

member of the council in 1858, when the agitation for 'good roads' commenced in our county (Hastings,) and remained a member for about twenty years.

"During that time I was Warden of the county ten years, and am, therefore, pretty intimately connected with the efforts to obtain good roads, the building of them and their maintenance.

"We have now over four hundred miles of good gravel roads, maintained at the county expense, and *free from tolls. We have unquestionably the finest system of gravel roads of any county in the Dominion, and maintained by the best system of supervision.* I was one of the originators, and have been active in completing and extending them. And now in direct reply to your queries:

"1. I am decidedly opposed to the present system of statute labor. It is the most expensive mode of keeping up roads, and very inefficient.

"2. You ask: 'What has your county adopted to take its place?'

"As a county we assumed all the leading roads as 'county roads.' These are directly maintained by the county by direct taxation upon the ratepayers. We have no tolls. Over four hundred miles are gravelled and maintained by direct county supervision.

"The 'statute labor' along the lines of road is used by township and village councils on roads outside county roads.

"3. 'What did we do with toll roads?'

"When we commenced our county system in 1862, of no tolls, we had about fifty miles of toll roads. The county bought them up and made them free. These fifty miles were divided among six companies. Some asked too much, but we forced them into compliance with what was just by starting parallel lines where possible. In two cases we had to pay too much, but purchased all.

"4. 'Do you find county control of roads to be a success?'

"Yes, an unqualified success; not a ratepayer would go back to the old system.

"5. 'How are your roads managed?'

"Under the power under the municipal law, which was broader twenty years ago than now, and has not been amended by the changes. We have, as stated before, assumed leading roads as county roads; using the term *leading roads* in a very broad sense. We tried various plans of managing, but finally, about 1870, we adopted the system we now have, and which works admirably. Other systems had worked badly. It was through my efforts the county council was induced to try it. It has worked well, and is the best, I believe, that can be used.

"The system is as follows: At the county council, each year, a gravel road committee of seven members is appointed. They choose a chairman.

"This committee acts during recess of council when necessary in the opinion of the chairman. The council has a superintendent of gravel roads. He employs foremen and men, subject to approval of

committee. Gangs of men are placed where repairs are required. The foremen and men become experts. We pay good wages, and have men in the employ of the county covering ten to fifteen years. The foreman reports to the superintendent, he to the committee, and the committee to the council.

At the first meeting of the year the county council determines what sum to expend during the year, based on the reports of last year. So far, this system has worked admirably. Roads are never allowed to 'run down,' and are improving annually. We have all the modern machinery, and have had only two superintendents during thirty years. The one now occupying the position secured it on the death of the first.

"Two things are essentially important to the proper working of this system.

"The first is an experienced trustworthy superintendent. We have such men, and pay them good salaries.

"The second is that the council should have its best seven men on the gravel road committee.

"Both superintendent and committee need to be kept up to the mark. The council demanding full reports in detail stimulates the committee, an active committee stimulates superintendent, foremen and men.

"The system has had the unqualified approval of the people during all these years.

"Your obedient servant,  
"A. F. WOOD."

In a private letter to the *Journal's* editor, Mr. Wood says: "I believe in good roads, and have no faith in statute labor. Our experience has demonstrated the county system to be superior to all others.

#### Pathmasters.

One of the first duties that will devolve on the new councils of many townships is the appointment of pathmasters.

Pathmasters should be chosen from amongst the most respected and intelligent men of the community, and they should be kept in office; even then their individual opinions and plans should be subject to revision by the council, which body should exercise a direct oversight of the roads, and their improvement by statute labor.

That there are men who could fill the office of pathmaster in a creditable manner is apparent from the fact, that in driving over the roads there will be found sections which have been well done, and good pieces of road constructed by statute labor alone. That there are poor pathmasters is indicated by other sections which show no evidence of result except those produced by the expenditure of municipal taxes, contributed very largely by those who have worked with a will in performing statute labor on other beats.

When men of suitable ability, knowledge and experience have been once

obtained, they should be retained in office. By the present system of annual rotation as soon as the pathmaster has learned something in his year of apprenticeship, his experience is lost and another appointed, who begins in turn to take lessons in roadmaking, at the expense of their condition. In other occupations an apprenticeship of some years is necessary before a person is qualified to practice, but a pathmaster, the moment he is chosen, is thought fit to direct a work requiring much science, at the expense of the township's capital of time, labor and money. Men are taken from the occupation in which they are skilled, and are transferred to one of which they know nothing. An honest man knows this, and immediately strives from his personal experience, from the advice of others trained by practice and instruction, from experts and from every available source to properly qualify himself. In this way and with continued experience he can become a most valuable officer. Such a man realizes the responsibility of his position and the duty he owes his fellow citizens, whose money he directs, and whose interests he expects to advance. He commands the respect of those who have to serve under him, his order is obeyed, public interest is created and maintained and the question of making good roads is rendered simple, requiring but a small outlay of money.

There is another man who strives for the office of pathmaster and looks upon his appointment merely as a victory over his neighbor. He exercises his authority in performing some act to aggravate a citizen with whom he does not see eye to eye. The improvement of the road is by no means the prime object, injury rather than betterment is the probable result, and those who are obliged to perform the work become disgusted.

Some men look upon their appointment as an acknowledgment by the council and community of their skill as roadmakers. The solicitation or acceptance of any advice from experienced men would be looked upon as a confession of unfitness, and certainly any suggestion to accept instruction from an expert would be regarded with contempt. The competent pathmaster, as well as the competent business man, is he who eagerly seeks from every source, the fullest possible information pertaining to his special line, believing that his knowledge never can be too perfect.

It is one of the weaknesses of the statute labor system, that it is very difficult for a pathmaster to enforce prompt obedience to his orders. If a neighbor persists in idleness, or if instead of doing as he is directed, he stops and argues for an hour on the wisdom of so doing, the pathmaster cannot obtain redress except at the expense of his neighbors' good will, a step very few pathmasters are willing to take. A farmer could and would discharge an employee for pursuing such a