

MACADAMIZED ROADS PLAN FOR OBION COUNTY

A Very Practical and Comprehensive Statement.

The system of main line macadamized roads which it is hoped will soon be built in Obion County connecting the various towns, civil districts and neighborhoods, includes roads aggregating in length about 225 miles.

Mr. W. C. Kelly, civil engineer, and Mr. C. H. Jenks, civil engineer, and others who are more or less familiar with this kind of road work, have estimated that the 225 miles of road can be built at a cost of \$800,000. Some parts of this system of roads would have to be constructed so as to carry heavier traffic than other parts of the system.

The road leading west from Obion to Glass is perhaps the most traveled road in the county and of course it would have to be wide and be built upon a solid foundation. This piece of road would perhaps cost more per mile than any other in the county. There are other important roads which constitute a part of the system of roads proposed to be built which need not be more than 10 or 12 feet wide and of very much less thickness than the Obion and Glass road. In some places there will be a lot of grading to do and in others very little. We have in Obion County several gravel pits which will afford a great deal of material from which to build the roads. We have two pieces of road leading west to Union City that have stood for many years, which were built entirely of native gravel; so that the civil engineers have taken all these matters and others into consideration and have estimated that the system of roads proposed can be built for \$800,000 as before stated.

A general description of the system of main line public roads proposed to be built is as follows:

Beginning at Obion and following the main road west to Glass, Elbridge, Minnick, and on west to Gratio. Another road leaving the above mentioned road west of Glass a quarter of a mile and running south and west through what is known as the Frog Level country to Lane's Ferry. Another road running from about a mile of Glass in a northerly direction to Hornbeak; from Hornbeak to Webb's store by the main road. From Hornbeak to Samburg and from Hornbeak to Troy by the main road. From Samburg eastward through Protemus to Union City. From Obion southeastward across the Obion and Trenton levy to the old Pierce place southwestward toward Trimble to the county line; from the old Pierce place running eastward through Mason Hall to Kenton; from Kenton eastward crossing Rutherford Fork, passing the old Wade place and following the main road through the seventh civil district to the Martin and Union City road and thence eastward with the Martin and Union City road to the Weakley County line, and west with the said Martin and Union City road to Union City. From Kenton north about one mile up the M. & O. R. R.; thence west to Jim Foster's and north and west to the Bingham place on the Mason Hall and turnpike levy road; from the Troy and Trenton road to Polk; from Troy to Rives; from Rives eastward to the Kenton and Union City road before mentioned, from Rives south and southeast by the G. W. Stovall place to the said Kenton and Union City road; from Pleasant Valley church south to intersect the road leading east from Rives above mentioned, from Troy northeastward to the old Herring place intersecting the road from Samburg to Union City, from Rives west and north intersecting the lake road at the Morgan place; the road leading from the Weakley County line on the eastern side of the sixteenth civil district, westward through McConnell, Harris Station, by Will Adams' place and Union City, by the Dr. Park place, Judge Caldwell's, to Clayton; from Judge Caldwell's north through Crystal to the State line; from Union City north by the Naylor place and via Mount Zion to the State Line road; from the Naylor place via Woodland Mills to the State line to the N. C. & St. L. R. R.; from Union City north by the W. M. Waterfield place to the old Cloys place; thence east with the old Hickman and Dresden road and north by Herbert Naylor's to the State line at the old Chambers place; from W. M. Waterfield's eastward by Dixon Corum's to the W. C. Barham place; from Harris to South Fulton and the three main line roads running south and southeastward from South Fulton and through the sixteenth civil district.

The above is a general description of the system of roads which would serve all people of Obion County, the length of these roads aggregating, as before stated, about 225 miles. It is

estimated that these roads could be shortened several miles by straightening the curves and cutoffs in various places. As before stated, it has been estimated that this system of roads can be built for \$800,000. Some of the advocates of this system of roads hope that under the new State Highway Law one-half of the cost of about 50 miles of these roads will be refunded to the county. This is not at all improbable, and in that event the system of roads would cost less than \$800,000.

To build this system of roads it will be necessary for the Legislature to pass an act authorizing Obion County to issue and sell \$800,000 worth of 5 per cent bonds. These bonds would be easily sold for the reason that such are always in demand by capitalists who deal in this sort of securities.

Quite a large number of the best people and the most intelligent people and the tax payers and business men and farmers of Obion County are strongly in favor of proceeding promptly with the matter of building this system of roads and it is believed that the same can be done at the price mentioned and that it would be the greatest enterprise that the people of Obion County could ever enter into. On the other hand a number of the citizens have strongly urged the objection to the building of this system of roads; that the roads would cost too much; that \$800,000 is so great a sum that the people of Obion County could never pay it; that to issue and sell this amount of bonds would be placing a debt upon the county which could never be paid. In the language of one of these objections, it would be "saddling a debt upon the unborn generations that they could never pay." The people who make these objections say that, of course, these roads would be fine to have but it would be a bad policy to go into debt for so large a sum of money for the reasons stated. If these objections are well founded, of course the roads should not be built.

