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## A GOOD ROADS PLEA

The Duty of the Press in This Important Movement.

GREAT QUESTION OF THE HOUR

An Able Paper By H. B. Varner, Esq., Editor of the Lexington Dispatch, Read Before the North Carolina Press Association at Their Recent Convention Held at Hendersonville.

Building good roads is the great question of the hour in North Carolina. In the familiar phrase, it is the paramount issue, not only in this State, but throughout the Union. It transcends in importance politics, the tariff, the money question or any other question. Nothing is hampering this country so much as mud; nothing could possibly do more for the development of the State and nation than macadamized highways. Hence, the duty of the press in this State, especially, to begin a State-wide campaign for the promotion of better roads. It is our manifest duty to cry aloud to advocate strongly, to publish information, to mold public opinion until the people reach that point where they are willing to bear the cost of building modern roads in every county.

It is idle for me to attempt enumeration of the benefits good roads confer on a people. Every man, no matter how unlettered, instinctively knows that a good road is a far better thing to have than a bad road. We naturally have it in us to know the value of, and to construct an easy pathway, but, unfortunately, the devil of tax steps in and tempts us to bear the ills we have, rather than fly to blessings we know of and greatly desire. Our people all believe in good roads, but there are some who are unwilling to pay the cost. I have heard good men and good farmers declare that inasmuch as the mud trails we now have were used by their fathers, they are good enough for us and it were useless to suggest a change in them. Others declare that we are too poor to attempt road construction, and still others are vehement in their opposition to the idea of handing down to succeeding generations such a loathsome thing as a public debt. There are some of the objections one hears.

**Factor in Civilization.**  
I believe in my soul that a bad road is the greatest curse that can be laid on a community. It stunts the industrial, moral and intellectual life of a people. But a good road is equally as great a blessing, for once a community gets facilities for transportation and communication, all other blessings will be added thereto. Mr. Roosevelt has well said that the difference between semi-barbarism and civilization is the difference between good and poor means of communication. Far back in history good road building was recognized as a leading factor in advancing civilization. We are told that early explorers in Peru found improved highways, one of the military roads being 2,000 miles in length, with tunnels through mountains, bridges or ferries over streams, a road 20 feet wide, made of flagstones covered with bitumen. Ancient Mexico built good roads, as did India and Persia. In the latter country the monarch built a smooth, hard highway alongside of the common earth road, and none could travel it save his royal highness. The Roman roads are still the marvel of a modern world and are still used. Nothing contributed more to Rome's prosperity and prowess than these imperial highways, straight as an eagle's flight, reaching to all parts of the world-empire.

Good roads mean progress and prosperity and are a benefit to the people who live in cities, and an advantage to people who live in the country. Like good streets, they make habitation along them desirable. You never, or rarely ever and then not for long, see a shabby home by the side of a modern road, where everybody passes and sees how you live. They make people straighten up and put their best foot forward.

The value of farms is enhanced. Statistics prove that in nearly every case the States having the highest percentage of improved roads are a powerful factor in encouraging the settlement of unused lands. Roads also have a far-reaching influence in holding men to their farms, and restraining them from drifting to the towns. While the manufacturing towns must have labor, who is here that will deny that if our counties had good roads, the hundreds of good farmers would not have moved their families from the country home to town to work in the mills? So great an exodus occurred two or three years

ago that farm labor was almost impossible to secure. These people are needed in the country; there they would have stayed had there been good roads, which make farm life so much more attractive. As the price of lands depends as much on accessibility to market as on productivity, it follows that road improvement, by holding people and attracting others, directly tends toward increase in value of all farm lands within touch of the improved highways. It is shown that in States where the average price of land is less than \$20 an acre the percentage of improved roads is only 1.8, whereas, in States where the acreage value is more than \$20, the average of improved roads is 9 per cent of the total mileage.

There are records which show that roads have increased the value of farm lands from 50 to 500 per cent. It has been ascertained by a dozen railroads through their land and industrial departments that farms through which good roads run are enhanced in value from \$2 to \$9 an acre, and whether conservative or enthusiastic, all concede that the increase is marked, immediate and inevitable. Suppose a county of 200,000 acres voted bonds, and placing the enhanced value at only \$4.50 an acre, it will be seen that the land owners thus benefitted would gain not less than \$900,000. If the bond issue amounted to half a million, there would be \$400,000 profit at once. The increase in the profit and price of farm products is equally certain and plain. The farmer's produce is worth nothing unless it can be placed on the market. Time was in England when food would be rotting in one place while people suffered for the lack of it in a community a few miles away, because it was impossible to transport the products of the farms.

