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“Getting Maine Out of the Mud” The “Good Roads” Movement in Maine during the Progressive Era

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“Getting Maine Out of the Mud”

The “Good Roads” Movement in Maine during the Progressive Era

Lee Webb

July 2018

Preface

In 2008, I was considering writing a thesis on the progressive era in Maine which would require analyzing the growth of a more “activist” state in the period from 1890 to 1920. I started to look in detail at the growth of state activity and spending during that period, and there were two areas which were the most important: roads and schools.

I first concentrated on roads and looked at how they were constructed, maintained, and financed in the 19th century, and then looked at the changes debated by the Legislature, the positions taken by the governors, and the changes in state spending. By 1920, the system was and change in every respect. I also reviewed the academic literature (none on Maine) on the changes taking place in other states, the role of the League of American Wheelman, and the actions of the US Department of Agriculture.

The result was a set of research memorandums that I wrote to myself. I then decided to rewrite many of them in papers. I did not pursue the idea of writing my thesis on the progressive era in Maine (although I have written a long paper on that subject) and thus I did not develop my argument about the development of roads and highways in Maine to the extent that I would have wished.

I do hope that research paper will be useful to future scholars.

Lee Webb

July 2018

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Introduction: Maine Roads in the 19th Century

In the 19th century, Maine's state government was small and weak. The state consisted of a Legislature that met every two years for ninety days, a Supreme Court, a State Prison at Thomaston, and a hospital for the insane in Augusta across the Kennebec from the State Capitol. The Superintendent of Schools and the Board of Agriculture were the only "state agencies" and each had perhaps four employees. This was a state regime of "charters and godliness." The state Superintendent of Schools was the only state official who administered what might be called a program. He oversaw the allocation to the towns, according to a rigid formula, of "common school funds" – raised from a "mil" tax on all real and individual property and from a portion of a tax on savings banks and national banks. He also was active, in alliance with teachers and school administrators, in trying to professionalize the schools, promote compulsory attendance, and end the "district" school system. Most of the state employees were political hires loyal to one or another of the leaders of the dominant Republican Party.

Maine's state government did not have powerful constituencies fighting for power over programs and funds, as we have today. Regulatory agencies were few and "regulations" fewer still. With the exception of the common school fund, there were no state grants. There were few state contracts. What the state did have was jobs, and they were all patronage appointments. The political parties fought for control of them. The federal government in Maine had more patronage jobs than the state.

This 19th century state government would be challenged and changed in the Progressive era as new economic and social forces released by industrialism and urbanism pushed the state to act in very new ways. One of the most important developments in the transition from the Gilded Age to the Progressive Era in Maine was the political movement for "good roads." This new

political power would create a more capable state and more capable city and town agencies. These agencies would exercise authority, distribute funds, tax, and help certain groups to reach their goals. The new programs would create a new politics, bringing new groups into the system, creating competition for resources that had not existed before, and create new political actors in Augusta. The new programs and policies, as Theda Skocpol has written, would themselves help to create a new politics.

The politics of the state would be quite different. In the past, businessmen came to Augusta to get charters and rights to use public resources. The Legislature helped everyone it could. But when the state began to expand and had resources, however scarce, available, a new competitive politics emerged on who should get those scarce funds. A new state program with a budget created conflict that had not been there before.

The Transportation System in Maine in the Late 19th Century

Up until the last decade of the 19th century, Maine's governors, the legislators, and the state's business leaders paid little attention to the conditions of the state's rural roads and made little effort to improve them. In fact, there appeared to be little pressure even from rural Mainers for better rural roads as most people thought that bad and impassable roads were natural and as much a part of normal rural life as uncontrollable storms, droughts, and blizzards. Powerful business leaders in Maine were more focused on national issues such as the tariff and the gold standard as well as the more immediate tasks of building or operating a new mill or business. The owners of the large mills and factories needed frequent and low-cost transportation and they, unlike the rural towns, had it by the 1890s.

Transportation in Maine between cities and the major mills towns was fairly good. Maine's southern and central counties enjoyed an extensive railroad system operated by the

Boston & Maine and the Maine Central Railroads. In the north the Bangor & Aroostook had recently started running trains to Aroostook, upper Penobscot, and later to Washington County. For some other parts of the state, Maine's major rivers allowed well-piloted schooners and small draft steamships access well into the interior, and the strong flow of the rivers offered no cost transportation for cut logs to reach the pulp and timber mills. Steamships out of Portland, Boston, New York, and Halifax connected Maine's port cities with each other and with the wider world and the Boston & Maine supplied fast service to Boston and southern New England. Portland, Lewiston, and Bangor had constructed good roads extending out into their rural districts.

Maine's Rural Roads

The major problem was the roads in the rural towns. At that time there were no state roads and few well-maintained county roads. Unless by railroad or ship, there was no way to go from one city or mill town to another without going through a rural town – one that had little interest in maintaining roads for city and business travelers' convenience. These towns in between had little interest in or ability to construct and maintain good roads.

In every state, the rural roads, on which the omnipresent horse or ox-drawn wagons travelled, were built, and maintained by a government "system" created decades earlier when farms and villages were largely self sufficient. High transportation costs prevented the movement of goods over long distances. Roads were the responsibility of the towns and cities. State governments were not interested in how towns carried those responsibilities. In respect to the "output" of state government on rural roads, there was practically nothing done in the 1870-1897 period. As late as 1889, most states depended on a system in which rural residents maintained roads by paying off their tax obligations in labor. Some states did not even allow residents to pay

their road obligations in cash. (Gearing, Charles L. *American Highway Policy*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1941, p. 42)

The “Town System” for Building and Maintaining Roads

The statutory language for roads in Maine’s *Revised Statutes* in the 1880s and 1890s was indexed primarily under “ways.” The statutory language for “roads” or “highways” was extremely brief. According to statutes which was last codified in the 1870s, roads were legally the responsibility of the towns, but the towns shifted that responsibility onto autonomous smaller highway “districts” within their towns. Towns were divided into “districts,” and each was managed by a resident chosen as a “surveyor.” The person might be appointed by a road commissioner elected at the town meeting or, by the selectmen, if the town meeting decided not to elect a road commissioner. The selectmen would then inform the surveyor of the tax obligation of every farmer or resident in his district. Town residents had the option of paying their road taxes in cash or in labor. Village residents and the more commercial farmers were likely to pay their taxes in cash. Most farmers, particularly those not rewarded by the cash economy, choose to pay their taxes in labor. Farmers who brought a yoke of oxen, a cart, horse, or a plow received extra credits towards his tax obligation. Interestingly, the surveyor kept his own accounts and received the road tax money directly from his district’s residents. At the end of his year-long term, the surveyor had to account to the selectmen for the cash taxes and labor he had received and indicate which residents had not met their road tax obligations. The selectmen could then pursue those who had not paid or labored by placing liens on their property.

