

Annual Report
of the
Motor Vehicle Division
State Highway Department

January 1, 1942 to December 31, 1942

On July 1, 1941 the new law covering the registration, titling and inspection of motor vehicles became effective. The old system employed in the registration of motor vehicles had been in vogue since 1905 in this State. Few changes have been made during the intervening thirty-five years except by way of amplification which consisted first of the titling provision; then the lien law was added, and finally those provisions relating to the annual inspection. During the same period the construction of highways has changed greatly as have the vehicles which operate thereon. In order that the system of registration and inspection of motor vehicles might be placed on a more efficient basis both from the public and administrative point of view, the recently enacted Motor Vehicle Registration Law was conceived.

In July, 1940 the Motor Vehicle Department sought the advice of the National Safety Council on the drafting of a registration law which would afford the maximum of simplicity, and at the same time materially improve the safety efforts of the Department. The present law as enacted is a combination of the automobile registration system employed in the British Isles, and the aeroplane inspection and licensing system in vogue in this country. The law was

developed in cooperation with the Delaware Chapter of the National Safety Council; the Delaware Motor Club (A. A. A.) and the Delaware Motor Trucks Association.

In brief the new system combines the titling, registration and inspection records, and establishes the titling and registration on a permanent basis. No changes are made in the Department's records except when a car is sold. The privilege of operating a car on the highways is conditional on passing the inspection and upon the payment of the registration or extension fee. A single annual visit to the inspection lane combines all registration and inspection formalities. The quarterly expiration periods eliminate the former peaks in registration and inspection, with the accompanying unsatisfactory rushing and crowding.

Automobiles were first registered in Delaware in 1905. The responsibility of the administration of this requirement was placed on the Secretary of State where it remained until 1939.

In June, 1921 the title law was passed and in May, 1924 the lien law was passed. These two laws having become necessary due to the misdemeanors and irregularities that had developed as the result of the widespread use of the automobile and the financing of the purchases thereof—the administration of these two laws was also the responsibility of the Secretary of State.

It is interesting to note that in the year 1908 there were registered 431 cars. This is the first year in which a complete record is available—in 1910 the number of cars registered had increased to 995. Delaware now has about 70,023 cars registered, and titles issued for a larger number. In addition to the registration of cars the registration of drivers has been carried on by the same Department. The foregoing responsibilities of the Secretary of State were classified and known as the Motor Vehicle Department of the Secretary of State's Office.

In 1939 the administration of the Motor Vehicle Department was transferred from the Secretary of State to the Highway Department and provision made for the appointment of a Motor Vehicle Commissioner who is responsible for the administration of this Division and answerable to the Highway Commission.

The Motor Vehicle Division is responsible for the issuance of operators and chauffeurs licenses, titles, recording of liens, examination of new drivers, revocation of licenses, inspection of motor vehicles, and the administration of the Motor Vehicle Law.

INSPECTION OF MOTOR VEHICLES

The first inspection of motor vehicles was voluntary through a Proclamation by Governor C. D. Buck who desired to establish a safety month "Save-A-Life Campaign." He set aside June 15-July 15 as a period of free inspection. Any garage in the State meeting the specifications could act as an official inspection station. A fee of 50c was paid by the registered owner to the garage.

In 1930 fifty stations were selected and each was paid \$100.00 at the close of the Campaign. In 1933 the State purchased sufficient equipment to install five state official safety lanes; two in the City of Wilmington and one each in New Castle, Kent, and Sussex Counties. The rural lanes moved from town to town during the inspection season—July 15 to August 31. This system was used until 1941 when permanent lanes were completed, one in each County located at Wilmington, Dover, and Georgetown. The new lanes are operated continuously throughout the year and are far superior to the old lanes, which were equipped only with brake and headlight testing machines. The new lanes are equipped with the newest type equipment for measuring side drag wheel alignment in feet per mile—front and hydraulic hoist for closer inspection of defective steering mechanism—headlight testers that measure the intensity of the candle-

power beam output as well as the directional aim and brake testers that are capable of accurately testing the brakes from the smallest car to the largest tractor truck and semi-trailer combination.

The importance of properly inspected motor vehicles from the standpoint of safety and economy is undisputed. This phase of the Department's work is only one of the combined efforts of the State Highway Department, (Construction, Maintenance, Police and Motor Vehicle Divisions), the Delaware Safety Council, and the Motor Clubs, which have brought about the results shown in the following figures:

TRAFFIC FATALITIES		VEHICLES REGISTERED	
1929	67	1929	54,960
1942	72	1942	70,023
% Increase	7½	% Increase	27

During the year 1942 on initial inspection 61,557 were approved and 20,627 were rejected. The reasons for rejections are set forth in the following table on a percentage basis.