**Price of Farm Products.**  
Official records in Guilford county show that the price of farm products since good roads have been built has increased from four hundred to seven hundred per cent. And yet, there is a farmer in my county who maintains that good roads will ruin him and the county, because they will reduce the price of produce, since, when the roads are bad, he gets \$2.50 a cord for wood, because wood is made scarce by the impassability of the highways; and he says he would rather haul wood through mud than deep for \$2.50 than to roll along a smooth road and sell it for \$1, which price he claims a cord will drop to in the event of good roads. The experience of Charlotte and Greensboro entirely disprove this absurd idea, for there are not two better markets in the State, and the first named has 200 miles of good roads leading to it, and the second 100 miles.

**Tax or Bonds?**  
The question comes, how to get good roads? Shall we vote a direct tax or shall we issue bonds? Shall we pay as we go, or shall we pay part now and let future generations pay part? To my mind, the whole question comes down to whether we want good roads now, or whether we are willing to build a few miles now and let another generation build a few miles and another and another, until in the course of human events we secure good roads throughout the State years after every person now at the age of accountability is dead and gone. I stand for bonds. Mecklenburg has been building roads 30 years, and she has about 200 miles, using direct tax. Guilford has been building roads six years and she has 100 miles, using bonds. We are too far behind to depend on a direct tax. We must go ahead and issue bonds, build the roads, increase our wealth, and reap manyfold the cost of the roads. Is North Carolina to labor another generation before good roads come to pass? God forbid. We would lose enough to macadamize every mile of road in the State.

Should a county issue bonds before a dollar is expended, a competent civil engineer should be secured and put to work mapping out the county. He should be under either the county commissioner or a highway commission composed of the commissioners and other men selected by the people. It is absolutely necessary that an engineer be employed, even though he cost considerable salary, for the location, construction and maintenance of roads are operations that no man or set of men without the aid of an engineer can conduct in the proper way to get the best results at the least cost. There is a disposition on the part of many people to cavil at the price paid such an engineer, and if you undertake to fight for roads you will meet it at the outset. That idea must be eradicated, as must also the idea that the men entrusted with the public funds will not place every dollar where it belongs. In an age of skepticism in business, it is not unnatural that people should suspect that huge sums voted for roads will be preyed upon. No county can build roads without an engineer who act

as pathfinder, going over the county, studying the situation, making maps, and doing all that very necessary preliminary work without which oftentimes money is worse than wasted.

**Road-Building an Art.**  
When county officers learn to appreciate the fact that road-building is an art, they will rely more and more upon expert advice and scientific demonstration, and when they have learned what class of roads is desirable, they will construct them and then guard them.

Therein lies one of the most important of all American highway questions. Americans build as good roads as Englishmen or Frenchmen, but having done so, they rest contented with their efforts and let each passing breath of air, speeding automobile, or drenching rain blow or wash the road surface away.

In the countries of Europe, where the well-nigh perfect roads are the pride of the citizens and the envy and admiration of visiting Americans, most jealous care is constantly given; a careful day-by-day inspection is made, and every depression is quickly filled and all inequalities rolled or tamped.

Two requisites, therefore, confront the county supervisors at the outset—first to ascertain what roads would be most suitable to that particular section, and secure what sums should be expended for their maintenance after completion.

These are vastly important and the nation's very small percentage of improved roads is due largely to a failure to give consideration to them. Millions of money have been wasted in building roads which local conditions made impracticable and out of all cost proportion to the county's revenues.

There are exceptions to all rules, however, and Pike county, Alabama, stands as a glittering exception to the usual construction blunder. There the county officials had planned to expend a large sum in the building of gravel roads.

Mr. W. L. Spoon, United States superintendent of road construction, being sent to make an inspection of the county's road possibilities, learned that 700 miles of important routes needed improvement. He figured that the cost of gravel roads would be \$3,000 a mile—plainly a sum greater than the county could be bonded for. Conditions, however, were ideal for sand-clay construction and he strongly urged its adoption. By legal proviso the county could be bonded for only 3 1-2 per centum of the assessed value of the real and personal property. The plan was decided upon and an issue of \$143,000 was voted. One hundred thousand dollars' worth of the bonds were quickly sold, being disposed of in \$50,000 allotments.

