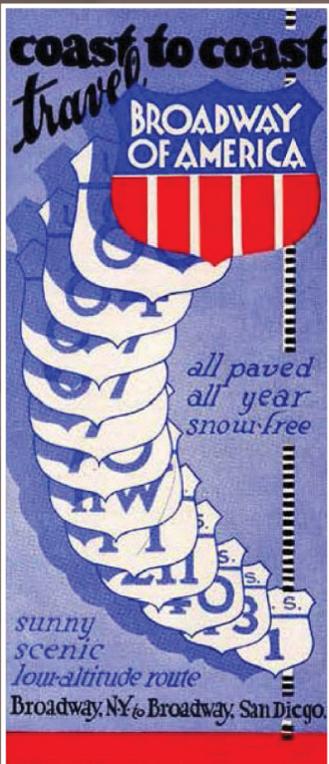


# The Bankhead Highway & Garland, Texas: 100 Years



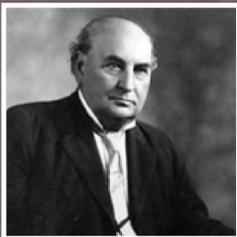
The Bankhead Highway was America's first transcontinental year-round automobile route. It connected Washington, D.C. to San Diego, California while running through 14 states and included Texas as a major part of the route.

The Bankhead Highway also wore several nicknames, such as Main Street USA and Broadway of America.

The Bankhead Highway still runs through Garland on what is present day Main Street and Garland Avenue. Street signs marking it as "Bankhead Avenue" remained in place as late as the 1950s.

2016 celebrates the 100th anniversary of the historic Bankhead Highway and its impact on the people and businesses of Garland.

The Bankhead Highway was named for Alabama Senator John Hollis Bankhead, who served from 1907-1920 and championed the Good Roads movement. The senator was Grandfather to celebrated actress Tallulah Bankhead.



Senator John Bankhead



Tallulah Bankhead

While Senator Bankhead was the highway's namesake, his friend Asa Rountree was the promoter who led the Bankhead Highway Association and was critical to its completion. He also published the *Good Roads Advocate* and organized the Bankhead Highway Association in 1916.



Asa Rountree

The Bankhead Highway was not built from scratch. Members of the Bankhead Highway Association selected existing roadways over which the route extended. Competing cities received one vote for each 10 members, so that their highway chances

improved according to memberships sold. Recognizing the economic possibilities, as well as improved access between Garland and Dallas, Garland supporters subscribed sufficient memberships to receive 13 votes

During the early years, finding good and reliable roads was a challenge and Rountree worked with "Path Finders" to identify the best roadways for the route. Below, Rountree welcomes one such "Pathfinder" in Dallas and used the opportunity to promote the highway. In April of 1919, The Dallas Morning News reported that the Bankhead Highway Pathfinders group had traveled 3,500 miles, recommending the Texas route pass through Garland, based in part on the "ability and willingness of people to build and maintain the road, together with such aid as they may be able to obtain from the State and Federal Government." County taxpayers eventually provided more than 70% of construction funding for the section serving Garland.



Source: Birmingham Public Library

After several years of debate, the Federal Government improved its highway numbering procedure to provide more uniform designations. Implemented in 1926, the new plan established a hierarchy among the nation's highways and prompted the designation of the Bankhead Highway as part of the federal system. This new system introduced the familiar highway marking shield and began to replace the old pole markers.



# Before Highways

The condition of many roads was deplorable. "They were often little more than trails that were muddy in the rain and dusty the rest of the time. Any long trip by automobile required not only time, patience and ingenuity, but tire-patching equipment, tools, spare parts, and emergency food and fuel" explained Richard F. Weingroff.

Rarely surfaced in any way, roads were barely passable in wet weather, even by horse and buggy. Roads were cleared in short sections, so an hour's drive to a nearby town today may have taken a full day back then. In the 1890s, an organization called Good Roads Enthusiasts began lobbying for better roads – at first in response to a growing craze for bicycles! Soon, automobiles became more affordable and numerous. More citizens began to realize that although building and maintaining better roads were expensive, the economic cost of coping with poor roads was even more costly.



Source: Texas Transportation Museum



Source: Portal to Texas History



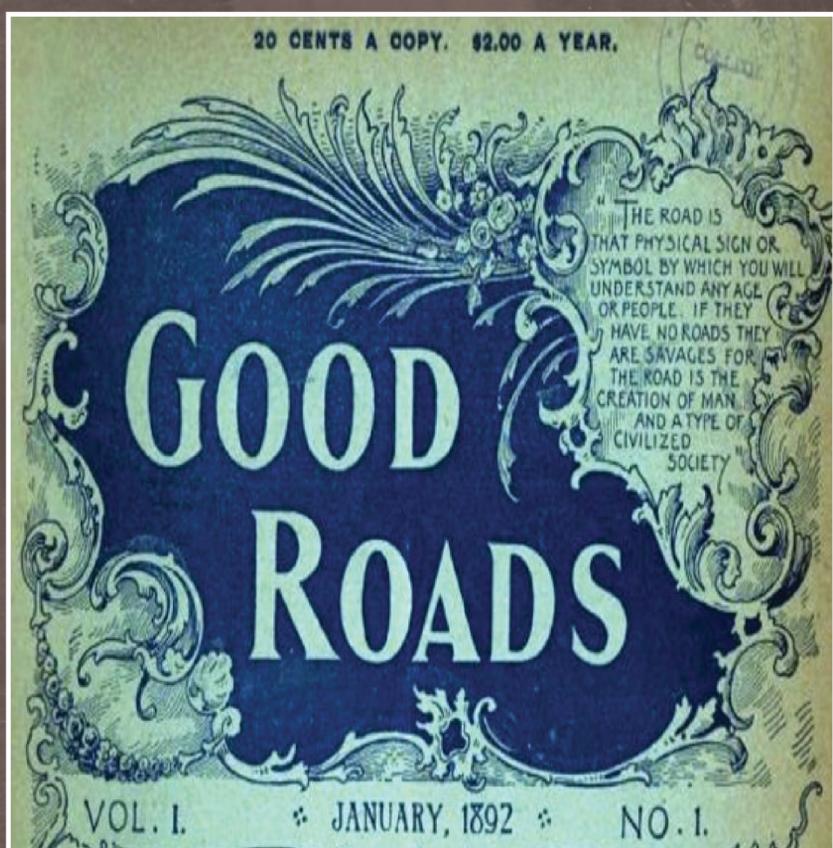
A Franklin touring car with air-cooled engine was the motoring choice of John T. Jones, pictured here with family members ca. 1912. At that time Dallas County boasted 1200 total miles of road, only 400 of which were graded and paved in any way.