The district surveyor also had a special obligation to keep bridges in repair, and to ensure access in the winter by either breaking a path through snowbanks or by rolling them down. At a

date of his choosing, but usually in either April or October, the surveyor could set a time and place where residents had to gather with their tools to pay off their road tax obligation. An 1891 guide written about Maine's roads, under the auspices of the League of American Wheelmen sketches the problems of road building in Maine. It criticized the practice of allowing men to work out their taxes on roads in the district as the worst ever devised, because the men have little knowledge of road building and spent their time in idle chatter. It reported that road work takes place only when the farmers' other work is finished, even though it was not the best time of the year to build a road. It stated that "road building has never been regarded as a subject worthy of investigation, but that there is increased interest, and perhaps the next generation will benefit from it." (*History of Maine Roads*, p. 7.)

The locally run system produced poor roads. Surveyors did not understand the "technology" of building all weather roads and they did not have the money to purchase professional services or skilled labor. Other than a farm plow, pickaxes and shovels, and a farm wagon, there was no technology. As a result, the local roads had to be constantly repaired. The materials used to build and repair local roads came from the side of the road.

Moreover, since there were many road districts in a town, there was little incentive for residents in one district to upgrade to a high standard their own section of road. One-quarter of a mile of good road could not get you to the village or the railroad station. The neighbors in the district down the road and closer to the village might have less interest, less experience, or fewer taxpayers.

If the system did not create good roads for resident travelling within the town, it certainly did not create good roads for travel between towns, or across counties. Road repair priorities

were set by the surveyor's districts and sometimes by the town meeting. Roads that linked villages within towns got more attention from a town than roads that linked their town to another. Least important were roads that went through their town but were critical for men or wagons that had to travel between two other towns. Some early investments in privately owned turnpikes that supplied strategic connections through a number of towns failed when railroads were built. By the late 19th century, few of the turnpikes that had been built remained. Low-cost city-to-city travel came from the railroads, steamboats on for the major coastal and river towns, and tramp schooners between the small coves and villages on the coast. One important innovation during this period was the great expansion of electrically powered "street railways" that had begun to offer passenger and some freight service between larger cities and towns which were not on a steam railroad line.

New Social Forces Push for "Good Roads"

In the latter part of the 19th century, complacency about the conditions on Maine's and the nation's rural roads began to change dramatically. There were five important reasons: growth in commercial cities and large towns; growth of The League of American Wheelmen; the creation of the Rural Free Delivery program of the US Post Office; the construction of railroads; and the growth of a more commercial agriculture. Mill towns, county seats, and villages serving as retail and distribution centers for their areas grew rapidly in the decades before the turn of the century. Growth was concentrated in towns and cities served by the railroad lines or by coastal and river steamers. High quality consumer goods, farm implements, and machinery were shipped by the large manufacturing firms in the Midwest and Middle Atlantic states that were nurtured by high tariffs. Similarly, local manufacturers of wood products, leather, and shoes, both large and small, were interested in buying increasing amounts of rural products if the price

were right, and a big part of the price was transportation. The cost of shipping by horse and wagon over roads in poor condition or impassable was too high. As a consequence, mill owners, merchants and the professional classes in the cities and villages began to realize that good roads were essential if they were to profitably reach customers and suppliers.

A second formidable force for change was the League of American Wheelmen, a national membership group that began in the 1880 to promote the interests of bicycle owners and enthusiasts. In its first eight years, working with state and city chapters, it lobbied state and city officials to secure the legal rights of bicycles on the roads and highways, and filed court suits for the same. Major bicycle manufacturers occupied leadership positions in the League, giving it a reliable source of funding and skills to create a fairly sophisticated strategy. In 1890, the League introduced uniform road bills in nine states. Each bill would create a state highway commission, the adoption of cash, rather than labor systems, to pay for town roads, and a classification plan for state roads. In its rhetoric, however, the League blamed the farmers and the rural residents for the bad roads.

Farmers did not take well to the League, and at first little legislation was passed. Farmers felt that the League was an organization of the “idle rich” who wanted them to build roads for their members’ selfish interests. In Massachusetts, for example, a proposal to create a state highway commission was defeated in part because it was considered a “bicycle measure.” Farmers felt that the League’s agenda would create a network of roads through rural areas that would be of primary benefit to the urban bicyclists, but the farmers would pay for them in higher taxes. (Mason, Philip Parker. "The League of American Wheelmen and the Good-Roads Movement, 1880-1905." University of Michigan, 1957. pp. 90-93)

While the League stepped back a bit from public identification with new road proposals because of the bad image they had created, they were a powerful force through the 1890s by generating newspaper publicity and new legislation for good roads. In 1893, they had 38,000 members, but by 1898 it had risen to over 103,000. While their direct success in passing state legislation was poor, they were more successful in Congress and in creating national reform coalitions. Due to their efforts, an Office of Road Inquiry was created in the U. S. Department of Agriculture to disseminate information across the country on the conditions of the roads in the states, various reform proposals, and the best road building techniques. Governor Sidney Perham of Maine testified in 1893 in favor of the bill setting up the Office of Road Inquiry. The League was also instrumental in establishing the National League for Good Roads in Chicago in 1893. (Mason, pp. 137, 144-45)

A third strong influence for good roads was the Rural Free Delivery Service, which was begun, under pressure from rural interests, by the U. S. Post Office in 1896. (Mason, LAW, page 200). Instead of being forced to come into the village for their mail, rural residents would have their mail delivered to their home or farm. Described by many as one of the most important steps in bringing rural Americans into the wider world, farmers could pick up their letters, newspapers, and later packages daily at a roadside box. They could also take advantage of the national mail order firms such as Sears-Roebuck and Montgomery-Ward to buy clothes, tools, and farm supplies, thus avoiding the high prices at the village stores, and the price gouging of the railroad express companies. (Hugill, Peter J. "Good Roads and the Automobile in the United States 1880-1929." *Geographical Review* 72, no. 3 (July 1982))

Quickly, RFD routes became one of the most popular programs of the national government. Congressmen and Senators vied with each other to announce new RFD routes for

their states which they had lobbied the Post Office Department to set up. Farmers who lived on proposed or established RFD routes became strong advocates for good roads, because the Post Office reminded local farmers that if the roads and bridges on their routes were not in good condition during every month of the year, and that if any parts were impassable, the routes might be cancelled. (Mason, p. 203). In some cases, the agents had to negotiate written agreements that obligated town officials to keep their roads in good condition. (Mason, p. 203.) By 1903, The Post Office blanketed Maine and the nation with over 15,000 separate RFD routes, creating a powerful force for change.

