

## Indiana Transportation History - A Personal Perspective R.H. "Bob" Harrell

### The Indiana Bicentennial (2016). The Idea of a Transportation History of Indiana in the 20th Century and Beyond.

For a number of years since retirement from the department, I have created a collection of transportation history resource materials. Most of the collection focused on highways and roads. Many of these items are copies of early reports of the Indiana Highway Commission and associated papers. I have also collected and preserved photographs of early road construction projects, examples being the Madison Hill (now SR 56), and the north south road, also on a significant Madison Hill, (SR 7). Photographs of early surveying crews and equipment, construction on U.S. 50 also exist. I have taken my camera with me while working with local governments as throughout Indiana and have a record of courthouses and recent projects. As of today we do not have a comprehensive 20th century history of highway and road planning and construction in Indiana. We need to leave such a legacy to teach those who come after us both the successes and failures along the way.

### The Sweep and Scope of Highway Transportation in My Lifetime.

I began work with the State Highway Department during the summer months while I was in high school. The equipment consisted of steam-driven earth moving equipment, mules and the like. We also had gasoline powered trucks and tractors to pull graders and asphalt laying equipment. Many of the early trucks, automobiles, and other road building equipment came from left over World War One equipment given to the state by the Federal Highway Administration.

### My Stated Goal, What You Can Learn from That

While still in high school, I boldly announced to my Dupont High School classmates that I would someday be director of the "highway department." It is important for young people to dream and to have goals early on. I started on a construction crew, then moved to working on a survey crew in the late 20's. I went back to working construction in the 1930's. I got my P.E. and Land Surveying certification along the way. My career with the highway department ended in 1974, but after a while I decided to keep on working and have done so since that time.

My early years with the State Highway Department were spent in the Seymour District working with road survey crews and major road construction projects in the District. After the survey crews and major construction projects, I was, on two occasions, asked to serve as District Highway Engineer of the Seymour District.

### The Move to the Highway Commission in Indianapolis

In 1957, after completing a long period of working in the Seymour District of the State Highway Department, I was called to work at the State office in Indianapolis, first as assistant chief of the state maintenance department, then as assistant chief of the road department, which included the interstate highway system.

### The Call to Become Executive Director.

Following the election of 1968, Governor-elect Whitcomb asked me to become his Director of the State Highway Department. After Governor Whitcomb's term ended, Governor Bowen asked that I remain the director for the first year of his administration.

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