

Excerpts from Allegheny County's controller's reports, newspaper clippings and miscellaneous publications related to the building of county roads.

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Proceedings of the Third American Road Congress 1914

Allegheny County Controller's Reports

Allegheny County's road department was created soon after 1895 when state legislation first allowed Pennsylvania counties to issue bonds for road construction. By 1900, the state was appropriating road building funds and in 1905, created an Automobile Division that required licenses to drive.

Allegheny County began building 16' wide macadam roads consisting of an 8" granite base topped with a 2" coating of light stone bound by hot tar. With the advent of automobile and truck traffic, whose narrow tires cut into the macadam surface, ruts soon appeared. A more durable road surface was needed. While macadam paving continued to be used on lightly travelled roads, a mixture of crushed stone, sand and asphalt was used to pave more heavily traveled roadways. Allegheny County laid its first asphaltic-concrete roads in 1910. Brick roads were also used at the time, but at a greater cost. A mile of macadam road cost \$12,000 while brick roads were \$23,000 per mile. [Motor Age Vol 18 9/15/10 pg 11]

In 1914, 128 caretakers were responsible for County roads. Each worker patrolled three miles of roadway, and working with hand tools, removed obstructions, cut weeds, whitewashed fences, patched holes, etc. This system remained in place until 1924 when it was replaced with a fleet of six road repair units, each consisting of a group of fifteen men and a foreman who were transported to and from jobs accompanied by a truck carrying tools and materials.

At this time, there was a provision allowing local municipalities to partner with the County in road building. Shared costs made road improvements more affordable. [Proceedings of the Third American Road congress 1914.]

As automobile travel came into wider use, Allegheny County [1924] embarked on a major construction program that within its first eight years resulted in 99 bridges at a cost of \$47 million and 100 road projects costing \$31,200,000. The 6th, 7th, 9th, 31st and 10th street bridges were built along with the McKees Rocks and Liberty bridges. Four boulevards would also be built so that motorists could more easily reach the outer edges of the county.

1925

In January 1925, the Allegheny County Planning Commission proposed a major road plan for the county because of the "countless" road petitions received.

Public Road Hearings Held included:

12 January	Big Sewickley Creek Road	Sewickley and Franklin Twp.
26 March	Kilbuck Run Road	Ohio, Sewickley Heights, Franklin Twp.
17 April	Kilbuck Run Road	Ohio, Sewickley Heights, Franklin Twp.
21 May	Magee Road Ext.	Sewickley Heights & Franklin Twp.

5	June	Bradford Woods Road	Marshall Twp. & Bradford Woods Borough
25	June	Mt. Nebo Road	Kilbuck, Ohio & Franklin Twp.
9	July	Bradford Woods Road	Marshall Twp. & Bradford Woods Borough
31	July	Courtney Mill Road	Ross & Kilbuck Twps.
8	Oct	Mt. Nebo Road	Ohio & Franklin Twps.
18	Nov	Sample / Wildwood Road	Hampton Twp.
3	Dec	Nedski Road	McCandless Twp.

Contracts completed for:

Big Sewickley Creek new road \$98,956.66

Fern Hollow new road \$164,875.94

Horne Camp new road \$209,598.45

District #1 roads resurfaced with asphaltic concrete:

Lowries Run / Rochester 3.35 miles

Ingomar 2.57 miles

Duff City / Camp Meeting 3.25 miles

Three Degree Section 1 2.58 miles

Three Degree Section 2 1.84 miles

Wildwood 1.81 miles

1926

State Senator William Flinn was credited as the originator of hard surfaced roads in Pennsylvania. As a member of the General Assembly representing Allegheny County, Flinn introduced the benefits of hard surfaced roads to the Legislature in 1879 and under his leadership, the state's first paved road was built in Washington County in 1895. A year later, Allegheny County received the second paved road, with others from across the state to follow.

1927

The **Pittsburgh Press** reported that the Bradford-Wexford Run Road opened 8 July 1927 as part of the county's belt system. The 1.3 mile long road cost \$40,000.00.

1928

In 1928, eight road projects were completed, including that for Bayne-Wexford Road in Franklin, Marshall, and Pine townships at a cost of \$294,795.75.

