The first roads in Indiana were of course former Indian trails, which were later widened for wagon traffic. Eventually many of these roads were covered with stone and gravel, and remained this way until this Indiana State Highway Department came into being in 1919.

Among the first roads in Indiana was a route from Madison to Vincennes, now US 50.

Another was from the White River Valley to Fort Wayne, now US 27.

The Michigan Road that ran from Madison to Michigan City is now mostly 421.

Probably the best known of these early roads was the National Road, which ran from Cumberland, Md. to Vandalia, Illinois. This road was started in 1806 by grubbing a path 80 ft wide, and in 1848 it became a plank road. This was the route of the wagon trains that passed through Indiana heading west, and is now US 40.

It was determined by the first appointed Indiana State Highway Commission, to lay out a grid of roads that would connect all county seats in the state, and connect all cities over 5,000 in population. The even numbered roads were to run east and west, and the uneven north and south. In the early years the Indiana State Highway system was one of the best in the nation, probably due to our access to limestone.

The original system of highways started out with 3,221 miles of road, which was five percent of the entire number of roads in the state. Today we have over 12,000 miles of state highway which is some 12 percent of all roads in the state. The State Of Indiana ranks 12th in the United States in total number of state highway miles in its system, but has more total roads, including state, county, and local, than any other state. The annual expenditure on all roads in Indiana is over 200 million dollars, and rising each year.

The creation of the Interstate Highway System in 1956 no doubt has affected our department and our system of roads more than any other outside influence in the history of this department. Perhaps both
good and bad can be said of this approach through federal participation of financing, so we best leave the final judgment to history.

These facts and figures are a pretty cold facet of this organization's history, but I hasten to add one of the warmer aspects of our history is the fact that over the years we have had some very dedicated men work for this department, men who were pioneers in our early road building, men now either deceased or retired, but men who did contribute something to the betterment of this great state, and we are proud of their contributions.