.

⁶U. S. Congress, Senate, The Miscellaneous Documents of the United States Senate, No. 33, 53rd Cong., Special Sess., 1893.

⁷Pope Memorial I, 15.

about three times what it cost Europeans to move their goods.⁸ There was, of course, a certain variation in the cost in the United States. A government survey taken before the twentieth century showed a ton-mile variation of from twenty-two cents in the prairie states to thirty-two cents in the Eastern states, with an average of twenty-five cents.⁹ The Goslar Company, in the Hartz Mountains of Germany, kept very close track of its savings after improving the roads and found that the \$25,000 spent improving the roads returned a ten percent profit each year.¹⁰ Dr. George T. Winston, President of the State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts in Raleigh, North Carolina, declared that bad roads in North Carolina cost the state \$10,000,000 per year which was the equivalent of killing every horse and mule in the state each year.¹¹ A United States Senate report estimated that good roads would save the country \$500,000,000 per year.¹²

Besides saving the farmer and other transporters money for hauling costs, improved highways would raise the land value of the

⁸"Economic Value of Good Roads," Scientific American, LXXXII (June 30, 1900), 402; Hulbert, 49; Roy Stone, "Work of the Department for the Farmer," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1897, (1898), 176; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Circular #27, Cost of Hauling Farm Products to Market or to Shipping Points in European Countries, (1897); Great Falls Tribune, June 13, 1910; Western News (Hamilton), Oct. 16, 1901; Enterprise (Malta), May 15, 1901.

⁹U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Circular #19, Traffic of the Country Roads, (1896), 1.

¹⁰U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Circular #14, Addresses on Road Improvement, (1894), 2.

¹¹U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Circular #24, Highway Repairing, (1896), 46.

¹²U.S. Congress, Senate, Reports, No. 2626, 58th Cong., 3rd Sess., 1904.

property they were near. This as much as anything else should have stimulated the farmer into building better roads. W. C. Latta, of Purdue, concluded that improved roads increased the value of land near the roads so much that the farmer lost \$0.7628 per acre for having bad roads in his area.¹³ When the good roads were built they did raise the price of land nearby. W. M. Drennan, the mayor of Birmingham, Alabama, declared that the building of roads in that area doubled the value of the property.¹⁴ In Kentucky the building of good roads reduced the taxes from thirty cents to fifteen cents per hundred. This came about because of the tremendous increase in land values due to the building of good roads. A southern engineer explained the reasons for these changes in this way.

New families from adjoining counties and States are constantly coming in, some to make their homes in the city and others wanting farms on the 'good roads.' Still others, looking ahead and anticipating profits, have made purchases 5 and 6 miles back from these roads, paying largely increased prices.¹⁵

In 1903 at the St. Louis Good Road Convention, William Jennings Bryan, plains politician, said that the farmers should be able to keep their crops until they could market them at the most favorable time. He continued that the farmer was forced to sell when the crop matured as he had no way of knowing when the roads might become impassable.¹⁶

¹³ORI #23 Circular, 3.

¹⁴ORI #23 Bulletin, 30.

¹⁵Sam C. Lancaster, "Practical Road Building in Madison County Tennessee," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1904, (1905), 339.

¹⁶Hulbert, 30.

A brief anecdote illustrated the problem very well:

It is said that a man riding on a heavy southern road saw a hat in the mud; stopping to pick it up he was surprised to find a head of hair beneath it: then a voice came out of the ground: 'Hold on, Boss, don't take my hat; I've got a powerful fine mule down here somewhere if I can ever get him out.' You can write and speak to farmers until Doomsday about taking quick advantage of the exigencies of the markets that are dependent on them, but if they have to hunt for their horses in a hog-wallow road all your talk will be in vain.¹⁷

Lack of roads not only made hauling difficult but also kept the farmers in ignorance of what was going on in the world. In the South farmers were continuing to produce cotton at low prices when they could have been growing potatoes that would have sold for \$2.00 per bushel.¹⁸

Good roads were not only of benefit to the farmer but also to the rest of society. Colonel Pope declared "the prosperity of any city depends largely on the surrounding country and the better the road facilities the faster the population will grow."¹⁹ One writer estimated that it cost St. Louis \$750 per day more to bring produce into the city on the bad roads than it would on good ones. This was enough money to macadamize fifty miles of road each year.²⁰ Other writers felt the saving would be even greater. One estimated that one-fourth of the annual wealth produced by the United States, \$7,500,000,000

¹⁷Hulbert, 48.