The Bayne-Wexford Road in Franklin, Marshall and Pine townships, forms a part of the outer belt system. It extends from the Lowries Run road at Bayne to the Perry Highway at Wexford, and affords a direct connection for travel between the Sewickley district and Zelenople and New Castle via Perry Highway to the north. The construction of an overhead crossing over the Pittsburgh, Harmony & New Castle Interurban Railways at Wexford was originally contemplated, but was abandoned in favor of a grade crossing after work on Contract No. 1 was started and a supplemental contract was let for the work.

The construction of this project was started August 20, 1926, and completed May 5, 1928, at a final cost of \$294,795.75, which included the cost of Contract No. 2 amounting to \$47,069.00 for the asphaltic wearing surface.

The total length of this improvement is 4.08 miles, and although the road traverses a section of the County having rough topography, the minimum radius curve has a radius of 600 feet, and the road has only one short grade of 9%, which is also the maximum grade of this road.

Contract No. 1 for the grading and base course of this project was awarded to R. H. Cunningham & Sons Company, with two supplemental agreements, cost \$247,726.75. The contract for the asphalt wearing surface, known as Contract No. 2, was awarded to the Harrison Construction, and was completed at a final cost of \$47,069.00. The total final cost of this improvement amounted to \$294,795.75.

1929

Allegheny County

"Public Improvements Promote Progress"

Convinced of the fact that public improvements exert an important influence upon the progress of any community, the Board of County Commissioners of Allegheny County on January 1, 1924, initiated a program of major public works, many of which are already effectively serving the citizens, while others of vital importance are being rapidly brought to completion.

Statistical records of one of Pittsburgh's large department stores show that deliveries of merchandise to suburban communities immediately increase as soon as roads to the suburbs are improved. Good roads likewise permit the farmer to economically deliver his farm products to the city. they make possible suitable homes in the country for the men who work in our industrial plants. Good roads improve the convenience of country schools and lessen the upkeep costs of automobiles. More than 400 miles of roads in Allegheny County were improved during the past five years.

The county commissioners initiated a major program of public improvements for roads, bridges, tunnels, parks, an airport and public buildings to modernize the county. Moss Side, Ohio River, Allegheny River and Saw Mill Run boulevards were built at this time.

In 1929, 24 road and boulevard projects totaling 36.28 miles were either completed or under construction. Estimated total cost was \$7 million with funding from the 1928 Peoples Bond Issue. Included:

- Babcock Boulevard section in Ross and Shaler townships. Reconstruction and elimination of dangerous curves and construction of two bridges over Girty's Run.
- Babcock Boulevard in McCandless. Eliminate dangerous curves near southern border of North Park at the Lentz and Anderson properties. 18' wide, 1.12 miles long
- Bradford and Wexford Run Road in Pine Township and Bradford Woods Borough. Joint project with Bradford Woods Borough to widen and reconstruct section of road from Perry Highway into the borough. Connects with hard surfaced road jointly improved in 1927. Road made 16' wide and .88 miles long. Total cost was \$21,178.35 with Bradford Woods contributing \$2,500.00.
- Ingomar Road - Highland Branch in McCandless Township. *This contract included the construction of a new road in McCandless Township - extending from end of present*

improved road at the Harry Pruder property to the Perry Highway near the Highland Station of the Harmony Interurban Railway. This work closed up a dead-ended county highway, in a well built-up residential section of the County. 18' wide, 1.17 miles long \$74,050.25

- Thompson Run Road - Ross and McCandless townships. Reconstruction and widening of road from Pine Creek Bridge #6 on Thompson Run Road northward to Three Degree and Thompson Run Road with traffic island. 18' wide and 1.15 miles long.
- *Warrendale-Bayne Road Extension - Located in Marshal Township, extends 3.68 miles from present improved Warrendale-Bayne Road at unimproved Stoneville Road to improved Big Sewickley Creek Road. Constructed of reinforced concrete, 18 feet wide. Contract price \$253,936.00. Contract date of completion, December 28, 1929. This new road closes the gap, making complete improved highway along the Northern part of the county from Tarentum on the Allegheny River to Ambridge on the Ohio River.*

F. W. Scott Company was awarded a contract to build a new rigid frame concrete bridge on Warrendale-Bayne Road Extension in Marshall Township on 12 January 1929. The Sewickley Creek Bridge No. 10 and road officially opened to the public on 28 December 1929. Funding was from the 1928 Peoples Bond Issue. Approximate cost was \$9,425.04.

