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A SKETCH

of the

NEW JERSEY

Department of Motor Vehicles

Part I

1906 - 1947

Pages 1 to 17

Part II

1948 - 1953

Division of Motor Vehicles

N.J. Department of Law and Public Safety

Pages 1 to 12

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# A SKETCH OF THE NEW JERSEY MOTOR VEHICLE DEPARTMENT

## Part I 1906-1947

**First Law.** Although the first important Motor Vehicle Law was passed in 1906, there were prior laws on the subject of the regulation of motor vehicles. The first law was known as Chapter 223 of the Laws of 1902 and provided that municipalities had the authority to make ordinances for wagons, carriages and similar vehicles. While motor vehicles were not mentioned in the 1902 law, there was a general understanding at that time that any motor vehicles that were used on the highways would be subject to the regulations as provided in Chapter 223.

**License plates.** In 1903 a law was enacted providing for the issuance of licenses for motor vehicles at a fee of \$1.00, such licenses to be issued by the Secretary of State. These licenses were written on ordinary paper and the license plates to conform with the number issued were either made by the owners of the vehicles or were obtained by the owners from any store that might be equipped to manufacture the plates. Most of the license plates were obtained at that time from the Horace E. Fine Company - the leading engravers of the City of Trenton. Mr. Fine noticed that railroad passes were made out on cards and he conceived the idea of having the registration certificates issued on cards rather than on a sheet of paper. In 1904 the registration certificates were issued by the Secretary of State in card form.

### **Succeeding Laws.**

As the motor vehicles increased in number it became necessary to have a more extensive law for their regulation, and in 1906, Chapter 113, the foundation of our present Motor Vehicle Law, was passed. As a matter of fact, there have been only three complete Motor Vehicle Laws; namely, Chapter 113 of the Laws of 1906, Chapter 208 of the Laws of 1921, and Title 39 of the Revised Statutes. Chapter 208 of the

Laws of 1921 was passed after a committee, which included Commissioner William L. Dill, had been appointed to revise the law. Title 39 was passed in 1937 and was included in the work of the Revision of Laws Commission, appointed to revise all of the laws of the State of New Jersey and place them into more compact and comprehensive form.

**Commissioner.** Chapter 113 of the Laws of 1906 was known as the "Frelinghuysen Law", having been introduced by Joseph B. Frelinghuysen, State Senator from Somerset County, and later United States Senator from New Jersey. The law provided that the Secretary of State should organize the Department of Motor Vehicle Registration and Regulation. The Secretary of State was required to provide suitable quarters for the Motor Vehicle Department and to approve all bills for disbursement of monies. The Secretary of State at that time was Samuel D. Dickinson of Jersey City, a very prominent Republican leader; and the Assistant Secretary of State, who became ex officio Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, was J.B.R. Smith of Trenton, originally from Warren County and also a Republican.

**Inspectors.** The law provided for the appointment, by the Secretary of State, of the Chief Inspector and as many inspectors, not exceeding seven, as might be necessary in detecting violations. The Commissioner of Motor Vehicles at that time received a salary of \$1500 per year as Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, and \$3,000 per year as Assistant Secretary of State, making a total salary of \$4,500. The compensation for the Chief Inspector was \$1500 per year. The regular Inspectors were paid at the rate of \$3.00 per day.

**Agents.** The Agency system was provided for by the law and either the Chief of Police or any other proper person could be designated by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles for the issuing of registrations and licenses and for the examining of applicants for licenses to drive motor vehicles. The fee allowed

such Agent was fixed by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, to be retained from the registration or license fee paid to the agent. During the first year, 1906, motor vehicle licensing agencies were established in Jersey City, Newark, and Camden. Part-time agencies were created at Phillipsburg, Asbury Park, Sea Bright, Freehold, Lakewood, Plainfield, Bridgeton, Rahway, Edgewater, Hackensack, Branchville, Morristown, Atlantic City, Ringwood and Lambertville .

**Revocation.** The law further provided that every registration certificate and every license to drive might be revoked by the commissioner for a violation of the law or on other reasonable grounds after due notice in writing and the ground thereof.

**Persennel.** The Chief Inspector, appointed by the Secretary of State, was Edward Johnson of Jersey City, who remained at the head of the Inspector Force from 1906 to about 1919. Mr. Johnson resigned at that time during the administration of Commissioner Wm. L. Dill and he was succeeded by Mr. Lester W. Gilbert of Jersey City, appointed by Thomas Martin who was Secretary of State at that time.

The legal age limit for the holder of a driver's license was sixteen years and the examination for drivers was not required until 1913, when the system was inaugurated by Job H. Lippincott, Commissioner of Motor Vehicles at that time.

It speaks well for the framers of the 1906 law that many of its provisions are contained verbatim in the present Motor Vehicle Law.

Most of the credit for the original Motor Vehicle Law in respect to its composition is due to J.B.R. Smith, who was the Assistant Secretary of State at that time.

The first Inspector appointed was George W. Thompson of Somerville, who was equipped with a motorcycle and was employed by the Department until his resignation during the administration of Commissioner Wm. L. Dill, about the year 1929.

Among the early appointments of inspectors were those of Anderson Shinn of Burlington and Dane B. Sawyer of Westwood, New Jersey. After many years of faithful service, Mr. Shinn was killed in an automobile accident in 1933. James J. Shanley of Elizabeth succeeded Lester Gilbert as Chief Inspector and remained in that position until 1938, when he was transferred and became the Chief of the Testing Division.

The present Chief Inspector is George W. Zeigler of Trenton, who succeeded Mr. Shanley as the head of the Inspector Force.

