

Roads.

The Houghton County Road Commission was born on April 4, 1910 as the county electorate voted 7,100 for and 989 against a Good Roads System, established in order to develop an organized improvement and expansion of roads in Houghton County.

Up until this year, only haphazard improvement of wagon roads into the country, and between population centers and the copper mining areas existed.

The advent of the Model T Ford, of which fewer than 1,000 vehicles existed in Houghton County in 1910, created the impetus to develop a meaningful road system.

Offices for the Road Commission were opened in rented quarters in downtown Hancock with personnel of six employees. Equipment consisted of three Pierce Arrow plows, a Model T Ford, one motorcycle, and five other truck vehicles. Late in 1911, the offices were moved to the Shelden Dee building in Houghton.

The Board of Road Commissioners began their road building responsibilities with a budget of \$29,051.00, provided by the County Board of Supervisors. The first priorities for road improvements were to reconstruct and straighten the route between the two major population centers of Hancock and Calumet.

The first road project was to improve the highway between Mesnard and the Rhode Island Mine.

The early years concentrated on developing the highways at the perimeter of the population centers for the purpose of serving the mining needs and also to create a system of farm to market roads, the first of which was the Otter Lake Road, into south Houghton County.

As the Road Commission improved the major routes, the state reimbursed them a portion of that cost and then designated those roads as state trunk line and paid for their maintenance.

The first Road Commission members, appointed by the County Board of Supervisors, were Chairman F.J. McLain, and members E.S. Grierson and Theodore Dengler. The first County Highway Engineer was Randolph Martin.

Houghton County Road Commission came into being by vote April 4, 1910. On their web page <http://www.houghtoncountyroads.org/> they say "Before then only haphazard improvement of wagon roads into the county and between population centers and mine areas existed.

With the advent of the Model T Fords, there were 1000 vehicles in Houghton County in 1910.

The Houghton Hancock Bridge reported in 1915 there were 491 teams and 993 cars crossing. In 1925 there were 85 teams and 4897 cars.

The early years had the Road Commission developing the roads, which were to eventually, become state trunk line highways while individual townships and cities were developing the remainder of the roads in Houghton County.

The completion of a road between Marquette and Houghton initiated the placing of the first tourist road signs by the Copper Country Commercial Club in 1916.

The year 1917 brought the first news headlines about two collisions on one weekend, along with the first arrest and \$10.00 fine of an Alston man for drunk driving, after a wild zigzag journey across the Houghton County bridge.

In 1919, the Road Commission replaced the horses, which pulled large snow rollers with tractors. Four teams of horses used to pull the snow roller. Richard Garnell of North Superior Road says he used to operate the horses and roller on the Houghton Canal and Heinola Roads after a bad snowstorm. He had 3 teams of horses. Teamsters worked the machine and horses. He got \$5 for working a 10-hour day. Our team of horses was purchased from the Village of Houghton were former fire horses, which pulled fire wagons in the summer and rollers in the winter.

A news article stated, while the tractors are slower than horses, 2 M.P.H. vs. 4 M.P.H., they do not tire in the large drifts and will make the round-trip between Hancock and Calumet in one day.

In 1922, the Road Commission hoped to keep the roads open for automobiles until January 1 and only for horse sleigh after that.

In 1923, the Road Commission moved their headquarters from Houghton and the Shelden Dee building to the Lake Superior Smelting Works property in Ripley, where some equipment and materials were already being stored.

Road use changed dramatically between 1915 and 1925 as daily traffic counts on the Houghton-Hancock Bridge changed from 491 teams and 993 cars in 1915 to 85 teams and 4,897 cars in 1925.

In 1926, the Road Commission hired the first motorcycle officer, Bud Kennedy, to patrol the county roads.

In 1927, the first trunk lines are kept open for the entire winter.

In 1931 the McNitt Act passed. It mandated that the County Road Commission shall absorb 20 percent of all township roads each year, until all 653 miles had been made county roads.

In 1934, the Road Commission experienced the heaviest period of activity in its history, as 4,731 Civil Works Administration employees were on the payroll.

Today, the responsibility of the Road Commission exists much as it did in the late 1930's, to maintain, with Michigan Transportation Funds, some 858 miles of county roads outside of the limits of the seven incorporated cities and villages.

ROAD information around Oskar.