The first allotment brought a premium of \$625 and the second one of \$325. Forty thousand dollars was a once spent for mules and road-building machinery and work was started.

With the sum remaining, 118 miles of the finest sand-clay roads in the South had been built within two years from the date of the bond issue; a generous sum was still on hand; eight gangs were at work, and the people were so pleased they stood ready to take up the remaining issue of \$43,000 and expend it in the same way.

Inasmuch as road building and road mending have been for a century under county commissioners and township road supervisors with practically no beneficial results observable—it seems plain that the time for a radical change of methods is at hand.

I am an earnest believer in Federal and State aid and co-operation in building good roads, and I believe that the time is at hand when the government will hit upon some plan whereby it may co-operate with the State and the State with the county, in the work. It has been argued that it is unconstitutional. Why should it be more so than expenditure of money for river and harbor improvements, which often take the form of a private enterprise? As a matter of fact, it has been shown conclusively in Congress that so far from being unconstitutional, the government in its very beginning began the construction of good roads and expended more than seven millions on the old Cumberland road from Maryland to St. Louis, a distance of 700 miles, and the work was only abandoned because there arose a question of authority and responsibility as to who should maintain and repair the road, the State, or the Federal government.

What does the government do for the farmer? We spend millions annually on the army, a dead loss, though doubtless necessary; we spend some hundred millions on the navy; have spent a half billion on river and harbor improvements. During ten years we spent more than six billion dollars of which about forty-seven million went to the agricultural department; but not a dollar for the promotion of good roads, a common blessing for all the people. During fifty years, in all the vast sum our government has dis-

bursed for one thing and another, not a dollar has been appropriated for roads. And yet, the farmers of the country compose the bulk of population, and last year contributed to the national wealth some eight billions of dollars. The one-horse farmer around behind the hill miles from town forms the foundation of the nation, and what has the government done for him? Nothing. The burden is upon him, he foots the bills; and the government takes his money and spends it on everything under the sun by the millions, on everything but on what affects him mostly—roads. In 1909 the farmers of this country not only fed more than eighty millions of people, but sent across the sea a billion five hundred millions of farm products. This preserved the balance of trade with all the world, and gave five hundred millions to the country to set aside for the proverbial rainy day. Had this not been, a billion dollars would have had to have been sent abroad to pay import duties. It was enough to pay the immense appropriations of Congress and still add half a billion to the national wealth. In the face of all this, the Federal government has done not a thing for good roads.

The forerunners of a national highway from New York south through the State. I believe the time is at hand when the government will spend money on that road. I believe we shall see a road from Asheville and the west through to the coast. It is bound to come. The duty of the press lies in hastening the day.

**A Woman's Heroism.**

Mobile, Ala., Special.—W. L. Samson, bridge-keeper for the Louisville & Nashville at Bayou Sara, Ala., early Thursday night was in his loft near the bridge when lightning killed him and threw his body into the water in front of his wife and little child. Mrs. Samson remained at the bridge all Thursday night and the greater part of Friday alone with her child, seeing that trains could safely pass the structure. As it was not a stopping point she could not get assistance until Saturday when she succeeded in flagging a train.

**Condition of Cotton Crop.**

Washington, Special.—The condition of the cotton crop by States for June 25, 1909, June 25, 1908, and the ten year average respectively follows: Virginia, 76, 92 and 84; North Carolina, 75, 89 and 84; South Carolina, 77, 84, 81; Georgia, 79, 83, 81; Florida, 83, 84, 85; Alabama, 64, 82 and 80; Mississippi, 61, 84, 86; Louisiana, 62, 80, 81; Texas, 79, 80, 80; Arkansas, 76, 85 and 81; Tennessee, 80, 89, 84; Missouri, 83, 87, 84; Oklahoma, 84, 64, 82.

**Boll Weevil Reaches Mississippi.**  
New Orleans, Special.—A report that the boll weevil in its flight eastward has reached Pike county, Mississippi, and that several specimens were found near Magnolia, that State, is contained in The Picayune's weekly summary of cotton crop conditions in Mississippi and Louisiana. The pest appears to have gained an early start this season in the infested territory and planters are abandoning weevil ridden cotton.

