

Historical Marker - S688C - State Highway Department / Horatio Earle (Marker ID#:S688C)



Front - Title/Description

State Highway Department

Created in 1905, the State Highway Department, the precursor to the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), revolutionized U.S. highway travel. Working with the Wayne County Road Commission, the agency paved the nation's first mile of concrete rural highway on Woodward Avenue in Detroit in 1909. It responded to growing automobile tourism by opening the first state-operated information center near New Buffalo in 1935. During World War II the state's first four-lane divided expressway carried workers from the Detroit area to Ford's Willow Run bomber plant in Ypsilanti. In 1973 MDOT expanded to include all transportation programs: ports, buses, aeronautics, marine, railroads, and non-motorized transportation.

Back - Title/Description

Horatio Earle

In 1905, the year the State Highway Department was created, Michigan roads were quagmires of sand, mud, and clay that trapped horse-drawn vehicles and early automobiles alike. Bicycle clubs, such as the League of American Wheelmen, led the effort to "reform" roads nationwide. In Michigan, the first state highway commissioner, Horatio "Good Roads" Earle (1855-1935), a bicyclist himself, vowed to conquer "The Mighty Monarch Mud." A former state senator, Earle served as state highway commissioner until 1909. Known as "the Father of Good Roads", Earle helped open the state to commerce and tourism. Monuments were erected in Cass City and Mackinaw City in his honor. Although appreciative, Earle stated, "The monument I prize most is not measured by its height, but its length in miles."

Significant Date:

Industry and Invention (1875-1915)

Registry Year: 2005 **Erected Date:** 2005

Marker Location

Address: 425 West Ottawa Street

City: Lansing

State: MI **ZipCode:** 48909

County: Ingham

Township: Lansing

Lat: 42.73406100 / **Long:** -84.55820500

Web URL: