



# *A Brief History*

OF THE

# Washington State Good Roads Association

PREPARED PURSUANT TO A RESOLUTION

OF THE

1938 CONVENTION AT SEATTLE

AND

PARTICULARLY EMPHASIZING THE WORK

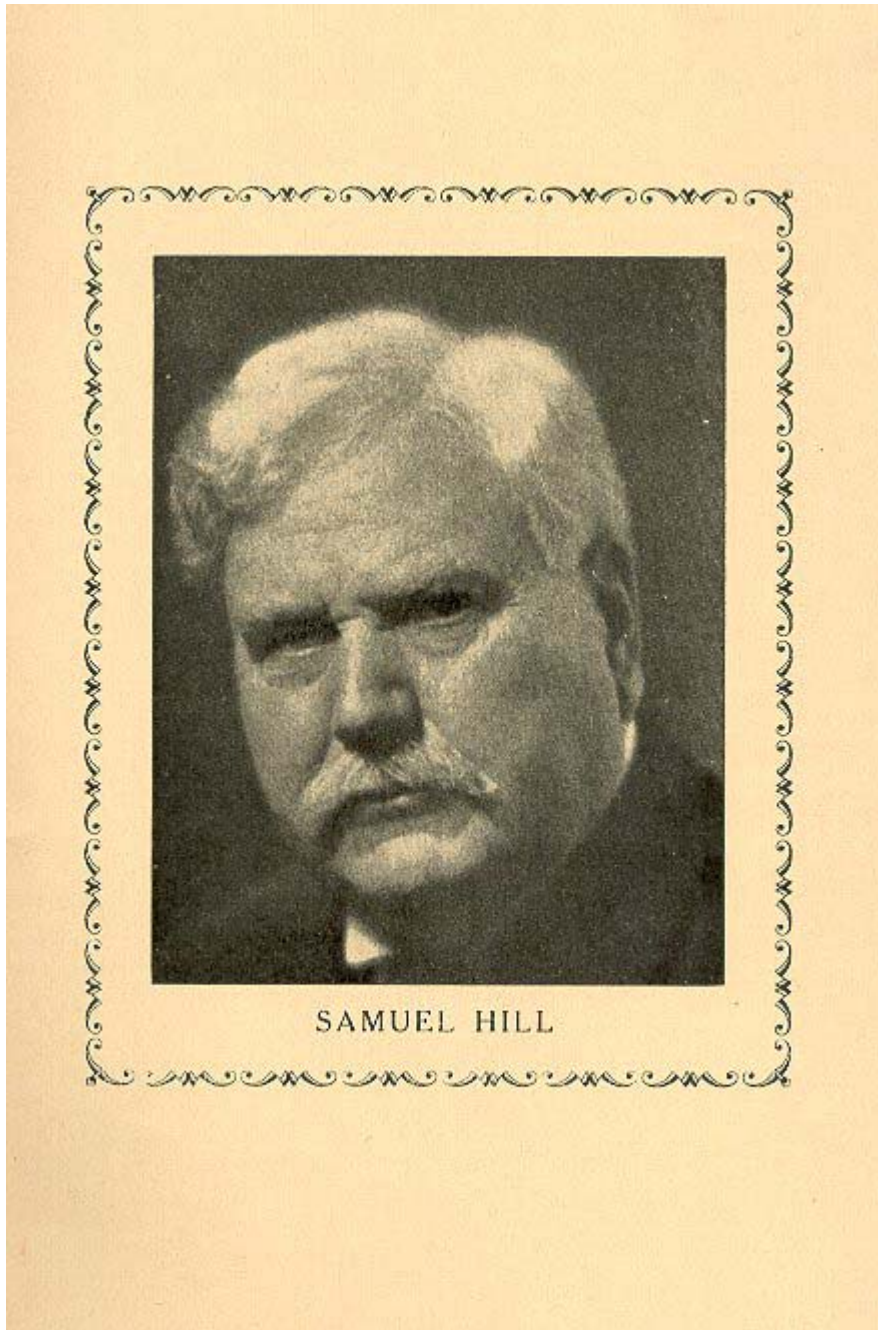
OF

# **HONORABLE SAMUEL HILL**

*The Founder*

*Published under direction of the 1939 State Convention*

*D. SHELOR Executive Vice-President*



AT THE ANNUAL CONVENTION of Washington State Good Road8 Association, held at Seattle, Washington September 29, 30 and October 1, 1938, upon the recommendation of the Past Presidents" organization, a resolution was unanimously adopted by the convention as follows:

