

EXCERPTS FROM OPENING ADDRESS - ST. LOUIS

By

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Joint Committee on Roadside Development

A complete picture of the history of Roadside Development would date back to the early Puritan days of New England, when every town and city of Massachusetts had a tree warden, whose duty it was to protect public trees. But it appears that the organization of the District of Columbia, Division of Trees and Parking, created in 1871, and now under the Engineer Department, was one of the first efforts at street tree planting as a public function. In chronological order, it is apparent that Massachusetts was the first State to enact legislation protecting roadside trees (1890). New Jersey passed enabling legislation in 1893 entitled "The New Jersey Shade Tree Statute", and Newark was the first city to recognize the statute by appointing or establishing on January 20, 1904, The Newark, New Jersey Shade Tree Commission. In the same year California enacted similar laws. In 1895 Minnesota empowered the park commissioners of each city to regulate the planting and preservation of shade trees in the streets and public grounds. In 1901 finds the State of Florida passing legislation empowering the county commissioners within the State to improve, by shading, the public grounds and highways of their respective counties, and in the same year Pennsylvania passed tree protecting legislation. In rapid succession New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Ohio passed laws in 1902, and considerable enabling legislation has been enacted since that date in many other States.

Thus, it may be noted that the earliest efforts for shade tree planting developed in the cities, where the crying need first arose - to counteract the loss of natural countryside vegetation resulting from Man's "civilizing" process. As the towns expanded and the influence of the automobile was felt, people began to think of tree planting on a larger scale, broadening the influence into the country, looking to the development of the roadsides.

Massachusetts again seems to have been the pioneer, where records show that first recognition of roadside development started in 1912. Connecticut, Michigan, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Missouri, California, Ohio and Virginia soon followed, until today, due largely to federal interest and legislation the work has become nation-wide in scope.

It was in July, 1930, that the first committee on Roadside Beautification was appointed by the American Association of State Highway Officials. Under the able leadership and ceaseless efforts of Mr. Luther M. Keith of Connecticut, this committee has met annually,

first in Pittsburgh, and then in 1931 at Salt Lake City, 1932 in Hartford and Washington, D. C., 1933 at Milwaukee, 1934 in Santa Fe, and in 1935 in Miami, thereby spreading the educational program for better roadsides to a major portion of the nation. The resolutions offered by the first committee in 1930 are so comprehensive that they are worthy of repetition at this time.

"WHEREAS, Roadside beautification and its varied activities reduces highway maintenance costs by checking erosion, preventing slides and controlling drifting snow, reduces accidents, increases adjacent property value, promotes civic pride, equalizes temperatures, opens and reveals natural beauty, advertises the State and provides a healthful recreation and enjoyment for all highway users.

"THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, THAT

"First: Adequate width of highway right of way be acquired at the earliest time to provide for future widening and a detailed plan of beautification.

"Second: Conservation of natural growth be recognized of first importance and that unnecessary destruction of roadside plants be prohibited.

"Third: The absolute control of the right of way be vested in the Department of Highways.

"Fourth: Responsibility for roadside beautification be vested in a competent person to carry out the work of the Department and to encourage individuals and organizations to assist in beautifying town entrances and the roadside in their localities.

"The Committee is in full accord that the following activities are of primary importance and should be included in the general plan of roadside beautification. They are recommended for consideration by State Highway Departments.

"First: Secure adequate width of right of way to provide for future widening and a detailed plan of beautification.

"Second: Conservation, maintenance and care of desirable natural growing trees, shrubs, vines, flowers and grasses.

"Third: Absolute control of the right of way, including plants, utilities, etc.

"Fourth: Vest responsibility for roadside beautification in a trained and competent person to carry out the work of the Department and to encourage cooperation of interested individuals and organizations in improving town entrances and roadsides in their localities.

"Fifth: Plant, sod or seed slopes to prevent erosion.

"Sixth: Clean up and improve roadsides previous to the planting of trees and shrubs.

"Seventh: Landscape and properly plant road intersections and other suitable areas.

"Eighth: Plant shade and ornamental trees in avenues and groups along rights of way.

"Ninth: Plant evergreen trees for permanent snow breaks to replace temporary snow fences.

"Tenth: Protect, maintain and landscape monuments, mile-stones, and old land marks.

"Eleventh: Protect, develop and maintain desirable roadside springs.

"Twelfth: Maintain roadside trees to permit unobstructed views of traffic and open and reveal unusual scenic vistas.

"Thirteenth: Establish and maintain parks, parking places and comfort stations.

"Fourteenth: Eliminate advertising signs within or over the right of way and regulate such signs adjacent to the highway.

"Fifteenth: Encourage clean and well kept stands, filling stations and other roadside establishments.

"Sixteenth: Promote other activities that will improve and give the public better use of roadsides.

"The Committee realizes that roadside beautification is in its infancy and further studies are suggested before standards are recommended".

Today the majority of our more than 125 million people depend on the automobile and bus in their quest for recreation as well as business. Did not our forefathers recognize and declare in the Declaration of Independence, that the inalienable rights of man are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness? This modern trend for the pursuit of happiness, being along our highways, places a great responsibility on highway administrations. The opportunity is ours, and the time has come for the formulation of a comprehensive program, workable in all sections of the country. May we make here, at this our first conference, a definite contribution to the people of our country - a contribution that will rebound to the glory and credit of all the highway departments and civic agencies here represented, and to our gracious hosts.