REASONS FOR REJECTIONS	
Tires .....	.43%
Align. ....	.22.91%
St. Oper. ....	.11%
Plates .....	.05%
Glass	5.29%
W. W. Vision .....	.01%
Horn .....	.10%
Windshield .....	.42%
Mirror .....	.04%
Exhaust	5.72%
Misc. ....	.05%
Hd. Lights .....	.26.62%
Dr. Lights .....	.12%
C P B Output	5.64%
P. & O. Lights .....	.12%
R. & S. Lights .....	.29%
Bulbs	1.00%
Wir. & Sw. ....	.02%
Reflectors	5.54%
Div. Sig. ....	.49%
Serv. Br.	18.02%
Park Br. ....	.45%
Br. Equal .....	.08%
P. & L. Reserve	3.85%
Doors & Latches	2.63%

There is no better justification for the inspection of motor vehicles than the fact that during each inspection period, a very large number of vehicles are found to have dangerously defective steering mechanism, a fault that has caused many serious accidents. Also, prior to the inspection of motor vehicles, more complaints were received about improper automobile lighting than all other factors combined.

Rarely do we receive complaints concerning automobile headlights, which is due to the more modern equipment and method used in the careful checking of these lights.

As evidence of the opinion of automobile owners, I quote from one of the many letters recently received by the Division:

"After listening to conflicting tales of delay and criticisms, I drove to the inspection lanes this morning, with little enthusiasm, and prepared to spar mentally, with any individual who dared to tell me my car was not in Class 1A.

"My first surprise came when the first official, whom I met at the entrance, politely asked for my driver's license and registration card. He was very courteous.

"Obliging him, I then passed through the regular inspection. Throughout, I noticed the same pleasantness and courtesy.

"In less than five minutes, the inspection over, I was again on my way.

"Some of us actually regard annual inspection as a one hundred per cent nuisance until we stop to think that actually, the inspectors are working in our behalf and for our safety.

"It's about time that some of us stopped squawking and give a little credit where credit is due.

"I think the men in your department are doing their share and it's up to us to cooperate.

"Thanking you again for your courtesy, I remain,

"Sincerely yours,

"B. F. G."

(The full name of this individual is available to any one who may be interested.)

Safety inspections aid a motorist not only in determining the condition of his own car but he is also assured as to the condition of all other vehicles on the highways. In this connection it is worthy of mention that while the State requires at least one annual inspection, the motorist may, for a fee of 25c, have his car inspected as frequently as he desires. The provisions in the statute preclude the registering and operation of cars on the highways that have been junked

or are mechanically defective without first having the car pass the inspection requirements. Few people realize the protection that the statute affords to those purchasing used cars, and particularly those coming from out of State.

OPERATORS AND CHAUFFEURS

The Driver's License

A splendid opportunity for educating prospective drivers in traffic safety is when they are in the process of securing their driver's license. At this time most individuals have their first real contact with the License Bureau. Some persons prepare carefully for their driver's examination; others report for the first examination poorly prepared and fail because of lack of knowledge, skill, or proper attitudes. It is likely that the amount of preparation depends to a great extent upon the quality and method of the examination. If the several tests of the examination are adequate and carefully administered, the prospective driver will spend more time preparing for them.

While the chief purpose of the license examination is to fulfill the vested responsibility in the code calling for the licensing of drivers, an additional but important purpose is the education of drivers. This educational process may be far more vital to the welfare of the State than the examination and the license revenue.

The Examination

The examination consists of four parts:

(1) The vision test. (Refer to examiners' manual)
Note: The vision requirements have been approved by Dr. Mayerberg of Wilmington, Dr. Preston West of Georgetown, the Delaware Safety Council and the American Automobile Association.

(2) The road sign test. (Refer to examiners' manual).
Would like to mention at this time that through the cooperation of the State Department of Public Instruction

and the Wilmington Board of Education, arrangements have been made so that applicants who are unable to read and write may attend night school free of charge. There are a few who have continued to attend these classes even after they have obtained their driver's license.

(3) The Road Rules (Law) Test.

Eight series of questions, namely a, b, c, d, etc., have been prepared. Each series consists of ten questions, based on information contained in the driver's manual. The correct answer to at least seven questions must be given in order for the applicant to pass.

(4) The Driving Test (Refer to examiners' manual).

Driver Improvement

A new Driver's Manual has been compiled and approximately 8,500 have been distributed. A new Chauffeur's Supplement has also been prepared for the information and instruction of those desiring a chauffeur's license.

A new Examiners' Manual has been written and is now ready for printing, showing the requirements the applicants must meet, proper procedures and the necessary steps for the examiners to follow. This will establish a standard system that **must** be followed thus assuring all applicants the same consideration.

