

## IX. THE CRUSADE FOR BETTER ROADS

During the closing decade of the nineteenth century and the opening years of the twentieth, a current of public opinion swept America into a renunciation of the roads with which nineteenth century Americans had been content. The agitation for better roads assumed the proportions and intensity of a crusade, and the leaders in the movement became apostles of the faith, preaching the gospel of good roads from one end of the land to the other. They had the satisfaction of seeing one state after the other cast off the outmoded system of road making and enter into a new era of improved highway construction, wherein the state actively engaged in road building. They saw the federal government again take up a share of the burden of making highways, and the creation of a bureau of the federal government to aid, encourage, and supervise their construction.

It was no coincidence that these same years witnessed the popularization of the bicycle and the automobile. These novel means of transportation were powerful factors in the growth of the good roads movement. And as the good roads idea grew and the bicycle and the automobile became practical realities, a new era dawned for the farmer. Good roads were responsible for the

initiation of free mail delivery to every farmer's doorway. Good roads brought the consolidated school, with its advantages in education, within the grasp of thousands of school children. Good roads made more profitable the neighborhood creamery, and made easier the marketing of farm produce. Good roads made as feasible for the farmer as for the city dweller the ownership and operation of automobiles. Good roads and the new methods of transportation cut distances in half, and, with the telephone, took from the farm the stigma of loneliness which had done so much to make farm life unattractive.

Although it was the farmers who benefitted most from good roads, it was not the agricultural population that took the initiative in the movement to obtain them. That distinction belongs to the young men who rode the crazy, two-wheeled contraptions called "bicycles." Apparently the first bicycles appeared in this country a few years after the close of the Civil War, when the Lallemond velocipede was introduced from France. A slight bicycling craze developed in America at that time, but it died out within a year or two. For a decade bicycles were a rarity, and only "an occasional boy was to be seen trying out his father's old 'boneshaker.'" During that ten years' interval, the "boneshaker" was considerably modified. Steel and iron had been substituted for wood, the front wheel had grown larger, and the "spider" wheel rimmed with a band of India rubber had

replaced the cumbersome wooden wheel of the earlier model. When the bicycle was next brought to public attention in America, it was a graceful, almost flimsy affair, the weight of which had shrunk from sixty pounds or more to about twenty. A few English-made bicycles probably were imported in 1876 and 1877, and in 1878 the Pope Manufacturing Company of Hartford, Connecticut, began to manufacture the "Columbia" bicycle along the lines of the most improved English models. Like wildfire the bicycling craze swept the nation in spite of the high cost of the machines -- the prices ranged from a hundred to a hundred and fifty dollars. In 1881 the Pope Manufacturing Company sold seven thousand bicycles. During the course of the next ten years other firms entered the field, and hundreds of thousands of the high-wheeled affairs were sold. In the eighties the "safety" bicycle, driven by a chain geared to the rear wheel, which was approximately the same size as the front one, was placed on the market, and, with the adoption of the pneumatic tire at the end of the decade, the new model gradually replaced the high-wheeled Columbia in public favor. In 1896 there were about four million bicycle riders in the United States and the 250 manufacturers of bicycles in the country were producing six hundred thousand machines each year. <sup>1</sup>

1. Carl W. Mitman, "An Outline Development of Highway Travel, Especially in America," in Smithsonian Institution, Reports, 1934, p. 336-339 (Washington, 1935); Goodhue County Republican (Red Wing), March 4, 18, April

It was natural that the devotees of the new sport should get together to share their enjoyment, and on September 11, 1879, a number of bicyclists met in Boston to hold a field day. Another gathering of the group was held in Boston in May of the following year. This meeting of the bicycle clan was notable because it was the occasion for the organization of the League of American Wheelmen, which welded the bicycle riders of America into one group. There were several unifying influences which brought the wheelmen together. The bicycle was a new vehicle upon the streets of American towns and cities, and American laws were not yet adapted to including them in the regulation of traffic and to extending to them the rights accorded the more familiar horse and buggy, the street car, and the steam railroad. Consequently, cyclists were discriminated against on city streets, and on country roads they apparently had no recognized rights. Teamsters were accused not only of refusing to give them a share of the road, but in some instances of attempting to run them down. Many cities passed ordinances forbidding them the use of parkways. In part this attitude toward the bicycle was the result of the newness of the machine, and in part the result of resentment of those who could not afford them against

1, July 1, 1869; "The League Meet at Chicago," in the Wheelman, 1: 115 (November, 1882); Saturday Evening Spectator (Minneapolis), July 8, 1882; St. Cloud Journal-Press, August 24, 1884.

this toy of the idle rich. The antagonism had an economic background, for operators of livery stables and taxicab fleets formerly had reaped a respectable harvest from carrying the people from place to place who now rode about on their bicycles. Such resentment sometimes was carried to the point of malicious interference with the operators of bicycles, and it was an aim of the League of American Wheelmen to protect its members from persecution by assisting them in a legal way when they became involved in court actions. The organization also sought to obtain the passage of laws which would protect the cyclists in their use of the public roads and streets. <sup>2</sup>

The wheelmen had another motive for organization. This was the desire to improve city streets and country roads in order that they might better enjoy their sport. The bicyclists found that their new vehicle greatly increased the radius of their activities. They found that, without becoming unduly fatigued, they could cover five or more times the distance that they could walk. Indeed, the "century run," or a journey of a hundred miles, within the space of a day was not impossible if road and weather conditions permitted. The fullest enjoyment of this form of recreation, however, demanded ideal road

2. "The League Meet at Chicago," in the Wheelman, 1: 115; Saturday Evening Spectator, July 8, 1882; Fred. Jenkins, "A Word for the League," in the Minnesota Wheelman, 1: 4 (September, 1885); "Rights of Wheelmen," in the Minnesota Wheelman, 1: 8.

conditions, and American cyclists became first disgusted with the existing roads and then militantly organized to bring about an improvement in them. "Bicycle riders," declared one of them, "are each personally much interested in the subject of good roads and pavements," and good roads was a subject which the organization stressed for the next score of years. In furtherance of this and the other aims of the organization, the league established as early as 1882 a monthly magazine, the Wheelman, which it distributed to its members. <sup>3</sup>

The League of American Wheelmen was a national organization. Subsidiary groups of wheelmen were formed in the states, each of which was organized as a free-acting agent in affairs which concerned its locality, but which was represented on the board of directors of the national group. Minnesota wheelmen were interested in the organization early in its history, and a Minnesota division was formed not later than 1881, within two years of the first appearance of the "iron ponies" in the state. In 1880 cycling was such a novelty that the management of the Fillmore County fair arranged for an exhibition by two riders. In 1883 the wheelmen of Minnesota held their first annual meeting, and in 1885 the organization in the state had a membership of more