A fourth force for improved roads until about 1915 was the railroads. Early on, the railroads saw that improved local roads would benefit them economically. The area served profitably by a railroad would expand substantially if good roads made it easier for goods and people to reach their stations. Faced with rising criticism of freight rates from farmers and shippers, railroads saw that better roads to their stations could reduce overall transportation costs to the user without having to reduce their own rates. Railroads also thought that better roads could even out the demand for railroads cars and make them more efficient. Harsh weather often stopped products from reaching railroad stations for days on end, resulting in trains being run with empty cars. Good roads could mean that trains ran regularly and at maximum capacity. Railroads supported the concept of “farm to market” roads as “the market” invariably turned out to be a railroad station. (Mason, pp. 186-187)

A fifth and final major force for change began was the growth of commercial agriculture, led by the successful farmers, who had turned to dairying. These commercial farmers had a direct and strong interest in good rural roads, as they helped them reach railroad stations and ports which connected them to the growing Southern New England cities. Farmers were told

that improved roads could reduce their transportation costs by as much as 60%. (Hugill, *Good Roads*) If rural roads were improved, it was argued that farmers could ship more in each wagon and thus reduce the number of trips, allowing them to spend more time on more profitable activities. (Mason, Page 93). Good roads would also reduce spoilage and damage to products on their way to market, and on the wear and tear on the horses and the wagons. Good roads would also allow farmers to take their products to market when the prices were good, rather than when the roads were good (but the prices low). Dairy farmers, in particular, desperately needed to get their raw milk to the local creameries or to the railway station twice a day or else the milk would spoil, and they would have to feed it to the pigs and take a loss. The commercial farmers, though fewer, were often most active in town and county affairs and they spoke the loudest.

The dairy farmer, like the other farmers who started to focus on diversified and specialized agriculture, had to make substantial investments in barns, machinery, labor, and breeding stock. They began to shift because the traditional farming economy of Maine that prospered until the 1850s had been built around wheat, barley, beef, and wool – all products that after the Civil War faced devastating competition from Midwestern farmers who could ship via the railroads and sell to eastern markets at lower costs than could Maine's farmers.

The collapse of traditional agriculture coupled with the greater opportunities available elsewhere had been the source of the massive migration out of Maine's rural farming towns that began just before the Civil War. Tens of thousands of farmers and rural workers said their goodbyes to their farms and families and moved to Maine's mills towns, the cities of Southern New England or out West.

It was during this period that the more innovative Maine farmers began to shift away from competing with the more efficient Middle West for the grain markets in Southern New England; instead, they turned to producing and selling more perishable crops – the ones that could not be shipped profitably or safely long distances from the Middle West. Maine could provide Southern New England, thanks to its closer location and its good rail and steam ship schedules with perishable crops such as vegetables, orchard fruits, butter, cheese, and especially milk. All these crops required substantial investments often in seeds, fertilizer, equipment, barns, fences, and breeding stock. Also, these crops were more susceptible to damage and bruising than the wheat and feed grains of the past.

The newer and more commercial farmers were one of the first organized groups in Maine to turn to the state government for help. One of the first state-wide associations was the Maine Dairymen's Association, followed soon after by the Maine Pomological Association. They believed that technology and scientific farming was the best strategy for Maine. They secured state funding for their "trade" associations, supported the Maine Agricultural Experiment Station, and provided early, but not consistent, support for the University of Maine as a land grant college to teach and promote agriculture. Their support was key in creating the Maine Board of Agriculture, winning it increased appropriations, and giving it strong regulatory authority over the sale of commercial seeds, fertilizers, feed grains, and nursery trees. Maine protected the interest of farmers in their markets more aggressively than it protected consumers or workers.

The Forces for the Status Quo

While most recognized that better roads were critical to economic growth, there was strong resistance to change, as the existing local district system had strong supporters. This

“system” met the needs of most voters in the rural areas. Most of the farmers were not commercial farmers; they were not active in the cash market. They could not produce crops that needed to get to the market quickly or crops which were heavy. Waiting a few days or a few weeks to take that all-day 10-mile wagon trip was not a real burden. The self-sufficient or marginal farmers were also strapped for cash. They were hostile to the highway reformers’ idea that they should pay their “highway tax” in cash rather than in labor. They had plenty of labor, particularly in the off seasons when road work was scheduled, but little cash. Good roads were not as important to them as they were to the village merchants or the prosperous farmers shipping butter and cheese to markets far to the south, or who were experimenting with producing highly perishable milk for urban markets. And later, when the Legislature required that highway taxes be paid in cash, rural residents opposed increased spending on roads because they felt that village residents and the more affluent farmers were the main beneficiaries, while they, the poorer farmers, would be paying higher taxes.

The Push for Good Roads: The National Scene

Similar conditions existed in many other states, but they had already begun to act. They took construction and repair of roads from the local “districts” and gave it to a larger unit of government, often the town (in New England) or the townships or counties (in the Middle Atlantic and Midwest). In New Hampshire for example, legislation was passed in 1893 which required that a single road board be established by each town, to replace the many road districts. In Ohio in 1898, townships of over 4,500 voters were given the right (but not the obligation) to establish a special board to supervise road building and repair. The state of Wisconsin in 1893 passed legislation which gave township boards the authority to buy road machinery and gravel

pits, collect road taxes in cash, and enter into contracts with outside parties for road work. (Mason, pp. 210-211.)

In some states such as New Jersey and Massachusetts, the state government itself was given greater authority and the power to develop road and highways plans, set minimum standards for road construction, and provide matching grants to its towns and cities. In 1891, New Jersey created a state highway agency to assist with money and technical assistance to counties in meeting their road building responsibilities. (Weber, *State Highway Networks*, Page?). Massachusetts also created a state highway department in 1892 and it asserted the authority to decide that it could contract with private contractors, rather than to towns or cities to get needed roads constructed. Massachusetts also created a state plan in 1897 that broke the state's roads down into a four-tiered classification system (check detail in Hugill) dividing responsibility and funding for the various tiers between the state and the towns and cities. (Hugill, p.?)

