

**NOTE: The GDOT Centennial poster, the District 4 Centennial Panel and a photo of I-75 Exit 55 from 1962 are attached.**



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*Southwest Georgia...*

## **100 Years of the Georgia Department of Transportation**

*Celebrating a Century of Safety, Service and Innovation*

**TIFTON** – Today is the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Georgia Department of Transportation.

On Aug. 16, 1916, the seeds were planted for what would grow into the Georgia Department of Transportation. The rutted dirt roads, not fit for bicycles and automobiles, were well on their way to becoming the paved infrastructure that is now the 10<sup>th</sup> largest in the nation.

“To reach this 100 year milestone took the tireless efforts of many people ... those with vision, those with passion, those who took a stand,” State Transportation Board chairman Emily Dunn said. “Georgia DOT thrives today and is set to do great things in the future.”

The State Highway Department of Georgia was formally created by the Georgia legislature as a result of the Federal Aid Road Act of 1916, which mandated formation of a state highway department in order to receive federal funds. In 1972, the State Highway Department of Georgia became the Georgia Department of Transportation.

One of the historical moments of note from Georgia DOT’s Southwest district of 31 counties occurred in 1950, when the Tifton division began a survey for a four-lane highway beginning at the Florida state line and extending north. That, of course, would become Interstate 75.

From the dirt roads of 1916 to today’s modern transportation system, Georgia DOT’s endeavors have improved mobility, enhanced quality of life and contributed to the economic development of Georgia. Innovations like intelligent transportation systems, the Highway Emergency Response Operator (HERO) program, express lanes, diverging diamond interchanges, fiber optics for incident management and a host of other achievements have contributed to Georgia’s recognition as a leader in transportation innovation.

Earlier this year, Gov. Nathan Deal signed a proclamation declaring 2016 as Georgia Department of Transportation's Centennial Year. It recognized Georgia DOT for constructing, maintaining and operating a transportation system that has increased mobility and enhanced quality of life while providing economic growth that continues to make Georgia the number one state for business.

"While a centennial is a time to reflect on the past, it is also a time to look ahead to new challenges," Commissioner Russell R. McMurry said. "Drones, connected vehicles, self-driving cars – these are just a few of the evolving technologies that will have a tremendous impact on transportation in the not-too-distant future. In the next century, Georgia DOT will continue to embrace change and rise to meet new challenges, break new barriers and positively affect more lives."

Georgia DOT celebrates the centennial throughout 2016. Two Georgia DOT centennial panels are on display in the lobby of the Lake Park visitor information and welcome center located between exits 2 and 5 on Interstate 75 North. One panel focuses on the Southwest district and features historic photographs and key transportation moments in this area. The panels will be at the visitor information and welcome center through August. The Southwest district panel will then be displayed at the Tifton-Tift County Public Library at 245 Love Ave. in Tifton.

For all things centennial, visit [www.dot.ga.gov/centennial](http://www.dot.ga.gov/centennial). There you'll find a statewide event calendar, decade-by-decade timeline, historical items, videos, and award winning student art. You can even take a Centennial Road Trip. #GDOT100

*Georgia DOT's work over the last century - its focus on maintenance; planning and constructing congestion relief projects; and ensuring the safety of the traveling public - has led to a treasured quality of life for residents and has contributed to the incredible economic development of the Peach State. Start your Centennial journey [HERE](#) or visit [GDOT's Centennial webpage at www.dot.ga.gov/centennial](http://www.dot.ga.gov/centennial).*

# Georgia



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# District Four: Southwest Georgia



Celebrating a Century of Simply the Best in Safety, Service and Innovation

Photo courtesy of Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives  
Construction of an extension of the Georgia Northern Railway line to Spence Air Base during World War II in 1942, Colquitt County. After the war, Spence Field was used to train air force pilots and commercial pilots, it later became the Municipal Airport. No longer functions as an airfield.

District Four composes 31 counties. In the early 1900's pine tree products were the prime source of income and the railroads and steam locomotives were the prime mode of transportation for moving people and raw materials. Railroads zig-zagged across South Georgia, creating transportation hubs in Tifton, Albany, Thomasville, Valdosta and others.

The first Division Office for what is now the Tifton District was located in Americus, W.C. Caye was the District Engineer.

## Overview:

- Counties Served: 31
- Square Miles: 12,000
- Interstate Centerline Miles: 106
- State Routes Centerline Miles: 3,600
- County Roads/City Streets Miles: 17,000
- Bridges: 2,600
- Airports: 23
- Transit Systems: 27
- Inland Port: 1



**August 16, 1916** – The State Legislature appoints seven prominent figures to begin the Georgia Highway Commission. They were authorized to act upon all duties prescribed by Congress under the Federal Aid Road Act.

**January 1, 1924** – The annual report states that the total cost of roads and bridges to date is \$20,241,065.97. The estimated cost of roads and bridges under construction is \$7,613,210.36 and the estimated cost of new projects for which funds have been provided and plans approved is \$5,296,620.50 for a total of \$33,150,896.83. This overall figure would represent the completion of 2,926.1 miles of the system's 5,500 total miles.