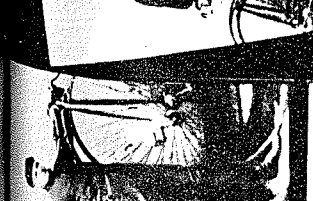
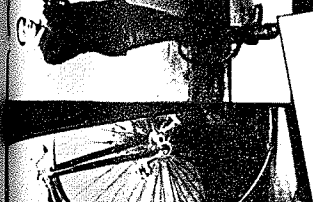
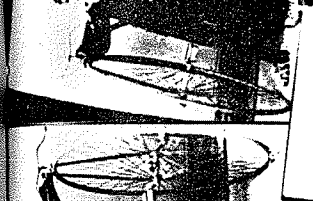
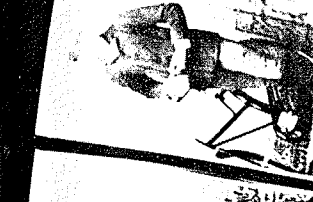
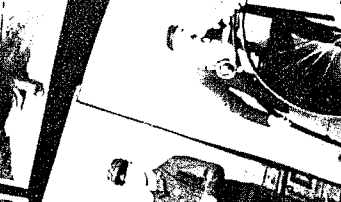
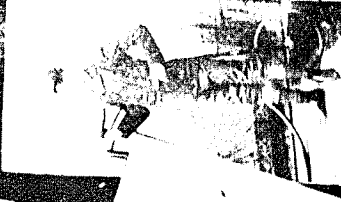
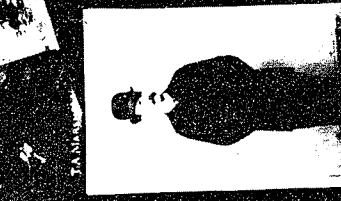
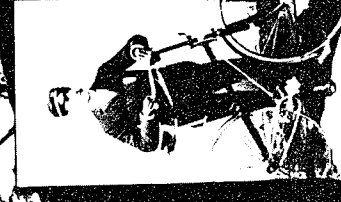
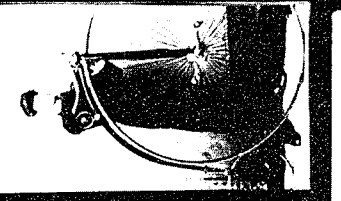
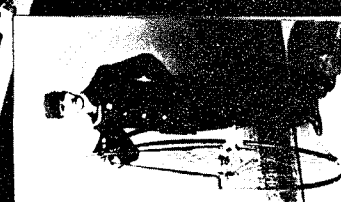
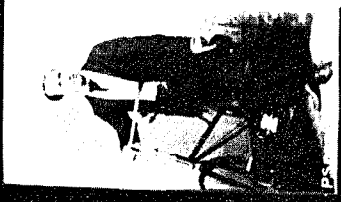
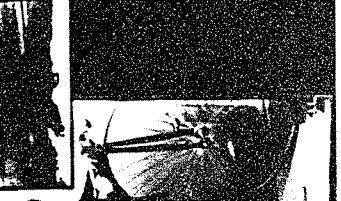
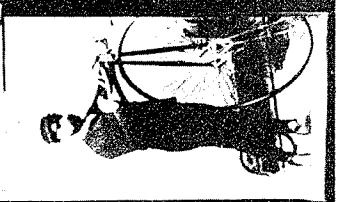
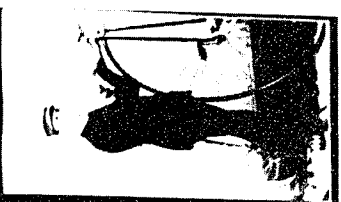
3. L. J. Bates, "Effect of the Bicycle upon Our Highway Laws," in the Wheelman, 1: 126-129 (November, 1882); Joseph B. Bishop, "Social and Economic Influence of the Bicycle," in the Forum, 21: 680 (August, 1896).

THE CYCLE CLUB OF ST. PAUL IN 1889  
[From a photograph in the possession of  
the Minnesota Historical Society.]





THE  
TRICYCLE  
CLUB





than 350, representing forty-four towns or cities, and was planning state-wide tours to build up its membership. It continued to grow until in the nineties several hundred bicyclists were listed on its rolls. It was characteristic of the times and the sport that the members of the Minnesota division of the league were not mere boys or youths, but it included some of the most prominent of the business and professional men in the state -- men whose voices and votes counted in any gathering. <sup>4</sup>

The League of American Wheelmen had decided early in its existence what the outstanding ills of the road system in America were. "In order to secure good roads in the country," a writer for the Wheelman stated in 1882, "it is chiefly necessary merely to so change the highway laws as to require all highway taxes to be paid in money, when the well-known shrewdness and closeness of the farmers in dealing with public moneys will induce them to watch closely after their interests, and see

4. Charles E. Pratt, "What of the League?" in the Wheelman, 1: 134 (November, 1882); Minnesota Wheelman, 1: 3, 9, 13 (September, 1885). The Minneapolis Cycling Club, claiming affiliation with the League of American Wheelmen, was organized at least as early as May, 1881. It consisted of twelve members. Saturday Evening Spectator, May 14, 1881, May 20, July 8, 1882. The Preston Republican for June 24, 1880, announced that "a new feature" of the fair for that year would be a bicycle race between two young men from Lanesboro. The same paper for April 28, 1881, stated that these young men had had their bicycles "for over a year," indicating that they probably had been purchased in 1879. As far as is known, these were the first bicycles in Minnesota.

that they get the worth of their money in good roads." As to the part the cycling enthusiasts were to play in obtaining better roads, the writer declared that bicycle riders "demand and will have, just as soon as they increase sufficiently to make their numbers felt in public affairs, the best roads in the country, and the best pavements in cities. . . . Bicyclers demand, and will have, as soon as they obtain power, smooth roads, hard and durable roads, and roads kept at all times clean and in thorough repair." Their influence would be "in favor of . . . such legislation as will secure the best [roads]; therefore, it will be an influence for the public good." 5

The constructive manner in which the League of American Wheelmen criticized the road systems of the states made that body a center about which all the other discontented elements -- and they were many -- could gather. Its vigorous stand encouraged other groups similarly to state their minds. In 1883, for example, the farmers of Iowa met in a convention to protest against the mud that threatened to engulf them. The campaign of Brown of the Mapleton Enterprise in 1885 already has been mentioned. Nothing came of these early protests, but by the end of the eighties the movement for good roads was well under way. In 1887 a New Jersey convention, sponsored by the state department of agriculture, formulated

5. Bates, in the Wheelman, 1: 126, 127, 129.

a plan for improving roads. The plan was placed before the legislature the following year, but it was not until 1891 that it was adopted. The New Jersey law provided for the abolition of the small road districts and the office of road overseer, and the delegation of the care of public roads to the township. The state was to assume one-third of the cost of building roads, one-tenth was to be charged to property owners, and the balance was to be assumed by the county. This law was the first of the modern state aid road laws, the first instance of a state definitely entering the business of building roads.<sup>6</sup>

In 1889 Dr. Jeremiah W. Jenks, a professor of political science and English literature at Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois, presented to the American Economic Association a study of the road problem. In it he summarized the benefits to be gained from good roads, compared the roads in America with those in other nations, and made suggestions which, he felt, would lead to an improvement of traveling conditions. He condemned the labor tax system as wasteful of labor and "hardly defensible on grounds of expediency," recommending the levy of a money tax in its stead. The collection of a

6. Ante, p. 325-328; Brindley, Road Legislation in Iowa, 184-192; Edward Burrough, State Aid to Road-Building in New Jersey (United States Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Bulletins, no. 9 -- Washington, 1894); C. Paul Jones, "Good Roads," in Society of Engineers in the University of Minnesota, Year Book, 1894-95, p. 33 (Minneapolis, 1895); Daily Pioneer Press, March 3, 1883.

money tax and its expenditure upon the roads, however, would not be an improvement over the existing system unless there was "efficient road supervision" by "a paid official who was expected to earn his salary," he said. The services of trained engineers in laying out roads, he advised, were essential to determine grades and to insure an efficient expenditure of public money. These trained engineers, he maintained, should be under the supervision of a "state board of engineers." He recommended the classification of roads into three divisions: state roads to be laid out, built, and maintained by the state; district roads to be laid out, built, and maintained by the counties; town roads similar to the general plan in force, to be built and maintained by the townships. Jenks's analysis of the road problem probably did not excite popular enthusiasm, but it undoubtedly reached the influential citizens of the nation. Its effect upon the future development of road legislation is attested by the fact that the schemes for obtaining good roads adopted by most of the states were based upon the plan he suggested. <sup>7</sup>

In the spring of 1891 a state-wide meeting was held in New York at which was organized the Association for the Improvement of the Highways of New York. During

7. Jeremiah W. Jenks, Road Legislation for the American State, 34, 66, 68-72 (American Economic Association, Publications, vol. 4, no. 3 -- Baltimore, 1889).