RESOLVED: That the Past Presidents unanimously declare and state that they favor the preparation at the earliest day possible, data duly identified, securing and setting forth the life and activities of our beloved Founder, Samuel Hill, with special emphasis upon (a) His journey during the Great World War, at the direction and under the authority of the Allied Command of the European Forces, from the United States through Vladivostock, through Siberia, Finland, Norway and Sweden to the Ocean Gate Way of Oslo and then through North Scotland and London and finally to Paris, giving fully the intimate and personal report as made by Mr. Hill to Messrs. Terrace and Hartman; (b) the work done by Mr. Hill in relation to the early formation of the Association, the results thereof, the plan of action and the results following therefrom and, (c) The careful preparation by Mr. Hill during his lifetime to perpetuate the history, development and achievements of the Association, the work of the personnel and all done in relation thereto.

Pursuant to the action taken and acting under the request and direction of the committee to carry the resolution into effect, the historical statement has been prepared by John P Hartman, a co-founder of the Association.

## CHAPTER 1

SAMUEL HILL, plain Quaker and international character, to the end of his life was one of the most charming, virile and dynamic men that one may meet, intensely patriotic, a deep lover of his country and tender to and towards all humankind. He wanted to do rather than to have things done for him. Serving was his crowning passion.

The gentleman was born in 1857 in North Carolina on the farm, his father being a country doctor. At the time the urge was strong to go to the Northwest. When Samuel was scarcely two years old the family journeyed to Indiana, remaining there but a few years and then on to Minneapolis where the father continued his practice, and the boy grew into manhood. In Samuel's early childhood the father died, but not until he had made a real mark in the new home state, and then the mother carried on with the children with her son Samuel as the main dependence of the family. The Doctor was a member of the legislature where he attained distinction. In addition to his legislative work he was active in social and civic betterment work. Because of his strenuous life the good Doctor overreached his vitality, dying suddenly while performing public duty.

The promising son became, in effect, the head of the family; worked at such jobs and things as would bring in some money, went through the schools in his adopted city, and later was given his college education at one of the small schools in Minnesota. He took the first job that came along, which was agent of the St. Paul & Pacific Railway, not far west of Minneapolis, which railway had shortly before been taken over by Mr. James J. Hill, and afterwards the name was changed to St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba, and later to Great Northern, now known to the whole world.

Mr. James J. Hill, in making an inspection trip over his lines, stopped at this station and found that it was unusually well-cared for, everything in order, the station agent accommodating and kindly, and could properly answer every question put to him, and seemed to be on his toes, so to speak. The Empire Builder lingered and finally asked the young man if he expected to remain as a station agent, when he said no, that if opportunity offered, he wanted to go into life and become a lawyer. There the conversation ended.

A little later, Samuel was called into St. Paul by the president, thinking, of course, that he was "on the carpet," but was then told that if he wanted to pursue his law studies, his employer would help him if he would go to Harvard, but that the young man must continue until thoroughly prepared for the profession. So later to Harvard Mr. Hill went, took his course, went on to Germany and studied vigorously in the University at Munich, acquitting himself with honor as usual.

When registering, he was assigned to student quarters which consisted of two small bedrooms and a between-room for study, and was told that when the servant took him there he would find his roommate for the period. And on arriving, the roommate introduced himself by indicating a French name, but that did not impress Mr. Hill at the time. When the November holidays arrived Mr. Hill was invited to go home and spend the period with his roommate; and then found on arriving at Brussels that they went directly to the palace of King Leopold, and discovered that his roommate was the heir-apparent to the Belgian throne, known later as the loved and able Albert, of whom the world all now know, and who became the intimate friend, to the dying day, of our illustrious road builder, in whose honor the King and Queen Elizabeth often entertained Mr. Hill as an intimate member of the family.

Returning to Minneapolis after his completed school work, Mr. Hill opened his law office, built up a profitable practice, took his part in political affairs and became finally chairman of the Republican State Central Committee. While Mr. Hill could have easily been elected to public office he declined all political honors.

