

ADDRESS

By

W. D. Waugh of St. Louis.

In 1933 your Committee listed nine States as having trained workers in charge of roadside development. I understand that forty-five States now have special departments for this work. More than half of these States are represented at this meeting.

We have made a fine start in Missouri and our Highway Commission has been generous in its support. Colonel Nelson, one of our Commissioners, has given the matter personal attention. When you travel through our State and see the improvement that has been made on roads in the past six years and remember that ten years ago we still had toll roads in Missouri, and even today have a bounty on wolves, you will see by this comparison the progress that has been made. Our road system is well started and beautification seems to be the next step.

St. Louis papers last week stated that 71 per cent of the automobiles in the world were in the United States and Canada. Probably not more than 5 per cent of the users of these automobiles have knowledge of road building, while 95 per cent look for comfort, safety, scenery and atmosphere. It is this 95 per cent who appreciate, understand and enjoy roadside improvement and beautification. Comfort is provided these motorists through modern types of pavement, safety features, properly banked curves on wide radii, wider pavements, and a determined effort to keep all types of obstructions off the highways.

Your work includes the building of lookouts where tourists may stop and enjoy the scenery or historical points, and in this connection I would like particularly to call attention to a lookout recently built by the City of Keokuk, Iowa, at Rand Park, which not only improves the park on the edge of the bluffs of the Mississippi, but provides a comfortable resting place, with rustic chairs and benches. It overlooks one of the finest views in the Mississippi Valley. I understand that this work was done by Mr. Ayers, Street Commissioner of Keokuk.

As road construction depends to a large extent on revenue from gasoline taxes and license fees, we realize the importance of the tourist, and having provided modern highways through the States our ability to attract the tourist would be through what we might call "atmosphere". Each State has local interest, natural or historic, which is of interest to tourists, and these should be preserved and made readily accessible. Santa Fe, New Mexico, for instance, has made a determined effort to maintain the old Spanish architecture, even though the new buildings may be made of concrete. Each State has something native which should be perpetuated.

It seems to me that it would be very helpful if an effort were made to revive the names for certain highways, such as the Lincoln Highway, Dixie Highway, Meridian Highway, Santa Fe Trail - and it would also mean something to tourists to refer to U. S. Highway 66 as the "Main Street of America".

Your work and your discussions will probably be confined to the various methods of improving the sites along the highways and will, of course, consider these improvements from an economical standpoint, but it might be of interest to take the viewpoint of the tourist. On a recent trip from Canada I had as a passenger a relative who had traveled considerably but had not toured by automobile any great distance in the past ten years. On arrival in St. Louis I inquired as to what points in the trip had been of most interest and it was revealing to find that roadside development and improvement had stood out prominently. There was a development along Highway 24, beside the Maumee River, in Ohio and Indiana. Also in Indiana my passenger was particularly interested in the wide highways and the rubbish barrels. We did not stop to see if there was any rubbish in the barrels, but there certainly was none on the pavement, which recalls the old saying that "you can see by the papers where the picnics have been". Indiana's Meridian Highway, north of Indianapolis, also brought a considerable amount of favorable comment. Crossing Illinois we found a number of State maintained picnic grounds, and attention was particularly attracted to the prevalence of hollyhocks planted about the gates at the entrances to farms. Whether this was done by the Highway Department or some Garden Association, we did not know.

In Missouri the Highway Department has carefully marked with name boards the names of creeks, rivers and, of course, towns. These boards not only have value as identification points but often start a new line of thought with tourists who may have been traveling for a long time and have run out of conversation.

In Oklahoma, on certain highways, particularly south of Oklahoma City, I found roadside telephones for emergency use. It seems to me that this is an excellent service for the tourists in thinly populated sections.

Many States have "Pure Water" signs. If these are properly regulated it should be an encouragement to towns, filling stations, and other public places to strive for authority to display such signs. The filling stations which, besides rendering the usual services, offer to fill the thermos bottle or jug with pure water, would be long remembered and referred to by the tourist.

There are a number of improvements which from personal observation I should like to recommend to your Association, particularly the use of flood lights on railroad crossings. In these days of long freight trains, it is possible to approach a crossing over which the locomotive

may have passed by a considerable distance. In uncertain weather conditions, where the visibility is not good, this danger may not be realized until too late to make a stop. There is also the condition at industrial railroad crossings where a train may be switching, and although a flagman is stationed at the crossing he may not be noticed by cars approaching from the other side of the train.

Then there should be a uniform railroad sign put up by the railroads, and I strongly recommend the standardization of the old sawbuck railroad sign and that permission be given the railroads to put this sign on the highway right-of-way at least 300 feet from the crossing. The Missouri-Pacific, I understand, uses eight or nine different types of railroad signs which it is required to provide to comply with different laws.

At the last session of the Missouri Legislature a bill was passed to require high board fences around wrecked car lots which might be located within 200 feet of a highway. It seems to me that this law has considerable merit and certainly would be helpful in removing such unsightly spots.

In certain localities much has been done towards removing the billboards. This seems to be a difficult problem, but any progress made in the removal of these signs would certainly be helpful. Apparently the most progress has been made by local groups who have organized and agreed not to lease property for the erection of signs.

In Missouri, before we had completely organized the roadside development department, considerable progress was made in beautification of highways through district competition. Citizens would form local groups to do what they could to improve a particular section.

In connection with your work, I believe that the time has arrived to give consideration to the rapidly increasing membership in the Walk Ways Association which is sponsored in St. Louis by the Community Council. The growth of this Walk Ways Association in the past three years has been remarkable, particularly in the East. There are a number of Walk Ways adjacent to our highway system in the St. Louis area and we have recently opened a two and a half mile stretch through Forest Park.

Consideration should also be given to people who find it necessary to walk on the highways. Various suggestions have been made in this respect, even to a concrete sidewalk being built on the shoulder.

The type of work that your Association is doing is of intense interest to all automobile users within your State, and in Missouri we have developed several associations of citizens who are prepared to cooperate and assist the Highway Department in every worth while project.

We have one group known as the "Citizens' Road Committee" which represents a cross-section of citizens throughout the State. They are having a meeting in Jefferson City tomorrow which five or six hundred members are to attend.

The St. Louis Chamber of Commerce has a membership of approximately three thousand, representing a cross-section of business and professional life in St. Louis, and our Highway Committee is made up of seventy-three members of the Chamber of Commerce who are particularly interested in highway work and are ready to cooperate at all times. This Committee considers the highway problems in this district, and after a thorough study makes its recommendations to the Board of Directors, whose approval means the backing of the entire Chamber of Commerce. There have been frequent occasions when members of this Committee have taken time from their business to the extent of making door-to-door calls on business men and citizens in certain districts, in order to secure support for some ordinance which would mean the improvement of our highway systems. They have also been helpful to the Highway Department in vigorously opposing plans or politics which might be detrimental to our highways.