1892 state conventions were held in Iowa and Missouri, and in the fall of that year delegates from a large number of states met in Chicago to form the National League for Good Roads. The purpose of the national organization was to "awaken public interest and to suggest a line of action that will later crystallize into concerted and systematic effort and a general remodeling of our whole network of highways." It wholeheartedly supported the good roads bill drawn up by Roy Stone of New York, which had been introduced in Congress during July, 1892. The bill, which became a law in March, 1893, provided for the creation of the office of road inquiry in the department of agriculture. The office was to study American methods of road making and prepare for publication articles dealing with the subject, and to aid in disseminating knowledge of the best methods of road making through the land-grant agricultural colleges and the agricultural experiment stations scattered throughout the country. An appropriation of ten thousand dollars was made to finance the work the first year, and a like amount was made available during each of the following two years. In 1896 the appropriation was reduced to eight thousand dollars, and that standard prevailed until the end of the decade. Stone, who had pushed the bill so vigorously, was placed in charge of the office, but in 1898 Martin Dodge, who had been the guiding spirit of the Ohio good roads movement, succeeded him. The office had a modest beginning

but it was directed by men of singular ability, who prepared the way for its expansion into a powerful agent for the furtherance of the good roads movement. <sup>8</sup>

In Minnesota the movement for better roads developed but little more slowly than in the nation at large, for the same influences were at work. The meetings of good roads enthusiasts in other states during the latter part of 1891 and in 1892 received more than ordinary attention, and articles dealing with road problems published in other states were republished in Minnesota newspapers. Manufacturers of road-making equipment, who had placed on the market new and improved models of scrapers, drags, and graders, sent their sales forces into the rural districts to stir up interest in the good roads movement among the farmers. Manufacturers of bicycles took a leading part in the agitation. One eastern firm offered a hundred bicycles as prizes for the best one hundred essays on the subject of roads and road making, and in Minnesota the Harry Svensgaard Bicycle Company of Fergus Falls offered prizes for the best descriptions of good and bad roads in Minnesota outside the cities. <sup>9</sup>

8. Northwestern Agriculturist, 6: 78 (April, 1891); Engineering News, 28: 35, 585 (August 25, December 22, 1892); Statutes at Large, 27: 737, 28: 266, 729, 29: 104, 30: 7, 336, 954; Roy Stone, compiler, State Laws Relating to the Management of Roads, Enacted in 1888-'93, 5 (United States Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Bulletins, no. 1 -- Washington, 1894); Daily Pioneer Press, November 13, 1892.

9. Hutchinson Leader, April 15, 1892; Freeborn County Standard, April 27, May 4, 1892; Minneapolis Evening



During the fall of 1891 the first organized attempt was made to do something about the roads of Minnesota. Early in November E. L. Grout, a pioneer of Rock County and a political leader of some force, wrote to the editor of the Rock County Herald of Luverne suggesting that a meeting of the road supervisors of the county be called to consider "plans for adopting the new methods [of making roads] and making arrangements whereby the work of each township can be done systematically and with the greatest economy." The editor of the paper endorsed the idea as "one of the most important matters brought before the people of this county for many a day." <sup>10</sup> A road convention, consequently, was held at Luverne on January 22 and 23, 1892. The four points of the program show what these southwestern Minnesota farmers considered to be the weak spots of the road system.

1st. -- As the law now stands can township authorities arrange to reduce the road taxes 50 per cent. and have them paid in money?

2nd. -- If the tax should be paid in cash could it be efficiently expended under the present over-

Tribune, April 30, 1892. The latter paper devoted one column at fairly regular intervals to the publication of letters from readers dealing with pertinent topics. It is significant that in practically every issue for a period of several months during the spring of 1892, at least one letter relating to the problem of road improvement was published.

10. Rock County Weekly Herald, November 6, December 25, 1891. An illustration of the promotion campaigns of the road machinery companies may be found in the Northwestern Agriculturist, 6: 126, 7: 112 (June, 1891, May, 1892), where pictures and descriptions of new road-grading machinery are shown.

seer system? If not, what modifications of the plan would be necessary?

3rd. -- If the manufacturers of road graders make terms that meet our views, will it be expedient to recommend our several townships to purchase one or more?

4th. -- What arrangements are requisite in order that needy road districts can have a more equitable share of the tax expended in the their [sic] localities? 11

It was the consensus of opinion of the "farmers and others" who attended the convention that under existing laws the township had no power to reduce taxes and collect them in cash. "It will be necessary to have an act of the legislature to do so, and we recommend that an act of the legislature be asked for to enable town boards to make the desired changes." When the question of purchasing road graders came up, the convention decided that where terms were favorable, road graders ought to be bought. Representatives of two manufacturers of road graders, who were at the meeting, promptly took up the challenge by offering liberal terms to town authorities. No immediate solution was suggested for the problem of providing aid for needy road districts, but it was decided that the question of co-operation between road districts was one of vital importance and should have united thought and action. "As a rope is no stronger than its weakest point, so a main thoroughfare should be considered no better than the worst place in it, and the district which has good roads should not

consider its road work completed until the roads in other districts are in equally as good condition." 12

The two-day conference opened the Minnesota phase of the good roads movement. It hesitantly approached the questions which were disturbing the people of the state, but the discussions centered around points which were germane to the good roads movement generally. The abolition of the poll tax and the substitution of a cash tax in its place were cardinal points in all phases of the crusade for better roads. The failure of a resolutions committee to condemn the small road districts might have indicated that the convention failed to recognize a genuine problem which had to be solved before the good roads ideal could be attained. The small road district and the old-fashioned road overseer were barriers to the employment of skilled civil engineers, who alone could make sure that roads were properly laid out, properly built, and properly maintained. The farmers in attendance, however, refused to accept the recommendation of the committee that efficient expenditures of public money could best be assured through careful selection of road overseers, and, although nothing was offered in its stead, the refusal to commend the existing system indicated that the good roads leaven was working. Finally, the significance of the attendance of road

12. Rock County Weekly Herald, January 29, 1892.

machinery men should not be overlooked. Hand in hand with the good roads movement went improved methods and improved machinery. They were essential parts of the movement, for without them the economy and improved road conditions, for which the good roads movement stood, could not have been attained. There was no pretense about the motives of the salesmen in attending the meeting: they wanted to sell their machinery. One suspects that at least this phase of the good roads movement was not entirely uninspired, and credence is lent to the feeling that the road equipment manufacturers may have had a ubiquitous, if unseen, finger in the good roads pie from start to finish.

The meeting was not without good results. Led by Grout, the Rock County Farmers' Alliance endorsed the good roads idea, and appointed a committee of three of its members to see that public interest was kept alive by the publication of articles dealing with the good roads problem in the local newspapers. The endorsement of the good roads movement by this local Alliance group was followed by similar action by the state organization, which, at its state-wide convention in St. Paul on July 7, 1892, adopted a resolution to the effect that highway matters had not received the attention they deserved and demanding remedial legislation. An attempt was made by other interested citizens to keep the discussion on a non-political basis. "Let every citizen attend their

town meetings and talk about this matter and settle for themselves what they want," appealed one such earnest worker, and he concluded, "This is Republican and also Democratic." 13

In Mapleton, editor Brown of the Enterprise viewed this first Minnesota convention with a great deal of interest. He commented:

A public meeting was held in Luverne, this state, last Friday to discuss a subject that the Enterprise, a few years ago, alluded to frequently and succeeded in stirring up quite a lively interest on the subject. The meeting was to consider the practi[ca]bility of abolishing tetotally the present system of road making. . . . Small road districts with inexperienced path masters, forced to rely on the careless and indifferent poll tax workers, must very soon give way to a better plan. Some progress has already been made in the improved machinery lately introduced for road grading. The period of old-fashioned scrapers is about over. What now remains to be done is to abolish the poll tax, create a cash road fund and let the road making of the whole town by contract, to parties who will furnish the tools and machinery, and work to a plan laid down by a competent high way engineer. 14

The good roads movement in Blue Earth County got under way again with the publication of Brown's comment. During the rest of the winter and the spring of 1892, letters dealing with the road problem from farmers, politicians, and businessmen of southern Minnesota were

13. Rock County Weekly Herald, February 19, March 4, 18, April 15, 1892; St. Paul Daily Globe, July 8, 1892. The fifteenth plank of the Farmers' Alliance platform demanded the immediate revision of the road laws of Minnesota and the appropriation of one-half the income from the sale of liquor licenses and from a state tax on inheritances for a state fund for public roads.

