



Enid's Good Roads Boosters

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An important chapter in Enid's history evolved during the first half of the last century when America was developing its road systems. In the early 1900's, the condition of America's road system was deplorable. Most transportation between towns were by rail. Roadways, particularly in the west, were a crude system of county roads used by farmers to get into their local trade town. Statewide roadways were rare and national roads almost non-existent. Henry Ford was to change this in 1906 with the introduction of the Model T-Ford. His mass produced auto would make this strange new form of transportation available to virtually everyone. The problem was once you got the little vehicles out of towns their owners found themselves on poorly maintained roads that became quagmires with the slightest rainfall. Communities across the country started "Good Roads Associations" designed to promote good roads. Farsighted town leaders knew that towns with better roads leading to them would enhance their business trade and towns fortunate to have a national road pass through them would surely prosper. The competition nationwide was fierce.

Special Points of Interest

- Enid's "Good Roads" Boosters.
- Chisholm Trail Good Roads Association.
- Building Early Area Roads.
- Harry Glasser and the US Highway 60 Association.
- Historic Highway: US Highway 81.

Chisholm Trail Good Roads Association

Enid jumped immediately into the battle for roads. Sherman Goltry first introduced the new horseless carriage to Enid in 1901. In 1907, Enid laid its first pavement on north Independence Street, and in 1909, Frank Hodgden, a local rancher and business man, chaired the Chisholm Trail Good Roads Association. His first effort was to record the history of the old Chisholm Trail. He sought the assistance of newspapers in towns up and down the Trail asking them to cooperate in efforts to secure information while the old time cowboys were still around. In about 1910, a fellow from Newton, Kansas, by the name of John Nicholson began organizing the Kansas communities along the old Chisholm Trail and called his organization the Meridian Road Association. In June of 1911, those interested in a Meridian Road from Canada to Mexico meet in Salina, Kansas, to organize the effort under Nicholson's leadership. Oklahoma sent its newly appointed highway commissioner, Sidney Suggs to attend the meeting. He returned to Oklahoma and in late July of 1911, called a meeting in Oklahoma City to organize a north/south road to connect with Kansas' Meridian Road that would follow the Sante Fe Railroad track through Oklahoma. This route would bypass Enid by some thirty miles to the east!

Immediately upon getting word of this development, the Enid Chamber of Commerce called a meeting of its own to organize those interested in boosting the Meridian Road in Oklahoma along the more western route of the old Chisholm Trail. Promoters knew this was the best and fastest north-south road through Oklahoma, *just ask any longhorn steer*. The Enid effort was organized by Chamber of Commerce secretary Will Scarff and at the Enid Convention held on August 16, 1911, Frank Hodgden was elected as treasurer of the new statewide organization. French J. Gentry, then from Pond Creek, but later an Enid businessman, also became active in the group.

Building Early Area Roads

Local supporters from each of busy and held open air meetings of local farmers up and down the Chisholm Trail organizing support. In addition to Hodgden and Scarff, other Enid civic leaders that joined in the effort were Edmond Frantz, Charles McClellan and Oscar Hayes. While not all farmers liked the idea of the automobile that hogged the roads and spooked their horses, several pledged their support. Area farmers including George Munn, H. Emerson, Isaac Regier and a host of others pledged a whole month's work with their horse teams. Enid businessmen held a "Good Roads Day" and went out and shoveled dirt and ran scrapers. By 1912, the Chisholm Trail was re-plowed from Kansas to the Red River and after inspection the Trail was officially designated the

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"Good Roads Day": Enid Businessmen joined Local Farmers to Build Early Roads.

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Oklahoma portion of the Meridian Road. Representatives of the National Highway Association visited Enid in July of 1914, and the Meridian Road was later endorsed by the National Association of Highways. Thus Enid had won the initial battle with regard to routing a major north-south national highway through it's community.

Enid Wins Early Battles for Good Roads

A similar effort was conducted later to route an east-west highway through Enid. The Albert Pike Highway running from Hot Springs, Arkansas, to Colorado Springs, Colorado, was routed through Enid and later known as U.S. 64. By 1920, traffic was flowing through Enid on both the Meridian Road and the Albert Pike Highway. The next year a new national highway was boosted through Enid claiming to offer a 250 mile shorter route from Seattle, Washington to Miami, Florida. The route entered Enid through Kingfisher on the Meridian Highway to Kremlin, then west on the Albert Pike Highway to Colorado Springs. The proposed route then went through Denver on to Yellowstone Park and then to Seattle. This route never materialized, but boosters started talking about a new East-West route from Virginia to California that would pass through the Rocky Mountains at Abo Pass in central New Mexico. Locally the route was called the "Abo Pass Road" and would later become U.S. 60. This highway claimed to be the shortest east-west route from the east coast to California. By the close of the decade, Enid had won major battles in making itself a major cross roads in the national highway system. It also could boast leadership in the state highway department with the appointment of French Gentry to the Highway Commission and later the appointment of his son Bud Gentry to be the first head of the State Highway Safety Department created under the Highway Patrol Act signed by Gov. Marland in 1937.

Harry Glasser and the US Highway 60 Association

In the mid '20's, the Route 66 boosters in the state took the upper ground in the battle for an east-west transcontinental roadway through Oklahoma. Enid did not give up the battle, however, and in the late '40's, local attorney Harry O. Glasser became active in the U.S. Highway 60 Association and became it's president in 1947. In June of that year Enid hosted the national convention of the Highway 60 Association and attempted to chart a strategy that would gain prominence for this route over Route 66. The game plan was to divert westward bound truck traffic off of Route 66 at Vinita where US 60 intersected with US 66. Truckers did not like Route 66 because it had become congested and was not well constructed for large trucks. If successful, Enid would benefit from the increased truck traffic.

Geography and Oklahoma politics did not fair well for Enid and it's Highway 60 plan. Progress west of Enid through remote western Oklahoma proved slow and the Route 66 proponents got their route paved first, thereby establishing it's supremacy.

Enid faired even worse in the post WWII effort to complete Oklahoma's highway infrastructure and lost the final battle in the late '50's when the new Federal Interstate system bypassed Enid. All was not lost, however, and with the efforts of long time Enid State Senator, Norman Lamb, and second term Governor Henry Bellman, Enid was finally able to complete it's four lane connection east to I-35, a key component to it's future economic development.

Historic Highway: US Highway 81

The final chapter of Enid's road history may not be complete. With a growing interest in "nostalgic" highway travel, evidenced by the re-opening of Route 66, Enid may once again find itself sitting on an opportunity as one of the main communities in a developing new transportation market catering to north/south "snow birds", motorcycle touring clubs, international and other travelers that prefer scenic routes over interstate highway travel. Local historian Bob Klemme has gotten the ball rolling and thanks to his efforts there is presently a pending act in Congress that will designate the Chisholm Trail as a U.S. Park Service, "Long Distance Trail." If the Trail is granted the designation, a huge door will be opened to develop U.S. 81 as a historic highway. It will be interesting to see if Enid will have another "road booster" like Frank Hodgden or Harry Glasser step forward and lead Enid in this newest battle ground for road supremacy – My bet is that Enid will.