Lafayette Paving
Nearly 50 Miles;
Cost $2,750,000

In a little more than two years Lafayette has seen parceled off almost 50 miles of city streets at a cost of almost $2,750,000.

Carried out under four major street projects, the work has transformed a large part of the city streets from dirt and gravel to asphalt and concrete.

So much progress in such a short period of time takes on a new luster when compared with the fight for better streets in early years.

Until 1934 every street in Lafayette, then a town of some 7,000, was dirt - dirt which became a sea of mud during the frequent rainy spells.

A small band of leading citizens kept up the cry for better streets, a demand that apparently fell on deaf ears for many years.

Lafayette's Jefferson St., then as now the main street in town, was in such bad condition that Gov. Sanders, attending a meeting on street improvements at that time, said:

"Jefferson Street is a famous street. It is either covered by six inches of dust or six inches of mud."

A. A. McBride, publisher of the Lafayette Gazette, and Dr. N. P. Morgan, shrugging off the leaden drizzle, were among those heading the movement for better streets.

Dr. Moss, reading of work being done in Illinois on street paving, persuaded civil engineers engaged in roadway work there to come to Lafayette to advise on local improvements.

The engineers appeared before the city council, police jury and school board and succeeded in receiving pledges of $500 appropriations from each.

Volunteers were enlisted to transport gravel and other materials in wagons borrowed from sugar cane planters in the area.

The first strip of gravelled road in the city was a portion of roadway from Jefferson St. to the Protestant Cemetery on Pinhook Rd.

Farmers and others using the gravel road were so impressed that they later voted a road tax.

The increased use of the automobile provided a city bond issue for roads in 1934.

From these beginnings the town began building gravel roads that soon covered much of downtown Lafayette.

Struggles changed from quarries to passable streets during the early years included portions of Jefferson St., Oak Ave., Lee Ave., Jefferson St., Vermilion St., Broad St., Lafayette St., Congress St., St. John St. and the Scott road.

Later Jefferson St. and many other streets of the central business area were paved, along with both the state - wide building program started in 1928 resulted in the paving of the main highways through the city.

Activity continued into the 1930's, when it received the aid of the federal WPA program.

Under WPA citizens petitioned to have streets paved. The usual 16-foot asphalt topping cost the property owner about $1 per front foot.

During this program many concrete culverts were constructed, even though the street was not paved.

First Project

Very little additional street paving was done until the first street paving project was launched in 1932, when the streets were surfaced with either concrete or asphalt.

Concrete gutters and curbs were provided, and subsurface drains were installed in some cases.

The use of soil cement base for the project to $566,000. The project was presented as a street paving project and set the pace for paving streets.

In a little more than two years the city brought the total down to 51 miles.

In the latter part of 1953, while the third paving project was being initiated, the city offered a street paving project to cover 15 miles. The $90,000 bond issue would have provided for resurfacing of 12 downtown Lafayette streets.

City fathers reasoned that a large percentage of the residents used the central city thoroughfares and thus should pay for their upkeep.

In September of 1953, the city fathers called for a new paving project.

They passed another bond proposal which was expected to have a great effect on traffic, even though they were voting on a strictly street project.

An underpass on Jefferson St. as the Southern Pacific Lines crossing there and the rebuilding of 40 streets on the central city throughfares were the major items on the approval of local property owners.

The project was presented as a $900,000 project, with the city paying $810,000 and the railroad the remainder.

The city accepted a low bid of some $500,000 from the Lake Charles contracting firm of M. Miller and Son, and the project was started late in 1954.

The city also started a fourth street paving project and set the wheels in motion for a fifth project.

The four projects met with the greatest opposition of any presented to property owners so far, mainly because of opposition to paving the streets and constructing curb-to-curb paving on others.

A total of 78 street projects were included in the fourth street paving program, 25 of them calling for new construction, 22 scheduled for curb-to-curb paving and 21 slated for resurfacing.

Some 300 local property owners met on Oct. 4 and petitioned for the removal of 4 of the 78 street projects, including four for new construction, 22 for curb-to-curb paving and 11 for resurfacing.

Streets were one of the major facets of a comprehensive planning survey being conducted by the city's planning commission.

A preliminary sketch plan brought out as its major criticism that Lafayette streets lacked continuity, not only in terms of length but also in terms of width. The survey claimed that the most

The city's third street paving project, announced in October of 1953, is the broadest ever undertaken in the city and covers some 13 miles of roadway.

It was divided into six smaller projects, one calling for 30-foot-wide concrete streets and five others providing for 25-foot-wide resurfacing in width from 21 to 34 feet.

A protest meeting several months later resulted in protests that had brought the total down to 51 miles and about nine miles of roadway.