

Bureau of Public Roads

Memorandum to Mr. Rose From

Mr. Mills

Series: FHWA Highway History Website Articles

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In the late 1920's, the Bureau of Public Roads (BPR) issued a series of news releases on the major U.S. highways. The releases described the routes, including road conditions and tourist opportunities along the way. The following memorandum on U.S. 11 was prepared for the series, but the BPR did not issue a release on the route. The following is presented as in the original, including misspellings.

Bureau of Public Roads
June 29, 1927

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From Mr. Mills

The geography of United States Highway No. 11 is unique among the routes east of the Mississippi in that throughout practically its whole length it follows the Appalachian range, crossing the parallel ridges from valley to valley as topography dictates.

Beginning at Rouses Point, N. Y., where connection is made with highly improved roads to Montreal from which point tourists may in turn proceed over improved roads to Quebec and the Shrine of SainteAnne de Beaupré and Murray Bay. It runs generally west and south through New York State giving access to the resorts on the Saint Lawrence River, the Thousand Islands on one side and to the northwest and Adirondack Mountains on the other. It passes through Watertown and Pulaski to Syracuse where it is intersected by the main trunk lines through New York from Albany to Buffalo. Syracuse may also be considered a point of departure from Route No. 11 via points in the Finger Lake Region of Central New York. This city is fourth in population in New York State and is the site of the Syracuse University founded in 1870.

Leaving Syracuse the road extends southward through Cortland and the Chenango Valley to Binghamton, where connection is again made with trans-state roads from Albany to Jamestown through the southern section of the State. There is also direct connection from Binghamton to Newburg, Kingston and other points on the Hudson River.

From Binghamton the route continues up the Susquehanna Valley, leaving the river at Great Bend, Pa., and continues generally southward through Clarks Summit to Scranton. Should the tourist, however, wish to avoid congested traffic through Scranton and immediate vicinity, it is possible to leave No. 11 at Clarks Summit and turn west to Susquehanna at Osterhout and follow the river road, joining No. 11 again at Wilkes Barre. Both Scranton and Wilkes Barre are in the center of the anthracite coal mining activities of the country. Coal tipples and breakers can be seen extending for several miles in either direction, particularly down the river valley.

Leaving Wilkes Barre the route parallels the river through Bloomsburg and Northumberland, where the west branch of the Susquehanna is crossed, via Liverpool crossing to the east bank at Clarks Ferry to Harrisburg. This capital city of the State is entered over Front Street with the river parkway on the right and beautiful residences on the left. Probably the principal point of interest in Harrisburg is the State Capitol Building dedicated in October 1906. The total cost of the building, furniture and equipment is said to have been approximately \$11,000,000. One of the best views of the Capitol may be obtained when crossing the Market Street bridge to Lemoine. The distance making greater the impression of its massiveness and beauty of proportion of the the façade.

Route No. 11 leaves Harrisburg by way of the Market Street bridge and passes through Lemoine and Carlisle, the site of the former Government Indian School, which is not used as a United States Veterans Hospital, continues to

Clarksburg and crosses into Maryland at the Middleburg line. Through Pennsylvania the route passes over one of the most picturesque regions to be found in the East; the entire roadway has been constructed to the latest developments of highway engineering, and while the location frequently presented problems of great difficulty these have for the most part been overcome, so that even in extremely mountainous sections there are no deceptive curves or excessive grade.

From the Pennsylvania line through Hagerstown, Maryland, the route crosses the upper reaches of the Potomac into West Virginia at Williamsport, runs through Martinsburg to Winchester, Va.

From Winchester southward through Lexington and Roanoke it follows the wonderful Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, one of the most beautiful and interesting regions south of the Mason and Dixon line. This valley is replete with romance and history. It was one of the main avenues of transport and communication for both armies during the war between the States, and through it the early pioneers made their way southwest to Kentucky through the Cumberland Gap, and into Tennessee through Bristol. In the Valley Route No. 11 makes the wonders of the Luray Caverns and the Natural Bridge easily accessible. Within easy reach also are the resorts of White Sulphur and Hot Springs, Virginia.

From Roanoke the road continues generally southwest through Wytheville and enters Tennessee at Bristol.
