

## ALABAMA HIGHWAYS

GROWING SENTIMENT IN FAVOR OF BETTER COUNTRY ROADS.

Relation of Good Roads to Public Schools—Accessibility a Factor in Education—A State Is Measured by Its Roads.

The counties of southern Alabama met in convention at Mobile recently and organized a good roads association, elected officers and adopted a series of resolutions demanding such legislation as will place the state in a position to plan and construct public roads in a more scientific manner than at present obtains.

The Hon. J. W. Abercrombie, superintendent of public instruction for the state of Alabama, discussed the subject of "Good Roads and Their Relation to Country Schools." He spoke in part as follows:

"The enrollment in the white schools of Alabama is only 64 per cent of the school population. In the colored schools it is only 48 per cent. Producing 25 per cent for withdrawals and irregularity in attendance, which is a very low estimate, we have a daily attendance in the white schools of 48 per cent of school population and in the colored schools a daily attendance of 30 per cent. In those states where the roads are good the average daily attendance is from 75 per cent to 90 per cent greater. It is reasonable to conclude then that something besides general interest is necessary.

"Though the interest be widespread and intense, the enrollment and attendance will be regulated greatly by the cost of going. For several years our common schools have been practically free. Now they are entirely free for at least four months in the year. Yet the attendance is not as large or as regular as it should be—and is large or regular as it is in many other states. Hence we conclude that something besides general interest and free tuition is needed.

"Somebody may suggest that the great necessity is a competent teaching force. It is conceded, I believe, by those who are experienced in such matters that no school can be a success in the fullest sense of the term, without a thoroughly qualified teacher, one in whom the people have faith. It was for that reason that the law-making power established recently a new system for the examination and certification of teachers, by which the qualifications of the teachers in the public schools have been increased more than 100 per cent. The board created for that purpose has labored faithfully and impartially and fearlessly to eliminate from the ranks of the educators those who are not qualified for the service. Great things have been accomplished in that direction. Our teachers are better fitted for efficient service than ever before. Yet the attendance upon the schools, the country schools especially, is too frequently small and irregular. Something is necessary other than general interest or free tuition or qualified teachers.

"A school may have all these things, may be perfectly equipped as to building, furnishings and trained teacher, and at the same time prove to be a failure on account of lack of accessibility. Accessibility depends upon the quality of the public roads. Our good public roads are on a par with our good schoolhouses. The one would be about as difficult to find as the other. What is the encouragement to erect good buildings along impassable highways? We do not build good residences even in such places. Business establishments and industrial enterprises do not flourish there. Inaccessibility and high civilization seldom accompany each other. Senator John T. Morgan spoke truly when, in a recent letter to Mr. L. L. Gilbert, secretary of the Montgomery Commercial and Industrial Association, he said: 'Not only are good roads pleasant and ornamental features of a country, but they are the wisest and most economical bestowal of money and labor. Every civilized country is measured by its roads as much as it is by its industries in the estimate that men place upon its value.' It is possible to have good roads without good schools, but it is absolutely impossible to have the best of schools without good roads. As a rule, the efficiency of a country's common schools may be measured by the condition of its public roads."

President D. P. Bestor of the board of trustees of the Medical College of Alabama discussed good roads in their relation to the medical profession and the patient. He said the good roads movement had been making splendid progress. It must be remembered that it took nearly 100 years to get the central government interested in the question of rivers and harbors. Even Calhoun and King, who was an Alabamian, had been opposed to making these appropriations, and other great statesmen had been slow about taking up the question of internal improvements. But the good roads movement had met with a prompt public response, and there was much to be thankful for.

Coming down to the question of the physician's interest in good roads, he said during a recent visit to another state he was impressed by the fact that many of the physicians used bicycles. They could not do it in Alabama. In the state to which he referred the physicians only charge \$1 for a visit. An Alabama they charge \$3. They had to do it, and the bad condition of the public roads was responsible for it. Better roads would mean that the physician, whose lot is a hard one at best, would endure fewer hardships and he would be able to reach the patient more quickly and would be able to do a better part by the patient.

## ROAD MONEY WASTED.

Working Out Highway Taxes Produces No Lasting Results.

Commenting on the highway law of the Empire State, the New York Times in a recent issue said:

"The legislation heretofore enacted for the improvement of the roads of the state is good as far as it goes, but it is not likely to go very far in the lifetime of the youngest of our readers. It provides for state aid to towns that are willing to contribute their part to better roads built under the direction of the state. Up to the present time we believe that only 300 miles of the 5,000 in the state are benefited by this law. The highway alliance, whose purpose is to 'increase the usefulness of highways,' proposes that the plan now in operation in towns generally shall be



HARD ROAD TO TRAVEL.

so changed that the resources available, which are very considerable, shall be applied under state direction.

At present each property owner is required to pay his share of the amount voted for roads, but is at liberty to work out the tax at the rate of one day's labor for each dollar due by him. The work, whether voluntary or hired, is done when and where the path master and the highway commissioner may direct. The change urged is that all payment of road taxes in labor shall be done away with, that all taxes shall be paid in money and that the money shall be expended under the direction of the skilled and trained officials of the state.

There can be no doubt that this arrangement would secure very much better return for the money of the various towns than is got at present. No one need be a great traveler in the interior of our state to know that the general condition of the roads is bad and that the badness is tremendously costly. It is quite common to see a fairly good road passing from the area of one town become a wretched road in the next, and the proportion of the latter is many times greater than that of the former.

As a rule the actual cost of the decent roads is not appreciably larger than that of the bad ones. The money is used in one case and wasted in the other. The plan suggested would not increase, as we understand it, the amount collected for roads. It would simply secure an immensely better return for it. And this return would be in the definite shape of economy and profit for the residents of the towns as well as for the community generally.