¹⁸Ibid., 47.

¹⁹Missoula Gazette, Dec. 4, 1889.

²⁰Hulbert, 49.

could be saved by improved roads.²¹ The editor of the Western News argued that the money that hauling over bad roads cost was greater than the operating expense of all the railroads in the country. "If anything could make as argument for good wagon roads this statement surely will."²²

Even a few large commercial companies recognized the problems caused by bad roads. "R. G. Dun & Co., of New York, in a recent interview of the conditions of trade, says that 'the stringency in money markets here and at some other points is more largely due to slow collections, which appear to result from severe weather and impractical roads than from any form of commercial unsoundness or inability to distribute products."²³ Some businessmen realized that good roads were important to provide access to markets.²⁴ The automobile increased the potential of traveling salesmen if they had good roads to travel over.²⁵

Merchants in Great Falls were quite concerned during the time of the Geiger law, because wool shipments might be diverted to Billings. The reason for this change would be that the roads into Great Falls were largely impassable.²⁶ Merchants in Hamilton, Montana, in 1901, were trying very hard to promote the building of a road to the mining

²¹Davis, 10.

²²Western News (Hamilton), Oct. 16, 1901.

²³ORI #26 Bulletin.

²⁴U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Road Improvement in Governors Messages, Circular No. 33, (1899). Hereafter referred to as ORI #33 Circular.

²⁵Chatburn, 206-7.

²⁶Great Falls Tribune, June 23, 1901.

community of Gibbonsville, Idaho. The merchants were hopeful of opening this area up to the trade of the Bitterroot Valley.²⁷ Deer Lodge County Commissioners also built roads to open new trade areas. In 1902 they built a road into the Big Hole Basin hoping to capture some of this business from Dillon.²⁸ It is apparent that many areas were concerned about having roads to either increase their "umland" or maintain what trade they had.

The estimates concerning the value of improved road was verified by a federal government survey taken between 1910 and 1915. Eight counties from Florida to New York that had just been bonded for improved roads were the subject for the five year study.²⁹ The selling price of farms in these eight areas "amounted to from one to three times the total cost of the improvements."³⁰ Besides this increase, money was saved in hauling costs. Figuring the cost of transportation before and after the improved roads demonstrated an average saving in the eight areas of 11.6¢ per ton mile after subtracting the cost of principal and interest.³¹ "Taking it from all of these angles, the experience of the eight counties has demonstrated that the beneficial effects of the road improvement justified the outlay, and that while

²⁷Western News (Hamilton), April 24, 1901; May 1, 1901.

²⁸Dillon Examiner, April 30, 1902.

²⁹J. E. Pennybacker, Economic Surveys of County Highway Improvement, Bulletin No. 393, U. S. Department of Agriculture, (1916), 1. Hereafter cited as Agriculture #393 Bulletin.

³⁰Ibid., 6-7.

³¹Ibid., 8.

more efficiency and economy might have been obtained in some cases, the loss was not such as to make the citizens of any of the counties feel that the move for better roads had been an unwise one."³²

The improved road and the automobile changed the whole tenor of American life by changing some businesses and creating new ones. The mail order business established to help provide goods to the farmer grew tremendously until good roads and the automobile slowed it down. Mail order houses were so damaged that by 1925, they had to begin regular retail merchandising.³³ Hotel and motel business increased and spread to a large extent as a result of increased numbers of people traveling on the highways who needed a place to stop for the night.³⁴ Most states are interested in and promote tourism today. This is not a latter day phenomena. The Agriculture Department recognized as early as 1901 that many of the outdoor areas could be like magnets drawing people to see the wonders of nature--and incidentally spend money.³⁵

The relationship between the common road and the railroad was one that had varying degrees of economic importance. When the railroad

³²Agriculture #393 Bulletin, 9.

³³Cohn, 186.

³⁴T. A. Larson, History of Wyoming (Lincoln, 1965), 345; Chatburn, 163.