14. Mapleton Enterprise, January 29, 1892.

published in almost every issue of the Mapleton Enterprise. All agreed upon the aim of the movement -- better roads; there was less agreement upon the methods by which the aim could be brought about. One writer believed that by providing adequate drainage better roads would materialize. Another suggested that the roads of the county should be macadamized. A road contractor thought that he could build adequate roads and keep them in repair with the money which in any road district was ordinarily paid in commutation for the road tax. A fourth commentator attributed all the evils that beset travelers over Minnesota's roads to the narrow tires that farmers used on their wagons, and believed that the compulsory use of wagons with tires three inches or more in width would alleviate the condition. The newspaper discussion of the road problem betrayed a more than ordinary interest in a subject of more than ordinary importance. The editor of the Mapleton Enterprise felt that the interest was widespread enough to justify him in calling a convention of Blue Earth County citizens that fall to consider what means should be taken locally to insure good roads. 15

On November 22 a good roads convention assembled at Mapleton. Brown was elected chairman of the assembly,

15. Mapleton Enterprise, February 19, March 4, 18, April 8, 15, 22, 29, May 13, 20, 27, June 3, 17, October 28, 1892; Rock County Weekly Herald, April 15, 1892.

and his partner in the journalistic field, H. C. Hotaling, was chosen secretary. Despite an expression of satisfaction with the existing road system by some of the delegates, the convention went on record as condemning the timeworn methods in use. Resolutions were adopted recommending the employment of competent civil engineers in each county of the state to see that roads were properly laid out and maintained; the abolition of the labor tax and the collection of all taxes in money; the adoption of the contract system for the construction of roads according to the specifications of the civil engineer; the enlargement of road districts so that each township should constitute a district; the creation of a state road and bridge fund made up of the receipts from the internal improvement fund and a percentage of the tax on the gross earnings of the railroads; and finally the formation in each county of a good roads association, composed of one member from each township and the chairman of the board of county commissioners, whose duty it should be to gather information about road-making methods, report on the condition and needs of the roads in their districts, and make suggestions for improving them. As an afterthought, and to please those among them who were contented with existing conditions, the convention adopted another resolution to the effect that "this general law should not be operative in any township until voted upon

by the people of said township." 16

Brown was a little disappointed with the results of this assembly, chiefly because the other newspapers of the county ignored it. If the newspapers were indifferent, he could not complain that the politicians were, for among the persons present were at least one state representative and a state senator, as well as several candidates for office in the forthcoming election. Some of them made suggestions, but most of them were there as Senator George T. Barr of Mankato stated, "to secure the views" of their constituents "so as to be able to act intelligently in regard to any changes which should be made in the road law." Their presence was an encouraging indication of the seriousness with which the road problem was being viewed. 17

The Mapleton convention outlined an aim for good roads advocates, but it was merely the prelude to a greater meeting which even then was being planned. In September, 1892, a month before the announcement of the Mapleton convention appeared, the Minnesota division of the League of American Wheelmen met at Winona. At the business meeting of the league A. B. Choate, chief consul of the Minnesota wheelmen, called attention to the progress that had been made in road improvement in other states. When he suggested that Minnesota wheelmen should take the

16. Mapleton Enterprise, November 25, 1892.

17. Mapleton Enterprise, November 25, 1892.



initiative in beginning the work for good roads in the state, the convention enthusiastically adopted the idea and voted to appropriate a hundred dollars to help defray the expenses of a state-wide convention of all who were interested in good roads. The St. Paul Chamber of Commerce volunteered to play host to the gathering and appointed Christopher C. Andrews to co-operate with the committee that the Minnesota wheelmen had appointed. Letters of invitation to attend the proposed convention were sent to the county commissioners of Minnesota in October, each county being entitled to send two delegates for every senator and representative that it had in the legislature. The task of arousing interest in the convention was made easier by the widespread attention given to the meeting of the second assembly of the national league for good roads in Washington in mid-January. Minnesota, in common with the rest of the nation, was growing road-conscious. 18

The first state-wide good roads convention in Minnesota met in St. Paul on January 25, 1893. Newspaper accounts placed the number of delegates present at four

18. Winona Daily Republican, September 23, 1892; Daily Pioneer Press, November 13, December 14, 1892, January 7, 15, 18, 1893. Forum, a monthly magazine of national circulation, published three articles dealing with the road problem during a single year's period: Isaac B. Potter, "The Profit of Good Country Roads," 12: 376-386 (November, 1891); Albert A. Pope, "An Industrial Revolution by Good Roads," 13: 115-119 (March, 1892); James A. Beaver, "Why We Have So Few Good Roads," 13: 771-777 (August, 1892). Other national magazines published similar articles, and the agricultural magazines were actively pushing the good roads movement.

hundred or more, but the official report of the convention stated that there were three hundred and fifty-five, only fourteen counties failing to send delegates. They came from all parts of the state, and they represented all possible points of view on the question of roads. For the most part, they were chosen "carefully and judiciously," and, in view of the fact that in many cases they were required to pay their own expenses, it is obvious that they were deeply interested in better roads. ]

The writer of an editorial in the issue of the St. Paul Pioneer Press which appeared on the morning that the convention opened commented on the pioneering work that confronted the convention in educating the people in the elementary principles of reform, and pointed out that one way to do that would be to show how much poor roads cost.

That is the fact that must be hammered into the mind of the farmers. If they can be made to see that they lose more money every year in the cost of hauling their crops from the farm to the nearest railway station than they ever have or can from excessive freight charges, they will begin to understand that road improvement is the first thing of all to which they must begin to devote themselves.

The second thing on which to lay stress is the description of a good road. . . . Most farmers, certainly not those who have been born in this country:

19. Daily Pioneer Press, January 25, 1893; Stillwater Daily Gazette, January 26, 1893; Detroit Record, January 27, 1893; Dodge County Record (Dodge Center), January 19, 1893; Great West (St. Paul), February 3, 1893. An unsuccessful attempt was made in the legislature in January, 1893, to get legislative sanction for the payment of the expenses of delegates to the convention by the counties. Senate Journal, 1893, p. 17; House Journal, 1893, p. 38.

never have seen a good road in their lives. . . .  
 What we must have is the macadam road. . . .

The next point, and by all odds the most difficult, is the question of ways and means. The state needs good roads and ought to have them. It will pay the people to provide them. But how shall we go about it? <sup>20</sup>

That, essentially, was the theme of the convention. When Henry R. Wells, an attorney from Preston who was elected chairman of the meeting, took the chair, he urged the convention not to "go too fast, ask too much, nor take the question of roadbuilding too far from the communities where these delegates belong." C. D. Gillan, a farmer from Redwood County, recognized the need for pioneer work in building up "the right sort of public sentiment." This need was emphasized in a still more forceful manner by Senator Jay La Due of Rock County, who urged that "we must arouse a feeling for better roads in our districts, and . . . our efforts should be at home first." The inspirational impetus for the meeting was furnished by W. W. Pendergast, a member of the faculty of the college of agriculture of the University of Minnesota, with a discussion of the need for a good roads movement.