Mr. Hill knew well the Empire Builder's family, and later married the elder daughter, Mary, and finally was induced to give up his practice and enter the employ of the Great Northern System, becoming president of the line from St. Paul to Duluth, and its Montana Central from Havre to Butte, in addition to handling much executive business of the entire System.

Mr. Hill felt that he should do something directly for the betterment of humankind, which could not be carried on while in the employ of another. He knew well that his country had the best system of railways in all the world, where his services there would only be to duplicate 'the work that others could do as well. He knew the hardship of the farm families who found it difficult, except when the roads were dry, to transport their product to the market or take home that from the city which they had to have, because the roads of America were nothing more than mud streaks or dusty ways. He concluded to devote himself to the highway cause, and after considering the whole United States, believed that he could accomplish more by going to the new State of Washington, to which he removed in 1898, closing all his employment, burning all the bridges behind, and intending to make that his headquarters and home for the rest of his days, in carrying out his new avocation, which finally became his vocation.

On arriving at Seattle, Mr. Hill, in season and out of season, preached good roads to everyone he met who would listen, with very little response, and particularly the farm people were suspicious, because they would not believe that any man had come here to aid the farmers, but only wanted to pull off something for the benefit of his former employers, or possibly secure an election to the governor's chair or achieve the United States senatorship.

In the latter days of the last Century, he decided to try and organize in Washington a State body to promote good roads building; and found about one hundred men who said they would join him in a State convention at Spokane on September 14th, 1899. He was much encouraged and was sure of a good and well attended meeting. On arriving, however, and opening the meeting, fourteen men only showed up at an old abandoned church, used for a public hall, south of the Northern Pacific Railway tracks. Undaunted, however, and with courage and full of faith, energy and hope, the gathering organized, electing Mr. Hill president. The gentlemen composing the first Washington State Good Roads Association meeting were:

\*Samuel Hill – Seattle  
John P. Hartman – Seattle  
R. H. Thomson – Seattle  
\*Claude Ramsey – Seattle  
\*R. L. Cline – Bellingham  
\*W. W. Perrigo – Redmond  
Lee Monohan – Renton

Frank Terrace – Orillia  
\*Judge C. H. Hanford – Seattle  
\*J J Donovan – Bellingham  
W. A. Bolinger – Methow  
\*A. L. Rogers – Waterville  
\*Eli Rockey - South Bend  
\*W. H. Parry - Richmond Beach

*\*Deceased*

Each of these men were thoroughly imbued with the principles involved, the purposes enunciated, and joined their leader enthusiastically, and although at times much discouraged, continued hard at the work. Not one thereof ever lagged.

The conventions for the succeeding eight years had a fair attendance, but the delegates were looked upon with suspicion by bankers, merchants and farmers, with many calling them unbalanced hobby-riders, saying we didn't need better roads than we had and if we did the people could not pay for them.

It became quite clear that the organization men favored a state highway system, to be built, maintained and managed by state officers rather than the unrelated and uncoordinated work theretofore carried on by the County Commissioners of the thirty-nine counties, and as was then done in all the states of the Union. Thus was encountered much back-hauling among local county office holders. There was not one state highway centralized power in all of our states, or elsewhere in the world. These roads were built by the local political power, with no plan, system or purpose beyond the convenience of the municipality known as counties. Thus there was no harmony of action so that the things done were of little or lasting value.

The Association had announced through the press that the principle (Centralized State Control), would be the chief theme for discussion and determination at the coming State convention. The County Commissioners felt that such course would interfere with their long exercised prerogatives and determined to vigorously oppose the leaders of the Association. To sustain the Commissioners' conclusions, they were lead by a dominating member from King County, who was determined that the convention should not declare in favor of a State commission or similar plan of action for building the principal roads, but should and must leave all projects and building to the County Commissioners solely. Thus, the issue was clearly and definitely defined.

This announced principle (state control) for active work having been clearly announced and understood, the county commissioners of the State took issue and were led by a dominating leader from King County, who determined that the convention would not declare in favor of a State-wide commission and plan of operation, but should and must leave the building to the County Commissioners solely.

