

John M. Malang
Highway Superintendent
1920 - 1921



Sketch by Wilbur Mayens
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In March 1919, the McCullough-Morgan Act amended the Hawes Law by providing for a Highway Superintendent who would generally oversee the State Highway Department operations and serve as secretary to the State Highway Board. The new act also increased the state road system to 6,000 miles, to be divided among the counties on a more equitable basis. It guaranteed each county at least two state roads totaling at least fifty miles. Total state road mileage in a given county would depend on its relative size. State and federal aid of \$7,200,000 would be divided nearly equally, with each county receiving approximately \$60,000 for its minimum fifty miles, or \$1,200 per mile.

The counties could continue the state road work with their own matching funds, and bring other county roads into the state system with the approval of the State Highway Board. The new legislation also appropriated funds for road dragging expenses. The counties continued to award all construction contracts.

Fifty-nine counties and special road districts approved bond issues in 1919 and 1920 to construct portions of their highways afforded under the McCullough-Morgan Act. With the numbers of vehicles in the state now approaching 300,000 and progress on the state system proceeding at a snail's pace, Superintendent Malang, Governor Frederick Gardner, and the Missouri Good Roads Federation spearheaded an intensive campaign for a \$60 million state bond issue to "Lift Missouri Out of the Mud." The bond issue passed in November 1920 in sixty-one of the 114 counties. The bonds provided much-needed additional revenues to advance the state road system more rapidly

John M. Malang became the new Highway Superintendent. Formerly the superintendent of the Joplin Special Road District, Malang had overseen construction of the first concrete road on the state highway system--Federal Aid Project No. 2 from Webb City to the Kansas state line. Malang would continue to work tirelessly for the Good Roads movement. The McCullough-Morgan Act required Graham to complete surveys of the entire 6,000-mile system by the end of 1921. Therefore he divided the state into six districts and placed District Engineers in St. Joseph, Macon, Sedalia, Springfield, De Soto, and Sikeston.

The Highway Department expanded further with bureaus of construction, surveys and plans, and audits headquartered in Jefferson City. The Bureau of Surveys and Plans under Carl W. Brown began surveys of the proposed roads with the help of the District Engineers, private engineering contractors, and county officials. By December 1920, 5,428 miles had been surveyed and plans completed for 3,127 miles. The Bureau of Bridges completed standardized designs of twenty-one concrete culverts, twenty-four concrete superstructures with spans of ten to fifty feet, and thirteen steel superstructures of fifty to 150 feet. They also drew plans for 185 individual bridges. Meanwhile, Superintendent Malang and Chief Engineer Graham continuously campaigned in the counties for local road bond issues.