A perfect highway is a thing of beauty and a joy forever. It blesses every home by which it passes. It brings into pleasant communion people who otherwise would have remained at a perpetual distance. It awakens emulation, cements friendships, and adds new charm to social life. It makes the region it traverses more attractive, the residences more delightful; it stimulates a spirit of general improve-

ment. Fields begin to look tidier, shabby fences disappear, gardens show fewer weeds, lawns are better kept, the houses seem cosier, trees are planted along its borders, birds fill the air with music, the world seems brighter, the atmosphere purer. The country is awake, patriotism revives, philanthropy blossoms as selfishness fades and slinks from view. The schoolhouse and the church feel the magic influence -- the wand of progress has touched even them; the old are young again, the young see something now to live for, and to all life seems worth the living. The daily mail reaches each home. The rural cosmopolitan "feels the daily pulse of the world." Wheelmen are no longer confined to the cities. Bicycles, now within the reach of all, are no strangers among farmers. The golden days of which the poets long have sung are upon us. The dreams of the past are coming true. Nothing can thwart the will of fate. Put your ear to the ground even now and you will hear the footfalls of the "good time coming." 21

After this emotional tuning up, the delegates were prepared to listen to the soberer and more humdrum aspects of good roads.

Since the program of the convention was built about the assumption that a large part of the work would have to be educational, many of the papers did not directly attack the problem of country roads in Minnesota, but were devoted to an effort to build up the stock of knowledge of the delegates. General Andrews, for example, read a paper describing the roads of Europe; George W. Sublette, assistant engineer for the city of Minneapolis, reviewed the essentials of pavements and roads in cities.

21. Proceedings of the Minnesota Good Roads Convention Held at St. Paul, Minn., January 25, 26, 1894 [1893], 5, 6, 7 (United States Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Bulletins, no. 2 -- Washington, 1894). Through an error, the date of the convention appears, throughout this publication, as 1894 instead of 1893.

and towns; John D. Estabrook, who for fourteen years had been superintendent of roadway construction in the city of Philadelphia, made some practical suggestions about the construction of dirt roads in Minnesota, and W. S. Chowen of Minneapolis gave a practical talk on the repair of such roads. 22

Choate, in a discussion of "Bad Roads -- Cause and Remedy," pointed out that "The root of the bad-roads evil in Minnesota is our lack of a practical, business-like system." He analyzed the weakness of the poll tax, by which "men who are incompetent and inexperienced are permitted to work out their road tax instead of paying it in money." He harshly criticized the extravagance of the small road districts in which "eleven thousand incompetent, inexperienced, petty road overseers have the supervision of the incompetent men who 'work the roads,' at an annual expense . . . of \$160,000 in cash." The financing of road improvements, he asserted, was difficult partly because the state constitution forbade the state to aid in improving the highways, and in the northern part of the state the financial problem was made still more perplexing by the presence of five hundred thousand acres of tax exempt railroad lands. To effect a cure for this situation, he suggested that railroad lands be placed on the tax rolls. The wagon roads of the state, he de-

22. Proceedings of the Minnesota Good Roads Convention, 8-13.

clared, should be classified, "according to importance, into State, county, and township roads," to supervise which he would "constitute State, county, and township highway commissions." The state highway commission would be authorized to "lay out and furnish plans and specifications for State roads, and require and enforce the building of the roads according to plans." Roads, he held, should be built "at a local expense and by a sort of partnership arrangement," and "the credit of State and nation should be used to obtain loans at a very low rate of interest." 23

The climax of the two-day convention came when E. J. Hodgson of St. Paul proposed a plan for a permanent good roads association. He asserted:

The very importance of this work admonishes us that we must not go at it in an impetuous, haphazard manner. The fullest investigation and deliberation are essential to its successful prosecution. For this purpose, and for the purpose of arousing public interest, a State organization will be necessary. The experience of others should be gathered and utilized to the fullest extent. We must not repeat the old acrobatic feat of jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. It should be taken up in a business way, or we had much better leave it as it is. 24

The aims of the convention were fulfilled in these speeches. A beginning was made of the problem of educating the people in the methods of making better roads. Spiritually, they were put in an exalted mood by the appeals to their emotions.

23. Proceedings of the Minnesota Good Roads Convention,  
11.

24. Proceedings of the Minnesota Good Roads Convention,  
15.

They were presented with a program of work to be performed. Finally, they were shown what was to be done in order that the work which they had begun might be carried on.

It was apparent that most of the delegates were in favor of making drastic changes in the road code of Minnesota. The abolition of the poll labor tax and the levying instead of a cash tax, the employment of skilled road engineers, the use of modern equipment, the performance of the work under contract instead of by day labor, the payment of bonuses for the use of wide wagon tires instead of narrow tires, the repairing of the roads as often and as soon as they needed it, and the creation of a state fund to aid in road building -- these were the suggestions most frequently made. There was also some enthusiasm for building macadamized roads, and for the employment of convict labor on roads.

A number of suggestions were made to provide for the financing of road building. Besides a cash tax to be levied for a road and bridge fund, one popular idea was to levy a special tax upon the railroads and railroad lands for this purpose. Members of the Farmers' Alliance urged that the money received from licensing liquor establishments should be used for highway purposes. One delegate from a northwestern county suggested that the county commissioners be given sole power to sell liquor, and that the funds from this source be used for county

roads and bridges. In his county, he claimed, the money not only would be sufficient to pay for building roads, but to finance the construction of drainage ditches as well. One large group in the convention favored the issuance of long-term bonds to pay for building roads. It was their claim that one generation should not be compelled to pay for roads which would be of equal benefit to coming generations. Diametrically opposed to this view was that of the Farmers' Alliance group. They feared that the issuance of bonds would place an increasing indebtedness on the farmers who, because they owned the land, would have to assume the greater portion of the burden of paying the bonds. It was a thesis of the Farmers' Alliance movement that the farmers were exploited by the wealthy industrialists, and the proposition of bonding, they held, was simply another method by which the exploitation would be carried on. Even before the state-wide convention was held, the editor of the Great West, the official Farmers' Alliance organ in Minnesota, warned his readers to "Look out -- it is a 'bond scheme' -- to give the rich a chance to put their wealth into your debts -- instead of using their money." A short time later he declared that "the farmers and laborers of this state . . . are too well posted and intelligent as a class not to see through the bond issuance scheme -- that it has behind it something of more importance to the originators than the 'proposed' good



to the farmers." One after another, the local Alliances of the state met to discuss the problem, and, as often, they returned a resolution opposing the long-term bond plan. The organization as a whole felt that the cost of improving roads "should be borne by all classes, inasmuch as the business men in our towns and cities will receive as much benefit therefrom as the farmers." 25

The first good roads convention did not bring about the immediate fulfillment of the ideal of good roads. Rather, its success lay in the formation of a permanent organization to carry on the work of teaching the people the value of good roads. This campaign of education, however, could not be prosecuted over a period of years without some sort of permanent organization to preserve the vital spark which, uncherished, would soon die. That was the function of the Minnesota State Good Roads Association, which was organized on a permanent basis in the closing moments of the convention. There was some opposition to such an organization, Fred Iltis, one of the delegates from Carver County, questioning the wisdom of a permanent organization on the grounds that it was likely to degenerate into a semipolitical body. 26

When the permanent organization was effected, a committee of five members, headed by Choate, who had been

25. Daily Pioneer Press, January 25, 1893; Great West, December 2, 1892, January 20, 27, February 3, 10, 17, 24, March 3, April 14, 1893; Mapleton Enterprise, January 6, 1893.