Source: Garland Landmark Society



The Garland Downtown Square, shown pre-Bankhead Highway in 1910, has watering troughs for horses in the middle of the square and no paved roads.

Source: Garland Landmark Society



Cover of the first issue of Good Roads magazine from 1892.

Source: Google Books

In the early years of automotive development, highway associations formed to promote travel across the country. They campaigned for highways that extended over vast distances, although traveling just 30 miles presented challenges. During this period road building was completed at local and state expense with no federal involvement. Highway associations promoted improved highways through coordinated funding and planning at all levels.

# Bankhead in the News

1919

**April 11, 1919**

The Garland News reported that Garland Road, including the south side of the square, currently graveled, would be asphalted by Dallas County in an effort at dust abatement.

**April 25, 1919**

The Garland News claims that Garland has 130 memberships in Bankhead Highway Association, entitling it to 13 votes in Mineral Wells Convention.

**May 24, 1919**

On this election day, county voters supported Prohibition and \$6,500,000 county road bonds, including those for stretches of the Bankhead Highway. The bond proposal was promoted with a map showing Jupiter/Miller dog-leg connected at each end to Garland Road.

**November 28, 1919**

Dallas County Commissioners Court adopts old route for Garland Road, also known as Bankhead Highway.

**December 5, 1919**

Garland's Bankhead Highway Association delegation thanks Dallas County Commissioners Court for recent action in retaining the old routing of the Garland Road (referring to the Jupiter/Miller dog-leg) and also its promise to build the highway through the main square of Garland.



1921

**March 21, 1921**

The District Engineer is instructed to apply to State Highway Commission for \$100,000 in additional state aid for construction of Garland Road, designated as State Highway No. 1.

**April 8, 1921**

Dallas County advertises bids for 18.2 miles of the Garland Road. The budget is \$881,000, "which is a part of the Bankhead Highway across this continent." County Judge estimates outlay for right of way at \$60,000, since "the route chosen by the former court departs from the old road for a large part of the way (The Miller/Jupiter dog-leg replaced by short cut paralleling the Santa Fe line, which can be seen in the Garland Route Map). Road and construction plans endorsed by the county road convention in 1919 called for a concrete road, but commissioners doubt available money will be sufficient.

**April 30, 1921**

Due to excessive prices asked for right of way between Reinhardt and Garland, Dallas County Commissioners report considering a slight change in right of way between those points. Some property owners have demanded as much as \$650 per acre, which is more than the court thinks the county can afford.

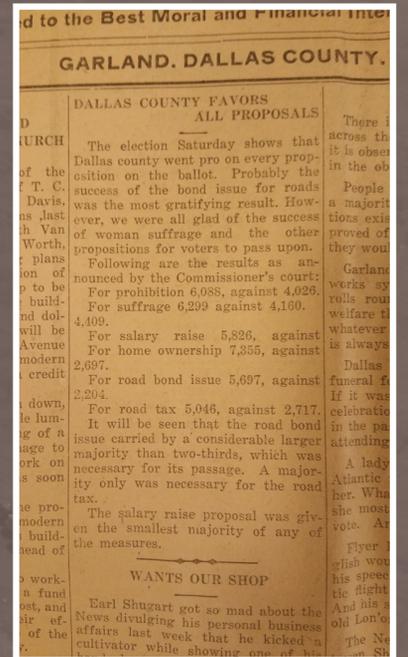
**October 9, 1921**

Garland Road is announced to be the highest priced road ever built in Texas and will be part of the Bankhead Highway system.

1918

**March 28, 1918**

The Garland News reports the County primary convention will be held April 5th to elect delegates for a county convention in Dallas on April 12, 1918. The convention will consider calling an election for voting road bonds. Jasper Rupard is the



1920

**January 5, 1920**

Dallas County Commissioners Court budgets \$17,600 for maintaining State Highway No. 1, Garland Road.

**April 16, 1920**

A. R. Davis and W. C. Kingsley to Hot Springs to join a group protesting proposed relocation of BH route to Oklahoma.

**April 19, 1920**

Dallas County Commissioners Court accepts \$107,876 for additional aid from State Highway Department to be applied to Garland Road with the understanding that sufficient funds will be provided by the county for prompt construction of the road.

**April 23, 1920**

A. R. Davis and W. C. Kingsley return with report that the Bankhead route was saved for Texas, partly in exchange for an Oklahoma branch that will run through the Panhandle and New Mexico to a junction with the main Bankhead line.



A. R. Davis



W. C. Kingsley

1922

**October 29, 1922**

Garland Road, 19 miles long and the highest priced road in county system at \$894,000, is expected to be completed in December of 1922.