In the report of the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles for the year 1906, he states that although the law specified that seven inspectors could be appointed, the appropriation was not sufficient to pay their expenses and four inspectors were appointed without compensation. These inspectors were gentlemen who were interested in the proper use of motor vehicles and the enforcement of the law. The three remaining inspectors were allowed the statutory fee; namely, \$3.00 per day until December 1, 1906, when their services were dispensed with for the winter.

**Reciprocity.** At the time the law was originally passed in 1906, no provision was made for reciprocity for non-residents. In 1908 a law was passed allowing non-residents the use of the New Jersey roads for eight days upon the payment of the fee of \$1.00. The law was changed later to allow non-residents the free use of the highways for a period of fifteen days in any one calendar year. Gradually the reciprocity period was extended to thirty days, then ninety days and lastly, during the term of Commissioner Hoffman, complete reciprocity for the entire year was provided by an amendment to the law.

**Speed,  
1906**

The first legislation on the subject of motor vehicle regulation stipulated a maximum limit of twenty miles an hour in the open country, and lesser rates for the built-up section.

Commissioner Smith stressed the importance of driving at a speed neither too slow nor too fast for traffic conditions.

We quote an interesting paragraph from the Commissioner's report of that year 1906 as follows:

"One of the most flagrant violators of the law that have come under our observation was arrested by a mounted policeman at Long Branch after a most desperate race, which resulted in completely tiring out the policeman's high-bred horse, and the capture of the transgressor was accomplished only after a threat of shooting. Yet this violator was acquitted before the magistrate, because the policeman was unwilling to swear positively that the vehicle was going faster than the maximum speed limit, although he did swear and proved to at least our satisfaction that the car was going at a much greater rate than was compatible with safety. In this case we had recourse to the very efficient provision of our law authorizing the revocation of licenses for cause."

Horses. The above paragraph is quoted for the purpose of giving an indication of the importance of the horse after the use of motor vehicles became more prevalent. As a matter of fact, during the first years of Commissioner Smith's administration, he was constantly endeavoring to placate the various groups who were opposed to the use of motor vehicles and among these groups the farmers stand out as the most radical. Evidently the horse breeding industry feared the rapid development of the motor vehicle and urged that there be restraint to hold down its expansion.

Again referring to the subject of inspectors, it is interesting to note the growth of the inspector force from three inspectors in 1906 to 108 at the present time, 1947.

Receipts. It is also interesting to compare the following figures:

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>REGISTRATIONS</u>	<u>DRIVERS' LICENSES</u>	<u>RECEIPTS</u>
1906	13,759	15,269	\$ 62,233.91
1946	1,175,172	1,538,270	24,819,573.67

Low Numbers. One of the interesting features that has grown with the years is the system of issuing low numbers to special applicants. The registration "1" was originally issued to Mr. Winthrop E. Scarrit, President of the Automobile Club of America. Number "1" was later assigned to Honorable James B. Dill, Judge of the Court of Errors and Appeals.

After Judge James B. Dill relinquished number "1", the Commissioner granted the request of Mr. Fred Kuser and assigned the number to him. Mr. Kuser was one of the leading citizens of the City of Trenton and was also a resident of New York City. He was appointed as Agent in New York City to issue New Jersey registrations and licenses and he was also appointed as a special or honorary inspector.

**Special Inspectors.** The position of special inspector became very desirable and in a short time there was a force of about 100 prominent citizens engaged in voluntary enforcement of the law. These special inspectors were also assigned low numbers and it was not until Walter E. Edge became Governor in 1917 that Mr. Kuser was obliged to relinquish number "1" to him. After that time the low number system expanded until it reached very considerable proportions at the present day. In connection with the low numbers, one of the earliest requests was for license numbers to agree with the year in which the applicant graduated from college. For instance, Thomas N. McCarter, now President of the Public Service Corporation, requested license number "88" and still holds this number at the present time, after a lapse of at least thirty-seven years. The late John A. Campbell, President of the Trenton Potteries Company and one of the leading citizens of Trenton, also held number "77" for many years; 1877 being the year in which Mr. Campbell graduated from Princeton University.

**Commissioners.** Commissioner Smith held the office of Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, ex-officio, from 1906 to 1911. His term expired in 1911 and as Woodrow Wilson, Democrat, was then Governor, a Democrat was appointed to succeed the Secretary of State and the Assistant Secretary of State, who was also the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles. Mr. Smith then engaged in the practice of law and is an authority on corporation matters, having written very many valuable books on this subject.

David S. Crater, Democrat, of Freehold, was appointed to succeed Secretary Dickinson and Job H. Lippincott, Democrat, of Jersey City succeeded Mr. J.B.R. Smith. The term of Mr. Lippincott was short-lived for the reason that Secretary Crater died suddenly in April of 1915 and Mr. Lippincott's term automatically ceased. The Governor at that time, James F. Fielder, although a Democrat, did not reappoint Mr. Lippincott. He did appoint Mr. Wm. L. Dill of Paterson. Mr. Dill had been prominent in State politics, having been engaged in various positions in the State Senate as well as governmental positions in his own City of Paterson. Secretary Crater was succeeded by Thomas F. Martin of Union City, Editor of the Hudson Dispatch and a prominent Democrat.

Deputy Commissioner. From 1915 to 1926, Wm. L. Dill was the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles ex officio; but in 1926 a law was passed which removed the Department of Motor Vehicles from the Department of State and gave it a separate entity. The new law provided for the appointment of a Deputy Commissioner, which position was given to Arthur W. Magee, Republican, of Glassboro, Gloucester County. As Commissioner Dill held office for fifteen years, from 1915 to 1930, many major changes and improvements took place during his administration.