26. Proceedings of the Minnesota Good Roads Convention, 16; Daily Pioneer Press, January 27, 1893.

elected president of the association, was selected to outline a program of legislation. But a movement was already under way in the legislature to enact good roads legislation. On January 10 Joseph Underleak, representing Fillmore County in the House, had introduced a bill which embodied many of the recommendations made two weeks later by the convention. It provided that townships might, when a majority of the voters signified their desire to do so, abolish the labor tax and substitute instead a cash tax, and that the supervision of road construction and maintenance be placed in the hands of the township supervisors who were to employ a competent road overseer. Critics of the bill found one serious defect in it, for, once the township had voted to abolish the poll tax and substitute the cash tax, they were prohibited from returning to the poll tax method of financing road work. Some of the legislators, like Robert C. Dunn of Princeton, the author a score of years later of a famous road bill, felt that the farmers had too heavy a drain upon their cash resources as things stood, and believed that most of them would prefer to continue to pay their road tax in labor. In the Senate the bill encountered more opposition. The committee on roads and bridges recommended that it be passed, although some of the members of the committee, notably Edwin E. Lommen of Crookston, felt that the measure was inspired by the manufacturers of road-making equipment. Thus, to the fear that farmers

would not, or could not, pay the added burden of a cash tax for roads was added the accusation that manufacturing interests stood to profit by the passage of the measure. Probably many of the senators said with Dunn, "I don't like the bill." At any rate, it never was brought up for a vote in the Senate. <sup>27</sup>

The good roads cause gained many influential friends during the following year. One of them was Michael J. Dowling, the editor of the Renville Star Farmer, who in his youth had suffered the loss, as the result of freezing, of his legs and one arm and part of the other hand. In spite of terrific physical handicaps, Dowling had risen to occupy a position of political importance in the state as a leader in the Republican party. While he was mildly interested in the good roads movement from its inception, an unfortunate occurrence during the summer of 1893 converted him into an ardent advocate of change in the road system. A bungling or maliciously mischievous road supervisor made Dowling the butt of a joke by serving written notice on him to appear in person to work out his road tax on the streets of the village. "What fine roads we will have," Dowling scolded, "if men without legs or hands are to do the shoveling. Ye Gods, what thrift!" Thereafter his newspaper advo-

27. House Journal, 1893, p. 37, 353; Senate Journal, 1893, p. 471; Great West, March 10, 17, 1893; Princeton Union, March 2, 1893.

cated the adoption of a cash road tax, and the following summer he himself participated in the good roads movement to the extent of attending a national good roads congress in Asbury Park, New Jersey, as the delegate of the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce. <sup>28</sup> Another powerful friend of good roads, P. V. Collins, was also a newspaper man, the editor of the Northwestern Agriculturist, a farm publication with a wide circulation throughout the northwestern states. With Dowling, he attended the good roads congress in New Jersey. <sup>29</sup>

The agitation for good roads was not confined to the activities of individuals. The Minnesota State Good Roads Association named one vice-president for each county in the state, and it was expected that these officials would lead in the organization of local groups. Some of the county groups were successful; others were productive of little good. In Rice County the suggestion that a county meeting should be held was endorsed enthusiastically by the farmers' institute, and on February 11, less than three weeks after the state good roads meeting, about a hundred and fifty Rice County farmers met in Faribault to form a permanent county good roads association. The bylaws and the plan of organization were patterned after those of the state group, representation

28. Renville Star Farmer, July 14, 28, 1893, August 3, 1894.

29. Northwestern Agriculturist, 9: 209 (July 15, 1894).

being extended to every township in the county. That group, influenced by the recent state-wide convention, approved the program adopted by the St. Paul meeting. Similar action was taken in Fillmore County on March 13, when the farmers' institute met there. The progress made by the first meeting was nullified by a second assembly, held in June, when the group, dominated by the Farmers' Alliance, proceeded to divorce itself from the Minnesota State Good Roads Association. 30

Slightly more than a year elapsed before there was evidence of any further local activity. Late in February, 1894, a call for a county good roads convention in Renville County was sent out, and on March 10 twenty-eight delegates gathered at Hector to discuss the various phases of the road problem. The Renville County meeting, however, completely repudiated the program of the state good roads convention of 1893. The bare account of the meeting published in the Hector Mirror reveals that, when the question of changing the road tax from a labor tax to a money tax was discussed, it was "the sense of this convention that the matter be left as at present." On the question of financing the construction of roads by long-term bonds, or by an immediate tax, the convention again went on record as saying that "it does not

30. Northfield News, January 28, 1893; Faribault Republican, February 1, 8, 15, 22, 1893; Great West, February 24, 1893; Preston Times, March 9, 16, June 8, 1893.

entertain either of the above propositions." State aid in building highways was completely negated, as was the proposition that the petty road district be abolished. The only positive action taken by this meeting was that of organizing a permanent good roads association, modeled after that in Rice County, with the chairman of the board of supervisors of each township acting as a vice-president Dowling later stated that the convention's rejection of the question of issuing bonds for the construction of roads was phrased as follows: "Resolved, That we, as citizens of Minnesota and of the county of Renville, are opposed to the issuance of any more bonds for the purpose of building up roads in this county to be utilized by the bicycle dudes of the towns, and to fill the coffers of the rich with the interest that they would get from the bonds." 32

A combination of unfavorable circumstances was slowing down the good roads movement. These were: first, an unsettled economic condition, prevailing in the nation at large; second, unusually fine weather which permitted rural Minnesota to escape its usual spring mud bath; 33

31. Hector Mirror, March 15, 1894; Renville Star Farmer February 23, 1894.

32. Proceedings of the National Road Conference Held at the Westminster Church, Asbury Park, N. J., July 5 and 6, 1894, 37 (United States Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Bulletins, no. 10 -- Washington, 1894).

33. The Mapleton Enterprise for January 26, 1894, commented on the fine weather as a result of which Minnesota's roads had been in unusually good condition during 1893, saying: "It is only in extreme wet seasons that we realize the necessity of a better road system."

third, the opposition of a powerful political party -- the Farmers' Alliance, which had merged into the Populist party -- to any plan of road improvement which would increase the indebtedness of the agricultural classes; fourth, the natural conservatism of the farmers, who were loath to try a new method during a period of economic distress; and fifth -- a phase of the third factor working in opposition to the good roads movement -- a feeling among the farmers that they would not be coerced into building roads for "the bicycle dudes of the towns." This last was a manifestation of a friction between town and rural people which was not new. "Johnny Hayseed" was a figure of derision to the townsman, as the "city slicker" was to the farmer, a mutual antipathy which was capitalized by the opponents of the good roads movement.

The apostles of good roads were not disheartened by the turn events took. They recognized the inevitableness of the good roads movement. Collins declared:

Until recently, agriculturally, Minnesota has been almost exclusively a wheat-raising section, but there is a strong agitation now toward diversified farming, and to me it seems that as soon as we secure diversified farming in Minnesota the question of the importance and the absolute necessity of improved highways will be forced upon the farmers, and they will be obliged to take some action. In wheat raising the farmer sows his wheat in the spring and sits on the fence and watches it grow, and in the fall, when the wheat is cut and harvested, the roads are generally in a pretty good condition, and they have not felt the necessity of improving them. <sup>34</sup>

The state association in 1894 made arrangements with the Minnesota Agricultural Society for a good roads exhibit at the state fair to be held in September, and planned that one day of the fair should be designated as "Good Roads Day." A program of addresses by prominent good roads leaders was arranged, and it was hoped that this field day would be productive of good results. Choate and the others who participated were bitterly disappointed, however, for "the farmers and men supposed to be especially interested in a matter of such importance to the state, were conspicuous by their absence." Some of the disappointment of the leaders of the movement was voiced by Choate in his address to a scanty audience, in which he expressed regret for the antagonism toward the League of American Wheelmen. He pointed out that, as a class, the bicyclists were "proportionately as heavy taxpayers as any other set of men in the commonwealth, and that instead of condemnation, commendation should be their reward for the efforts put forth in behalf of the movement." 35

The hard times of the nineties, however, aided as well as injured the good roads movement. One of its effects was that of forcing manufacturers of bicycles to lower their prices. A bicycle which in 1892 had cost from a hundred and twenty-five to a hundred and fifty

35. Northwestern Agriculturist, 9: 213 (July 15, 1894); Minneapolis Tribune, September 9, 11, 13, 14, 1894.



dollars could be purchased for fifty or seventy-five dollars in 1895. This decrease in price resulted in an unexpected popularity of the machine among the less wealthy classes. In the early nineties only those of comparatively great wealth could afford to own a bicycle. After the economic chaos had passed, farmers and farmers' sons and daughters found it within their means to possess them. It became increasingly difficult for the farmers to hate the "bicycle dudes" when their own children cavorted about on the popular machines. 36

