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SPRING THE TIME FOR ROAD WORK

So Says Department of Agriculture.

GOOD WHEN SOIL IS DAMP.

If Attention to Roads is Put Off Until the Latter Part of Summer the Surface Becomes Dry and the Toll Expended is Unsatisfactory.

It is a great mistake to put off working roads until August or September, according to road experts of the United States department of agriculture. The roads should be worked when the soil is damp so as to make the soil bake when it dries out. If the roads are worked when they are dry it takes more power to draw the machine, and besides, dry earth and dust retain moisture and quickly rot after rains. The use of clods, sods, weeds or vegetable matter in building earth roads should be avoided, because they also retain moisture.

By using the road machine in the spring while the soil is soft and damp the surface is more easily shaped and soon packs down into a dry, hard crust, which is less liable to become dusty in summer and muddy in winter.

Repairs to roads should be made when needed and not once a year after crops are laid by. Because of its simplicity, efficiency and cheapness, the split log drag or some similar device is destined to come into more and more general use. With the drag properly built and its use well understood, the maintenance of earth and gravel roads becomes a simple and inexpensive matter. Care should be taken to make the log so light that one man can lift it with ease, as a light drag can be drawn by two medium sized horses and responds more readily to various methods of hitching and the shifting position of the operator than a heavier one. The best material for the drag is



THE WIDTH OF THE EARTH ROAD WILL DEPEND ON THE TRAFFIC.

a dry cedar log, though elm, walnut, box elder or soft maple are excellent. Oak, hickory or ash is too heavy. The log should be from seven to ten feet long and from eight to ten inches in diameter. It should be split carefully as near the center as possible and the heaviest and best slab chosen for the front. When the soil is moist, but not sticky, the drag does the best work. As the soil in the field will bake if plowed wet, so the road will bake if the drag is used on it when it is wet. If the roadway is full of holes or badly rutted the drag should be used once when the road is soft and slushy.

The earth road can best be crowned and ditched with a road machine and not with picks and shovels, scoops and plows. One road machine with a suitable power and operator will do the work of many men with picks and shovels and, in addition, will do it better. If the road is composed of fine clay or soil it will sometimes pay to resurface it with top soil from an adjacent field which has sand or gravel mixed with it.

Storm water should be disposed of quickly before it has had time to penetrate deeply into the surface of the road. This can be done by giving the road a crown or slope from the center to the sides. For an earth road which is twenty-four feet wide the center should be not less than six inches nor more than twelve inches higher than the outer edges of the shoulder. The narrow road which is high in the middle will become rutted almost as quickly as one which is flat, for the reason that on a narrow road all the traffic is forced to use only a narrow strip.

The width of the earth road will depend on the traffic. As a rule, twenty-five or thirty feet from ditch to ditch is sufficient if the road is properly crowned. Ordinarily the only ditches needed are those made with the road machine, which are wide and shallow. Deep narrow ditches wash rapidly, especially on steep slopes. The earth road should not be loosened, dug up or plowed up any more than is necessary. It should be gradually raised, not lowered; hardened, not softened.

MERIT SYSTEM AND HIGHWAYS.

Two applications of the merit system to highway work which will be noted with satisfaction by road builders have recently been made.

In Connecticut state employment has been put upon a merit system basis by means of the state civil service law which became effective on Aug. 1, 1913. As applied to the highway department, this law puts all of the officials and employees, with the exception of the state highway commissioner, into the classified service.

In New York state the appointment of six division engineers has been made by competitive examination. A description of the method of conducting these examinations was given by First Deputy Commissioner George A. Ricker at the recent special road meetings of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

It has long been recognized that efficiency in the conduct of highway work could best be obtained by the selection of men with regard only to their fitness and ability, and it has been generally believed that the absolute elimination of political considerations from appointments of this kind was desirable. But while these have been generally accepted as abstract principles, their actual application has not been as frequent as might be desired.—Good Roads.

ROAD REPAIRING A REAL ECONOMY.

