

Chapter I

How the Road Got its Name

THE guttural source words for ROAD, uttered in primitive Europe long millenniums ago at the beginning of the Stone Age (? B. C.) and even at the dawn of the Bronze Age (3,500 B. C.) or the Iron Age (1,000 B. C.), perhaps will remain secreted forever in the womb of time.

The modern Indo-European languages into which these words or their derivatives, became embedded, include the principal speeches of Europe as well as the Indo-Iranian and other Asiatic tongues. The most familiar early types of these languages are the Latin in the West and the Sanskrit in the older East where we find the first intimation of a word for ROAD. In the Sanskrit, as early as the fourth century before the Christian era, as well as in the later Latin, the meaning of these original words was dominated by the idea of MOVEMENT in one of its aspects, such as: (1) The character of the motion; and (2) the mark left upon the ground by the moving person or object. Many names of vehicles were derived later from these basic names for the path of travel.

The most ancient and generic term of all seems to be the antecedent of our word WAY. It means the track followed in passing from one place to another. Our modern word stems from the Middle English, *wey* or *way*, which in turn branches from the Latin word, *veho*, I carry, derived from the Sanskrit, *vah*, carry, go, move, draw, or travel. Our twentieth-century words *Wagon* and *Wain* may be traced back to the Middle English, *wain*; Old High German, *wagan*; Dutch and German, *wagen*; Anglo-Saxon, *waegen*, from *wegan*, to move, rooted in the Latin infinitive, *vehere*, to move or carry. The modern word VEHICLE, from the Latin *vehiculum*, also has *vehere* as its ancestor and back of that the Sanskrit, *vāhana*, a vehicle.



RAID

The word HIGHWAY harks back to the elevated, *agger*, the mound or hill of the Roman road formed by earth thrown from the side ditches toward the center. In old

England these raised, or high, ways were under the protection of the King's peace and open to public, unrestricted travel as distinguished from byways, or private roads.

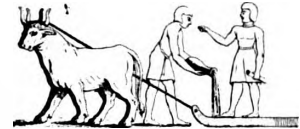
Our familiar word ROAD is of comparatively recent origin. It is used only once in the King James version of the Bible (translated 1604 to 1611) and then in the sense of a raid, or foray

(I Samuel 27:10). William Shakespeare (1564-1616) uses the term in the sense of a common road only three times out of a total of sixteen. The other meanings are a raid, a riding, or journey on horseback, or a roadstead where ships ride at anchor. The word is derived from the Anglo-Saxon, *rād*, from *ridan*, to ride and the Middle English, *rode* or *rade*, a riding or mounted journey. It means usually a rural way as contrasted with an urban street which originated in the Latin *strata via*, a way spread or paved, with stones.

The second group of source terms may be illustrated by our words TRAIL, TRACK, or TRACE, describing a mark left upon the ground by sled runners, feet, wheels, or other means, from the Latin, *trabo*, *trahere*, *traxi*, *tractum*, translated draw; the Middle English, *traillen*; and the Old French, *trailler*, to tow.

The Anglo-Saxon, *paeth*, akin to the Dutch, *pad*, gives us our modern word PATH, and probably takes its origin from the manner in which the earth is beaten by the foot, Sanskrit *pad*, and Latin *pes*.

Our words ROUTE and RUT are the survivors of the Latin, *via rupta*, meaning a way cut through the forest, or broken by a plow, wheel, travel or other means.



TRACK



TRAIL