It has been estimated that improvement in roads steadily used, which should save only 10 per cent of the wear and tear of horses and wagons and of the time of men employed, would save to the average farmer from \$50 to \$100 a year. It is not at all unreasonable to infer that the plan proposed would effect such an improvement. As it would not cost the country residents a cent more in expenditure, it ought to be popular if it is once understood.

## NEED OF GOOD ROADS.

They Cost Money, but in the End Are Cheaper Than Poor Ones.

The greatest need of the country is good roads. To have good roads we must have a good road law, says Texas Farm and Ranch. To have a good road law the people who use roads must be made to comprehend their value. Then they will demand of state and county legislators to proceed to solve the problem.

Good roads cost money, and myopic taxpayers have objected to any practical system on that account, whereas bad roads cost a great deal more than telford or macadam. There is no lack of facts and figures to prove this statement true. Railroads, telegraphs and telephones are great modern agencies of civilization, and if there is an exception to the rule that civilization follows these institutions we have failed to find it or hear of it. But bad country roads greatly retard the civilization process, besides levying the heaviest tax known to civilization.

Rural mail delivery is largely dependent upon the character of our roads, and would be well nigh impracticable on the muddy lanes of the Texas black waxy section in wet weather. Therefore, to enjoy the benefits of a daily mail, our people must go to work systematically to make better roads. What matters it if a road costs \$3,000, \$8,000 or even \$10,000 per mile if, after it is made, every person who uses it will feel glad that the expenditure was made?

## Plant Trees by the Roadside.

How much and at what little cost could the roadways of the country leading to the large cities be beautified if each farmer should give a little time to the planting of trees and shrubbery along the way?

## WHEEL AND ITS WAY

OBSTACLES OF MANY KINDS WHICH IMPEDE ITS PROGRESS.

Good Roads a Mighty Force as a Civilizing Agent—Cost of Transportation Reduces Profits of Producer. Work For the Roadmaker.

One of the most instructive papers of the good roads convention in Buffalo in September was by Lewis M. Haupt, Philadelphia, member of the isthmian canal commission.

"Every forward turn of a wheel," he said, "is a revolution and typifies progress. It is immaterial whether it be a wagon wheel or a car wheel, a fly-wheel or a water wheel, a turbine or a propeller, a pinion or a pulley, a bicycle or a mobile. It is always fascinating to see the wheels go round.

"But behind the wheel to make it revolve there may be a crank; behind the crank there must be a motor; behind the motor an artisan; behind the artisan a capitalist; behind the capitalist an inventor; behind the inventor there is the great Creator of mind and matter, the incomprehensible God, the mainspring of all activities and possibilities.

"Intuitively the mind is carried back in the spirit of the days of old, when the prophet Ezekiel stood on the banks of the river Chebar, in the land of the Chaldeans, and, looking into the opened heavens, beheld the four living creatures which had the likeness of a man going upon wheels.

"The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of beryl, and they four had one likeness, and their appearance and their work was, as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel. \* \* \* The spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. And whithersoever the spirit was to go they went, thither was their spirit to go."

"From that day to this the earth has trundled around her course in many ways, bearing to the children of the present century the fruition of this prophecy of the spirit and the wheels. Well may it be said today that every thing goes upon wheels, but there are wheels and wheels. Some turn more easily than others and do more work at less cost, and thus we are brought directly into contact with the surface or roadway which the wheel harnesses as a practical question in economics, mechanics and physics.

"In addition to the wheel and its way there are obstacles of various kinds which impede its progress.



IMPASSABLE FOR WHEELS.

There may be a mountain in the path or a cataract in the stream, a chasm in the plain, or it may be that rain has converted an earthen road into a slough, that a cyclone has drifted sand across a railway or a blizzard has filled a cut with snow.

"Such are a few of the contingencies which obstruct the highways of commerce and which it is the work of the engineer and roadmaker to remove where practicable.

"What better and more condensed instructions can be found for this than those which came from the prophet Isaiah as the voice of him that crieth from the wilderness of Asia, 'Prepare ye the way; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'

"Today Russia is literally carrying out these specifications in extending her area of steel from the Baltic to the Japan sea that civilization may advance by the peaceful revolutions of the wheel and not by the arbitrament of the sword. \* \* \* Roman roads subjugated and controlled the empire. Truly the wheel is mightier than the sword as a civilizing agent."

Following this preamble Mr. Haupt showed the relation of the rate of transportation to the profit to the producer and the influence severally of the highway, the railway and the artificial and natural waterways in limiting or extending the market range. In conclusion he said:

"Very little of the 800,000,000 tons of freight carried annually on the railroads of the United States has its origin on the line of the road, but must first be moved from farm, mine or forest over earth roads at an average cost of 25 cents per ton mile. If the average distance be but four miles the expense of transportation before delivery to the railroad would be \$800,000,000, while the charge for distribution may swell this to over \$1,000,000,000 annually, most of which goes to cover wear and tear.

"The cost of transportation on our common roads may be greatly diminished by reducing the resistances and improving the grades, alignment, surface and drainage. If reduced to even one-half the effect would be to double the area of the territory tributary to the railroads and so increase their tonnage as well as the margin available for transportation.

"As it costs much less to improve roads than to open branch railroads as feeders, it would be good policy on the part of railroads to unite with counties, townships and boroughs in developing systems of improved trunk roads with laterals as feeders to their own systems. Numerous precedents for such a policy exist in foreign countries, where the results have proved its wisdom and economy."



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## Mike.

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## McGregor.

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