States also dealt with the issue of where the funds would come from to pay for any new roads or improvements. Up until the 1890s, states did not require town residents to pay their road taxes in cash. Labor was an acceptable substitute. In addition, most states did not allow local towns and townships and counties to bond for road and highways improvements. But by 1904 the situation had changed dramatically in many states, twenty-five had approved state highway bonds, and sixteen states had given permission to townships and counties within their boundaries to issue bonds. All states had some form of requirement that taxes to support roads be paid in cash. (Mason, pp. 223-225).

Up until the turn of the century, most traffic on roads was either by horse, horse-drawn or oxen-drawn wagon, hand-drawn carts, or by foot. Interestingly, the demand for improved roads, the restructuring of road management, bonding, and state assistance policies all predated the automobile. While the automobile would become the powerful motive force for highway policy in the early 20th century, it played no role in the 19th. In 1895 there were only four automobiles registered in the United States, and in 1900 only 8,000. It was not until 1903 that the first gasoline powered automobile appeared on a road in the United States (in Springfield, Massachusetts) And in Maine in 1905, there were only 715 automobiles and 898 licensed operators. (Mason, p. 8). So, the pressure for change stemmed from 19th century forces.

The Push for Good Roads: The Situation in Maine

Up until 1897, Maine's state government avoided facing the road problem in the rural farming towns. There were few exceptions to this policy of inaction. The first was that every two years when the Legislature sat, powerful legislators were able to win a special appropriation to build a road or a bridge in their district. Bridge appropriations were more common than road appropriations perhaps because bridges had to be built all at one time, rather than phased in over the years as a road extension could be. This tendency for *ad hoc* appropriations was very consistent with how the Legislature normally did its business.

On the other hand, the Legislature, responding to powerful interests, devoted considerable attention to the roads in two specific areas of the state. The first was in the cities. The Legislature passed numerous city charters, and amendments to city charters in decades before 1900, and each charter authorized powerful city agencies and departments for the construction of roads, sidewalks, sewers, and bridges. In many ways. these charters also

reflected the strong interest of real estate and business leaders in good roads. The second major area of state interest in roads was in the wild lands or the unincorporated areas of the state.

There the major source of legislative interest was stimulated by the timber owners and the lumber and pulp and paper companies. In these vast areas, land ownership was highly divided and access by public road was almost non-existent. The only way to reap the enormous values in the wild lands was to gain access to the use of other privately-owned land. The result was pages and pages of detailed statutes outlining the process through which a landowner could lay out a road, or temporary dam site, or lumber yard on someone else's land. The county governments acquired great powers to lay out roads, provide a means of appeal, calculate damages, and shut down "private ways" that were no longer needed. While there was strong economic and political support for state action on city roads and for roads on the "wild lands," but little interest in roads in the rural farming areas.

In a manner common to the 19th century, there was no state policy nor was there any agency or board to implement a program. The Legislature responded to pressures from its powerful members and to outside influences by making *ad hoc* appropriations. This process was no different than the way the state funded high schools and academies and dealt with what the state called the "defectives."

In the 19th century, Maine's legislators came to Augusta, to bring home an appropriation not to make broad policy for the state. Their goal was often extremely specific –to get the legislature to amend a company charter, particularly one of a bank, a utility, or a dam, to get an appropriation for a local hospital, charity, or academy, or for a local roads or bridge. Legislators rarely occupied a seat for more than two years, and they, and their constituents, measured their success on the basis of whether they were able to bring home an appropriation or a charter

change. For example, in its 1897-1898 Session, the Legislature appropriated about \$30,000 for twenty-five specific projects across the state including bridges in Kingman (\$5,000), Millbridge (\$500), Indian Township (?), Lexington Plantation (\$150), and Wiscasset (\$2,500)

But the social forces unhappy with the existing 19th century road system slowly became more powerful, and they began to force the Legislature to go beyond the “member item” approach to policy and tried to create a newer system for building and maintaining roads. Able to organize more effectively at the state level than they could in the five hundred individual towns and plantations, they pushed for state offices with dedicated staff which would be their voice in state government: institutions and offices that were capable over time of mobilizing state and local authority to their goals. The result was to create in the progressive years a new system of agencies, rules, regulations, and administration techniques which were quite revolutionary; in the following two decades, state agencies promoting and building roads would become the most powerful agencies in state government. There losers in this new system, including cash poor marginal farmers, local rural neighborhoods, the power of town officials, and eventually the railroads. The winners would include the city and village merchants, people with automobiles, tourist resorts, commercial farmers, and the road construction lobby.

First Steps by the Governors

Maine’s governors tried to look at issues from a broader and more cosmopolitan perspective than the Legislature. This interest in taking a more aggressive role was reflected in the inaugural speeches of Maine’s governors in the first decades of the 1900s. In the first decades, Maine’s governors were not powerful. They did not command substantial public resources, nor did they even try to assert any leadership, but they did tend to use their inaugural speeches to open the legislature to raise issues they felt the Legislature should be aware of or

should action on. For example, Henry Cleaves, who had just been elected in 1892 told the new legislators in August of 1892 that he saw an “awakened interest” in improved highways and highlighted the importance of good roads to economic growth, particularly in the rural areas. “As were most governors of Maine in those years, Cleaves was a veteran of the Army of the Potomac in the Civil War. He was a Bowdoin graduate, a Portland lawyer, a former member of the Legislature, and Attorney General of Maine from 1880-1885. (Joseph Ernest Kallenbach, *American State Governors, 1776-1976*, Dobbs Ferry, New York: Oceana Publications, 1977-1982)) Every citizen who travels,” he told the Legislature, “every farmer desiring to reach the best markets for his products, appreciates the value of good public roads.” He described how much more expensive it was to transport goods by road than by railroad and pointed out “the disadvantages felt by every producer removed from rail and water communication” and how the “equalization of such conditions.... is certainly desirable.” (1893 *Inaugural Address*, p. 186)

Two years later in 1895, in his Address to the new Legislature at the beginning of his second term, Cleaves again raised the issue of rural roads, chiding legislators for their inaction on roads and highways and pleading for “some recognition by the Legislature of the growing demand for improved highways,” He pointed out again that many people were “taking a great interest” in improved highways and urged the Legislature to give the subject “your careful consideration.”. Arguing against the tendency of the Legislature to focus on *ad hoc* local bills, he called for a “well regulated and uniform method of expending the money now appropriated,” and argued that with such a uniform method “our highways could be largely improved without any material increase in taxation.” He encouraged the Legislature to undertake a “thorough and careful investigation by men of experience of a permanent system of highway improvement” in order that the “wisest course may be determined upon.” He warned that unless the program was

well thought out any resulting road program of internal improvement might be “more burdensome than the people would care to bear.” (*1895 Inaugural*, p. 93)

A serious proposal reached the floor of the Legislature in 1895. In that year, the Maine Senate briefly considered Senate Document Number 253 that would have eliminated the smaller highway districts in a town and constituted the town as the one single highway district. The town would elect a road commission, and all taxes would be in cash, and every town would be required to have a minimum tax rate of at least $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1% of the town’s polls and real and personal property for road purposes. This proposal was far ahead of its time and the Legislature would not consider as major a reform again for years.