Special mention should be made here of the following: Our new scoring system used while conducting driving tests, which should eliminate any one passing that does not show the required qualifications.

Designated driving test routes have been established having right turns, left turns, backing, turning, right angle and parallel parking, stop signs and traffic lights.

We are now occupying our new modern quarters in Wilmington, Dover, and Georgetown, where adequate space and equipment has been provided.

Honorable mention should be made of the Waiting Room in the Wilmington office, where murals, which are both educational and instructive, have been placed on the walls.

Special classes for the improvement of drivers were given as follows during 1942:

Defense Training	2
First Aid	10
Motor Corps (Emergency Driving)	8
American Women's Volunteer Service	3
Ambulance Drivers	5
Industrial Service Training	4
	32

DRIVER LICENSE EXAMINATIONS

Examinations	1941			1942			
	Examinations	Failures	Failure %	Examinations	Failures	Failure %	
January . . .	855	80	9.36	January . . .	1000	170	17.00
February . . .	714	56	7.84	February . . .	727	130	17.88
March	1380	95	6.89	March	1053	225	21.37
April	1321	106	8.02	April	1061	217	20.45
May	1277	110	8.61	May	963	181	18.79
June	1995	222	11.13	June	1079	221	20.48
July	1641	320	19.50	July	842	170	20.19
August	1582	439	27.75	August	699	131	18.74
September . .	1225	325	26.53	September . .	624	136	21.79
October	1236	239	19.33	October	823	117	14.22
November . . .	890	161	18.09	November . . .	612	125	20.42
December . . .	813	141	17.34	December . . .	557	89	15.98
Total	14,929	*2,294	15.37	Total	10,040	*1,912	19.04

*The number of failures show the applicants were not prepared for their examinations and had to return from one to as many as six times before completing the examination and obtaining their driver's license.

For instance, one person required two examinations for vision, two for law (Road Rules) and two for driving making six examinations given one applicant. Approximately 85% of these noted failures were completed and driver's license issued.

REVOCATIONS - RESIDENTS

	1940	1941	1942
Intoxicated Driving No. 81	238	240	203
Leaving Scene of Accident No. 107	43	46	41
Three Convictions for Reckless Driving No. 83..	19	21	4
Larceny	6	12	3
Perjury	4	3	6
Manslaughter	5	1	1

SUSPENSIONS - RESIDENTS

	1940	1941	1942
Taking Car Without Consent of Owner No. 28..		4	8
Lending Operator's License No. 73-2	16	6	1
Failed to Renew Insurance No. 167		18	26
Permitting Illegal Use of Car No. 77	22	36	32
Police Recommendation No. 66		11	
Suspended for Sufficient Reason	35	9	23
Judgment	23	18	19

REVOCATIONS - NON-RESIDENTS

	1940	1941	1942
Intoxicated Driving No. 81	62	77	62
Leaving Scene of Accident No. 107	2	8	2
Larceny		3	
Three Convictions for Reckless Driving No. 83..		1	
Manslaughter	1		1

COMPARISON OF TITLES ISSUED—1941 AND 1942

	NEW TITLES		USED CAR TITLES	
	1941	1942	1941	1942
January	1421	408	1910	1913
February	1319	150	1684	1614
March	2640	125	3157	2329
April	2642	116	3396	2419
May	2175	93	3026	1732
June	2042	91	3048	1390
July	1937	90	2897	1627
August	1265	57	2634	1434
September	604	59	2255	1490
October	779	74	2164	1798
November	714	51	1838	1459
December	815	48	1687	1026
Total	18,353	1,362	29,696	20,231

TRANSACTIONS FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR OF 1942

	Mall	Dover	Wilmington	Georgetown	Total
REGISTRATION					
Pleasures	362	11,642	40,496	14,463	66,963
Commercials	100	4,001	7,193	5,194	16,488
Tractors	27	202	45	88	362
Motor Cycles	0	54	228	94	376
Dealers	99	176	224	140	639
Extra Wgt., etc.	37	175	223	97	532
Exempt	17	307	414	336	1,074
Totals	642	16,557	48,823	20,412	86,434
OPERATORS					
Opr. (1941 & 1942)	30,154	13,533	29,885	5,694	79,266
Chauff. " "	5,082	5,178	9,854	2,218	22,332
App. " "	21	1,609	3,137	504	5,271
Totals	35,257	20,320	42,876	8,416	106,869
MISCELLANEOUS					
Lost Tags	130	114	395	81	720
Dup. Cards	842	912	2,190	436	4,380
Exch. Opr. Cards	1	286	636	145	1,068
Reference Money	335	0	0	0	335
Postage	19	6	0	0	25
Temp. Veh. Permits.	74	400	3,291	276	4,041
Lost Inserts	11	26	211	11	259
Voluntary Insp.	0	86	674	124	884
Bad Check Coll.	8	2	3	13	26
Totals	1,420	1,832	7,400	1,086	11,738
TITLING DEPARTMENT					
New Titles	96	358	664	244	1,362
Used Titles	3,795	4,642	9,208	2,587	20,232
Corr. Titles	111	477	400	395	1,383
Dup. Titles	319	238	184	36	777
Supp. Titles	170	36	9	0	215
Liens	1,911	1,497	3,214	861	7,483
Satisfactions	5,872	11,714	0	0	17,586
Exempt Titles	2	48	36	16	102
Totals	12,276	19,010	13,715	4,139	49,140
GRAND TOTALS					
Transactions	49,595	57,719	112,814	34,053	254,181