- 1924** – At the time of the Annual Report there were
- 715 Old Bridges - Total length, 78,500 ft
  - 674 New Bridges - Total length 100,158 ft
  - 59 Bridges Under Construction
  - Total length - 10,221 ft

**1924** – A meeting of representatives from towns along the route from Columbus to Brunswick is held in Tifton to discuss the designation of this route as the "C" (Columbus) to Sea Highway.

**1928** – Roadside enhancement was performed as several hundred crepe myrtle and dogwood trees were planted on both sides of the National Highway (SR 7) throughout the District.

**1928** – Promotion of tourism was nothing new, but tourists passing through Tifton on November 19, are invited to stop for lunch. Those who couldn't stop are given a handout and wishes for a pleasant trip.

**1933** – The number of Highway Districts are reduced to three and the Division Office is moved to Fitzgerald where it remained until 1941. The office moves to Tifton after being destroyed by fire and was again burned in 1944.

**1941-1946** – Known as the War Years. Most resources are diverted to the National Defense. Roadway construction is almost at a standstill in the Tifton Division.

**1948** – Known as the year of the flood. Many roads and streets throughout the southern part of the Division are closed for several days due to being underwater. When the flood waters recede, many roadways and bridges are missing causing them to be closed for a longer period of time while reconstruction took place.



April 7, 1948. State Route 94 Valdosta Morvan Road. Highwater view from the East side of the river.

**1950** – Tifton Division begins a survey for a 4-lane highway, beginning at the Florida state line and extending north across the width of the Division. They faced most challenging opportunity—the design, right of way negotiations and construction of a 90 mile segment of what would become part of the 42,000 mile National Interstate Highway System.

**1960** – A six-mile section of roadway known as the Tifton Bypass becomes South Georgia's first completed "interstate." This roadway utilizes the largest paving train ever used at the time, with a continuous operation at over 2,000 linear feet per day. The total construction cost is \$3.4 million.

**1962** – District Four gets a new ultra-modern \$237,000 building with all new color-coordinated interior and furnishings dedicated by Governor Vandiver. The Tifton Division Headquarters for the overall operation of the 30-county section of Southwest Georgia gets a home.

**1968** – Multi-vehicle crash on I-75, due to dense smoke and fog created by fires in the heart pine bay area in Cook County. This disaster occurs again in 1981.

**1975** – The State Highway Department is reorganized into the Department of Transportation and the Field Divisions into Field Districts. District boundaries are realigned and the Tifton District picks up Crisp and Wilcox counties for a total of 31 counties.

**1980** – "The First in the Nation" railroad rehabilitation project on a 14.1-mile section of rail between Moultrie and Pavo.

**2015** – The new \$12 million dollar Broad Avenue Memorial Bridge opened to traffic. The new bridge features bike lanes, wider sidewalks, slightly higher guard rails and period lighting similar to that of the old bridge. It continues to honor America's troops and carries the original plaque that was placed there in 1920.

Train engine, Albany, Dougherty County, Georgia, 1931.



Photo courtesy of Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives

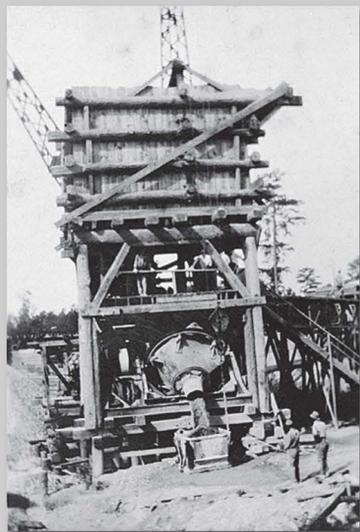


Photo courtesy of Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives

Left: Albany, Dougherty County, circa 1919. Construction of the Broad Street bridge, the second bridge over the Flint River. Cement and sand were mixed in the wooden vat and then poured down into the hopper.

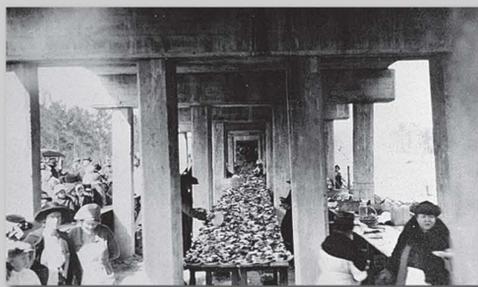


Photo courtesy of Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives

Thomasville, Nov. 11, 1921. Citizens enjoy a picnic lunch under the concrete bridge over the Ochlockonee River located on the highway to Albany, now U.S. Highway 19. The bridge was dedicated to the veterans of World War I.



Photo courtesy of Vanishing Georgia, Georgia Archives

Left: Seminole County, circa 1927. Swinging bridge across the Chattahoochee River at Georgia Highway 91. The bridge was constructed by Austin Brothers Bridge Company from Dallas, Texas.