Even though farmers remained obdurate in their opposition to the bicyclists, they were not able consistently to ignore other factors working to bring about a reformation of the road system. The diversification of farming about which Collins spoke at Asbury Park in 1894 was almost achieved in that very year. In announcing the Minnesota state fair, the Minneapolis Tribune published the results of a survey made by some six hundred reporters scattered over the state showing that "diver-

36. Daily Pioneer Press, January 7, 1895; Minneapolis Tribune, September 13, 1894. Review (Mankato), June 6, 1893. The Fergus Falls Journal for July 27, 1893, gives the price of a wheel, which in 1892 sold for a hundred and fifty dollars, as eighty-five dollars. The country newspapers of Minnesota give abundant evidence of the popularity of the bicycle. At Albert Lea, for example, in May, 1894, a bicycle club with a membership of about thirty, was formed. Freeborn County Standard, May 9, 1894. The Hutchinson Leader for May 1, 1896, stated that there were about a hundred and fifty bicycles in the community, and in the issue of the Mankato Free Press for July 23, 1897, the number of wheelmen in that vicinity was reported to be about five hundred.

sity" was "the key to success." Wheat contributed about twenty-five million dollars to the wealth of the state, while other grains were estimated to be worth more than thirty-one million dollars. Fruits and vegetables added fifteen million dollars to the farmers' purse, eggs and poultry brought in five million dollars more, and dairy products were estimated to total about a million dollars. Beef and pork raised the total by an additional ten million dollars, and hay and grass seed brought an income of sixteen million dollars. The wheat crop, judged from these figures, was not as important in the farmers' income as the total of the other items, and they were just becoming aware of that fact. <sup>37</sup>

The influence of the creamery as a factor in bringing about good roads can scarcely be overestimated. Many a farmer, after he arrived at the creamery and found his cream churned to butter by the bumpy, rutty roads, learned to curse such roads fluently. To an observing person, it was evident that "every creamery is becoming the focus where center better roads, and to the creamery must be given one more credit mark besides those it has already earned as an economizer of time and labor on the farm." The reason for this was obvious, for "milk is a perishable product and its limit of preserved sweetness is a narrow one," and, therefore, "where the milk has to go to

37. Minneapolis Tribune, September 9, 1894.

the creamery there can be no staying at home until the road dries." <sup>38</sup> That is but one instance of the pressure of circumstances which forced the farmers to alter their concepts of the good roads problem.

With the knowledge that economic factors were working to help the good roads advocates obtain improved roads, the leaders of the movement kept doggedly at their work. Moreover, they were being aided by forces close to the farmers. The influence of Collins as editor of an agricultural paper has been cited, but the whole-hearted co-operation which the college of agriculture and the agricultural experiment stations gave the movement brought the agitation for better roads closer to the rural population than any other medium could have done. Furthermore, the office of road inquiry in the department of agriculture at Washington issued one bulletin after the other to bear the message of good roads to the people not only of Minnesota but of the nation at large. In the face of changes in the methods of road making and maintenance in other states, the most conservative of Minnesota's population could scarcely help being impressed, and, from being impressed by the accomplishments of other states, it was but a step to following their example. It was noticeable that the good roads convention held in St. Paul in January, 1895, was

38. Saint Paul Globe, July 19, 1897; Mankato Free Press, July 16, 23, 1897.

attended with greater enthusiasm than had been that of 1893, and furthermore that the rural areas of the state predominated. But it was also evident that, if good roads meant higher taxes, the rural areas would "worry along as best they can with the natural roadways, patched up by a little filling and ditching here and there." 39

In the legislature the good roads advocates were more successful in 1895 than they had been in 1893. Two laws were passed, both of which had been recommended by the convention. The one provided that the owners of wagons with tires three inches wide or more should be granted a rebate on their road tax assessment of two dollars for every wagon so equipped, provided that the total amount rebated did not equal more than half of their tax. The success of similar laws in other states and the publication early in 1895 of a pamphlet by the office of road inquiry bearing on that subject undoubtedly had a great influence on the action of the Minnesota legislature in passing the bill. 40 The other law relat-

39. Daily Pioneer Press, January 7, 14, 16, 1895; Minneapolis Tribune, January 17, 1895.

40. Minneapolis Tribune, March 22, 1895; Northwestern Agriculturist, 10: 104 (April 1, 1895); Roy Stone, compiler, Wide Tires: Laws of Certain States Relating to Their Use, and Other Pertinent Information (United States Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Bulletins, no. 12 -- Washington, 1895). Agitation in Minnesota for wide tires had been sporadic for years. The Saturday Evening Spectator for October 28, 1882, had suggested their adoption, and in the Mapleton movement of the mid-eighties wide tires likewise played a part. In 1892 several papers suggested the enactment of laws for this

ing to good roads was a revised form of the bill permitting townships to abolish the poll tax which was so nearly passed by the legislature of 1893. It provided that, if twenty per cent of the legal voters of a township petitioned, a vote on the question of abolishing the poll tax might be taken. If the result of the vote favored the abolition of the labor tax, the supervision of the roads of the township was to be vested in the board of township supervisors, who were authorized to employ a competent supervisor to care for them. If after five years twenty per cent of the voters again petitioned for a vote on the poll tax question, the labor tax might be restored if the vote favored the repudiation of the decision. The bill as passed removed the objectionable feature of the 1893 bill -- the irrevocability of the cash tax. 41

In themselves these laws fell far short of the ideal. The enthusiasts would have abolished the poll labor tax immediately, but public opinion was against such arbitrary action. The good roads advocates would have installed a state department of skilled engineers to supervise the construction of roads, and would have set

purpose. See, for example, the Hutchinson Leader, May 20, June 3, 1892, and the Freeborn County Standard, June 1, 1892. The passage of the Wisconsin wide tire law in 1893 elicited prompt comment from Minnesota sources. See, for example, the Hutchinson Leader, June 23, 1893, and the Blue Earth City Post, July 13, 1893.

41. General Laws, 1895, p. 161-163.

up a state fund to pay at least a portion of the cost of building them. Sentiment, however, was still against a radical departure from the familiar practice, even though the legislature was willing. Home rule was clung to tenaciously by the rural districts, and the efforts of the good roads leaders were looked upon as an infringement of that right. "The farmers are competent, under the township organization, to manage the roads without dictation from the Twin Cities or any other city," one of these rural residents declared. "The people of the several townships say 'hands off' of home rule. . . . The farmers in the townships will never permit a road commissioner to govern the management of roads, or the bonding the town for road purpose. If the farmers want better roads . . . let this road movement come from the farmers." 42

In 1895 the good roads cause was aided by the organization of the Minnesota Surveyors and Engineers' Association, a body made up of civil engineers in Minnesota. Moreover, the schools were taking a more prominent part in the work of spreading the gospel of good roads. The May, 1896, number of the Farm Students' Review, issued by the state college of agriculture, was devoted to essays on good roads, and a course in road engineering was included in the curriculum of the col-

42. Lake Crystal Union, February 26, 1896.

lege of engineering as early as the fall of 1894. Whether the farmers of Minnesota wished to become converts to the good roads movement or not, they were being won over almost without being aware of it, and improved equipment was to be seen at almost every point where road work was under way. In many cases villages and smaller cities were undermining the complaint of the farmers that the entire expense of road building fell on the agricultural class by purchasing some of the more expensive equipment and lending it to the agricultural road districts, the only condition, in many cases, being that the rural road district should use it on roads leading to the village. "Such public spirit," commented Collins, "is to be commended and it has helped to make good roads popular in many counties." The smaller pieces of equipment were being sold at a lower price than formerly, and as a result their use was spreading. 43

Annual conventions of good roads advocates were held after 1895, and in 1896 a new organization, known as the Good Roads Association of Minnesota, was formed. It was headed by Judge H. R. Wells of Preston, who had been temporary chairman of the 1893 convention, and

43. Northwestern Agriculturist, 8: 340, 10: 328 (February, 1893, November 1, 1895); Minneapolis Tribune, January 20, 21, 1896; Blue Earth City Post, June 15, 1893; Mapleton Enterprise, June 9, 1893; Mankato Free Press, July 16, 23, 1897; Engineering News, 33: 165 (March 14, 1895); Farm Students' Review, vol. 1, no. 5 (May, 1896); University of Minnesota, Catalogues, 1893-94, p. 126 (Minneapolis, 1894).