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

January 1, 1942 - December 31, 1942

REGISTRATIONS	NO. ISSUED	AMOUNT
Pleasure	53,136	\$550,076.75
Pleasure ½ yr.	12,729	74,210.06
Commercials	12,801	326,098.25
Commercial ½ yr.	3,570	84,893.20
Tractors	360	1,801.50
Motor Cycles	361	1,472.00
Motor Cycles ½ yr.	7	20.00
Dealers	637	5,417.00
Exempt	398	
Exempt ½ yr.	676	
Extra Wgt., etc.		2,629.23
TOTAL REGISTRATIONS	84,675	\$1,046,617.99
OPERATORS LICENSES		
Ch. & App. (1941)		4,801.00
App. (1942)		2,853.50
Opr. (1942)		77,153.00
Chauff. (1942)		21,935.00
TOTAL OPR., CH., & APP. (1941)		4,801.00
TOTAL OPR., CH., & APP. (1942)		101,941.50
MISCELLANEOUS		
Lost Tags	703	681.50
Duplicate Cards	4,347	2,173.50
Ex Operator Cards	1,068	734.00
Reference Money and Postage	360	759.55
Lost Inserts	259	64.75
Temp. Veh. Permits	4,039	4,039.00
Voluntary Inspections	884	221.00
Bad Check Coll.	27	106.00
TOTAL MISCELLANEOUS	11,687	8,579.30
TITLES		
New Titles	1,362	1,362.00
Used Titles	20,225	20,225.00
Corrected Titles	1,379	1,379.00
Duplicate Titles	760	380.00
Liens	7,474	3,737.00
Satisfactions	17,586	4,396.50
Exempt Titles	102	
Supp. Titles	215	215.00
TOTAL TITLES		31,694.50
Shortage		42.30
Surcharge		91.25
GRAND TOTAL		\$1,193,683.24
BANK DEPOSITS		1,195,672.84
LESS REFUNDS		1,989.60
		\$1,193,683.24

APPROXIMATE DISTRIBUTION OF MOTOR VEHICLES IN REFERENCE TO EXPIRATION OF REGISTRATION

December 31, 1942

Registration and Insert Guide				Total	State & Exempt	Vehicles Registered		
Sussex Co.	Kent Co.	N. C. Co.	as of 1/1/42			as of 1/1/43		
Reg. expir. 3/31/43	11,150	8,366	18,960	38,476		Pleas.	63,837	55,765
Reg. expir. 6/30/43	1,108	907	2,111	4,126	629	Comm.& Trl.	14,905	13,416
Reg. expir. 9/30/43	3,867	3,535	17,934	25,336		Tractors	327	342
Reg. expir. 12/31/43	538	402	1,145	2,085	128	Motor Cycles	340	316
TOTAL	16,663	13,210	40,150	70,023	757		79,409	69,839

APPROXIMATE DISTRIBUTION OF MOTOR VEHICLES IN REFERENCE TO COUNTIES

December 31, 1942

1/1/43	Sussex County	Kent County	New Castle Co.	Total
Pleasures	12,116	9,632	34,017	55,765
Commercials	4,355	3,216	5,845	13,416
Tractors	80	218	44	342
Motor Cycles	89	48	179	316
TOTAL	16,640	13,114	40,085	69,839

I respectfully recommend, that, as soon as we can know what changes or additions have been made to the present Motor Vehicle Laws by the 109th General Assembly, a suitable booklet be printed for distribution. This booklet to contain all the existing Motor Vehicle Laws properly codified and indexed.

Also that before another Legislature convenes an entirely new Motor Vehicle Law be written which will embody the many changes that should be made in the present Law and thus make it a model Law for Delaware and every State.

Also that a much greater percentage of finances and effort be expended toward the Safety Education of our citizens especially the youth beginning with their first grade in school.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation and thanks to my associates also to all those individuals and Associations who have rendered loyal and valuable service to the Motor Vehicle Division during the year.

Respectfully submitted,

GEORGE S. WILLIAMS
Commissioner