

DO YOU WANT GOOD ROADS?

Baltimore, Md., June 13, 1923.
Editor of Kent News.
Sir:
A law was passed at the last session of the Legislature of Maryland

authorizing Kent County to borrow the sum of \$100,000 to be used and expended for the purpose of constructing and permanently improving the public roads and highways of Kent County and for no other purpose. The bonds to secure this loan can not be issued, however, unless a majority of the citizens of the County voting upon this question at the election to be held on the Tuesday after the first Monday of November, 1922, shall cast their ballots in favor of the

loan and for the bond issue. I have had conferences upon this subject with Mr. John N. Mackall, Chairman of the Good Roads Commission of Maryland, with Mr. Gault Applegarth, Kent County Engineer, and with many citizens of the county. After these conferences and an examination of the Act of Assembly above referred to, as well as the road laws of Kent County, it seems clear that the sum above mentioned should be borrowed by Kent County for the purpose of improving its road system. My own knowledge of the county roads, based upon extensive experience as the owner of land in Turner's Creek Lane in the Second District of Kent County has also assisted me in coming to the conclusion above stated.

The present physical condition of the State roads and the county roads in Kent County has been well described in a communication to the Baltimore Sun from Chestertown, under date of January 14, 1922, and in a clear and interesting article appearing in the Baltimore Sun under date of April 3, 1922. The State roads are said to be equal to any in the country. They are in excellent condition and it is through this great system of State roads extending throughout Maryland that our State has become known throughout the land as it never could have been otherwise. The condition of the county roads in the various counties of the State is far from that of the State roads. We have in Kent County four hundred and ten miles of county roads. To keep these four hundred and ten miles scraped as well as possible, so as to fit them for travel and traffic during a greater part of the year there is only available the annual sum of \$26,616.76. This is totally inadequate to the pressing needs of many communities in the county containing thrifty villages and fertile land. These outlying districts, or "necks" as they are called, are for some months of the year almost wholly isolated. In the bad months farmers in these regions cannot get their products to market; children are kept from school; physicians cannot visit their patients; and all phases of the social life of such communities are partly or wholly interrupted. The facts stated in these communities to the "Sun" are known to us all.

The plan of the County Engineer, which has been often stated publicly, is to construct a system of gravel roads sufficient for the travel in these outlying portions of the county which, in his opinion, and in the opinion of others competent to judge, will be sufficient for the travel and traffic in these neighborhoods. It has been estimated by the County Engineer that through the proper expenditure of the sum of \$100,000 which it is contemplated to borrow, together with the annual sum of \$12,134.14 which it is said can be spared from the annual

county appropriations for roads and bridges, that such communities as Golts, Chesterville and Sassafras in the First District; Blacks, Turner's Creek, Morgue and Lynch in the Second; Worton, Melitola and Newtown in the Third; East Neck Island, Crosby and Skinner's Neck section in the Fifth; Langford in the Sixth; and Pomona in the Seventh; would be connected up with the main highway system to the State. In the Fourth District nearly all the communities would thus be connected up. The statement has been made many times without contradiction at the public meetings held in Kent County on this subject that such roads would be of a reasonably permanent nature.

It is impossible to calculate in money the advantages and benefits which would accrue to the entire county if these communities could be linked with the State roads in the manner suggested. The advantages are so apparent to all practical men in the county that an enthusiastic meeting was held in Chestertown on January 14, 1922, at which meeting what has been called the "Kent County plan" was unanimously ratified. An organization was then formed which should be kept alive as the nucleus of a campaign of education in favor of the proposition to bond the county for \$100,000. An executive committee to put through the plan embodied in the resolutions passed at this meeting was appointed. The membership of the executive committee includes the following persons: Thomas Massey, First district; John H. Clendaniel, Second; B. F. Rash, Third; Wm. S. Collins, Fourth; James Stevens, Fifth; J. Page Gale, Sixth; Wm. C. Brown, Seventh. Mr. Charles L. Doid, of Chestertown, was made secretary and Mr. P. A. M. Brooks was the chairman of the public meeting.

