

PROSPERITY COMES TO COUNTY BECAUSE OF ROAD DEVELOPMENT

Douglas County Leads the State in Building Good Roads—Program for Year Calls for Much Substantial Road Building—Pacific Highway to be Completed—Lateral Roads to be Improved

(By Charles V. Stanton.)

It was long before Nero's fiddling at the burning of Rome was interrupted and disturbed by the clatter of chariots banging over the rough cobblestones, that people began talking about good roads. But in modern times, as in days of old, people in power fiddled while travelers continued to rattle and bump over the uneven surfaces that marked the thoroughfares, and so it has not been until recent years that real road building has been started. But even with the construction of permanent roads a new thing, it is not difficult to see the advantages that are beginning to manifest themselves. New businesses are coming in, new people are moving to the country, new development is taking place. A person needs to go back only a few short weeks into the business affairs of the county to recount several business deals of major importance that have taken place. It takes more than an unparalleled climate to bring enterprising business men into a community; it requires much more that superlative scenery to attract men and women who are bent upon garnering the almighty dollar, consequently there must be some other attraction, which has caused men and women to leave paying enterprises to settle in this community in the hope of bringing about even greater gains and this magnet is beyond doubt the spirit of development and optimism which has caused the people of this community to hurl defiance in the face of opposition and overwhelmingly decide to devote their finances to the upbuilding and improvement of the entire community by constructing and maintaining good roads.

Good roads have marked the growth of civilization. As the arts have progressed and have developed the minds of people good roads have become paramount issues and in the countries bearing the highest marks of civilization road building will be found to be keeping pace, limited only by the bounds of natural physical conditions.

Douglas county has attained a point where good roads are not only desired, but are demanded. Facilities for travel have reached such a stage that no longer will people tolerate the quagmires and mud holes which allow only the slowest and most crude methods of transportation to be utilized. With the constant improvements being made to motor vehicles, and with the gainful relation of these vehicles to agricultural and business life, public sentiment demands a change in the facilities for travel and as public sentiment is the guiding force of all government then more and more importance is being given to the subject of good roads.

A few years ago people were content with roads which in winter could be traveled only on horseback or with light teams. In those days little was thought of hard surfaced roads and few people even dreamed of seeing such roads built in a wholesale manner. In fact, had such a subject even been broached, public bankruptcy would have been predicted in no uncertain terms.

Then the motor car began to be seen on such roads as could be traveled, and people with teams carefully avoided these roads in order to keep from being stampeded when out enjoying a pleasant ride, and the noisy, banging motor cars were heartily cursed and maligned. But more and more improvements were made and gradually the motor car has been adopted as the standard mode of travel. And now we are witnessing the rapid growth of the freight transportation industry

and hundreds of new freight lines are being established with modern automobile trucks hauling articles of commerce in competition with the railroads and apparently gaining headway in spite of a vigorous opposition.

The motor vehicles and tractors have wrought great changes on the farms of the country and more rapid transportation has become necessary. Likewise business has felt the advantage and stimulating effect of motor travel and consequently the demand for better roads becomes more widespread.

The improvement in roads, however, has not been accomplished without a struggle. It is human nature to bring opposition to bear upon the thing that is new, and when good roads began to be talked there were those who still advocated clinging to the old mud holes and devoting the money to some more worthy purpose. But as usual, the forces of advancement won and the good road campaigns started.

One need not go back many years to find the first substantial and permanent improvements made in roads, particularly in this section of the state. Prior to the adoption of the system of permanent roads thousands upon thousands of dollars were thrown away upon roads which were eventually abandoned, the money so spent being literally wasted. If Douglas county had used the money which was spent in improving and grading the Roberts mountain road, one of the worst sections of highway in the northwest, it could have constructed many miles of paved road like the beautiful and valuable cut-off which has at last eliminated that terrible death trap which for years menaced the lives and safety of all those who passed that way.

Thousands upon thousands of dollars were spent in efforts to eliminate dangers which could only be lessened, and then with a little study and a little investigation a new route was opened up, taking away the dangers which cost so many lives and which resulted in so many injuries and such great losses in property, and gave in return a beautiful scenic road, paved throughout its entire length and created at a low cost in comparison with the useless and wasteful expenditures upon that thoroughfare which for many years was the dread of all those forced to travel through the county.

This is only one of the many such roads which have existed for many years, while people went on without realization of the great value of the hard surfaced road. Then some of the philanthropic capitalists of the state took some of Portland's abundant scenery and capitalized it by building a paved road so that people might see some of the great sights to be afforded along the Columbia river, and with the construction of the first few miles of the Columbia river highway, people suddenly came to realize the great value accruing from good roads and all at once there began a clamor for road improvement and road building.

There is no need to trace the results. The accomplishments have been of such recent date that nearly everyone is well acquainted with the mighty strides the state of Oregon and Douglas county have made. The Pacific highway, paved throughout its entire length, is a reality which will result within an incredibly short time. Other main thoroughfares opening up new and wealthy sections of the state, are being built as rapidly as time and finances will allow. In road activity Oregon is second to none, and in road building

Douglas county has taken the place of one of the foremost counties of the state.

In Douglas county the Pacific highway is nearly all paved. Next spring contracts will be let to complete the work and this thoroughfare will be hard surfaced throughout its entire length. The commission also plans to construct a number of new bridges in this county and the money is ready so that the county will be asked for nothing more. Only a few more months will see this road completed and thrown open for all kinds of travel. Already the advantage of an all winter highway is manifest. Daily automobiles from points in Washington and California pass through the city carrying parties bent on either pleasure or business. Tourist travel has been maintained even in the most severe weather and business by auto has been kept up regardless of unusual storms.

For the first time in the history of the state, the Pacific highway has been carrying all-winter travel without hindrance or delay. In former years there were many spots where assistance was necessary and Pass Creek canyon is not yet a forgotten memory, but now the canyon, Smith's hill, and even South Stephens street, have lost their menace and with drawn curtains the motorists drive rapidly along the highways unmindful of the winter storms which in past years would have prevented them from moving further than a few miles from their own homes.

While the Pacific highway has been the project given chief place in the construction program, other roads have not been neglected. Douglas county has voted two large bond issues, aggregating over a million and a half dollars, for the purpose of constructing new roads in all parts of the county to build up the agricultural and business wealth of the community.

Next year will see the Roseburg-Coos Bay road, by way of Camas Valley, brought much nearer completion. This road has long been the dream of the enterprising citizens of this community. Connecting directly with the chief centers of the coast country, it holds a great commercial value for both communities and will figure largely in the trade of the future. Already a great deal of improvement work has been done and the hardest part of the construction has been completed. Affairs are now being shaped so that early next year the county and state, working on a co-operative basis, will finish the section between Roseburg and Camas Valley, and an all-year road, capable of carrying heavy traffic to and from the coast towns, will be finished.

Another road of primary importance is the one which doubtless will be eventually known as the "Umpqua highway."

The Umpqua river has its source and its mouth in the same county and throughout its entire length is within the boundaries of the one division of government. Along it are some of the most scenic spots to be found in the world, while the forests which occupy much of its basin hold untold wealth. Power projects are there in great numbers, waiting only for development to bring them to view. Great potential resources are to be found there and some day a highway built from the source to the mouth will open up these great resources and cause capital, ever upon the lookout for opportunity, to realize some of the latent possibilities of this great country.

This road from one end of the stream to the other, is nearer actuality than some people real-

(Continued on page 22.)

