

Theodore Gary
Highway Commissioner
1921 - 1926



Sketch by Wilbur Mayens
Missouri Department of Highways
Highway Planning Division

The Centennial Road Law of 1921 marked the final step in the transition from local to state control over road construction.

Designed to implement the 1920 bond issue, the Centennial Road Law passed in special session after long, heated debate and compromise between urban and rural legislators.

It created a four-member Missouri State Highway Commission with broadened powers to locate, design, construct, and maintain the state highway system, let contracts, and purchase rights of way. The commission was authorized to appoint a Secretary to the Commission, a Chief Counsel, and the Chief Engineer.

The legislation detailed a 1,500-mile system of primary routes to be comprised of “high type” or hard surfaced roads to connect the principal cities. It also explicitly defined a secondary system of 6,100 miles, chiefly of graded earth and gravel, which interconnected all of the county seats.

The law mandated that construction be carried on simultaneously as far as possible in all the counties; each county received an apportionment of \$6,000 per mile. Governor Arthur Hyde appointed the first commission members on December 1, 1921: Theodore Gary, chairman; S. S. Connett, vice chairman; Murray Carleton; C. D. Matthews; and state geologist H. A. Buehler as an ex officio member. The new commission reinstated Graham as Chief Engineer.