



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Minnesota State Archives

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

An Inventory of Its Statewide Road Inventory Files

OVERVIEW OF THE RECORDS

- Agency:** Minnesota. Dept. of Highways.
- Series Title:** Statewide road inventory files,
- Dates:** 1936-1950 (bulk 1936-1943).
- Abstract:** Manuals, instructions, memoranda, field notes, news bulletins, statistical tables, and work sheets relating to an inventory of Minnesota roads conducted during the 1930s and early 1940s as part of a statewide Minnesota Highway Planning Survey, a joint research project of the Minnesota Dept. of Highways and the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads. It compiled information on the location, physical condition, traffic hazards, proximity to points of origin or destination, and related data on state roads, primarily in rural areas.
- Quantity:** 2.2 cu. ft. (2 boxes and 1 oversize v.).
- Location:** See Detailed Description section for box locations.

ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY OF THE STATE-WIDE HIGHWAY PLANNING SURVEY

The State-wide Highway Planning Survey was a joint research project of the Minnesota Department of Highways and the Bureau of Public Roads of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (since July, 1939, the Public Roads Administration of the Federal Works Agency) with the cooperation of the Works Progress Administration. Similar surveys were conducted in other states. Funds for the highway surveys were authorized by the Hayden-Cartwright Act of 1934, which set aside 1½ % of the highway allotments to the states for the purpose of "surveys, plans, and engineering investigations." The State-wide Highway Planning Survey had three components: a road inventory, a traffic survey, and a financial survey.

By the 1930s, the need for a state-wide road inventory was becoming self-evident. With the coming of the railroads and statehood in the 1850s, road building lapsed from a matter of state and national interest to one of purely local concern. Well into the 20th century, townships created and maintained roads, with the counties playing only a minor role and the state none at all, except for law making and doling out proceeds of some minor federal grants. In fact, the state constitution adopted in 1858 prohibited state funds from being spent on public roads (or any other internal improvement). Counties could give aid for road improvements, but this was very limited until the dawn of the 20th century. The state constitution was amended in 1898 to allow

state aid for road construction under state supervision, but legislation carrying out this amendment was not enacted until 1905. Town boards still had the responsibility for the repair of roads designated as "state roads" until 1913, when for the first time counties were made responsible for the maintenance of these roads. Townships remained responsible for the maintenance of other county roads.

After the establishment of the State Highway Commission in 1906, state officials began collecting information on roads and road conditions, but the data were often incomplete or inaccurate. As automobiles became more numerous after 1910, the demand for more and better maintained roads increased. After the establishment of the state trunk highway system and the office of county highway engineer in 1920, annual reports on state and county roads became more complete and accurate, but still there was little information on roads outside of state or county jurisdictions.

The statewide road inventory, which began in 1936, was largely a rural road inventory because information on city streets was more complete, while rural roads comprised over 90% of the state's roads. More than 98% of the land area of the state was traversed by rural roads, and more than 63% of the population was rural, and more than 63 % of the vehicles used rural roads.

The road inventory was a systematic gathering of information on the physical condition of roads in Minnesota, their location, their status of improvement, their administrative classification, and their proximity to potential origins or destinations of traffic. Information for the inventory was gathered in four activities; an automobile log, a road hazards inventory, a railroad grade crossings study, and a cultural data record. The automobile log was a measurement of distances either by automobile odometer or by the actual measurement or pacing off of impassable stretches. The road hazards inventory listed the location and description of sharp curves, steep grades, low bridges, and poor sight areas. The cultural data record listed all farm buildings, industrial plants and businesses, schools, mines, dams, airports, telephone and power lines, homes, pipelines, railroads, etc. that were near a road or could be a point of destination of someone traveling a public road.

Data collected through the road inventory was made available through a printing of a series of state and county maps showing locations of the roads and other cultural data and through a series of statistical tables.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE RECORDS

The files of the statewide road inventory comprise manuals, instructions, memos, field notes, news bulletins, statistical tables and work sheets related to the road inventory conducted in the 1930s and 1940s. Some of the material is dated after the survey had been completed, but pertains to subsequent or related activities. The collection is arranged as an alphabetical subject file. Of particular interest are the manuals, which give detailed instructions on how the survey was to be conducted, and the memos and news bulletins of the Bureau of Public Roads, which give considerable background information. The collection also contains a fair amount of field notes and statistical data that may be of interest to a highway engineer conducting a detailed review.

The final narrative report of the survey, titled "Report on Methods and Procedures of the Road Inventory, July, 1943" is found in Box 1. The (oversized) final statistical report is found in

Box 3; it also includes some traffic survey data. The financial survey portion of the Highway Planning Survey for the years encompassed by the main body of these files does not appear to have survived.

