

## ST. MARY'S COUNTY DEVELOPMENT OF OUR ROADWAYS

- 1639 “Mattapany Path”, **the first County road** from St. Mary’s City to the Patuxent River.
- 1674 Legislation enacted the construction of a highway “passable for horse and foote over such place of Zechiah swamp” (present MD RTE 234).
- 1692 Creation of a road from Point Lookout to the northern part of the County was referred to as the “Patuxent main road.”
- 1704 Justices of the County Court were empowered to record all “publick roads” and to appoint overseers to ensure the roads were **“hereafter clear’d and wll Grubbd fitt for traveling twenty foott wide.” Roads were also to be kept clear of all obstructions 15 feet above the surface of the road for carriages, carts and horsemen.** The specified road width was twenty (20) feet.
- 1704 Legislation standardized road construction and identification. The system of notching trees to identify roads resulted in “Patuxent main road” becoming Three Notch Road.
- 1794 Dennis Griffith’s Map of Maryland shows two main roads running the length of St. Mary’s County from the Charles County border to Ridge ,with the two roads merging into one from Ridge to Point Lookout.
- 1802 Levy Justices of the County **created road districts** and appointed road overseers for each section of roads.
- 1821 The County was formally laid out into fourteen (14) road districts.
- 1831 St. Mary’s County Courthouse fire destroyed the administrative archives of the St. Mary’s County Justices pertaining to roads during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- 1854 County Commissioners first granted permission to **“close the Old Road”** and to adopt a new road as a public road in lieu of the old road formerly in use.
- 1859 The bridge over the St. Mary’s River at Great Mills was completed in August.
- 1868 An Act “...to provide a road system” for the County was enacted. The law also provided that a salaried **County Superintendent of Roads** be appointed by the County Commissioners for a three (3) year term.
- 1876 The law provided for the repairs of the public roads and the creation of a county road book. **Repairs were allowed within fifteen feet of the center of the road,**

**and to straighten all roads where it could be done with the consents of adjoining land-owners.**

- 1876 County Commissioners imposed a levy on all assessable county property to pay for the public roads.
- 1878 \$3,500 was allotted for repairs to public roads by the County Commissioners. Notice was published warning against throwing weeds, briars etc. in the public road.
- 1879 County Commissioners required all fences, gates and **obstructions be removed** from the public roads.
- 1889 St. Mary's Beacon Letter to the Editor...bemoaned the excessive number of road supervisors and labeled the \$7.50 per day which those supervisors were paid as "highway robbery".
- 1904 It was ordered that the County Commissioners be advised as to the most suitable routes and materials to be used for County roads.
- 1905 State Aid Road Fund was made available to Counties. St. Mary's County had 602 miles of roads to maintain and received \$7,789.85 of the \$200,000 monies.
- 1908 **The State Roads Commission was created**-introducing "state" roads terminology . The first County automobile accident was reported in November.
- 1909 First State Roads Commission construction project was in Mechanicsville. Award was based on a bid price of \$10,000 per mile. On Mechanicsville Helen Road, layers of tar and stone placed onto the surface of a gravel bed which was rounded in the middle and drained to each side.
- 1910 Leonardtown recorded it's first automobile accident. There was a problem with speeding. Only about one-fourth of St. Mary's County roads were graded.
- 1914 Act establishing U.S. Mail Routes and construction of rural post roads was approved.
- 1914 **Legal speed limits were established:** 25 mph on the open highway; 12 mph in sections with two or more houses in sight of one another and 6 mph in towns and villages. A 50 horsepower, 7 passenger touring car with electric lights and starter sold for \$1,925.
- 1914 \$2,050 was spent by St. Mary's County for maintenance of roads within, the then, the five election districts.
- 1914 Law stipulated that a **road inspector position** be created in each district.

- 1914 Starting July 1, Semmes Motor Line **began operating public buses** between Leonardtown and Washington. The fare was \$3.00 one way or \$4.50 round trip.
- 1915 The application of loose gravel to the State road from Ridge to Point Lookout was awarded at a bid price of \$8,923.66.
- 1916 BOCC obtains legislative authority to erect “road sign boards which shall be a hand pointing toward one town or place...together with the name of places and number of miles apart...in large enough type to be seen by travelers not less than 50 yards away”—This was subsequently repealed in 1941.1915
- 1919 **Thomas Al Ridgell started a public bus service** between Scotland and Leonardtown called the Scotland Motor Line. The fare was \$1.00 either way.
- 1920 Law authorized the County Commissioners to issue \$200,000 in road bonds for construction and repair of public roads and bridges in an amount not to exceed \$50,000 per year.
- 1954 Reconstruction of MD RTE 246 was begun.
- 1976 199.7 miles of State roads and 530 miles of County roads were maintained by the State.
- 1978 The Governor Thomas Johnson Bridge was opened in January.
- 1984 On July 1, St. Mary’s County assumed routine highway maintenance responsibilities for it’s own roadways.
- 1999 In Maryland, typically, 70% of the roads are County maintained, 22% State maintained and 8% are privately maintained.
- 2011 There are 628 miles of paved County maintained roads and 262 miles of State maintained roadways.