



Nebraska Department of Roads

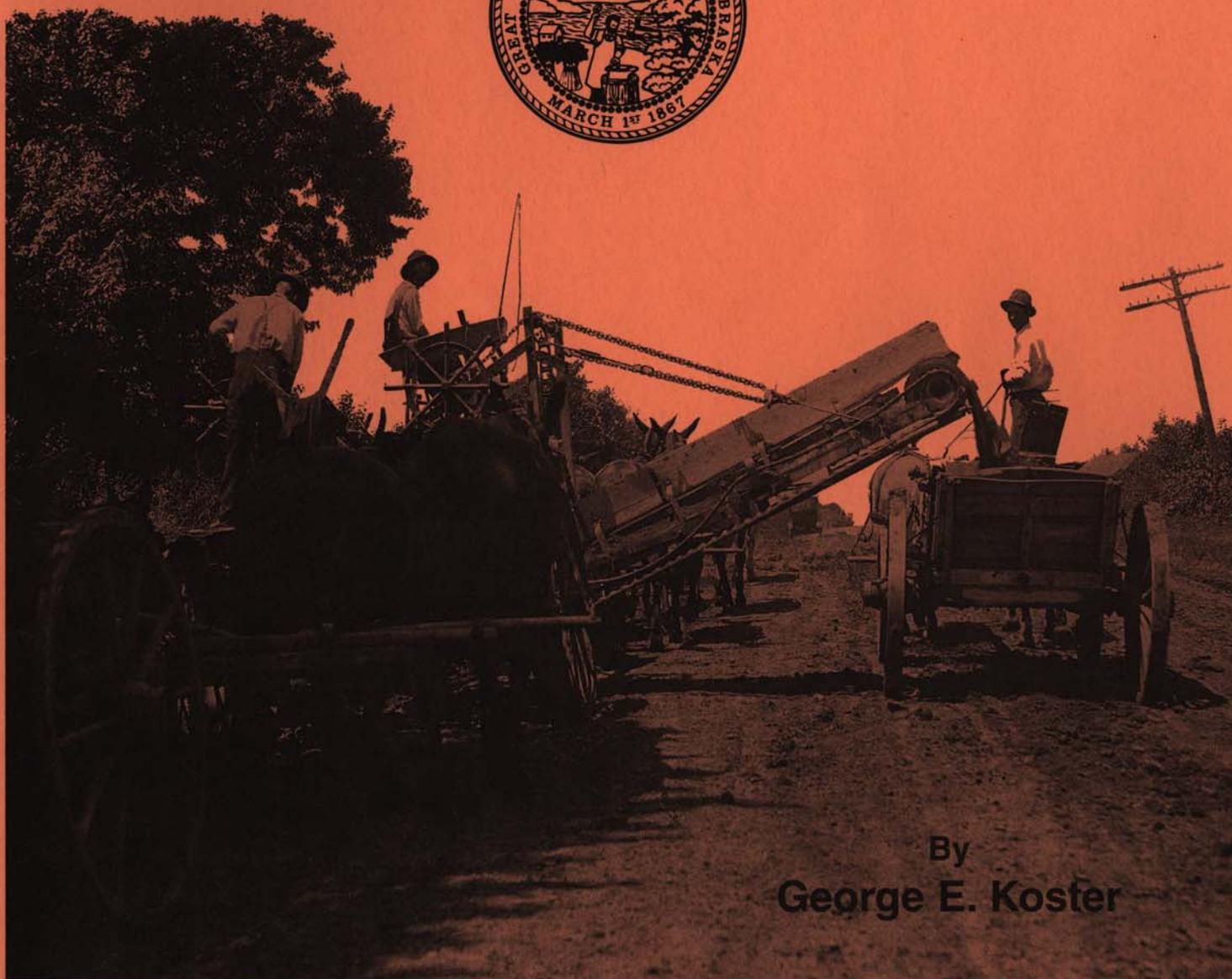
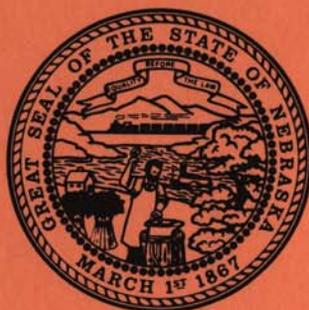
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A Story of Highway Development in Nebraska