The issue was sharply defined, which induced some three hundred delegates to journey to Walla Walla for the October meeting of 1910, with two-thirds from the Puget Sound area. The charter members, then known affectionately as the "old guard," were on deck, thoroughly organized and knew that a majority of the convention would stay with them and the plan be made a permanent policy of the organization. However, the dominating leader was resourceful. Anyone could become a voting member who was a citizen of the State and paid a dollar for the year's membership. With two Walla Walla county commissioners, he drove out in their flivvers into the country and secured forty-four members from among the farmers, who were against all new road building, brought them in as delegates in the afternoon when the fight commenced. The trick was known, but the men had a right to vote. Knowing that there would be a hard fight with many parliamentary questions to solve, the State president, Mr. John C. Lawrence, called John P. Hartman to the chair, who was somewhat of a veteran as a presiding officer, and while fair would be firm all around. The discussion opened promptly at 1:30 and was a give and take for five hours, when finally the roll was called, whereby the principle involved in the resolution was voted down by a majority of twelve. But the "old guard" might be wounded but never surrender, and carried the fight to the next State convention at Wenatchee in 1911.

In the meantime a large amount of work had been done on this subject among the people and all clearly shown to the taxpayers how the twelve majority was obtained and who was responsible therefor. The resolution came up again at the Wenatchee convention in the form exactly as proposed at Walla Walla, and was adopted by a five to one vote, which ended the struggle, and thereafter the centralized state policy has governed, and that principle has gone to every state in the Union. This convention was regarded as a principle-making event that saved the cause and saved the road causes probably throughout the Union.

Since that period, no one has thought otherwise than building as we are now going.

However, the legislature had to be reasoned with. The 1911 Session was adverse to any appropriation out of State moneys. In fact in a rather nasty way the Senate indefinitely postponed a bill introduced by a friend of the cause, reflecting upon those who were most instrumental in carrying on the work.

The 1913 Session saw the handwriting on the wall, found then the farmers were better organized and demanding roads, and for the first time of any state in the Union, the legislature appropriated two million dollars for the coming biennium, provided for the organization of a department, although there was much adverse, and severe newspaper criticism, one paper severely arraigning the "old guard," stating that if they were let alone they would bankrupt the State. It is now easier to get an appropriation of twenty-five million dollars for the biennium than it was to get the first two million. The ups and downs, however, have been many, but finally the organization saw it to its interests to keep in close touch with the legislature and go there publicly, to lobby before the committee and see the membership, and in that, the work would not have been so well done except that our permanent recording secretary and Executive Vice-President, Douglas Shelor, in his regular work, would be in Olympia each session, and always kept in close touch with the legislation and called the executive committee or others to his assistance when it was necessary to go to Olympia.

It has been a pleasure to all the organization members to find that our State specifications as to gradient, alignment and permanent wearing surface has been adopted by most of the states of the Union, because we were and are always in the vanguard.

The first reinforced Portland Cement concrete surfaced highway was laid for a distance of two miles in Wayne County, Michigan, just outside of the City of Detroit, in 1911. The second, however, was built from Toledo north four miles in 1912 by Lewis County, and would not have been done probably but because of the efficient work of N. B. Coffman, a president one time of the Association, who insisted upon a good job. While that road was monolithic in structure, a portion thereof is still driven over daily by those who go from Seattle to Portland, and is in good condition, although very few of those using the highway know that it is the second structure of its kind in the world.

When it was determined first by Washington that State money should not be placed upon any highway where the gradient was beyond five per cent, county commissioners and many engineers said that we will have no highway, for we cannot cross our mountains at so low a gradient. But every road over our mountains falls within the requirement, and then sharp curvature is prevented, except at rare places, and that specification has been complied with throughout the State. Because Washington took the position early, other states in the mountain areas from the Atlantic to the Pacific have followed suit, so that no place in the world are the grades so easy upon our public highways as in our country, being led by Washington. It was our position on the gradient question that led the United States Congress to provide that none of its money should be used on any road where the grade exceeded five per cent. It is estimated by careful students that by following the principle, we have been able to double the load upon all highway movement over what it would have been had the old and slipshod way been adopted. So that millions upon millions have been saved to the people of America by adhering to a stubborn principle announced by the "old guard" who determined on a course and then stood by the principle as the only sure foundation.

Most of the states organized good roads associations after Washington, but each provided for a good salary, at least for the secretary, with a considerable income, and because where honey is, the flies will gather, all had lots of trouble, and none lasted more than eight years, until they dissolved "like the morning dew before the sun."