Two years later in 1897, the newly elected governor, Llewellyn Powers chided and then encouraged the Legislature. Powers, a lawyer from Houlton, was elected to be county attorney in the Aroostook County, was appointed by President Ulysses S. Grant to the lucrative and prominent patronage position of US Collector of Customs at Houlton, was elected to the Maine House for four terms, and served as Speaker of the Maine House in 1895, during Governor Cleaves’ last term. While he was in public office, he invested heavily in purchasing timber land in Maine and other New England states and became a wealthy man. (*American State Governors*) Displaying some real knowledge of the problems and the politics of the “road system,” Governor Llewellyn Powers repeated Cleaves’ argument, telling the legislators that “under existing laws the burden of maintaining roads and building bridges often bears unequally upon towns and townships, and is anything but proportionate to the benefits conferred.” He called for correcting these “inequalities” but at the same time, seemed to be chiding the rural towns for the practice of allowing people to pay off their taxes by labor. He said that he believed that “all road money

shall be raised and wisely expended.” He ended his comments saying that Maine’s laws for building and repairing roads “need revision and some radical changes.” (*1897 Inaugural*, p. 147)

1897 The Legislature Mandates a New Town Structure for Roads

The Legislature took strong action in 1897, although it was well after most states had already taken some action. Part of the reason for Maine’s slowness to respond, was that the most powerful economic interests in the state had good transportation. The railroads, the hundreds of little ports on the coast, the electric car lines, and the flowing rivers met the interests of the most politically powerful forces in the state. The forces for change, bicyclists, rural reformers, commercial farmers, were just not as strong in Maine, as they were in other states. Maine was a laggard, not a leader, among other states.

In response to Governor Power’s admonitions, the 1897 Legislature did take some action on roads. It passed two bills that responded to the pressures for reform, yet in a manner consistent with the way the state had traditionally responded to issues. The state attempted to solve a major problem, by using traditional approaches and traditional institutions. The first action was the “Act for the Repair of the Highways” (March 27, 1897). In some ways, the bill changed a great deal and in other days it changed little. Roads would remain a local responsibility, but the state dramatically changed the way roads were financed and maintained. In fact, the state changed the political economy of towns, privileging the more affluent *vis a vis* the less affluent, and weakening the local district forces in favor of the town wide interests and officialdom.

The Act had two important provisions. The first required the citizens of a town to pay their taxes in cash, ending the ability of people to meet their tax obligations by working. This was a substantial change and created a real burden for the poor and the cash poor and made their

struggle to maintain their farms more difficult. It pushed them off their farms and towards taking a job for wages in a nearby city or one further away in Southern New England. On the other hand, this legislative action helped the commercial farmers and the village residents who were already involved in the cash economy.

The second element of the bill abolished the district system of highway maintenance, by turning the town into a single highway district. A single elected Town Road Commission replaced the multiple local highway surveyors. The Road Commissioner was to be either elected by the Town Meeting or appointed by the Selectmen. The Legislature also required that he be paid, and it set a minimum daily wage –of at least \$2 per day. The Commissioner was now clearly responsible to the elected town officials, and not a volunteer who might or might not diligently apply himself. In addition, the Road Commissioner was given the responsibility to hire the men and teams to do any work, mandated by the town meeting or the selectmen and to purchase whatever timber, plank and other materials he felt necessary.

This change was similar to the one that the Legislature had mandated for restructuring local school districts. In that law, the Legislature required that the town create a central school board, managed by a Superintendent, to replace the old multiple school districts within the town. Under the state mandated school system, the hiring of men and women teachers, as well as purchasing supplies was centralized in central town office.

Interestingly, while road reformers enthusiastically supported such initiatives, many rural residents were no doubt uncomfortable. Affluent farmers and village residents would have little problem paying their road taxes in cash. In addition, while the road districts might not be efficient producers of good roads, they were mainstays of the structure of rural life, as were the

multiple rural district schools. For many, the town officers and town government were as much a foreign body as state and federal governments are looked upon today. But the centralization of power in the town and specialized officials was a trend that would characterize not only road policy and school policy but many other initiatives of the state in the coming decades.

While the state wanted to strengthen the ability of towns to build and maintain good roads, there was no consensus that the state should play a leading role as was true in many other states. What did happen, however, was a small step forward. The Legislature authorized the Maine Board of Agriculture, one of the few existing “state agencies” at that time, to disseminate information for town, county, and city officials on the “highways of the state” and on the “best ways” for building and maintaining public roads. The Board could also make recommendations for legislation. The Legislature appropriated \$3,500 to the Board to pay the costs of this new effort.

The choice of the Board of Agriculture as the vehicle to implement this program is interesting. The Board was created at the behest of the commercial farmers. And this agency seemed like the best vehicle to help farmers to get their raw milk to the railroad stations at the least cost and without the jostling over rutted rural roads that would ruin this perishable product. Expanding the responsibilities of the Board seemed a natural response to the desire to help farmers. Secondly, compiling statistics and encouraging “best practices” – had been the long been the means that Maine’s Board of Agriculture had used to help farmers in choosing crops, fertilizers, seeds, and farm equipment. In addition, the Board had another advantage. The Board of Agriculture was one of the few institutions that had the “capacity” to deliver a state initiative, even if that initiative was just compiling statistics, holding meetings, and issuing reports.

The League of American Wheelmen had supported giving the additional responsibilities and funding to the Maine Board of Agriculture, but they were much more ambitious. The bill they introduced in the Maine House of Representatives had many elements. First, it would write into state law that bicyclists enjoyed the same rights of access to public roads as any other users. The League bill also proposed a registration fee of \$1 on bicycles which would go to the state, with part of the fee going to establish a state fund to pay for the investigation of needed highway improvements in Maine. The primary recorded opposition to the legislation came, as might be expected, from the towns, which complained that the bill would reduce their tax collections. As bicycles were then considered personal property, they were taxed by the town through its property tax. Not only were the towns upset that they would have to share the revenue from bicycles with the state, but they also felt that the \$1 registration fee was less than what bicycles had to pay under existing laws. In fact, the average property tax rate of towns at that time was about \$2.20 per 100 dollars of value, and bicycles were then selling for about \$150. The towns were right. Why should the state be supporting, encouraging, and subsidizing a sport for the wealthy?

