

## THE GRAND RIVER TRAIL (Cont.)

About the time land owners got Grand River Road graveled, the State decided to pave the road with concrete from Detroit to Lake Michigan. In order to widen the right of way to 100 feet the State bought the land and tore out the gravel roads; altho' the farmers were still bonded (for several years to come for the gravel roads they had built). The State regraded for concrete; paid for the fence; cut down shade trees; moved telephone poles, many farmer's barns, houses and out-buildings back off the right of way. Federal aid and prison labor was used for some of the road construction. A cement plant was built and cement mixing equipment purchased, also trucks and steam shovels. This experiment, by the State, in road building resulted in scandals, wide-spread graft and corruption. Because of the political upheaval, shortly after US 16 was completed the State got out of the road building business and put road construction up for bids by private contractors.

One must not omit the fact that the need to move equipment and men from the farms to the train or to ships for transport to Europe during WW I, was probably a major impetus to the evolution of better roads and incidently the development of trucks.

A fleet of privately-owned passenger cars operated over this improved road and provided, for the time, quite fast transportation between Detroit and Lansing. Called "jitneys" they, of course, charged more than the nickel charged by those cars of the same name that operated in the cities in the 1914-1922 period. These were followed by the buses, first the Blue Goose then the Greyhounds, and now the Trailways and others.

During the mid 1950s U.S. 16 was retired with the building of I-96. The old route had served and still serves Michigan citizens well. It now belongs to the counties through which it passes and its maintenance is again their responsibility.

Those who live along this old Indian trail and who receive their mail with that address, still call it Grand River. Its many nicknames include the Plank Road, the Gravel, the Pike, the Grade. Interstate 96, while providing a fast, safe and direct route for the traveler does not have the historically romantic ring to its name. (At least, not yet.)

The original Indian Trail has been witness to many forms of transportation. The people came on foot, horseback, ox cart, freight wagon, stagecoach, jitney, auto, truck and bus to establish homes, occupations, and recreation. At the present, it seems logical that the coming years will mean more and more development along the old Indian Trail until it perhaps becomes one long city stretching from shore to shore across Michigan. Will this development rule the people or will the people control this growth? (Condensed and edited from "A Scrapbook of Michigan Memorabilia" by Wm. A. Pless and "Yesteryears of Green Oak 1830-1930")

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OLD KENT BANK  
300 W. North St.  
Brighton, Mi. 48116