Revised 1997



By George E. Koster

A STORY OF HIGHWAY DEVELOPMENT
IN NEBRASKA

By
George E. Koster

Published by the
Department of Roads
Lincoln, Nebraska

Revised 1997

BACKGROUND

"A Story of Highway Development in Nebraska" (Revised 1997) is an updated and expanded version of "A Story of Highway Development in Nebraska" (1986), the latter being published by the Department of Roads in December of that year. The text is a compilation of information taken from a myriad of sources and leans heavily on the author's judgement and experience. And, since the entire undertaking was accomplished on a part-time basis, footnotes were omitted for simplicity of publication. In instances where the author may have used brief passages written by another, without using quotation marks or giving that person proper credit, forgiveness is requested. The purpose of the text is not for personal achievement, literary merit, or financial gain. Rather, it is for purposes of history, education, and public information about the development of highways in Nebraska.

THE AUTHOR

George E. Koster, a fourth-generation Nebraskan and former Secretary to the State Highway Commission (1972-1975), is assigned to the Project Development Division at the Department of Roads headquarters in Lincoln. He is the author of the "Research Study on Corridor Preservation" (1973), "History of the Nebraska State Highway Commission" (1974, 1986, and 1992), "A Story of Highway Development in Nebraska" (1986), "A History of the Principal Executives of the State Highway Department" (1995), and "A Story of Highway Development in Nebraska" (Revised 1997).

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PREFACE

My father was a Registered Professional Engineer and building highways was his life. He worked hard, put in long hours, and for almost half his career, had no fringe benefits. Hired by the Department of Roads and Irrigation in 1933 at age 24, he was first covered by Social Security at age 42, received a 40-hour workweek at age 49, began participating in a state retirement plan at age 55, and died on duty at age 63. My father was proud of his profession, dedicated to his work, and loyal to the institution of which he was a part. His has been a tough act to follow.

Hopefully, the text will inform the reader about the evolution of Nebraska's highways and a bit of associated history. It is a story of change, of progress, but mainly of people. While I make no pretense to literary merit, I'm proud to have been given the assignment, on a part-time basis, to describe the development of Nebraska's highways from their modest beginning to the magnificent transportation network of the 1990's. Above all, I wish to thank Judy K. Kelly and her staff in the Word Processing Center of the Communication Division for their most excellent support. Thanks must also go to the many present and former employees who contributed so generously of their time and recollections. And finally, I wish to thank Miss Fay Gordon, formerly of Norfolk High School, and my mother for their instruction and insistence on a reasonable use of the English language.

But as my mind wanders back through the dim mists of time to the days that were, I encounter the shadowy images of countless beings. These are the highway workers of yesteryear, who through loyalty, dedication, and hard work, gave us a solid foundation for the highway system now enjoyed by today's mobile society. Therefore, it is with respect that I dedicate this book to those highway workers who have gone before, to that "undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns."

George E. Koster
Lincoln, Nebraska
August 1997

THE STATE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

The 1895 Legislature created the State Board of Irrigation which first met on April 24 of that year. In 1911, the Legislature changed the board's name to the State Board of Irrigation, Highways, and Drainage. The 1919 Legislature changed the board's name to the Department of Public Works. In the same year, the registration of motor vehicles, which was begun by the Secretary of State in 1913, was transferred from that office to the Department of Public Works. The department was then composed of two bureaus and one headquarters division: the Bureau of Roads and Bridges; the Bureau of Irrigation, Water Power, and Drainage; and the Motor Vehicle Records Division.

While the department's field divisions varied from five to ten from 1919-25, they stabilized at eight in 1925 and were located as follows: Divisions 1 and 2 (Lincoln), Division 3 (Norfolk), Division 4 (Grand Island), Division 5 (Scottsbluff), Division 6 (McCook), Division 7 (North Platte), and Division 8 (Ainsworth). Although field Division 2 was responsible for 10 counties in the east-central (Omaha) area, its office was in Lincoln.

In 1933, the Legislature changed the department's name to the Department of Roads and Irrigation. The department was still composed of two bureaus: the Bureau of Roads and Bridges and the Bureau of Irrigation, Water Power, and Drainage. The Bureau of Roads and Bridges was subdivided into four headquarters divisions: Road Construction and Maintenance, Maps and Plans, Clerical and Records, and Motor Vehicle Registration. Also in 1933, the field Division 5 office was transferred from Scottsbluff to Bridgeport.