The State Begins to Fund Town and County Roads

Further action had to await 1901 when the Legislature took a first step towards creating state “highways.” This was a big step up from town roads. The new legislation authorized the county commissions of the state’s 16 counties to designate a main thoroughfare running through a town as a state highway and match town funds up to \$100 for improvements on that road. The legislation also provided the state’s first specific appropriation for highways. To raise the money, the Legislature in 1905 directed the Secretary of State to set up a system to register

motor vehicles for a fee. Yet demand was limited. Of the \$15,000 appropriated, only \$8,000 was used. (Jewett, *A Financial History of Maine*, p. 73)

One of the reasons for the Legislature's action was the election as governor in 1900 of John Fremont Hill. He would be re-elected in 1902. Born in Elliot, Hill was trained as a doctor, and began his medical practice in Boothbay, but soon moved to Augusta to marry Lizzie Vickery, daughter of a wealthy and politically well-connected magazine publisher. Based in part on the connections available to him through his new in-laws, he became a successful promoter of electric railways, and gas and electric companies in Maine. He also sat on the boards of the three most important banks in Augusta. He was first elected to be a member of the Maine House and then Senate in the period from 1888-1897. Then he was elected by the Maine Legislature to the Executive Council, in 1898 and sat in the Council during Governor Power's last term.

(American State Governors)

In his inaugural address to the Legislature in 1901, Hill reaffirmed the "great interest and importance" of improved highways especially "to the people in the country towns." Perhaps because of his background as a promoter and developer he emphasized how roads help all investors. "Good roads shorten the distance to market, increase the value of contiguous property, and are potent factors in the development of every community," Hill argued. He pointed out that while there was good progress in recent years, with new railroads lines and service, "there has been little improvement in our highways."

Hill was clearly interested in highways, not rural roads. Hill told the Legislature that the "time had come when Maine needs a "definite and effective plan for the improvement of our main thoroughfares. On the other hand, he said that he opposed the concept of a State Highway

Commission “which would take from the towns any part of the control which they exercised over their roads. He wanted instead a “plan of state aid” that would be practical and “gradually result in greatly improved highways throughout the state.”

He had argued that any state assistance should be for (state-designated) highways and thoroughfares and not (local) roads. He said that the cost of good roads is “beyond the means of most towns” and that “improved highways must come first” And he ended arguing that a system of state and county aid could reduce the burden on municipalities yet provide “immense benefits” to the state. (*1901 Inaugural*, pp. 136-137)

In his second inaugural two years later in 1903, he praised the matching grant for highways act, but he criticized the very loose standards used for the identification of state roads and called for follow up verification of expenses. However, he strongly defended the 1901 program, saying it was a “practical and progressive plan” that was “free from many of the objections which have been urged against other methods.” He called for the program to be continued, with increased appropriations. (*Inaugural*, p. 84)

The next big step was taken in 1905 when the Legislature created the office of State Highway Commissioner who was to assemble data on highways and roads and make it available to towns and counties. In 1907, the Legislature took another big step. Cities and towns were required to designate major thoroughfares through their towns as state highways and to appropriate money to maintain them. Moreover, a requirement that the State Commissioner must supervise the work led to that work meeting a higher standard. This was another big expansion of state authority. And the Legislature kept appropriating more funds. While the state had only appropriated \$8,000 for highways in 1901, by 1904 it was \$30,000. (Jewett, A

Financial History of Maine, p. 74 and Table D.) This unprecedented expansion of state authority and spending occurred under the governorship of William Cobb, a wealthy lime manufacturer and businessmen from Rockland, who was elected first in 1904 and re-elected in 1906. He was a graduate of Bowdoin and at one time was President of the Bath Iron Works. In his Inaugural in 1905 he did not speak about the issue of good roads or highways at all. In fact, he said that he would not raise any issues for consideration or make any recommendations on initiatives, but instead spoke of the need for economy and his priority of cutting state taxes. (*American State Governors*) In his Inaugural in 1907, he took a very different view, based in part on his sense that Maine now was “more prosperous than ever before in her history.” Governor Cobb complimented the Legislature for creating the office of State Highway Commissioner and said that it was “no longer necessary to argue the advantages and disadvantages of better roads, for these are now admitted and conceded by all. “

Putting his finger on the new world of debate on road and highway issues –after it was agreed that they were a priority, Governor Cobb told the Legislature that the real issues would be “the amount of money to be spent, and how it shall be raised and apportioned by and between the State and the municipalities, the location of the work and how and by whom it shall be done.” And he announced that, for one of the first times, he would be presenting to the Legislature a comprehensive bill for their consideration, which had been drafted by his Highway Commissioner which embodies the “best methods practiced in other states.”

Governor Fernald Calls for “Trunk Roads”

Bert Fernald was elected Governor in 1908 but served only one term. He was defeated for re-election. Fernald was a considered an insurgent Republican, thought of by many as a “progressive. In fact, he had run for Governor in 1904 at the Republican State Convention

against William Cobb but had lost. A wealthy man, due to establishing a string of the counties earliest corn and vegetable canning factories, as well as dairy, telephone, and banking investments, Fernald was from the town of Poland, and he had been a State Representative and State Senator. He was considered very close, perhaps even a protégé of his neighbor, Hiram Ricker, the owner of the Poland Spring Resort in Poland. Ricker was one of the most outspoken supporters of state spending on roads and highways, but his priority was not the rural roads that commercial farmers relied on, but on what he called “trunk roads.” After he left the Governor’s Office in 1911, he became President of the National Canners Association, and then ran, this time in an open primary, for nomination for a US Senate seat. He won and was elected in 1916.

(American State Governors)

In his Inaugural, Fernald noted that other New England states are “building roads on a general plan for development.” He said that he believed that Maine should “set about the construction of thoroughfares crossing the state from border to border. Some felt that Fernald was echoing the view of his patron, Hiram Ricker, who owned both Poland Springs and the Samoset on Penobscot Bay, and believed that the growth of his business depended on “trunk lines” that could allow wealthy summer people to drive easily from Boston and New York to his resorts in Maine. Fernald also called on the Legislature to pass uniform laws for licensing cars, insurance. By 1908, the state was spending \$197,000 on highways.