Traffic Act. One of the most important improvements during the term of Commissioner Lippincott from 1912 to 1915 was the system of examinations for drivers, inaugurated by him. It might also be well to mention that during Commissioner Lippincott's term it became necessary to provide for a uniform Traffic Act in addition to a regular Motor Vehicle Law. The various municipalities throughout the State had ordinances regulating traffic which differed from each other. For instance, what would be lawful in Jersey City would not be lawful in Newark. Commissioner Lippincott

was appointed on a Committee to study the subject of traffic regulation. After an intensive study of the ordinances of all the municipalities in the State, Commissioner Lippincott drafted the first Traffic Law of New Jersey, known as Chapter 156 of the Laws of 1915. Chapter 156 of the Laws of 1915 remained in effect until 1928 when Chapter 281 became effective. Chapter 281, Laws of 1928, was enacted as a result of the work of a special committee appointed by the Legislature to study traffic conditions. A comparison of the provisions of Chapter 281, Laws of 1928, with the provisions of Chapter 156 of the Laws of 1915, shows that the new law includes all of the provisions of the original traffic law.

When the new traffic law was passed a Traffic Commission was appointed and in 1932 the Traffic Commission was transferred to and included in the Department of Motor Vehicles.

In 1930 Harold G. Hoffman, Republican, Congressman from New Jersey, was appointed by Governor Larsen as Commissioner of Motor Vehicles to succeed William L. Dill whose term had expired. During Commissioner Hoffman's term the Bill of Sale Law was introduced and passed, the Financial Responsibility Law was amended in such a way as to make it workable, the law providing for the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles to accept service of process on non-resident defendants was passed, and the law providing for the licensing and regulation of motor vehicle junk yards was also passed during the term of Commissioner Hoffman.

Commissioner Hoffman held the office until January 1935 when he was inaugurated as Governor of New Jersey. In commenting on Commissioner Hoffman's term, it can be truthfully said that this was one of the highlights of the career of the Department of Motor Vehicles. An innovation was the Thursday Luncheon Club, held first at the Carteret Club, and later at Hotel Hildebrecht. At these luncheons, lectures were given by various

celebrities and many of these lectures were most interesting and instructive. In addition to the lectures, musical talent was furnished by stars of radio and screen. Among those stars remembered who have since become prominent are Frances Langford, George Murphy, Edward Robinson, Jay Flippen, and many others. These entertainments were both instructive and enjoyable, and along with many other interesting innovations, served to affix in the memory of the employees the administration of Commissioner Harold G. Hoffman.

#### American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators.

During Commissioner Dill's term the Eastern Conference of Motor Vehicle Commissioners was formed and many interesting meetings were held.

During the term of Commissioner Hoffman the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators was organized and an annual meeting is held each year which is productive of splendid results.

#### Safety Education.

The Division of Safety Education was inaugurated during Commissioner Hoffman's term. This is now one of the most important divisions of the Department and many interesting and effective moving pictures promoting Safety Education have been shown through the efforts of Commissioner Magee.

#### Commissioner Magee.

In 1935 Commissioner Hoffman assumed the office of Governor and Deputy Commissioner Magee became Acting Commissioner of Motor Vehicles. In 1936 the Legislature enacted a law providing that Arthur W. Magee should be the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles and should be appointed for a term of four years and his successor should be elected by joint session of the Legislature. Commissioner Magee was elected in 1940 by the joint session

of the Legislature and in 1944 he was appointed Commissioner of Motor Vehicles by the Governor, Walter E. Edge, with the consent of the Senate, such method of appointment being authorized by a law passed in 1944.

W. J. Dearden

Deputy Commissioner. In 1936 when Acting Commissioner Magee was appointed Commissioner, he appointed William J. Dearden, Chief Clerk, as Deputy Commissioner. Mr. Dearden had been connected with this Department since 1908 and had practically grown up with the Department and was, therefore, familiar with most of the problems incidental to the administration of the Motor Vehicle Law.

#### Inspection.

During Commissioner Magee's term he has furthered many important projects, among them being the establishment of the Inspection of Motor Vehicles. Chapter 269 of the Laws of 1936 provided for the method of the Inspection of motor vehicles and as a result of this law the Department now has the splendid system which is one of the outstanding methods of conserving lives and promoting safety. There are twenty-eight inspection stations throughout the State. Each station is managed by a supervisor and there is a total of three hundred examiners, whose duty it is to examine each motor vehicle that is submitted to the station for testing purposes. The Inspection System commenced in January, 1938, and after six years it is still working splendidly. Due to gasoline rationing and conserving of tires, it was found necessary to reduce the number of inspections to one inspection per year. With the end of the war and the return to normal conditions - two inspections are required.

It is interesting to note that the idea of inspection of motor vehicles was favorably promoted during the year 1928. The "Save-A-Life" Campaign was conducted in that year in private garages throughout the State. However, it was not until 1936 that an effective law was

was passed providing for the necessary machinery to place the system in operation.

Agents.

The present system of daily deposit by the agents and the drafting on these deposits by the Department of Motor Vehicles was instituted by Commissioner Lippincott in the year 1913.

During the term of Commissioner Magee the agency system has been improved in many ways and many meetings of agents are held at various times throughout the State. Important questions are discussed at these meetings and there is a spirit of cooperation which can only be obtained through organization. In other words, the agents are now working in unison and each agent has the benefit of the experience of other agents. In this way many improvements have been made and more efficient service has been rendered the public.

General Agent.

The first General Agent appointed to visit the various agencies was Mr. William E. Ryan of Trenton and Paterson. Mr. Ryan had been the agent in the City of Trenton and was appointed by Commissioner Dill to call upon the various agents and render every assistance possible.