It was one of the announced principles of the early organizers, and followed to this day, that no salary should be paid to any officer of the organization under any circumstances, and only a modest amount towards expenses. The annual dues of members are but one dollar, and as the attendance is substantially one thousand now, it does not pay much more than the costs of a convention hall and having the proceedings reported, printed and circulated for the benefit of the membership. Because thereof, those who come are there solely from the fact that they are interested in the undertaking and want to promote good roads. But the Washington Good Roads Association has

become the most dynamic and forceful organization ever functioning in this State. Office holders who want to do something under cover, fear them. Those who want to do the right, court them. And ever is the membership ready to punish the one and reward the other according to what is right.

The chief aim of the Association has been at all times to inculcate intelligent and supervised economy in road building. The plan prevailed and has been the dominating contributing cause for the real success of the Association.

But; it was deemed wise to blend the beautiful with the practical, when considering the scenic possibilities of the State of Washington. To accomplish this aim an educational plan, which would appeal to the eye and fire the imagination under the inspiration and direction of Mr. Hill, was laid on a sure foundation. By this method, pictures, we usually do more than by any other plan in reaching the individual citizen, and, by the use of lantern slides, insure mass movement. In reaching the public, Mr. Hill, was a past master and thus thoroughly prepared, spending more than a million dollars; to acquaint the world with the beauties of the State of Washington, the United States and even elsewhere. In this preparation Mr. Hill had specially built in Paris, by the best skill that could be obtained, a lantern for slides, and immediately employed Mr. Barnes, a photographer and artist of great worth, to collect the pictures, prepare them in natural colors and then showed them, first over the State and later over the United States. Nothing contributed so much to the demand and final construction of national highways throughout our country, so that upon a dustless roadway, one may travel and see, and see and travel and thus the whole country became more perfectly blended, whereby that was done which unified the people, north and south and east and west, to a greater extent than anything ever undertaken by our people. For this work Mr. Hill is entitled to and has received universal commendation which he modestly accepted, but often tried to impress the public that the creation of the undertaking was that of either others or in cooperation with others. But it was his idea solely, adopted by all, that gave this happy and lasting result to the people of our country.

After having shown the pictures throughout the United States and Europe, always to appreciative and enthusiastic audiences, he made a trip to Japan and exhibited the pictures there in some of the larger cities. He was commended by the Emperor who saw them, the Premier and other prominent people of the Japanese Empire.

Finally Mr. Hill presented all the slides, five thousand or so in number, and the perfect lantern, to the educational department of Japan and since that time continuously have these pictures been shown throughout the Empire, for we know that the public school is universal throughout the Japanese Islands, where the illiteracy has the lowest percentage of any country in all the world, even topping somewhat the United States.

We have learned from the Japanese people that the pictures are still shown and are carried from school to school. Duplicating lanterns have been made and the pictures divided so that when a Japanese comes to this country in this day, he is not surprised in seeing the grandeur of Mt. Rainier, the over-awing supremacy of the Grand Canyon, the unbelievable but natural display of the Yellowstone and so on, because in his youth he saw these wonders displayed upon the lantern slide and grew into manhood knowing all the beauty and the man who made this information possible.

No man in our country during the past fifty years had as wide and intimate acquaintance with nobility, aristocracy, and captains of industry, all prominent in world affairs, than Samuel Hill. Fortunate indeed was the Washington State Good Roads Association to have such a man for its founder and leader. He would be received en familie by the rulers both in Europe and Asia and was intimately associated with those prominent in social, political, religious and commercial affairs throughout the world. He had traveled extensively, having gone around the world many times and always made two or three trips to Europe each year during the last thirty years of his life.

To start with, the close acquaintance which he made with Prince Albert, afterwards King Albert of the Belgians, made the good start so that whether in England or Germany, Italy or Russia, Japan or Austria, he was received by all people most cordially. But, above all this, he was idolized by the commoners. Throughout the State of

Washington and elsewhere in our country there were thousands of men whom he greeted by their given names, for, like the martyred President, he loved the common people and was ever ready to do for them. In fact, before his death he had spent most of his large fortune in that which benefitted particularly the masses and in so spending and serving he achieved his greatest desire.

At this place in the narration of events, in complying with the convention requirement, we complete what seems the necessary details about Mr. Hill's connection with the Washington' State Good Roads Association, but obeying the second part of the resolution, it is a privilege to recount in brief detail an event of international moment, conceived and put into effect by our illustrious Founder 'and Honorary Life President, which becomes Chapter II of the record to be preserved.