Even Democratic Critics of Wasteful Government Supported more Highway Spending

Frederick Plaisted was elected in 1910 and was the first Democrat Governor since his father had been elected by the Fusion Ticket in 1881. Unlike all his Republican predecessors, he was not a wealthy businessman. Although his ownership of the *New Age*, a partisan Democratic newspaper in Augusta (1889-1914) that competed with the far larger and state-subsidized

Kennebec Journal, provided part of his income, he was primarily a Kennebec County politician. He had been a delegate to the National Democratic Conventions in 1896 and 1900 and then later in 1912 when he was governor. Immediately before being Governor, he had been Major of Augusta, Sheriff of Kennebec County, and then Mayor of Augusta again. His successful local campaigns and his state-wide success in 1910 were a result of wide public dissatisfaction with the Republican's prohibition policy. Plaisted would later be appointed by Governor Oakley Curtis, another Democrat, to the patronage-rich State Park Commission, and was then further rewarded by Democratic President Woodrow Wilson to the well-paid patronage job as Postmaster of Augusta. (*American State Governors*)

In his Inaugural, Plaisted struck a very different note than his Republican predecessors who he had attacked for willingness to tax and spend. Arguing that the state faced a major deficit, he said he would not support any new or expanded funding programs, such as highway or schools. His only mention of roads was, as his predecessor Governor Fernald had, was to call for a reasonable license fee to be collected from owners of automobiles coming into the state, and that that revenue would be used to maintain the highways which the state had already built. (*1911 Inaugural*, p. 902.)

While there were problems with state spending, many people believed that he overstated it, as Democrats had always campaigned against excessive spending and taxing. Plaisted did see that the growing state spending was a problem, but the major reason for his vehement opposition was the Democrats long held belief that Republicans wanted to expand state government to provide plenty of patronage jobs for Republican organizers. Plaisted's initiatives as governor were in the use of law, rather than spending money. He pushed for child labor legislation, a new primary election law, a corrupt practices act, and workers compensation. Many of these

initiatives were aimed breaking down the system that had guaranteed Republican majorities for decades.

The public and business pressure for spending on highways was so strong that the Plaisted and the Democrats had to back down. Thanks to the doubling and tripling of the number of automobiles, spending to expand and improve roads had become extremely popular as. The Democratic-controlled Legislature gave in, pushed by enthusiastic Republican support, and decided to submit to the voters a \$2,000,000 bond issue, to support town road construction and to start building state highways. Requiring a constitutional amendment, the Legislature put it on the ballot for the September 1912 election.

However, Plaisted faced a very tough re-election campaign. The Democrats had embarrassed themselves by botching state referendum that repeal prohibition and it turned out that the public was outraged at Democrats attempts to eliminate recently passed state government programs that had become quite popular.

Progressive Governor Haines Creates a State Highway Commission

In 1912, William Haines, the Republican candidate, defeated Plaisted in his bid for re-election. On the same day that the voters chose Haines, they also voted by a four-to-one majority, to approve the \$2,000,000 bond issue for highways which a bi-partisan coalition had put on the ballot the previous year. These funds would be used to match local funds and would produce an unprecedented explosion of public spending on roads and highways.

Haines's election returned Maine to the activist government and increased public spending that was characteristic of his Republican predecessors. He had begun his career practicing law in Waterville, and became very successful in banking, lumbering and real estate businesses in Waterville and Augusta. He was County Attorney in Kennebec County from 1883-

1887, a member of the State Senate from 1889-1893, Attorney General from 1897-1901, Member of the Executive Council from 1901-1905, and then elected Governor in 1912.

(American State Governors)

Haines's Inaugural Address in 1913 was very long and detailed, with major sections on public utilities, public education, workers compensation, waterpower, the forests, prohibition, and the highways. Haines along with Fernald before him and Milliken after him should certainly be considered "progressive" governors. In fact, he devoted more words to the subject of improving Maine's highways than all the previous Governors combined. Haines pointed out how important the automobile had become in such a short time to the men of wealth for their pleasure, to the merchant and tradesman for the trucking and delivery of his goods, and for the farmers. "The introduction of the automobile," he said, "has made the question of highways of still more importance to the people of the State." It has "undoubtedly come to stay as the leading means of transportation and it goes without saying that the better the highways, the more useful can such machines be made."

Haines also pointed out that one of the big issues facing the state was what to do with the proceeds of the \$2,000,000 bond approved for highways construction. The payment of the principal and interest on the bonds would come from the registration taxes placed on automobiles, trucks, and motorcycles by the last session of the Legislature. The language of the constitutional amendment was that the bond proceeds would be spent "equitably" across the state, but Haines admitted that the definition of "equitably" was "a little uncertain." He argued that the funds should be spent in the counties in proportion to their "valuations," thus rewarding the more affluent counties in the south and in the central parts of the state.

Haines was clearly frustrated by the way that the towns had been spending the money that state aid had granted to them. He complained that “in many towns the highway work has been controlled by a political faction, whose object was to work with men and teams on the road machine.” He pointed out that the towns have spent \$25 million on highways and roads in the last 20 years, but they have only seen real positive results in the last few years thanks to the state aid programs. He clearly wanted the state to impose strict controls on how the towns spent their road money, suggesting that the state would only assist towns that “guarantee by law that it [state money] shall be expended by the best highway construction known to modern science.”

(Inaugural, pp. 1087-1089)

And the Legislature responded. Many of its new members were active progressive, having been energized to run by Roosevelt’s Bull Moose campaign in 1912. The Legislature abolished the State Highway Commissioner and replaced the office with a far larger and more powerful State Highway Commission. The new law also divided the state’s roads into three categories: *state highways*, which were between major towns and cities, and would be maintained by the state: *state-aid highways* which would be constructed and maintained in a partnership between the state and towns: and *third-class highways*, which towns and cities would be responsible for. Although in 1913, state license fees were producing 138,000 in annual revenue, it was not enough. Bond issues would pay for the expended State spending on highways until 1914 when the state began for the first time to tax gasoline, *(Jewett, Financial History, p. 82,)*

“Trunk Roads” vs. “Farm to Market Roads”

Haines was defeated in his bid for re-election by Oakley Curtis, a Portland Democrat, because the Maine Progressives split from the Republicans and ran a candidate in the general

election. Curtis was a very wealthy man, with extensive interests in banking and in shipping. His primary asset was a large fleet of coal ships that carried coal from Virginia to Maine and other East Coast States. His political career had started as a member of the Board of Aldermen in Portland, then as a member of the Maine House (1903-1905), Maine Senate (1905-1907), and finally Mayor of Portland (1911-1915). (*American State Governors*)

Curtis, like his Democratic predecessor Frederick Plaisted, concentrated his Inaugural on attacking Republican spending. His initiatives, like those of Plaisted, were to pass laws to regulate and control, rather than to start or expand programs that spent money. He also recommended laws that would reform the political system, and thus weaken the Maine Republican machine.