Funds Should Be Conserved by Repairs at Necessary Times.

The office of public roads of the department of agriculture is making a strong effort to focus the mind of the country on the fact that maintenance and effective repair are of equal importance with the actual improvement of bad roads. Investment of money in new roads does not become real economy until provision is made for keeping these new roads in condition after they are built. If a new road is built and then allowed to fall into disrepair much of the original investment is simply wasted, says Municipal Engineering.

Europe, generally speaking, is ahead of the United States in the matter of road improvement, but Great Britain is struggling with a problem similar to the one that confronts the people of the United States. In England, Scotland and Wales there are no fewer than 2,110 separate authorities, who between them administer 175,487 miles of roads, or an average of only eighty-two miles apiece. In Scotland, apart from the big cities, there are over 200 burghs, one-half of which have but ten miles of road apiece to maintain. Needless to say such a minute mileage is insufficient to keep the road plant fully occupied all the year around and renders the employment of a skilled engineer impossible for economical reasons.

Officials of the office of public roads when called upon for assistance by the various states are pointing out that road building is an art based on a science and that trained men and experienced men are necessary to secure the best results.

Statisticians have found that, although the average expenditure on the improvement of roads exceeds \$1,000,000 a day, a large portion of the money in the United States is wasted because of the failure to build the right type of road to meet the local requirements or the failure to provide for the continued maintenance of the improvement.

The various states and counties within the last six months have taken a greater interest in road improvements than ever before in the history of the United States, and there is now a strong movement to conserve the roads of the country where they are improved. Scientific maintenance will be one of the chief features of the work of the office of public roads throughout the present year.

GOOD ROADS IN ARIZONA.

Many Miles of Highway Improved in the Southwest.

Many miles of country roads have been improved in the southwestern country by the application of caliche, which, if properly handled, gives satisfaction for a country road of moderate cost. Last season three miles of road near Phoenix were improved by the application of caliche and a wearing surface of oiled sand and gravel.

Caliche is a local name for a calcareous, cement-like deposit which occurs in great abundance in many parts of Arizona, particularly in and near the foothills. When pulverized, wet and compacted by traffic or rolling it forms a macadam or concrete-like mass of moderate hardness and fairly high degree of toughness.

The engineer states that the road has a very satisfactory surface, but it remains to be seen whether the sand and oil will last as long as the caliche base.

The cost of the road was about \$5,000 per mile. Caliche was hauled from one and three-quarters to four and three-quarter miles and the oil from four and one-half to seven and one-half miles.—Engineering Record.

DEATH PENALTY UP

ABOLITION AMENDMENT WILL BE VOTED ON

Paul Turner, Member of Anti-Capital Punishment League, Submits an Amendment

The voters of Oregon will have another opportunity to determine at the coming election whether capital punishment should be abolished.

Undismayed by the overwhelming defeat of the proposition at the last election, Paul Turner, of Portland, member of the Anti-Capital Punishment League has submitted to the Secretary of State for approval as to form, an amendment to the constitution providing for the abolition of capital punishment. He said the amendment would be offered at the November election.

Mr. Turner proposes adding to article 1 of the constitution and repealing all sections conflicting with

it, the following:
 "The death penalty shall not be inflicted upon any person under the laws of Oregon. The maximum punishment which may be inflicted shall be life imprisonment."
 It is reported that Mr. Turner is responsible for the amendment and that the Anti-Capital Punishment League is not co-operating with him. The law provides that all measures for initiative and referendum must be submitted to the Secretary of State for inspection as to form.

Lava Beds Gets Publicity
 The San Francisco Chronicle of Sunday, April 12, contains a page illustrated writeup of the Modoc Lava Beds, written by William Wagner, formerly of Lakeview. The article is well written and the pictures show many interesting scenes and individuals connected with the early days and the Indian outbreak in that picturesque region. Among the individuals is a picture of L. D. Applegate who took a prominent part in the Modoc Indian war.

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