At the close of Commissioner Dill's term, Mr. Ryan was succeeded by Mr. Paul Case of Asbury Park. Mr. Case served as General Agent during Commissioner Hoffman's term and the present General Agent appointed by Commissioner Magee is Mr. Russell E. Atkinson of Pitman.

Hearings.

Special mention should also be made of the number of hearings conducted during Mr. Commissioner Magee's term. The power of the Commissioner to revoke drivers' licenses for violation of the law and for all other reasonable grounds has resulted in a proper respect for law enforcement.

However, even with the general knowledge that penalties must be meted out to gross offenders, it has become necessary to have a separate division for the revocation of driver's licenses. Many improvements have been made in the system and the "Stop Card" is particularly effective. When a license is revoked, a card is placed immediately in the license record file and if the licensee applies at an agency at some future date and obtains a license, he is immediately found out when his license record is being filed.

Revocations. The system of revoking licenses after three or more convictions of major violations of the law was inaugurated in 1933 during the term of Commissioner Hoffman and Commissioner Magee has been most active in continuing the system.

In conducting this system it is necessary to have complete cooperation by the revocation division, fines division and financial responsibility division. The fines division is in charge of the keeping of the records of magistrates' reports of convictions and when there is a report of three convictions it is the duty of the Fines Division to refer the case to the Revocation Division. In this way, a personal check is kept on all drivers who have become involved in violations and through this system the licensed drivers of New Jersey are now aware of the penalty that will be meted out if they are heedless and fail to observe the law.

The investigation of fatal accidents is one of the most important features of law enforcement. All reports of fatal accidents are investigated by an inspector with a view to finding out whether revocation of the licenses of the drivers involved in the accident is deemed necessary.

There are many other features of the Revocation Division which are worthy of mention, but owing to space, will not be enlarged upon at this time. Suffice to say that the administration of the law under Commissioner Magee is most complete and the Department is so well organized that every employee connected with the Department of Motor Vehicles has an understanding of the

duty that he is required to perform in the division to which he or she is assigned.

The hearings on questions concerning the revocation of licenses are held before Deputy Commissioner Dearden, Chief Inspector Zeigler, Deputy Chief Inspector Millen, and Supervisor George Schwoebel of the Financial Responsibility Division. A Law was passed which gave to the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles the power to appoint deputies to hear these cases.

License Plates. As outlined in a previous paragraph, attention was called to the manner of obtaining license plates in the early years of the Department. In 1908 the law charged the State with the duty of supplying "Identification Marks" - license plates. During the year 1912 it became necessary to change the system and the manufacture of the plates was awarded by contract to the lowest bidder. Horace E. Fine of Trenton was the successful bidder for several years and his workmanship was of the finest. Later the contract was awarded to the Greenduck Company of Illinois and later to the Quayle Manufacturing Company of New York. The work of fulfilling the contract became somewhat slipshod and in 1917 Commissioner Dill in his annual report called attention to the defective plates that had been manufactured for the year 1918 even though the specifications were the same as they had been for previous years. The workmanship was defective and in 1919 arrangements were made to have the plates made at the New Jersey State Prison under the supervision of the Prison Labor Commission. The adoption of the State Use System was a step in the right direction and has been continued until the present day.

During the year 1943 no new plates were issued owing to war conditions and the shortage of metal. Small tabs were issued to be affixed to the license plates and in 1944 the law provided for the display

of only one plate. This was necessary owing to the war program for the conservation of metal. During the present year, 1947, the display of two license plates has been resumed.

Space will not permit a complete resume of the improvements that have taken place from 1906 until the present time.

**Drunken driving.**

Among the changes worthy of note was the change in procedure for trying cases involving the charge of drunken driving. Until the year 1921, persons accused of driving while under the influence of intoxicating liquor were tried under the Disorderly Persons Act. In revising the law Commissioner Dill recommended that this offense should be tried under the provisions of the Motor Vehicle Act and it was incorporated in Section 14-3 and is now under Section 39:4-50 of the Revised Statutes.

The subject of drunken driving has been the theme for many a news release and report. All of the Commissioners have been troubled by this serious violation and every conceivable effort has been made to reduce the number of violators.

**Compulsory Insurance.**

In 1924 Commissioner Dill was appointed on a committee to study the question of compulsory insurance and through his efforts a model bill was introduced in the legislature but failed to pass. In 1929 the Financial Responsibility Law was passed as a compromise measure. This law provided for the filing of insurance after a conviction for a serious violation. The law as it was first written was unwieldy and unworkable and in 1930 Commissioner Hoffman was successful in having the law amended in such a way as to make it enforceable.

Speed,  
1939.

It is interesting to note the change in the speed limit from twenty miles per hour in 1906 to forty miles per hour and forty-five miles per hour in certain marked zones in 1939. Owing to the conservation of gasoline, however, it was necessary, in order to assist in the War Program, to reduce the speed limit to thirty-five miles per hour, which was the law until after the close of the war, when the provisions of the 1939 law were again resumed.

Registration  
Fees.

It is also a matter of interest to examine the registration fees. The original registration fees were \$3.00 for vehicles of less than 30 horsepower and \$5.00 for vehicles of 30 horsepower and over. The present fees are forty cents per horsepower for cars of less than 30 horsepower and fifty cents for cars of 30 horsepower and over.

When the commercial vehicle first came into existence the fee was charged at the same rate as the fee for passenger vehicles, according to horsepower, with the proviso that an additional \$10.00 should be charged for all vehicles over 4,000 pounds. When the law was revised in 1921 during Mr. Dill's term, the fee was rated according to the gross weight of the vehicle and load. This schedule ranged from \$10.00 to \$99.00 and was in effect until April 1, 1947, when the present (1947) schedule providing for a maximum fee of \$204.00 for a vehicle weighing 40,000 pounds was passed.