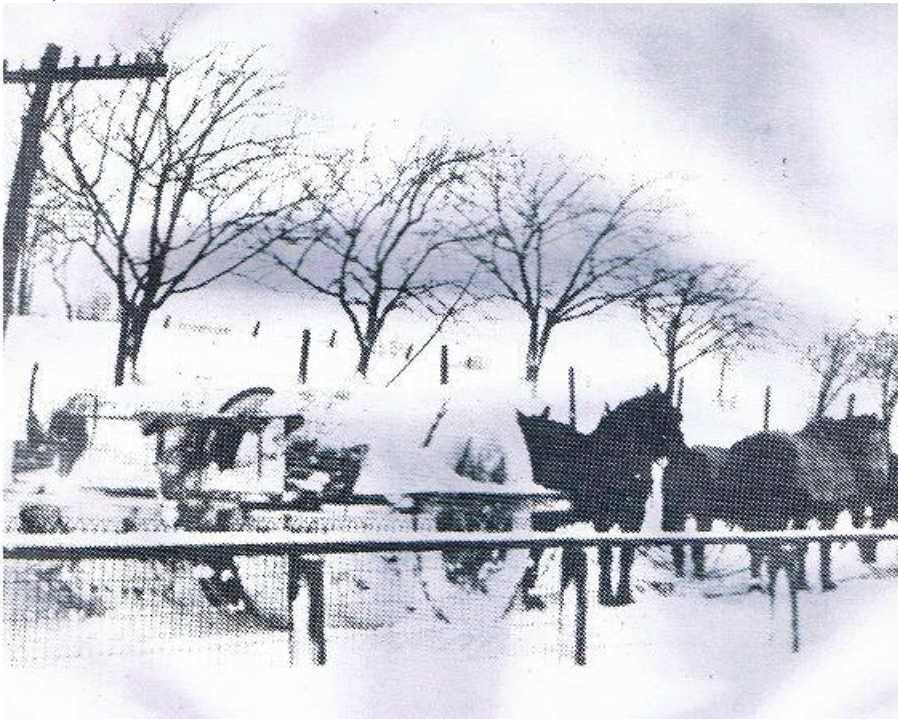
The following paragraph was taken from MTU Archives Bill Brinkman Collection "In the first and second decades of this century, the townships all had their own highway

departments.

The Road Commission says April 4, 1910 that the county took over the entire highway building and maintenance.

A Gazette photo of the snow roller used to pank down highway snows belonged to the Stanton Township Highway Department. Various local farmers drove it on a day wage basis and contained sand or other heavy material.

From 1880 right up to 1930 the roads were primarily used by horses and sleighs and buggies. But in the mid 1920's the Houghton County Road Commission started to use motorized plows and even a snow blower in 1921 experimentally. It was a very primitive machine. A photo was taken by a member of the Zurcher family in front of their home." (Mel Anderson's home in 2009)



Richard Garnell has a photo from the 1985 Gazette: "Fifty years ago (1935), they didn't push snow around in the winter time, but just packed it down with rollers like this one in Osceola...Four teams of horses were used to the machine." The rollers were large on either side of the "machine".. the middle was open. In 1919 the Commission replaced the horse drawn snow rollers with tractors.

Richard wrote on photo - "Richard Garnell used to pack snow with the same kind of roller on the Oskar Canal and Heinola area after a bad snowstorm. Three teams of horses always pulled the roller. The teamsters (drivers) were paid \$5 for a 10-12 hour day. Our team of horses was purchased from the Village of Houghton. They were former fire horses, which pulled fire wagons in the summer and sleighs in the winter.

The daughters of Hannah Romppainen, Marie Tuohimaa and Florence Suo, share: that the North Superior Road was first named the **Relief Road** as the WPA (Works Project

Administration) built the road. Growing up the Romppainens lived off the Relief Road

North Superior (Road Commission named it ST-51 H) was aligned with **Bay Shore Rd** (Government Pit or 553E) but did not come thru to meet it. The East West Road turned South just past the **Red Barn Road** (ST 61) coming out in Olson's farm south of the School. Richard Garnell shares: The N. Superior Road did not come thru as it does today. It stopped / began at the Red Barn Road by his and parent's home. The road we call N. Superior that begins at the Houghton Canal Road to the Red Barn Road was built by people on relief. (WPA). They could use no mechanical tools.. only their shovels and teams of horses. Art Kelly's mother and father and Art lived on the Relief Road and helped with construction during the depression. See Kelly document. The Works Project Administration was in operation from 1935 to 1942 under Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Robert Karinen sketched a trail.. Later to be the North Superior/Relief Road going east directly across the Houghton Canal Road though it was not there then. He says this was a crossing where the old military trail went to Fort Wilkins. Abraham Lincoln in 1864 designated the Military Road from Green Bay to Fort Wilkins. Mike Karinen shares that the Military Road was the mail route on the North Superior Road and across the now Canal Road, East over where the canal eventually was dug. This was near the Olson / now Jon Dunstan Farm. (Other resources say the military road was in Houghton area not here)