³⁵James W. Abbott, "Mountain Roads as a Source of Revenue," U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1901, (1902), 527-8.

first became important, it meant the decline of the common road.³⁶ The railroads may have been responsible for the decline of the wagon road but it was not deliberate policy. The decay of the road was as harmful to them as to any other group. They depended on the wagon road for the material that was brought to the railroad. The railroads also believed that good roads in an area would help bring in immigrants to populate that area.³⁷ The railroads had to have good roads to increase the farming area that would ship by the roads. Estimates of how far a farmer could bring produce on bad roads varied from two to ten miles, but on good roads products could be brought from up to forty miles.³⁸

The railroads believed that good roads would be good for business and promoted the early good road movement. In some areas they would haul road building materials free if interested people would load and unload the material.³⁹ One of the earliest ways the railroads helped was by furnishing the "good road train." For a number of years they did this quite willingly, transporting officials, equipment and material from meeting to meeting.⁴⁰ The railroads did not encourage

³⁶ Maurice O. Eldridge, Public-Road Mileage, Revenues, and Expenditures in the United States in 1904, Bulletin #32, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, (1907), 11; ORI Bulletin No. #23, 36; Chatburn, 171.

³⁷ Roy Stone, "Good Roads," Overland Monthly and Outwest Magazine, XXV (March, 1895), 236.

³⁸ ORI #24 Bulletin, 14; A. L. Craig, The Railroads and the Wagon Roads, Circular No. #37, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, (1904); Albert A. Pope, Wagon Roads as Feeders to Railways (Boston, 1892), 15, 17. Hereafter cited as Pope, Feeders.

³⁹ Pope, Feeders, 21; Mason, 188.

⁴⁰ Great Falls Tribune, July 28, 1902; Enterprise (Malta), April 3, 1901.

feeder roads only to help their business. When the farmers agitated for decreased rates, the railroad officials could advise them to cut their costs by building good feeder roads.⁴¹ The railroads actually built some roads. Most of these were, of course, into areas the railroads were trying to exploit commercially such as parks, but others were built for diverse reasons.⁴² There is no question but that railroad officials were interested in the building of roads. Besides their work in the field there are the statements that Pope collected for a pamphlet he published.⁴³

Poor roads stole many millions of dollars from this country every year in money wasted on excessive transportation costs. Good roads were not just a convenience, they were a dollars and cents necessity for a strong and growing nation. The fact that the railroads helped to build up a business competitor demonstrated that these sometimes "ruthless" businessmen thought that their businesses could not help but benefit from the good roads. Good roads not only led to decreased transportation costs but also led directly to increased land values. Every area that built good roads thrived economically for the building and would have suffered had it not built them.

⁴¹Mason, 186.

⁴²Great Falls Tribune, July 23, 1906; Oct. 13, 1909.

⁴³Pope, Feeder. This pamphlet contained favorable statements from the Canadian Pacific Railway Co.; the Illinois Central Railroad Company; the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Northern Railway; the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railway Company; the Great Salt Lake and Hot Springs Railway; the Wilmington, Onslow & East Carolina RR; the Georgia Midland and Gulf Railroad; Birmingham, Sheffield & Tennessee River RR; the Chicago & West Michigan RR; the Grand Rapids & Indiana RR; the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway; the New York, Chicago & St. Louis RR; the Flint & Pere Marquette RR; the St. Louis, Cape Girardeau & Fort Smith RR; the Grand Trunk RR of Canada; and the Rio Grande Western Railway.

II

The farmer has a right to insist upon roads that will enable him to go to town, to church, to the schoolhouse, and to the homes of his neighbors, as occasion may require; and with the extension of rural mail delivery, he has additional need for good roads in order that he may be kept in communication with the outside world, for mail routes follow good roads.

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If these good roads will enable men, women, and children to go more frequently to church and there here expounded the gospel and receive inspiration therefrom, that alone is reason enough for good roads.⁴⁴

Whether roads are good, that is, can be easily used at all times of the year, determines a great many factors of life. The most important of these concern how happily man lives in the way that he wants to live and how easily he maintains those institutions that while not absolutely necessary to life, are prerequisite to elevation from an animal existence. As Congressman Thomas H. Tongue of Oregon declared:

Good roads do not concern our pockets only. They may become the instrumentalities for improved health, increased happiness and pleasure, for refining tastes, strengthening, broadening, and elevating the character. . . . Out beyond the confines of the city with its dust and dirt and filth, morally and physically, these "healthful and innocent recreations and pleasure" are to be found and good roads help to find them.⁴⁵

The automobile made it possible for people within the cities to get out of their stifling and unhealthy environments and into the outdoors. Now it was very possible for families to travel in short

⁴⁴Hulbert, 31, 35.