1931

Harrison Construction Company built the Ohio River Boulevard from Island Avenue in Pittsburgh to Camp Horne Road in Emsworth. It would be an easy to follow five mile approach to Pittsburgh from the West through Ben Avon, Avalon and Bellevue. The brick roadway was 40' wide with granite curbs and included twelve bridges that crossed ravines. By joining with the West End Bridge and Saw Mill Run Boulevard as well as the McKees Rocks Bridge, travel to and from the South Hills would be easier.

Between April and November 1931, the 20' wide 1.3 mile long Rochester Road between Babcock Boulevard and Perry Highway in Ross and West View was built of reinforced concrete.

1934

Ohio River Boulevard was built on the old roadbed of the Pennsylvania Railroad between Haysville and Walnut Street in Sewickley.

A new Kummer Road was built to replace the original township dirt road, connecting Babcock Boulevard with Walter Road at the entrance to North Park. Relief labor built the 20' wide 9" thick reinforced concrete road. Total cost of the 7,618' road was \$179,522.92. An extension connecting the Walter Road intersection with the golf course entrance was then built at a cost of \$45,988.87.

A new Ingomar, Kummer and Walter roads intersection was built.

Relief workers were building Pearce Mill Road through North Park.

Road improvements were made through the Thorn Hill property in Marshall Township. 10' wide roads were built with 5' berms on each side.

Babcock Boulevard between Keown Station [Three Degree Road and Babcock Boulevard in Ross Township] and North Park was as narrow as 14' in places. As it was heavily travelled as the main road into North Park, the road was widened to 20' and banks were cut back at curves. The road was then paved and white stripes were painted on sides as driving aids. Owners of properties involved with the reconstruction were not reimbursed by the county.

1935

Relief labor also built the 20,074' North Ridge Drive, which began and ended on Pearce Mill Road. The 20' wide pleasure drive crossed *isolated sections of the park with beautiful vistas*. Cost was \$144,605.70.

Pearce Mill Road from Babcock Boulevard to North Park's northern boundary was to be completed. Cost was \$252,752.88.

1936

Prior to 1 January 1936, the Department of Public Works was known as the Department of Highways, Bridges, and Tunnels. After Allegheny County reorganized its departments, the DPW was established to provide comprehensive organization of surveys, design, planning, construction supervision, materials testing and maintenance within one department.

Under Public Works Administration (PWA) projects; labor, direct supervision and some equipment were provided by the Federal Government with the county providing materials, supplies and equipment.

Harrison Construction Company was awarded a PWA contract in December 1935 to relocate a 2.3 mile section of Babcock Boulevard in McCandless and Pine Townships to eliminate dangerous curves.

Wildwood, Pearce Mill and Irwin Run Roads were connected to the relocated Babcock Boulevard that crossed the earthen dam at North Park Lake.

The 11,249' long and 20' wide scenic Lake Shore Drive around North Park Lake was under construction.

1937

Section 3 of Kummer Road connecting the golf course entrance to Pearce Mill Road was completed. The 20' wide, 1.65 mile road cost \$115,670.85.

Sections 1 and 2 of Hemlock Drive were built around the North Park Swimming Pool.

1938

Public Works Administration (PWA) gave grants covering 45% of construction costs for projects that included Walter, Ingomar, McKnight roads and Babcock Boulevard. North Park PWA projects completed in 1937 were the boathouse, pool, bath house, lake, dam and appurtenances, sewage plant, parking area, water filtration plant, stand pipe, Babcock Boulevard and Lake Shore drive. Final cost, as determined in 1938, was \$997,313,66.

Work began to relocate Ingomar Road between Babcock Boulevard and Kummer Road.

McKinney Road in North Park was graded and paved.

Paving of Brush Creek Road in Marshall Township was started. 20' wide with an 8" slag base and 2" asphalt surface with an estimated cost of \$39,900.

Knob Road was also being paved in Marshall Township at a slightly greater cost.