**FEMININE NEWS NOTES.**

The Queen of Rumania has written thirty volumes.

Florence Nightingale has entered her ninetieth year.

Queen Alexandra is said to be against woman suffrage.

By a recent decree women are not allowed to engage in bullfights in Spain.

Patents for inventions relating to flying machines have been applied for by British women.

Miss Mary Harriman, eldest daughter of E. H. Harriman, gave an Erie ferryboat for a consumptive camp to Brooklyn.

The Sisterhood of Emanu-El has just opened a new branch in the form of a home for Jewish girls in East Sixty-first street, New York City.

Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini, Superior-General of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, has returned to this country from Brazil.

Miss Josephine R. Upham has accepted the post of woman missionary in the new American Seamen's Friend Society Institute in West street, New York City.

Mme. Popova, a Russian woman, has invented a rudderless airship, which she has named the annulated dragon because of the peculiar shape of its body.

Miss Charlotte Church, who is teaching in a new schoolhouse on the Necanicum, Oregon, is "baching" in a cabin about a mile from her school, having no near neighbors but wild animals.

A wife in New York City who got a decree of separation in 1901, with \$20 a week alimony, told the court the other day that it has cost her nearly \$20 every week since that time to collect the \$20.

There are in this country about 120,000 physicians and 35,000 dentists.

## TAR HEEL CHRONICLES

Happenings And Doings Gleaned From All Parts Of The Old North State.

**Shot Down by Officer.**

Durham, Special.—Sheriff J. F. Harward returned Wednesday at 3:15 from Virginia, Va., where Charles Carroll, a Durham tough, a badly wanted for various and sundry devilties. Carroll has been eluding the officers here for the past three years. His worst offense is burglary, breaking into a house and stealing \$18. He has stolen chickens enough to make the most approved colored thief everlastingly jealous and has made blockade liquor of cheap chemicals and general cussedness to pollute every stream in the county. He has always managed to escape when in trouble, but was shot once by Deputy Belvin when he was chased by the Durham man. When captured Carroll made a break, but was shot down and was brought to Denison, Va., on a cot. The Durham officers met him there and brought him here. His pal escaped, but bloodhounds were put on his track and he is expected to be bagged. Carroll, in person, is the least pretty of men. He is 6 feet, 8 inches with the most elongated legs. He has the reputation of being able to outrun a horse, has been frequently known to catch a rabbit and in a foot race against Deputy Belvin is the only man who has ever distanced him. It was in one of these chases that caused Captain Belvin to shoot at him and injure him in the hand. There are so many charges against this fellow that nobody knows which one he must face first. He will doubtless be given a hearing on the count for burglary.

**The Current Turned On at the Sanford Mills.**

Sanford, Special.—Electric power from the Carolina Power and Light Company's plant at Buckhorn Falls was turned on at Sanford Cotton Mills Tuesday morning and now their 11,000 spindles and 400 looms, which were formerly run by a 450-horse-power engine supplied by steam from four 100-horse-power boilers, now turn at the hum of electric motors. This is the second manufacturing plant in our town to use electric power, the Sanford Ice Plant the first, and others will follow as early as wiring can be done, the power line having been completed only a few weeks ago.

**Wagon Shaft Plunged in Messenger Boy's Body.**

Salisbury, Special.—Clarence Monroe, aged thirteen, a Western Union messenger boy, son of Mrs. Robert Monroe, of this city, was seriously injured here late Tuesday afternoon while on a bicycle. In avoiding a collision with a street car he ran into a delivery wagon, the shaft of which pierced him in the side. So terrific was the blow that it required two men to pull the boy from the shaft. His shoes were torn from his feet. In an unconscious condition he was carried to a physician's office for treatment, and his condition is decidedly precarious.

**Maud Kelly Convicted.**

Raleigh, Special.—The court room of Police Justice Stronach was jammed to the limit Monday—black and white were there to hear the trial of the abandoned white woman, Maud Keely, lately captured at Rocky Mount and brought here last Friday. She was convicted on evidence by three State's witnesses of unlawful relations with William Jones, a negro hackman.

Last week Jones was sentenced for 18 months on the roads. Monday the Kelly woman, convicted of being his paramour, was given the same sentence.

