

**Samuel Ellsworth Bradt**  
**October 22, 1861 to March 15, 1938**



Samuel Ellsworth Bradt was born on October 22, 1861 to Andrew and Amy Ann Bradt. He began a business career in 1879 at the DeKalb firm of Bradt and Shipman, manufacturers of gloves and mittens. He soon became a leading figure in the community, pioneering the work of many civic and business enterprises. Mr. Bradt was secretary and manager of the DeKalb Building and Loan Association from 1885 to 1935 and president of the First Trust and Savings Bank of DeKalb from 1905 to 1933. He also contributed a considerable amount of time to the local Board of Education and the local and state Chambers of Commerce.

His chief area of interest was Illinois Highway finance and construction. He is credited by many as the leading force behind the development of the Illinois state highway system. From 1913 to 1917 he served as a member of the State Highway Commission under Governor Dunne.

From 1917 to 1921 he served as a State Superintendent of Highways under Governor Lowden. In 1922 Samuel E. Bradt retired from his position as State Superintendent devoting most of his time to banking, but still participating in all road meetings in the middle west. Years after his death on March 15, 1938, S.E. Bradt continued to be honored for his participation in local and state activities.

In 1910, Logan W. Page, director of the U.S. Office of Public Roads (OPR, formerly the U.S. Office of Road Inquiry), created the American Association for Highway Improvement (renamed the American Highway Association in 1912). He saw the organization as an umbrella group representing the entire highway community, including good roads associations, railroads, equipment manufacturers, and the highway agencies — at that time, few in number — established by State governments.

State highway officials, however, believed that they needed their own organization. Page approached Commissioner of Highways George P. Coleman of Virginia to suggest limiting the new group to the heads of State highway agencies and their immediate staff, “. . . thus making the organization strictly official and enabling full and frank consideration of questions, particularly those of a technical character untrammelled by commercialism or popular prejudices.”

On December 12, 1914, at the Raleigh Hotel in Washington, DC, highway officials representing 16 States formed the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO), with Page and two of his top officials in attendance. The participants selected Henry G. Shirley, chief engineer of the Maryland State Roads Commission, to be president of AASHO, a post he held for two terms (1914–1915 and 1915–1916).

Samuel Bradt, as a member of the Illinois State Highway Commission, represented Illinois at that meeting.

**References:**

1. Bertha G. Bradt Collection - Northern Illinois University, Regional History Center  
<https://www.niu.edu/university-libraries/sca/collections/rhcua/rc/RC%2046.pdf>
2. Celebrating A Century of Cooperation - Richard Weingroff  
<https://highways.dot.gov/public-roads/septemberoctober-2014/celebrating-century-cooperation>