

THE TENSAS GAZETTE

Gazette Publishing Company, Ltd.

Official Paper of the Parish of Tensas School Board and Fifth Louisiana Levee District.

\$1.50 Per Annum

NEW SERIES, VOL. XXV

ST. JOSEPH, LOUISIANA, FRIDAY, MAY 5, 1916

NUMBER 31

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Maintaining Earth Roads

Drainage of Prime Importance—Drag Should
Not Be Used on a Dry Road—How
to Operate Road Drag

(Prepared by the U. S. Department of Agriculture)

The first and last commandment in earth road maintenance is to keep the road well drained. To insure good drainage the ditches should be kept open, all obstructions removed and a smooth crown maintained. Side ditches of ample capacity should be maintained with sufficient fall to dispose of surface water. These ditches in most places can be constructed and repaired with a road machine. The road machine or grader may in general be used effectively for this work. The machine should be used when the soil is damp so that it will pack and bake into a hard crust.

All vegetable matter, such as sods and weeds, should be kept out of the road, as they make a spongy surface which retains moisture. Clods are also objectionable for they soon turn to dust or mud. Bowlders or loose stones are equally objectionable if a smooth surface is to be obtained.

A split-log drag or some similar device is very useful in maintaining the surface after suitable ditches and cross-sections have once been constructed. This drag can also be used to advantage on most gravel roads as well as on earth road. The principle involved in dragging is that clays and most heavy soils will puddle if worked when wet and set very hard when dry. The little attention that the earth road needs must be given promptly, therefore, and at the proper time if the best results are to be obtained.

In dragging roads only a small amount of earth is moved, just enough to fill the ruts and depressions with a thin layer of plastic clay or earth

a small amount of the damp soil which is smeared over the surface of the road.

BEAUTY OF OUR STATE ROADS

Plan of Planting Shade Trees Along Roadside Is Good One—Decision of Maryland Court.

The decision of the court of appeals sustaining the validity of the law which confers upon the state board of forestry regulatory power and authority in the matter of planting or cutting and pruning trees along the state highways, is of potential importance in connection with the latest proposal to improve the side lines of the state roads by the planting of forest or fruit trees. The state road law apparently, in the original draft, contemplated such a scheme of improvement, says Baltimore American. While the planting of shade trees is not made a mandatory duty on the state road commission, there is a clause in the law that opens the way for such a plan of beautification.

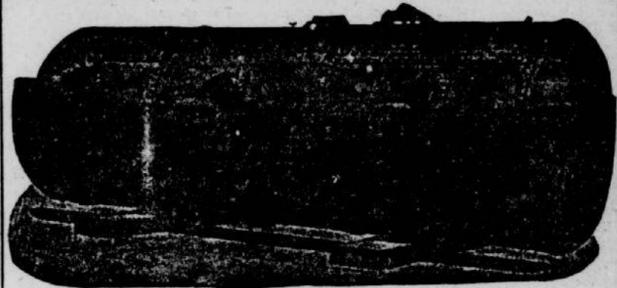
The state forestry board would perhaps be the agency through which such a plan could be best realized. The activities of the annual arbor days have not been largely successful in the matter of roadside tree planting. Such a scheme can only be brought to realization through systematic and persistently maintained effort. But the idea is a good one and should be brought to realization even though it is necessary for the state to invest some money in the undertaking. Nothing would more conduce to the beau-

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St. Joseph, La., May 12, 1915.

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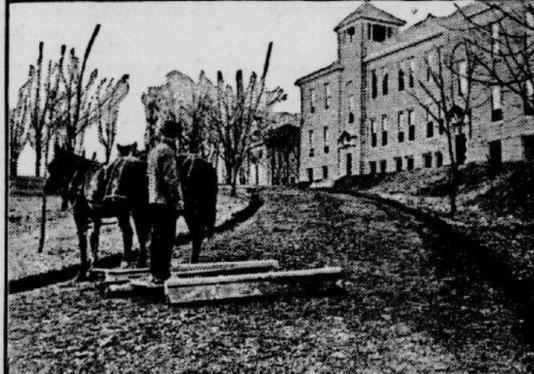
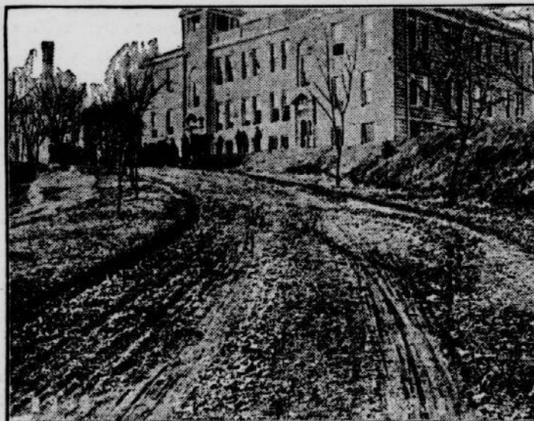
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and Fridays at noon, or on

arrival of express train.



Above: Road to Be Treated With Split-Log Drag.—Below: Same Road
Thirty Minutes Later.

which packs very hard so that the next rain, instead of finding ruts and depressions in which to collect, runs off, leaving the surface but little affected.

Using the Drag.

The drag should be light and should be drawn over the road at an angle of about 45 degrees. The driver should ride on the drag and should not drive faster than a walk. One or two round trips, the first straddling the wheel tracks, is usually sufficient to fill the ruts and smooth the surface. If necessary, the road should be dragged after every bad spell of weather, when the soil is in proper condition to puddle well and still not adhere to the drag. If the road is very bad it may be dragged when very wet and again when it begins to dry out. A few trips over the road will give the operator an idea as to the best time to drag. Drag at all seasons but do not drag a dry road.

The side slope or crown of an earth road should be about one inch to the foot. If the crown becomes too high it may be reduced by dragging toward the ditch instead of from it. If the drag cuts too much, the hitch should be shortened and the driver should change his position on the drag. If it is necessary to protect the face of the drag with a strip of iron, it should be placed flush with the edge of the drag and not projecting. A cutting edge should be avoided as the main object of the drag is to move but

tification of rural neighborhoods than the lining of the highways with shade trees.

STATE TO MAINTAIN ROADS

Amount Exceeding \$160,000,000 Expended Annually for Construction and Care of Highways.

The realization has become quite general that, in order to render maximum service, state highway departments should be given some measure of control over the construction and maintenance of local roads. For this class of roads an amount exceeding \$16,000,000 is expended annually, with comparatively little result to show in the form of improved road mileage for this great outlay. The state of Iowa has met this situation by placing all the road work in the state under the direction of the state highway department.

Traffic is increasing so rapidly as to cause excessive wear upon the roads, especially in the vicinity of congested centers of population. This results in a heavy annual maintenance cost, averaging in the large Eastern states not less than \$750 per mile per annum. Many experiments have been made in the effort to devise types of road which can be maintained at relatively low cost. Thus far, aside from the cheaper forms of construction, the states are depending upon the various forms of bituminous macadam, concrete and vitrified brick road.

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