1939

The first section of a newly built McKnight Road connecting Babcock Boulevard and Siebert Road in Ross Township was begun in December 1938 and completed July 1939. Two twelve foot lanes ran in each direction with a twelve foot median strip. The road replaced an earlier dirt road and was intended to provide a more direct route out of the city to North Park.

600' of Walter Road in North Park was relocated and rebuilt and included construction of the Pine Creek Bridge #3. Work began at the end of October 1938 and ended 6 July 1939.

Ingomar Road in North Park was relocated and rebuilt between Kummer Road and Babcock Boulevard. Work started in November 1938 and wrapped up in August 1939.

1940

D. W. Challis was awarded the contract to construct the 8,916' four lane Section 2 of McKnight Road northward between Siebert Road and the Gumbert School, now occupied by the McIntyre Square shopping center.

Section 3 of McKnight Road, consisting of a half mile section at the northern end, connecting McIntyre Road in Ross Township and Perrymont Road in McCandless Township, was approved.

The 3 1/4 miles of sections 1,2 and 3 of McKnight Road were in use by the end of 1940, connecting Babcock Boulevard in Ross with Babcock Boulevard in McCandless. Section 1 was built with a PWA grant. Sections 2 and 3 were built as county projects and did not require federal funding.

It can be noted that McKnight Run Creek runs the length of the valley, beginning near Perrymont Road and flowing southward into Girty's Run Creek. During road construction, the water was piped under McKnight Road and adjacent properties until being discharged under Babcock Boulevard and into Girty's Run.

1941

The fourth section of McKnight Road extended the roadway southward from its terminus at Babcock Boulevard to the East Street Valley, following the earlier Harmony Line route. This was the most hilly section of roadway and included construction of a bridge to carry traffic over Babcock Boulevard and one to carry Ivory Avenue over McKnight Road. Interchanges would need to be built at Babcock Boulevard and Nelson Run Road.

1942

Wartime shortages of men and materials forced the suspension of many road building projects, but McKnight Road's designation as a vital access road into and out of the city of Pittsburgh insured construction of Section 4 continued until November 1943 when all work was suspended due to a critical manpower shortage. Ivory Avenue motorists were left with a 100' wide and 30' deep gap until work resumed in June 1945.

Earthen roads in the county were graded, holes filled, rolled then oiled.

1943

Pennsylvania's transportation department made a survey to extend the northern end of McKnight Road over a mile to Route 19 (Perry Highway) at Pine Creek in McCandless. The fifth section of McKnight Road would be built by the state instead of the county.

1946

December 29, 1946 was the official opening of the entire five mile stretch of McKnight Road. Motorists enjoyed a high speed, limited access highway that connected the city of Pittsburgh to McCandless Township and provided easy access to North Park.

2,000' of Hemlock Drive in Hampton Township between North Park and SHR 02126 was built.

1947

By the end of 1947, the county was responsible for 489 miles of paved and 25 miles of earthen roads.

1950

It was noted that work continued on the western extension of the Pennsylvania Turnpike between Irwin and the Ohio state line.

1952

The State extended the northern terminus of McKnight Road from Perrymont Road to Perry Highway at Pine Creek in McCandless. Allegheny County requested and received permission to construct a cloverleaf at Ingomar Road to make North Park more easily accessible.

When planning the construction of McKnight Road, the original intention was to provide fast and easy access from the city of Pittsburgh to Route 19 (Perry Highway) at Pine Creek as well as to North Park, which along with South Park, was touted as a "workingman's country club". The park and the surrounding rural communities proved to be very popular with post-war families and within a few years of war's end, McCandless experienced an 80% growth in population, while Hampton's more than doubled. Ross and Shaler each gained more than 5,000 new residents within ten years.

With a booming population, came the demand for more housing, stores, schools, and service stations for the growing numbers of automobiles that suburban families came to depend upon. To meet growing demands, Ross Township began issuing permits for curb cuts and soon, motorists who once enjoyed high speed travel, were slowed to a crawl as they navigated traffic trying to make turns into every business establishment. One type of business not permitted along McKnight Road, however, was taverns.

Allegheny County transferred ownership of the road to Pennsylvania's highway department in 1961.