The Houghton Canal road (553) was a wagon trail at first. Before the dredging of the North Entry the road went around the lake to Hancock side. At this time the Canal Road went between Selma/Eino Lantto's property and Andrew Reikki's property then onto the now Bay Shore Road and around the end of the Canal water. The location of the road changed westward after the canal was dredged in late 1800's.

Bucky Ovist's deed says they got an easement in 1916 and I think that connected the old canal road to the present day canal road.

Look at Plat Maps section.

The original Osma Plat road (Kelly's road) was a driveway, a two track, which began at the present day Bucky Ovist driveway. Kelly's road came down thru the field on high ground, back to Lantto's transformer behind now Fulayer's present home. The transformer was south of the road and the Lantto dairy barn was on the North side of road. The road went thru the Andrew Reikki property after the Selma/Eino Lantto property and in now Frair's grove of trees next to open pasture. It continued south of now road to the Andrew Krapu farm (Frairs now) by going down the now Nelson driveway. It turned to the left and went past cottages to Kelly and Kalliainen property in 1944. One can see the remains of the first road between Bettinson/Traub and Koski properties. The road moved back (1956?) towards the swamp/West's property to have more room behind cottages.

A 1938 drawing from the Houghton Co. Road Commission says of our now Osma Plat. It is named Road ST-653 D. Described as: Southeast off of 653 (Canal Road) from the Northeast quarter of Section 5. T55 R34.

This drawing states: at 0.00 leave Co. Rd 653. 0.04 farmhouse on left (Ovists now) and enter farm (of Selma/Eino Lantto). 0.24 Farm house on right (Selma Lantto), Barn on left (dairy barn). 0.49 curve left. 0.61 curve right. 0.69 curve left. 0.73 road right to farmhouse and cottage (now Nelson's driveway to Juntunen?). 0.80 turn left. 0.82 trail right. 0.88 cottage

right. 0.89 road right to cottage. 0.89 Road right to cottage.
0.99 road right to cottage. 1.00 turn right. 1.03 farm house on right (Kelly?). End of Road

Red Brick Road: (553C) Old timers said Indians had an encampment on the point where Deric Garnell lives now at end of Red Brick Road. Garnells found arrowheads and fire pits. Barb recalls Deric's dad, Henry, showing her a framed display of arrowheads found on his farm.

Robert Karinen sketched 2 clay pits alongside (North side) the Red Brick Road. They used the clay to make bricks for the Charcoal kilns. Paul Frair tells of 2 pits on his property but they are filled in.

Bob Olson says they used to call this road "Brick Yard Road". See document under Oskar area Businesses on the North Canal Brick Factory.

Bay Shore Road: Was called Government Pit Road, as there is a gravel pit on the road. The old Houghton Canal Road went thru the Waara /Lampainen property around the canal before dredging to the Hancock Canal.

Winter Road. Richard Garnell shares: There was a winter road across the ice from the Houghton Canal to the Hancock Beach area. Horse and sleighs would cross there. One time he recalls his dad Alex Garnell telling him to get off sleigh and walk beside the horses. If it appeared the ice would not hold the horses, he was supposed to pull the pin to separate them from sleigh. They never did go thru the ice luckily.

Mel Anderson tells of their neighbor the Webers using the road to go to church and the horse and buggy went thru the ice. Mr. died and she survived.

Road to N. Superior Road from Oskar. This trail went up behind Ruohonens, Yotti, Garnell, and Johnson to N. Superior. This might have been a railroad grade of Oscar Eliassen's at one time. See map in Chapter of Oskar.

Heinola Road from Oskar. This road went up from near today's Kevin Ruohonens to Heinola. This might have been a railroad grade of Oscar Eliassen's at one time. See map in Chapter of Oskar.

