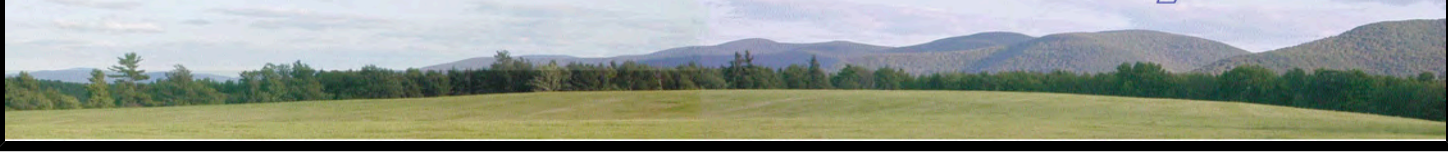


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## Gilboa Roads

***Chuck Brainerd***

When starting this assignment, I thought first about the people who had worked on the roads and the equipment that was necessary. I want to cover that, but I want to also discuss the way the fundamental goals of the road system have changed over the last century.

My grandfather had worked on the roads of Gilboa, and my father did also from 1935–1970. My first “job” on the Gilboa roads was around 1950 when I was 17 as a wingman on my father’s snow plow in the winter or the lever operator on the gravel screen in the summer.

When I started, people did not demand a lot from their roads, but they did want them to be useable in winter—there were dairy products to be shipped and school buses to run. And, even as late as the 1970s and ’80s, the snows were much heavier and more frequent. Because of this seasonal demand, the majority of the road crew were part-time winter employees—a perfect use of farmers who needed income in the winter and could always find time to plow roads seasonally.



One interesting piece of equipment was the Lynn tractor, a truck with wheels on the front and tracks on the rear—it was great for bulling through any terrain with problematic footing. The barely discernable child beside the front tire is a young Chuck Brainerd.



Other early equipment was a crane.



Other early equipment was a steam shovel (yes, driven by steam) next to the Lynn tractor .

Winter road equipment hasn’t changed that much—one-way plows maintain the majority of roads and a heavy truck pushing a V-plow would bull through drifts on South Gilboa, Blenheim Hill, or Flat Creek roads.

In the summer, then as now, the state subsidized one mile of macadam road per year. The roadbed would be prepared by the town crew and the asphalt was laid down by a company contracted for that purpose. Aside from this single mile, the summer crew would seal previously macadamized roads, use a towed grader to smooth and refinish dirt roads, and oil one of the town's "main" roads. Occasionally, we would also be called upon to reroute a road.

Starting in the 1980s, Gilboans wanted wider and smoother roads, and these required heavier equipment, larger summer crews, and more professional skills. Thus, at the start of the twenty-first century, the Gilboa Highway Department has larger and more sophisticated equipment used by full-time professionals.

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