

# History of Civil Engineering at Kansas State University

*The Kansas Transportation Engineering  
Conference Connection*



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The Board of Regents authorized the creation of the Department of Civil and **Highway** Engineering in 1907. The first classes began in Fall 1908.



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Seaton Hall view from the site of the K-State Union



Walter S. Gearhart was chosen to be highway engineer in the extension department, July 1, 1909. In 1911 under the implications of a State law the holder of this position became State engineer. Numerous and diverse services were performed in this capacity throughout the State.

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In 1914 Gearhart was made professor of highway engineering in the department of civil and highway engineering. He served in that capacity and as State engineer until April 4, 1917. In 1917 the legislature passed an act creating the State Highway Commission, in part in order to cooperate with Federal authorities in highway development.



Central Seaton Hall was constructed in 1922



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The Commission had authority to appoint a chief engineer who should be State highway engineer, and Gearhart was appointed to that position. He served until he enlisted in the engineering corps of the U.S. Army where he held a captaincy. The Kansas Highway Engineering Conference began in 1918 and, although the absolute link is uncertain, it was a natural outgrowth of the highway extension program.



Main (Oregon) Street in Hiawatha, KS, 1909

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The conference continued to be called the Kansas Highway Conference continued until about 1975.



Main (Oregon) Street in Hiawatha, KS, about 1950 which was also “old” U.S. Highway 36.



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Between 1973 and 1976 the conference was renamed the Highway and Transportation Engineering Conference when KDOT was created.

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This Conference is an important part of the mission of the past and of the future of the CE department.



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The Brown County Historical Museum.

Jim Koelliker, CE Interim Department Head, April 2008