Complaints,  
against local  
officers and judges.

During the early years of the Department there was much dissatisfaction among motorists owing to the so-called "speed traps". The motorists, in fact, were really persecuted and it was only after the combined efforts of the Automobile Clubs and the Department and the motorists themselves

that a time came when a change for the better occurred and it is now rare to receive a complaint regarding a magistrate or an enforcement officer. In the course of time with more strict laws enacted relative to the powers of justices of the peace, (particularly with reference to the disposal of fine money) and a better understanding on the part of arresting officers, the complaints relative to ill treatment at the hands of local officers and magistrates are very few indeed.

**County prefix on plates.**

As the number of registrations grew, it became necessary to devise a smaller registration plate for display on the motor vehicles. In 1925, during Commissioner Dill's term, the system of county prefix on registration plates became effective, thus making the plate more readable and more easily remembered. The present system is an improvement over the first plates that required the county designations.

**Gasoline tax.**

In 1926 Commissioner Dill recommended a gasoline tax and in 1927 the two cent per mile gasoline tax became effective. At the same time the law providing for personal property tax on automobiles was abolished. The enforcement of the Gasoline Tax Law was vested in the Department of Motor Vehicles until 1931, when it became a part of the State Tax Commission.

**Excise Tax.**

In 1927 the Excise Tax Law providing for a tax of one-half cent per mile on interstate buses and trucks was passed. A few years later the courts decided that the tax could not apply to commercial vehicles and it is now in operation only with respect to interstate buses.

**Social Events.**

In closing this sketch it is well to mention that there is a social side to the Department as well as a business side. The Agents, the Inspectors and the Examiners all have Associations which bring them in closer personal relation and which are productive of much good feeling.

Probably one of the outstanding social events of the Department was the banquet held in 1933 to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of those

members of the Department who had attained twenty-five years of service at that time. The affair was held at the Newark Athletic Club and was attended by many distinguished personages, including Governor Moore, former Commissioners J.B.R. Smith and Job H. Lippincott, and Dr. Messick of the Civil Service Commission. The members honored at this celebration were Wm. J. Dearden, Chief Clerk, now Deputy Commissioner; Anderson Shinn, Deputy Chief Inspector; Dane B. Sawyer, Inspector; John W. Baldwin, Inspector; and M. Agnes Smith, Administrative Clerk. The affair was sponsored by a Silver Anniversary Committee and the five honored guests were recipients of many handsome gifts.

Ten Year Club.

A few years later the Ten Year Club was organized, having as its object the recognition of ten years of service in the Department. This Ten Year Club has grown each year and serves the very commendable purpose of bringing together once a year all employees of the Department. At the Spring Meeting held in May all members of the Department, whether they have served ten years or not, are eligible to attend. In this way a spirit of friendship is promoted and the opportunity is afforded to become acquainted with those members of the Department who come from long distances and who do not have the opportunity of visiting the Main Office owing to their many pressing duties.

During the first year of the Department, as stated in a previous paragraph, there were three full time agencies and fifteen part time agencies. The agents, together with the Commissioner and his Secretary and three File Clerks, the Chief Inspector and one Inspector, comprised a total of twenty-five employees. This is quite a contrast to the number of employees at the present time, approximating at least seven hundred.

End of Part I

1947.

PART II.

1948- 1953.

Reorganization.

1948 - 1949. A law was passed during the legislative session of 1948

relating to the reorganization of the executive and administrative departments, of the State Government; and establishing a Department of Law and Public Safety as a principal department in the executive branch of the State Government.

The principal purpose of this law, Chapter 439 of the laws of 1948, effective on January 1, 1949, was to carry out the provisions of Section IV of the Revised Constitution, framed at the Constitutional Convention, held at Rutgers University in New Brunswick and completed on September 10, 1947.

The new Constitution provided, among other things, that all administrative departments of the State government and their respective functions, powers and duties should be allocated by law among and within not more than twenty principal departments.

The new law designated the Attorney General as the head of the Department of Law and Public Safety, and the Divisions established in the Department of Law and Public Safety were the following: Division of Law; Division of State Police; Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control; Division of Motor Vehicles; Division of Weights and Measures, and a Division of Professional Boards.

At the time the law went into effect on January 1, 1949, Walter D. Van Riper was the Attorney General, and Arthur W. Magee was the Director of the Division of Motor Vehicles. Subsequently, Theodore D. Parsons, head of a prominent law firm of Red Bank, New Jersey, was appointed by Governor Driscoll to succeed Attorney General Van Riper.

Chapter 264 of the Laws of 1948 also provided for a new court system which includes trials of all cases for violations of the Motor Vehicle Law. The new law also abolished the office of Justice of the Peace.

**Attorney General-**

**Counsel to the Department.**

In the early years of the Department, the Commissioner depended for legal advice upon the Attorney General. Among the Attorney Generals who were frequently consulted were John W. Wescott, Edward L. Katzenbach, Edmund Wilson, Thomas McCran, William A. Stevens and David Wilentz. During the year 1924, Commissioner Dill wrote to Edward Katzenbach, Attorney General, requesting the Attorney General to detail an Assistant Attorney General to devote his time exclusively to the handling of cases involving infractions of the Motor Vehicle and Traffic Acts, and to represent the State particularly in cases of appeal from convictions of the charge of driving while under the influence of liquor. Commissioner Dill did express his appreciation for the cooperation of Joseph Lanigan and Grover Richman of the Attorney General's force of assistants, but felt that the situation required a special assignment of counsel to represent the Department at all times.