RELATED MATERIALS

Atlases of county maps that reflect data collected through the State-Wide Highway Planning Survey, published in 1940 and 1942, are cataloged in the Minnesota Historical Society map collection as *Atlas of general highway county maps for Minnesota*. Later compilations of the same type of data are also in the MHS map collection, under various titles. (See Atlas classification no. G1425 .M66.)

Minnesota. Dept. of Highways. Finance Division. Highway planning survey annual reports, 1946-1948 (3 volumes), part of the State Archives, appear to document the financial survey portion of later years of the Highway Planning Survey. Entitled "Highway Receipts, Disbursements and Debt," they were prepared by the Minnesota Highway Department at the request of the U.S. Public Roads Administration.

Traffic or origin/destination surveys for the cities of Austin (1948), Brainerd (1949), Crookston (1946), Fergus Falls (1947), Minneapolis (1946) New Ulm (1949), Owatonna (1948), Red Wing (1948), Rochester (1948), St. Cloud (1946), St. Paul (1946), and Willmar (1948), all cataloged in the MHS Library, also reflect Highway Planning Survey work.

See also Minnesota Highway Planning Survey. *Minnesota highway facts; a summary of the findings of the Minnesota highway planning survey* (1942), also in the MHS Library.

INDEX TERMS

This collection is indexed under the following headings in the catalog of the Minnesota Historical Society. Researchers desiring materials about related topics, persons or places should search the catalog using these headings.

Topics:

- Roads--Minnesota--Planning.
- Surveying
- Traffic surveys--Minnesota.

Organizations:

- Minnesota Highway Planning Survey.
- United States. Bureau of Public Roads.
- United States. Bureau of Public Roads.
- United States. Public Roads Administration.
- United States. Work Projects Administration (Minnesota).

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Preferred Citation:

[Indicate the cited volume and page or item and folder title here]. Minnesota. Dept. of Highways. Statewide road inventory files. Minnesota Historical Society. State Archives.
See the Chicago Manual of Style for additional examples.

Accession Information:

Accession number(s): 978-85; 999-62

Processing Information:

Processed by: Rich Arpi, April 1999

These materials were received, partially foldered but unorganized, in 1978. They were refoldered, organized, and inventoried in 1999, retaining the original folder titles as much as possible. A group of state park blueprint maps, apparently gathered as informational copies, was transferred to the existing series of "State park map files" in the Dept. of Natural Resources.

PALS ID No.: 0800010128 RLIN ID No.: MNHV893-A

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

Note to Researchers: To request materials, please note both the location and box numbers shown below.

Location	Box	
107.G.19.8F	1	<p>Acres: Forests, Game Refuges, Reservations, etc., 1938. Aerial Photography, 1937-1939. Budget: Estimates, 1939-1942. Check of Public Roads Administration Sectional Maps for Minnesota, 1940. Code Classification: Division of Road Construction, Chart C, July, 1942. Coding: General Notes, 1936-1941. Correspondence, 1936-1948. 4 folders. County Boundary Check, 1940. County Maps, 1941. (correspondence about)</p> <p>Directory of Road Inventory Personnel, December 1939. Drafting Room: Regulations and Memoranda, 1936-1940. Federal Aid, 1940-1943. Federal Aid: 7% of 10% systems; School Bus and Postal Mileage; Krichesky Report Data, 1941-1943. Federal Aid Mileage in Reservations, etc., 1936-1942. Grades: Tables and Summaries of Trunk Highways. Data from Progress Profiles. 1943. Highway Planning Conference, Chicago, March 10, 1937. Index of Railroad Station Plats, Profiles, and Right of Way Maps, 1936, A-Z. 2 folders. The location of the maps to which this index refers is unknown.</p> <p>Indian Service Roads, January 1, 1945. Initial Planning Survey Report, 1941-1944. Instructions for Coding and Tabulating Road Inventory Data. Drafting Room Manual Part II. November - December 1938. Instructions for Coding and Tabulating Railroad, Highway, or Street Grade Crossing Data. Drafting Room Manual Part III. June 15, 1939. Inter-Regional Highways, General. 1939-1941. Inter-Regional Highways, Accidents and Traffic, 1939. Inter-Regional Routes, State and County Mapping, 1938-1940. Legend Development, 1936-1940. Lengths of Individual Sections, U.S. 2 and U.S. 53, 1939. Lyon County, 1950.</p>