Michigan Highway History

Before it was a state highway, many parts of the original route of M-26 were used as a military road, connecting Fort Wilkins at Copper Harbor with Fort Howard at Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Menominee County: The **Military Road** started out as a "tote" road for lumberjacks carrying supplies from Shawano north to the camps. In the early days of the Civil War, the North had no way of transporting troops from Fort Howard at Green Bay to Fort Wilkins in Keweenaw County, Michigan. On March 3, 1863 Congress passed an act approving the roads construction. The construction was paid for with land grants, three sections for each mile of completed road.

This road opened up the northern pineries for the early lumbermen and the economy of Shawano.

From 1919 until 1934, M-26 was routed southward to the Wisconsin state line to a connection with along what is now US 45.

The original northern terminus of M-26 was in Laurium Michigan at M-15 Michigan highway (now US 41). It was extended in September 1926 along US 41 to Mohawk Michigan and then replacing M-83 Michigan highway to Gay Michigan. This extension would be reversed in July 1933 when the Mohawk to Gay routing is turned over to Keweenaw County control. A second extension in 1935 along US 41 to Phoenix replaced M-129 Michigan highway between Phoenix and Eagle Harbor. At this time, M-206 Michigan highway was designated from M-26 to the Eagle Harbor light house. A rerouting of M-26 in November 1940 moved it between Phoenix and Eagle River, replacing M-111 Michigan highway. The segment between Phoenix and Eagle River along Copper Falls Mine Road was turned over to Keweenaw County at this time.

In 1979, M-26 was rerouted through Dakota Heights Michigan", bisecting it. Park Avenue had formerly served as the main route from Houghton to Atlantic Mine Michigan, but this was replaced by the new route of the highway.

In September of 2006, the Michigan Department of Transportation opened a bypass around the southwest and southern edge of South Range Michigan" in order to provide a safer route through the town. As of 2006 October 4, MDOT has transferred jurisdiction of the necessary pieces of roadway to complete the M-26 bypass of South Range.

After 1938, the **M-111** designation was given to an old M-6 Michigan highway" routing in the Keweenaw Peninsula that ran between Eagle River Michigan" and Phoenix Michigan along what is, now, modern-day M-26 parallel to Eagle River. That incarnation lasted two years until M-111 was deleted and M-26 was realigned over it. The M-111 designation has not been used since being deleted in 1940.

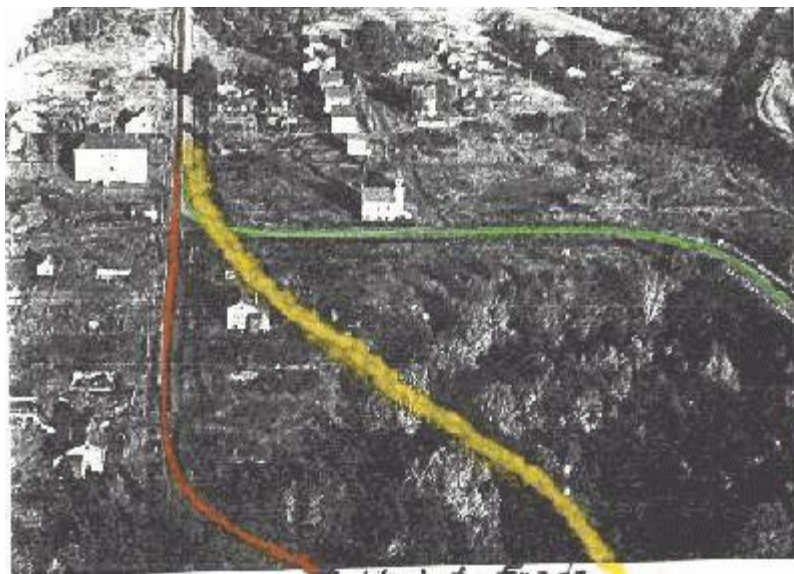
M-206 was a state highway that served as a spur route from M-26 into Eagle Harbor and the/Eagle Harbor Lighthouse in Keweenaw County in 1935.



North Stanton Township road map.



Winter Roads over the canal were common for horse and buggy.. today snowmobiles make roads. One winter road was near Gedvillas Road to the Hancock Park.



Roads over the Salmon Trout in Redridge over the years. Red is first road. Green is 2nd road, yellow is present road location.