Attorney General Katzenbach accordingly assigned James P. Dolan, now deceased, of Jersey City as special counsel. Judge Dolan served the Department from 1924 to December, 1927, at which time he resigned. He was succeeded by Paul C. Supinski of Jersey City who served until May 28, 1929.

On June 20, 1929, Attorney General William A. Stevens appointed George M. Eichler of Hoboken, who served as special counsel until March 26, 1934, when he was succeeded by Alexander F. Ormsby of Jersey City.

Mr. Ormsby was appointed by Attorney General David Wilentz on March 26, 1934, and resigned on February 7, 1940.

Joseph Lanigan and Harry Walsh of the Attorney General's staff were also assigned in 1933 to assist in taking care of the legal business incident to the work of the Department.

On February 8, 1940, Louis M. Mallin of Atlantic City was appointed by Attorney General David T. Wilentz, as special counsel to the Department to take the place of Alexander Ormsby.

Louis M. Mallin was succeeded by Lawrence L. Crispin of Woodbury, appointed by Attorney General Van Riper. In 1946 Mr. Crispin relinquished the position, owing to the pressure of other duties in Gloucester County. Mr. Crispin was succeeded by John J. Kitchen of Woodbury, who is the Assistant Attorney General assigned to the Division of Motor Vehicles at the present time.

Mention should also be made of the very able assistance rendered to the Department by John Bruther of Trenton, Assistant Attorney General, later appointed to the Division of Revision of Laws, from which position he resigned to devote his entire time to private law practice.

**Traffic Bureau  
Transfer.**

Executive Order 31, dated November 30, 1951, removed from the Division of Motor Vehicles functions performed by the Bureau of Traffic Engineering and the Bureau of Safety Education and transferred them into a Division of Traffic Safety within the Department of Law and Public Safety.

The actual change-over took place on January 1, 1952, with Arnold Vey, as Director of the Division of Traffic Safety, and Leo Welch as Deputy Director.

**Truck fees.** Reference is made in Part I to the increase in fees for commercial vehicle registrations.

In 1950, the schedule of fees for commercial vehicles was again amended by Chapter 142, which increased the fees from a minimum of \$10.00 to a maximum of \$240.00.

Revenue. In Part I, the figures for drivers' licenses, registrations and Revenue were given for 1906 and 1946. Following are the figures for 1952.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Registrations</u>	<u>Drivers' Licenses</u>	<u>Receipts</u>
1952	1,811,417	2,082,770	46,507,087.45

Director Arthur W. Magee. After the appointment of Arthur W. Magee by Governor Walter E. Edge in 1944, his term continued as Commissioner until January 1, 1949, when the title was changed to Director, Division of Motor Vehicles, Department of Law and Public Safety.

The law under which Mr. Magee was appointed, Chapter 44 of the Laws 1944, provided for a term of four years, but specified that the Commissioner should be continued in office after the expiration of his term until his successor should be appointed and qualified.

The new law, providing for the Division of Motor Vehicles under the Department of Law and Public Safety, further provided that the Director of the Division of Motor Vehicles shall be appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, and shall serve during the term of office of the Governor appointing him and until the director's successor is appointed and has qualified.

Mr. Magee continued in office until the month of May, 1950, when Governor Driscoll appointed Martin J. Ferber of River Edge, Bergen County, as Director of the Division of Motor Vehicles, and appointed Mr. Magee as Traffic Consultant, New Jersey Turnpike Authority.

Mr. Magee had served for twenty-four years with the Department, having been first appointed as Deputy Commissioner in 1926, as Acting Commissioner in 1935, when Commissioner Hoffman assumed the office of Governor; and as Commissioner in 1936. His appointment in 1936 was brought

about by an Act of the Legislature, Chapter 24 of the Laws of 1936. Prior to that time, the law provided for an appointment by joint session of the legislature. It seemed to be impossible to obtain a joint session; consequently, the law was passed making possible Mr. Magee's appointment, by naming him in the law.

General Agent. In Part I, reference is made to the General Agent. When Martin J. Ferber became the Director of the Division of Motor Vehicles, he named George J. Steussing of River Edge as General Agent, who continued in the position after the resignation of Director Ferber .

**Director Martin**

J. Ferber Mr. Ferber assumed the office of Director on May 23, 1950.

The exercises connected with his taking the oath of office were held at the Administration Building, Hackensack, after which a reception was held and a luncheon given for his many friends and well-wishers. During his term, Chapter 4 of Title 39, dealing with traffic regulations, was amended to a very considerable extent - one of the principal changes being the new speed limits - 50 miles per hour maximum and twenty-five miles per hour in the built-up sections. He also advocated a three-year driving license, and a five year license plate, with inserts for each year following the original issuance of the plate.

Mr. Ferber's term was short, - May 23, 1950 to **October 1, 1951.**

He resigned as Director on October first, 1951, after which his candidacy for the position of Sheriff in Bergen County was announced. He was successful in winning the election and now holds the office of Sheriff.

**Director William**

J. Dearden. In accordance with the law's provisions, the Deputy Commissioner , William J. Dearden, became Acting Commissioner upon the resignation of Mr. Ferber. Mr. Dearden remained Acting Commissioner from October 1, 1951,

until December 5, 1952, when he was sworn in as Director, having been appointed by Governor Driscoll, with the advice and consent of the Senate.

Mr. Dearden's appointment as head of the Division of Motor Vehicles culminated a long series of advancements from his first appointment in 1908 at the age of fifteen years, as messenger. In the course of the years, he advanced steadily as he gradually became proficient in the duties of each position assigned to him by Commissioners Smith, Lippincott, and Dill. His particular specialty at that time centered in the Bookkeeping and Auditing work, including supervision of the Agents' accounts, as well as the accounts incident to the administration of the main office.

