

The Canadian Engineer

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Are Good Roads Remunerative to Municipalities?

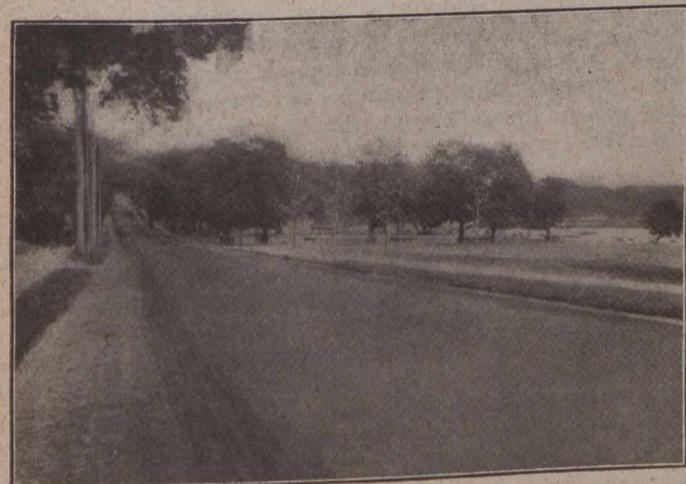
Experience in Massachusetts Throws Some Light Upon the Question, Do Good Roads Pay?—Increased Amounts of Taxes Are Collected Due to Rise in Land Values Directly Caused by Road Construction

By COL. WILLIAM D. SOHIER
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WHEN I attended the Canadian Good Roads Congress at Hamilton last week, I gave some statistics regarding the value of good roads—their actual dollars and cents value—which the representative of *The Canadian Engineer* thought were interesting, and he made me promise to write an article giving some more detailed data in answer to the question, "Do good roads pay?"; or more exactly, to the question, "Are municipalities remunerated for their expenditures on good roads by the increased taxation due to rise in land values occasioned by the construction of the roads?"

To begin with, I will cite some experiences we have had in Massachusetts. The figures I will quote are in round numbers. I have left off the hundreds and sometimes the thousands, because they are of no value, comparatively speaking.

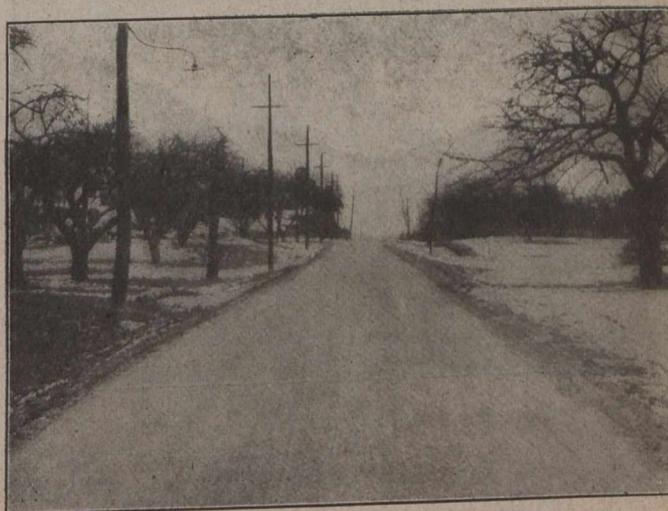
We must realize that there are so many considerations other than roads that may enter into increased land values, that it would be very difficult to prove that all of these increases were due absolutely and solely to better roads. At the same time, there is no doubt in my mind that good roads have been very largely responsible for the increases in valuation, and particularly in localizing them in places which have become favorite summer-resident resorts, the



Lathrop Road, Near Beverly, Mass.

particular portion of the town that was served by good roads having developed and other equally good localities on the seashore, for instance, not having developed; though, of course, this does not show in the valuation of the town.

In Massachusetts, the municipalities of Beverly and Manchester had good roads really back as far as 1895 and thereabout. Wenham, Hamilton and Ipswich were also connected up with improved roads. Essex, lying between Hamilton and Gloucester, has some fine beaches, sand dunes, and a river, but the road has not yet been built.



Massachusetts State Highway, South Sudbury

The following are the valuations in 1900 and 1915 respectively, with the percentage of increase:—

	1900.	1915.	Percentage increase.
Beverly	\$16,000,000	\$44,000,000	175
Hamilton	2,299,000	6,000,000	161
Ipswich	3,245,000	5,634,000	73
Topsfield	859,000	4,294,000	400
Middleton	569,000	923,000	62
Wenham	1,000,000	3,662,000	266
Manchester	8,700,000	20,000,000	129
Essex	977,000	1,315,000	34
Boxford	688,000	1,338,000	94½
Newbury	979,000	1,600,000	63
Georgetown	1,000,000	1,365,000	36½

Beyond Ipswich is Newbury, which was not connected up on a through route until lately. Beverly, Wenham, Hamilton and Ipswich are all connected with a good road; hence their valuations. Hamilton, Wenham and Ipswich are farming towns, although Ipswich has a little seashore.

Topsfield was connected with a good road to Hamilton in the year 1900. It is also a farming town, as is George-