The 1937 Legislature created within the department, the Division of Highway Safety and Patrol, to be known as the Nebraska Safety Patrol. In 1942, the department was composed of the Bureau of Highways; Bureau of Irrigation, Water Power, and Drainage; Motor Vehicle Division; and the

Safety Patrol. In 1954, the responsibility for operation of the Scale Section and 12 weighing stations was transferred from the Safety Patrol to the Bureau of Highways.

The 1957 Legislature divided the Department of Roads and Irrigation into three separate state agencies: the Department of Roads, Department of Motor Vehicles, and Department of Water Resources. The Department of Roads was composed of the Bureau of Highways (four headquarters divisions, eight headquarters sections, eight field divisions) and the Safety Patrol. In 1967, the Legislature changed the name of the Nebraska Safety Patrol to the Nebraska State Patrol.

In 1968, the field Division 2 office was transferred from Lincoln to Omaha. Since 1969, field divisions have been called districts. Also in that year, District 6 (McCook) and District 8 (Ainsworth) became sub-districts of District 7 (North Platte) and District 3 (Norfolk), respectively. At the same time, District 7 (North Platte) was renumbered and became District 6. The former McCook district was reinstated in 1971 and became District 7. In 1977, the former Ainsworth district was reinstated and once again became District 8.

The 1981 Legislature made the Nebraska State Patrol a separate state agency and the 1985 Legislature reassigned the Carrier Enforcement Division from the Department of Roads to the patrol. In 1997, the Department of Roads has 17 headquarters divisions and eight field districts, with assistance from the State Highway Commission and Office of Legal Counsel (Attorney General). The eight field districts are: District 1 (Lincoln), District 2 (Omaha), District 3 (Norfolk), District 4 (Grand Island), District 5 (Bridgeport), District 6 (North Platte), District 7 (McCook), and District 8 (Ainsworth).

STATE ENGINEERS

	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>	<u>Years & Months Served</u>
1. Robert B. Howell	5/1895 -	4/1896	01-00
2. William R. Akers	4/1896 -	4/1897	01-00
3. J. Morris Wilson	4/1897 -	4/1900	03-00
4. Charles B. Channel	4/1900 -	4/1901	01-00
5. Adna Dobson	4/1901 -	4/1909	08-00
6. Edward C. Simmons	4/1909 -	4/1911	02-00
7. Donald D. Price.	4/1911 -	3/1915	04-00
8. George E. Johnson.	3/1915 -	3/1923	08-00
9. Robert L. Cochran.	3/1923 -	7/1934	11-04
10. Arthur T. Lobdell.	7/1934 -	1/1935	00-06
11. Albert C. Tilley	1/1935 -	1/1941	06-00
12. Wardner G. Scott	1/1941 -	1/1948	07-00
13. Fred H. Klietsch	2/1948 -	8/1951	03-06
14. Harold L. Aitken	8/1951 -	4/1953	01-08
15. Lorenz N. Ress	4/1953 -	1/1959	05-10
16. Robert L. Cochran.	1/1959 -	12/1959	01-00
17. John W. Hossack.	1/1960 -	11/1968	08-10
18. Marvin L. Nuernberger.	11/1968 -	1/1971	02-02
19. Thomas D. Doyle.	1/1971 -	6/1977	06-05
20. David O. Coolidge.	6/1977 -	1/1983	05-07
21. Louis E. Lamberty.	2/1983 -	2/1986	03-00
22. Raymond H. Hogrefe	3/1986 -	10/1987	01-08
23. Gerold C. Strobel	10/1987 -	7/1991	03-09
24. W. Wayne Teten	7/1991 -	1/1992	00-06
25. Allan L. Abbott.	1/1992 -		

Note: From 1895-1919, the dates were confirmed from the minutes of the meetings of the State Board of Irrigation (1895-1911) and the State Board of Irrigation, Highways, and Drainage (1911-1919). Said minutes are located at the Department of Water Resources. From 1920-1997, the dates were confirmed from personnel records at the Department of Roads. Messrs. Lobdell (1934-35) and Teten (1991-92) served as the acting State Engineer.