

Julian Montgomery

Chief Highway Engineer, Texas Highway Department

October 1, 1937 - June 30, 1940

Julian Montgomery started with the highway department when it was created in 1917, and he had the dubious honor of following the renowned Gibb Gilchrist when he retired as state engineer in 1937. He would be the last department outsider for the rest of the century to be promoted to state engineer.

Montgomery's service was also affected because department insiders considered him an appointee by Gov. James Allred and not the Highway Commission. Allred and Gilchrist had not seen eye-to-eye on highway funding issues. Although Montgomery's early career involved highways, his career just before his appointment was more involved with building construction - another fact that caused concern among department insiders.

Even though Montgomery held the top position for only three years, his career was marked by service to and a continued relationship with the department over his 50-year civil engineering career. When he died in 1973, Dewitt C. Greer, who succeeded him as state engineer in 1940, was an honorary pall-bearer.

When George A. Duren was named the first state highway engineer in 1917, he needed a capable assistant to organize the engineering branch of the highway department. He found one in Montgomery, a fellow civil engineering graduate of the University of Texas. Montgomery, who also earned a master's degree from the University of Illinois, quickly took over, designing bridge and culvert standards until World War I interrupted his career. Returning to the highway department in 1919, he was named Corpus Christi district engineer.

Soon, he was wooed away to be the Rockwall County engineer in charge of a \$1 million road program. He eventually accepted a position as Wichita Falls city engineer. He then opened his own private engineering firm, based in Wichita Falls and was appointed regional supervisor for Texas and seven other states by the National Planning Board.

He was later named director of the Public Works Agency for Texas in 1935 by President Franklin Roosevelt. During his term, he expedited completion of several buildings on the UT campus. He resigned from the PWA in 1937 to take the top spot with the highway department.

During his tenure with the highway department, he put into operation the department's Workmen's Compensation Insurance Division in early 1938. The department established an employee safety program, which included first-aid training and safety education. As a result, the program improved morale and reduced insurance costs. Montgomery also added a position of assistant state highway engineer to maintain closer contact between headquarters and the 25 districts.

Despite his early experience with the department, he was still viewed as an "outsider." He retired from the department in 1940, citing health problems. Nevertheless, shortly after his departure, he quickly organized and headed a group of engineers and architects who planned and supervised the rapid construction of many military bases and prison camps at the onset of World War II. Among the many projects, his group built Bergstrom Air Force Base, Austin. In 1957, he was honored with the first Distinguished Graduate Award from the University of Texas College of Engineering.

He died in Austin in 1973 at 82.

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