The outstanding fact which dominates the present road situation in Kent County is the increase in the use of automobiles by farmers. The dirt roads are things of the past for men who use these vehicles, which will churn up and destroy an old fashioned road and simply make it a series of ditches for mud and water in the winter season. All farmers, all merchants, indeed, all citizens of Kent County, know these facts to be true. The question now is whether they want to go back to the old situation of isolation, or whether they wish to become parts of an active, living, modern community. If the latter is desired, it can only be accomplished by constructing permanent roads. Experts on the subject of roads consider that well constructed gravel roads in localities like the "necks" of Kent County are for such localities permanent in their nature as the stone roads are said to be permanent for the State highways. No material constructed by man is absolutely permanent. Permanency is only a relative term. The citizens of the county

are eager to co-operate with such a movement, as has been shown in many ways, notably by the building of two miles of good road near Berterton by the colored preacher and his congregation.

The articles already written in the "Sun" have stated in great detail the urgent need for connecting all parts of the county with the main system of the State. The County Engineer has also shown many doubts as to whether the necessary money or want to have many of their most beautiful and productive sections remain fastnesses of mud, shut off from the rest of the world for a considerable part of the year.

I have been for many years an advocate of good roads in Maryland, but I have never so forcibly brought home to me as during a visit to my home place in the Second District last February. I then secured the cart to the extent of \$50 during a short run through Turner's Creek Lane, near Still Pond Cross roads.

I have visited many sections of the county a number of times in the last month or so. Everybody wants roads, but there seems to be on the part of a few people some doubts as to the wisdom of getting them. For the benefit of such people I should like to explain the provisions of the Enabling Act as well as the provisions of the Road Law of Kent County.

The Enabling Act of the last Legislature authorizing this loan was carefully drawn, with all the safeguards surrounding such loans. It provides among other things for the payment of the entire proceeds of the sale of the bonds, after the cost of printing and other outlays connected with their issue, to the County Commissioners who shall deposit the same in such bank or banks as the Commissioners may designate. It is further provided that the money derived from the sale of the bonds "shall be expended only for the purpose of constructing and permanently improving the public roads and highways of Kent County, and for no other purpose."

