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#33 Jefferson Highway Association, Crawford County Division, Records, 1915-2005
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INTRODUCTION

Records of the Jefferson Highway Association of Crawford County. The Records consist of correspondence, minutes, newspaper articles, maps, financial expenses, pledges, legal records, a research paper, and related materials.

DONOR INFORMATION

Unknown

ORGANIZATION HISTORY

The Jefferson Highway Association, named after Thomas Jefferson, was formed in 1915 to build a highway through the Mississippi Valley. The highway was the idea of Edwin T. Meredith, publisher of *Successful Farming* and *Better Homes and Gardens* and later Secretary of Agriculture under President Woodrow Wilson, who thought the highway would be economically beneficial to the region's farmers. In November 1915 a meeting was held with representatives from all the Louisiana Purchase states to organize an association for the purpose of constructing an international highway from Winnipeg in Canada to New Orleans, Louisiana. This convention was also held to determine the route of the new highway. Several Kansas counties were competing against each other and against the state of Missouri to get to be part of the highway. A contest was to be held to determine the route between Kansas City and Joplin, Missouri, the winner to be determined by whichever state, Kansas or Missouri, completed the most miles of new road by September 1916.

The Crawford County division of the Jefferson Highway Association was formed after the 1915 convention to help plan and fund the highway. Townships and private landowners were to be the primary sources for funding. It was decided initially that the Kansas route would go through Pittsburg, Girard, and Fort Scott but there were several disagreements that took place while the road was being built. Some places did not want to fund the road and did not see it as a benefit. Girard was later excluded from the route, in spite of many protests, in favor of the Commercial Highway, which went north from Pittsburg to Arcadia and then to Fort Scott, in spite of many protests. The contest between Kansas and Missouri, in a decision that angered some, ended in a stalemate with both states being awarded the highway between Joplin and Kansas City. After these dual roads were built they were considered too narrow and rough. Despite all these problems, the highway was eventually completed and used by the area communities for many years. The federal and state governments later passed laws that enabled them to build and maintain better highways. The Jefferson highway designation eventually faded away with sections of the road becoming parts of US Highway 69 and US Highway 71.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Jefferson Highway Association of Crawford County collection consists primarily of correspondence, minutes, newspaper articles, maps, legal records and related materials. The bulk of the records dated from 1915 to 1931. The collection is arranged

into six series identified as: **Correspondence, Minutes and Legal Matters, Maps, Miscellaneous, Newspaper Articles, and Research Paper.** Additional information about the Jefferson Highway Association may be found in the Haldeman-Julius collection that contains copies of Jefferson Highway Declaration, a monthly newsletter, from 1919 to 1922.

The **Correspondence Series** is comprised of letters that date from 1915 to 1923. This series is arranged chronologically. The letters are mainly between various members of the Crawford County division of the Jefferson Highway Association. They discuss construction and financing of the highway, meetings, legal matters and other miscellaneous topics.

The **Minutes and Legal Matter Series** contain minutes of meetings, resolutions, orders, financial records, and other documents. Also included is a Hearing of Cherokee, Crawford and Labette Counties Delegation before the Highway Commission, February 11th, 1931 about the highway change from Girard to Arcadia.

The **Maps Series** consists of various printed maps of the Jefferson Highway route.

The **Miscellaneous Series** consists of a Jefferson Highway Association newsletter, an advertisement for a Good Roads Mass Convention, and information about funding the highway.

The **Newspaper Articles Series** contains clippings from 1915 to 2005. Included is an early article about the organization of the Jefferson Highway Association. Many of the articles are from the Kansas City Star and Topeka newspapers detailing the materials used to build the road, how the highway was progressing and its importance for the area. The later articles are about the history of the Jefferson Highway.

The **Research Paper Series** contains a research paper by Michael Francis Jackson, written in 1978, titled The Birth of the Jefferson Highway and Its Establishment in Crawford County.

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