Collins was elected secretary. In co-operation with the Minnesota Agricultural Association and the Minnesota Surveyors and Engineers' Association, the organization arranged to hold annual meetings at the state fair grounds and to prepare models of good roads for exhibition. These were to be full scale and would be "well calculated to promote interest in good roads, besides furnishing valuable information." 44

The organization by this time had something definite at which to aim, for the legislature of 1895 had indicated its willingness to set up a state road and bridge fund and had passed a measure providing for the allocation of the income from the internal improvement land fund to a state road and bridge fund, which was formed from this source and the income received from the federal government as the result of the sale of United States lands in Minnesota. Before the measure could go into effect, however, it was necessary to submit it to a popular vote, for a constitutional amendment adopted in 1872 forbade the legislature to appropriate the income from the internal improvement land fund for any purpose without first obtaining the consent of the people. The measure was lost because of an insufficient vote, although a great majority of those who voted on the measure favored

44. Northwestern Agriculturist, 11: 116 (April 15, 1896); Crow Bar, vol. 5, no. 2, p. 11 (August, 1896). The latter is a monthly publication devoted to the heavy hardware trades.



its adoption. 45

Governor David M. Clough, in his address to the legislature at the opening of the 1897 session, came out vigorously in favor of adequate road legislation, advocating a "system of county roads with limited state aid," and the Good Roads Association in its 1897 convention planned a remodeled bill to submit to the legislature to replace the one which the electorate had rejected by so narrow a margin the year before. The new bill was in the form of a constitutional amendment, and it included in a road and bridge fund the money received from the five per cent fund, and the income from the internal improvement land fund, to which was added a general pro-

45. Ante, p. 309; Folwell, Minnesota, 3: 225; Kumm, Constitution of Minnesota, 96. According to Folwell, 152,765 persons voted for, and 28,991 persons against the measure. A majority of the total votes cast, however, was greater than the number cast in favor of the bill. In 1841 Congress passed a law granting 500,000 acres of land for internal improvements to every state upon its admission to the Union. When Minnesota became a state, it was assumed that the internal improvement land grant had been satisfied by the land grant made to aid in the construction of railroads. About 1866, however, it was discovered that the railroad land grant had no relation to the internal improvement land act of 1841, and immediate steps were taken by the state to obtain the lands. The amendment of 1872 was adopted to prevent the legislature from using the proceeds from the sale of these lands to retire the railroad bonds issued by the state in 1858 and 1859. In 1881, however, the redemption of the railroad bonds by means of this fund was sanctioned. In 1896 about \$365,000 remained as a permanent fund. It was this money that the legislature proposed to combine with the five per cent fund to form a state road and bridge fund. Statutes at Large, 5: 455; reports of the state auditor, in Minnesota, Executive Documents, 1866, p. 30-32, 1896, vol. 1, p. 289; Kumm, Constitution of Minnesota, 96.

perty tax of one-twentieth of a mill. The road and bridge fund thus set up was to be administered by a state highway commission of three members serving without compensation other than personal expenses. No county was to receive more than three per cent, nor less than one-half of one per cent, of the total fund expended during any one year, nor could the state pay more than one-third of the cost of any road or bridge, and not more than one-third of the fund was to be expended upon bridges. <sup>46</sup>

Little difficulty was experienced in getting the bill for the amendment passed by the legislature. It was, rather, in danger because of too great popularity. An enthusiastic backer of the movement proposed to introduce a bill of his own appropriating almost a quarter of a million dollars of state money to finance road construction by the state. Collins remarked: "This thing of having a plan may be all very well for 'dem bicycle fellers' but it won't do at all for statesmen who want to get at the State Treasury and make things hum. After all, wouldn't it be better to postpone all action rather than to make a plunge which would prejudice future progress?" The proposed bill was "indefinitely postponed."<sup>47</sup>

46. General Laws, 1897, p. 600; message of Governor Clough to the legislature, in Minnesota, Executive Documents, 1896, vol. 1, p. 40; Northwestern Agriculturist, 12: 34 (February 1, 1897).

47. Northwestern Agriculturist, 12: 50 (February 15, 1897); Senate Journal, 1897, p. 95, 101, 233, 272, 294, 370, 493.

About a year and a half remained before the voters would have the opportunity to record their opinions of the constitutional amendment. Its advocates determined to use that time in preaching the gospel of good roads from one end of the state to the other. Sometimes they failed in their purpose. Thus, at Zumbrota in May, 1897, considerable disfavor with the Good Roads Association was manifested, chiefly because the representatives of the body failed to tread lightly when the question of taxation for roads was brought up, and because, in describing existing methods of road making, the speakers unfortunately touched some of the delegates on a sore spot. <sup>48</sup> The editor of the Zumbrota News, describing the meeting, said:

The majority of them went away scoffing and indignant, utterly disgusted with the mass of matter presented, very little of which was of any practical value whatever. Nor can the farmers justly be blamed for their opinions in this respect. Their methods of road making were unjustly and harshly criticized, odious comparisons were drawn, reflections made which aroused the temper, and a mass of impracticable theory presented which tried the patience of all present. <sup>49</sup>

Other meetings for the same purpose had happier endings, however, and the good roads leaders made definite progress in arousing public opinion in favor of the movement. <sup>50</sup> At each of the two state fairs which inter-

48. For accounts of the Zumbrota meeting see: Zumbrota News, May 28, June 4, 1897; Red Wing Daily Republican, May 27, 28, 1897; Northwestern Agriculturist, 12: 186 (June 15, 1897).

49. Zumbrota News, May 28, 1897.

50. Zumbrota News, June 25, 1897; Farmers' Tribune (Minneapolis), September 2, 6, 1898.

vened before the election, good roads conventions were held, and model roads were shown. During the summer of 1898 the office of road inquiry published a lengthy article by Choate, which was distributed throughout the state. Perhaps the most telling feature of this article was a series of statements by prominent Minnesotans endorsing the proposed amendment to the constitution. The list of endorsers included politicians, educators, professional men, and businessmen from every part of the state. No small item in building up public favor was the help extended by a sympathetic press, including the agricultural periodicals, although Farm, Stock and Home, edited by Sidney M. Owen, who ran for governor on the Populist ticket in 1890 and again in 1894, favored the amendment with the reservation, "but for heaven's sake no more bonded debt, at least until debt-paying becomes easier and more common than it now is." <sup>51</sup> Both the Republican and Democratic parties were committed to the cause of good roads in their platforms, although the planks were, on the whole, harmless enough. <sup>52</sup>

51. Crow Bar, vol. 5, no. 2, p. 11 (August, 1896); Daily Pioneer Press, September 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 1898; Farm, Stock and Home, 13: 145, 14: 339, 371 (April 1, 1897, October 1, November 1, 1898); Northwestern Agriculturist, 13: 264, 314 (September 1, October 15, 1898); A. B. Choate, State Aid to Road Building in Minnesota (United States Department of Agriculture, Office of Road Inquiry, Circulars, no. 31 -- Washington, 1898).

52. Minneapolis Journal, June 16, July 1, 1898; Northwestern Agriculturist, 13: 358 (December 1, 1898); Daily Pioneer Press, December 24, 1898; Kumm, Constitution of Minnesota, 195; General Laws, 1899, p. vii.

The first phase of the good roads movement in Minnesota was ended with the adoption of the constitutional amendment in the election of November 8, 1898. The law of 1895 enabled any township in the state to abolish statute labor on the roads. The amendment of 1898 made it possible for the legislature to establish a road and bridge fund and organize a state highway commission. The program to this point had failed to make provision for the employment of skilled engineers by the local units of government, and no adequate supervision of local construction work by state-employed engineers was provided. Yet, the progress made by these pioneers of good roads during the era of the bicycle was great.