Owing to his responsible <sup>status</sup> ~~position~~ in the Auditing Division, he was in a key position to be considered for the position of Chief Clerk, which became vacant in the year 1923. Commissioner Dill appointed Mr. Dearden to fill the vacancy which was caused by the resignation of E. Raymond Glover of Trenton, the Chief Clerk at that time, who had succeeded the first Chief Clerk, Otto Dahl of Jersey City.

When Arthur W. Magee, the first Deputy Commissioner, became Commissioner, Mr. Dearden was appointed as Deputy Commissioner, and R. Earle Leonard, Assistant Chief Clerk, succeeded Mr. Dearden as Chief Clerk.

**Speed.** In 1951, the speed limit was changed by the enactment of Chapter 23, which provided for two speed limits; twenty-five miles an hour when passing a school zone during recess or while children are going to or leaving school during opening or closing hours; twenty-five miles an hour in any business or residence district; fifty miles an hour in all other locations.

**Drunken driving.** An important change in the penalty for conviction of the charge of driving while under the influence of intoxicating liquor occurred in 1952, owing to the enactment of Chapter 286, which changed the penalty for a second conviction from permanent forfeiture of driver's license to a forfeiture of

of the driver's license for a period of ten years from the date of the second conviction. Application for restoration will be considered by the Director after ten years have elapsed, and evidence and recommendations submitted in behalf of the applicant, tending to show that restoration of his license would be safe and advisable.

Point System. As stated in Part I, the "habitual violator" program was started in 1933. This program provided for citing a driver for a hearing to show cause why his driver's license should not be revoked, after his third conviction for violation of the law.

The "Point System", effective on July 1, 1952, during the term of William J. Dearden, succeeded the "Habitual Violator" program. The Point System provides for a scale of points to be charged against drivers who have been convicted of moving violations of the motor vehicle and traffic law.

Parking violations do not carry points; neither does a conviction for a commercial vehicle overload, since this is a violation of the owner rather than the driver.

A driver amassing twelve or more points, within a three year period dating from a violation occurring after July 1, 1952, makes the motorist subject to a hearing before the Director on a rule to show cause why his driving privilege should not be revoked.

The Point System has been very satisfactory and is a great contributing factor toward curbing the tendency of many drivers to be thoughtless and not as safety conscious as the circumstances require.

Registration plates;  
inserts.

In 1952, it was decided to continue the 1952 registration plates for the following year, and if possible, for a total of five years, provided the plates remain in good condition. The five year plan was first discussed

during the term of Mr. Ferber, and put into effect by Mr. Dearden, who prepared a bill for the Legislature, authorizing the use of inserts to be attached to the 1952 license plates for succeeding years. These inserts are issued when the registration is renewed yearly, and inscribed on the inserts in numerals is the year in which the registration is renewed. The insert system results in a saving of time and money for the manufacture of the new plates each year, thus resulting in conserving valuable metal.

**Special Inspectors.** The number of special or honorary inspectors appointed since 1906 by the various Commissioners finally reached the point where a change in the system became necessary and desirable. The system had been found to be unsatisfactory, principally owing to the special inspectors not being in uniform when making arrests or enforcing the law on the highways, and also to their not being willing or in a position to appear as complainants before magistrates at the time set for the hearings in which they were the complainants. The special inspectors' badges were therefore recalled by Commissioner Magee, and no new appointments have been made since that time.

**Driver training schools.** Chapter 216 of the Laws of 1951 provided for the licensing and regulation of driver training schools. The regulation of these schools is under the supervision of George W. Zeigler, Chief Inspector. Investigations are made under his direction by the inspectors, who inspect the driver training schools and maintain strict supervision over the instructors employed by the driving schools.

**Automobile race tracks.** During the year 1952 a new responsibility was given to the Inspector Force - the administration of the law requiring the licensing and regulation of automobile race tracks. As a result of the Division's activity,

both spectator and participant safety at these automobile race tracks was greatly improved.

Accident Prevention Clinic. This clinic opened on October 1, 1952, and was designed principally for the examination, physically and psychologically, of traffic law violation repeaters. With financial assistance from the Automobile Association of New Jersey, and technical aid from the Center for Safety Education of New York University, the clinic is operated at 152 West State Street, Trenton, by motor vehicle inspectors specially trained for this work.

#### Security-Responsibility Law.

The 1952 Session of the Legislature passed the Security-Responsibility Law, effective on April 1, 1953. This law repealed the Financial Responsibility Law, Chapter 6 of Title 39. This new law is a substitute for the Financial Responsibility Law, which it repeals.

Based upon the findings of a joint legislative committee appointed in 1950 to study the subject the 1952 Legislature enacted five separate laws, popularly identified by the following titles:

- Motor Vehicle Security-Responsibility Law
- Unsatisfied Claim and Judgment Fund Law
- Motor Vehicle Liability Security Fund Law
- Accident Report Law
- Assessment of Expenses Law.

The above laws are not all effective immediately, and the Director has had literature and circulars prepared for distribution to the public, in order that there may be an understanding of the provisions and the purposes of the laws - the principal object being the payment of claims and judgments resulting from motor vehicle accidents when the motorist responsible for the accident fails to compensate his or her victims through insurance or cash settlement.

Commissioners and Directors.

Since 1906 until the present time, December

31, 1953, the terms of the Commissioners have been substantially as follows: J. B. R. Smith, 6 years; Job H. Lippincott, 3 years; William L. Dill, 15 years; Harold G. Hoffman, 5 years; Arthur W. Magee, 15 years ( one year as Acting Director); Martin J. Ferber, 1½ years; William J. Dearden, 2 years ( one year as Acting Director); - a total of 47 years.