⁴⁵ORI #25 Bulletin.

period of time to relatively isolated areas where they could relax and breathe pure, fresh air.⁴⁶ The automobile also made it possible for more people to travel and broaden their horizons. The resulting introduction of people to other areas in the country as well as to their neighbors did much to destroy the provinciality of American life.⁴⁷ This travel allowed the previously isolated farmer to benefit more easily from the advantages of the city, and to enjoy a new social life. He could travel to his neighbors or even go into town for movies, plays, and other entertainment that was relatively unknown in the rural areas.⁴⁸ The federal government endeavored to open up the new forest recreation areas with roads so that everyone in the country could travel to these areas and enjoy the beauties of nature. Generally, the opportunity to get away from crowded cities into the majesties of the great outdoors, was supposed to elevate the population.⁴⁹

Besides moral improvement, good roads provided health benefits. Improved roads in themselves were beneficial in that they were less a health hazard than the older muddy, swampy roads. As poor roads were

⁴⁶ Chatburn, 211.

⁴⁷ Davis, 11.

⁴⁸ Cohn, 178; Chatburn, 206.

⁴⁹ O. C. Merrill, "Opening up the National Forests by Road Building," U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1916, (1917), 521, 529.

often poorly drained there were numerous sloughs and bogs along side them. These areas were breeding grounds for disease. Better drained roads cleared up these areas and contributed to the nation's general health.⁵⁰

The automobile in conjunction with the good road brought further social benefits. For the first time the speed with which healers and healing substances could be brought to sick people was vastly increased. Automobiles could function as ambulances and take sick and dying people great distances, where they could receive the attention that they needed. Obviously, the automobile and the good road led the way to the end of rural isolation.⁵¹

The automobile was responsible for even more remarkable social advances. The auto changed women's fashions. For some time the ladies had been wearing extremely tight fitting clothing that was not good for their health. After women began to use the automobile, they changed to more loosefitting and comfortable clothing. The long skirts that they wore swept unhealthy dust into the air. The new automobile fashions, with their short skirts, ended this menace to health.⁵² Other than this supporters praised the automobile for replacing the horse and the unhealthy flies that accompanied them.⁵³

⁵⁰ Chatburn, 212, 213.

⁵¹ Ibid., 212.

⁵² Ibid., 213.

⁵³ Ibid.

However, the social changes wrought by the automobile could not all be placed on the plus side of the ledger. The automobile quickly was adopted as a quick means of transportation by the criminal element. They used trucks to transport stolen goods quickly from one place to another and also used them for "bootlegging." People moving from the city to the country were sometimes unable to restrain themselves and committed various acts of vandalism. And, of course, the auto was perfect for couples who wanted to get away somewhere for more stimulating activities such as "spooning."⁵⁴

One of the most serious accusations leveled against the automobile by those who idealize country life was that the automobile destroyed, or at least seriously crippled, small towns and rural communities. It is a fact that for most of American History there has been an increase in the percentage of the population living in urban areas and a subsequent decrease in rural percentages. However, the automobile and improved roads were not the reasons for this. Surprisingly enough, before the automobile and adequate roads, bad roads were blamed for the poverty and subsequent loss of farm population. In discussing this problem in 1904 the Senate Agricultural Committee reported:

But the general improvement of the country roads would be a far more important step. [than the telephone and rural free delivery]. Bad roads do more than anything else to promote ignorance, isolation, discouragement, and disgust among the country people. Good roads promote attendance at school and the church; they make social

⁵⁴Chatburn, 213, 215.

gatherings, literary societies, dramatic entertainments, and club and lodge meetings possible during the winter and spring. With bad roads the farmer is compelled to hibernate, socially, for three or four months in one year. With good roads, these months become the most pleasant and in some respects the most profitable in the year.⁵⁵

This statement represented not the isolated feeling of a few writers but the consensus of those who wrote about the problem⁵⁶ Even Theodore Roosevelt believed this. He wrote:

If winter means to the average farmer the existence of a long line of liquid morasses through which he has to move his goods if bent on business, or to wade or swim if bent on pleasure; if an ordinary rain means that the farmer's girl and boy can not use their bicycles; if a little heavy weather means the stoppage of all communications, not only with the industrial centers, but with the neighbors, then you must expect that there will be a great many young people of both sexes who will not find farm life attractive.⁵⁷

The effect that good roads had on the churches is questionable. Some felt the effect was good, others that it was bad. This much is obvious: if the roads were bad enough, no one would be going to church. Before the automobile, the farmers had to rest their animals who had worked hard all week and not force them to pull the family through the mud. Also, there was some question about the state of mind of a minister who had traveled over miserable roads to get to his flock.⁵⁸

⁵⁵U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, Hearings, Roads and Road Building, 58th Cong., 2d Sess., 1904, 76.