**The Squirrel aMn.**

Durham, Special.—Maurice Massey, a negro man of 52 years of age, came into town last week with a load of squirrels, making 582 that he has killed and sold. The old fellow has developed a decoy that is fatal to them. He can so thoroughly imitate the rodents that they run up his gun and are slain. He has come to be known as "the squirrel man," and furnishes a large number of patrons.

**Hogs Dying From Cholera.**

Rocky Mount, Special.—There is a report from several parts of the two counties that cholera is working havoc with the hogs just at present, and that many are dying of the disease. The disease seems more prevalent in the section between here and Sharpsburg and heavy losses have been reported within the last two weeks by farmers who live in this neighborhood. One farmer in this neighborhood and within a few miles of this city is reported to have lost over twenty-five last week.

**Changes at A. and M.**

Raleigh, Special.—Dr. Burton J. Ray, of Raleigh, has been appointed to an instructor's position in the chemical department at the A. and M. College. He is a son of Prof. John E. Ray, of this city. Dr. Ray is a graduate of Wake Forest and completed his graduate work at Cornell University this year.

Dr. L. F. Williams, who served as an instructor in chemistry for the past two years, has been promoted to the grade of an assistant professor. Dr. Williams is a graduate of Trinity College and completed his graduate work at John Hopkins University.

Another Raleigh boy, Mr. Frank W. Sherwood, now holds a position at A. and M., being located in the State Experiment Station. He graduated at A. and M., this year, in the Department of Industrial Chemistry, and was appointed as an assistant chemist in the experiment station. The changes and addition will greatly strengthen the faculty in the Department of Chemistry and the staff in the experiment station.

**Banks Declare Dividends.**

Charlotte, Special.—The snug sum of \$73,250 was distributed in cash in the form of semi-annual dividends to the fortunate holders of stock of the several Charlotte banks on July 1st. Of this aggregate, the Commercial National will pay out \$25,000, which is 5 per cent on its capital of \$500,000; the Merchants and Farmers, \$10,000, which is 5 per cent on its capital of \$200,000; the First National, \$15,000, which is 5 per cent on its capital of \$300,000; the American Trust Company, \$14,000, which is 4 per cent on its capital of \$350,000; the Charlotte National, \$7,500, which is 3 per cent on its capital of \$250,000, and the Southern Loan and Savings Bank, \$2,000 which is 4 per cent on its capital of \$50,000. The Union National, which is only two years old, does not declare semi-annual dividends but returns all the profits to the surplus fund of the bank.

Collectively speaking, all of the local banks have enjoyed a half-year of marked prosperity.

**Drowned in Yadkin River.**

Spencer, Special.—Claude Livingston, aged 20 years, of Jerusalem, Davie county, was drowned in the Yadkin river near that place Sunday at noon while in bathing with a party of young friends. He was swimming in 15 feet of water some distance from the bank, when he was noticed to throw up his hands and sink. His friends made every effort to save him, but were powerless, and his body did not reappear until it was recovered from the bottom of the river several hours after the tragedy.

The cause of the drowning is unknown, but it is presumed Mr. Livingston was seized with a cramp and lost his powers of locomotion.

**Must Go To Trial.**

Raleigh, Special.—Governor Kitchin has declined to grant a pardon to Susan Hoyle, a 70-year-old white woman indicted at the August term, 1905, criminal court of Burke county. She was charged with arson. Being adjudged insane the woman was not tried, but committed to the criminal insane department of the State Prison. Governor Kitchin declined to grant the pardon on the ground that the woman had not been convicted and the Constitution requires conviction before the governor is authorized to pardon. It was stated that she will return to Burke county for trial and that the solicitor may not prosecute the case.

**Bond Issue Held Up.**

Raleigh, Special.—On account of the fact that not every part of the act voting a bond issue of \$500,000 was read three times in the last legislature, a question of validity has arisen and the Supreme court will be asked to pass upon it at its fall session. The bond issue is therefore held up.

**They Were Walking Some.**

Statesville, Special.—Master Julian Morrison, son of Mr. J. K. Morrison, and Master Miles Cowles, son of Mrs. W. H. H. Cowles, of Statesville, did some walking Tuesday. The boys recently walked to Wilkes county for the exercise and novelty of the thing, and spent a week there with relatives and friends of Miles. And they returned home a-foot. They left Wilkesboro Tuesday morning at 6:30 o'clock and reached their homes here last evening at 8 having made the tramp of probably 40 miles in a single day.