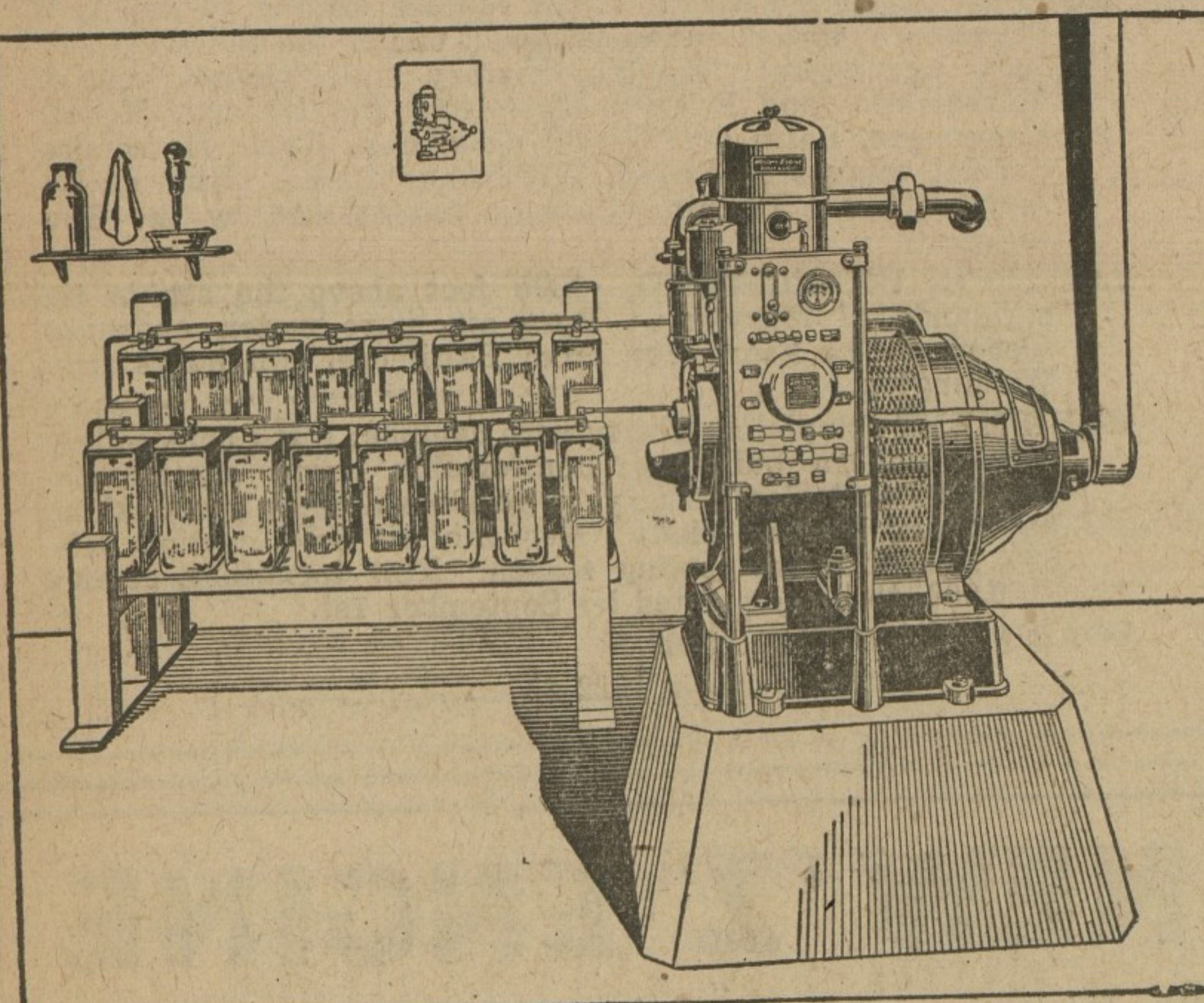
The local road law of Kent County is equally definite and clear as to the way in which roads shall be built or repaired. Such building and repairs are to be done under the direction of the County Engineer, who is appointed by the County Commissioners after proof of his competency and experience in road engineering work and repair. The Engineer shall also be approved as a competent road engineer by the State Roads Commission of Maryland and by the Chief Engineer thereof. If he may be removed from office for "incompetency, neglect of duty or misconduct in office." In addition to these safeguards, it is especially provided that the County Engineer "shall not be interested, directly or indirectly, in any firm or corporation which has any interest in or claims for the use of said roads and bridges, nor receive any commissions on such purchases."

I have especially consulted the road authorities in the state regarding Mr. Gault Applegarth, the present Road Engineer for Kent County. They still commend him as a man competent for his important work and speak highly of his personal integrity about which I have never had any doubt. In addition to these investigations I have taken the liberty of asking Mr. Applegarth what kind of work the Kent Construction Co., in which he has admittedly a stock interest, does and where such work is done. He informs me that the work of the Kent Construction Co. is done in Delaware and in other places outside of Kent County, and where neither he nor his company would attempt to break the law of Maryland by being interested in any contract for the building of roads in Kent County. It seems from the above statement so clear that the Enabling Act passed by the last Legislature of Maryland ought to be ratified and confirmed by all citizens of Kent Co. interested in the expansion of the road system of the county that I content myself with this simple statement made above. Criticism and public discussion are, however, always to be desired, and if the citizens of Kent County have views against the improvement of the roads in the manner now proposed the present is the time to state such views openly and in public, so that they may be examined as fully as the arguments of those in favor of the building of the roads through the proposed loan may be scrutinized and criticized.

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