Of the Commissioners above listed, two died during the year 1952, and one during the year 1953.

William L. Dill. The many friends of Judge Dill, including particularly those who were in the Department during the years of his administration were sorry to hear of his death in February, 1952. When he took office in 1915, the Department of Motor Vehicles was still in its early stages, and it fell to the lot of Mr. Dill to inaugurate many new systems and initiate movements looking toward an improvement in administration which would result in greater safety on the highways, more revenue, and better working conditions in the main office and at the various agencies.

In 1928, Mr. Dill was nominated for Governor on the Democratic ticket during the same year that Alfred E. Smith ran for President of the United States. Although Mr. Dill carried many more votes in New Jersey than the Presidential candidate on the same ticket, he lost the election to Morgan Larson of Perth Amboy, Republican.

After the expiration of Mr. Dill's term as Commissioner in 1930, he was succeeded by Harold G. Hoffman, (then Congressman from New Jersey), and he was later appointed as a lay Judge of the Court of Errors and Appeals.

He again entered the race for Governor in 1934, and was defeated by the Republican candidate, Harold G. Hoffman. He continued as Judge of the Court of Errors and Appeals for several years until his retirement, and after a short but severe illness, died at his home in Paterson.

He will be long remembered for his unusual and outstanding personality, and he is sadly missed by his many friends and his fine family.

**Job.H. Lippincott.** Mr. Lippincott's term was very short - from 1912 to 1915, - but in those years he gave evidence of remarkable ability and initiative. After leaving the Department, he was connected with Warren Brothers Company, road builders; and later, at the time of his death in 1952, he was associated with George W. Brewster and Son, Contractors, of Hackensack, New Jersey. After a severe illness of many weeks, he died in Summit, New Jersey, in 1952. The employees who were associated with him during his brief term as Commissioner remember him particularly for his driving power and enthusiasm for his job.

In the course of the years after leaving the Department, it was necessary for him to come to Trenton for business reasons, and he frequently stopped at the office to renew his friendship with his old friends in the Department.

**Jay B. R. Smith.** After the close of his term in 1912, Mr. Smith entered into the practice of law at Newark, and in 1918 became editor of the Corporation Manual, and later was Editor-in-Chief of the several publications of the United States Corporation Company, located in New York City. He was also associated with the Selective Risks Companies, under the management of his brother, D. L. B. Smith of Branchville.

After his brother's death, he became President of the Selected Risk Companies, and served for a short time, when he was appointed Chairman of the Board, which position he occupied until his death.

Mr. Smith suffered a paralytic stroke, and died at his home in Summit, on August 31, 1953. There are only a very few members of the Department who remember him as Commissioner, but he was quite a familiar figure in the office, as he frequently visited the State House on his business trips to Trenton, and often stopped at the main office to chat with his friends in the office of the Secretary of State (across the hall), and with his former secretary, Miss Agnes Smith, and the present Director, William J. Dearden, who also remembers him as his first "boss".

this sketch without drawing attention to the heroic service rendered to our country by the young men employees of the Department of Motor Vehicles. The record shows one hundred and fifty-five men in the military service, - and sad to relate - five of these men failed to return. Three who met their deaths while in the service of their Government during the war had been employed in our Auditing Division - James Ree, Rocce Pagano, and Alvin McMinn. One, Edward J. Nugent, was an inspector, and one an agent, H. Douglas Wahl of Summit. The Department has also suffered the loss of many popular and efficient young men and women employees, - among them being James J. Shanley, former Chief Inspector and Chief of the Testing Division at the time of his death in 1951, and also Bernard E. O'Keefe, our Chief Auditor, and an employee of many years service, who died in 1952.

**Reorganization.** In July, 1953, the reorganization of the supervisory level of the Division of Motor Vehicles went into effect.

On September 15, 1953, notice was sent to all Bureau heads that from henceforth, the Division of Motor Vehicles is divided into three bureaus, and that groups former known as bureaus will hereafter be known as sections.

The bureaus, the assistant directors in charge and the sections assigned to each, are as follows:

**BUREAU OF CONTROLS**, Albert Rhodes, Assistant Director: Administration, Personnel Fiscal and Budget, Property, Printing, Security Responsibility, Hearings and Driver Improvement.

**BUREAU OF REGULATIONS**, R. Earle Leonard, Assistant Director: Agent Supervision, Auditing and Accounting, Central Records, Information, Certificate of Ownership, Dealers and Bus Excise.

**BUREAU OF ENFORCEMENT**, George W. Zeigler, Assistant Director; Road Patrol, Investigations, Driver Examinations, Vehicle Testing, Driver Schools, Race Tracks and Junk Yards.

The titles formerly held by the Assistant Directors were as follows:

R. Earle Leonard, Chief Clerk; George W. Zeigler, Chief Inspector;

Albert Rhodes, Public Relations Assistant.

Following is a list of the Section Chiefs:

Elliott F. Daniels, Chief, Meter Vehicle Inspection Section;

George B. Schwoebel, Chief, Security-Responsibility Section;

William C. Brennan, Supervisor, Certificate of Ownership Section;

William J. Millen, Supervisor, Driver Improvement Section;

William J. Brennan, Chief, Accounting Section;

Gertrude Smith, Supervisor, Record Section;

John A. Baky, Supervisor, Magistrates' Fines Section;

Joseph Avanzate, Printing Section;

Thomas Mayer; Central Agency;

Ann Lauria, Payroll and Personnel Section;

John Beka, Information Section;