**Gov. To Dedicate Longest New Road Section Oct. 9th**  
The longest section of interstate highway yet completed in Georgia will be dedicated to Governor Vandiver and a host of dignitaries on October 9th at Fitzgerald. The highway, which will be 37 miles long, will connect the city of Fitzgerald with the city of Tifton. The highway will be the longest section of interstate highway in Georgia. It will be the longest section of interstate highway in Georgia. It will be the longest section of interstate highway in Georgia.

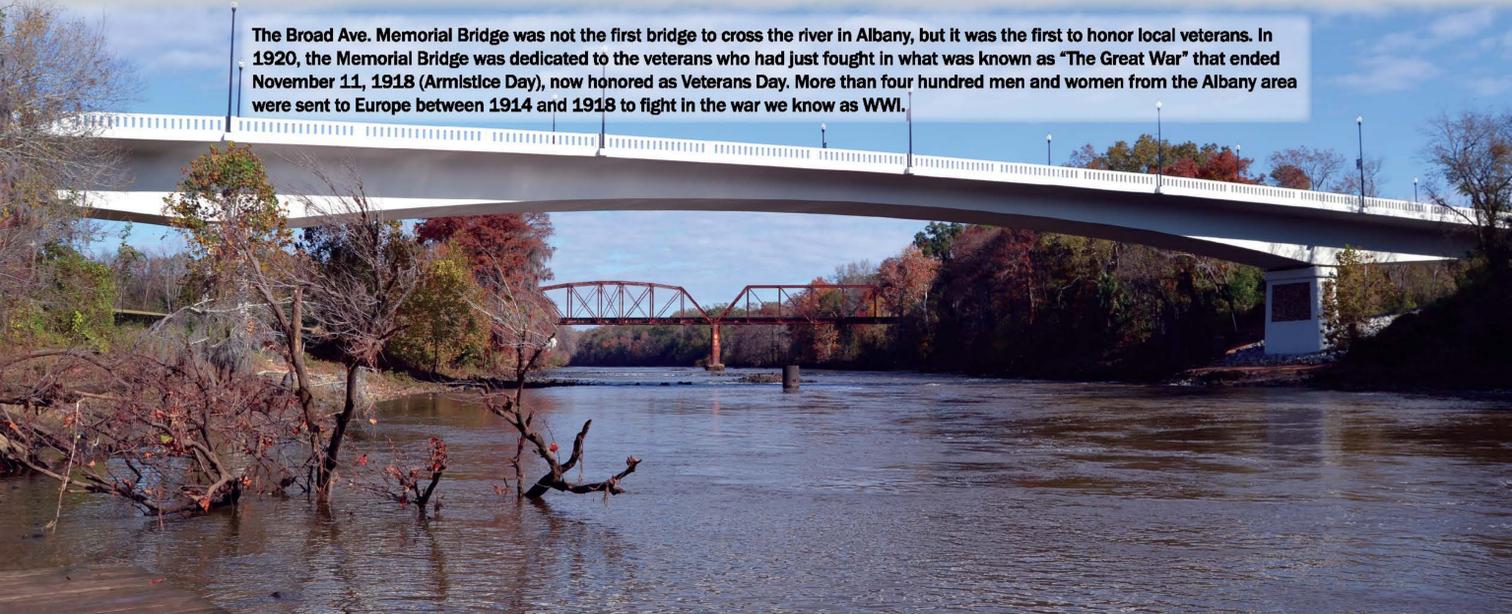
**Barbecue Here is Big Success As Nearly 4,000 Turn Out**  
"The governor, as well as Mr. High Smith and J. P. 'Bud' Anderson were among those who were present at the barbecue. The barbecue was held at the home of Mrs. J. C. Gentry and drew an elite lighted band. The barbecue was held at the home of Mrs. J. C. Gentry and drew an elite lighted band. The barbecue was held at the home of Mrs. J. C. Gentry and drew an elite lighted band." (Note: This text is repetitive in the original image.)

On October 9, 1959 a dedication was held to open a new section of Interstate Highway 75. The new stretch was 37 miles long and extended the entire length of Turner and Tift counties. It included 32 bridges and 16 frontage roads and was built at a cost of \$13,896,299, including rights of way and utilities.



GOVERNOR ARRIVES IN TIFTON TO COMPLETE CEREMONIES... Governor Ernest Vandiver, Mrs. Gene Lavender, Smith, and Highway Board members stand beside the first barrier erected on Interstate Highway 75. Standing in the front row are: (left to right) Gov. Ernest Vandiver, Mrs. Gene Lavender, Mr. Scott, the governor and Jim Cline.

The Broad Ave. Memorial Bridge was not the first bridge to cross the river in Albany, but it was the first to honor local veterans. In 1920, the Memorial Bridge was dedicated to the veterans who had just fought in what was known as "The Great War" that ended November 11, 1918 (Armistice Day), now honored as Veterans Day. More than four hundred men and women from the Albany area were sent to Europe between 1914 and 1918 to fight in the war we know as WWI.





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