⁵⁶ORI #25 Bulletin, 33; ORI #33 Circular; ORI#23 Bulletin, 13, 34; W. H. Moore, The Social, Commercial and Economic Phases of the Road Subject, Circular #34, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, 1899, 1900; Hulbert, 24, 38; Great Falls Tribune, Jan. 20, 1900.

⁵⁷ORI #26 Bulletin, 79.

⁵⁸ORI #24 Bulletin, 43.

No doubt the small, off the highway, country church, disappeared with the advent of the good road and the automobile.⁵⁹ Some of course, lamented this; others felt that these churches could well be lost, for then healthy, stable congregations could develop into strong consolidated churches, accessible by roads that could be traveled year around. The only areas where strong churches probably failed were those in the ten to fifteen mile radius of large cities.⁶⁰

As far as schools are concerned, there is no question but that improved roads, and of course, the automobile, have been most beneficial. Charles B. Aycock, Governor of North Carolina, stated that one could tell the condition of the roads by the attendance in church and at school.⁶¹ The educators of the time looked hopefully to consolidated schools, adequately staffed and able to afford the necessary teaching aids. Needless to say, bad roads while holding down attendance completely stifled such hopes. Even after good roads developed, and attendance became steady, consolidation had to wait for the motorized bus.⁶² Many people of the time saw the very close association between the roads and schools, and decried the poor roads that held schooling back.⁶³

Statistics compiled at the time clearly demonstrated that school attendance and the roads were very closely related. Surveys

⁵⁹ORI #25 Bulletin, 14; Cohn, 188.

⁶⁰Hulbert, 20.

⁶¹ORI #24 Bulletin, 9.

⁶²Chatburn, 210.

⁶³Hulbert, 17, 82; ORI #21 Bulletin, 19; ORI #26 Bulletin, 34.

by the OPRI revealed that the average attendance of children in school prior to the improvement of roads was sixty-six out of one-hundred. Following the road improvement it was seventy-six out of one-hundred.⁶⁴ At the turn of the century, John W. Abercrombie, state superintendent of education in Alabama, reported that the white schools had an average attendance of forty-eight percent and the colored schools thirty-six percent. He claimed that in states with good roads the attendance was from twenty-five to fifty percent higher.⁶⁵ The Department of Agriculture reported in 1908 that in five states they surveyed where the average percent of improved roads was 30.55 percent; the percent of white illiterates was 0.34 of one percent. In the four states surveyed where only 1.51 percent of the roads were improved the percentage of white illiterates was 4.76 percent. Their conclusion applied to all the above information: "It is probable that bad roads are partly a cause and partly an effect of ignorance, but it certainly appears that the two are closely related."⁶⁶

It is apparent that roads have done more good than evil for rural and country life. The accusation is leveled even today that improved roads such as superhighways are destroying small towns and country life. The statement is unproven. A survey taken during the 1920 to 1940 period, one of rapid development of good highways, found

⁶⁴Agriculture #393 Bulletin, 9.

⁶⁵ORI #23 Bulletin, 39.

⁶⁶U. S. Department of Agriculture, Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture: 1908, (1909), 145.

that rural villages and hamlets were very stable. These areas provided necessary functions to the people that lived in these areas and will continue to exist as long as they do so.⁶⁷

The question of whether the improved road and the automobile have brought benefits or detriments to American social life must be firmly answered on the side of benefits. Along with the telephone, Rural Free Delivery, and more recently television, they brought the rural American into the mainstream of American life. They have contributed to the strengthening of rural social institutions such as the school and the church. They have enabled the American, no matter where he lives, to see easily and conveniently the immense country of which he is a citizen. They have enabled people who live in the cities to leave their crowded living areas for relaxation in the out-of-doors. In short, the improved highway and the automobile have vastly changed our life for the better.

⁶⁷ D. G. Marshall, "Hamlets and Villages in the United States: Their Place in the American Way of Life," American Sociological Review, XI (April, 1946), 149.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

The history of the good road movement is an examination of one improvement in American life that is interesting as well as significant. The people who were interested in the movement were largely motivated by selfish goals. The LAW, the first group to actively push for the good road, was interested in a pleasant place to ride bicycles. It, of course, gave way to the autoist who was also interested in improving roads for similar reasons. The railroads wanted to increase the area from which they could draw goods and hence multiply their freight profits. The machinery equipment companies, of course, were interested in selling road building equipment. The farmers resisted the movement at first because they anticipated building the roads with their money for other people to enjoy. It was difficult to prove to them that they would benefit economically.

