



THE GROWING DEMAND

The State of Delaware has experienced continuous and pronounced population growth since the turn of the century. For the period 1950-1960, Delaware was the fifth fastest growing state in the United States, increasing over 40% in number of people.

Situated practically in the center of the vast Megalopolis extending from Boston to Richmond, Delaware will continue to experience rapid population growth and industrial expansion. In urbanized New Castle County alone the 1960 population of 266,000 is expected to reach 564,000 by 1985 with a triple increase in vehicular traffic.

Important to this fantastic growth pattern is a vital need for a highway system that will not only keep pace with but continue to be a major contributor to the safety, convenience and progress of Delaware's citizens. In the words of Michael Fairless, "The people who make no roads are ruled out from intelligent participation in the world's brotherhood."

PAVING THE WAY

From 1905, when automobiles first required registration, to 1907, when operators licenses were required and the speed limit was set at "one mile in three minutes," a grand total of 313 automobiles were registered in the state. Not many citizens saw the need for a state highway system.

However, T. Coleman duPont, envisioning a road running the length of Delaware, managed to secure legislation in 1911 permitting the formation of "Coleman du Pont Road, Inc." Construction began that year on the original two-lane highway.

By 1916, it was apparent that the automobile had come of age, and the State Highway Department was created by the Legislature to construct and maintain a state highway system. Meanwhile, the Coleman du Pont Road had been completed from the southern border to a point five miles south of Milford.

The engineering and construction staff assembled by Coleman du Pont Road, Inc., became the nucleus of the staff for the new department and, with the continued financial support of Mr. du Pont, went on with the construction of the DuPont Boulevard.

The State Aid Road Law passed in 1919 made it possible for the state to

match county contributions for the construction of new roads and reconstruction of existing dirt roads.

Although opposition was often encountered in obtaining rights-of-way through farmland, rural landowners began to recognize the benefits of highway transportation. By 1923, the state had 354 miles of paved highways including the 96.7 miles of the completed DuPont Highway.

In 1927 the first secondary road was built. Designed to provide all-weather transportation at a minimum cost, it was 18 feet wide with only one nine-foot lane paved. Traffic in those days was so light that a motorist could travel miles before having to pass another car on the dirt lane.

With increased recognition of the potentialities of the automobile and truck, modernization began. The DuPont Highway, completed as a dual highway in 1934, was considered the best superhighway in the world at that time and the longest stretch of dual road anywhere.

In 1935, with the transference of all county roads to the State Highway Department, Delaware boasted 3,800 miles of roadways.

Except for the war years 1942-1946, when gasoline rationing and shortages of material as well as manpower forced abandonment of new construction projects, Delaware's Highway system has grown to match the needs and desires of the motoring public. With the increase in population and automobiles expected during the next fifteen years, designing and construction today must also anticipate the needs of tomorrow.