Eight hundred thousand dollars would be a small debt for Obion County to owe. It would be a very small debt compared to the value of the property in Obion County. The assessed value of the property in the county is approximately \$12,000,000; its actual value is three and one-third times what it is assessed at, or \$40,000,000. These are big figures, but Obion County is a big county, and a rich one. The real value of the property in Obion County is easily \$40,000,000, so that an \$800,000 debt would only be 2 per cent of the value of the property in the county. A citizen who owns a farm worth \$3,000 would owe a debt in the same proportion if his indebtedness amounted to \$60; the owner of a farm worth \$5,000 would owe a debt of the same proportion if his indebtedness amounted to \$100; a man owning a \$10,000 farm would owe a debt in the same proportion if his indebtedness amounted to \$200. Eight hundred thousand dollars sounds large to an individual, but to the great rich county of Obion it is a small debt amounting to only 2 per cent of the real value of the property. That we should not build this system of main line macadamized roads for the unborn generations which are yet to come, when the cost is so small, may be wrong.

This is not an individual matter, it is a county proposition, and the size and magnitude and the wealth of the whole county must be considered in determining whether the cost of the proposed roads is large or small. The absolute truth is that an \$800,000 debt to Obion County would be a very small debt, and one that could be easily paid.

Within the last year a few concrete bridges have been built in Obion County which will last for many years, and with this exception there has been no permanent road improvement made in Obion County within the memory of the oldest citizen.

From year to year and from generation to generation for nearly one hundred years temporary improvements have been made, cheap bridges have been constructed and dirt roads have

been made, and this work has been done each year only to be done over the succeeding year. Cheap bridges have been built that in a year or two would be destroyed by Father Time. From year to year the road contractors and road hands have piled up dirt in the middle of the roads to make passage ways for travelers, knowing that as soon as the winter rains, snows and freezes and thaws were over they would have to go back again and do the same work over. This looks like child's play. Children build play houses, and when they have built them they knock them down and build again. I believe we should quit this child's play and build some permanent rock roads in Obion County and leave them here for the "generations that are yet unborn" to travel over and incidentally to travel over ourselves while we are yet in the land of the living.

The objection that the debt could never be paid at first seemed to be a strong one, but when it is considered in the light of past events and what will likely occur in the future, it will be seen that this debt can be easily paid. The past events referred to is the increase in the value of the property in the last thirty years, and what will likely occur in the future is that the property in Obion County will continue to increase in value for the next thirty years in the same proportion or perhaps more rapidly than it has in the past. Just how these matters will affect the paying off of the bonds will be seen from the following statement:

To begin with, I will say that, of course, a special road tax sufficient to pay for the upkeep of the roads and to pay interest on the bonds will have to be levied. The present assessed value of all the property in the county being approximately \$12,000,000, a special tax of 40 cents on the hundred dollars worth of all the property would pay the interest and upkeep for the first few years, and after the first few years it would more than pay the interest and upkeep and the surplus could be saved and put into a sinking fund for the purpose of retiring the bonds when they fall due.

The interest on \$800,000 at 5 per cent would amount to \$40,000 per annum or \$8,000 more than enough to pay the interest, said \$8,000 to be used for the upkeep if needed or go into the sinking fund. Four dollars on the thousand is what this tax would amount to. A farm or a piece of city or town property val-

ued at \$1,000 would have to pay an additional tax of \$4.00; property valued at \$1,500 would pay an additional tax of \$6.00; property assessed at \$3,000 would pay \$12.00 additional tax. There is hardly an individual in the county who would not receive each year benefits worth largely more than this tax amounts to by reason of having a system of macadamized roads over the county; the amount of travel and hauling and marketing of produce and the benefit to the children in going to and from school any year would more than offset this expense, to say nothing of the pleasure that everyone would derive from the roads and many other advantages.

Now with these preliminary statements I will endeavor to show how the bonds would be paid off with the 40 cent tax in addition to paying the interest and keeping up the roads, and to show this it is necessary to go back thirty years and come forward and show what the result would have been had a 40 cent tax been levied thirty years ago for road purposes and collected each year from that time till the year 1914. The assessed value of the property in the county for the last thirty years is as follows:

1885--\$3,675,603	1900--\$ 7,855,659
1886-- 3,647,196	1901-- 9,203,058
1887-- 3,639,357	1902-- 9,164,764
1888-- 5,300,439	1903-- 9,150,221
1889-- 5,110,225	1904-- 8,619,216
1890-- 5,336,558	1905-- 8,925,642
1891-- 5,480,516	1906-- 9,251,711
1892-- 6,543,239	1907-- 9,406,494
1893-- 6,604,347	1908-- 9,425,749
1894-- 6,512,800*	1909-- 10,081,227
1895-- 6,182,763	1910-- 10,681,084
1896-- 6,230,492	1911-- 11,207,521
1897-- 6,445,719	1912-- 11,564,513
1898-- 7,073,407	1913-- 11,626,718
1899-- 8,120,507	1914-- 11,879,121

The total value of all property assessed during the thirty years is \$233,845,866, which, divided by the number of years (thirty), would give an average annual assessment of \$7,461,000; so that if we had levied a tax of 40 cents on the hundred dollars worth of property and collected the same for the year 1885 and each year since, including the year 1914, the average amount of property on which this tax would have been levied each year would have been \$7,461,000 instead of \$3,675,603, the amount the property was assessed at in 1885.