The agitation and clamoring for good roads was led by self-interested and a few idealistic people. But the end result was beneficial to the entire nation. The farming community with good roads and the automobile had one more link to tie them to the rest of society. Farmers' living conditions were greatly ameliorated by this new combination that allowed them to visit their neighbors and to town at all times of the year. The rural people also benefited by the

increase in the value of their land and the ability to get their goods to the railhead more cheaply. The rest of the country benefited from the swiftness with which goods could be brought to them and the system that grew up whereby they could conveniently and in short time periods travel to the various parts of the country.

The role of the automobile in the good roads movement was very important. The auto sparked a transportation revolution. At first, it destroyed the "good road" but soon it prompted better roads to rise from the ashes of what had been. The automobile needed a hard dust-free surface that could not be broken up by swiftly turning wheels. This need led eventually to the paving we have today. The lure of swift and convenient transportation brought people onto the nation's highways who otherwise never would have come. These people, in time, all became advocates of excellent highways.

There are still poor roads in this country. But the worst of them is far superior to most of the roads of yesterday. The national interstate highways and the freeways, turnpikes, and thruways of our states are monuments to those men who fought so hard to get some improvement on the atrocious roads with which the nation entered the century.

APPENDIX I

Automobile, 1900-1910, advertising Great Falls Tribune

Make	Dealer	First adv	last adv	Frequency
Crestmobile	Denton & Veen	1/3/04	4/3/04	9
Rambler	B. D. Whitten	2/14/04	7/1/06	26
Reo	Forrest & Monk	6/16/07	6/16/07	1
Chalmers- Detroit	Chas. E. Davis	10/15/08	3/17/10	17
Cadillac	Thomas Evans	11/22/08	11/23/08	2
Ford	Forest & Monk	1/1/09	4/23/10	51
Bendix	F. I. Long	7/26/08	8/25/08	20
Stevens- Duryea	Silver Bow Auto Butte	5/16/09	5/28/09	13
Imperial	Stackhouse	1/23/10	1/25/10	2
Black Crow	D. L. Woods Helena	3/38/10	12/25/10	7
Velie 40	Chas. E. Davis	3/27/10	4/8/10	8
Buick	Northwestern Auto	4/10/10	11/27/10	6
Hudson	Chas. E. Davis	4/10/10	7/1/10	27
Abbot-Detroit	Abbot-Detroit Mtr. Minot, N. D.	5/6/10	5/6/10	1
Overland	Forest & Monk	5/29/10	6/12/10	3
Marion	Fraser & Corson	7/18/10	7/23/10	2
Interstate	Plumb & Hendricks	8/30/10	9/1/10	3
Perfected Great Chadwick Six	Montana Motor Co.	12/18/10	12/18/10	1
Cadillac	Montana Motor Co.	12/18/10	12/18/10	1
Hupmobile	Montana Motor Co.	12/18/10	12/18/10	1
White-Gas	Montana Motor Co.	12/18/10	12/18/10	1

APPENDIX II

Tractor and Motor Cycle Advertisements in the Great Falls Tribune
1900-1910

Make	Dealer	First adv.	Last adv	Frequency
Hart Parr	H. B. McGary Bozeman	2/19/08	2/26/08	2
Huber	R. H. Wright	3/6/09	3/14/09	2
Geiser Steam	O. J. Johnson	2/18/10	12/25/10	7

MOTORCYCLES

Reading- Standard	Gr. Falls Iron Works	8/23/02	8/23/02	1
	Pioneer Auto Co.	9/4/10	9/10/10	2
R-S	H. R. Noble	9/25/10	9/29/10	5

APPENDIX III

Road Proverbs

Good roads promote prosperity; bad roads provoke profanity.

If the roads around a town are bad, it might as well be on an island.

In considering roads, remember that there are few towns that look so good to the farmer that he will kill a horse to get there.

Ill fares the town, to hasten ill a prey, where teams turn out to go a better way.

Good roads will increase health, happiness, education, religion and morality.

Good roads will decrease profanity, discouragement, back taxes, sheriff sales, sour grapes and grouches.

Good roads invoke a blessing upon any people who build them.

Meagher Republican (White Sulphur Springs), July 19, 1912.

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