Houghton County Rotary in action on M-26

Daily Mining Gazette, week of Feb. 6-12, 1938

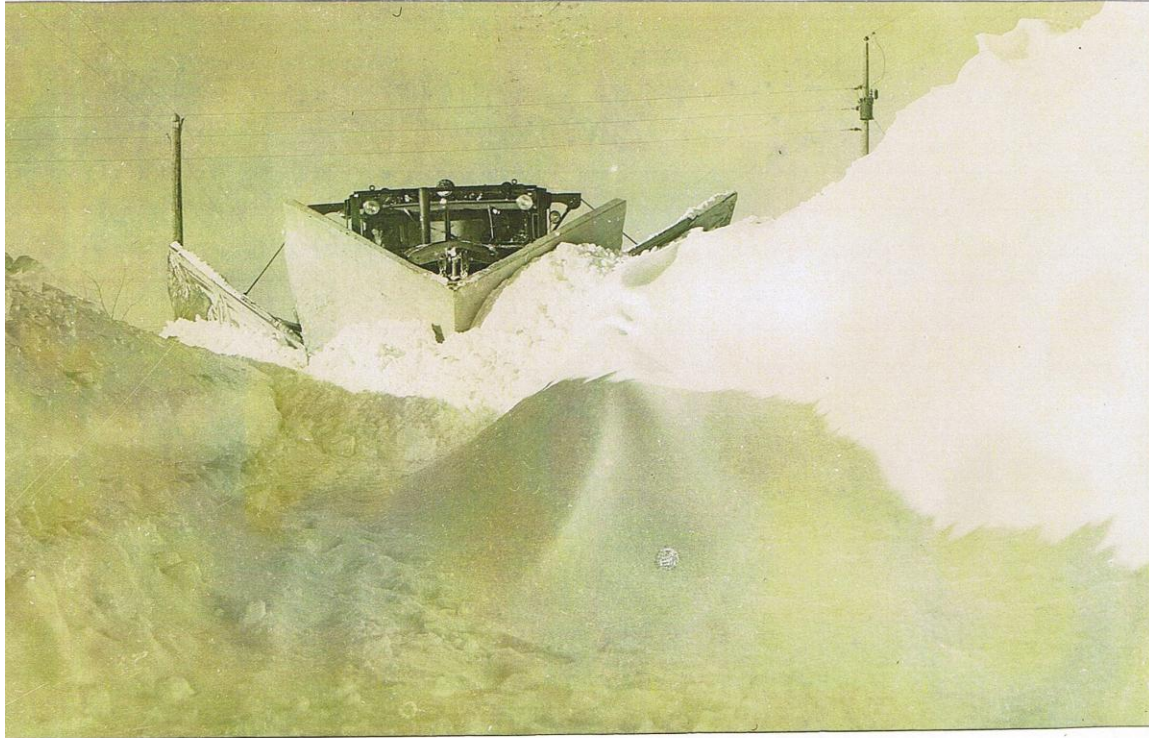
Thursday, February 11, 1988



The latest in snow removal

Necessity is the germ of invention and, so after years of using a roller horse-drawn barrel filled with sand, the road commission of Houghton County and Stanton Township decided to try a mechanized snow-blower. It was the year 1921 and Ernie Schmidt of Oskar was called upon to man the new machine. It did yeoman's service, he remembers,

and was effective in removing the snow from highway but it broke down often, he recalls, because it was real experimental at the time. Later, more advanced designs were created, until today we have modern mechanisms for snow removal. Karl Winkler was the county road engineer at the time. (Photo from Bill Brinkman files)



This huge plow referred to as the "Butterfly" is the largest of the 20 big plows that the Houghton County Road Commission operates. This one is shown barreling down the Heinola Road wide open bucking drifts up to 20 feet high.

In fact this drift almost reached the transformer on one of the Power Line poles. I was permitted a s Newspaper photographer to accompany the plow driver and his assistant who operates the four wings. The driver in this plow was Ken Kuru, considered the very best in the business. Stamped 2-20-1971 though might not be the date of the picture.



This is the rear view of the big "butterfly" and shows the huge drifts that it must buck to get through. You will notice some farmer's bush buggy stranded along the side but that will not prevent the big plow from bypassing it.

In fact one day, as the plow was barreling along one of the deep drifts it picked up a Volkswagon that was completely covered by snow and unseen by the plow driver. The car flipped up over the embankment. The plow stopped and the driver and his assistant got out, righted the Volkswagon that was on top of the bank. The owner shoved it down over the bank onto the road, and then the driver and assistant got in and drove off with no damage or harm to the Volkswagon. Stamped with date 3-12-1971 not sure if that is the date of the picture though.

Researched by Barb Koski Osma Plat Road Houghton MI 49931 in 2009.
Submitted 2011. Contact Webmaster with other stories.