Location	Box	
107.G.19.8F	1	<p>Manual of Instructions for Compilation of Annual Status Report for State Aid, County Aid, and County Road Systems, January 1945.</p> <p>Manual of Instructions for Rural Road Inventory (Thayer), 1936-1950.</p> <p>Manual Development: General Inventory, revision and criticism, 1937-1938.</p> <p>Manual Development: Form # 111, Bridges, etc., 1937-1938.</p> <p>Manual: State and County Map Standards, 1936.</p> <p>Manual: Taking Sight Distance, Horizontal Curvature, Oct. 1937.</p> <p>Mapping, Planning Survey Memorandum, revised 1946.</p> <p>Memos to RI Manual, 1948-1956.</p> <p>Mileage Log, Road Use Survey, Highways 2, 12, 16, 52, 61, 65, [1948?]</p> <p>Minnesota Forest Highways, January 1, 1945.</p> <p>Multiple Lane Roads: existing or under construction as of Jan. 1, 1942.</p> <p>Operating Plan: Compiling the Initial Report for Road Inventory and Financial Survey Tables as outlined in Memo # 287, 1941.</p> <p>Railroad Grade Crossing Study: Manual of Instructions, March and July, 1938.</p> <p>Report on Methods and Procedures of the Road Inventory, July 1943.</p> <p>Report on Parking Facilities, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Sept. 24, 1946.</p> <p>Rice County: A Planned County Highway System, ca. 1948.</p> <p>Road Condition Surveys, 1941-1942.</p> <p>Road Inventory, Field Notes. 1936-1941. 2 folders.</p> <p>Road Inventory Manual, plates, 1937-1940.</p> <p>Road Inventory, Progress Reports, 1939-1949.</p> <p>Road Use Tabulating, 1942-1943.</p> <p>Rural Road Inventory, Manual of Instructions, Jan. 1938.</p> <p>Rural Road Inventory, Manual of Instructions, August 15, 1947.</p> <p>Rural Road Inventory, Manual of Instructions, June 15, 1948.</p> <p>Rural Road Inventory, Manual of Instructions, April, 1949.</p>

Location	Box	
107.G.19.9B	2	Slope Mileage by Counties, Minneapolis, Duluth, St. Paul Governing Routes, 1939. State and County Map Standards: Drafting Room Manual and Supplements, 1936-1940. State Line Roads Maintained by Iowa, 1940. State Mileage, S.M. Tables, 1939-1942. 4 folders. State Parks Review, 1936-1941. State Summary Tables: Three Lane, Four Lane, Multiple Lanes, 1936 Inventory. Status of Classification, 1937. Strategic Highways: Standardizations, Instructions, Priority Cost Estimates, 1935-1941. Strategic Highways, 1939-1944. Sub-Standard Highways, Restricted Sight Distance, 1939-1940. Template Development, 1937-1939. Traffic Capacity Study - Intersections and Roadways: General Information and Fergus Falls, Sept. 1946. Minneapolis, Sept. 1946. Brainerd and St. Paul, Sept. 1946. Trunk Highway Description as Marked, July, 1934. Trunk Highway Mileage by County as of January 1, 1944. United States Dept. of Agriculture, Bureau of Public Roads: Memos, March 1936 - June 1939. 5 folders. Bureau Memos by Subject. 1 folder. Federal Works Agency Memos: July 1939 - 1940. 1945-1948. News Bulletins: 1-16, June 1936 - June 1937. 17-25, August 1937 - October 1938. 26-33, January 1939 - August 1941. Index, November 1940. 2 folders. Urban Compacts, 1938. Work Records and Miscellaneous Reports, 1939-1940. Miscellaneous, 1937-1943.

Location	Box	
112.I.10.4F	[3]	<p>State of Minnesota - State Summary: A Tabulation of Road and Traffic Data by the State-wide Highway Planning Survey. Minnesota Department of Highways, Federal Works Agency-Public Works Administration. Road Inventory as of December 31, 1936. Traffic Survey as of July 1936 to June 1937. With assistance of Works Projects Administration. November 1, 1941. 1 oversize volume. Onion-skin typed pages, 537 pp.</p> <p>Includes data on total mileage of rural highways by surface types (e.g., bituminous, concrete) and widths including trunk, federal aid, state aid, county aid, township, national forest, state forest, U.S. Indian Service, state park, and U.S. military highways. Also included are data on number and number per 100 miles of restricted sights, excessive curves, and excessive grades on trunk highways by surface types. Number and length of highway bridges by type and material is included as are data on the number of railroad crossings, toll bridges, and tunnels on highways in Minnesota. Some traffic volume studies also are included with this study.</p>