On this basis, if we had issued an amount of bonds in 1884 which would

have required a 40 cent tax to pay the interest, we would have issued nearly \$300,000 worth of bonds—the assessed value at that time being, as stated, \$3,675,603, forty cents a hundred on which would have amounted to \$14,702.41, or a few dollars less than enough to pay the interest. By this time, without counting any sinking fund interest, we would have collected enough as a result of the 30 cent tax to have paid off the \$300,000 worth of bonds, and we would have had left about \$145,320. As stated above, the average assessed value of the property for the thirty years has been \$7,451,000, a 40 cent tax levied on which would bring in \$29,844; the interest on the \$300,000 at 5 per cent would have amounted to \$15,000, which, taken from the \$29,844, would leave each year \$14,844 surplus, which in the thirty years would amount to \$445,320, or \$145,320 more than enough to pay off the bonds; and if the surplus each year was placed in a sinking fund at interest it is safe to say that there would have been at least \$250,000 more than enough money on hand at the end of the thirty years to have retired the bonds.

There is but one way to judge the future and that is by the past. This is an accepted and approved rule in judging the affairs of men. Applying this rule, the experience of the past thirty years shows a gradual increase in the assessed value of the property of the county to the extent that it has trebled in value with nearly a million dollars over; so that according to this rule the assessed value now being \$12,000,000 in the next thirty years it will increase three times that or up to \$36,000,000, and subtracting the \$12,000,000 the property is now assessed at, would leave an increase of \$24,000,000, which would make an average yearly assessment for the next thirty years of \$24,000,000 per annum on which the 40 cent special good roads tax would be collected, the amount of which would be \$96,000 per annum. Subtracting from this amount \$40,000 per annum for interest on the bonds would leave \$56,000 per annum average yearly income from the 40 cent tax to go into the sinking fund to retire the bonds, and this amount multiplied by thirty years would show an estimated amount in the sinking fund at the end of thirty years of \$1,680,000, not counting any interest on the sinking fund, or enough money to pay off the bonds and \$880,000 in addition, or enough in addition left over after paying the bonds off to build another system of roads like that now proposed to be built. This tax of 40 cents could be reduced from year to year so as not to accumulate more money than is needed, or the surplus could be used to extend the system of main line roads over the county.

Thirty years ago I was nine years of age. The principal thing here at that time was the lumber business and log hauling. Forests of fine timber abounded. Later on we had furniture factories, saw mills, spoke factories and the like, and I remember that it was predicted that when the timber was all cut and disposed of the country would be ruined and the day of its passing was looked forward to as a time of dire calamity to come.

Just what the future has in store for us no one can foretell with precision; but for one I believe that the spirit of progress is alive in the land; that history will repeat itself; that in the next thirty years as marked improvement and increase in values will occur as in the last; that as a part of that improvement and progress will come the building of permanent roads, culverts and bridges, houses, barns, silos, and fine homes; improvement in the cultivation of the soil and breeding of live stock; improvement and progress of education and church work; and at this time I believe that we should do our part in this system of progression by stopping our dirt road child's play and proceeding promptly and in a business like manner to build a system of permanent roads for our own use, happiness and

pleasure, and for our own financial benefit and as a fine heritage to be left to our children and the "generations yet unborn."

The tax rate now is \$1.30, of which 20 cents is used for public roads, together with the work of the road hands of the county. After macadamized roads are built this fund should all be used to improve the other roads of the county, and with this all the other roads could be made as good as the best roads are now.

It has been said that the building of this system of roads would bankrupt the county. As shown above, this is not true. On the contrary, it would be the greatest financial blessing that could come to us at this time. If we could start building this system of roads this fall after crops are laid by it would be the means of putting in circulation in the county among the people who need it most a large sum of money for hauling and labor of the kinds required for building roads, and the amount of this money so put in circulation would be equal to the profits from a bumper crop. I have said it before and I say it again, the building of this system of roads would dispel the gloom caused by crop failure, drouth and war. Prosperity would be in the land; a fresh flow of immigration would come to Obion County; property would increase in value; no home seeker would pass Obion County by who could find a home here to purchase; Obion County would continue to be the finest and richest county in the State and perhaps in the nation. I have faith that the roads will be built, for I hear many expressions of approval, and I have faith that they will be built for the reason that I know it is right they should be, and in the end the right will prevail.

O. SPFRADLIN.

Card of Thanks.

We desire to thank each of our dear friends who were so kind during the illness and death of our dear son and brother, and especially Dr. Adkerson, who was so kind and ready to come at any time and do all in his power. May the richest blessings rest upon each and every one.

MRS. A. A. BARNES.
O. E. BARNES.
H. T. BARNES AND FAMILY.

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