One of the longest sections in the Inaugural was on highway and road policy. He recognized how important the automobile had become. “The automobile proposition is beyond the experimental stage” and the “pleasure stage,” and it must be considered “from a commercial viewpoint.” And the automobile has also changed the politics of highway and road s policy, particularly amongst the farmers. “Time was,” Curtis said, “...when the automobile was condemned unmercifully, in the rural districts, but now, through a process of evolution, it(automobile) has become a necessity in all sections of the State and the Country.”

But with the widespread interest in the automobile and highways, the battle for expansion and control of state highway funds had clearly become contentious and a major source of conflict in the State Legislature. Curtis recognized this, bemoaning how contentious the debates on highway policy had become (over the control of funds appropriated by the state). He complained of the “factions” that competed, the “varied interests” and the “incessant dissention” that

produces “uncomfortable, unwarranted, and unprofitable debate” that “militate(s) against sound progress and health prosperity.” He was particularly worried that the “urban and rural populations cannot be more harmonious” and “serve the interests of the whole State.” Following Democratic ideology at that time, he hoped that “allowing the principle of home rule” and “non-interference” with local issues might be a principle that would eliminate the “dissention,” but he appeared more hopeful than confident.

The idea of a trunk highway system seemed to be the most contentious. While seeming to hope that “home rule” would remedy the dissention, Curtis strongly endorsed the priority of a trunk line system which would be “constructed for the general public’s convenience, to facilitate traffic of all descriptions, and to reduce costs.” Unable or unwilling to make specific recommendations of how such a trunk line system should be built, he merely told the Legislature that a new policy should take into account population, valuation, distance, and the facility of highway in deciding what kind of roads get built where. Like Plaisted before him, he was caught between wide public support for more spending on highways and the long-standing Democratic ideology that opposed new state programs and new state spending. Governor Curtis was thus ambivalent when he had to face the question of a potential new Highway Bond issue. While expressing doubts about the advisability of issuing long term bonds, when even the best roads might not last long, he did not oppose them. And again, obviously uncomfortable with the prospect that state highway spending would continue to rise, he expressed his doubts on where the Legislature “will get its millions” to “build even ordinary highways, and (the) large amount to keep them in serviceable condition.” (*Inaugural*, pp. 935-938)

However bitter were the disputes over who would get the funds and what roads were built, the Legislative recognized the wide support for more and better roads and put on the ballot a major new bond issue for highways planning and construction.

Governor Milliken

The Maine Republican Party overcame the split that had allowed the Democrat Curtis to be elected governor, thanks to Teddy Roosevelt's abandonment of his Bull Moose Party, and in 1916 they elected Carl Milliken, a Republican, was elected Governor. Milliken had been one of the most effective progressives in the legislature. He was close to many of those who founded the Maine Progressive Party, but he had never abandoned the Republican Party during the upheavals of 1912-1914. He would become the most progressive governor of the early 20th century. Milliken was born in Augusta where his father was the State Land Agent. He moved to Island Falls in Aroostook County and became wealthy in the lumber business. He was a member of the Maine House (1905-1908) from Island Falls, and of the Maine Senate (1909-1914) from Aroostook County. He was President of the Maine Senate in 1912-1914. (*American State Governors*) He won the Republican nomination for Governor in 1916 thanks to the fact that state law had recently been changed and required the Democrats and Republicans had to nominate their candidates through a popular primary.

In his Inaugural, Milliken recognized that in recent years there had been "a rapid development of public sentiment for good roads and the ratifying progress in general knowledge of the essentials of real economy in road building." He recognized that public opinion "demands the continuance of the good roads program," but also recognized the strong disagreement within the state on how to raise the money to continue the state's road building program. "Your chief consideration," he said, "will be, therefore, in connection with the amount of revenue required

annually for the construction of state highways and the most equitable method of assessing the necessary tax.’ He described the major choice as being between whether the state should embark on imaginative program of a “complete system of roads” and the “expenditure of many millions of dollars within three or four years,” or the “continuance of State highway construction at the existing rate.” The problem that he and the state were facing was that there was only \$200,000 remaining from the road construction bond issues, and the state’s highway program would grind to a halt if no new funds were made available. The big imaginative program would require a major bond issue, and such a bond would require another constitutional amendment. Much of the tax burden of such a program would be transferred to future generations.

The other alternative, and the one that Milliken preferred, was to continue the existing level of state spending on highways – about \$500,000 per year – and to finance this through new direct taxation. This approach had the advantage of being able to start quickly, as the time-consuming process of a constitutional amendment would be avoided. Therefore, he called for an increase in the state’s direct “mil tax” on all real and personal property as the way to finance this stay-the-course program.

Milliken also recommended some additional changes in the state’s automobile laws reflecting how complex the issues were becoming. One was to require automobiles travelling at night to display lights, another was to reduce the rate of accidents at railway grade crossings by requiring the railroads to install automatic signals, and another was to prevent the damages being done to the improved state highways, by limiting the weight of trucks allowed to travel on the state highways. (*Inaugural*, pp. 867-868)

With Milliken's staunch support, state spending on highways reached \$2,137,000. Popular pressure was so large for increased spending on highways that Milliken too had to back down on his desire for pay-as-you-go financing. He reversed course and decided to support additional state bonds for highways. He supported a new constitutional amendment to approve the bonds. In September of 1919, the Legislature scheduled votes to authorize bond issues to build wharves and port facilities (in Portland), another to raise the allowable amount of bonds for highways and bridges, and a third to increase the state's bond limit generally. The voters' appetite for better roads and new highways was such they approved all bond issues in the September 1919 Special Election. In 1920, Milliken's final year in office, the state of Maine spent \$4,146,000 on roads and highways.

The Role of Automobiles

Automobiles increased demand for roads, but also changed the dynamic of that demand. Before automobiles and trucks, the goal of better roads was to help horse-drawn vehicles to reach railroads stations or river or coastal ports. Good roads were a means to extend the range that commerce to existing transportation hubs.

Autos and trucks changed that. They could, with good roads, create entirely new networks connecting major and minor places directly including those out-of-the-way villages untouched by existing systems. They also provided competition to railroads and ships, offering better service and often at lower costs (particularly for small loads). Trucks were valuable for shipping to market milk products and perishable fruits, vegetables, and meat. One result was that railroads shifted from being active supporters of new highways and trunk lines towards being opponents.

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