

Michigan Observes Highway Milestone

Sixty years ago, the Michigan Legislature took action that paved the way for creation of the Michigan State Highway Department.

A concurrent resolution introduced in the Legislature on May 15, 1901, called for appointment of a committee to study the need for a state highway system.

The resolution, which was sponsored by State Sen. Horatio S. (Good Roads) Earle, was passed by the Senate the day it was introduced and the House of Representatives the next day and was immediately signed by Gov. Aaron T. Bliss, who named Earle Chair-

man of a seven-member committee.

STATE HIGHWAY Commissioner John C. Mackie said passage of the resolution marked the first time that the people of Michigan took steps to provide themselves with good roads.

"Up to then, Michigan's road system had consisted of a few military routes, some private toll roads and local rural roads," Mackie said. "The resolution of 1901 opened the way for Michigan to have a unified road system covering the entire state."

THE COMMITTEE issued a report in 1902 calling for a constitutional amendment to allow the state to give financial aid to counties for construction of roads.

Rep. Edwin Denby of Detroit, who later served as Secretary of the Navy under President Harding, termed the Committee's report "one of the most dangerous ever to come before the session" and the Legislature defeated a resolution to amend the Constitution.

However, Gov. Bliss was impressed by the Committee's report and he proposed creation of a "State Highway Department" in

his message to the Legislature in 1903.

THE LAWMAKERS passed a law creating the Highway Department and Bliss named Earle as Commissioner but the law was ruled unconstitutional by the Attorney General.

Although unable to spend any of the \$5,000 that had been appropriated by the Legislature and deprived of both salary and expenses, Earle continued his crusade for good roads throughout the state. In 1905 the voters approved a Constitutional amendment allowing the

state to participate financially in construction of roads.

The Legislature promptly passed another law creating the State Highway Department and Gov. Fred M. Warner named Earle as its first Commissioner.

EARLE WON NATIONAL fame by building the first mile of concrete highway in the world on Woodward Ave. between Six and Seven-Mile Roads in 1909.

Engineers from all parts of the country inspected it and some predicted it wouldn't last a year. But it carried 25 million vehicles before it was replaced in 1922.

EARLE FAILED to gain re-appointment as Highway Commissioner in 1909 and in 1913 ran for

6-D THE BIRMINGHAM (MICH.) ECCENTRIC July 6, 1961

the office on the National Progressive (Bull Moose) ticket after it had been made elective by the Legislature.

Frank F. Rogers, who was Earle's Deputy Commissioner from 1905 to 1909, won the contest. Earle—who was not an engineer—ran third. He died in 1935 at the age of 80 after seeing many of his highway dreams come true.

Education Groups Plan Joint Confab

A move destined to better serve the educational needs of Birmingham as well as the entire state comes with the announcement that the Michigan Association of School Boards and the Michigan Association of School Administrators will meet in the first of a series of joint Annual Conventions to be held in Detroit's Cobo Hall this September.

Frank Zeiter, MASA president, and Earl H. Place, MASA president, said that their respective groups, meeting jointly for the first time in the state's history, will enter into an exchange of ideas on the latest information, techniques and materials in the educational field with the avowed result of "doing a good job even better for the people of the State of Michigan."

They have named R. George Wood, a 25-year veteran in the convention-exposition field, as convention manager.

Birmingham representatives will be among an estimated 5,000 school board members from throughout the state and some 800 school administrators and other personnel attending convention business meetings, scheduled concurrently with an exposition which will cover all phases of school services, materials, supplies, etc.



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